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ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORMS:
A RETROSPECTIVE AND PROSPECTS

The paper is devoted to the online education platforms that play an important role in today education. Some retrospective and future trends of their development are presented. The kinds of online platforms and their essential features are also under consideration.

Nowadays online education is becoming more and more popular all around the world. As we know, technology has changed the way we do our day-to-day activities, such booking tickets, banking, networking etc. Another factor influencing the development of this type of learning is changing the way we work. To make a successful career young people have to keep up with all innovations via online learning. As a result, there are many platforms with courses which help millions of people improve skills or even gain new ones. What is more, if you are not able to get a degree or qualification that you like or you have not any opportunity to go to another city or study at a prestigious university, online education is really useful.

Online platform is a specially developed platform which uses Internet technology for the design and development of teaching and learning purposes. [4, c.5]

"A learning platform is an integrated set of interactive online services that provide trainers, learners, and others involved in education with information, tools and resources to support and enhance educational delivery and management".

The best-known online platform is Coursera. There you can find courses in various areas of knowledge. The project offers the courses in Physics, Engineering sciences, Humanities and Arts, Medicine, Biology, Mathematics, Computer Science, Economics and Business. In addition, there are many other online platforms, such as:

- ✓ Prometheus
- ✓ edX
- ✓ Udacity,
- ✓ MIT OCW,
- ✓ Stanford online.
- ✓ Course Buffet

The platforms function as an online classroom where instructors can hold discussions, upload readings, show videos and play audio, carry out learning activities, make announcements and assess and grade student work. They store and deliver materials developed in a variety of different formats — everything from MS Office documents to videos and third-party applications. They support synchronous (at the same time) and asynchronous (not at the same time) interactions between faculty and students and students and students [2, c. 50]. Online learning management systems can be hosted locally or remotely, "in the cloud" (Moodle Rooms or Blackboard).

In fact, since 1728 the concept of distance education has remained the same: only communication channels have changed. Almost three hundred years ago Mr. Caleb Philips became the first organizer of the distance education system, placing an announcement in the Boston newspaper about recruiting students from the suburbs for quick writing and accounting courses [3, c. 10]. Lessons were sent by regular mail once a week. Favourable conditions for development of distance or online education was the regular postal services. Phillips's ad itself looked like this:

.. All citizens who wish to receive these skills,

 can be trained as well,

 as if they lived in Boston,

 with the help of several lessons,

 weekly mailed ..

Not long time ago all online training used to be very simple: here is a lecturer, he reads papers, sometimes drinks water, and we record the video and upload it onto the YouTube. Nowadays new key players in online education are developing their own LMS - Learning Management Systems. And these systems have to be constantly updated. Essentially all LMSs have "standard" or typical and uniform features, including:

- Analytics (with varying degrees of quality)
- Apps
- Assignment submission
- Discussion forum
- File upload/ download capacity
- Grading
- Instant messages
- Online calendar
- Online news and announcement (institution and course level)
- Online quiz
- Wiki
- Widgets that allow connections to social media [1, c. 44]

It should be mentioned that online education platforms even offer people to get a certificate of completion. So if you want to continue your study or get a specialized training, these certified centers of online education could provide you with all necessary learning materials, test your knowledge and skills and issue a certificate.

In conclusion, we would like to say that online education platforms are a great source of various means for study encouraging the motivation and well-balance development for learners. The future trends of online education will be connected with development of new software and applications for testing practical skills, diversification of learning facilities and even assistance in employment.

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