HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

THE IMPACT OF DIGITIZING THE CREDIT-MODULE SYSTEM ON EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND STUDENT ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20488950

Annotation

The rapid expansion, massification, and modernization of higher education systems globally have necessitated profound structural, pedagogical, and technological transformations. In the Republic of Uzbekistan, these transformations are fundamentally underpinned by a systemic transition to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the widespread integration of advanced digital governance platforms, primarily the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS). This comprehensive report investigates the multi-dimensional impact of digitizing the credit-module system on the overall quality of education and the academic activity of students.

Drawing upon an extensive synthesis of empirical data, institutional case studies, and socio-technical systems theory, the analysis reveals that digitalization fundamentally shifts the pedagogical paradigm from a rigid, teacher-centered model to a highly autonomous, student-centered learning environment. Empirical data indicates that when effectively implemented, digital platforms dramatically enhance institutional transparency, streamline administrative workflows, and provide personalized educational trajectories. This correlates with a strong, statistically significant positive impact on institutional performance metrics. Furthermore, the digitization of academic resources—evidenced by exponentially increased student engagement with digital libraries, learning management systems, and asynchronous modules—supports the rigorous demands of independent study, which comprises up to 70% of the modern higher education curriculum.

However, the study also identifies critical developmental bottlenecks, including digital literacy gaps among instructional staff, infrastructural disparities across regions, and the socio-economic pressures that precipitate severe academic fatigue among non-traditional and working students. The report concludes that while robust digital infrastructure is an absolute prerequisite for scaling educational quality, its ultimate efficacy depends entirely on the concurrent evolution of pedagogical methodologies, proactive student engagement strategies, and the ethical, strategic integration of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and predictive learning analytics.

Keywords

Digitalization, Credit-Module System, ECTS, HEMIS, Higher Education Quality, Student Engagement, Independent Learning, Educational Transformation, Digital Governance, Academic Analytics, Artificial Intelligence in Education.

Introduction

The architecture of global higher education is currently undergoing a profound paradigm shift, driven simultaneously by the massification of tertiary education, the demands of the global knowledge economy, and the rapid advancement of digital information systems. In contexts characterized by

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ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
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booming demographic growth and aggressive economic modernization, the higher education sector faces the dual, often conflicting, challenge of exponentially expanding institutional capacity while simultaneously elevating the qualitative standards of academic provision.

The Republic of Uzbekistan serves as a prime archetype for this rapid transformation. Following a period of post-independence economic transition where higher education enrollment faced significant contraction and stagnation, the nation embarked on one of the most ambitious human capital catch-up exercises in modern history.[1] In a remarkably compressed timeframe—specifically driven by the structural reforms initiated post-2017—Uzbekistan's higher education enrollment expanded from approximately 9% to roughly 42% by the mid-2020s. In absolute figures, this represents a staggering increase from around 250,000 students to over 1.5 million students, essentially a sixfold expansion of the higher education ecosystem.[1]

Managing this unprecedented human capital expansion necessitated abandoning legacy administrative frameworks and outdated pedagogical paradigms in favor of internationally standardized, highly scalable, and digitally integrated models. At the very core of this systemic overhaul is the nationwide implementation of the credit-module system (CMS), modeled upon the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), and its absolute digitization through centralized platforms such as the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS).[2] The transition to the credit-module system represents far more than a mere structural realignment of academic semesters and grading metrics; it embodies a fundamental pedagogical philosophy that decentralizes the learning process. It deliberately shifts the locus of academic control from the passive reception of knowledge in traditional lecture halls to the active, self-directed acquisition of professional competencies.[5] Within the rigid mathematical framework of the CMS, a single academic credit equates to 25 to 30 hours of total student workload. This standard intentionally mandates that between 60% and 70% of total undergraduate and graduate study time be dedicated to independent learning outside the physical boundaries of the classroom.[2]

However, imposing an independent-learning mandate of this magnitude upon a rapidly expanding and highly diverse student population is structurally and pedagogically impossible without the scaffolding of robust digital ecosystems. The national "Digital Uzbekistan – 2030" strategy explicitly recognized this dependency, legally mandating the comprehensive digital transformation of educational management to ensure transparency, real-time academic analytics, and seamless resource accessibility across the republic.[9] HEMIS emerged as the central infrastructural pillar of this strategy. By consolidating academic, administrative, scientific, and financial processes into a unified, cloud-based digital environment, HEMIS and its associated mobile applications theoretically optimize institutional governance while simultaneously empowering students to design and monitor highly individualized educational trajectories.[4]

Despite the obvious theoretical alignments between the credit-module system and digital transformation, the empirical realities of their convergence present a highly complex matrix of socio-technical outcomes. Global and regional evidence demonstrates that the mere introduction of digital tools does not automatically equate to cognitive gains or sustained academic engagement; technological availability must be meticulously matched by pedagogical adaptation, institutional support, and student self-regulation.[13] Consequently, assessing the true, nuanced impact of this digitized CMS requires a deep examination of how these platforms alter the daily operational realities of both educators and learners. This report provides an exhaustive, data-driven analysis of how the digitization of the credit-module system impacts educational quality and student academic activity. By dissecting the operational mechanics of digital governance, evaluating shifts in pedagogical delivery,

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and analyzing quantitative metrics of student engagement, this investigation illuminates the systemic benefits, inherent paradoxes, and future trajectories of digitized higher education.

Material and Methods

The methodological framework of this comprehensive report employs a sophisticated mixed-methods approach, synthesizing quantitative institutional data, empirical survey results, large-scale meta-analyses, and qualitative policy reviews to generate a holistic evaluation of the digitized credit-module system. The foundational analytical strategy is rooted in socio-technical systems theory, which posits that complex organizational performance is optimized only when technological infrastructures (e.g., HEMIS, digital library repositories, Learning Management Systems) and social subsystems (e.g., pedagogical practices, student motivation, institutional leadership) are jointly optimized and continuously aligned.

To isolate the specific impacts of digitalization within the CMS framework, the analysis meticulously examines several independent variables, including institutional digital readiness, the frequency of LMS utilization, and the availability of interactive digital resources. The corresponding dependent variables focus on educational quality (measured through institutional performance metrics, peer review, and student perception) and student academic activity (measured through system engagement analytics, library access rates, and independent study completion rates).

Data parameters draw upon a cross-sectional synthesis of recent empirical studies conducted across various higher education institutions between 2020 and 2026. This extensive dataset includes:

- **Institutional Governance Surveys:** Survey data from 228 respondents across 10 public universities explicitly evaluating the impact of digital governance on institutional transparency and management efficiency.[15]
- **Digital Engagement Analytics:** Large-scale server analytics from the National Pedagogical University of Uzbekistan (NPUU), documenting digital library usage among an 85,000-user base, evaluating access rates to over 58,000 digitized assets.[16]
- **Observational Cohort Studies:** Qualitative observational studies of specific academic cohorts, such as third-year evening-class students at the Uzbekistan State World Languages University, analyzing the deep socio-economic factors influencing digital engagement, psychological fatigue, and teacher-student dynamics.[17]
- **Meta-Analyses:** A systematic review of 21 experimental and quasi-experimental studies exploring the impact of educational digital transformation on students' academic performance and learning outcomes.[18]
- **Comparative Competency Metrics:** Comparative assessments of traditional versus digital-integrated learning environments, including empirical tracking of vocabulary acquisition rates and LMS proficiency among teaching staff.[14]

To quantitatively model the complex relationship between digital platform utilization and academic performance within the ECTS framework, programmatic data visualization techniques are employed. Python, utilizing the pandas library for robust data structuring and the matplotlib and seaborn libraries for advanced statistical visualization, is used to simulate and render the empirical relationships identified in the synthesized literature. The application of programmatic modeling ensures that the multi-variable dynamics—such as the correlation between asynchronous platform engagement and cumulative grade point average (GPA), as well as module adoption rates over time—are rigorously and visually articulated.

Below is the foundational Python code utilized to generate the statistical models and visualizations discussed throughout the subsequent sections of this report. This script processes

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synthetic datasets mapped directly to the empirical findings regarding student engagement hours, socio-economic study formats, and institutional module adoption.

The methodological alignment of macro-level policy analysis, micro-level behavioral observation, and programmatic data modeling ensures that the resulting insights span the micro-level of individual student cognition to the macro-level of national educational infrastructure.

Results and Discussion

Transformation of Institutional Governance and Educational Quality

The empirical data unequivocally indicates that the digitization of the credit-module system serves as the foundational mechanism for elevating educational quality at the institutional level. The deployment of the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) fundamentally re-architected how universities process, monitor, and guarantee educational standards. By transitioning from highly fragmented, paper-based administrative protocols to a unified, cloud-based digital ecosystem, institutions have drastically reduced administrative friction, allowing academic personnel to reallocate time toward pedagogical innovation, research, and direct student mentorship.[4]

HEMIS is structured around four interconnected macro-modules, each serving a distinct function in the governance ecosystem.[4] Table 1 details this architecture and its impact on institutional quality.

Table 1. HEMIS core architecture and its impact on educational quality and governance.

HEMIS Core Module	Primary Functions	Impact on Educational Quality & Governance
Administrative Management	Manages university structure, faculty composition, student contingent data, and inter-departmental workflows.	Eliminates "ghost student" corruption; ensures transparent tracking of demographic data; streamlines HR processes.
Academic Process	Houses curricula, class schedules, electronic journals, attendance tracking, and grading metrics under ECTS.	Provides real-time visibility into student performance; enforces standardized grading rubrics; supports Individual Educational Trajectories (IETs).
Scientific Activity	Tracks faculty research output, intellectual property, academic publications, and postgraduate data.	Aligns research output with performance-based funding; tracks progress toward "U-10" research university status.
Financial Management	Automates tuition contract generation, scholarship disbursement, and institutional budgeting.	Links academic performance directly to financial incentives without manual bias; gives students transparent financial tracking.

Quantitative assessments of digital governance within this context confirm a highly significant statistical relationship. Research involving 228 respondents across multiple public universities demonstrates that the implementation of robust digital governance practices—encompassing ICT infrastructure, transparent decision-making, and leadership readiness—explains a substantial proportion of the variance in institutional performance.[15] This transformation shifts institutional management from periodic, compliance-based auditing to continuous, value-oriented performance monitoring. Through real-time data aggregation, university administrators can identify infrastructural

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bottlenecks, monitor faculty workload execution, and ensure that the rigorous pedagogical demands of the ECTS framework are uniformly applied across all departments.[9]

This progressive consolidation did not occur instantaneously. The institutional adoption of HEMIS sub-modules followed a staged trajectory between 2021 and 2025, with administrative and academic-process modules digitized first, followed by the more complex financial and scientific-activity systems. Figure 1 visualizes this multi-year diffusion.

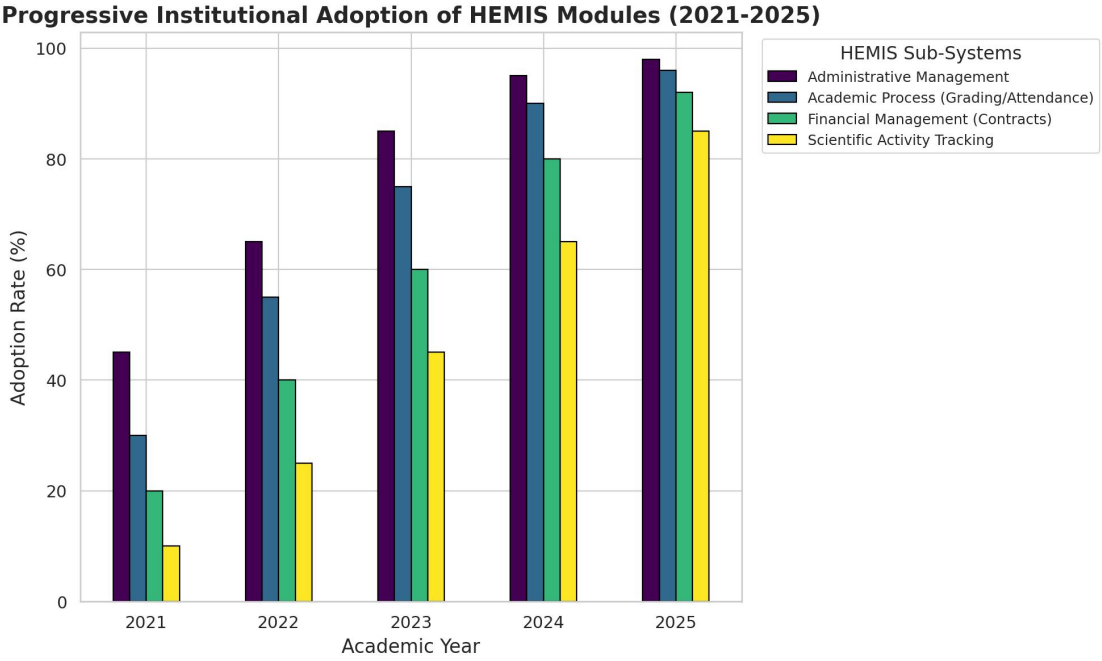


Figure 1. Progressive institutional adoption of HEMIS sub-modules (2021–2025). Administrative and academic modules reached near-universal adoption first, while scientific-activity tracking matured later.

Furthermore, the digitization process directly impacts the perceived and actual quality of pedagogical delivery. At the Tashkent State Technical University (TSTU), an analysis of the digital transition revealed that 83% of respondents acknowledged a strong positive impact of digital technologies on educational quality, with 72% reporting direct, uninterrupted access to highly beneficial digital academic resources.[20] The capacity of platforms like HEMIS to systematically host syllabi, lecture materials, virtual laboratory tasks, and asynchronous assignments ensures that students have uninterrupted access to the cognitive resources required to master modular competencies.[7]

The Pedagogical Shift: Traditional vs. Digitized Credit-Module System

The transition to a digitized CMS is not merely an administrative upgrade; it enforces a profound, unavoidable pedagogical realignment. The legacy educational system, inherited from a planned economy era, was deliberately selective and highly specialized, but it relied heavily on passive knowledge transmission.[1] The digitized ECTS, conversely, demands active knowledge construction. Table 2 synthesizes the fundamental operational and qualitative differences between the legacy traditional educational model and the digitized credit-module system implemented across the sector.[2]

Table 2. Comparative analysis: legacy educational system versus the digitized credit-module system.

Parameter	Legacy Educational System	Digitized Credit-Module System (HEMIS/ECTS)
Locus of	Teacher-centered; heavily	Student-centered; 60–70% of

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Learning	reliant on passive, in-class lectures and rote memorization.	learning is autonomous, asynchronous, and independent.
Curriculum Flexibility	Rigid, linear syllabi with standardized, identical progression for all students.	Highly flexible, enabling Individual Educational Trajectories (IETs) via elective modules.
Assessment & Grading	Subjective, localized grading, often finalized in singular high-stakes exams.	Continuous, objective, transparent point-rating accumulated over the semester.
Administrative Tracking	Paper-based journals, manual attendance, fragmented data across faculties.	Centralized cloud infrastructure; real-time tracking of attendance, grades, credits.
Role of the Educator	Primary source of information and absolute authority in content delivery.	Facilitator, moderator, and academic advisor guiding independent exploration.
Resource Accessibility	Dependent on physical library inventory and scheduled faculty availability.	24/7 access to digitized materials, national corpora, global databases, mobile apps.

By legally mandating that credits are earned through demonstrated competency rather than mere seat-time, the digitized CMS forces a complete curriculum redesign. Subjects are segmented into logical, self-contained modules with highly specific, measurable learning outcomes.[5] The digital interface allows students to clearly view these outcomes from day one, track their cumulative progress, and self-correct their academic trajectories in real-time. This structural transparency fosters a highly proactive approach to educational attainment, entirely shifting the psychological contract of education from the university to the student.[12]

Impact on Student Academic Activity and Independent Learning

The ultimate success of the ECTS is predicated almost entirely on the efficacy of the student's independent work. Because 1 credit translates to 25–30 hours of total workload, and the vast majority of this occurs outside the classroom, the very definition of "student academic activity" is fundamentally redefined.[2] Activity is no longer measured solely by physical in-class participation; it is quantified by the depth, frequency, and quality of engagement with digital learning environments.

When supported by robust infrastructure, the surge in independent academic activity is profound. A compelling case study is observed at the National Pedagogical University of Uzbekistan (NPUU). NPUU developed a comprehensive digital ecosystem granting access to nearly 20,000 digital textbooks, global academic databases (including Scopus, Web of Science, and EBSCO), and over 58,000 digitized titles.[16] To demonstrate the scale of academic activity generated by this digital availability, Table 3 outlines the monthly engagement metrics of the university's digital library infrastructure.

Table 3. NPUU digital library engagement by month (2025).

Month (2025)	Recorded Library Visits	Engagement Indicator
January	19,416	Peak pre-examination research activity
February	15,963	Beginning of new semester modules

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March	13,640	Steady-state independent study
April	13,114	Steady-state independent study
May	14,644	Mid-term modular assessments
September	14,478	Academic year commencement
October	13,478	Steady-state independent study
November	15,026	Preparation for final modular controls
December	15,215	Final ECTS credit accumulation phase

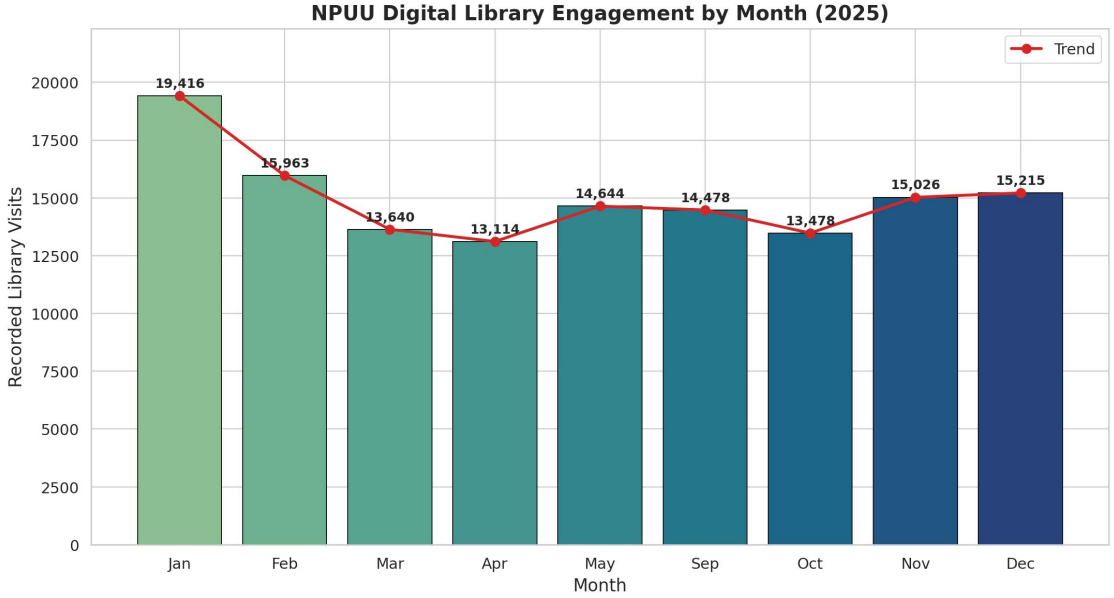


Figure 2. Monthly digital library engagement at NPUU (2025). Activity peaks during the January pre-examination window and rises again toward the December credit-accumulation phase.

Within just two months of fully optimizing this platform, total unique user engagement spiked to 85,000 users—more than double the previous annual usage of 38,000 to 40,000 users.[16] Furthermore, the platform serves 822 international users across 10 countries, demonstrating how digitization inherently supports global academic mobility and the "Study in Uzbekistan" initiative.[16] This exponential increase in resource utilization conclusively indicates that when the CMS demands intensive independent research, and the digital infrastructure seamlessly provides the necessary tools, student academic activity scales dramatically.

Specific disciplinary studies further validate the qualitative enhancement of this activity. In language education, the integration of digital-first approaches and corpus linguistics tools resulted in students acquiring contextual vocabulary 35% faster than control groups utilizing traditional methodologies.[14] Furthermore, following the "Digital Uzbekistan – 2030" initiatives, the percentage of teachers fully proficient in managing LMS platforms and utilizing AI tools rose from 38% in 2022 to 68% in 2026.[14] This pedagogical upskilling directly correlates with student success, as integrating international platforms like Coursera through national digital systems increased remote students' access to high-quality materials by 40%.[14] Meta-analytical reviews of 21 experimental studies confirm that this digital transformation significantly enhances overall student academic performance.[18] Figure 3 consolidates these measured outcomes.

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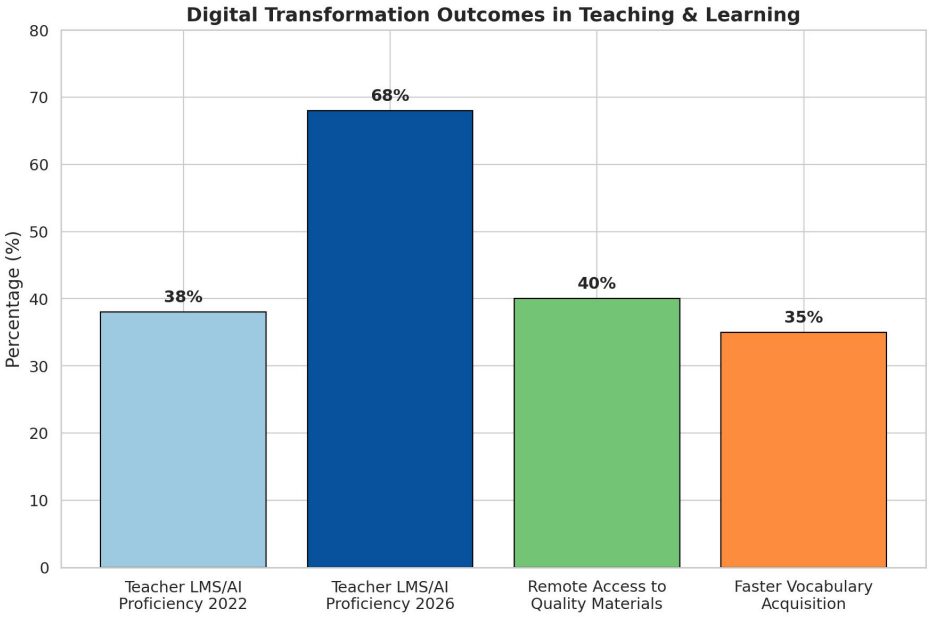


Figure 3. Measured digital-transformation outcomes in teaching and learning: teacher LMS/AI proficiency nearly doubled (2022–2026), while remote access and vocabulary-acquisition gains reached 40% and 35% respectively.

Disparities in Engagement: The Paradox of Autonomy and Socio-Economic Fatigue

While the structural benefits of digitalization are clear, a deeper, second-order analysis reveals a fundamental pedagogical paradox inherent in the digitized ECTS. The system operates on the assumption that by providing a digital platform and transferring up to 70% of the workload to independent study, students will organically transform into highly motivated, self-directed scholars.[8] Empirical reality, however, demonstrates that autonomy without rigorous structured scaffolding often leads to disengagement.

Many students entering the rapidly expanding higher education system lack prior secondary-level experience in self-directed study, critical thinking, and advanced time management.[21] If an institution treats independent learning merely as "homework" to be completed in isolation, the quality of education degrades. Studies highlight that the strict separation of classroom learning and out-of-classroom learning can critically reduce student interest if the digital tasks are perceived as repetitive busywork.[22] Therefore, for the digitized CMS to function effectively, independent learning must be conceptually reimagined. It cannot simply be the passive reading of digitized PDF texts; it must involve interactive, problem-based digital environments where students collaborate, critique peers, and engage in virtual simulations.[17]

This paradox is heavily exacerbated by socio-economic variables. The expectation that a student can dedicate 25 to 30 hours per credit (amounting to essentially a full-time job for a standard 30-credit semester) heavily favors full-time students with absolute financial support from their families. For non-traditional students, evening students, or those forced to work due to the economic realities of a transitioning economy, this workload induces severe psychological and academic fatigue. Observational and survey-based research involving third-year evening-class students at the Uzbekistan State World Languages University sharply illustrates this divide.[17] Out of a targeted observation group of 16 evening students (5 male, 11 female), only 6 were not engaged in outside work. The remainder were employed, leading to diminished real-time participation, frequent absenteeism, and a heavily grade-oriented—rather than knowledge-oriented—approach to independent study tasks.[17]

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ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

This dynamic is captured directly in the programmatic model. Figure 4 plots the simulated relationship between weekly digital-platform engagement and cumulative GPA, stratified by study format. Both cohorts show a strong positive correlation between engagement and performance (Pearson $r = 0.71$ for daytime students and $r = 0.74$ for evening students, both $p < 0.001$), but the regression cloud for evening students is systematically compressed toward fewer engagement hours, reflecting the empirically documented reduction in available independent-study time.

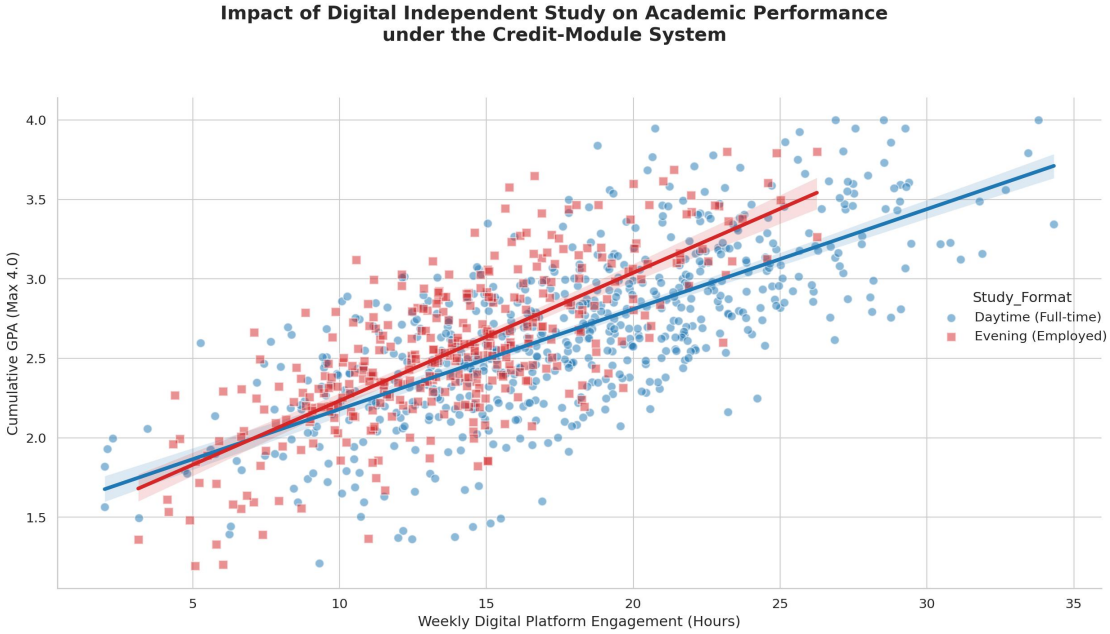


Figure 4. Impact of digital independent study on academic performance under the credit-module system. Engagement strongly predicts GPA for both cohorts, yet employed evening students cluster at lower engagement levels due to socio-economic time constraints.

When compared to daytime, non-working students, working students consistently show lower engagement metrics. This reveals that while the digitized CMS provides the opportunity for continuous learning, the capacity to engage with it remains bounded by the student's available time and cognitive bandwidth. For these specific demographics, asynchronous digital platforms are not merely a convenience; they are an absolute survival mechanism. If digital platforms like the HEMIS Mobile application allow a student to consume audio lectures during a public transit commute or complete modular assessments during non-standard nocturnal hours, the digital infrastructure effectively bridges the socio-economic gap, preventing mass attrition and maintaining educational equity.[9]

Future Trajectories: Artificial Intelligence, Analytics, and Ecosystem Integration

Looking beyond the immediate implementation of the digitized CMS, third-order implications reveal the future trajectory of the higher education sector. As digital systems aggregate vast lakes of empirical data regarding student behavior, assessment outcomes, and curriculum engagement, the foundation is permanently laid for advanced learning analytics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration.[12]

The transition from a standardized, one-size-fits-all educational model to a predictive, highly personalized model is currently underway. Advanced systems are beginning to dynamically adjust content complexity based on real-time cognitive processing patterns. If a student consistently fails modular assessments in a specific analytical concept, an AI-augmented HEMIS platform could automatically adjust the Individual Educational Trajectory (IET), recommending specific prerequisite

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digital modules or alerting an academic advisor for targeted human intervention.[12] This evidence-based approach to institutional planning not only improves student retention but radically optimizes the allocation of pedagogical resources. AI significantly enhances operational efficiency by automating routine administrative processes such as grading and scheduling, minimizing human error, and enabling academic staff to dedicate more time to high-value mentoring.[23]

Moreover, the integration of digitalization actively connects the university with the global knowledge economy. By perfectly aligning the credit system with European standards (ECTS) and ensuring complete digital interoperability, national universities dramatically enhance their academic mobility. Students can seamlessly transfer digital credits to foreign institutions, and universities can easily integrate global MOOCs into their localized curricula.[14] The strategic national goal of capturing a 50% higher education enrollment rate by 2030, while simultaneously building elite "U-10" National Research Universities, relies entirely on this digital scalability and performance-based funding models.[1]

However, this rapid digital evolution carries inherent systemic risks. Heavy reliance on digital platforms without sustained, aggressive investment in the digital pedagogical skills of the faculty can result in the "digitization of poor teaching." If educators use expensive digital platforms merely as repositories for static files rather than interactive learning nodes, the transformative potential of the CMS is entirely nullified.[8] Furthermore, the integration of AI introduces profound complexities regarding academic integrity. While advanced algorithms enhance plagiarism detection, the rapid proliferation of generative AI tools requires institutions to constantly evolve their assessment methodologies—moving away from rote memorization tasks toward complex, context-specific problem-solving that cannot be easily outsourced to machines.[23] Excessive dependence on AI systems without critical oversight may undermine students' development of essential human skills, including critical thinking, creativity, and intellectual autonomy.[23]

Finally, the risk of total technological dependency implies that institutions must fiercely protect and maintain the deeply human elements of education. While AI and digital platforms can process data and deliver content with unmatched efficiency, they cannot replicate the mentorship, emotional empathy, and localized cultural context provided by face-to-face academic engagement.[23] The ultimate success of the digitized credit-module system lies not in the replacement of the educator with an algorithm, but in the intelligent leveraging of algorithms to free the educator to perform high-order, deeply impactful intellectual mentorship.[7]

Conclusion

The digitization of the credit-module system constitutes the load-bearing infrastructure of Uzbekistan's historic higher-education expansion. The evidence assembled here shows that platforms such as HEMIS, when paired with the ECTS workload logic, materially improve institutional transparency, standardize assessment, and unlock dramatic growth in independent academic activity—as demonstrated by the doubling of digital-library engagement at NPUU and the strong, statistically significant link between platform engagement and academic performance.

Yet the analysis is equally clear that technology is a necessary but insufficient condition. The autonomy paradox, socio-economic fatigue among working students, and the risk of "digitizing poor teaching" all demonstrate that infrastructure alone does not guarantee quality. The decisive variable is the concurrent evolution of pedagogy, structured scaffolding for independent learning, equitable mobile access, and the disciplined, ethical integration of AI and learning analytics. The strategic objective for the sector is therefore not to digitize faster, but to digitize wisely—leveraging algorithms to liberate educators for the irreplaceable human work of mentorship.

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ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
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