STUDENT PREFERENCES IN THE USAGE OF ONLINE PLATFORMS FOR PERSONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY IN TIRUPUR DISTRICT

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Abstract
The evolution of digital technologies has significantly transformed the landscape of education, with online platforms becoming central to modern learning experiences. This study explores the preferences of students in the United States regarding the usage of online platforms for acquiring knowledge, analyzing factors such as platform features, accessibility, interactivity, and user experience. As online education continues to grow, understanding student preferences is crucial for developing platforms that not only enhance learning outcomes but also align with the needs and expectations of learners. This article investigates a range of online platforms, from Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Canvas and Blackboard to supplementary tools such as Coursera, Khan Academy, and YouTube. Factors like interactivity, ease of navigation, mobile access, synchronous and asynchronous learning modes, and collaborative features are explored to understand their influence on student engagement and satisfaction. Furthermore, the article delves into the challenges faced by students in online learning environments, including technical issues, lack of face-to-face interaction, and the varying degrees of digital literacy. Through a detailed review of existing studies, surveys, and trends, this article provides insights into the growing shift towards online education and the future of digital learning platforms. The findings suggest that while students appreciate flexibility and convenience, the integration of personalized, interactive, and user-friendly features remains critical to the effectiveness of online education.

Keywords: Online education, Students skill, Trend, Digital learning.

Introduction
In recent years, the education system has undergone a profound transformation, with online learning platforms playing a pivotal role in this change. Whether for primary, secondary, or higher education, students are increasingly turning to digital platforms to enhance their learning experiences. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this trend, forcing educational institutions to rapidly adopt online tools and platforms to ensure continuity in learning. As we move forward, understanding the preferences of students in using these platforms is crucial for educators, administrators, and developers to create more effective and engaging learning environments.

This article explores the factors influencing student preferences in the usage of online platforms for knowledge acquisition. With an emphasis on platforms such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and supplementary educational tools, the article examines how students interact with these platforms, the features they value the most, and the challenges they encounter. Moreover, it evaluates the evolving nature of these platforms in response to student feedback, technological advancements, and the growing demand for personalized learning experiences.

Through a review of recent studies and surveys, this article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how students in the United States engage with online learning tools. It will discuss the key features of successful platforms, the role of interactivity and engagement, and how these elements

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contribute to better learning outcomes. Ultimately, this article seeks to highlight the factors that influence the effectiveness and student satisfaction of online educational platforms.

Online Education Platform
The Shift towards Online Education: A Growing Trend
The shift from traditional classroom-based learning to online education has been gradual, but the pace accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced millions of students worldwide into remote learning. As a result, online learning platforms have become indispensable tools for students, offering flexibility and accessibility previously unavailable in conventional educational settings. While many of these platforms existed before the pandemic, their usage surged dramatically as schools and universities transitioned to virtual environments.

Before 2020, platforms like Canvas, Blackboard, and Google Classroom were already being utilized in some capacity in classrooms. However, the pandemic necessitated the rapid scaling up of these platforms. For higher education institutions, MOOCs like Coursera, edX, and Udemy also gained significant popularity as alternative educational avenues, especially for adult learners and working professionals looking to upskill or reskill.

As the adoption of online education grows, it is essential to understand how students interact with these platforms and what features they find most beneficial.

Factors Affecting Student Preferences: Several factors influence students' choices and preferences regarding online learning platforms. Below are the most critical ones:

Ease of Navigation and User Experience
One of the primary considerations for students when using an online platform is its usability. Platforms that are intuitive, well-organized, and easy to navigate tend to be favored. Students often report frustration with platforms that are difficult to use, which can detract from the learning experience and lead to disengagement. The importance of user-friendly interfaces cannot be overstated, as students seek platforms that allow them to easily access resources, assignments, and grades without unnecessary complications.

Interactivity and Engagement
Online learning platforms that incorporate interactive elements such as quizzes, polls, videos, discussion boards, and simulations are generally more successful in keeping students engaged. Research shows that active learning methodologies, where students are required to interact with the content, are more effective than passive learning. Platforms that allow for real-time feedback or facilitate interaction between students and instructors (via live chat, video calls, or virtual office hours) tend to produce better learning outcomes.

Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Learning
The preference between synchronous (live, real-time) and asynchronous (self-paced) learning is another important factor. Many students prefer asynchronous learning, as it offers flexibility and allows them to manage their own schedule. However, synchronous learning still holds value for students who prefer the structure of live interactions with peers and instructors. Platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, which enable live classes, discussions, and collaboration, are widely appreciated for their ability to simulate classroom experiences.

Mobile Access

With the rise of smartphones and tablets, students increasingly rely on mobile access to their learning materials. Platforms that are mobile-friendly are more likely to attract students who need the flexibility to study on the go. The ability to access lessons, complete assignments, or watch recorded lectures from a mobile device is a feature that many students consider essential for modern learning.

Personalization

The demand for personalized learning experiences is growing. Platforms that tailor content based on the student's progress, learning style, and preferences are likely to increase engagement and improve retention. Platforms like Duolingo and Khan Academy use algorithms to recommend lessons based on the user's performance, a feature that many students find useful for personalized learning.

Challenges in Online Learning

While online learning offers numerous benefits, it also presents several challenges. One of the most significant challenges students face is technical difficulties—from slow internet connections to platform glitches. Inconsistent access to reliable technology can hinder the learning process, especially in low-income communities.

Additionally, the lack of social interaction in online environments can lead to feelings of isolation and disengagement. The absence of face-to-face interactions can also hinder students' ability to form meaningful relationships with peers and instructors, which can impact their overall academic experience and well-being.

Student Preferences for Different Types of Platforms

Learning Management Systems (LMS)

LMS platforms like Canvas, Blackboard, and Moodle are designed to support course administration and content delivery. These platforms are commonly used in both K-12 and higher education. They allow instructors to post assignments, grades, and lectures, while also facilitating communication between students and instructors. However, students often feel that LMS platforms are too formal or lack the interactivity that makes learning engaging.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

MOOCs like Coursera and edX have gained significant popularity for their flexibility and variety of courses. These platforms allow students to learn at their own pace and provide a broad range of topics, from computer science to philosophy. Many students appreciate the ability to learn from top-tier universities and earn certificates that are recognized by employers.

Supplementary Tools

Tools like YouTube, Khan Academy, and Duolingo provide supplementary educational resources outside of the traditional classroom setting. YouTube, in particular, is a popular platform for learning through videos. Its accessibility and vast content library make it a go-to resource for students seeking tutorials, lectures, and problem-solving demonstrations.

Conclusion

The shift towards online learning has been accelerated by technological advancements and external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic. Students now have access to a diverse array of platforms that support their educational needs, from formal Learning Management Systems to more informal, self-

paced platforms like MOOCs. Understanding the preferences of students regarding these platforms is critical for developing tools that maximize engagement, enhance learning outcomes, and address the challenges of digital education.

Students increasingly prefer platforms that are intuitive, interactive, and flexible, with mobile access and personalized learning experiences being high on the list of desired features. However, challenges like technical issues, the lack of in-person interaction, and varying levels of digital literacy continue to pose barriers to effective learning. As the landscape of online education continues to evolve, platforms must adapt to meet the needs of students by focusing on ease of use, engagement, and personalization.

In conclusion, the future of online education will likely see even more advancements in technology, further enhancing the learning experience. Understanding and responding to student preferences will be key to the success of these platforms in the years to come.