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IMPACT OF LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMS AND BUSINESS DIGITIZATION ON ORGANIZATIONAL ADAPTABILITY

Abstract. The study examines the synergistic impact of lifelong learning (LLL) programs and digitalization on organizational adaptability, focusing specifically on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within Georgia's business landscape. In today's increasingly digital and competitive global market, SMEs face immense pressure to remain agile and innovative. This research emphasizes that the integration of employee development initiatives with digital transformation strategies not only enhances organizational resilience but also improves operational efficiency, enabling businesses to better navigate challenges and seize emerging opportunities.

Digitalization, as a transformative force, has redefined workflows, optimized processes, and expanded market reach for SMEs. However, the benefits of digital transformation can only be fully realized when employees possess the necessary skills to utilize these technologies effectively. Lifelong learning plays a critical role in equipping the workforce with up-to-date knowledge, fostering adaptability, and ensuring employees can leverage digital tools to drive innovation and productivity. By empowering employees through continuous education, organizations can create a culture of proactive learning and technological competence.

Despite their significance to Georgia's economy, SMEs often encounter barriers to fully embracing digital advancements. These challenges include limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of structured training programs. As a result, many SMEs struggle to adopt modern technologies and equip their teams with the skills required to sustain competitiveness in a rapidly evolving market. This study highlights these critical gaps and seeks to address how strategic investments in both digital transformation and skill development can enable SMEs to overcome such limitations.

Employing a mixed-methods approach, this research explores how the combination of digital tools and lifelong learning programs contributes to key organizational outcomes, such as enhanced efficiency, streamlined decision-making, and improved employee engagement. It also underscores the role of supportive policies in strengthening the digital and educational ecosystems for Georgian SMEs, offering actionable insights into fostering long-term growth and competitiveness. Ultimately, the findings affirm that aligning continuous education with technological adoption is not just beneficial – it is essential for SMEs to thrive in an ever-changing business environment.

Keywords: Education, Digitization, Lifelong Learning, Organization Adaptability.

JEL Classification: D83; M53; L21; O33; I25.

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Introduction. The study researches the main role that LLL (Lifelong Learning) programs and digitization play on organization adaptability. The interaction of these two is critical as businesses strive not only to survive but also to maximize profits in an increasingly competitive environment, which may be addressed by the simultaneous use of these factors.

Digitalization has redefined the operational and strategic frameworks of organizations worldwide. The integration of digital technologies into all aspects of business, is fundamentally changing how companies operate, create and deliver value to customers. With the digital technologies advancement, it became necessary that organizations adapt to the technologies required for their business models. Digitization can improve efficiency, increase customer engagement and create new business opportunities. However, the rapid pace of digital transformation also presents significant challenges that require a flexible and adaptable organizational structure.

Along with digitization, lifelong learning is seen as a critical driver of organizational adaptation. Continuous development of employees, advancing their skills and knowledge through educational programs is said to equip the workforce to meet current and future business challenges. Lifelong education programs not only promote the personal growth of employees, but also enhance the collective capacity of organizations to respond effectively to change (Meister, 2017). As the business environment becomes increasingly complex, the value of lifelong learning and continuous professional development cannot be overstated.

Despite the recognized importance of digitization and lifelong learning, there is a paucity of integrated studies that examine their combined impact on organizational adaptability. The majority of studies is focused on the isolated effects of digital technologies or educational programs without examining the synergy between these two critical factors (Berman & Bell, 2011; Cedefop, 2015). The aim of this study is to identify this connection, assessed by both human capital and managers of small and medium (relatively vulnerable) businesses, deep digging into how digitalization and lifelong learning interact to strengthen organizational adaptation.

Background of the Research Problem: Georgian market is mostly represented by small and medium size enterprises. Although 64.4 percent of the turnover volume of the

business sector comes to large businesses, 15.0 percent to medium-sized businesses, and 20.7 percent to small businesses¹, taking into account that the incomes of small and medium-sized enterprises are much less than the incomes of large businesses, their number is the determinant of the percentage difference. These are relatively vulnerable organizations, that do not have in place proper development strategies that would predict their daily activities, have limited financial resources and difficulties in raising additional funds to increase performance. Such groups also find it difficult to recruit adequate human capital, since the processes of finding and hiring highly qualified employees is associated with high budgets. For this reason they have to select entry-level candidates who need more time to do the same job, as well as more time and attention from upper-level management to teach them new business processes and improve their knowledge of work performance techniques.

The subject of the study is small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the Georgian business sector, which constitute a vital but vulnerable component of the national economy. They face unique challenges in adapting to the rapidly evolving technological landscape and global market pressures. The object of this research is the combined impact of lifelong learning programs and business digitization on organizational adaptability. By exploring the link between continuous employee development and digital transformation, the study aims to uncover how these factors contribute to enhancing the resilience, efficiency, and adaptability of SMEs.

It is crucial for small and medium-sized enterprises to recognize both the necessity of digitization processes and the solutions this transformation offers. Equally important is understanding the timing of appropriate investment in the training and upskilling of human capital to maximize the benefits of digitalization. In our study we tried to show:

1. If the digitization process leads to the need to integrate lifelong learning education programs;
2. What is the impact of continuing education programs and digitalization on the adaptability of organizations and, accordingly, on its successful functioning in a changing environment, because today,

1 National Statistical Service of Georgia. Activity results - IV quarter of 2023. 2023. URL: <https://www.geostat.ge/en> (дата звернення: 17.11.2024).

as centuries ago, "THE ONLY CONSTANT IN LIFE IS CHANGE" (Heraclitus of Ephesus).

During the course of this research, which involved desk analysis, examination of international practices, and assessment of successful case studies, it became evident that the majority of companies operating within the Georgian market lack integrated digital technologies for workflow digitization. As a result, most employees do not perceive a need for additional training, participation in workshops, or engagement in various acceleration programs. This issue is particularly pronounced among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), where the integration of digital tools is essential. Such integration would optimize processes by reducing the unnecessary use of human and financial resources.

The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of continuing education programs and digitization on organizational adaptation. The research objectives were:

- to determine how continuous education programs can be structured to increase organizational adaptability to the digital environment, as it is crucial to update employees' skills and knowledge to match the rapid pace of technological change;
- to examine the role of digitization in facilitating or hindering organizational adaptation. Digital technologies can lead to profound changes in business processes and models;
- to identify synergies between lifelong learning and digitalization process to increase organizational adaptability. By investigating the interplay between these two factors, research allowed us to identify how they could be used in conjunction to maximize organizational flexibility and responsiveness.

In addition, it aimed to contribute to the academic literature by filling a gap in understanding the joint impact of these two critical factors on organizational adaptability.

Literature Review. The dynamic nature of present job markets, characterized by rapid technological advancements and evolving industry requirements, emerges a paradigm shift in the approach towards education and skill development (Prangnak, 2023). Lifelong learning (LLL) and continuous upskilling have developed as vital strategies for individuals and organizations alike to stay relevant in the face of contemporary challenges (Dennison, 2023).

The future of work and the ever-changing skills demand in the labor market has been a constant debate and a pressing challenge

for higher education institutions (HEI's). Economic growth across all sectors has been driven by the digitalization of public organizations and private enterprises. According to a report from Gartner (2020) digitalization-driven skills shifts can be described by three central tendencies; (a) new skills are emerging driven by accelerating technological advancements, (b) skills are evolving through shifts toward big-data oriented tools, and artificial intelligence; and (c) yesterday's skills are expiring as technology performs increased tasks faster and cheaper than humans, exemplified by the enormous influence of ChatGPT at the beginning of 2023. (Peters et al., 2023).

Lifelong learning (LLL) has become the overarching concept and vision for education, as reflected in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well, one of which, SDG 4, explicitly petitions countries to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'¹. Lifelong learning is rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages, in all life-wide contexts and through a variety of modalities that, together, meet a range of learning needs and demands².

Digitalization has been identified as the most significant technological trend that is changing both, society and business (Digitalization: A Literature Review and Research Agenda, João Carlos Gonçalves dos Reis et.al). There are tens of definitions by many authors but we chose to mention some of the most relevant to our topic. „Digitalization is one of the most significant on-going transformation of contemporary society and encompasses many elements of business and everyday life. Digitalization refers both to a transformation from “analogue” to “digital” (e.g. a shift from cash to electronic payments) and to the facilitation of new forms of value creation“ (e.g. Accessibility, availability, and transparency) (Hagberg, Sundstrom, & Egels-Zandén, 2016); “The integration of the analogue and digital worlds with new technologies that enhance customer interactions, data availability and business process (Eling & Lehmann,

1 Sustainable Development Goal 4. URL: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4> (дата звернення: 17.11.2024).

2 Lifelong learning. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. URL: <https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/unesco-institute/mandate/lifelong-learning> (дата звернення: 17.11.2024).

2018); “Digitalization refers to the use of digital technology, and probably digitized information, to create and harvest value in new ways” (Gobble, 2018); “Digitalization is the growing application of ICT across the economy “encompassing a range of digital technologies, concepts and trends such as artificial intelligence, the “Internet of Things” (IoT) and the Fourth Industrial Revolution” (Morley, Widdicks, & Hazas, 2018).

It is important to understand that the profitability of the company depends entirely on the skills of the people working in it, because regardless of the digital resources they use, if their technical knowledge and skills are not relevant to perform the assigned work effectively in a short period of time, there is always a gap between their motivation and their high level of work performance. Accordingly, companies should constantly try not only to find new employees with specific qualifications, but also to retrain the existing team as needed. Since there is a high probability that a person who is a new member of the team might not be able to adapt to the given environment, will be characterized by low loyalty to the company. However, an employee who has been working with us for several years knows our organizational culture to be very loyal to him, especially when we offer him educational programs tailored to his needs, which will modernize and improve his work behavior.

This is confirmed by Harvard’s Division of Continuing Education, which emphasizes that professional development can significantly increase job satisfaction, productivity and employee retention. Programs that offer continuing professional development help employees keep up with industry trends and keep their skills relevant to current skill requirements¹.

McKinsey emphasizes the need to align workforce development programs with business performance metrics to prove return on investment (ROI) for employers. The study highlights the need to develop these programs to strengthen the region’s capacity and ensure that they meet the needs of employers and workers through data-driven decision-making as a result of the program².

First of all, digitization helps the company to absorb new opportunities, easily adopt and implement new processes, the level of mobilization of employees is immediate, they can receive news and changes and quickly adapt. The digital world changes the scope of the company’s work, opens the borders and allows the organization to reach customers in any part of the world, it is the digital channels that ensure the rapid exchange of information, which allows companies to keep up with modern conditions.

Digitization of companies in Georgia remains one of the topical issues as small and medium enterprises do not have adequate resources to manage the transformation of processes, to alleviate the situation, a number of projects are planned, which are focused on the digitalization of startups in the regions, and more than one training and cognitive course is planned, which will ensure the increase in the level of acceptance of digital technologies among the population.

Taking into account the fact that almost 90% of Georgia’s economy is created by the SME sector, as presented in the paper „Fostering Business Development and Digitalisation in Georgia“ – (OECD 2022)³, the importance of strengthening the inclusion of digital technologies within the given sector, so that companies are ready for new changes and are ready to accept the challenges that appear in the market, becomes evident.

Digital technologies have the potential to increase the productivity of SMEs by providing easy access to strategic resources, expanding their customer base, leveraging scalability and network effects. Despite these advantages, the adoption of digital technologies by SMEs often lags behind larger corporations. The report “Fostering Business Development and Digitalisation in Georgia” – (OECD 2022)⁴ assesses the existing conditions affecting the digitalisation of SMEs, including connectivity, regulatory environment and levels of digital literacy. It reviews past policy achievements and predicts future actions, offering policy recommendations for each of these areas to improve digital adoption among SMEs.

Here we should consider the 2023 report “Digital Ecosystem Digest – Digitization

1 Why is Professional Development Important? Harvard Division of Continuing Education, 2021. URL: <https://professional.dce.harvard.edu/blog/why-is-professional-development-important/> (дата звернення: 17.11.2024).

2 Closing the skills gap: Creating workforce development programs that work for everyone. McKinsey & Company, 2017. <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Industries/Social%20Sector/Our%20Insights/Closing%20the%20>

skills%20gap%20Creating%20workforce%20development%20programs%20that%20work%20for%20everyone/Closing-the-skills-gap-Creating-workforce-development-programs-that-work-for-everyone.pdf (дата звернення: 17.11.2024).

3 Fostering Business Development and Digitalisation in Georgia. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/c6e27d8a-en>

4 Ibid.

Trends and Startup Ecosystem in Georgia". The paper shows the challenges of Georgia's startup ecosystem, that the adoption of digital technologies is not smooth at current stage. One of the main advantages of digitization highlighted by startups is the ability to reach new customer segments that were previously unreachable through traditional channels. In addition, digitalization enhances customer-centric capabilities, as the growing amount of digital customer data allows companies to develop products and services that are specifically tailored to their customers' preferences and needs (Zhgenti & Chkareuli, 2023). Within the framework of the same paper, a study was conducted on the type of computer activities people use in the work environment, 34.8% of respondents use software related to their profession, which help in the process of work, 61.2% out of 100% use them to receive and process electronic files (Zhgenti & Chkareuli, 2023).

It should be noted that after the post-pandemic crisis, the SME sector is now able to rehabilitate business processes and return to active work. Also, it was the pandemic that led to the integration of the digitization process at a relatively accelerated pace. However, there are still a number of issues that require the development of additional strengthening programs.

Research Methodology. The content of the conducted research addresses the digitization process, continuous education and their combined impact on companies, which means that the research had to involve many parties in order to get proper feedback and results. The research population was represented by the SME sector, such as startups from various directions or small entrepreneurs who have started operating for no more than 5 years. Interviewees also were people who had recently completed their education and now needed to refresh their knowledge and skills. First, we determined what kind of information was needed in order to achieve the research objective with reasoned responses, an even more important part was to select a data collection process to obtain data from the relevant audience.

Within the framework of the research, it was necessary to determine whether the digitization process led to the need for education programs and what effect digitalization and continuous education had on the adaptability of companies in case of simultaneous action. The topicality of the research led us to use quantitative and qualitative approaches for the data collection, which support the

theories presented in the research in different directions. We used a mixed approach as a research method, which allowed us to determine the impact of continuous education and digitalization on organizational adaptability. For the quantitative research, a structured questionnaire was developed and administered to a large number of employees and managers in various industries. Both the participants of various acceleration programs and the representatives of different professional sectors, such as lawyers, auditors, high-level management and middle-level representatives, who are involved in the coordination of different projects on a daily basis and for this have to learn and use completely different modern technologies.

The survey assessed the extent of digitization and continuous learning in various organizations, as well as the perceived impact on adaptability and other performance indicators. For example, how modern technologies improve the time and quality of work and how satisfied employees are when using them.

Closed type questions, as well as interval rating scales and open questions were used for the quantitative research, it was important that the participants in the questionnaire could record the result in the minimum time and we could draw correct conclusions based on the answers. The questionnaire was distributed through multiple sources in closed groups in order to avoid inappropriate and irrelevant responses that would affect the reliability and validity of the responses. 124 participants took part in the research. In the interests of the research, it was shared on the LinkedIn platform, where we meet employed people who are actively involved in business processes, and also shared in a closed Facebook group, which represented more than 100 accelerator participants who had a startup or were employed in various fields in leading organizations, it was also shared with representatives of various service fields, who are always trying to develop in their professional activities.

In addition to the quantitative research dedicated to the study of individuals, employees or self-employed start-up entities, due to the specificity of the topic, we selected and conducted a qualitative study in which only the founders of successful companies participated. Taking into account their own time resources, we chose online interviews, which consisted of 8 open and 3 closed questions and included all the issues that were included in the quantitative research

Table 1. Questions Used in Surveys and Interviews

Questions for Qualitative Surveys	Questions for Interviews
Which age category do you belong to?	Which sector does your company represent?
What is your current role in the organization?	The size of your organization?
What industry does your organization belong to?	How many years have you worked in your current organization?
The size of your organization?	Do you see the need for employees to constantly update their professional knowledge?
How often do you participate in continuing education programs?	Do you have internal training modules integrated into your workflow?
How much do you think these programs have improved your job-relevant skills? (Not improved 0-10 Very improved)	How focused is the company on providing employees with opportunities for continuous education?
Are continuing education programs provided by your employer or an external body?	To what extent are digital platforms integrated into the work process in your organization?
How supportive do you feel your organization is for continuing education? (No Max Support 0-10 I Feel Support)	What difficulties do you face when digitizing processes?
Rate your organization's digitalization level (low 0-10 high)	How adapted do you think your organization is to the modern business environment?
How often do you use digital tools in your daily work processes? (I don't use 0-10 I use daily)	To what extent did the digitization of the company lead to the need for continuous education (training, retraining, etc.) in your case?
In your opinion, how has digitalization affected your work efficiency? (negative 0-10 positive)	Does the combination of digitization and lifelong learning impact organizational performance?
Has digitalization led to significant changes in your organization? (no 0-10 yes)	-
How quickly does your organization adapt to technological change? (gradually 0–10 very fast)	-
Does updated knowledge help you find and implement modern technologies in your work processes? (no 0-10 yes)	-
How effective is the involvement of modern technologies in the process of work performance in terms of time? (not effective 0-10 very effective)	-
To what extent has the digitization of the company caused the need for continuous education (training, retraining, etc.) in your case? (No, I didn't need 1-10, yes, it was necessary)	-
How would you rate the flexibility of decision-making processes in your organization? (eg: how bureaucratic is this process currently and does it need digitization) (negative 0-10 positive)	-

questions, although the difference was that the founders of the companies shared their experience based on their own practice and mainly responded to the results. In addition to pre-prepared questions, there was an in-depth study of the issue.

Summarizing the information obtained from the research, it helped us to better see the intersection of the digitization process with continuing education from both perspectives.

What is the attitude of the leaders of the organization, do they believe that all this maximizes the profit of their company, or on the contrary, the integration process hinders the level of work performance, and what do the employees think is this an additional burden or the main way of easing the work.

Main Results. As a result of the study, it was determined to what extent the planning and use of education programs becomes

Table 2. Summary of Quantitative Research Results

The age segment of the research	38.7%	28.2%	23.4%	-	-
	26 – 35	18 – 25	46 – 55	-	-
The managerial roles of the respondents in the organizations	39.5%	20.2%	16.9%	12.9%	10.5%
	middle level	top level	lower level	founder	other
Industries the companies were representing	consulting	accounting	law	financial	-
	FMCG	service	marketing	IT	-
The size of the organizations	51.2%	14.9%	33.9%	-	-
	medium	small	large	-	-
Time the respondents worked with their organizations	36.7%	46.7%	16.7%	-	-
	1-3	4-7	7+	-	-
How often the respondents take part in LLL programs	36.3%	31.5%	15.3%	16.1%	0.8%
	yearly	once in two years	once a month	never	-
By whom are the LLL programs provided	48.4%	29.5%	19.7%	2.4%	-
	Employer	Self-decision	External company	other	-

necessary while the organization is undergoing digital transformation. It was important for us to perceive the process independently from the eyes of the employees and the employer, to see what the employer's attitude is and what the subordinate's expectations are in the background of the implementation of modern technologies.

We have observed that many companies are currently embracing digitalization, exploring and evaluating various platforms that streamline and automate processes, ultimately reducing the need for human labor. However, it has also become evident that employees are frequently unprepared to engage in the planning of these new platforms and often express skepticism towards them.

The results show that in organizations may focus their learning and development efforts on younger employees who are at formative stages in their careers and are likely to benefit from long-term training investments. The heavy representation of middle managers highlights that LLL programs targeting leadership, managerial skills, and cross-functional responsibilities might be highly effective., thus founders may look for training that fosters innovation and business scaling. Different industries require tailored learning programs. For instance, consulting professionals might benefit more from strategic thinking and leadership skills, while the IT sector may demand technical skill upgrades. A sector-specific approach to LLL would maximize the effectiveness of the

programs. Medium and large organizations are likely to have more formal and frequent LLL programs as part of their employee development strategy. Smaller organizations might prioritize external programs due to limited internal resources for training. Employees with 4-7 years of tenure are likely seeking advanced training in leadership, management, or technical skills to move into higher-level roles. Those with 1-3 years of experience may prefer training focused on building foundational skills, career development, and cross-functional expertise. A substantial portion of respondents are actively involved in regular learning. For organizations, offering LLL programs with flexible schedules (yearly or bi-yearly) could address the learning needs of most employees, while more frequent options could engage those seeking continuous improvement. The high level of employer-provided programs indicates that companies are aware of the importance of LLL. However, the significant number of self-directed learners shows that many employees are motivated to seek growth opportunities beyond their organization's offerings. Employers may benefit from encouraging more self-directed and hybrid models, blending internal and external resources.

The workforce surveyed is mostly young and mid-career, meaning organizations should focus on providing training that supports both career progression and skill adaptation to emerging technologies and market trends.

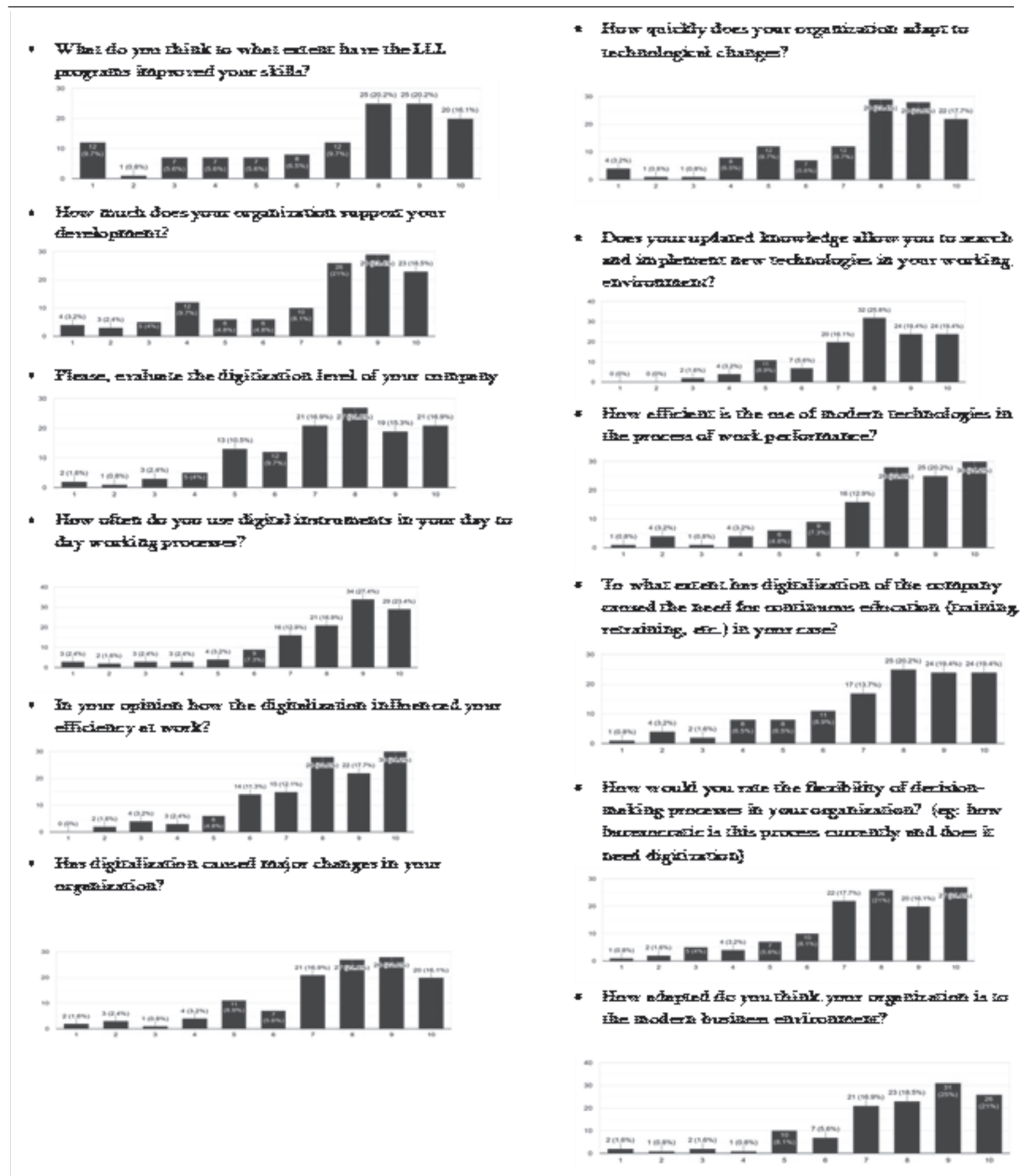


Fig. 1. Results of Scaled Responses of Quantitative Research

A large proportion of middle-level managers and founders means that leadership training, problem-solving, and strategic decision-making should be key areas of focus in LLL programs. LLL programs must cater to the specific needs of industries like consulting, FMCG, and IT, with tailored content that addresses the unique challenges faced in each sector. There's a clear expectation for employer-provided training, but a sizable portion of the workforce is also investing in self-development. Offering a mix of formal corporate learning and fostering a culture of self-directed learning would

empower employees to take ownership of their growth. Offering LLL programs at different frequencies – yearly, bi-yearly, or even monthly for some – allows organizations to cater to diverse learning preferences and needs. By addressing these insights, organizations can craft a more responsive and effective lifelong learning strategy that benefits both employees and the business as a whole. In addition to the answers given in the table, we wanted the respondents to have the opportunity to assign different ratings to the given answers, which would help us gain a deeper understanding of

Table 3. Summary of Analysis of Qualitative Research Results

Respondent Profile	87.5% of the participants in the study were representatives of the private sector, and 12.5% – from the public sector. According to the research shows that half are large companies, and the rest are small and medium-sized businesses.
Need for professional development	All respondents say that continuous professional education of employees is necessary. It is remarkable that companies organize various trainings and workshops for this purpose, which help to improve the qualifications of employees.
Use of Digital Platforms	The level of integration of digital platforms differ by companies. Some of them are fully digitized, while others are still in the process of digital transition. Challenges such as employee resistance to innovation and difficulty in selecting digital tools is often the issue.
Difficulties while digitization	Key challenges include budget constraints, data security, and employee training. Nevertheless, the respondents confirmed that solving these issues is an integral part of the digitization process of their organizations.
Impact of Continuous Education and Digitization	According to all respondents, the combination of digitization and continuous education has a significant impact on the company's success, which increases efficiency and competitiveness in the market.

their attitudes.

Based on the results from the survey the analysis is broken down into key areas regarding the impact of digitalization and lifelong learning (LLL) programs on employees' skills, organizational support, and adaptability to technological changes. Majority of respondents indicate significant improvement in terms of participating in continuous learning programs, which means that the LLL programs are effective and that employees value these opportunities. The answers show high levels of support from their companies, this means that organizations prioritize talent development, which is crucial for retention and employee satisfaction. The high digitization level based on the respondents' opinions in the survey suggests that companies are forward-thinking and likely more competitive. The frequent usage of technologies implies that employees are comfortable with digital tools and that it plays a critical role in productivity. For the digitalization's impact on work efficiency most respondents report increased efficiency, showing that the company's digital transformation efforts are paying off. Major technological changes in the organization suggest that companies are adapting quickly to new technological developments. The speed at which an organization adapts to technological change is critical in today's fast-paced environment. Adaptation is key to maintaining a competitive edge and the results show that most of the companies where respondents work have good indicators in this. The question about employee ability to apply new technologies measures whether employees feel equipped, through updated knowledge, to introduce and implement new technologies in their work. The results show that they

feel confident, thus training programs are effective and that the organization fosters an environment of innovation. As the efficiency of using modern technology directly influences productivity and overall performance in the organization, high ratings given in the graph indicate that the digital tools in place are well-suited to the tasks at hand. Many of the respondents indicated continuous education needs due to digitalization, which suggests that technological advancements are outpacing employees' current skill levels. This would indicate a strong demand for ongoing LLL programs to keep up with the digital transformation. The level of bureaucracy and the flexibility of decision-making processes were evaluated, particularly in the context of whether further digitization is needed. The respondents see a need for more digitization, which means that streamlining processes could help the company adapt more quickly to changes. Finally, respondents gave positive feedback on how well their organization is adapted to the modern business environment, that indicates that the organization is future-ready, embracing both technological and operational changes.

Results of Qualitative Research

Eight respondents participated in the qualitative research. They answered open and closed questions, and if necessary, responded each answer in depth. All respondents were founders/owners of successful companies.

In summary, qualitative research has shown that the implementation of digital tools and the provision of continuous education in the modern business environment are necessary for companies to develop and strengthen their operations.

Interpretation of Results

Table 4. Integration of Digital Tools and Work Efficiency

SUMMARY OUTPUT								
Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.649873871							
R Square	0.422336048							
Adjusted R Square	0.417601098							
Standard Error	1.511860095							
Observations	124							
ANOVA								
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F			
Regression	1	203.8759155	203.8759155	89.19545309	3.18101E-16			
Residual	122	278.8579555	2.285720947					
Total	123	482.733871						
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	3.132006023	0.514054304	6.092753231	1.33519E-08	2.114384185	4.149627861	2.114384185	4.149627861
X Variable 1	0.593692488	0.06286229	9.444334444	3.18101E-16	0.469250307	0.718134669	0.469250307	0.718134669

Table 5. Adaptation of Technological Changes and Demand for Continuous Education

SUMMARY OUTPUT								
Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.462149503							
R Square	0.213582163							
Adjusted R Square	0.207136115							
Standard Error	1.951770053							
Observations	124							
ANOVA								
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F			
Regression	1	126.2201685	126.2201685	33.13381594	6.54447E-08			
Residual	122	464.7475734	3.80940634					
Total	123	590.9677419						
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	4.093479252	0.614524361	6.661215583	8.27543E-10	2.876966901	5.309991603	2.876966901	5.309991603
X Variable 1	0.451566673	0.078448773	5.756198045	6.54447E-08	0.296269492	0.606863854	0.296269492	0.606863854

Table 6. Technological Changes and Business Adaptation

SUMMARY OUTPUT								
Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.594149531							
R Square	0.353013666							
Adjusted R Square	0.347710499							
Standard Error	1.582009017							
Observations	124							
ANOVA								
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F			
Regression	1	166.5996751	166.5996751	66.56657943	3.48638E-13			
Residual	122	305.3358087	2.502752531					
Total	123	471.9354839						
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	3.975832193	0.498103288	7.98194328	8.96408E-13	2.989786985	4.961877402	2.989786985	4.961877402
X Variable 1	0.518793564	0.063586725	8.158834441	3.48638E-13	0.39291729	0.644669838	0.39291729	0.644669838

The analysis of the research results showed that continuous education and digital transformation play an integral role in the process of organizational adaptation. These two factors are especially important in a digitally growing and rapidly changing business environment like Georgia. The tables show the mutual influence and correlation of different variables, which allows to determine the extent to which the combination of digital technologies and continuous education affects the success of organizations.

Key Findings:

Research has shown that the frequency of using digital tools significantly increases work efficiency. This finding also indicates that the integration of digital technologies is necessary to optimize the work process.

The rapid adoption of technology by organizations increases the need for employee training. This indicates that successful management of digital transformation requires constantly updated knowledge.

Companies that quickly adapt to technology adapt better to the modern business environment. Research shows that adopting technological change increases the flexibility and efficiency of organizational processes.

Flexible and less bureaucratic decision-making processes help to adapt to modern business conditions. This shows that the introduction of digital solutions can accelerate the company's adaptation.

To summarize, digital transformation is a key driver of organizational effectiveness and innovation. Companies that have successfully used digital technologies have demonstrated the ability to adapt more quickly to market demands. Digital tools that help analyze data make decision making more informed and strategic. Research has shown that promoting lifelong learning increases employee satisfaction and the ability to make innovative decisions. Organizations that encourage the continuous updating of employee knowledge are better able to manage digital transformation. The research revealed the challenges that accompany digital transformation, especially for small and medium-sized businesses. The main challenges are budget constraints and the adoption of digital technologies, which hinder their growth and competitiveness. The results of the study revealed that the integration of digital technologies and continuous education are the main success factors of the organization. Their combination significantly increases business competitiveness, innovation and efficiency in the market.

Conclusion. As the research outcome we can conclude that organizations that prioritize continuous learning opportunities for their employees are better able to cope with the challenges of digital transformation. These training programs empower employees to effectively use new technologies and adapt to new operational roles as digital tools evolve. Research has highlighted the fact that continuing education leads to higher levels of employee satisfaction and retention rates. Educated employees are more engaged and can contribute more creatively to the organization's goals, leading to a more innovative organizational culture.

The study examined the role of digitization in facilitating or hindering organizational adaptation and found that digital transformation is indeed a key driver of operational efficiency and strategic innovation. Organizations participating in the study that successfully integrated digital technologies

showed a marked improvement in their ability to quickly adapt to market conditions and customer demands. This is especially evident in their simplified operational processes, which not only increase productivity, but also significantly reduce costs. By automating routine tasks, these organizations can allocate more resources to strategic decision-making and innovation. Research has shown that digital technologies facilitate better data management and analytics, which are critical to understanding market trends and consumer preferences. This capability allows organizations to make informed decisions quickly, a critical advantage in a market characterized by rapid change.

In addition to the above, the research highlighted the challenges that small and medium-sized businesses face in Georgia. Despite the obvious benefits of digital transformation and lifelong learning, there is a significant gap between SMEs in Georgia. Many SMEs struggle to adopt digital tools and training programs due to limited resources, lack of expertise and infrastructure constraints. This slow rate of adoption hinders their competitiveness and limits their growth potential in the digital economy. However, on the other hand, medium and large companies in the market are distinguished by the rate of integration of digital tools into their processes and continue to digitize their business processes continuously, as well as take care of developing the skills of their employees in order to create the maximum convenience in the process of accepting changes and help them adapt better.

The study clearly showed the value of increased adaptability of companies by synchronizing continuous education and digitalization processes, which results in an increase in the profit rate of companies and the benefits of better positioning of the brand in the market.

As a conclusion, several strategic recommendations can be formulated for organizations in Georgia, especially for small and medium businesses and the people employed there.

1. Enhanced support for digital transformation: It is necessary for both international projects and industry leaders to provide stronger support for digital transformation initiatives. This could include subsidies or tax breaks for technology adoption, partnerships with technology providers, and investments in digital infrastructure to lower barriers to entry for SMEs.

2. Development of continuing education programs: Educational institutions and

corporate training providers should collaborate to develop customized continuing education programs that meet the specific needs of industries and sectors. These programs should focus on technical skills such as data analytics and digital marketing, as well as theoretical skills such as adaptive thinking and digital literacy.

3. Encouraging digital innovation: several projects should encourage digital innovation that will facilitate the adoption of innovation and technology at all levels of the business spectrum. This could include creating innovation hubs, providing grants to digital start-ups and implementing policies that promote digital skills in the workforce. Similar projects are currently found only for urban businesses that operate centrally in large cities, the roots of digitization need to reach each region and those small entrepreneurs who are invited to independently produce each detail, and digital products will help them optimize processes, for example, in inventory control, in identifying new sales channels, for digital channels in preparing advertising and promotional materials, signing online contracts

and conducting negotiations, which will give them additional business opportunities.

4. Cultural shift towards lifelong learning: Cultivating a culture of lifelong learning in an organization is crucial. Management should encourage and reward continuous learning and adaptation to foster an environment where employees are motivated to develop new skills and embrace change positively. This is necessary for companies to interrupt the process of human resource drain and to optimize the resources of given employees to rotate their positions and promote them.

5. Building collaborative networks: Building networks and partnerships between businesses, educational institutions and technology providers can facilitate knowledge exchange and co-development of solutions that enhance organizational adaptability.

To sum up, it can be said that the study identified the shortcomings of the Georgian business environment at the current stage and what hinders its digitization processes, however, it revealed the potential that small and medium entrepreneurs have in order to further refine and develop their activities.

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ВПЛИВ ПРОГРАМ НАВЧАННЯ ВПРОДОВЖ ЖИТТЯ ТА ЦИФРОВІЗАЦІЇ БІЗНЕСУ НА АДАПТИВНІСТЬ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЇ

У дослідженні розглядається синергетичний вплив програм навчання впродовж життя (НВЖ) та цифровізації на організаційну адаптивність, зокрема на малі та середні підприємства (МСП) в бізнес-ландшафті Грузії. На сучасному глобальному ринку, який стає все більш цифровим і конкурентним, МСП стикаються з величезним тиском, щоб залишатися гнучкими та інноваційними. Це дослідження підкреслює, що інтеграція ініціатив з розвитку персоналу зі стратегіями цифрової трансформації не лише підвищує організаційну стійкість, але й покращує операційну ефективність, дозволяючи підприємствам краще орієнтуватися у викликах та використовувати можливості, що з'являються.

Цифровізація як трансформаційна сила переосмислила робочі потоки, оптимізувала процеси та розширила охоплення ринку для МСП. Однак переваги цифрової трансформації можуть бути повністю реалізовані лише тоді, коли працівники володіють необхідними навичками для ефективного використання цих технологій. Навчання впродовж життя відіграє вирішальну роль у забезпеченні робочої сили сучасними знаннями, сприянні адаптивності та забезпеченні використання працівниками цифрових інструментів для стимулювання інновацій та підвищення продуктивності. Розширюючи можливості працівників через безперервну освіту, організації можуть створити культуру проактивного навчання та технологічної компетентності.

Незважаючи на свою важливість для економіки Грузії, МСП часто стикаються з перешкодами на шляху до повного впровадження цифрових технологій. Ці проблеми включають обмежені фінансові ресурси, неадекватну інфраструктуру та відсутність структурованих навчальних програм. Як наслідок, багатьом МСП важко впроваджувати сучасні технології та навчати своїх працівників навичкам, необхідним для підтримки конкурентоспроможності на ринку, що швидко розвивається. Це дослідження висвітлює ці критичні прогалини та намагається з'ясувати, як стратегічні інвестиції в цифрову трансформацію та розвиток навичок можуть допомогти МСП подолати такі обмеження.

Використовуючи змішаний підхід, це дослідження вивчає, як поєднання цифрових інструментів та програм навчання впродовж життя сприяє досягненню ключових організаційних результатів, таких як підвищення ефективності, оптимізація процесу прийняття рішень та покращення залученості працівників. У ньому також підкреслюється роль політики підтримки у зміцненні цифрової та освітньої екосистем для грузинських МСП, пропонуючи практичні рекомендації щодо сприяння довгостроковому зростанню та конкурентоспроможності. Зрештою, результати дослідження підтверджують, що узгодження безперервної освіти з впровадженням технологій є не просто корисним, але й необхідним для процвітання МСП у постійно мінливому бізнес-середовищі.

Ключові слова: *освіта, цифровізація, навчання впродовж життя, адаптивність організації.*

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