

**Experiences of English Language Faculty Members of a Public University in
Kazakhstan regarding Digital Learning Platforms Integration in
Higher Education**

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Ethical Approval



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Dear Aibek Akhmetkaliyev,

This letter now confirms that your research project titled “Faculty Perceptions towards Integration of Digital Learning Platforms in Higher Education in Kazakhstan” has been approved by the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee of Nazarbayev University.

You may proceed with contacting your preferred research site and commencing your participant recruitment strategy.

Yours sincerely,

Aisi Li, DPhil

On behalf of:
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Abstract

Experiences of English Language Faculty Members of a Public University in Kazakhstan regarding Digital Learning Platforms Integration in Higher Education

This study investigates faculty perceptions regarding digital learning platforms integration in higher education in Kazakhstan by drawing on data collected through qualitative research methods. Though initiatives such as “Digital Kazakhstan” seek to modernize the teaching and learning, there exists a huge gap between the policy and the real class practice. This research adopts a qualitative case study design of experiences of English language faculty members of a public university in the north of Kazakhstan. From their attitudes, the challenges they faced in adopting DLPs and the strategies they employed, their attitudes were explored through semi-structured interviews. The interview data were analyzed thematically, and key benefits (benefited from enhanced teaching efficiency, improved student engagement and flexibility of learning modalities) and the critical barriers (poor infrastructure unreliability training, and resistance to change) were identified. Based on Technology Acceptance Model and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, this study concludes that ease of use, usefulness, and robust institutional support are factors of faculty adoption decision. This confirms that to achieve DLP integration, ongoing professional development, tackling digital inequalities and bridging the gap between high level aspirations and actual conditions should be considered. This thesis contributes to the local discourse of the digitalization of higher education and global conversations related to the use of technology for inclusive and student-centered learning by providing context specific insights and recommendations.

Keywords: digital learning platforms, higher education, Kazakhstan, faculty perceptions, Technology Acceptance Model

Аңдатпа

Бұл зерттеу сапалы зерттеу әдістері арқылы жиналған екі дерекке сурет салу арқылы Қазақстандағы жоғары білім берудегі цифрлық оқыту алаңдарының интеграциясына қатысты факультет қабылдауға қатысты факультет қабылдауларын зерттейді. «Цифрлық Қазақстан» сияқты бастамалар оқыту мен білім беруді модернизациялауға тырысады,

Саясат пен нақты сынып тәжірибесі арасындағы үлкен алшақтық бар. Бұл зерттеу Қазақстанның солтүстігіндегі мемлекеттік университеттің ағылшын тіліндегі оқытушыларының тәжірибелік іс-шараларының сапалы дизайнын қабылдайды. Өз көзқарастарынан, олар DLP-ді және олар жұмыс істейтін стратегияларды қабылдауға тап болған қиындықтардан,

Олардың көзқарастары жартылай құрылымдық сұхбат арқылы зерттелді. Сұхбат деректері тақырыптық талданды және негізгі артықшылықтар болды және негізгі артықшылықтар болды (оқытудың тиімділігі, оқушылардың қарым-қатынасы және оқу модальдарының икемділігі жақсарды) және сыни кедергілер (нақты инфрақұрылымдық оқытушылық жаттығулар) өзгеруге төзімділік) анықталды. Технологиялық қабылдау моделі мен технологияларды қабылдау және пайдаланудың бірыңғай теориясы негізінде бұл зерттеу қолданыстағы жеңілдік, пайдалылықтың және сенімді қолдау факультет асырап алу туралы шешім қабылдауға негізделген. Бұл DLP интеграциясына қол жеткізу, біліктілігін арттыру,

Сандық теңсіздіктерді шешу және жоғары деңгейдегі ұмтылыстар мен нақты жағдайлар арасындағы алшақтықты жою керек.

Бұл тезис жоғары білім беруді цифрландырудың жергілікті баяндамасына және контекстік оқыту технологияларын қолдануға байланысты инклюзивті және студенттік

оқыту технологиясын ескере отырып, контекстік нақты түсініктер мен ұсыныстар беру арқылы.

Кілт сөздер: сандық оқыту платформалары, жоғары білім, Қазақстан, оқытушылар құрамы,

Технологияларды қабылдау моделі

Аннотация

Опыт преподавателей английского языка государственного университета в Казахстане в отношении интеграции платформ цифровых обучения в Высшем образовании

В этом исследовании исследуется восприятие преподавателей в отношении интеграции платформ цифровых обучения в высшем образовании в Казахстане, опираясь на обе данные, собранные с помощью качественных методов исследования. Хотя такие инициативы, как «Цифровой Казахстан», стремятся модернизировать преподавание и обучение,

Существует огромный разрыв между политикой и реальной классовой практикой. В этом исследовании принимается качественный пример разработки опыта преподавателей английского языка государственного университета на севере Казахстана. Из их взглядов, проблем, с которыми они столкнулись при принятии DLP и стратегии, которые они использовали,

Их отношение было изучено с помощью полу-структурированных интервью. Данные интервью были проанализированы, и ключевые преимущества (выиграли от повышенной эффективности обучения, улучшенное вовлечение учащихся и гибкость методов обучения) и критические барьеры (плохая инфраструктура, невыразимая, обучение ненадежности, и сопротивление изменениям) были идентифицированы. Основываясь на модели принятия технологий и единой теории принятия и использования технологий, в этом исследовании делается вывод, что простота использования, полезность и надежная институциональная поддержка являются факторами принятия преподавателей. Это подтверждает, что для достижения интеграции DLP, постоянного профессионального развития,

Следует рассмотреть вопрос о цифровом неравенстве и преодолении разрыва между устремлениями высокого уровня и фактическими условиями.

Этот тезис способствует местному дискурсу о цифровизации высшего образования и глобальных разговоров, связанных с использованием технологий для инклюзивного и ориентированного на участие в обучении, предоставляя контекстные знания и рекомендации.

Ключевые слова: платформы цифрового обучения, высшее образование, Казахстан, восприятие преподавателей, Технологическая модель.

Table of Contents

Contents

Author Agreement.....	ii
Declaration.....	iii
Ethical Approval	iv
CITI Training Certificate.....	v
Acknowledgments.....	vii
Abstract	viii
Аңдатпа.....	ix
Аннотация	xi
Table of Contents	xiii
List of Tables	xvi
Table 1 <i>Codes and themes for analysis</i>	
31	xvi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Background of Study.....	1
<i>The Integration of DLP in HE.....</i>	<i>1</i>
Kazakhstan’s Plans to Integrate DLP in Higher Education.....	2
IT training	3
The Success of DLP is Contingent.....	5
Statement of the Problem	7
Purpose of Study	7
Research Questions	8
Significance of the study	8
Outline of the Thesis	9
Summary.....	10
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	12
Introduction.....	12
Digital Learning Platforms (DLP) in Higher Education	12
<i>Global Trends in DLP</i>	<i>12</i>
Potential Benefits of DLP.....	14
Challenges and Pedagogical Barriers.....	14
Faculty Perceptions of DLP.....	16
Theoretical Framework	17

<i>Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)</i>	17
Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)	18
How Theory Guides the Present Study	18
Summary.....	19
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	21
Introduction.....	21
Research design.....	22
Research site and rationale	23
Sampling and participants	25
Data collection tools.....	26
Data collection procedures	28
Data analysis	30
Lack of training.....	34
<i>Details of codes and their use:</i>	34
Ethical considerations.....	36
Chapter 4: Findings	38
Introduction.....	38
Faculty perceptions of digital learning platforms	39
General Perceptions and Comfort Levels	39
Views on Digital Platforms' Role in Active Learning.....	40
Faculty experiences with digital learning platforms	41
Adopting platforms in teaching practices	41
Challenges during the adoption process.....	41
Adaptations during the pandemic or other circumstances	42
Enhancing teaching efficiency	44
Facilitating student engagement and interaction.....	44
Enabling flexible and remote learning	45
Challenges of integration.....	46
Technical issues	46
Lack of training or familiarity	47
Resistance to change among faculty	47
Implications for Kazakhstani public universities.....	48
Summary.....	50
Chapter 5: Discussion	52
Introduction.....	52

Connection with Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	52
Faculty Perceptions of Digital Learning Platforms	53
Faculty Experience with DLP Integration	55
Challenges and Barriers to Effective Use of DLP	56
Institutional and Practical Implications	58
The Role of Digital Divorce in Higher Education	60
Summary	62
Chapter 6: Conclusion	64
Limitations	65
Recommendations for Future Research	66
Implications for policy and practice	66
References	68
Appendix A: AI Declaration Form	82
Appendix B: Consent Letters	83
Appendix C: Recruitment Emails	85
Appendix D: Data Collection Instruments	91
Appendix E: Data Analysis – Transcript and Coding Samples	94

List of Tables

Table 1	<i>Codes and themes for analysis</i>	31
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of Study

The Integration of DLP in HE

Due to the potential of digital learning platforms (DLP) to enhance the teaching and learning processes, the integration of DLP into higher education (HE) has become a focal point globally in the past couple of years (OECD, 2021; Bond et al., 2021). Across the world, there are reportedly several countries investing huge sums in digital infrastructure and training programs to integrate technology into their educational settings, which can transform their education systems (Jensen et al., 2022). Such investment is driven by the desire to prepare students for a digital economy, increase the accessibility of educational resources, and create an atmosphere with more interaction and interactivity (Velychko et al., 2021).

On the global stage, there are debates over how to implement DLP into higher education. Supporters suggest that DLP promotes learning effects, stimulates student participation, and prepares students for the digital economy (Jarjabka et al., 2024). Innovative technologies enrich the possibilities to present information, interact, and make extensive resources available. In the process, they also give students digital acumen needed in this technology-driven world (Redecker, 2017; Ng, 2012). But with DLP, there are some potential challenges. First among these is the digital divide, or gaps between those who have ready access to computers (van Dijk, 2020), and others that do not. This divide can further deepen pre-existing educational inequalities, especially for students belonging to underprivileged backgrounds due to a lack of access (Afzal et al., 2023). In addition, technical support for students and educators alike is usually poor, which can impede DLP from being properly implemented in class (Howard et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2020). A second major impediment is educators' resistance to change, as many may be too

unfamiliar with modern technologies or unsure of how effective they are (Şerban et al., 2020). This resistance is often rooted in a combination of factors, including limited digital literacy, lack of confidence in using technology in pedagogically meaningful ways, and fear of diminishing their traditional roles as subject-matter experts (Ertmer, 1999). For some educators, particularly those who have spent decades teaching in conventional classroom environments, transitioning to digital platforms can feel daunting or even threatening to their professional identity (Tondeur et al., 2017). Additionally, insufficient institutional support and a lack of continuous professional development exacerbate this issue, making educators feel unprepared and isolated in the face of rapid digital transformation (Howard et al., 2021). Without targeted training and a supportive culture that normalizes experimentation and gradual integration of digital tools, even the most promising technologies risk being underused or outright rejected. Therefore, addressing this human dimension of digital adoption is just as critical as providing technical infrastructure—it requires building educators' digital confidence, creating peer-learning communities, and recognizing the emotional labor involved in educational change.

Kazakhstan's Plans to Integrate DLP in Higher Education

Kazakhstan, as any other future contemporary state that aims to redevelop its education system based on international models, has undertaken a number of policies. One of the strongest initiatives in this regard is the "Digital Kazakhstan" initiative, with the government implementing a complex state program to launch digital transformation of education, medicine, e-services, and transport since 2019 (Mukanov, 2023). It also seeks to develop a competitive digital economy, efficient public administration, and a digitally literate society.

The ambitious Digital Kazakhstan program's vision sketches a future for digital technology transforming higher education on two fronts. Firstly, the digital infrastructure

upgrade and secondly, the enhancement of faculty training and promotion of digitized study materials on e-learning platforms. The aim is to improve more interactive, accessible, and efficient teaching and learning. Nevertheless, even with such country-level goals, the actual application of DLPs on the faculty level remains uneven. The ongoing gap between policy purposes and classroom realities suppresses the effective application of said technologies.

The program focuses on digital infrastructure modernization and seeks to give institutions the platforms, connectivity, and tools to enable digital learning, teaching, and administration. This strategy is a wider international trend where digital technologies are being more and more embedded in the fabric of higher education, both as pedagogical tools and as surveillance and performance measurement tools that are sometimes condemned as technological surveillance (Timotheou et al., 2022). However, its success depends heavily on faculty engagement. Many lecturers worldwide are faced with issues such as inadequacy in technical support, inadequate training, and mismatch between existing facilities and pedagogical demands (refs). As long as the practical constraints cannot be addressed by these, then the promised yields of Digital Kazakhstan might be too utopian and not genuinely change-oriented.

IT training

Training is also a key component of the Digital Kazakhstan initiative, aimed at equipping educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively integrate digital tools into their teaching practices. This includes structured interventions such as workshops, online educational courses, and digital literacy certification programs designed to build competencies in technology-enhanced pedagogy (OECD, 2021; Ministry of Digital Development, 2018). However, for many educators who have long relied on traditional methods and face-to-face routines, the introduction of new digital tools may feel

more like an externally imposed requirement than a meaningful enhancement of their professional practice—especially when training is perceived as insufficient, overly technical, or misaligned with their daily teaching realities (Kirkwood & Price, 2014; Tondeur et al., 2017). When professional development is generic rather than contextually grounded, educators may engage with digital platforms only superficially, limiting their transformative potential (Howard et al., 2021). Therefore, while training is essential, its effectiveness depends heavily on being ongoing, relevant, and integrated into educators' real classroom needs.

Among the priority directions of the Digital Kazakhstan program is the development and implementation of digital textbooks and resources, including e-textbooks, interactive lessons, and online databases to enhance traditional learning environments (Ministry of Digital Development, 2018; UNESCO, 2020). In keeping with global trends within education, universities in Kazakhstan have introduced a variety of e-learning platforms and tools such as Moodle, Blackboard, and Google Classroom to offer more interactive, flexible, and student-centered modes of learning (Bond et al., 2021; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020). These platforms have been especially relevant in the post-pandemic period, where the need for hybrid and distance models of learning has been acutely felt (Dhawan, 2020). However, the mere existence of these platforms does not guarantee that they are being used effectively or pedagogically soundly. The literature suggests that many teachers fail to integrate digital tools meaningfully into their instruction due to a lack of training, institutional support, and differing levels of digital literacy (Al-Fraihat et al., 2020; Tondeur et al., 2017). Consequently, while platforms like Moodle and Google Classroom are technically implemented across many institutions, their pedagogical impact remains patchy and under researched in localized contexts like Kazakhstan. This gap highlights the importance of not only investing in digital infrastructure but also in

building digital capacity and pedagogical alignment so that such tools make a difference to teaching and learning.

However, the use of digital learning platforms also highlights a persistent and critical issue within higher education: the digital divide. This divide refers not only to disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity but also to differences in the ability to effectively use digital tools (Van Dijk, 2020). In many institutions, neither faculty nor students enjoy equal access to stable internet connections, personal devices, or digital learning environments—leading to uneven implementation and a patchwork of success in deploying technological initiatives (Czerniewicz et al., 2020; Khalid & Pedersen, 2022). Such inequality undermines the central promise of digital platforms to provide flexible, inclusive, and equitable learning opportunities.

Importantly, the digital divide extends beyond physical access. It encompasses variations in digital literacy and self-efficacy, which significantly affect the ability to navigate and utilize educational technologies (Ng, 2012; Hargittai, 2010). Faculty and students with lower levels of digital competence may struggle to engage with learning management systems or synchronous platforms, resulting in reduced participation and poorer learning outcomes (Beaunoyer et al., 2020). Furthermore, research from developing and transition economies shows that socio-economic and geographic disparities exacerbate these challenges, disproportionately affecting rural and marginalized communities (Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). As a result, rather than bridging gaps in educational access, digital platforms can unintentionally reinforce existing inequalities if systemic barriers are not addressed.

The Success of DLP is Contingent

Higher education Digital Learning Platforms (DLP) in Kazakhstan are entirely dependent on the surmounting of numerous systemic and infrastructural challenges. While

concerted effort has been applied to developing digital capacity—via the government's Digital Kazakhstan initiative, for example—the long-term transformation requires more than initial outlays in infrastructure and spasmodic training workshops (Government of Kazakhstan, 2017). Policymakers must place the highest priority on creating enduring, long-term technical assistance and professional development mechanisms. These systems must strive to integrate digital fluency and literacy into teachers' essential skills (Redecker, 2017; Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Lacking good pedagogical expertise in technology integration, teachers will be unable to utilize digital tools in the most effective ways, resulting in less-than-optimal learning experiences for students.

In addition, the digital divide remains a huge stumbling block, not just in terms of technology access but also digital skills levels on socio-economic and geographic lines. Rural or resource-poor institution students are likely to face compounded disadvantages due to inadequate infrastructures and poor digital literacy pedagogy (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014; Czerniewicz et al., 2020). These disparities were brought starkly into focus in the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated distance education and underscored egregious disparities in digital preparedness (UNESCO, 2020). Kazakhstan must implement targeted, equity-driven policies for students and teachers alike, such as subsidized internet plans, device loan programs, and inclusive training models.

Further, there is a need to foster a culture of innovation and digital openness within universities. This means facilitating experimentation with emerging learning technologies, creating communication between digitally educated faculty, and encouraging administrative leaders to champion long-term digital policy (Laurillard, 2012). Those institutions that embed digital transformation in their strategic planning are noted to be more agile and better at utilizing technology to improve learning (Salmon, 2019). Therefore, it is not a matter of choice, but rather a necessity to overcome these

sophisticated challenges. They are a keystone to reach the revolutionary educational goals of Digital Kazakhstan and to integrate the higher education system of Kazakhstan into the general global digital economy.

Statement of the Problem

Despite Kazakhstan's strategic emphasis on integrating information and communication technologies into higher education, a significant disconnect remains between national digitalization policies and their actual implementation at the institutional and classroom levels. One of the core problems is that faculty members—who are central to the adoption and success of Digital Learning Platforms (DLPs)—often face inconsistent access to resources, inadequate training, and limited technical support. These challenges hinder their ability to effectively integrate DLPs into their teaching practices, leading to uneven adoption, reduced instructional quality, and disparities in student learning experiences. Furthermore, the lack of understanding about instructors' lived experiences and perceptions regarding digital teaching tools contributes to a gap in policy responsiveness and slows down meaningful digital transformation. This study addresses the urgent need to examine these experiences to uncover systemic barriers and inform more grounded, equitable approaches to DLP implementation in Kazakhstan's higher education institutions.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research is to explore the experience of the faculty members in a public university in north Kazakhstan regarding integration of digital learning platforms into their teaching activities, and to identify the challenges and benefits in the process.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the perceptions of the faculty members in the department of English in a north Kazakhstani public university regarding the integration digital learning platforms into their teaching activities?

RQ2: What are the experiences of the faculty members in the department of English in a north Kazakhstani public university regarding the integration of digital learning platforms into their teaching activities?

RQ3: What are the benefits and challenges of digital learning platforms in Kazakhstani higher educational institutions?

RQ4: What are the implications for Kazakhstani public universities in incorporating digital learning platforms into the teaching activities?

Significance of the study

This study is particularly relevant to the Kazakhstani context because it examines the current state of digital learning platform (DLP) integration in higher education and offers lessons that can be employed to inform future policy reforms in digitalization in education. To policymakers, the study will provide empirical evidence on infrastructural shortcomings, digital gaps, and teacher readiness, allowing for the creation of evidence-based national plans and targeted investment in digital education initiatives. Educational administrators will be in a position to make more informed decisions regarding institutional-level matters such as minimal technical support, disparate faculty preparation, and issues of student accessibility—information to inform more nuanced support systems and resource planning. For scholars, the study will put aside both the difficulties, and the best practices encountered in DLP adoption, thereby enabling them to align their teaching, acquire digital competences, and engage more effectively with technology-enhanced

education. Last but not least, the study will bridge the policy-practice gap to foster a broader and more effective digital transformation in Kazakhstani higher education.

Outline of the Thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the study by presenting the background, outlining the statement of the problem, research purpose, research questions, and significance of the study. It also situates the research within the context of Kazakhstan's national digitalization policies and the realities faced by higher education institutions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the relevant scholarly literature on the integration of digital learning platforms (DLPs) in higher education, including global trends, challenges, and opportunities. It discusses theoretical frameworks related to digital adoption, digital divides, and change management, with a specific focus on studies conducted in developing and transitional contexts similar to Kazakhstan.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the research design, methodology, and procedures used in the study. It explains the rationale for choosing a qualitative case study approach, details participant selection, data collection methods (semi-structured interviews), data analysis strategies, and discusses ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the major findings from the interviews with faculty members, organized thematically in relation to the research questions. It provides a detailed account of faculty perceptions, experiences, perceived benefits, challenges, and institutional barriers to effective DLP integration.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The final chapter interprets and discusses the findings in relation to existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and the research questions. It draws out the broader implications for policy, practice, and future research, and offers practical recommendations for improving the integration of digital learning platforms in Kazakhstani higher education.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

The final chapter summarizes the key findings of the research and reflects on their broader implications for policy, practice, and future research. It offers practical recommendations for policymakers, university administrators, and educators to enhance DLP adoption in Kazakhstani higher education and proposes areas for further study.

Summary

Kazakhstan's Digital Kazakhstan strategy aims to change national education by building infrastructure and digital content. However, there is still a policy-practice gap. Even though platforms like Moodle, Google Classroom, and Blackboard have been implemented, their use is not uniform due to the absence of technical support and unequal access to technology.

The fate of DLP integration rests on continued institutional commitment, faculty development, and efforts to address digital inequality. This study investigates how northern Kazakh public university English faculty view and live with DLPs, what challenges and benefits they encounter, and what are the implications for broader digital education policy.

The study is grounded on four research questions and aims to inform future educational reforms by highlighting faculty needs, implementation challenges, and institutional strategies for more effective adoption of DLP.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review provides the conceptual context to understand how higher education (HE) integrates Digital Learning Platforms (DLP) in Kazakhstani and global contexts. The review critically examines existing research on the benefits and issues of DLP adoption, including the digital divide concerns, teacher attitudes, and technological and pedagogical barriers hindering or facilitating the use of innovative tools (John, 2015; Velychko et al., 2021). In addition, the chapter covers theories of technology acceptance and clarifies terms like digital competence and digital literacy. The chapter ends by setting research gaps informing the present research regarding the attitudes and experiences of faculty in a Kazakhstani public university. The present paper was designed to highlight the fact that DLP has been acting as a pioneer in promoting higher education worldwide, and this context put the value of this process in the Kazakhstani context.

Though there was a prospect of more student engagement, flexibility, and efficiency with digital platforms and tools, John (2015) and others like Velychko et al., (2021), there are also some issues like the digital divide addressed by Afzal et al., (2023), limited training, and resistance from faculty, as stated by Elm et al., (2023), and Viberg et al., (2021). For avoiding a difficult generalization of DLP for more advanced and smarter tools, there needs to be appropriate arrangements or coordination made by the educators because they are going to encounter a set of difficulties through a lack of flexibility of the tools and institutional support and resources (Rahiman & Kodikal, 2023).

Digital Learning Platforms (DLP) in Higher Education

Global Trends in DLP

Digital Learning Platforms (DLP) comprise a wide range of digital systems and technologies—e.g., Learning Management Systems (LMSs), video conferencing software,

and AI-driven content platforms—designed to support teaching, learning, and administrative processes at higher education institutions (John, 2015). They are meant to enhance access and interactivity in educational provision.

Global trends indicate a greater institutional reliance on DLPs in the provision of blended and online learning models. As DiMaggio and Powell (cited in Şerban et al., 2020) state, national policy directives, quality assurance mechanisms, and funding arrangements tend to shape the manner in which universities adopt such technologies. Technical availability is not sufficient, though. Effective integration depends on faculty buy-in and a shift in pedagogical approaches (Leal Filho et al., 2023).

Blended learning has particularly gained momentum in higher education, offering an accessible combination of face-to-face and online instruction. Learning Management Systems (LMSs) such as Moodle, Blackboard, and Canvas are at the forefront of this practice by allowing asynchronous access to material and synchronous student interaction (Jensen et al., 2022; Graham, 2013). These websites have the potential to optimize course design, resource sharing, and communication but pose new challenges like placing increasing demands on IT infrastructure and the need for ongoing professional development of academic staff (Alammary, Sheard, & Carbone, 2014). To boot, the mass adoption of other digital tools—Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Google Workspace—has further diversified university technology ecosystems at times causing tool overload and disjointed digital experience for students and teachers (Rapanta et al., 2020; Bond et al., 2021). As these campuses navigate through these complex environments, alignment of pedagogical purpose with digital tools continues to remain a top priority. Emergent literature highlights heightened emphasis on accommodation and individualization in DLP implementation. Sun and Chen (2023) are, for instance, highlighting a shift towards adaptable learning platforms that apply AI to deliver content in accordance with students'

performance, enabling differentiated teaching in online contexts. Along similar lines, Vázquez-Cano et al. (2022) note that the integration of mobile learning platforms has provided greater scope for students residing in remote and disadvantaged areas.

Potential Benefits of DLP

The application of Digital Learning Platforms (DLPs) in higher education has been shown to improve student engagement, learning flexibility, and teaching effectiveness (Bond et al., 2021; Al-Fraihat et al., 2020). Rahiman and Kodikal (2023) posit that the incorporation of artificial intelligence into DLPs has significantly transformed educational processes—enhancing students' learning experiences as well as streamlining administrative activities such as automated marking, personalized feedback, and academic advising. These intelligent features allow educators to more closely monitor student performance and adapt teaching in real time. Further, DLPs facilitate personalized learning paths that adapt to students' individual needs and learning styles, offering such features as adaptive quizzes and real-time monitoring of student progress (Popenici & Kerr, 2017). They also enable inclusive education by virtue of accessibility features and adaptive formats of content delivery, which are useful to the disabled or in the remote communities (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Burgstahler, 2015). These features make DLPs a critical component of higher education systems today. Hung and Zhang (2023) also find in a paper that students have higher autonomy and motivation when utilizing the interactive elements of DLPs, such as gamified quizzes, discussion forums, and progress boards. Moreover, DLPs have led to more cooperation among students and between students and instructors, fostering more student-oriented and active learning environments (Martin et al., 2020).

Challenges and Pedagogical Barriers

Although most DLPs have numerous advantages, they have faced serious challenges in the higher education sector. Leal Filho et al. (2023) states that systemic

disruptions associated with the speeding up of the process caused by COVID-19 compelled a fast transformation towards online learning without proper preparation. Academic staff were commonly ill-equipped to manage the steep learning curve that came with the introduction of new and emerging educational technologies, leading to uneven and occasionally ineffective adoption. Added to this problem was the lack of standardized training models, which produced discrepancies in digital proficiency between institutions and disciplines (Bond et al., 2021; Howard et al., 2021). These gaps retarded the full pedagogical potential of DLPs and contributed to faculty workload and stress, who were frequently left to adapt without clear institutional support (Watermeyer et al., 2021). Moreover, a lack of digital infrastructure and technical support further exacerbated inequalities in access and use, particularly in regions where connectivity and resources were already limited (Crawford et al., 2020; Selwyn, 2020).

Digital literacy is also a key obstacle to the successful integration of Digital Learning Platforms (DLPs) into university teaching. Teaching staff have consistently indicated the requirement for greater comprehensive training in both fundamental and advanced use of digital tools, such as platform navigation, content development, and pedagogical integration (Almusharraf & Khahro, 2022; Tondeur et al., 2017). Instructors' level of digital competence has been demonstrated to reduce confidence and effectiveness in online teaching (Gudmundsdottir & Hatlevik, 2020). Lastly, the infrastructure support within institutions is usually underfunded or lacks the resources necessary to fully support IT help desks, instructional designers, and professional development units since DLP adoption creates a myriad of technical problems in multiple and varied forms (Bond et al., 2018; Phillips et al., 2021). Such shortages not only impede individual faculty adaptation but can also crystallize systemic inequalities among departments and institutions, particularly where digital change is treated as an add-on rather than a strategic imperative.

Czerniewicz et al. (2021) also note that unequal access to digital technologies, especially for adjunct or part-time faculty and students in rural locations, has exacerbated existing educational inequalities. A such digital divide not only limits the possibilities of DLP but can solidify structural inequities in education systems.

Faculty Perceptions of DLP

Research on faculty attitudes towards DLP provides a complex picture. On the one hand, technology-enhanced learning is increasingly viewed as a key component of modern pedagogy. On the other hand, many faculty are ambivalent or resistant due to increased workload, insufficient support, or fear of pedagogical failure (Karkouti, 2021).

Elm et al. (2023), from their qualitative exploration of two Swedish universities, cited that while the majority of teachers appreciated the accessibility and flexibility that DLPs offered, a few were intimidated by the repetitive necessity of adjusting to new systems and tools. Staff noted reduced perceived teaching quality when digital tools were not made part of pedagogy.

Similarly, Amhag et al. (2019) concluded that even though digital platforms like Teams and Zoom enabled individuals to communicate virtually, they did place additional stresses on faculty for reconceptualizing course work, managing online classrooms, and one-on-one mentoring. Viberg et al. (2021) identify that some staff did experience difficulty maintaining professionalism within a digitally constructed context as gaps in digital literacy were presented as one limitation of teacher effectiveness.

Rahman et al. (2023), in a multi-institutional study during the COVID-19 pandemic, found that the online spaces had been embraced by some of the faculty because they are convenient and accessible, while others had found it difficult with low learner participation, technical limitations, and lost classroom dynamics. These findings highlight

the necessity for certain professional development courses and institutional strategies aimed at building digital resilience among staff.

Recent studies in Kazakhstan have also begun to indicate the same patterns. For example, Yessekenova et al. (2022) determined that although teachers appreciated the flexibility offered by platforms like Moodle and Google Classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic, they complained about limited digital infrastructure, insufficient training, and a lack of ongoing institutional support. Furthermore, Omarov and Tashkenbayev (2021) indicated that the majority of regional university lecturers found it difficult to adapt their pedagogical activities to online modes, particularly when they taught STEM disciplines. Rahman et al. (2023), in their cross-institutional study during the COVID-19 crisis, found that while some teachers embraced online platforms because they were convenient and accessible, others complained about low student participation, technological limitations, and missing classroom ambiance. These findings underscore the need for targeted professional development programs and institutional initiatives to develop digital resilience among educators, both worldwide and in Kazakhstan.

Theoretical Framework

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

There are various models which have been used to explain the intention to adopt a particular technology and one of the widely used models is called the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989). TAM also established two fundamental beliefs that define an individual's implementation of the new technology,

1. Perceived Usefulness is the degree to which technology is perceived as increasing productivity or gaining accomplishment of some educational mission. In a faculty context, this might refer to how the platform enhances students' participation, facilitates grading or enhances the ways in which instructors organise their courses.

2. The Logical Numerical Measure of Perceived Ease of Use reflects how easy technology is appreciated as being to learn and operate without consuming a lot of time. For busy teacher/training officers, a complicated or not user-friendly system can be discontinued at an early stage (Lin & Yu, 2023).

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

While TAM forms the basis, the more inclusive Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology was developed and includes factors such as social influence, facilitating conditions, and behavioral intention (Lin & Yu, 2023). For instance, the facilitation conditions include the awareness of departmental support in faculty and the influence through social pressure from peers. This is particularly salient in the context of the Kazakh higher learning system to support national strategies such as “Digital Kazakhstan” whereby policy prescriptions need to be supported by institutionally supported instructional cultural beliefs in the effectiveness of technology-based innovation (Mukanov, 2023).

How Theory Guides the Present Study

In this study, TAM and UTAUT inform both the interview protocol design (e.g., exploring faculty perceptions of usefulness and ease of use) and the subsequent data analysis. By filtering faculty perceptions and behaviors through these models, the study could potentially uncover whether skepticism is due to perceived non-usefulness (e.g., "It doesn't enhance my teaching") or due to the perception that DLP is too complex to effectively integrate (e.g., "It takes too much time to learn"). Moreover, the attention to social context and facilitating conditions demonstrates how departmental leadership, institutional training programs, and peer networks affected faculty adoption rates. Lastly, these theoretical viewpoints enhanced our understanding of the intricate relationship

between technology attributes, user perceptions, and institutional settings in the Kazakhstani environment.

In addition to TAM, UTAUT also extended the investigation by incorporating variables of Social Influence and Facilitating Conditions that were particularly relevant in institutional settings. These elements allowed the researcher to study how faculty adoption is affected not only by personal attitudes toward technology but also by external factors like peer support, departmental encouragement, and access to institutional resources. For example, interview questions about collaborative teaching culture, access to training, and leadership support were derived from these theoretical understandings.

During data analysis, TAM and UTAUT provided the structured filter through which faculty responses were interpreted. Themes of resistance to DLP usage due to complexity or time constraints were coded under Perceived Ease of Use, while remarks pointing to benefits like better organization or enhanced student engagement were traced back to Perceived Usefulness. Similarly, experiences reflecting peer support or reliance on technical support were categorized under Social Influence and Facilitating Conditions, respectively.

With the use of these models, the study moved from a descriptive account of faculty experiences to a theoretically grounded explanation of facilitators and inhibitors of DLP adoption in the Kazakhstani higher education context. This allowed for a deeper interpretation of the manner in which institutional, personal, and technological factors intersect to shape adoption behaviors, yielding more nuanced insights that can inform targeted intervention and policy change.

Summary

The literature reveals both opportunities and tensions in the integration of Digital Learning Platforms in higher education. While DLPs offer promising tools to enhance

pedagogy, engagement, and accessibility, their success depends largely on faculty preparedness, ongoing institutional support, and responsive policy frameworks. The dual nature of faculty experiences—characterized by both enthusiasm and apprehension—points to the need for more inclusive and capacity-building strategies. These insights lay the groundwork for the present study, which investigates faculty perceptions and their lived experiences with DLP integration in a Kazakhstani university context.

Similarly, other theoretical models including TAM proposed by Davis (1989) and UTAUT by Lin and Yu (2023) have been useful in explaining the continued interaction of perceived usefulness as well as perceived ease of use, the influences of social pressure, and institutional support. These models serve as the theoretical framework of this study, and they are used in the process of data collection and performing analysis of the faculty perceptions in a North-Kazakhstani public university context. However, there are still some research gaps regarding the localised experiences of the faculty who are expected to make the national initiatives such as ‘Digital Kazakhstan’ relevant in their practise. Therefore, the present study has chosen this aspect of DLP to provide methodologically informed advice to use in enhancing DLP in higher education in Kazakhstan and contributing to the discussion of how and to what ends new technologies can be introduced into educational systems.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter explains the methodological approach applied in this study, which aimed to explore teachers' attitudes and experiences regarding the use of digital learning platforms (DLPs) in higher education in the case of Kazakhstan. As the use of DLPs is increasingly becoming central to educational reform activities globally and domestically, it is crucial to understand how educators manage these reforms. This study has in view especially the lived experience of English teaching staff at one of Astana's leading public universities, reporting on both the opportunities and challenges that form part of digital transformation in Kazakhstani higher education.

Qualitative case study was used to collect the richness and contextual specificity of the phenomenon being studied. The research approach was selected for its ability to study the rich, nuanced meanings of participants and delve deeper into the ways in which technological integration impacts teaching practices, institutional support, and professional development.

The chapter begins by outlining the rationale for the research design and case study approach, before going on to offer a full description of the research environment and rationale behind this in the context of the objectives of the study. The sampling strategy and recruitment of participants are then set out, highlighting the purposive sampling approach employed to ensure the data collected were not only significant but representative of the faculty experiences. The chapter concludes with discussion of the data gathering and analysis procedures, ethical issues, and methods employed to ensure trustworthiness and rigor.

Through the description of methodological choices taken during this study, this chapter introduces what is required to understand how the findings were generated and perhaps interpreted within the context of broader digitalization strategies in Kazakhstani higher education.

Research design

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore instructors' perceptions and experiences regarding the integration of e-learning platforms into a higher education setting in northern Kazakhstan. A qualitative case study was most appropriate for exploring complex social phenomena in real-life contexts where researchers gain in-depth understanding of the participants' perspectives and everyday experiences (Yin, 2018). The case study methodology was useful to this study since it enables nuanced examination of the specific conditions and challenges facing members of the faculty in a singular institutional and cultural context.

The qualitative approach highlighted the individual meanings participants attach to their experiences, which aligned with the research goal of uncovering nuanced understandings of faculty perceptions and practice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through the use of open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews, the research encouraged rich, detailed descriptions and enabled patterns and themes to be established that might not emerge through quantitative methods (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Besides, a case study was an appropriate choice because it is well-suited to the study of the multi-faceted nature of digital platform integration with regard to technological, pedagogical, and institutional dimensions. It provided an integrated perspective that considered the interplay of individual, departmental, and organizational forces that influence faculty members' experiences (Stake, 1995). The structure also

allowed for the formulation of actionable recommendations that are tailored to the Kazakhstani public university setting.

In summary, the qualitative case study approach was justified in this research since it accommodates the aim of this research to gather the richness and depth of faculty members' experiences and perceptions and place these within their own organizational setting.

Research site and rationale

The research was conducted within a public university located within Astana, Kazakhstan. The university is most renowned for its commitment to scholarly success, innovation, and the integration of new technology in education and learning. Being among the most innovative universities in the country, it is a model for other universities in Kazakhstan and is therefore close to being as ideal a location from which to study the integration of digital learning platforms. The university's emphasis on adopting modern educational technologies is in alignment with the research objectives of exploring faculty attitudes and experiences towards using such platforms.

The English Department of this public university was chosen as the subject of this research because it is actively involved in utilizing digital platforms to facilitate language teaching and learning. Language teaching tends to need varied resources, such as interactive and multimedia tools (Chapelle, 2010; Stockwell, 2012), which makes it a rich site for exploring the adoption and effectiveness of digital platforms. Moreover, English scholars will be most exposed to these technologies (Hampel & Stickler, 2012; Comas-Quinn, 2011), given the increased emphasis on English-medium instruction and digital pedagogy in universities worldwide and in Kazakhstan (Brandenburg & Zhu, 2007; Suleimenova & Beisenbayeva, 2021; OECD, 2017).

The other reason why the Department of English was selected is that its faculty has diverse faculty makeup with members who possess disparate teaching backgrounds and technological expertise. Diversity here makes data collection more encompassing, allowing for the exploration of multifaceted opinions concerning the benefits and drawbacks of online learning platforms. The role of the department in supporting students' preparation for global communication also underscores its importance as a case study site, given the central position played by digital environments in making language study and intercultural contacts possible. Aiming at public university and its Department of English, this study aspires to obtain results that may be used to inform more ambitious projects for implementing digital learning platforms across Kazakhstani public universities, addressing some needs in language learning contexts.

While the chosen public university in this research is among the most technologically advanced and innovative in Kazakhstan, it is to some degree a special case compared to a number of other public universities in the country. Its significant emphasis on digital transformation, internationalization, and academic innovation differs from that of regional or resource-constrained institutions, where digital infrastructure, possibilities for faculty development, and technological integration may be weaker (OECD, 2017; Suleimenova & Beisenbayeva, 2021). Therefore, the findings of this study are most easily applied to similar environments—i.e., other urban, better-resourced Kazakhstani universities actively involved in modernization efforts. However, some caution is necessary in applying the findings to more rural or lower-technology institutions, where disincentives for incorporating DLPs may be stronger. Yet the chances and challenges thus created through this case study present lessons for the broadest range of higher education settings. They indicate both towards the enabling conditions that are set to ensure fruitful integration of digital learning and also towards the system-level issues—such as gaps in

digital literacy and infrastructural inequalities—that hold across different forms of institution.

Thus, although the university is a Kazakhstan innovation model for digital economy, what it learns is still capable of shedding light on national trends and informing policies that aim to promote more efficient and equitable utilization of digital learning platforms across the nation.

Sampling and participants

Purposive sampling, one of the most respected qualitative research methods of identifying rich cases that are of high potential to illuminate into the phenomenon under study (Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2015), was employed in this research. This sampling method is best suited when there are researchers trying to understand in-depth experiences and perception of individuals closely related to or knowledgeable on a given subject matter (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). In this study, purposive sampling was employed to choose the faculty members who had first-hand experience of using digital learning platforms (DLPs) in universities to secure data that is not only pertinent but also meaningful.

Criteria for the selection of participants were established and later clearly defined to ensure that it continued to be relevant in relation to the research questions. The faculty members were chosen considering the following factors:

1. Teaching within the Department of English in a northern Kazakhstan public university.
2. Active teaching using digital platforms (e.g., Moodle, Google Classroom, Blackboard).
3. Exposure to diverse kinds of teaching, ranging from early-career employees (3–4 years) to more experienced teachers (5+ years).

4. Academic diversity in the roles, encompassing lecturers, senior lecturers, and course coordinators.

5. Exposure to both traditional and digital teaching environments, allowing comparative observation.

This department was chosen tactically as it proactively integrated digital tools in language instruction, where multiple learning resources and methods are particularly vital. Language learning often encompasses interactive materials, multimedia resources, and adaptive modalities, which places it as a highly appropriate context for analyzing DLP adoption (Avidov-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018).

The diversity of participants' teaching experience and position helped to capture a broad spectrum of attitudes, skills, and issues related to the use of DLP. Such diversity contributed to achieving a more detailed understanding of how individual background, institutional environment, and technological sophistication intersect to impact faculty perceptions and behaviors.

In line with Yin (2018), the employment of purposive sampling in this qualitative case study is in line with the objective of examining complex, context-dependent phenomena through the rich understanding of those engaged in them. Besides, the method is in line with the interpretivist orientation of the research, prioritizing depth and richness of information over generalizability (Campbell et al., 2020).

Data collection tools

This study employed semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection tool, a widely accepted method in qualitative research for capturing detailed, context-rich insights from participants (Gill et al., 2008; Kallio et al., 2016). Semi-structured interviews offer a balance between structure and flexibility, allowing the researcher to pursue consistent themes across interviews while also adapting to emerging topics and participant-

specific narratives (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This flexibility is particularly valuable in exploring faculty perceptions and experiences with Digital Learning Platforms (DLPs), where individual viewpoints are shaped by diverse pedagogical backgrounds, institutional contexts, and levels of technological familiarity.

An interview guide was developed to ensure coverage of key themes aligned with the study's research questions. It included nine thematic sections, covering the following domains:

1. Background and teaching experience
2. Initial exposure to and use of DLPs
3. Perceived usefulness and ease of use
4. Integration strategies and teaching practices
5. Institutional support and training experiences

6. Challenges and barriers to DLP adoption
7. Student engagement and feedback
8. Changes during remote/online learning periods (e.g., COVID-19)
9. Recommendations for improving DLP integration

The interviews were conducted in English, Kazakh, or Russian, depending on participants' language preferences, to ensure clarity and comfort. Each session lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted online via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, platforms widely used in qualitative research for remote data collection (Archibald et al., 2019).

To ensure the credibility and accuracy of the data, all interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent. In addition to recordings, detailed field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues, context-specific observations, and researcher

reflections. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim and all identifying information was removed to ensure participant anonymity. The transcripts were securely stored and managed in compliance with ethical research standards (Cacciattolo, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews were selected not only for their ability to explore sensitive or complex themes in-depth but also because they empower participants to express their views in their own terms, which is crucial in interpretivist and case study research designs (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This approach enabled the study to gather rich, descriptive data reflecting faculty members' authentic experiences with DLPs, ultimately supporting a more nuanced thematic analysis.

Data collection procedures

To gain insights into faculty attitudes, experiences, challenges, and implications of using digital learning platforms (DLPs) in teaching, semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data gathering instrument. Semi-structured interviews are a prevalent qualitative research instrument, mixing structured and unstructured methods to provide consistency across participants and room for pursuing emergent themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is a suitable research method for this research as it provides an opportunity for the researcher to ask more follow-up questions to participants' responses, thus tapping into the depth and passion of their opinions, which is critical in responding to the research questions (Gill et al., 2008).

The interviews were based on 15–20 open questions with the aim of probing broad themes such as faculty members' opinions, experiences, benefits, and limitations of DLP implementation. Each session was planned to last around 45–60 minutes, giving enough time to address critical issues while still giving participants enough time to voice their ideas in depth. The adaptability of this approach made it possible for participants to

elaborate on matters most pertinent to their experiences, hence increasing the validity and richness of the gathered data (Kallio et al., 2016).

In order to accommodate participant choices and prevent any communication barriers, interviews were conducted in English, Kazakh, or Russian, which were the participants' preferred options. This range of languages meant that potential interpretations could be circumvented, and participants were comfortable enough to speak more spontaneously. The subsequent interviews were also conducted online, keeping in mind participants' convenience and availability. For online interviews, Zoom and Microsoft Teams were employed since they can easily be accessed and utilized for recording and taking notes.

All the interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent to ensure data accuracy. In addition to recordings, detailed notes were made in each session to record key insights and non-verbal cues. The recorded data were transcribed verbatim for analysis and strictly adhered to ethical principles to maintain participant confidentiality and anonymity.

The interview guide was pilot tested using two faculty members to test for clarity and responsiveness of questions. Small adjustments were done to perfect the wording of questions and improve interview flow following their responses. This ongoing process helped ensure the questions properly captured the phenomena being studied, thereby enhancing overall reliability of the data collection process (Yin, 2018).

Using semi-structured interviews, the study was in a position to collect broad and contextually dense data for extending knowledge on the integration of digital learning platforms into higher education.

Data analysis

The data collected through semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely adopted method in qualitative research for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns (themes) within textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis was chosen due to its flexibility, its capacity to accommodate both inductive and deductive coding, and its suitability for interpreting participants' lived experiences in a structured yet interpretative manner (Terry et al., 2017). This method allowed for a deep exploration of faculty perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to the integration of digital learning platforms (DLPs) in the context of higher education.

The analysis followed the six-phase framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. Familiarization with the data:

Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of participant responses. The researcher then read and re-read the transcripts, taking preliminary notes and highlighting significant patterns, concepts, and emotional tones, as recommended by Castleberry and Nolen (2018).

2. Generating initial codes:

Using both deductive coding, based on the research questions and theoretical frameworks (TAM and UTAUT), and inductive coding, derived from the participants' unique expressions and experiences, meaningful units of data were coded. For example, initial codes included training needs, access issues, student engagement, and skepticism toward technology.

3. Searching for themes:

Codes were grouped into broader categories and refined into initial themes that captured recurring patterns across interviews. For example, codes like efficiency, interactive learning, and pedagogical benefits contributed to the theme Perceived Benefits of DLPs, while resistance to change, technical challenges, and lack of training informed the theme Barriers to Effective Integration (Braun et al., 2019).

4.Reviewing themes:

Themes were reviewed to ensure internal consistency and external distinction—that is, each theme was internally coherent and distinct from others (Nowell et al., 2017). This phase involved re-checking themes against coded extracts and the overall dataset to refine their boundaries and ensure alignment with participants' narratives.

5.Defining and naming themes:

Each theme was clearly defined, named, and linked explicitly to the research questions and theoretical constructs. For example, the theme Faculty Perceptions of Usefulness and Ease of Use was grounded in TAM, while Institutional Support and Peer Influence reflected constructs from UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

6.Producing the report:

The final themes were used to structure the findings in Chapter 4. Direct quotes from participants were included to illustrate key points, enhance authenticity, and ensure that the analysis remained grounded in the participants' voices (Elo et al., 2014).

The analysis was primarily conducted manually to ensure close engagement with the data, but was also supported by GPT-based assistance for exploration code clustering and comparison. The use of digital tools was carefully managed to avoid over-reliance and to maintain interpretive depth and qualitative rigor (Sullivan & Sargeant, 2011).

1. To enhance trustworthiness, several strategies were employed:

2. Triangulation through reviewing responses across participants and data sources.
3. Peer debriefing and review of codes and themes with fellow researchers.
4. Maintenance of an audit trail documenting analytical decisions and theme development.
5. These steps helped ensure that the findings were credible, confirmable, and representative of the participants' experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Below is a comprehensive table of codes and their corresponding themes for analysis (Table 1). These codes and themes are aligned with your research objectives and questions.

Table 1.

Codes and themes for analysis

Themes	Codes	Description
1. Faculty perceptions of digital learning platforms	<i>Active learning facilitation</i> <i>Adaptation to technology</i> <i>Effectiveness of teaching</i> <i>Skepticism or resistance</i>	Faculty perspectives on how digital platforms enhance or hinder teaching and learning.
2. Faculty experiences with digital learning platforms	<i>Ease of use</i> <i>Learning curve</i> <i>Integration in teaching</i> <i>Technical difficulties</i> <i>Pandemic-driven adoption</i>	Experiences related to adopting and adapting to digital platforms in their teaching practices.
3. Perceived benefits of digital learning platforms	<i>Efficiency</i> <i>Flexibility</i> <i>Student engagement</i> <i>Resource accessibility</i>	Positive outcomes for faculty and students resulting from DLP use.
4. Challenges of digital learning platform integration	<i>Technical issues</i> <i>Time constraints</i> <i>Lack of training</i> <i>Resistance to change</i> <i>Student-related challenges</i>	Barriers faced during the implementation and use of digital platforms.
5. Implications for Kazakhstani public universities	<i>Training needs</i> <i>Policy recommendations</i> <i>Infrastructure improvements</i> <i>Long-term vision</i>	Suggestions for institutional and policy-level changes to support the integration of digital platforms.

Lack of training

Resistance to change

Student-related challenges Barriers faced during the implementation and use of digital platforms.

5. Implications for Kazakhstani public universities Training needs

Policy recommendations

Infrastructure improvements

Long-term vision Suggestions for institutional and policy-level changes to support the integration of digital platforms.

Details of codes and their use:

1. Faculty attitudes and beliefs towards digital learning platforms. Highlight positive attitudes and beliefs towards DLPs, like active learning facilitation and concerns like skepticism or low confidence.

2. Faculty experiences with digital learning platforms. Examine particular experiences, like difficulty in initial adoption, technical difficulties, or positive outcomes like increased engagement in distance teaching.

3. Perceived benefits of digital learning platforms. Explain how DLPs enhance teaching efficiency, support flexible learning arrangements, and share resources.

4. Challenges in implementing digital learning platforms. Explain issues such as poor infrastructure, insufficient training, and faculty or student resistance that disrupt smooth implementation.

5. Implications for Kazakhstani public universities.

By using thematic analysis within this systematic and iterative process, the research was able to effectively determine the overall themes that address the research questions and provide valuable information on integrating digital learning platforms into higher education.

Ethical considerations

This study was guided by firm ethical standards to ensure that participants' rights were protected, there was transparency, and the research process was of integrity. Ethical clearance was obtained from the NUGSE Research Committee, which reviewed the research goals, methodology, and data management procedures to ascertain adherence to institution policy and global best practice in research with human subjects (BERA, 2018; Resnik, 2020). These data were collected against the backdrop of ethical principles informed by respect for persons, beneficence, and justice anchored in foundational ethics documents such as the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects, 1979).

Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. They received clear information sheets—in English, Kazakh, and Russian—describing the aims of the study, the procedures, potential risks and benefits, their right to withdraw with no penalty, and how data would be utilized and stored. This multilingual practice is an exercise in best practices in cross-cultural and multilingual research, ensuring the participant is well informed and able to access clear information (Liamputtong, 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2013).

The participation was entirely voluntary with no coercion and no incentives offered. The participants were informed clearly of their right to refuse to answer any question or to terminate the interview at any moment without harmful repercussions. Ensuring that the setting was a safe, respectful, and open one was extremely important to the researcher, facilitating trust and genuine responses. Qualitative research especially when handling personal experiences is highly reliant on such ethical sensitivity (Silverman, 2021; Hammersley & Traianou, 2012).

To ensure confidentiality, the interviews were anonymized during transcription and pseudonyms were used in all reporting. Data were kept on password-protected devices and cloud platforms in line with institution data protection policies and GDPR-compliant procedures (Flick, 2018). Raw data were restricted to the principal researcher only.

The study also incorporated ethical reflexivity throughout all phases design, data collection, and analysis—through ongoing consideration of the potential impact of power dynamics, cultural presumptions, and researcher positionality (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Tracy, 2010). The researcher maintained an audit trail and reflective journal to document ethical decisions and offer transparency and accountability.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the research findings, which aimed to explore faculty attitudes, experiences, benefits, challenges, and the broader implications of integrating digital learning platforms (DLPs) into pedagogical practice in Kazakhstani public university. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with faculty members of the Department of English and were analyzed through thematic analysis to ascertain recurring patterns and themes.

The analysis yielded five broad themes:

1. Faculty attitudes towards digital learning platforms, highlighting varying attitudes towards DLP usage, ranging from enthusiastic uptake to skepticism.
2. Faculty experiences with digital learning platforms, highlighting practical, hands-on understanding of instructor adoption and adaptation of DLPs, including successes and challenges.
3. Perceived benefits of digital learning platforms, outlining how such systems enhance teaching efficiency, student engagement, and resource accessibility.
4. Challenges in unifying digital learning platforms, surmounting hurdles such as technical issues, inadequate training, and resistance to change.
5. Implications for Kazakhstan's public universities, with suggestions on how the unification process can be enhanced, e.g., through staff development and infrastructure development.

Each of the themes is explored in detail in the following sections, with direct quotations from participants to situate and support the findings. The themes collectively offer a nuanced understanding of faculty attitudes toward and perceptions of digital

learning platforms, along with actionable suggestions for their implementation in higher education.

Faculty perceptions of digital learning platforms

This section explores the faculty's perceptions of digital learning platforms (DLPs), focusing on their overall impressions, comfort levels, and views on the role of these platforms in facilitating active learning. The findings reflect a spectrum of attitudes ranging from enthusiastic acceptance to cautious skepticism, shaped by individual experiences and institutional contexts.

General Perceptions and Comfort Levels

The teachers explained diverse perceptions of digital learning platforms depending on their experience with and exposure to the technologies. The majority of the participants mentioned the convenience and efficiency of DLPs, which they referred to as essential tools for modern education, in terms of the effectiveness of teaching. For example, as one of the participants mentioned, "Digital platforms have streamlined my teaching process, making it easier to organize course materials and track student progress." (P1).

However, some of the professors were not at ease with such platforms. There was therefore varying adaptation to technology. While younger members of the faculty appeared to be more at ease, talking about exposure in their learning days, older members of the faculty spoke of a steeper learning curve.

A senior lecturer said, "I found it difficult to use the platform at first, but I grew more confident as I used it. Training would have been very useful." (P2)

Also, a number of participants spoke against, expressing doubts specifically around the use of technology possibly outweighing the older methods of instruction. One such participant narrated, "Even though technology is helpful, it can't beat the personal bond that occurs between people through classroom teaching." (P2)

Overall, opinions about DLPs by the faculty ranged from highly favorable to cautiously critical, and comfort levels were influenced by variables such as age, experience prior to, and exposure to training.

Views on Digital Platforms' Role in Active Learning

Faculty participants overwhelmingly agreed that DLPs play a significant role in active learning, as they enable students to engage with course material in new and active ways. One respondent said, "Digital platforms get students to engage more actively, whether on discussion boards, quizzes, or group projects." (P3). Interactive elements of DLPs, such as real-time feedback tools, were also cited as being effective in enhancing student engagement. "The ability to provide immediate feedback on quizzes or assignments motivates students to stay engaged and improve their performance."(P2)

In addition, the respondents emphasized the significance of DLPs in facilitating diverse learning styles. For instance, "With these platforms, I can incorporate videos, readings, and interactive exercises, which accommodate different types of learners and make the classes more interesting." (P2)

A few lecturers, however, were worried that too much use of technology might take away from critical thinking or creativity in students. "Although online platforms are easy to use, there is a risk that students will be passive recipients of information if we do not deliberately design interactive content." (P3)

Despite these problems, all parties concurred that, if utilized in the appropriate manner, DLPs had the potential to promote active learning through collaboration, creativity, and personalized feedback.

These findings suggest that attitudes among faculty toward digital learning platforms are multifaceted, both reflecting the opportunities and difficulties of these platforms.

Faculty experiences with digital learning platforms

This section investigates the faculty members' experiences with digital learning platforms (DLPs), focusing on their adoption in teaching practices, the challenges encountered during the process, and the adaptations made during the pandemic or similar circumstances. The findings reveal the dynamic nature of faculty engagement with these platforms, reflecting both successes and struggles in their integration.

Adopting platforms in teaching practices

Faculty members reported varying levels of success in incorporating DLPs into their teaching practices. Many highlighted how these platforms supported diverse instructional strategies, such as organizing course content, conducting assessments, and facilitating communication with students. One participant shared, "The platform I use allows me to structure my courses effectively, making materials, assignments, and feedback accessible to students in one place." (P3)

Others mentioned that DLPs enabled the use of multimedia resources, enhancing the delivery of lessons. For example, "I often integrate videos, interactive quizzes, and discussion forums into my lessons, which makes the classes more engaging and interactive." (P2)

However, the extent to which platforms were adopted varied among faculty, with some reporting limited use, such as only for attendance tracking or sharing materials. This reflects differences in familiarity, confidence, and perceived usefulness of the platforms in enhancing pedagogy.

Challenges during the adoption process

The deployment of DLPs was not an easy process. Various challenges were pointed out by the faculty, including technical issues, time constraints, and the absence of training.

According to one of the participants, "The platform was difficult to navigate at first, and it was a long process to prepare items in the appropriate format."(P3)

Another frequent issue mentioned was the lack of institutional support and training. Some professors complained about the need to undergo long workshops for understanding the platform's features. As (P1) indicated, "We were instructed to start using the platform immediately, but there was little guidance on how to get the most out of it."

Technical problems, such as system crashes and connectivity issues, also posed significant barriers. (P2) mentioned, "When it was busiest, the site would crash during my lessons, frustrating me as well as my students."

Such challenges call for timely planning, technical support, and effortless-to-use systems to bring the smooth introduction of DLP more into practice.

Adaptations during the pandemic or other circumstances

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital platforms, and instruction staff needed to be moved to a completely online class at short notice. A number of participants attested that it was a learning experience but also an opportunity to experiment with the potential of DLPs.

"The pandemic was a tipping point for me. I had to learn how to use them quickly, and now I can see the long-term benefits." (P3)

Instructors referred to a plethora of modifications they undertook during this period, including the recording of video lectures, using discussion forums to simulate class interaction, and the insertion of live polls as a way of engaging students. As illustration, "I started recording my lectures and uploading them to the platform so students could access the material at their own pace. This was very helpful for those with spotty internet connectivity during actual sessions." (P2)

However, the rapid transition also introduced constraints, such as difficulties in maintaining student motivation and assessing learning outcomes.

"It was difficult to get students motivated in an entirely online environment, especially when so many of them were experiencing problems with slow internet." (P3)

These lessons illustrate the two-edged impact of the pandemic: while it hastened digital uptake and spurred innovation, it also exposed infrastructure and preparedness gaps.

The data in this section illustrate the complex experiences of DLP teachers, which are shaped by enabling and constraining forces. The next section examines the desired outcomes of digital learning platforms, including enhancing teaching and learning performance. Perceived benefits of digital learning platforms

This section examines the advantages faculty members identified in using digital learning platforms (DLPs) in their teaching practices. The findings highlight how these platforms enhance teaching efficiency, facilitate student engagement and interaction, and enable flexible and remote learning opportunities.

Enhancing teaching efficiency

Faculty members consistently emphasized how DLPs improved the efficiency of their teaching processes. One of the most cited benefits was the ability to organize and centralize course materials. “Digital platforms streamline everything—assignments, resources, and communication are all in one place, which saves time and reduces confusion.” (P2)

The automation of administrative tasks, such as grading and attendance tracking, was another significant advantage. Many participants appreciated tools that allowed for automatic grading of quizzes and assignments, enabling them to focus more on content delivery and student interaction. For example, “Grading used to take hours, but with the platform’s automated tools, I can provide immediate feedback to students.” (P3)

Additionally, faculty noted that DLPs allowed them to monitor student progress effectively. Analytics features, such as tracking student activity and participation, provided valuable insights that were previously difficult to obtain.

Facilitating student engagement and interaction

Another key benefit identified was the ability of DLPs to enhance student engagement and interaction. Faculty members observed that features such as discussion forums, polls, and collaborative tools encouraged active participation from students. “The discussion board feature allows students to share their thoughts and ideas, which makes the learning experience more interactive and inclusive.” (P2)

In addition to fostering peer-to-peer interaction, DLPs were also recognized for facilitating real-time communication between faculty and students. For example, live chat and virtual office hours were highlighted as tools that made instructors more accessible to students. “Students who might hesitate to ask questions in class feel more comfortable reaching out via the platform’s messaging system.” (P1)

Moreover, multimedia capabilities were noted as enhancing the overall learning experience. Faculty members described how the integration of videos, quizzes, and interactive assignments made lessons more engaging and catered to diverse learning styles.

Enabling flexible and remote learning

The ability of DLPs to support flexible and remote learning was frequently cited as a transformative benefit, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Faculty members highlighted how these platforms ensured continuity of education despite disruptions. “The platform made it possible to transition to remote teaching overnight. Without it, we couldn’t have maintained our classes.” (P2)

Flexibility in terms of time and location was another significant advantage. Faculty noted that students could access course materials and complete assignments at their own pace, accommodating different schedules and learning needs. For instance, one instructor remarked, “Students appreciate being able to revisit recorded lectures and materials, which helps them grasp concepts more effectively.”

Additionally, DLPs were seen as leveling the playing field for students in remote or underserved areas. The accessibility of resources and the ability to participate in classes online ensured that geographical or logistical challenges did not hinder learning opportunities.

These findings demonstrate that DLPs offer significant benefits in terms of efficiency, engagement, and flexibility, making them valuable tools for modern education. The next section explores the challenges faculty members faced during the integration and use of these platforms.

Challenges of integration

This section explores the challenges faculty members encountered while integrating digital learning platforms (DLPs) into their teaching practices. The findings highlight issues related to technical difficulties, insufficient training or familiarity with the platforms, and resistance to change among some faculty members.

Technical issues

Technical difficulties were one of the most frequently mentioned challenges, reflecting infrastructural and operational barriers to effective DLP integration. Faculty members noted that unreliable internet connectivity often disrupted teaching activities, particularly during live sessions. “During peak hours, the internet would slow down or cut out completely, making it difficult to maintain class continuity.” (P3)

Another common complaint was system glitches within the platforms themselves. These included problems with uploading materials, accessing assignments, or using specific features. For example, “Sometimes the platform would crash just as I was about to start a class, and I had to resort to emailing materials to students instead.” (P4)

These technical issues not only frustrated faculty but also affected student engagement and learning outcomes. The findings underscore the need for robust technical infrastructure and reliable platform support to ensure smooth operation.

Lack of training or familiarity

Another significant challenge identified was the lack of sufficient training for faculty members on how to effectively use DLPs. Many participants reported that they were expected to adopt these platforms without receiving adequate guidance or support. “When we were introduced to the platform, there was no proper training. We had to figure things out on our own, which was time-consuming and stressful.” (P5)

Faculty members who were less tech-savvy found the learning curve particularly steep, expressing frustration with having to dedicate substantial time to understanding platform features. “I spent hours experimenting with the platform just to understand basic functionalities. It felt like a waste of time that could have been avoided with proper workshops.” (P4)

The absence of consistent, institutionalized support exacerbated these challenges, highlighting the importance of providing accessible and ongoing training for faculty to improve their confidence and competence with digital tools.

Resistance to change among faculty

Resistance to change was also identified as a barrier to successful DLP integration. Some faculty members were hesitant to adopt digital platforms, preferring traditional methods of teaching. “I’ve been teaching successfully without these platforms for years. It feels unnecessary to change something that already works.” (P5)

Others expressed skepticism about the pedagogical value of DLPs, perceiving them as tools that prioritize convenience over quality education. “I worry that these platforms encourage a more passive form of learning and reduce meaningful interactions with students.” (P4)

Additionally, generational differences appeared to play a role, with younger faculty members being more open to technology, while some senior faculty expressed reluctance due to unfamiliarity or discomfort with digital tools.

To address resistance, participants suggested fostering a culture of openness to innovation through professional development opportunities and showcasing the tangible benefits of DLPs in improving teaching and learning.

These findings illustrate that while DLPs have significant potential, their integration is hindered by technical issues, inadequate training, and resistance to change. The next section examines the implications of these challenges and provides recommendations for improving the adoption of digital learning platforms in higher education institutions in Kazakhstan.

Implications for Kazakhstani public universities

This sub-section expounds the implications of the findings on Kazakhstani state universities and lays down recommendations on how to deal with the issues revealed, with practical means of how institutions can apply solutions that would assist teachers in incorporating DLPs into teaching. The recommendation from this awareness aims at guiding institutions towards creating a learning environment conducive to the digitalization of higher education.

The study indicates that successful integration of DLPs requires a holistic approach to dealing with infrastructural, pedagogical, and cultural concerns. The key recommendations are:

1. Universities should prioritize internet connectivity, platform stability, and access to reliable IT support. This is crucial in order to neutralize technical snags that hinder teaching and learning.

2. Faculty-specific training programs should be prepared, targeting the basic and higher-level functionalities of the platform. Periodic workshops and practical exercises will instill confidence and capability among faculty members.

3. Institutions can generate a positive faculty attitude toward DLPs by highlighting their teaching advantages and documenting successful experiences through case studies. Facilitating involvement of faculty champions who promote use of DLPs can support overcoming resistance to change.

4. The adoption of digital platforms can be promoted among the faculty by recognition programs, workload adjustments, or practice innovation grants. Peer support groups may also inspire sharing of knowledge and collaborative working.

5. In order to be successful, platforms must be localized to meet the demands of Kazakhstani students and faculty. That entails multilingual interfaces and culturally attuned content.

To ensure integration of DLPs becomes a reality, universities can establish policies through the following real-world steps:

1. A support center can provide the faculty with technical assistance, training resources, and access to best practices. The support center can also serve as a place for troubleshooting and continuous professional development.

2. Peer mentoring programs can pair experienced faculty with new DLP faculty so that knowledge sharing and peer support can take place. Online forums or practice communities can also facilitate collaboration and idea sharing.

3. Piloting programs to try out platform use can uncover new issues and iron out implementation strategy prior to scaling up platform take-up. Feedback from students and faculty during piloting can influence improvement.

4. Mechanisms must be put in place by universities to assess how DLPs enhance teaching and learning quality. Ongoing evaluation would determine areas of improvement and inform policy changes.

5. Institutions should adopt a comprehensive digital education plan that is compatible with their mission and goals. This plan must include a master plan for infrastructure development, faculty training, and adoption of new technologies.

These strategies and suggestions emphasize the essential role of a supportive institutional context in enabling the faculty to leverage the potential of digital learning platforms. In addressing technical, pedagogical, and cultural challenges, Kazakhstani public universities can enable a more effective and sustainable integration of digital tools, ultimately contributing to an improved quality of education for both faculty and students.

Summary

This chapter overviewed the study findings, whereby it delved into experiences, perceptions, benefits, challenges, and wider implications of incorporating digital learning platforms (DLPs) into teaching practices of a Kazakh public university. The findings were categorized under leading themes that were proximal to the immediate research questions and provided a generalized overview of how the faculty employed DLPs.

The study revealed a range of attitudes towards DLPs, by faculty who see their future potential in streamlining teaching and enhancing student engagement and being mindful of comfort levels and uncertainty among some instructors. Testimonies of the field experience of faculty reported success in the way of effective organization of course material and enhanced communication, and problems like technical failures, steep learning curve, and insufficient institutional support.

The findings noted the strengths of DLPs, such as enhanced instructional effectiveness, supporting active learning, and adaptive and web-based pedagogy. There

were, nevertheless, also extremely significant challenges, ranging from constrained infrastructural facilities in terms of technology, an insufficiency of proper training, and resistance to change by faculties. These challenges revealed the need for intentional institutional interventions.

The results of the research had implications for public universities in Kazakhstani that necessitated investment in robust technical infrastructure, guaranteeing adequate training, enhancing an innovative environment, and modifying platforms according to indigenous needs. Reasonable strategies, such as the establishment of support centers, fostering staff collaboration, and testing projects, were proposed to facilitate effective integration of DLPs.

The report provides useful findings to the integration of digital platforms to the tertiary sector, and these are opportunities coupled with the prospects of development. The lessons are significant in the sense that they are very applicable in guiding institutional policies and practices in exploiting the potential of digital learning platforms to improve teaching and learning in Kazakhstani universities.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The main focus of this research examined how university teachers in Kazakhstan perceive digital learning platform utilization in their learning environment at a state institution. Multiple essential findings appeared from the research that illuminated both the advantageous features and obstacles related to integrating DLPs in higher education systems.

The research identified both positive and negative but mostly optimistic perspectives concerning DLPs from university faculty members. The research participants identified multiple operational advantages from these platforms as they allowed efficient material delivery and automatic grading and promoted increased student engagement. According to investigative evidence faculty members utilized DLPs to support active learning through functions such as discussion forums and quizzes in addition to real-time feedback tools. These platforms provide multiple learning approaches that enrich student educational experiences according to faculty members who used them. The positive perspectives about Distribute Learning Platforms (DLPs) were overshadowed by multiple challenges from faculty members who noted insufficient preparation as well as technical hurdles that existed alongside a general reluctance to adopt new educational methods. The steep learning curve of new technologies as perceived by first-time digital users inhibited their ability to seamlessly implement DLPs in teaching.

Connection with Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

These findings are highly aligned with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which theorizes that perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOUS) are direct determinants of technology adoption. The favorable faculty perceptions of Digital Learning Platforms (DLPs) for instance, their potential to enhance student engagement,

arrange material delivery, and provide flexible learning — demonstrate a high degree of perceived usefulness. However, challenges in the form of technical problems, institutional support shortage, and the learning curve with emerging technologies indicate significant barriers to ease of use. Those faculty members who had prior digital literacy and access to continuous training found DLPs easier to integrate, while those who did not have support reported frustration and resistance. These findings confirm the TAM model, showing that successful implementation of DLPs in higher education institutions is contingent not only on the perceived usefulness of the platforms but also on minimizing the effort and obstacles required for their effective use. Moreover, exogenous variables such as infrastructure, training facilities, and institutional policies had a significant impact on both PU and PEOU, which in turn influenced faculty attitudes and intentions regarding digital platform usage continuation.

Faculty Perceptions of Digital Learning Platforms

RQ 1 – What are the perceptions of the faculty members in the department of English in a north Kazakhstani public university regarding the integration digital learning platforms into their teaching activities?

As an answer to Research Question 1, the study expressed a variety of faculty attitudes toward the utilization of Digital Learning Platforms (DLPs) in pedagogy. At one extreme, several participants expressed positive attitudes toward the flexibility, accessibility, and innovativeness of the platforms. Faculty appreciated that DLPs facilitated asynchronous learning, content delivery was made simpler, and there were more opportunities for student engagement—especially useful during periods of remote learning. These findings are consistent with studies by Elm et al. (2023) and Karkouti (2021) that also describe faculty appreciation for flexibility and broader dissemination through DLPs.

That enthusiasm was tempered, nonetheless, by some major concerns. Several instructors identified increased workload, particularly in developing and digitizing content. Some were worried about the quality of teaching and communication online, doubting the effectiveness of virtual modalities compared to face-to-face pedagogical practice. This uncertainty aligns with findings from Viberg et al. (2021), noting while platforms such as Moodle and Teams were convenient, it was challenging for many teachers to facilitate substantial engagement and professional identity in the virtual environment.

Moreover, a lack of institutional support and training were also singled out by faculty in this research as fundamental barriers to both effective and confident use of the platform. These perceptions resonate with overarching structural concerns revealed within the Kazakhstani context. For instance, Yessekenova et al. (2022) found that while instructors valued the ease of use of such platforms as Google Classroom and Moodle, many were frustrated with inadequate infrastructure, a lack of ongoing support, and inadequate technical support. Similarly, Omarov and Tashkenbayev (2021) emphasized that pedagogical personnel, particularly at the regional universities, faced challenges in translating pedagogical approaches into online formats, referring to a significant lack of opportunities for professional development.

The empirical findings of this study therefore underline a clear tension between innovative possibilities of DLPs, on the one hand, and challenges of implementation in practice, on the other. While faculty see the transformative potential of digital platforms, their perceptions are strongly filtered through the reality of workload, training deficits, and pedagogical skepticism. The duality suggests that any attempt to promote the adoption of DLPs cannot simply trumpet the advantages but must also address the systemic and environmental challenges that continue to impinge on faculty use.

Faculty Experience with DLP Integration

RQ 2 – What are the experiences of the faculty members in the department of English in a north Kazakhstani public university regarding the integration of digital learning platforms into their teaching activities?

In response to Research Question 2, experiences of faculty members with integrating Digital Learning Platforms (DLPs) reflected a combination of success stories and persistent challenges, influenced by a range of institutional, technological, and individual considerations. Some of the participants mentioned comparatively smooth experiences in adopting digital pedagogy, attributing these to timely institutional interventions such as early training workshops, availability of basic infrastructure, and peer collaboration. These were typical examples of faculty who had some prior experience with using digital tools or those who were in departments that had more solid IT support structures.

More of the faculty, however, described more complex and often problematic experiences. Many of the participants indicated the sudden switch to online modalities—particularly during the pandemics, a "sink or swim" experience in which they had to redesign whole courses with inadequate time, resources, or training. One of the instructors mentioned having to learn new platforms "overnight" while, at the same time, maintaining teaching excellence and student interaction. These remarks echo the findings of Amhag et al. (2019) and Rahman et al. (2023), who observed that even as platforms such as Zoom and Teams enabled distance teaching, they also exerted huge amounts of pressure on instructors to reshape pedagogical content and manage increasingly fragmented digital classrooms.

Similarly, Bond et al. (2021) note that the transition to digital pedagogy is rarely smooth but is instead a complex balancing act of emergent roles, untested technologies,

and often heightened emotional labor. The study participants amplified this complexity, with some observing the emotional and cognitive burden of coping with platform glitches, student disengagement, and blurring of work-life boundaries in a virtual teaching environment.

Faculty level of experience and professional development access were key determinants of the way DLP integration was experienced. More digitally experienced or those who had already tested blended learning strategies were more at ease with adjusting their courses. Conversely, new users tended to report confusion and anxiety, especially when confronted with multifunctional systems or when required to resolve technical problems on their own. Additionally, disciplinary variations were a contributing factor. Language and social science teachers generally indicated a smoother transition to delivering content in digital media, but teachers of more practice-oriented or lab courses indicated significant difficulty in replicating activities done in class online.

In general, the findings suggest that faculty experiences with integrating DLPs are extremely contextual and varied, influenced by individual readiness, institutional support, and the nature of academic discipline. Successful integration, therefore, cannot be contingent on the availability of digital platforms per se—it must also consider the scaffolding and support mechanisms in place to facilitate faculty in this endeavor.

Challenges and Barriers to Effective Use of DLP

RQ 3 – What are the benefits and challenges of digital learning platforms in Kazakhstani higher educational institutions?

Addressing Research Question 3, the study identified a variety of principal challenges for teaching staff in successfully embedding Digital Learning Platforms (DLPs) within their pedagogic practice. These challenges harmonize with both Kazakhstani and

international evidence, pinpointing a combination of technological, institutional, and human factors that limit the scope for digital change in higher education.

One of the most pressing issues cited by participants was having limited digital competence, particularly in older scholars or those with less experience with ed-tech prior to the pandemic. A few participants confessed that it was difficult for them to be proficient in certain basic platform activities such as creating quizzes, working with discussion boards, or even video conferencing software effectively. This is consonant with the finding of Gudmundsdottir and Hatlevik (2020) that lower levels of digital skills often have lower levels of confidence and reduced pedagogical innovation.

The second major challenge was technical and infrastructural constraints. They frequently mentioned unstable internet, out-of-date hardware, and insufficient IT support as typical obstacles. For those operating in regional or rural areas, these issues were even more severe, with some teachers indicating total dependence on individual devices and internet subscription to carry out their teaching functions. The foregoing findings agree with Watermeyer et al. (2021) and Selwyn (2020) global reports, which observe that such infrastructural shortcomings not only affect the delivery quality of teaching but also augment educational inequalities geographically and institutionally.

In addition to technical challenges, institutional issues also complicated efficient DLP adoption. Actors bemoaned the absence of formal training programs, inconsistent platform policies across departments, and minimal time allocated to digital course design. One of the lecturers noted that although their university mandated the use of tools like Moodle or Google Classroom, there were hardly any instructions given on how to integrate these tools meaningfully into pedagogy. Such findings support the contention made by Phillips et al. (2021) and Czerniewicz et al. (2021), who state that top-down digital

strategies are generally bound to fail in the absence of comprehensive implementation guidance and participative planning.

Placed within the Kazakhstani environment, these challenges share some similarities as well as unique features. Like teachers everywhere, Kazakhstani teachers face the general challenges of learning to teach in a digital way in an environment of minimal support and training. However, some local factors, e.g., patchy infrastructure from region to region, centralized decision-making within public institutions, and relatively new digital cultures provide additional levels of complexity to the adoption process. Employees in this study often reported feeling isolated in navigating these challenges, with institutional resources to hand sometimes trailing behind policy intentions.

Lastly, these hindrances directly affected daily teaching work, from slowed content delivery to reduced student interaction and increased workload because of troubleshooting and reformatted material. Although participants were generally positive regarding the potential of DLPs, they emphasized that without systemic reforms in training, infrastructure, and institutional planning, the platforms are at risk of being administrative weights rather than pedagogical innovation tools.

Institutional and Practical Implications

In answer to Research Question 4, this discussion considers the overall institutional and policy-level consequences of integrating Digital Learning Platforms (DLPs) into higher education, i.e., in the Kazakhstani public university setting. The findings from the present study, combined with inferences from past literature, substantiate that the correct digital transformation cannot be guaranteed through the availability of platforms but requires concerted, long-term institutional endeavor.

Among the respondents' strands of response was the demand for long-term digital planning that goes beyond short-term crisis reaction like the COVID-19 pandemic. The faculty emphasized that the lack of an explicitly articulated, forward-looking vision on digital learning in their institution hindered the long-term and significant use of DLPs. Other contributors described the strategy in place as "reactive rather than proactive," whereby emerging digital tools were being brought forward without sufficient consideration for integration, sustainability, and alignment of educational intent. Such is corroborated by research work by Leal Filho et al. (2023) that suggests strategic digital roadmaps based on inclusive planning, equity, and developing technology infrastructure.

Members also considered the absence of routine professional training as an institutionally essential lack. Most of them referred to the need for systematic, repetitive training involving technical and pedagogical aspects of DLP adoption. Single ad hoc or workshop-type activity was not felt as sufficient for fostering the digital competence needed to implement sustainable adaptation. These are in line with recommendations by Howard et al. (2021), who are of the opinion that lecturers need continuous learning and work opportunities to engage more meaningfully with digital pedagogies.

Other than this, there was also unanimous support for greater technical and pedagogical support. Some of the lecturers said that insufficient availability of IT support, lack of instructional designers, and poor communication channels tended to make them "sort things out for themselves." Besides undermining the rollout of DLP, this also left them frustrated and burnt out. Most particularly in rural universities and poor settings, the digital divide was seen as an institutional and technology issue—where structural inequalities limit the potential of equal delivery of education.

Policy implications that can be derived from the findings are that central education officials and university administrators need to give priority to digital infrastructure and

support services, especially in the non-urban campuses. Some participants suggested specific departments or units in the universities to manage digital transformation activities, e.g., curriculum planning, technical support, and teacher training. Others suggested integrating policy guidelines that encourage digital innovation, quality control, and the incorporation of digital skills into the processes used to measure and construct the faculty.

The Role of Digital Divorce in Higher Education

The digital divide is also a salient equity issue in higher education, particularly with the growing centralizing role of Digital Learning Platforms (DLPs) in teaching and learning. Findings of this research clarify how both students and faculty are victimized by asymmetrical digital access—not just in the sense of difference in internet connectivity or device ownership but also in the differential development of digital competencies and institutional support. These inequalities raise relevant questions about who gets left behind in the digital transformation of education and why.

Faculty participants' experiences mirrored and echoed overall global trends described by Afzal et al. (2023) and Czerniewicz et al. (2021), highlighting that structural inequalities are more likely to be amplified—than reduced—by digital interventions. In Kazakhstan, these inequalities were felt most acutely within the regional universities and among the less experienced teacher groups in terms of pedagogical technology use. Some teachers also noted that their colleagues at rural campuses could not rely on stable internet access, prompt technical assistance, or opportunities for pedagogical growth, all of which impacted their abilities to use DLPs effectively.

These institution- and geography-based inequalities were complemented by the problems on the student side as well. Participants worried about students' unequal access to digital devices, especially with pandemic-forced lockdowns when entirely online teaching became the norm. As reported in Yessekenova et al. (2022), many students in Kazakhstan,

particularly from low-income or rural areas, lacked laptops, reliable Wi-Fi, and digital literacy competencies, which led to lower participation, missed assignments, and even course drop-out. Teachers felt helpless when students disappeared from online courses, knowing that the actual cause was typically digital exclusion rather than motivation or interest.

Instructors also noted that the digital divide was not only technological, it was pedagogical and social. Students who were inexperienced with the conventions of online learning (e.g., engaging with discussion forums, submitting work via LMSs, engaging with Zoom-based classrooms) required more scaffolding. But the necessity to shift so quickly, along with the absence of instructor training, meant that a lot of this did not take place.

1. These findings are consistent with international literature summoning institutions to adopt targeted, equity-minded responses. Some of the potential strategies include:

2. Provision of devices and subsidized internet to vulnerable employees and students.

3. Investment in digital literacy initiatives targeting students and instructors, particularly in under-resourced settings.

4. Conducting digital equity audits purposed to reveal systemic access disparities on campuses.

5. Decentralizing digital support services in a manner that regional and rural campuses are well served by IT and pedagogical support.

Last, closing the digital divide must include an acknowledgment that technology is not enough to equalize the playing field. As this study illustrates, digital inclusion must be set within broader institutional frameworks that address economic, geographic, and social inequalities. Without such determination, efforts to modernize higher education via DLPs risk compounding the very inequalities they strive to overcome.

Summary

The findings of the research in this paper are congruent with other scholarly research regarding the implementation of digital technologies within higher education. DLPs are shown to improve learning outcomes according to Rahiman & Kodikal (2023) and Velychko et al. (2021) as they increase learner engagement and offer flexible learning avenues. The authors supported these facts on shared challenges which include technological failures in addition to weak support systems and teacher opposition to effective integration. The findings of the study confirm established evidence where challenges in implementing DLPs primarily exist through system failure as well as poor training programs for extensive use of DLPs. The global literature (Afzal et al., 2023) conceptualized digital divide as inequalities in the access to technology while this condition is found within global studies as well as in the Kazakhstani setting. The distribution of reliable digital tools among learners unevenly prompted faculty members' concerns regarding DLPs' effectiveness because it is a universal issue.

According to this study, different instructors demonstrate different types of interaction with DLPs during work.

The extent of the acceptance of the digital platforms by the participants was dependent on both technological familiarity and the extent of their institutional support. The utilization of trained DLPs by the instructors was more motivated as they were fully briefed with professional development of how to utilize them.

The users who were not technology literate, as well as those who were unable to obtain assistance in solving technical issues felt a sense of detachment accompanied by frustration. According to Viberg et al. (2021) and this research, it is found that the faculty members choose digital tools since they understand their benefits and they are easy to use.

The availability of tools with ongoing supportive activities enhances faculty member volition in utilizing digital learning platforms by building their digital learning abilities and motivating them. Successful implementation of DLPs requires that institutions provide technical assistance as well as motivational initiatives to faculty members in an attempt to achieve maximum involvement.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter synthesizes the key findings of the study and highlights their implications for policy, practice, and future research on integrating digital learning platform (DLP) into higher education in Kazakhstan. The research sought to explore the perceptions, experiences, and challenges of the faculty members as they navigate the process of adopting and implementing DLPs in a technologically changing learning environment. Along the way, the study contributes to a growing body of literature on digital transformation in education by offering context-specific data from a Kazakhstani public university.

The findings presented in this study reveal a multifaceted picture of DLP adoption one shaped by varying levels of digital literacy, access to institutional resources, faculty make-up, and infrastructural constraints. Although the participants identified pedagogical potential of DLPs in maximizing instruction quality, flexibility, and learner engagement, they also acknowledged critical barriers in terms of insufficient training, technical issues, and unequal access to technology for students. These findings support calls for focused initiatives closing gaps in technology, faculty support, and inclusive digital pedagogies.

This chapter begins by summarizing the most important findings of the research, followed by a critical discussion of its limitations and the direction it suggests for future research. It concludes with policy and practical suggestions for enabling more inclusive and efficient integration of DLPs in tertiary education institutions in Kazakhstan and globally. Through this conclusion, the study aims to inform decision-makers and educators on the conditions needed for a more sustainable and inclusive digital learning environment.

The research focused on understanding faculty member perspectives as well as their encounters when utilizing digital learning platforms (DLPs) in Kazakhstan higher education institutions. The data demonstrates that university staff members understand

how DLPs create distinct advantages for instructional efficiency together with student enthusiasm and educational flexibility. Technology platforms enable educational content that fosters learning engagement while delivering instant assessment help students learn well without limitations. The implementation of DLPs raises different hindrances to proper integration. The problems with technical issues combined with insufficient training and resistance to change prevented DLPs from becoming effortlessly adopted. The perceptions of DLPs among faculty members depended on their technological understanding and previous experiences together with their resource access to support. The conservation of DLPs was higher among the younger teaching personnel who exhibited strong technological competencies although inexperienced or older professors battled with implementation. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds encounter limited effectiveness in DLPs because they face digital access barriers which include challenges with securing technology and dependability of internet connections.

Limitations

My investigation yielded beneficial findings but certain research boundaries should be understood. The investigation examined a solitary Kazakhstan public university which fails to account for diverse perspectives of teachers among institutions throughout the nation. The research findings lack a direct application to other universities in Kazakhstan together with institutions from different socio-economic countries. The adoption of semi-structured interviews during the research process entails limitations because the method lets researcher biases and the individual perspectives of participants affect the results. Some of the data came from self-reported measures in this study that could be subject to a social desirability bias leading participants to prove positive experiences while underreporting challenges.

Recommendations for Future Research

The study creates multiple research possibilities which explore digital learning platforms in higher education. The research needs to examine how different academic fields affect faculty members' experiences with DLP integration. The implementation experience of faculty members would probably exhibit distinct challenges as well as advantages depending on their academic field between research-driven subjects like the sciences and knowledge-based fields like the humanities. Additional research must increase the study's sample base and survey faculty from various United States institutions to make the findings more applicable. Longitudinal research will reveal progress in faculty opinions regarding digital platforms when members gain experience with technology and institutions improve their technological infrastructure. Research about students' viewpoints on DLPs including their usage behavior would create a complete understanding of digital tools' influence on educational experiences. Research outcomes will help policy creation and strategy development efforts that aim to improve DLP adoption processes for higher education institutions.

Implications for policy and practice

The research findings demonstrate that policymakers need to establish specific programs to overcome teaching resource challenges in DLP implementation. Educational policymakers together with administrators need to establish mandatory training sessions and technical assistance programs for their teaching staff. The use of workshops with online education and practical training sessions will create opportunities for faculty members to build self-assurance in working with DLPs. The research finds evidence that universities need to enhance their digital structures through improved investments to guarantee equivalent access of needed tools and resources for students and faculty members. The digital divide needs urgent attention because it will determine how

effectively DLPs prevent worsened educational social inequalities. According to the research findings the transition to digital learning should proceed step by step instead of abrupt changes because it offers faculty members time to adjust while receiving appropriate technological support.

The implementation success of DLPs depends on several simultaneous approaches to maximize their potential benefits for teaching and learning in higher education. Higher education institutions need to supply continuous educational development together with sufficient technical help as well as better digital systems to provide equal access across faculty members and students. The analysis of barriers within this study results in improvements both of digital learning platform adoption rates and development of an inclusive learning environment across institutions. The research delivers critical findings regarding digital transformation in education which provides concrete recommendations to improve DLP integration in Kazakhstani universities as well as educational institutions worldwide. Cognizant of these findings researchers should direct their future studies toward investigating the enduring effects of DLP implementation as well as faculty participation tactics and how students experience digital educational resources to fully describe their effects on academic systems.

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Appendix A: AI Declaration Form



Thesis Title: Experiences of English Language Faculty Members of a Public University in Kazakhstan regarding Digital Learning Platforms Integration in Higher Education

Declaration of the Use of Generative AI

I hereby declare that I have read and understood NUGSE's policy concerning appropriate use of AI and composed this work independently (please check one):

- with the use of artificial intelligence tools, or
 without the use of artificial intelligence tools.

(If you have used AI tools as defined in the GSE policy document, please complete the rest of this form.)

During the preparation of this thesis/examination, I used ChatGPT, Quillbot, Gemini to help me with planning, organizing and editing grammatical mistakes.

I also declare that I

- am aware of the capabilities and limitations of AI tool(s),
 have verified that the content generated by AI systems and adopted by me is factually correct,
 am aware that as the author of this thesis I bear full responsibility for the statements and assertions made in it,
 have submitted complete and accurate information about my use of AI tools in this work, and
 acknowledge that there may be disciplinary consequences if I have not followed NUGSE's guidelines regarding AI appropriate use.

Name: Aibek Akhmetkaliyev

Signature:

Date: 26.04.2025

Appendix B: Consent Letters

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Faculty Perceptions of Integration of Digital Learning Platforms in Higher Education in Kazakhstan

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a research study on faculty perceptions of the integration of digital learning platforms in higher education in Kazakhstan. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences, challenges, and benefits perceived by faculty members in relation to these platforms.

PROCEDURE: You will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. The interview has [number] questions, which will be audio-recorded with your consent. The interview will take place online/zoom/teams]. You will receive the interview transcription for your verification and approval. Your identity and your answers will be kept confidential, and your personal information will not be disclosed.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: The risks associated with this study are minimal. There may be some minor discomfort in discussing challenges or issues you have encountered. In such cases, I will remind you that the participation will be voluntary, and you can refuse to answer the question or withdraw at any time without consequences. I will pause or stop the interview if I notice you are showing signs of discomfort. The recordings and notes will be stored in the password-protected devices throughout the duration of the study to prevent unauthorized access. A recording will be deleted immediately after it is transcribed. All the data will be deleted two years after the completion of the thesis.

The benefits which may reasonably be expected from this study include contributing to the development of strategies to enhance the use of digital learning platforms in higher education, which could improve teaching and learning outcomes.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand that your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You also have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals, but your identity will not be revealed.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, Dr. Aisi Li (li.aisi@nu.edu.kz).

Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the GSE Research IREC subcommittee at gse.irec@nu.edu.kz.

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep. According to the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan an individual under the age of 18 is considered a child. Any participant falling into that category should be given the Parental Consent Form and have it signed by at least one of his/her parent(s) or guardian(s). In addition, the child must give assent to participate in the research. Both parent consent and child assent scripts should be included with this application.

Appendix C: Recruitment Emails

Invitation to Participate in Research

“Experiences of English Language Faculty Members of a Public University in Kazakhstan regarding Digital Learning Platforms Integration in Higher Education”

Dear [Participant's Name],

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Aibek Akhmetkaliyev, and I am a Master’s student at the Graduate School of Education at Nazarbayev University. I am currently conducting a research study as part of my master’s thesis under the supervision of Professor Aisi Li. The study is titled “Experiences of English Language Faculty Members of a Public University in Kazakhstan regarding Digital Learning Platforms Integration in Higher Education”.

The purpose of this research is to explore faculty members' experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to the integration of digital learning platforms (e.g., Moodle, Blackboard, Google Classroom) in teaching and research activities. By understanding your experiences, the study aims to contribute to improving the use of these platforms in higher education institutions.

I am reaching out to invite you to participate in this study. Participation involves a one-on-one interview, which will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The interview will be conducted at a time and location convenient for you and will be audio-recorded with your permission. Your responses will be confidential, and all identifying information will be removed in the final report. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without any consequences.

If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please reply to this email at your earliest convenience. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have and provide further details about the research.

Thank you very much for considering this request. Your participation would be highly valuable in contributing to this research and potentially improving digital learning experiences in higher education.

Best regards,

Aibek Akhmetkaliyev

Master's Student, MSc in Educational Leadership

Nazarbayev University

Email: aibek.akhmetkaliyev@nu.edu.kz

Supervisor:

Professor Aisi Li

Email: aisi.li@nu.edu.kz

Зерттеуге қатысуға шақыру

«Жоғары білім берудегі цифрлық оқыту платформаларына қатысты Қазақстандағы мемлекеттік университеттің ағылшын тілі оқытушыларының тәжірибесі»

Құрметті [қатысушының аты],

Бұл электрондық пошта сізді жақсы табады деп сенемін. Менің атым Айбек Ахметқалиев. Мен Назарбаев Университетінің Жоғары білім беру мектебінің магистрантымын. Мен қазір кандидаттық диссертациямның бір бөлігі ретінде профессор Айсидің жетекшілігімен ғылыми зерттеу жүргіземін.

Зерттеу «Жоғары білім берудегі сандық оқыту платформаларына интеграциялану туралы Қазақстандағы мемлекеттік университеттің ағылшын тіліндегі оқытушыларының тәжірибелері» .

Бұл зерттеудің мақсаты - профессор-оқытушылар құрамының тәжірибесін, қабылдауды және сандық оқыту платформаларын интеграциялауға байланысты мәселелерді зерттеу (мысалы, Moodle,

Қара тақтасы, Google Crossult) Оқу-зерттеу жұмыстарында. Сіздің тәжірибеңізді түсіну арқылы зерттеу жоғары оқу орындарында осы платформаларды қолдануды жақсартуға өз үлесін қосуға бағытталған.

Мен сіздерді осы зерттеуге қатысуға шақырамын. Қатысуға бір-бірден сұхбат қатысады, ол шамамен 45-тен 60 минутқа дейін кетеді. Сұхбат сіз үшін ыңғайлы уақытта және орналасқан жері бойынша өткізіледі және сіздің рұқсатыңызбен аудио жазылады. Сіздің жауаптарыңыз құпия болып табылады және барлық

сәйкестендірілетін ақпарат қорытынды есепте алынып тасталады. Қатысу толығымен ерікті түрде,

Сіз кез-келген уақытта ешқандай салдарсыз шыға аласыз.

Егер сіз қатысуға қызығушылық танытсаңыз немесе қосымша ақпарат алғыңыз келсе, осы электрондық поштаға сіздің ертерек ыңғайлылығыңызбен жауап беріңіз. Мен сізде қандай да бір сұрақтарға жауап беруге және зерттеулер туралы қосымша мәліметтер келтіргеніме қуаныштымын.

Осы сұранысты қарағаныңыз үшін көп рахмет.

Сіздің қатысуыңыз осы зерттеуге өз үлесін қосып, жоғары білім берудегі цифрлық тәжірибені жақсартуда өте маңызды болар еді.

Ең жақсы тілектер,

Айбек Ахметқалиев

Магистрант, білім беру саласындағы магистратура

Назарбаев Университеті

Электрондық пошта: aibek.ahmetkaliyev@nu.edu.kz

Жетекшісі:

Профессор Аиси Ли

Электрондық пошта: aisi.li@nu.edu.kz

Приглашение принять участие в исследованиях

«Опыт преподавателей английского языка государственного университета в Казахстане в отношении интеграции платформ цифровых обучения в высшее образование»

Уважаемый [имя участника],

Я надеюсь, что это электронное письмо находит вас хорошо. Меня зовут Айбек Ахметкалиев, я являюсь магистрантом в сфере управления образованием в Назарбаев Университете. В настоящее время я провожу исследование в рамках диссертации моего научного руководителя под руководством профессора Айси Ли. Исследование называется «Опыт преподавателей английского языка государственного университета в Казахстане в отношении интеграции платформ цифровых обучения в высшем образовании».

Целью данного исследования является изучение опыта, восприятия и проблем преподавателей, связанных с интеграцией платформ цифрового обучения (например, Moodle, Blackboard, Google Classroom) в преподавании и исследовательской деятельности. Понимая ваш опыт, исследование направлено на то, чтобы способствовать улучшению использования этих платформ в высших учебных заведениях.

Я обращаюсь, чтобы пригласить вас принять участие в этом исследовании. Участие включает в себя интервью один на один, который займет примерно от 45 до 60 минут. Интервью будет проводиться в то время, удобное для вас, и будет записано на аудиозапись с вашего разрешения. Ваши ответы будут

конфиденциальными, и вся идентификационная информация будет удалена в окончательном отчете. Участие совершенно добровольно и вы можете уйти в любое время без каких-либо последствий.

Если вы заинтересованы в участии или хотите получить больше информации, пожалуйста, ответьте на это электронное письмо с самым ранним удобством. Я был бы рад ответить на любые ваши вопросы, и предоставить более подробную информацию о исследовании.

Большое спасибо за рассмотрение этого запроса.

Ваше участие было бы очень ценным в участии в этом исследовании и потенциально улучшать цифровой учебный опыт в высшем образовании.

С наилучшими пожеланиями,

Aibek Akhmetkaliyev

Студент Мастера, MSC в области образовательного лидерства

Университет Назарбаева

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Руководитель:

Профессор Аиси Ли

Электронная почта: aisi.li@nu.edu.kz

Appendix D: Data Collection Instruments

Semo-structured interview questions

1. General Perceptions and Experience:

- Can you describe your overall experience with using digital learning platforms in your teaching?
- How do you perceive the role of digital learning platforms in higher education today?
- How comfortable are you with using these platforms for your teaching and research activities?

2. Perceived Benefits:

- What are some benefits you have experienced or observed from integrating digital platforms into your teaching?
- How have digital platforms influenced your ability to engage with students or manage your teaching workload?

3. Challenges and Barriers:

- What are the primary challenges you face when using digital learning platforms in your teaching?
- Have you encountered any technical issues or limitations with the platforms? If so, how did they affect your teaching?
- How do you feel about the level of support and training available for using these platforms effectively?

4. Faculty and Institutional Support:

- How would you evaluate the support provided by your institution in terms of infrastructure, training, and technical assistance for using digital platforms?

- What improvements or additional support do you think would help you use digital platforms more effectively?

5. Impact on Teaching and Learning:

- How have digital learning platforms changed your approach to teaching? Have they influenced how you structure your lessons or interact with students?
- In your experience, how have digital platforms impacted student engagement and learning outcomes?

6. Adoption and Adaptation:

- How do you feel about the process of adopting new digital tools or platforms in your institution?
- What factors make it easier or harder for you to integrate digital platforms into your daily teaching practices?

7. Digital Divide and Equity:

- Do you think all faculty members and students have equal access to digital tools and platforms? Why or why not?
- How do you think the digital divide affects the use and effectiveness of digital learning platforms in higher education?

8. Future Improvements and Recommendations:

- What do you think could be done to improve the integration of digital learning platforms in higher education in Kazakhstan?
- What recommendations would you make to administrators or policymakers to enhance the effectiveness of these platforms?

9. Reflections on Digital Transformation:

- How do you see the role of digital learning platforms evolving in higher education over the next few years?

- What impact do you think digital platforms will have on the future of teaching and research in your institution?

Appendix E: Data Analysis – Transcript and Coding Samples

Excerpt from Interview Transcript	Code
<p>R: Can you describe your overall experience with using digital learning platforms in your teaching?</p>	
<p>P1: I have been using digital learning platforms for almost my whole teaching career, that is for nearly 7 years. In the beginning, it was just to optimize some educational processes and to try to integrate interactive activities into the classroom, later I started to use them more actively and for different purposes.</p>	<p>Ease of use Learning curve Integration in teaching</p>
<p>R: How do you perceive the role of digital learning platforms in higher education today?</p>	
<p>P1: For me, DLP facilitate active learning, conditions for better individual or collaborative tasks, help motivate students to learn the subject and keep them engaged in the big-sized and multi-level groups.</p>	<p>Integration in teaching</p>
<p>R: How comfortable are you with using these platforms for your teaching and research activities?</p>	
<p>P1: I find it convenient. As a person who always tries to be up-to-date with technologies and is online all the time, I</p>	<p>Student engagement</p>

am trying to incorporate DLP in teaching or in any work that I do.

Resource accessibility

R: What are some benefits you have experienced or observed from integrating digital platforms into your teaching?

P1: There are numerous benefits to incorporating technology into education. Firstly, students generally support this approach. In today's digital age, relying solely on books and notepads feels outdated. When lessons incorporate modern technology, students tend to be more engaged and enthusiastic about their studies. Secondly, using digital tools eliminates the need for creating and printing worksheets, which helps conserve paper and ink. Furthermore, technology brings diversity and interactivity into the classroom. Various digital platforms offer different tools that facilitate individual, pair, or group work, enhancing the overall classroom experience and ensuring that every student is actively involved, leaving no room for disengagement.

Moving beyond books and notepads.

R: How have digital platforms influenced your ability to engage with students or manage your teaching workload?

P1: Managing a large number of students in study groups and working with under-equipped classrooms presents various challenges. However, digital platforms empower teachers to engage all students equally and involve them in the learning process throughout the entire lesson. Additionally, the automated interactive activities offered by these platforms come

Easier assessment, tracking progress, collecting student work.

with diverse features that streamline teachers' tasks, including manual assessment, progress monitoring, and collection of students' works.

R: What are the primary challenges you face when using digital learning platforms in your teaching?

P1: The primary challenge is to identify a platform that is both convenient for teachers and students and effective in enhancing the educational process. It should be well-supported by developers, user-friendly, and easy to learn for use at home as part of self-directed learning, as well as in the classroom. Additionally, it should be compatible with various devices and offer multiple subscription plans, ensuring at least one option is affordable for educators.

Usability, affordability, compatibility.

R: Have you encountered any technical issues or limitations with the platforms? If so, how did they affect your teaching?

P3: Yes, I have. There is a platform that I use all the time to show presentations, to do interactive tasks and to revise and check tests. Recently they put limitations on the quantity of projects that can be made on the account. They have lagging features that are not working on students' devices, some features are internet-intensive. That can be upsetting, or withhold the learning but I don't pay much attention to that and try to find the solution and continue regardless of the difficulties.

Technical issues

R: How do you feel about the level of support and training available for using these platforms effectively?

P1: Digital platforms provide guides and on-screen tips on how to use features, there are video training, explanations and

contacts to address any issues. So, I think at least a popular and widely used platform provides decent support.

R: How would you evaluate the support provided by your institution in terms of infrastructure, training, and technical assistance for using digital platforms?

P1: When discussing the training provided by educational institutions, I can share my experience at my university, where we are strongly encouraged to engage in workshops, courses, and advanced training focused on digital technologies in education. Earlier this year, I took part in a Coursera training program offered by our university, which centred on online teaching and the various platforms available for educational purposes. Additionally, we have an IT department dedicated to assisting with any issues related to devices or the learning management system utilized at our university.

Workshops, trainings

R: How do you feel about the process of adopting new digital tools or platforms in your institution?

P3: I feel that my institution does its best to integrate the latest technologies and support the usage of digital technologies in the classroom. However, the transition is still slow, especially with older teaching staff and not all campuses are equally well equipped.

Slow transitions

R: Do you think all faculty members and students have equal access to digital tools and platforms? Why or why not?

P2: When discussing the digital platforms or management systems supported by our institution and our partners, we typically encounter no issues, as all current students and staff have full access and support. However, we face challenges due to the unreliable internet connectivity across the

Full access and support

university area, which can hinder access to certain sites and platforms.

R: How do you think the digital divide affects the use and effectiveness of digital learning platforms in higher education?

P2: It would be great if all students and teachers could be provided with the latest equipment and fast-paced internet. It could enhance the learning process and optimize the work of higher educational institutions.

Optimizing learning process

R: What recommendations would you make to administrators or policymakers to enhance the effectiveness of these platforms?

P3: Make it affordable, less resource intensive, and more user-friendly with support of different devices.

Affordability
