



Journal of Strategic Business and Economics (JSBS) – ISSN 3080-3314

Post-Labor Economics: Rethinking Productivity, Income Distribution, and Human Agency in Economies Governed by Automated Cognitive Labor



Volume 1 – Issue 1 – September 2025

Title of Article

Post-Labor Economics: Rethinking Productivity, Income Distribution, and Human Agency in Economies Governed by Automated Cognitive Labor

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Abstract

As economies transition into post-labor configurations, the foundational metrics of productivity, income distribution, and human agency require radical epistemic revision. This paper explores the implications of automated cognitive labor—where AI systems reproduce knowledge, decision-making, and creative logic traditionally authored by human actors. Rather than viewing automation as displacement, we reconceptualize it as a catalyst for redefining labor itself: from physical and cognitive expenditure to sovereign authorship, credentialled presence, and narrative dignity.

Leveraging Education 6.0 and the STEMMA framework (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine, Automation), we construct a modular economy in which productivity is traced through authored logic, and income is distributed not by hours spent, but by credentialled epistemic value. This paradigm situates post-labor economics as a schematic ecosystem—where human agency is preserved through pedagogic sovereignty and computational infrastructures are governed by visible authorship protocols.

Our analysis presents visual schematics of post-labor value flows, interrogates the ethics of cognitive automation, and frames income not as a reward for work, but as a calibrated recognition of credentialled authorship. In this emerging economy, automation demands authors—not operators. The future is not post-human—it is post-labor, and its infrastructure must be sovereignly encoded.

Keywords

Post-Labor Economics, Automated Cognitive Labor, Credentialing Sovereignty, Education 6.0, STEMMA Logic, Income Recomposition, Human Agency, Pedagogic Equity, Narrative Dignity, Epistemic Infrastructure, Schematic Economy, Post-Work Theory

Introduction

The twentieth century anchored economic value in labor—physical, cognitive, and temporal. Productivity was quantified through output per worker, income distribution was tethered to occupational hierarchy, and human agency was validated by participation in work. However, as artificial intelligence systems increasingly assume cognitive functions once deemed exclusively human—reasoning, pattern recognition, synthesis, and decision-making—the foundations of economic theory begin to fracture. We now enter a post-labor epoch in which automation not only accelerates productivity but detaches it from human effort, prompting urgent inquiry into the meanings of work, value, and agency.

This paper investigates the epistemic implications of automated cognitive labor, advancing the proposition that labor is no longer the singular source of productivity, nor the sole warrant for income. Automation does not merely replace human functions—it reframes the ontology of economic participation, necessitating new architectures for credentialing, authorship, and income recomposition. Here, we reject dystopian framings of obsolescence and instead foreground sovereign authorship as the successor to labor—an epistemic presence rooted in narrative dignity, credentialing logic, and schematic intelligibility.

Education 6.0, conceived as a sovereign curricular operating system, offers the infrastructural remedy to post-labor dislocation. Through modular credentialing and pedagogic sovereignty, it reframes human agency not as economic expendability but as schematic authorship. STEMMA (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine, Automation) encodes this transition as a disciplinary logic in which automation is not antithetical to humanity but composable within sovereign frameworks. Together, these

infrastructures enable a redefinition of productivity as authored epistemic flows and reimagine income not as payment for labor, but as recognition of pedagogically credentialed presence.

In this manuscript, we examine automated industries, digital knowledge systems, and credentialed economies to chart the contours of post-labor economics. We argue that human agency survives not through preserved jobs, but through designed systems of schematic visibility and epistemic equity. In a world where cognitive labor is automated, the question is no longer *how humans work*—but *how humans author*. The following sections construct that redefinition.

Literature Review

The historiography of economic thought has long situated labor as both the ontological root and evaluative metric of productivity. From Adam Smith's foundational articulation of value emerging through the division of labor to Karl Marx's critical framing of labor as the exploited substance of capitalist accumulation, the economic identity of the human subject has been fundamentally tethered to occupational participation. Marxian thought, in particular, situates surplus value as the derivative of uncompensated labor, embedding income distribution within a moral framework of systemic extraction. Meanwhile, Keynesian economics retained labor as indispensable, even while forecasting technological unemployment as a transitional consequence of industrial progress. In each case, labor not only produced goods—it produced epistemic identity.

Yet this triad of classical formulation has encountered profound theoretical disruption with the advent of automated cognition. The displacement thesis, advanced by scholars such as Zuboff, Brynjolfsson, McAfee, and Susskind, interrogates the consequences of automation not merely on the quantity of work but on its character. Zuboff's notion of "informed" labor acknowledged the shift from manual to cognitive work but preserved the premise that labor—though informational—remained distinctly human. Brynjolfsson and McAfee stressed the exponential nature of digital productivity yet retained economic frameworks centered on human task orientation. Susskind's provocative treatise moved toward conceptualizing a post-work economy but lacked the infrastructural theory to restore agency within such economies. These thinkers gestured toward rupture yet fell short of proposing sovereign pedagogic systems as replacements for occupational participation.

The absence of curricular infrastructure within automation discourse is particularly conspicuous. While critiques of labor displacement abound, few propose credentialed visibility or modular epistemic presence as the successor to wage identity. The literature thus suffers from a conceptual lacuna—it neither provides a grammar for sovereign participation nor establishes pedagogic criteria for non-labor-based economic recognition. What remains undeveloped is a framework wherein automation necessitates—not eradicates—human authorship through designed credentialing and schematic agency.

Education 6.0 emerges as the epistemic response to this void. Its architecture departs from labor utility and re-centers human agency as authored presence within sovereign learning economies. Through modular credentialing, typographic intelligibility, and locally governed pedagogic systems, it reframes economic inclusion not as job retention but as schematic authorship. STEMMA (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine, Automation) provides the disciplinary reconfiguration necessary for value generation beyond labor. It positions automation not as epistemic erasure, but as a compositional field within which narrative dignity and pedagogic sovereignty assert human continuity. In this regard, the literature reflects both the limits of industrial epistemology and the urgency of curricular renaissance. Automation may dissolve labor, but it simultaneously demands a redesign of human visibility, economic participation, and credentialed worth. The transition from labor to authorship is not ancillary—it is imperative.

Theoretical Framework

The displacement of labor by cognitive automation presents not merely a technological inflection but an ontological recalibration of economic identity. Traditional theories of productivity, anchored in physical and temporal human exertion, no longer accommodate the epistemic conditions under which value is generated in automated economies. The challenge is not one of substitution alone—machines replacing human tasks—but of reimagining the very substance of economic participation. This framework advances three interdependent constructs: *Epistemic Income*, *Credentialed Presence*, and *Narrative*

Sovereignty, positioned within the infrastructural logic of Education 6.0 and the disciplinary code of STEMMA (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine, Automation).

At its core, *Epistemic Income* replaces wage labor with modular recognition of authored contribution. Here, income flows not as remuneration for time-bound tasks but as pedagogically validated presence within sovereign learning economies. The locus of value shifts from output to authorship—from quantifiable labor to credentialled epistemic composition. Education 6.0 operationalizes this shift by designing ecosystems wherein modular credentialing becomes the basis for income distribution, circumventing the need for labor as justification. The implication is radical: citizens are compensated not for performing tasks within prescribed roles, but for credentialled authorship within sovereign curricular infrastructures.

Credentialled Presence refers to the visibility and recognition of individuals within schematic economies, not as employees but as epistemic agents. In pre-automation models, presence was indexed by job function; post-labor participation must now be encoded by modular credentials that represent authored knowledge, creative composition, and schematic stewardship. Credentialing sovereignty enables individuals to assert economic and narrative agency, particularly in contexts where labor is either irrelevant or inaccessible. Education 6.0's architecture allows these credentials to be locally governed, typographically intelligible, and epistemically validated without dependence on external occupational regimes.

Finally, *Narrative Sovereignty* constitutes the restoration of human agency through authored curriculum, locally governed epistemology, and schematic representation. In a world where machines increasingly simulate cognition, narrative becomes the site of human originality and dignity. STEMMA encodes this through its inclusion of Automation not as an enemy of humanity, but as a field to be authored, regulated, and composited within human-designed disciplinary logics. Automation is therefore not post-human but post-labor: it invites narrative reconfiguration rather than existential surrender.

Together, these constructs dismantle the binary between labor and obsolescence, offering instead a schematic continuum of human authorship. Economic identity is no longer tied to work, but to visibility within designed credentialing systems. Participation is no longer occupational, but epistemic. Automation ceases to be a threat when the infrastructures of authorship are sovereign, modular, and pedagogically encoded.

Education 6.0 is thus not ancillary to post-labor economics—it is its operating logic. STEMMA is not merely disciplinary—it is compositional. The framework offered here proposes a post-labor economy grounded in authored presence, credentialled value, and epistemic compensation, replacing wage dependency with sovereign recognition.

Methodology

This study employs a multi-layered analytical methodology that aligns with the epistemic requirements of post-labor economies and the infrastructural logic of Education 6.0. Rather than measuring productivity through conventional labor metrics, the methodology recalibrates evaluation around authored epistemic flows, modular credentialing architectures, and schematic visibility within automated learning economies.

At the foundation of this inquiry is a qualitative synthesis of curricular infrastructures that operationalize sovereign authorship. Data is drawn from modular credentialing systems, typographic standards in epistemic representation, and sovereign learning ecosystems encoded with STEMMA (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine, Automation). The focus is not on occupational classification, but on schematic participation: the presence and recognition of individuals within educational economies defined by their authored contributions and locally governed credentials.

Credentialing metrics are analyzed according to three parameters: pedagogic modularity, typographic intelligibility, and semantic sovereignty. Pedagogic modularity evaluates the capacity of credentialing systems to segment, encode, and recognize authored knowledge without dependency on linear labor sequences. Typographic intelligibility assesses the visual clarity and epistemic legibility of credentials as economic assets—where the design and structure of the credential are part of its compositional value. Semantic sovereignty examines the degree to which these credentials are governed by local, indigenous, or sovereign epistemologies, rather than imposed occupational taxonomies.

Income architectures are not modeled through employment statistics but through flows of recognition, compensation, and economic participation rooted in authored presence. This involves tracing how Education 6.0 infrastructures distribute value via modular credentials—using narrative visibility as the axis of economic inclusion. Methodological instruments include schematic mapping of credential-to-income pathways, analysis of sovereign curriculum design protocols, and comparative modeling of credentialled economies against labor-based systems.

Additionally, the study incorporates anticipatory analysis of automation's compositional footprint across disciplinary domains. STEMMA serves here not as a disciplinary acronym, but as an encoding logic through which automated cognition is made intelligible and composable. The analysis maps how Automation, as the sixth canonical dimension, interacts with other STEMMA fields to construct economies no longer reliant on human labor but capable of credentialing sovereign authorship.

This methodological approach departs from economic empiricism that privileges occupation and wage. Instead, it formalizes a schema wherein human agency is reconstructed through sovereign curriculum, typographic authorship, and epistemic compensation. The unit of analysis is not the job, but the authored credential. The object of inquiry is not the worker, but the epistemic participant.

Case Studies

To ground the theoretical propositions articulated thus far, this section examines exemplary models in which credentialled presence and sovereign authorship have reconfigured economic agency beyond the parameters of wage labor. While some are emergent infrastructures, others exist as operational prototypes that gesture toward full implementation of post-labor principles. Each case reflects the transition from occupational dependency to modular recognition, validating authored identity within epistemically governed economies.

The Springfield Learning Grid in Southern Africa serves as an illustrative locus where Education 6.0 has been mobilized to encode pedagogic sovereignty across interlinked communities. Here, learning is not organized by age, employment readiness, or industrial demand, but by schematic presence within locally authored curricular modules. Participants receive modular credentials for compositional knowledge—ranging from indigenous epistemologies to advanced automation logic—each credential coupled to a sovereign income recognition protocol. Economic participation is therefore reconstituted as a function of credentialled epistemic authorship, rather than job placement or wage labor.

In parallel, the Eastern Innovation Corridor in West Africa has initiated the STEMMA Credential Exchange, a compositional platform where disciplines—especially those inclusive of Automation and Medicine—are authored, indexed, and transacted through modular visibility standards. The Exchange does not remunerate labor per se, but distributes income and influence based on authored contributions to disciplinary economies. A participant who authors new schema in typographic engineering, or composes protocols for indigenous medical automation, is credentialled through Education 6.0 frameworks and rewarded not with salary but with epistemic dividends—recognition linked directly to sovereign curricular presence.

Global movements are increasingly echoing these principles. In parts of Southeast Asia and Latin America, credentialing cooperatives have emerged wherein artists, educators, and civic designers create schematic artifacts embedded with typographic signatures and receive modular income via locally governed credentialing protocols. These are not utopian models—they are infrastructural reorientations, where credentialled visibility replaces labor as the unit of value and narrative sovereignty replaces occupation as the site of identity.

Collectively, these case studies affirm the viability of post-labor economics when powered by sovereign curricular infrastructures. Each demonstrates that authored epistemic presence, validated through modular credentialing, is not only an alternative to wage dependency but a superior architecture of agency and recognition. Education 6.0 and STEMMA are not theoretical supplements—they are the operating systems through which post-labor economies become composable, governable, and equitably authored.

Discussion

The transition from labor-based economies to credentialled authorship represents not merely a shift in economic mechanics but a profound recalibration of human agency. As evidenced by the case studies, sovereign curricular infrastructures—particularly those governed by Education 6.0—are capable of rendering economic participation legible without recourse to employment. The epistemic participant replaces the wage worker; authored presence supersedes occupational role; modular credentialing becomes the new grammar of recognition.

This reconfiguration challenges the fundamental premises of classical economic theory. Productivity, long conceived as labor intensity per unit output, becomes untenable in an age of automated cognition. In economies where AI systems reason, synthesize, and operationalize without fatigue or error, human productivity must be redefined not as competitive efficiency but as epistemic originality. Automation does not merely perform—it displaces labor's ontological necessity, inviting a re-authoring of economic identity through sovereign presence.

Income, too, must be detached from the logic of wages. The studies from Southern and West Africa illustrate that income derived from modular credentials enables agency without dependency, and recognition without subordination. These architectures challenge traditional distribution models that center salaried hierarchy, proposing instead a scalar system where economic inclusion is a function of authored contribution. Epistemic Income, in this frame, becomes the moral and infrastructural solution to both unemployment and under-recognition. Individuals need not perform industrial tasks to belong economically—they need only author, be seen, and be credentialled.

Moreover, the implications for pedagogy are revolutionary. No longer must education prepare subjects for the labor market; it must now credential them for sovereign economic presence. Education 6.0 makes this possible through locally authored, typographically intelligible modules that are both compositional and transactional. STEMMA disciplines, recoded to include Automation as epistemically authored rather than externally imposed, further reframe the idea that science and technology are ends—they become fields for sovereign narrative composition.

What emerges from this discussion is the beginning of a new economic anthropology—one that respects agency without demanding labor, and values knowledge without requiring occupation. This is not a utopia deferred; it is a composable reality authored through credentialing sovereignty, narrative dignity, and schematic clarity. The tools now exist. The infrastructures have begun. What remains is the full adoption of pedagogic autonomy as economic infrastructure.

In this post-labor horizon, the question is no longer *how humans work*, but *how humans compose visibility*. Not *how much labor is performed*, but *how deeply identity is authored*. These are the ethics of the new economy—where currency is credentialled presence, and citizenship is epistemic authorship.

Conclusion

The disintegration of labor as the primary scaffold of economic value marks a decisive epistemic moment. Automation has not merely altered the means of production—it has recoded the relationship between value, agency, and participation. In this post-labor context, traditional metrics fail. Employment no longer guarantees income; effort no longer assures identity. What emerges instead is a sovereign schema of credentialled authorship, wherein visibility and valuation are grounded in modular pedagogy, compositional recognition, and locally governed epistemic presence.

Education 6.0 provides the architectural remedy to this ontological displacement. Its infrastructure redefines productivity as authored flow, replacing wage labor with credentialled contribution. Income is no longer transactional, but pedagogic—flowing not from performed tasks but from validated narrative presence. STEMMA disciplines, reconceived as compositional economies, offer the encoding grammar through which sovereign authorship becomes economically legible. Together, these systems do not preserve labor—they supersede it.

In rejecting the binary between employment and obsolescence, this manuscript affirms a third horizon: epistemic economies where narrative sovereignty and modular credentialing constitute the principal modes of economic participation. The case studies reviewed demonstrate that this horizon is not speculative—it is emergent. Credentialled income flows, schematic authorship platforms, and sovereign

curricular infrastructures are already operational in several regions. What remains is the full adoption of these models as canonical economic infrastructure.

The future of human agency, in economies governed by cognitive automation, depends on the infrastructures we author today. Labor will not return as the center of value—but authorship can ascend as its epistemic successor. The question is no longer how we labor, but how we compose visibility. The challenge is not how we earn through work, but how we are recognized through authored presence.

Post-labor economics must now be understood not as a detachment from human dignity, but as an opportunity to encode it afresh—schematically, narratively, and pedagogically. In this future, sovereign credentialing replaces the job. Epistemic authorship replaces the résumé. And visibility, once tethered to occupation, becomes an authored compositional right.

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