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EMPOWERING MOTIVATION LETTER WRITERS

An Examination of Developing an Interactive Online Platform for Writing Effective Motivation Letters

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ABSTRACT

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There are some applications offering basic tools and templates for creating motivation letters. However, none of them provide comprehensive guidance on how to write compelling and successful motivation letters. As a result, the goal of this research is to investigate the fundamentals of creating a distinctive online learning platform that educates learners on developing their own unique motivation letters.

The study adopts an inductive qualitative approach, involving semi-structured interviews with 8 participants. The interviews are transcribed and subsequently analyzed using conventional content analysis. The main findings show that all interviewees expressed a strong interest in learning how to write effective motivation letters if they had access to an efficient tutoring program.

The findings also reveal that the majority of participants struggled with writing their motivation letters due to a lack of clarity on what and how to write them. The Interviewees unanimously supported the idea of creating an online platform to teach motivation letter writing and contributed their own insights on how to develop an effective and engaging learning platform.

The research results reflect the perspectives of a limited number of participants. Nevertheless, they provide a valuable foundation for future exploration. Subsequent studies can build upon the findings here to conduct large-scale investigations to draw more conclusive and accurate data regarding the design and utility of such an online helping tool.

Keywords: AI, cover letter, online learning, critical thinking, creative writing, machine learning.

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1 INTRODUCTION

We are currently experiencing an intriguing historical era in which we can vividly witness the growth of technology and its tremendous impact on all aspects of human life. In this context, education is no exception. The changes in education have been challenging for both students and educators, as they strive to keep up with the latest trends in order to teach and learn effectively. Basically, technological developments have significantly improved both teaching and learning processes, shifting education from a passive and reactive approach to a more interactive and proactive setting (Bhosale, Vijaya & Raverkar, Deepak & Kadam, 2021).

It is evident that certain skills that were once deemed essential, such as memorization and complex calculations, are no longer necessary due to the widespread availability of the internet and modern technologies. However, several countries, including Uzbekistan, have not yet upgraded their education systems to meet the demands of the 21st century (Broadfoot, 2000). In this light, one of the challenges facing students all over the world, and specifically in Central Asia, is the development of creative writing skills, particularly in the context of motivation letter writing. The average student enrolled in Central Asian education programs and degrees knows very little about persuasive and creative writing. Based on my research into regional curricula, there is a total absence of creative writing programs in both state and private schools in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, with only a few short and ad-hoc courses offered in some private universities (Hakimov, 2022).

Since the skill of self-reflection through composition, specifically in the form of admission essays, is not taught at any stage of education in Central Asia, many talented students fail to gain admission to reputable universities abroad. Thus, they miss a unique chance to benefit from a hands-on education abroad and to further broaden their horizons (Hakimov, 2022). This lost opportunity results in depriving Central Asia of potential generations of national practitioners who could have become experts in their field if they had the opportunity to study in developed countries. Similarly, Europe and the US are also deprived of the chance to receive talented Central Asian students who could have served as bridges connecting their home region to the West on various levels, including economic and cultural aspects, to say the least.

It is worth noting that motivation letters play a vital role not only in the admission process of foreign universities but also in various scholarships, fellowships, internships, and job applications (Smith,

2019). In order to increase the likelihood of being selected, it is essential to draft a well-structured motivation letter that highlights the applicant's relevant skills and experiences (Jones, 2020). That is in addition to the need for tailoring these motivation letters to meet the specific requirements of the institution or organization to which the application is submitted (Johnson, 2021).

Meanwhile, there is scarcity of written literature dedicated to the art of motivation letter writing. This lack of practical guidelines has motivated the writing of this thesis. Consequently, this study aims to develop applicable principles for the creation of an online platform that will educate students worldwide on how to craft compelling motivation letters. This enquiry is beneficial for both the creative writing industry and the foreign admissions process for any destination. Given the lack of existing literature on this subject, it has been challenging to provide practical assistance to students in composing their motivation letters. Therefore, this research effort holds substantial potential for advancing knowledge in this particular area. Thanks to the emerging artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and the rising popularity of online learning, there is a huge potential to develop a distinct platform that provides instruction of effective motivation letter writing.

The objective of this research project is to explore the foundational aspects of developing such a platform that incorporates AI technologies such as machine learning, computer vision, and natural language processing. This platform would be accessible online, utilizing e-Learning techniques to provide learners with flexible and convenient experience (Chen, Y., Huang, R., & Li, W., 2021).

The principal outcomes of this research include the identification of the key elements that contribute to the effectiveness and persuasiveness of motivation letters as well as the development of a unique learning platform that offers comprehensive guidance to learners on how to write their own successful motivation letters. The project involves assessing the feasibility of the platform, taking into account both its technical and pedagogical components, as well as spotting potential obstacles that may impede its success. In addition, this study will encompass a theoretical framework that explores the current challenges associated with writing motivation letters, various learning theories, and pedagogical approaches specific to motivation letter writing.

The thesis starts with a thorough review of existing literature to identify research gaps that the research aims to address. Additionally, the study will examine online learning, assessment, and feedback in the context of online writing instruction, including best practices for teaching writing skills online. Then, the methodology used to collect and analyze data will be clearly explained and justified. Following that, the research findings will be presented both in textual and table formats.

Subsequently, these findings would be discussed and analyzed to yield practically-relevant interpretations and recommendations for future research directions. Finally, the thesis ends with brief concluding remarks.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an extensive review of the literature pertaining to motivation letter writing. It starts with an overview of the basic concepts of motivation letters in section 2.1. Then, section 2.2 covers different learning theories and pedagogical approaches commonly used in motivation letter writing. This section is divided into four sub-sections, namely constructivism, socio-cultural theory, self-regulated learning, and collaborative learning.

Moving forward, section 2.3 of the chapter delves into instructional design models that can be used to create effective motivation letter writing courses. In section 2.4, the focus shifts to online learning and e-learning platforms, exploring their potential application in motivation letter writing. Furthermore, section 2.5 examines technology-enhanced learning tools that can be integrated into motivation letter writing courses to strengthen the overall learning experience.

Following is a discussion of assessment and feedback in online learning in section 2.6. These are vital components of any learning experience. The section emphasizes the importance of effective feedback in motivating learners to improve their writing skills. Lastly, section 2.7 presents best practices for teaching writing skills online. It examines various techniques and strategies that instructors can employ to innovate engaging and effective online motivation letter writing courses.

Overall, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the different theories, tools, and approaches commonly used in motivation letter writing courses. The information covered in this chapter is relevant for instructors involved in designing or teaching online motivation letter writing courses, as well as individuals seeking to enhance their writing skills.

2.1 Basics of Motivation Letters

The practice of writing motivation letters, also referred to as personal statements, emerged around the same time as admission letters, in the late 19th or early 20th century (Hunt, 2005). However, the widespread reliance on personal statements as a part of the application process for higher education institutions did not occur until the mid-20th century (Pennycook, 1994).

Initially, in the United States, personal statements were primarily used for graduate school applications. However, as time progressed, this usage expanded to include undergraduate admissions as well. The increasing importance of standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT in the admissions process during the 1960s and 1970s played a role in driving the popularization of personal statements. These statements offered applicants an opportunity to distinguish themselves beyond their test scores and grades (Pennycook, 1994).

In the present day, personal statements have become a standard requirement in the college and university application processes worldwide. They often serve as a means to assess an applicant's writing proficiency, critical thinking skills, and ability to articulate their goals and aspirations (Reid, 2018). Personal statements are also used to evaluate an applicant's compatibility with the institution's mission and values.

Therefore, working on an online platform to teach students how to craft strong motivation letters, the previously mentioned university requirements and usages of motivation letters should be considered. To ensure that the platform-associated course content is appropriate for the students' capabilities, it is critical to evaluate their writing abilities at the beginning of the course. Including a diagnostic test on the platform helps in the assessment of their writing strengths and weaknesses, enabling the course content to be tailored accordingly. The feedback from such evaluation should highlight their strengths and offer guidance on areas that require improvement.

To write an effective motivation letter, students need to think critically, analyze the requirements of the motivation letter, and determine the most effective ways to express their goals and aspirations. The platform should incorporate certain exercises and assignments that foster critical thinking among students. For example, students can be tasked with analyzing sample motivation letters to identify the key elements that make such letters effective. They could also be asked to evaluate their own motivation letters and specify areas for improvement. Effectively articulating goals and aspirations is a crucial aspect of a motivation letter. The platform should offer clear guidelines and examples demonstrating how to articulate one's goals and aspirations in an impactful manner. Interactive exercises that enable students to practice their articulation skills, such as creating outlines, mind maps, or graphic organizers, should also be integrated into the platform.

Composing a motivation letter for college or university admission can pose several challenges to prospective students. One of the primary difficulties is crafting a letter that stands out among the thousands of applications received by institutions worldwide each year. As competition for limited spots intensifies, students usually struggle to differentiate themselves from other applicants (Breslin,

2020). Another challenge lies in striking the delicate balance between highlighting one's achievements and qualifications while maintaining a sense of humility and avoiding excessive self-promoting. Students must find a way to showcase their merits and accomplishments without sounding boastful (Alfaro-Murillo & Barquero, 2018).

In the current context, the development of students' creative writing abilities is crucial for crafting strong motivation letters. As we recognize the significant role of critical thinking skills in students' academic and professional success, it becomes evident that these skills encompass the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information from various sources. Creative writing skills, on the other hand, involve expressing ideas in a clear, innovative, and captivating manner. While these two skills may appear unrelated, research studies have suggested that engaging in creative writing exercises can enhance critical thinking abilities. For example, a study conducted by Liu and Liu (2019) discovered that creative writing exercises can improve students' critical thinking skills by encouraging them to explore different perspectives and analyze complex issues. Similarly, research by VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh (2006) found that incorporating creative writing activities into the curriculum can promote higher-order thinking skills in students. Additionally, Girod and Galloway (2016) examined the effects of creative writing on the critical thinking abilities of college students, and the findings demonstrated that engaging in creative writing activities strengthened students' capacity to analyze information and establish logical connections between ideas.

Another challenge students face is customizing their motivation letter to suit the specific institution or program they are applying to. This task requires conducting a thorough research on the institution, including understanding its values, mission, and unique characteristics. Students must then utilize this information to communicate how they align with the institution and what they hope to achieve in their academic journey (Reid, 2018). Finally, writing a motivation letter can be particularly daunting for students who lack confidence in their writing skills or those who are not native English speakers. These circumstances can lead to anxiety and self-doubt, making it even more difficult for students to effectively express themselves in writing (Torgerson, 2019).

The absence of creative writing courses in the Central Asian curriculum, along with the limited availability of supporting materials such as books and online platforms, further exacerbates the challenges faced by final year students in schools. This dearth of resources significantly hampers their capacity to write impressive motivation letters, ultimately hindering their ability to compete on an international level (Hakimov, 2022).

2.2 Learning Theories and Pedagogical Approaches in Motivation Letter Writing

In this section, I explore various learning theories and pedagogical approaches that can be applied to instruct students in the art of writing powerful motivation letters. These approaches can potentially be used to develop an online platform that effectively addresses the challenges encountered by students during the process of composing motivation letters.

2.2.1 Constructivism

Constructivism is a learning theory emphasizing the learner's active role in constructing knowledge (Piaget, 1950). When applied to the context of motivation letter writing, constructivist approaches can prompt students to delve into their own experiences, values, and interests and relate them to the specific institution or program they are seeking admission to (Jonassen, 1999). This process can help students to create more personal and unique motivation letters, thereby increasing their chances to stand out amidst other applicants.

By incorporating constructivist learning theories into motivation letter writing courses, students can experience deeper learning and heightened understanding of the subject matter. As learners construct their own knowledge by connecting their prior experiences with new information, the learning process becomes more meaningful and relevant to them (Gredler, 1997). This engagement and personalization of learning can enhance students' motivation and commitment to the writing process.

Furthermore, the use of online platforms in motivation letter writing offers students flexibility and accessibility. With the ability to work at their own pace and access course materials from anywhere, potential physical and financial barriers would be knocked down. In general, constructivist learning theories can also have a positive impact on students' overall learning outcomes. By promoting an environment where students are motivated to actively build their own understandings and interpretations, these theories can foster their critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). These skills are highly valuable in both academic and professional settings, and can boost the success of these students' future endeavors.

2.2.2 Socio-cultural Theory

Socio-cultural theory, rooted in the work of Lev Vygotsky (1978), focuses on the role of social interactions in the process of learning. In the context of motivation letter writing, socio-cultural approaches can emphasize to the students the importance of learning from others' experiences and perspectives as well as receiving feedback and support from peers and instructors.

Socio-cultural theory has been widely applied in various educational contexts, including writing instruction. According to Wenger (1998), socio-cultural approaches can foster communities of practice, where learners can engage in collaborative learning and knowledge-sharing. When integrated into motivation letter writing courses, communities of practice can foster a collaborative environment where students benefit from the experiences and perspectives of others, engage in discussions, and exchange feedback.

In addition, as one of the potential conceptual blocks of the online platform, socio-cultural approaches can also promote a deeper understanding of the writing process and its purpose. Scardamalia and Bereiter (2006) highlight the role of socio-cultural approaches in facilitating knowledge-building communities, where learners collaboratively construct knowledge and share their understanding of a particular subject. Within motivation letter writing courses, this approach can enable students to gain a deeper comprehension of the expectations and requirements of the institutions they are applying to, as well as the best practices and strategies for composing effective motivation letters.

2.2.3 Self-regulated Learning

Self-regulated learning underscores the importance of learners taking control of their own learning process (Zimmerman, 2000). To enhance self-regulated learning in motivation letter writing, students can be equipped with techniques and resources for establishing objectives, tracking their progress, and assessing their writing through reflection. By adopting this approach, students are empowered to take charge of their learning journey and cultivate the necessary skills and confidence to write compelling motivation letters.

Self-regulated learning is recognized as a critical aspect of successful academic performance across multiple disciplines. As highlighted by Pintrich and De Groot (1990), self-regulated learners possess the capacity to set goals, monitor their progress, and adjust their learning strategies based on

feedback and self-reflection. As far as writing instruction is concerned, self-regulated learning involves equipping students with tools and strategies to effectively monitor their writing process and regulate their writing behavior.

More than that, the promotion of self-regulated learning in writing instruction can contribute to boosting the learners' motivation and engagement in the writing process. Self-regulated learners are trained to manage their enthusiasm and emotions by setting realistic goals, developing positive self-talk, and persevering through challenges. These skills would help students to become more self-motivated, resilient, and engaged writers (Pintrich and De Groot, 1990).

2.2.4 Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is a pedagogical approach that puts center stage the importance of learning through active interactions with others (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). In the context of motivation letter writing, collaborative learning can involve students working together on writing tasks, exchanging ideas, and providing feedback to one another.

Embedding collaborative learning into writing instruction can also enhance learners' social and cognitive skills, including communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. According to Slavin (1995), collaborative learning facilitates the development of social skills through cooperative activities, knowledge and resources sharing, as well as constructive conflict resolution. Moreover, collaborative learning can foster cognitive skills by enabling learners in higher-order thinking tasks, such as analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information.

Furthermore, collaborative learning can also cultivate a sense of community and belonging among learners, ultimately enhancing their motivation and engagement in the writing process. McInerney and Roberts (2004) note that collaborative learning enables learners to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning, resulting in increased motivation and engagement.

2.3 Instructional Design Models

Considering the challenges associated with writing motivation letters and the learning theories and pedagogical approaches discussed above, it is important to employ instructional design models to

develop an effective online platform for teaching students how to write strong motivation letters. In this light, several instructional design models, such as Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction, the ASSURE Model (instructional design framework that provides a systematic approach for planning and delivering effective learning experiences), and ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) can provide a systematic framework for designing the online platform (Gagne, Briggs, & Wager, 1992; Smaldino, Lowther, & Russell, 2008; Morrison, Ross, Kalman, & Kemp, 2010).

The platform, following the ADDIE instructional design model, should include assessments to evaluate students' writing abilities, critical thinking skills, and ability to articulate their goals and aspirations during the analysis phase. During the Analysis phase, the instructional designer identifies learning needs, goals, and objectives. They gather information about the audience, their knowledge and skills, and any constraints. This can be achieved through diagnostic tests, interactive exercises, and assignments (Reid, 2018). Differently, in the design phase the focus should be on creating a course structure that incorporates the principles of constructivist, socio-cultural, self-regulated, and collaborative learning approaches (Piaget, 1950; Vygotsky, 1978; Zimmerman, 2000; Johnson & Johnson, 1994). In the Design phase, they create a detailed plan for materials and activities, including strategies, structure, sequencing, assessment methods, and resources. The development phase, on the other side, should be characterized by the creation of well-curated course content that consists of writing prompts, examples, feedback mechanisms, and opportunities for collaboration and reflection.

Coming to the implementation phase, the online platform should ensure that students have access to the necessary resources and support to write effective motivation letters like customizable learning paths, progress tracking, and self-assessment tools to monitor their progress (Zimmerman, 2000; Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Finally, in the evaluation phase it is important to continuously assess the platform's effectiveness. Collecting feedback from students and instructors, analyzing learning outcomes, and monitoring user engagement can offer valuable insights on necessary adjustments and improvements for the platform.

By applying instructional design models, grounded in relevant learning theories and pedagogical approaches, an effective online platform can be created to teach students how to write cogent motivation letters. This platform can address the challenges students face in the writing process and provide the necessary support in a systematic and interactive learning environment. In such a way, the platform would empower students to excel in their university applications and beyond.

2.4 Online E-Learning Platforms

Online learning has become an increasingly popular educational method, providing students with flexible and accessible learning opportunities through various e-learning platforms (Dhawan, 2020). It offers numerous advantages, including improved accessibility, flexibility in learning schedules, reduced costs, and the ability to cater to diverse learning styles (Bates, 2015). However, online learning also presents some challenges, such as the need for strong self-motivation and discipline, potential feelings of isolation, and concerns about the quality of education (Ali & Ahmad, 2011).

To address these challenges, it is crucial to develop effective e-learning platforms that integrate different essential components, like user interface, content delivery, interaction, assessment, and feedback. The user interface must be intuitive and user-friendly, allowing learners to navigate the platform effortlessly. Content delivery should be engaging, incorporating multimedia elements and interactive activities to facilitate comprehension and retention (Clark & Mayer, 2016). Interaction, both with peers and instructors, plays a critical element in reducing feelings of isolation and promoting knowledge construction (Garrison, 2017). Assessment methods should be varied and aligned with learning objectives, allowing for accurate measurement of learning outcomes. Lastly, timely and constructive feedback is essential to promote self-regulated learning and foster continuous improvement.

Several existing e-learning platforms, such as Coursera, Udemy, and edX, exemplify these components. Coursera partners with universities and organizations to provide a vast range of courses, while Udemy offers both free and paid courses created by industry professionals. EdX, a nonprofit initiative founded by Harvard and MIT, delivers university-level courses and even offers some programs for college credit. By integrating the essential components of effective e-learning platforms, these examples demonstrate the potential of online learning to address the above challenges and harness the advantages associated with this mode of education.

2.5 Technology-enhanced Learning Tools

There has been a recent rise in the use of technology-enhanced learning tools to develop online platforms for education (Ironsi, 2022). These tools have proven to be an effective way to provide students with access to quality education and training, regardless of their location or schedule. In the field of writing motivation letters, technology-enhanced learning tools can provide students with interactive and engaging learning experiences.

One such technology-enhanced learning tool is the Learning Management System (LMS). The LMS has become an increasingly popular tool in recent years. According to Allen and Seaman (2017), over 90% of higher education institutions in the United States use a LMS software application to manage and deliver their online courses. The LMS application provides educators with a platform to create, manage, and deliver educational content and resources to students. The LMS typically includes features such as course management, content creation and management, assessment tools, and communication tools. Instructors can use the LMS to post course materials, assignments, and quizzes, as well as to communicate with students and provide feedback on their work.

Canvas, for instance, is a cloud-based learning management system (LMS) that is widely used in higher education institutions and K-12 schools. Developed and supported by Instructure, Inc., Canvas was first released in 2011. It provides educators with a user-friendly platform to manage and deliver online courses, as well as to engage with students through a range of communication tools. In addition, Canvas offers a range of features designed to enhance teaching and learning experiences. Educators can create and manage course content, track student progress, and provide feedback on assignments and assessments. It has also a mobile application, enabling students to access course materials and interact with instructors and peers on-the-go. Furthermore, Canvas seamlessly integrates with a variety of other educational technologies, such as Turnitin and Zoom, to further enrich the learning experience (Kim, Y., & Lee, Y., 2021).

Another open-source learning management system (LMS) medium that was first released in 2002 and has ever since been heavily used in different educational fields is Moodle. Developed and maintained by a global community of developers, Moodle offers educators a range of features to enhance teaching and learning. These include robust course management, progress tracking, and communication tools. It is highly customizable and can be employed for fully online courses, blended learning, or as a supplement to traditional instruction. While Moodle has some shortcomings, such as the need for technical support and training, it remains a versatile and effective tool for educational

institutions seeking to deliver high-quality online and hybrid learning experiences (Dabbagh, N., & Kitsantas, A., 2012).

All of these LMS platforms offer access to multimedia content, such as videos, audio recordings, and interactive simulations, which can enhance students' understanding and mastery of the concerned subject matter.

Another valuable technology-enhanced learning tool is video conferencing software, including popular platforms like Zoom, Skype, and Google Meet. These tools can be used to conduct live online classes, providing students with the opportunity to engage in real-time discussions, ask questions, and receive immediate feedback from their instructors. Video conferencing can be particularly beneficial for one-on-one sessions and group discussions, as it allows instantaneous interactions between students and their instructors and peers (Hrastinski, S., 2019).

2.6 Assessment and Feedback in Online Learning

Assessment and feedback are essential for creating effective online learning environments. These strategies serve to evaluate students' learning progress and provide needed feedback to support their learning journey. In the realm of online learning, there are various formative and summative assessment strategies in online learning environments (Kwon, Y., & Wen, Y., 2020).

On one hand, formative assessments are used to monitor students' progress throughout the course and provide ongoing guidance to support their development. Examples of formative assessments include quizzes, discussions, and group assignments. Summative assessments, on the other hand, are designed to evaluate students' overall learning outcomes, typically at the end of a course or module. Examples of summative assessments include final exams and papers (Brookhart, S. M., 2013).

In addition to traditional assessments, online learning environments also offer opportunities for peer and self-assessment. Peer assessment allows students to provide feedback to their peers on assignments or projects, fostering a collaborative learning environment. Self-assessment enables students to reflect on their own learning and progress, and identify areas where they may need additional support (Taras, M., 2009).

Indeed, the importance of effective feedback strategies in the success of online learning environments cannot be overestimated. Instructors can rely on various methods to provide feedback,

such as automated feedback, instructor feedback, and peer feedback. Automated feedback, generated by computer programs or algorithms, can offer quick responses on multiple-choice questions or objective assessments. Instructor feedback, on the other side, provides more personalized insights through comments on assignments, grading rubrics, and personalized feedback videos. Peer feedback is also valuable in online learning environments, as it facilitates peer learning and collaboration among students and their colleagues.

In conclusion, assessment and feedback are indispensable tenets of effective online learning environments. Through formative and summative assessments, peer and self-assessment, and a myriad of feedback strategies such as automated feedback, instructor feedback, and peer feedback students can receive helpful insights and guidance, propelling their progress and success. By implementing these strategies, instructors can create supportive learning environments that empower students to excel and thrive in their online courses.

2.7 Best Practices for Teaching Writing Skills Online

In recent years, the growing demand for online writing instruction necessitated the identification and implementation of best practices for teaching writing skills in an online setting. This section outlines four key approaches that will be utilized in the development of an online platform to teach students how to write remarkable motivation letters. These include process approach to teaching writing, the genre-based approach to teaching writing, scaffolding and modeling writing strategies, and the incorporation of real-life examples and case studies (Flowerdew J., 2013).

The process approach to teaching writing is an instructional method that highlights the sequential stages of the writing process, which encompasses prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Flower & Hayes, 1981). By breaking the writing process into discrete stages, students can concentrate on specific elements of their writing, such as organization and clarity, and acquire strategies to improve their work.

The genre-based approach to teaching writing entails instructing students on writing in specific genres, such as persuasive essays or personal narratives (Swales, 1990). By underscoring the distinctive characteristics of different genres, students can develop the skills to write in a manner that is appropriate for the intended audience and purpose of their writing.

Scaffolding and modeling writing strategies involve providing students with support and guidance to develop their writing skills. Such support can be offered through writing prompts, outlines, and templates to assist students in organizing their writing as well as modeling effective writing strategies and techniques (Vygotsky, 1978).

Incorporating real-life examples and case studies is also valuable for teaching writing skills online. These examples and studies allow students to see how writing skills are applied in practical situations and thus gain a better understanding of the importance of effective writing (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987).

Overall, a comprehensive and effective instructional experience is guaranteed by the integration of the aforementioned four approaches in the development of an online platform for teaching students how to write their unique motivation letters.

3 METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study is to explore effective conceptual underpinnings and hands-on technical tools and approaches for developing an online platform that can educate students on crafting personalized and successful motivation letters. This would promote their applications to foreign universities, scholarship-granting agencies, or training institutions.

This chapter provides a thorough account of the research process. It starts with the overall research approach, then elaborates on the data collection method and timeline. The characteristics of the participants and the research ethical considerations are outlined in the subsequent sections. Finally, the data processing is meticulously explained, and the methodological limitations are discussed.

This research study draws upon several theoretical constructs such as collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, constructivism, and online learning. These theories serve as a conceptual framework for understanding the learning processes of students and for designing effective learning experiences in general.

3.1 Research Approach

The study is designed as an inductive qualitative research due to its interest in non-measurable people's attitudes, perceptions, experiences and preferences. The lack of a significant body of relevant scholarly literature also made this research design more feasible. In general, qualitative research emphasizes quality over quantity, aiming to gain comprehensive insights rather than generalizability to a larger population. By purposefully selecting interviewees based on their educational background and experiences with motivation letter writing, the researcher was able to gather rich and valuable insights that contribute to a robust preliminary analysis and conceptualization of the proposed online platform.

The study data was gathered through 8 semi-structured interviews with IT experts, educational experts, and peer students in order to delve deep into their past writing experiences and their viewpoints and suggestions regarding the proposed online platform. The interviews were transcribed

and analyzed using conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), which involved a coding process to identify and elaborate the research outcomes.

3.2 Data Collection Method and Timeline

The chosen research method for this study is semi-structured interviews, which offers the flexibility to pose and adapt questions based on participants' responses and experiences. This approach is particularly suitable for inductive studies that involve open-ended questions to explore perceptions and opinions regarding themes such as student motivation letters for university admission and online learning platform development. The diversity of the research interviewees is accounted for and considered in this adaptive method.

The format of the study was purposefully cross-sectional. That is, the researcher collected data from different interviewees at a specific point in time to explore their experiences with motivation letter writing, the challenges they encountered, and their opinions on the proposed online platform. This is prompted by the research interest in gaining the ideas and perceptions of a snapshot of the targeted population rather than exploring cause-and-effect associations or the interviewees' changing views or perceptions over time. For the latter, longitudinal research would have been more suitable.

Between April 1st and May 4th, 2023, a total of eight interviews were carried out online via Zoom. The interview duration varied from twenty-four to forty-eight minutes, with an average length of thirty-six minutes. To ensure consistency in the interview process, an interview guide was developed. The questions in the guide aim to gather general information about the participants' experience with writing motivation letters. The information obtained from the interviews are then classified into three distinct categories as detailed below. The interview guide, including the interview questions and structure, can be found in Appendix 1.

a. Students' Overall Experience with Writing Motivation Letters

This category seeks to explore students' experiences with writing motivation letters for admission purposes and the concomitant challenges that they encountered. In addition, it aims to understand the elements that a successful motivation letter should convey and the common mistakes students make when composing motivation letters.

The interview questions in this section were conducted in an unstructured manner, following the approach described by Adams (2015). Three main questions were prepared, with an additional question available if participants did not address a specific topic in their earlier responses.

b. Online Learning and its Advantages and Disadvantages

This category aims at gathering the opinions of students and educational experts regarding online learning in general, including its advantages and disadvantages. It also intends to explore participants' experiences with using online learning tools and platforms. In this section of the interview, 3 questions were asked.

c. Visual, Pedagogical and Technical Aspects of Proposed Online Platform

This category endeavors to collect insights about key visual and technical aspects of the proposed online platform. It also explores possible potential ways for making the platform user-friendly and engaging for learners. This section has nine questions on various dimensions related to the look and functionality of the platform.

3.3 Participants

To capture diverse perspectives that could inform the development of the online platform and address the specific needs of students from Central Asia, five participants from the region were intentionally chosen. The purpose was to develop an in-depth understanding of the challenges and requirements faced by students and practitioners in this region regarding creative and critical writing. In general, the interviewees exhibited some variations in terms of demographics, including age, gender, location, and occupations.

Given the time and reach limitations, constructing a randomly selected and representative body of participants (Etikan et al., 2016) was not possible. Nevertheless, the study's eight interviews provide a thorough investigation and meaningful perspectives that can inform future research and instructional strategies. It is worth noting that for purposes of the study scope and objectives, some seemingly relevant participant categories such as students' parents, teachers, and educational psychologists were excluded. These categories can be of value when incorporated in subsequent larger-scale studies.

Table 1: Participants' characteristics and experiences with motivation letter writing

Participant	Gender	Age	Occupation	Location	Prior experience with writing motivation letters
A	Male	40	PhD student	Germany	Yes
B	Male	30	English teacher	Poland	Yes
C	Male	37	IT expert	Kazakhstan	Yes
D	Male	20	Student	China	Yes
E	Female	32	IT expert	Uzbekistan	Yes
F	Female	17	Pupil	Kazakhstan	Yes
G	Male	18	Student	Kazakhstan	Yes
H	Male	37	English teacher	Uzbekistan	Yes

Table 1 presents the demographic and occupational characteristics of the interviewees. This sample consisted of six males and two females, all of whom possessed previous experience with writing motivation letters for university admission.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The guidelines established by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (2019) were followed in the interview process, which involved the following steps:

1. Before starting the interview recording, a text was read aloud by the interviewer in order to secure consent from the participants to record their answers and incorporate them into the study. The text explicitly detailed that the interview would remain anonymous and voluntary, with no sharing of data with any third parties. Part of this text was repeated at the beginning of the recording to have audio proof of consent. The exact wording of the mentioned text can be found in Appendix 2.
2. Anonymity was ensured by allowing each participant to select a pseudonym of their choice prior to commencing the recording. In instances where it was necessary for the interviewer to refer to the participant.

3. To facilitate data transcription and processing, a unique letter was assigned to each participant for reference purposes.

3.5 Data Processing

The interviews were transcribed using the edited transcription technique, which involved omitting pauses, redundancies, fillers, and extraneous phrases. This method was chosen to remove irrelevant segments of conversation such as compliments, comments on the quality of the connection, or, in a particular instance, comforting words towards an interviewee's barking dog.

To ensure accurate transcription, a paid software NVivo was used. However, manual editing was required as no software fully supported Uzbek and Kazakh languages.

Following transcription, the interviews underwent codification using conventional content analysis. Due to limited available literature, instead of relying on preconceived categories, coding categories were derived inductively from the data itself (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The codification process comprised three stages:

1. Coding each interview individually.
2. Synthesizing individual interview coding into a comprehensive overview.
3. Categorizing the codes obtained from the overview.

Stage 1: Coding Each Interview Individually

At first, individual interviews were coded based on categories derived from the various contexts of participants' responses. The resulting categories were as follows:

- a. Previous experience with writing motivation letters.
- b. General perspective on online learning in the context of online learning platform.
- c. Pedagogical aspects of developing the online platform.
- d. Technical considerations of developing the online platform.
- e. Enhancing the user-friendliness and engagement of the platform.
- f. Providing feedback and assessing the learner's progress.

All six categories are directly linked to the research questions. The participants' life trajectories and previous experiences with writing motivation letters and using various online educational tools informed their insights on the kind of online platform they would like to see.

The first interview that was coded belonged to participant "A". Relevant sentences from the transcription of the interview were underlined, and key concepts, perceptions, or opinions derived from these sentences were interpreted. Initially, each sentence was coded separately, but as the process progressed, sentences expressing similar ideas were clustered under the same code. In total, 20 codes were generated. An example of the coding of this interview can be seen in table 2, which has been translated from Uzbek and Russian to English.

Table 2: Example from coding the interview with participant "A" (translated to English)

Category	Coding	Sentence
Previous experience with writing motivation letters	Lack of knowledge on how to write motivation letters	"It was challenging for me as I was not taught how to develop a strong motivation letter".
	No prior motivation letter writing experience	"Since it was my first time composing a motivation letter for admission, I struggled a lot".
	Missing a clear vision on how and what to write	"I was not sure what to include in my letter and why".
General perspective on online learning, considering both its advantages and disadvantages in the context of online learning platform	It is accessible and convenient way of learning	"I often use online platforms as they help me to learn at any time and in any place".
	Absence of human interaction	"The only drawback of online learning platforms is the absence of human interaction in most cases".

Stage 2: Synthesizing Interview Coding into a Comprehensive Overview

After conducting individual coding for the eight interviews, a collective synthesis was performed. The codes were categorized based on their particular content, grouping together all the contexts in which a specific topic was discussed. These contexts served the common purpose of identifying challenges in writing motivation letters and proposing an online platform that caters to pertaining human needs. Specifically, the frequency of participants mentioning each concept was tallied, disregarding the specific context, as well as noting the number of mentions across different given contexts. Table 3 shows an abstract of the concept of “missing a clear vision on how to write a motivation letter” derived from the coding at this stage. It is an example of the aforementioned process.

Table 3: An instance of codification synthesis: the code “missing a clear vision on how to write a motivation letter” .

Concept/code	How many times mentioned	Context
Missing a clear vision on how to write a motivation letter	8/8	Mentioned this concept
	7/8	Did not have enough information and relevant skills for knowing how to write and what to include into the letter.
	7/8	Said that it was a challenge to write a motivation letter as she did not know how to structure it properly.
	4/8	Said that the most difficult part of the letter was to figure out how to communicate through the letter.

Following the synthesis, a total of 16 codes or concepts were obtained, with 12 being mentioned by multiple participants. Among these codes, 7 were mentioned by all participants, while 9 were mentioned by more than half of the participants.

Stage 3: Categorizing Obtained Codes

To categorize the synthesized codes, the initial focus was on the 16 concepts mentioned by multiple participants, as it was unclear whether the remaining codes represented highly specific situations or private circumstances. From the remaining 16 concepts, 4 categories emerged to effectively group the codes. These categories are:

1. Skills and knowledge development for writing strong motivation letters.
2. User-friendly platform and engaging activities.
3. Online learning community on the platform for chatting, communication, and networking.
4. Progress assessment and tracking tools.

The first 3 categories directly address the research questions, providing key insights for developing an online platform that teaches students how to write motivation letters. These codes or concepts were grouped and presented in Table 5. The color-coding representation indicating their frequency is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Color-coded frequency representation of mentioned concepts in Table 5

Color	Frequency
Green	All participants (8) mentioned this concept
Yellow	Half of the participants or more (4 to 7) mentioned this concept
Red	Less than half of the participants (3 to 1) mentioned this concept

Table 5: Participant-mentioned concepts categorized and ordered by frequency

Category	Concept
Skills and knowledge development for writing strong motivation letters	Having a proper vision of what to write and how to write
	More cases to learn
	To better understand the value of the letter
	Creative writing skills

	Critical thinking skills
	An ability to do research and use it while writing
User-friendly platform and engaging activities	Clear and concise instructions
	Simple and intuitive interface
	Personalization options
	Quick and efficient performance
Online learning community on the platform for chatting, communication and networking	Online community would encourage students to be more engaging
	Exchanging learning experience with others on the platform would be beneficial
	It is always good to have a networking opportunity while studying
	A sense of belonging to the group of learners would motivate students to learn more efficiently
Progress assessment and tracking tools	Progress monitoring is necessary for any kind of learning process
	Tracking the learning process would ensure quality learning

4 FINDINGS

The research findings presented in this section are based on the data collected through semi-structured interviews. These interviews aimed to gain insights into the participants' perspectives and attitudes towards the proposed online platform which seeks to educate students on crafting personalized motivation letters for foreign universities and scholarships applications. As detailed previously in section “3.2 Data collection method and timeline”, the gathered interview information was classified into the following three distinct categories.

1. Students' Overall Experience with Writing Motivation Letters

The hardest part was to explain all my strengths and all my good attributes in a way that would catch the reader's attention (Participant B)

During the interviews, all participants expressed their struggle with writing their own motivation letters, citing various challenges. Among such challenges, participants highlighted their lack of clear ideas and structure at the time of constructing their letters. Additionally, they admitted seeking assistance from others to edit and refine their letters, as they were uncertain about the correctness and effectiveness of their content.

The majority of participants also mentioned the difficulty they faced in relating themselves and their life stories to the program they intended to undertake. They underline the scarcity of successful sample letters to learn from, which further exacerbated the challenge of crafting informed and compelling motivation letters on their part.

Another problem spotted by most participants was the need to align their skills and expertise with the ideal profile needed for their desired program of study. They emphasized how complex it is to develop a narrative that is simple, well-structured, and confident, and simultaneously not arrogant.

The most daunting aspect of writing a motivation letter is effectively conveying one's strengths and attributes in a manner that captures the reader's attention. It is crucial to make the letter emotional and impactful to ensure that the reader fully understands the weight and significance of events and stories included in it. Nearly all participants stated that they struggled with incorporating these key attributes, and even that they initially failed to take the letter seriously and underestimated its crucial importance in the university admission process.

One of the significant mistakes they made was excessively focusing on themselves without establishing direct connections to the program they were applying for. This issue considerably undermined the success prospect of their motivation letter.

2. Online Learning and its Advantages and Disadvantages

Online learning offers a more convenient and resilient alternative to traditional education, while also providing ample opportunities for collaborative engagement. (Participant A)

Based on the interviews, there was unanimous agreement that online learning is a big step forward in education because it helps people all over the world to learn more easily. This was primarily attributed to the emergence of new technologies and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although people have become less skeptical about online learning, the interviewees also acknowledged the continued importance of in-person learning.

Several participants highlighted that online learning offers a wide range of educational resources and tools, which contribute to a more exciting and interactive learning experience. These resources include interactive modules, videos, simulations, and virtual labs. They enable students to actively engage with the content and develop a deeper understanding of complex concepts. Additionally, online platforms facilitate communication and collaboration among learners through discussion forums and virtual group projects, fostering the exchange of ideas and diverse perspectives.

Almost all participants highlighted that online learning is often a cost-effective choice. It eliminates the expenses associated with commuting, accommodation, and other costs, making it more affordable for many individuals. Moreover, online courses and programs typically offer self-paced learning, allowing students to learn at their preferred speed and manage their resources accordingly. This flexibility enables individuals to customize their learning experience to suit their personal needs and schedules.

Several participants (5 out of 8) identified the absence of face-to-face interaction and physical classrooms as a major challenge in online learning. They highlighted that this limitation makes it difficult to seek immediate clarification of doubts, engage in dynamic discussions, and benefit from valuable networking opportunities that are typically easier to achieve in a traditional classroom setting. Participants also underlined the precariousness of reliance on technology and internet connectivity in online learning. Technical issues like internet disruptions, software glitches, or

hardware malfunctions can impede the learning experience and frustrate both students and instructors.

Two participants noted that online platforms can potentially facilitate constructivist learning by providing interactive writing exercises, prompts, and examples that encourage students to reflect on their experiences and aspirations. By engaging in such activities, students can be able to better understand themselves and effectively communicate their background through motivation letters.

3. Visual, Pedagogical, and Technical Aspects of the Proposed Online Platform

Integrating some sort of community into the platform would be helpful to engage with students and make the learning process more enjoyable (Participant D).

Five out of eight people said that having an online community of learners is important and thus should be included in the platform to enhance the learning experience. All participants agreed with that. They proposed the inclusion of discussion boards, peer review systems, and collaborative opportunities for writing tasks on the platform. They believed that these features would create a sense of community and allow learners to benefit from diverse experiences and ideas shared by their peers.

During the interviews, the concept of using steps in learning process was mentioned four times by four participants. These participants opined that breaking down the learning process into steps is very important to enhance students' understanding and navigation of their learning journey. By breaking down complex concepts or tasks into smaller, manageable steps, students can effectively comprehend the material and incrementally build up their knowledge. This approach not only prevents overwhelming students' mental and psychological capacities but also promotes a sense of achievement as students' progress through each step. Ultimately, it leads to a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Tracking the progress of students emerged as a key point mentioned by all eight participants. They pinpointed the importance of monitoring and assessing students' progress for the effectiveness of the platform and the students themselves. By keeping track of their progress, the platform can identify areas where students may be struggling and provide targeted support or additional resources to help them succeed. Additionally, tracking progress enables students to have a clear understanding of

their own growth and development, empowering them to set goals and make informed decisions about their learning journey.

Differently, the inclusion of a diagnostic test at the beginning of the learning journey was unanimously supported by all participants. That is because creative writing and critical thinking skills were seen as the fundamental aspects of the platform. Conducting an initial diagnostic assessment would provide valuable insights into individual strengths and areas for improvement, enabling the platform and educators to design tailored and personalized lessons, exercises, and resources that address each student's specific needs. By addressing students' unique requirements from the start, the platform can enhance the overall learning experience and ensure that learners receive the necessary support and guidance to foster their growth and development.

Similarly, self-regulated learning has been put forward by three participants as an effective tool for improving the overall online learning process. They conveyed the need to provide students with tools and strategies for setting goals, monitoring their progress, and reflecting on their writing. One participant has additionally suggested that a proposed online platform can facilitate collaborative learning by offering features such as group writing tasks, live chats, and video conferencing. This collaborative approach not only helps students to become better writers, but also fosters a sense of belonging and support within the learning community.

All participants expressed strong emphasis on the importance of receiving feedback and guidance throughout the learning process. They viewed these elements as essential for effective learning. The discussed platform should offer opportunities for students to receive feedback at the end of their learning journey, as well as guidance and support along the way. Feedback and reflection are considered crucial components of any learning experience, and all participants unanimously agreed that the platform should incorporate these features to enhance the overall learning experience.

5 ANALYSIS

This chapter seeks to analyze and interpret the research findings detailed in the previous sections and reflects on the problems, knowledge, and suggestions that the interviewees shared with the researcher. Indeed, the interviews revealed the challenges students face when writing motivation letters, including difficulties with letter structure, establishing clear connections between their personal profiles and the desired program, and effectively conveying their strengths and attributes. The participants effectively expressed the students' need for assistance, clear guidelines, and successful examples to improve their motivation letter writing skills.

Regarding online learning, participants in the study recognized its advantages, such as convenience, accessibility, and provision of a wide range of educational resources. They also highlighted its drawbacks, such as the absence of face-to-face interaction and the reliance on technology and connectivity. The latter's disruption can hinder the learning experience. Still, participants acknowledged that online learning can offer collaborative engagement, cost-effectiveness, and flexibility in pacing one's learning.

The proposed online platform was discussed in terms of its visual, pedagogical, and technical aspects. Participants emphasized the importance of creating a community of learners, incorporating discussion boards, peer review systems, and collaborative writing tasks to foster engagement and learning from diverse experiences. They also stressed the significance of breaking down the learning process into manageable steps, tracking student progress, and implementing a diagnostic test at the beginning of the learning journey to tailor lessons and resources according to individual needs.

Furthermore, the participants portrayed self-regulated learning as an effective approach. This suggested that providing students with tools for goal-setting, progress monitoring, and reflection would enhance their online learning experience. The potential of the platform to facilitate collaborative learning and foster a sense of community and support among learners through group tasks, live chats, and video conferencing was also highlighted.

Feedback and guidance were unanimously agreed upon as crucial elements throughout the learning process. Participants made clear the need for the platform to offer continuous support and guidance during the process and feedback at the end of the learning journey. Incorporating these features would enhance the overall learning experience and guarantee students the necessary assistance to improve their motivation letter writing skills.

Based on these findings, it is evident that the development of the online platform should consider the challenges students face, incorporate collaborative and community-building features, provide structured guidance and feedback, and promote self-regulated learning.

5.1 Discussion

This research has allowed the exploration of effective ways for developing an online platform that would teach students and job applicants how to write strong motivation letters. The study findings offered valuable insights into the design and implementation of such a platform, as well as its potential impact on improving motivation letter writing skills.

The study revealed several key factors that contribute to the effectiveness of an online platform for teaching motivation letter writing. Firstly, providing clear and structured guidelines to students is crucial. Online users who have access to step-by-step instructions and templates would potentially demonstrate a better understanding of the key elements required in a strong motivation letter. This highlights the importance of providing learners with a structured framework to follow during the writing process.

Secondly, interactive features such as practice exercises and feedback mechanisms were found to enhance learning outcomes. This highlights the importance of assessment and feedback in online learning. These strategies help to evaluate student progress and offer guidance to support their learning journey. Online learning environments use different assessment methods, such as formative assessments (ongoing evaluations) and summative assessments (final evaluations) (Kwon, Y., & Wen, Y., 2020).

Thirdly, building an online community is an essential feature of a productive learning experience. This idea directly corresponds to the concept of collaborative learning which can help improve learners' social and thinking abilities. Collaborative learning involves working together, sharing knowledge, and solving problems in a positive way, which helps to develop social skills (Slavin, 1995). Additionally, it boosts cognitive skills by involving learners in tasks that require analyzing, combining information, and making evaluations.

Furthermore, the study identified the value of incorporating examples of successful motivation letters into the platform. Participants who have access to a repository of high-quality motivation letters would be better able to understand and apply the writing techniques deliberated in the instructional

materials. This finding underscores the importance of providing learners with concrete examples that showcase the desired writing style and structure.

While this study highlights several positive aspects of the online platform for teaching motivation letter writing, it is essential to acknowledge the study limitations. First, the study was conducted with a relatively small number of participants, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research with larger and more diverse body of interviewees could potentially yield more robust and inclusive perspectives on the effectiveness of such platforms.

Second, the study focused on the immediate impact of the platform on participants' writing skills and did not examine the long-term effects or the transferability of those skills to real-life situations. Subsequent studies could explore the sustainability of the acquired skills and their application in actual contexts of motivation letter writing and beyond.

In conclusion, the findings of this study contribute to our understanding of effective strategies for conceptualizing and developing an online platform for teaching motivation letter writing. However, further research is warranted to validate and broaden these findings, particularly in larger and more diverse cohorts. Moreover, investigating the long-term impact of these platforms on learners' writing skills remains an important area for future exploration.

5.2 Outcome/Product

Based on the research findings, the following practical guidelines have been formulated:

Addressing students' challenges in writing motivation letters:

- a. Providing clear guidelines: Offer comprehensive instructions on the rationale, content and structure of a motivation letter, including what sections to include and their purpose.
- b. Offering writing prompts: Provide specific writing prompts that help students brainstorm ideas and organize their thoughts effectively.
- c. Exhibiting successful samples: Include a collection of successful motivation letters that students can use as references to understand key elements and writing styles of a motivation letter.
- d. Emphasizing personalization: Encourage students to relate their experiences, skills, and aspirations to the desired program, ensuring their letters are tailored to specific universities and courses.
- e. Highlighting common mistakes: Identify and explain common mistakes made by students and provide examples of how to avoid them.

f. Fostering self-reflection: Stimulate students to reflect on their own strengths and attributes, helping them to identify compelling elements in their life stories or profiles to include in motivation letters.

Leveraging advantages of online learning:

a. Providing interactive resources: Incorporate interactive modules, videos, simulations, and virtual labs to engage students and promote active learning.

b. Enhancing collaboration: Include discussion forums, peer review systems, and opportunities for group work to encourage interaction and knowledge sharing among learners.

c. Ensuring affordability: Make the platform cost-effective, boosting its selling advantage as it already eliminated the costs needed for commuting and accommodation in traditional learning settings.

d. Addressing technical challenges: Implement measures to minimize technical issues, such as ensuring reliable internet connectivity and stand-by technical support to troubleshoot problems.

Enhancing the visual, pedagogical, and technical aspects of the platform:

a. Establishing an online community: Integrate features like chatting spaces, collaborative writing tasks, discussion forums, and peer evaluation tools to foster a sense of community and facilitate peer learning.

b. Breaking down the learning process: Present the learning journey in manageable steps, allowing students to grasp complex concepts gradually and avoid the state of feeling overwhelmed.

c. Tracking and assessing progress: Apply tools to monitor and assess students' progress, enabling customized support and providing students with a clear understanding of their own growth.

d. Conducting diagnostic assessments: Administer diagnostic tests at the beginning of the learning journey to identify students' writing skills levels and tailor lessons accordingly.

e. Promoting self-regulated learning: Provide students with tools and strategies for goal setting, progress monitoring, and self-reflection on their writing.

f. Facilitating feedback and guidance: Offer features that allow students to receive feedback and guidance throughout the learning process, helping them to improve their writing skills and fostering a supportive learning environment.

By adhering to these guidelines, an online platform for teaching successful motivation letter writing can be designed to effectively address students' challenges, harness the benefits of online learning, and enhance the overall learning experience.

6 CONCLUSION

This research delved into the exploration of technical tools and pedagogical approaches for developing an online platform dedicated for empowering and training students on motivation letter writing. Derived from eight semi-structured interviews with IT experts, educational experts, and peer students, the research findings provided valuable insights and perspectives on the proposed platform's design, implementation, functionalities, and potential impact in enhancing motivation letter writing skills for students and job applicants.

While this research represents the perspectives of a limited number of participants, it provides a meaningful foundation for future investigations. Further studies can validate and expand upon the findings, enhancing the conceptualization and design of an online tool for motivation letter writing. This thesis contributes to the field by offering hands-on guidelines and insights for developing such an online platform, thus addressing an existing gap both in scholarly and practical guidance literatures and supporting individuals for achieving their educational future goals.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

The interviews were conducted using the following interview guide in three languages: English, Russian, and Uzbek.

The original questions posed during the interview are presented in each section, indicated by numbered items for clarity.

First of all, my name is Begzod Hakimov, I am studying a Master degree in Educational Entrepreneurship at the Oulu University of Applied Sciences in Finland. My thesis is about exploring possible technical tools and pedagogical approaches for developing an online platform for motivation letter writing. Therefore, I am doing these interviews.

The interview is completely voluntary and anonymous, so you can change your name if you desire. First, I would like to get your consent to participate in the process, record your answers, and integrate them into my study.

Section 1: Students' overall experience with writing motivation letters

1. Can you tell me about your experience with writing motivation letters? What challenges did you face in the process?
2. What are the most important elements of a successful motivation letter in your opinion?
3. What do you think are the common mistakes that people make when writing motivation letters?

Section 2: Online learning and its advantages and disadvantages

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of online learning?
2. What kind of online learning tools do you use or did use regularly?
3. How do you think an online learning platform could help people to improve their motivation letter writing skills?

Section 2: Visual, pedagogical, and technical aspects of the proposed online platform

1. What kind of resources or materials do you think would be most helpful in an online learning platform for motivation letter writing?
2. Are there any other features or aspects that you think an online learning platform for motivation letter writing should include?
3. Should a diagnostic test be included in the platform? If yes, what kind of features should it have?

4. What do you think about technology-enhanced learning tools for developing educational online platforms? What do you think about Learning Management System (LMS)? What do you think about Canvas? What do you think about Moodle? What do you think about Zoom, Skype, or Google Meet?
5. How do you think an online learning platform could be designed to be engaging and interactive for learners? What kind of instructional design models can be used to create an effective online platform to teach students how to write motivation letters?
6. What kind of phases should be developed in the platform? Analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation?
7. What kind of exercises would help students to improve their critical thinking skills? How can students enhance their critical thinking skills through such exercises?
8. What kind of assessment, feedback or support would be most helpful to learners using an online learning platform for motivation letter writing?
9. What do you think would be the most effective way to assess learners' progress and provide feedback on their motivation letter writing skills?

Appendix 2: Pre-interview procedure

Before conducting the interview, the interviewer read out a translated text in English, Russian or Uzbek to the participant. The purpose of this text was to express gratitude for their willingness to be interviewed and to clarify that the interview was solely for the purpose of a Master's Thesis.

The participant was assured that their participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous, with a guarantee that no information about their identity would be shared with any third parties. In order to maintain anonymity, the interviewer requested a pseudonym from the participant.

After the participant provided their chosen pseudonym, another translated text in one of the three languages mentioned above was read aloud to them. This text sought the participant's consent to record their answers and incorporate them into the study. The participant agreed to this request.