# DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN GEORGIA

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**ABSTRACT**. Consumption of distance or online courses is growing more and more, for which various large, independent digital platforms with a variety of learning topics are actively used. These websites are accessed by users from all over the world, thus competing with national and local analogues.

The aim of the research is to study Georgian distance and e-learning platforms and to analyze the current situation in Georgia in this direction. The paper explores the direction of digital transformation of human resource development in the business sector and depending on the scale or specificity of the research issue, does not relate to current events at any level of education and human resource development in the public sector.

To achieve the purpose of the research, a documentary research is used, which is based on a review of digital platforms or tools and existing Georgian or foreign publications on the subject.

The article discusses the importance of digital competence and the digital communication tools used in the learning process; Distinguish common or distinctive features of distance, e-learning and online learning; Georgian digital learning platforms are discussed and their status is analyzed, about which the author's assumptions and recommendations are expressed.

## Introduction

Global processes, the growing frequency or use of digital technologies and the internet, the limited time resources of business people, the need for social distancing as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in recent years, and many other factors have led to the digital transformation of human resource development.

Unlike simple communication through electronic means, digital learning is an educational process and in its organization great importance is attached to the integration of flexible tools and the existence of sound platforms. Many such resources are used globally and quite successfully.

The pandemic that has spread in recent years has accelerated the digitization of education in Georgia at all levels of education, at the same time creating a number of opportunities for the smooth implementation of the educational process. Numerous studies have been conducted in this regard and reports have been prepared by scientific and non-scientific circles, and the issue of human resource development of the organization in this direction has remained relatively vague.

The aim of the research is to study and analyze the state of Georgian digital platforms for human resource development.

To achieve the goal, folowing tasks are set as: review of the terminology; Georgian digital platforms state analysis; Overview of Georgian or foreign digital tools used in the human resource training process; Describe the unified situation and present future perspectives.

To achieve this goal, a documentary study is used, which includes a review of Georgian digital platforms, digital communication tools used in Georgia, scientific publications, reports of various local and international organizations and research institutes.

The results of the research include recommendations based on the analysis and hypotheses expressed on a number of issues.

The theoretical or practical results of the article will be interesting and valuable for further research perspectives in this area and for anyone interested in the subject.

## Literature review

Human resource development using online platforms is a common practice in many countries around the world, as evidenced by the websites of many global online courses. We do not find a similar attitude in Georgia, where within the framework of human resource development, the focus is mainly on online or classroom learning initiated by the organization, while learning on the basis of digital platforms is mainly within the framework of self-development. Consequently, the interest in such websites is not so strong, which is confirmed by the scarcity of scientific research and statistical information. Statistics are available within the framework of information produced by specific platforms about their own website: total number of registered users on the website, number of online courses conducted and etc.

It should also be noted that in recent years, compared to the business sector, the public sector has been more actively involved (conducting relevant research, publishing public publications, raising awareness, etc.) in promoting online training in human resources within the professional development of the same public servants.

## Methodological approach

The paper is based on an online desk research. Search techniques included the use of various search engines. The following criteria were considered in the search for digital platforms for human resource development:

1. The main aim of the website should be synchronous or asynchronous digital training.
2. The use of the website should be interesting for the employed people (regardless of the field).
3. The website should not be intended for secondary or higher education only.

Based on these criteria, several digital platforms for human resource development have been identified. The information on the relevant websites was processed using analysis and synthesis techniques.

## Conducting research and results

### Digital Learning and Digital Competence

Online, electronic, distance or similar content-based learning is often used as a synonym for digital form of human resource learning. There are many distinguishing marks between them, however, not sharp and strictly defined. This is primarily due to the fact that there are no precise and unified definitions of these terms, which is confirmed by the fact that we find different content in different scientific or non-scientific publications.

Distance learning takes place away from the real learning space, which meant the exchange of information without direct connection, however, nowadays the process may already take place in real time [1]. Often, online learning is referred to as online training[1] and is simply defined as computer-based training conducted over the Internet or intranet [2]. If we look in depth, online (e-learning) is considered as the use of

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[1] Mainly typical for English language publications (auth. note)

digital materials to support learning, at which time it is not mandatory to carry out the process remotely [1]. During the remote process, online learning may be done synchronously or asynchronously using different means [3], however, necessarily using information and communication technologies [4]. In recent years, the term online, e-learning has been replaced by terms such as „digitally enhanced" or „digitally enhanced learning" [5], which more adequately reflects the content of the term.

So, with an essential separation of terms, it is possible to isolate key factors. The main feature of distance learning is the distance of process participants in space, and the use of the Internet as a means of communication transforms it into a form of online learning [6].

In the above definitions, online and e-learning are referred to as synonyms, however, in some sources they are separated from each other. For example, according to COL's „Basic Terms and Definitions of Open and Distance Education", online learning is e-learning, where it is essential to use digital networks to access learning services and materials. The same source in the definition of e-learning emphasizes that digital devices may be used in the learning process without any connection (intranet, Internet or any other connection) [7].

The practice of open education in the field of education and development is of strategic importance [8], where access to open educational resources is a fundamental issue. open educational resources is any public or openly licensed educational material that can be reproduced, used, or shared by anyone. Such materials may include curricula, syllabus, lecture notes, projects, audio, video, and so on [9]. Today, the progress of open education has penetrated into online learning, which has led to the development of massive open online courses[2]. Their main source of nourishment is open source learning management systems such as Moodle and EdX [9].

The widespread use and introduction of digital learning in the development of human resources in organizations, among many other factors, requires the digital competence of staff. Digital competence is also called digital knowledge and includes the skills of online communication, digital information processing, security, creation or problem solving [9].

In order to achieve digital competence of the staff, in most cases, certain office or computer programs are required by the Georgian employer from the very beginning as necessary requirements in the job application. In the case of employees who are already working, they often organize short-term trainings in order to master various computer skills.

### Georgian Digital Platforms For Remote Development

Online and distance learning is quite common in the world today, which is due to the fact that platforms used in many countries, such as the website of free courses of leading universities coursera, repository of programs of famous American universities edx, a portal for a variety of courses udemy and etc.

In parallel with global trends in human resource development, digital and multidisciplinary remote development platforms have been established in Georgia in recent years. Their activation was also driven by th6e shift of the communications sector to digital format as a result of the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in late 2019. As a result, among the Georgian, digital, training platforms operating in recent years are:

- **Online Education Center** - It is a Georgian language education portal, which aims to provide quality education to a wide range of consumers. The platform integrates online courses of professional trainers and issues certificates after their completion [10].
- **studyonline.ge** - The mentioned educational portal belongs to „Internet Services" Ltd., whose main activity is the implementation of Internet projects. One such project is the mentioned platform of video and live courses on various topics. It acts as a liaison between the participants in the learning

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[2] MOOC: massive open online courses

process, on one side of which are teachers, tutors, trainers, educational institutions and any person wishing to create their own online course, and on the other side are those wishing to study [11].

- **Kentsero** - It is a Georgian e-learning platform that aims to increase access to education and resources and adapt them to reality. Only people aged 16 and older can access to educational services and they also must be registered on the website. It should be noted that the author of the module is responsible for the information or opinions expressed during the training course. The main advantage of the platform is free training courses and at the same time, certificates are issued based on exam results [12].

- **Namqy.ge** - This platform acts as a liaison between the learning process subjects and it's function is the technical support of the process. The purpose of its creation was to enable trainers to share knowledge in Georgia or in different countries and to remove barriers related to the lack of time or the cost of training for the trainees. The platform does not set criteria or preconditions between stakeholders and information providers. Therefore, its essence is simple - training centers and trainers offer it, and the trainees choose the training they want [13].

- **ESx.ge** - It is based on world-famous education and science platform edX, which was launched in Georgia in 2020. The aim of the project is to create a digital educational space where high quality available resources will be combined. Currently, various scientific or multimedia materials are available on the site with open access. In the Georgian reality, the platform is distinguished by the fact that it offers students the implementation of the Mini MBA without the help of human resources, with digital technologies and artificial intelligence. The courses are led by the first, Georgian-language digital lecturer - an interactive avatar created on artificial intelligence systems [14].

- **webinars.ge -** It is the first online webinar platform based in Georgia, offering a new generation of webinars and video conferencing services. A website designed to innovate, share knowledge and experience or disseminate change, seeks to make learning accessible to everyone in the digital world [15].

- **Lingwing.com** - Is a foreign language learning platform that combines both free and paid, but affordable packages. In addition to the website, it also offers customers an app for mobile phones. The platform currently unites more than 240 000 users [16].

- **Open Courses -** This portal is a kind of repository of open training courses and its goal is to develop the knowledge community, increase access to quality and modern education. The project is based on cooperation or involvement of educational and scientific institutes, researchers and academic staff, business and public sector [17].

- **skills.ge** - Is a Georgian online learning platform from 2017, which combines various video courses created by professionals [18].

- **Digital bus** - It is a platform designed to study the professions of the future, combining online courses created by professionals tailored to any audience. Its advantage is to recommend students for employment in partner organizations after graduation [19].

- **education.mindworks.ge** - It is a management and ICT consulting company MindWorks asynchronous online learning platform focused on both educational and business organizations. The site offers free workshops and online courses for any user [20].

- **e-learning.ge** - The attractiveness of the portal is due to the fact that all courses are free and a certificate is issued upon completion [21].

The abundance of digital learning platforms created in Georgia is to some extent related to the emergence of a new pandemic reality, however, some of them have not been able to continue to function in the long run and currently only a few of them are active. Their goal is basically the same - to spread knowledge by sharing online courses. Some of them also offer many free courses to the customers, however, the difference in quality compared to the paid courses is still clear. In the case of asynchronous online

courses, a variety of topics are observed, while synchronous courses are mainly created on such demanding topics as accounting, finance, office programs and etc.

It should be noted that the successful operation of such platforms is mainly related to the quality and price of online courses. Quality courses are created by professionals in the field, which will not have a low cost (especially in the case of synchronous courses) and it is especially difficult to deliver for free.

In Georgia, the use of such digital platforms for human resource development is questionable, while most of them are at an early stage of development. It is much easier to invite professional trainers - the authors of the courses and organize training for your own staff, in which case the staff training costs will be deducted from the course price which includes website fee.

In addition to independent digital learning platforms, many educational and non-educational institutions have their own online course portals, website modules and periodically organized courses that may be considered as the participants in the same supply market. Not to mention e-learning exchange services, such competition deprives digital learning platforms of a solid segment of consumers and paves the way for self-sustaining users, which is not at all sufficient for their functioning.

## Distance learning tools in Georgia

It is clear that the low activity of independent digital learning platforms is due to the low demand for online learning through them and which may be due to finances. As a rule, sites act as intermediaries and liaisons between course providers and users, for which they receive a certain fee. Such costs are reduced and in some cases zero for the use of multiple means of communication to organize digital learning.

Today, in Georgia, as well as in the world, various means of communication, platforms, applications are used for educational processes, business meetings or other virtual connections, which makes it possible to carry out the educational process in real time. Over time, they become more and more sophisticated and adaptable to consumers.

The 15th Annual Open Survey, in which 33 countries participated, identified the most common learning tools for 2021 [22]. These results allow us to generalize the practices of different countries and draw the appropriate conclusions. The first platoon includes such digital platforms for organizing meetings, which are also common in the Georgian reality, namely:

- **YouTube** - A video platform that is not only used for educational purposes, but also available to anyone, to distribute any content. It has not lost its popularity over the years and has not given up first place in this annual survey [22].
- **Zoom** - Second place goes to Zoom, a leading global platform for distance learning and meeting organization. It is noteworthy that years ago he held much lower positions and only in the last few years has his gradual promotion become noticeable [22]. It allows you to pre-plan event time and share links for target groups. In addition to verbal communication, the created virtual space is able to share the screen, display or exchange resources (including various multimedia materials) and use the board alternative. Its exceptional flexibility makes it compatible and transferable to almost any digital device (including smartphones) [23].
- **Microsoft Teams** - The frequency of use of this collaboration platform, like Zoom, has increased in recent years and by 2021 it has already taken place in the top five [22]. Teams provide process interactivity and integrate a variety of learning process functions that other alternative systems do not have: student assessment and knowledge observation, testing organization, and more [24].
- Well-known platforms for meeting and teaching include Google's **Google Meet**, which has a Zoom-like functionality, and **Google Classroom**. They occupy the 16th and 17th positions in the research [22].
- **Webex** - It is a reliable and secure platform for organizing educational or non-educational meetings. Despite its notoriety, it ranks 70th in the study [22].

Because digital learning takes place in virtual space, the actions and materials used in the process also need to be digitized. Among the hundreds of products, the popularity of the tools described above is primarily due to the fundamental issues necessary for digital learning, such as: Ability to access from different devices; Easy to master design and features; Livestream function; Ability to record the learning process and view it later; Interactivity; Ability to share screen; Virtual board function; Ability to make notes; Ability to record and evaluate listeners and etc.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, it can be said that today part of the Georgian digital learning platforms is not functioning, and most of the active part is mainly asynchronous teaching - sharing educational videos and other materials. Only a small number of websites organize synchronous online courses. The problem of the activity of Georgian digital learning platforms is defined by the lack of online courses, which in turn indicates low demand. Although the pandemic has given impetus to the digitization of teaching, in a developing country like Georgia, the event has not been enough to develop independent online learning platforms.

The use of independent Georgian digital learning platforms is reduced by large internationally recognized digital course websites. Part of the users interested in online courses, who speak a foreign language, especially English, stop their choice on such foreign platforms, where the quality of courses is much higher than Georgian analogues.

As the development of independent Georgian digital learning platforms in Georgia is at an early stage, it is advisable to initially offer online courses to users through cross-sectoral and inter-organizational collaboration, which may be accompanied by a synergistic effect determined by a concerted effort.

The choice of distance learning tool and platform is individual and the organization decides which one to give preference to, however, new technologies, platforms, tools, systems or other innovations lose their effectiveness if their potential is not fully exploited. Thus, in addition to the usefulness of the innovation, the quality of its use must also be taken into account.

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# ადამიანური რესურსების განვითარების ციფრული პლატფორმები საქართველოში

**აბსტრაქტი**. დისტანციური თუ ონლაინ კურსების მოხმარება სულ უფრო და უფრო იზრდება, რისთვისაც აქტიურად გამოიყენება სხვადასხვა მსხვილი, დამოუკიდებელი ციფრული პლატფორმები მრავალფეროვანი სასწავლო თემატიკით. აღნიშნულ ვებ-გვერდებს მომხმარებლები მთელი მსოფლიოდან მიმართავენ, რითაც ხდება კონკურენციის გაწევა ეროვნულ და ადგილობრივ ანალოგებთან.

კვლევის მიზანია დისტანციური და ელექტრონული სწავლების ქართული პლატფორმების შესწავლა და ამ მიმართულებით საქართველოში არსებული მდგომარეობის ანალიზი. ნაშრომი იკვლევს ბიზნეს სექტორში დასაქმებულთა განვითარების ციფრული ტრანსფორმაციის მიმართულებას და საკვლევი საკითხის მასშტაბურობისა თუ სპეციფიკურობიდან გამომდინარე არ ეხება განათლების რომელიმე საფეხურზე მიმდინარე მოვლენებსა და საჯარო სექტორში დასაქმებულთა განვითარებას.

კვლევის მიზნის მისაღწევად გამოყენებულია სამაგიდე კვლევა, რომელიც ეფუძნება ციფრული პლატფორმებისა თუ ინსტრუმენტების და ამ საკითხზე არსებული ქართული თუ უცხოური პუბლიკაციების მიმოხილვას.

სტატიაში განხილულია ციფრული კომპეტენტურობის მნიშვნელობა და სწავლების პროცესში გამოყენებადი ციფრული საკომუნიკაციო საშუალებები; გამიჯნულია დისტანციური, ელექტრონული და ონლაინ სწავლების საერთო თუ განმასხვავებელი ნიშნები; განხილულია ქართული ციფრული სწავლების პლატფორმები და გაანალიზებულია მათი მდგომარეობა, რის შესახებაც გამოთქმულია ავტორისეული ვარაუდები და რეკომენდაციები.

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