

Chapter 86

Experiences of Educators in Imparting Digital Education and 21st Century Skills to Modern Students

Sriya Chakravarti

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5396-0318>

Higher Colleges of Technology, UAE

Rosalind Rice Stevenson

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7373-7877>

Writing on the Go, UK

ABSTRACT

As technology influences societies worldwide and invents new opportunities and challenges, its role in education has become increasingly relevant. As the learning environment adapts and incorporates new e-teaching tools, it becomes imperative to find the role, place of technology in education, and examine the voices of educators that work with various technologies in teaching and learning to train young learners. Therefore, this research aims to examine if educators believe that they can inculcate the 21st century skills into the modern student in an online teaching environment. Furthermore, the research attempts to find the obstacles on part of the educators and students that inhibit delivery of a seamless online educational experience and teaching of the 21st century competencies.

INTRODUCTION

As technology influences societies worldwide and invents new opportunities and challenges, its role in education has become increasingly relevant (Srivastava et al., 2014). As the learning environment adapts and incorporates innovative e teaching tools (auto proctors, intelligent tutoring systems), it becomes imperative to understand the role and place of technology in the future of education. Examining

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the voices of educators working with these technologies in teaching and learning is one way to help us understand the effect of technology on education and the transfer of 21st century skills to our students.

Therefore, this research study examines if educators believe that they can inculcate the four essential skills of Communication, Collaboration, Critical thinking and Creativity (4Cs) into the modern student in an online teaching environment (Miller, 2016). Additionally, the research intends to find the obstacles on part of the educators and students, which inhibit delivery of a seamless online education experience and delivery of the 21st century competencies.

The study undertaken was qualitative in nature using a phenomenological study approach. A carefully selected sample of seven participants contributed through interviews for this research project. These educators were from various Higher Education institutions of the world and have extensive teaching experience in traditional and online teaching.

This research work is timely and relevant as the society re-imagines a new reality post pandemic for a multitude of industries, education being one of them. The findings of this research may be useful to educators and administrators working directly with students, K-University, educational researchers, educational software developers, textbook publishers, and organizations interested in funding educational initiatives.

BACKGROUND TO THE ISSUE

Globalization has influenced various dimensions of our modern lives. As more companies turn multinational or transnational due to globalization, education needs to go through a reformation process to accommodate the changing world order. This way it can prepare the 21st century learner for the future of work, opportunities and challenges. Furthermore, it may help prepare the learners to adapt to various backgrounds and thrive during times of uncertainty, complexity, diversity, and disruptions (Winarti, 2018).

Twenty-first century competencies has received recognition for building sustainable social and economic growth globally (Koh, Chai, Benjamin, & Hong, 2015). However, instructional methods in education need reformation to include the teaching of these skills (Winarti, 2018). The (4Cs) are essential skills of the 21st century and needed by learners to succeed in academics and the workplace of the future. However, it is widely felt that instructional methods have not changed sufficiently to allow for effective teaching of the 21st century competencies (Miller, 2016).

The contemporary world understands the importance of the (4Cs) and recognizes it as the basis upon which all other skills are build. Without this solid foundation, positioning the learner as workplace-ready is compromised (Koh, Chai, Benjamin, & Hong, 2015). Despite professional training being widely provided to educators (on the teaching of the (4Cs)), there remain barriers to practice (Joo et al., 2018). Exploring what these barriers are and why they exist is paramount to understanding the actions needed to overcome these issues. Successfully identifying barriers to teaching (4Cs), involves considering the effect on both teachers and learners as they strive to deal with the impact of technology in the online teaching and learning dynamic.

Regardless of the training given to the educator, instructional practices vary. This is due to the role of the culture, context, environment and perspectives of that professional (Guri-Rosenblit & Gros, 2011). Measuring whether digitisation of teaching and learning has helped in the integration of (4Cs) into the learning paradigm, or indeed is a barrier itself is another dilemma facing education. Finding a solution, which leads to a creative online approach to the teaching of (4Cs) in the curriculum, will require an

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