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NURSILA ABDUL & SHAKILA CHE DAHALAN

Integration of 21st Century Learning Practice in History Education: A Literature Review

ABSTRACT: This literature review presents an analysis of the implementation of 21st century learning practices in history education in Malaysia. This review focuses on the impact of these practices on student engagement and achievement. This paper also discusses the methodology used to assess the effects of these practices as well as their implication in improving history education in Malaysia, aligning with the demands and obstacles of contemporary education. This findings on the study show that the integration of critical thinking, digital literacy, collaboration and communication skills in the teaching of history provides significant benefits to students and the teaching process. Schools should focus on helping teaching learn how to use technology in their lessons and incorporate digital materials for exciting historical studies. The implications are policy makers should invest in updating the history curriculum to include current global viewpoint and topics, making sure it stays interesting and sparks students' curiosity about history. Embracing innovative pedagogy and a learning environment that encourages active student involved, these methods will have an even bigger impact. By adapting to educational advances and social changes, history education can keep growing and get students ready to face tough challenges and contribute meaningfully in this increasingly connected world.

KEY WORDS: The 21st Century Learning; Practices; History Education.

INTRODUCTION

History education is really important, because it helps young people understand their past and how it affects the present and future (Rudi, Ahmad & Awang, 2019; Dahalan, Ahmad & Awang, 2020).

In today's globalized and technologically advanced world, just memorizing facts and dates isn't enough anymore. We need a more interactive and student-focused way of teaching history that helps us develop skills are useful in the modern world. Learning in the 21st century involves important things like thinking critically, digital literacy, collaboration, and communication skills (Een & Sariyatun, 2019).

About the Authors: Nursila Abdul is a Master Student at the Department of History, Faculty of Human Sciences UPSI (Sultan Idris Education University), 36900 Tanjung Malim, Perak Darul Ridzuan, Malaysia; and Dr. Shakila Che Dahalan is a Lecturer at the Department of History, Faculty of Human Sciences UPSI, Malaysia. Authors corresponding: nursilaabdu197@gmail.com and shakilacd@fsk.upsi.edu.my

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In the context of history education, this means that student need to be able to critically analyse historical sources, use technology to access and evaluate information, and collaborate in complex projects to understand historical event from multiple perspective (Wasler, 2008; Ni, 2023).

The main purpose of this analysis is to explore how 21st century learning practices can effectively be applied in history education and to evaluate the impact of these practices on student engagement and achievement. Furthermore, this article will also identify the challenges faced in implementing these practices and provide practical suggestions to overcome them.

Given the significance of 21st century skills in preparing students for complex and interconnected world, it is crucial to determine how history education can be adjusted to meet these demands. This literature review will examine innovative pedagogical approaches, successful case examples and implementation strategies that can help teachers incorporate 21st century learning practices into the history curriculum (Hwang & Chang, 2019; Yuwanti, Sari & Rusdiani, 2025).

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach. It involves a detailed review of literature to explore 21st century learning practices in history education. Various academic sources were found using online databases, such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, SciSpace the search terms used included “21st Century Learning”; “History Education”; “Digital Literacy”; “Critical Thinking”; “Collaboration”; and Communication” (Creswell, 2014; Yuwanti, Sari & Rusdiani, 2025).

Only sources published in last decade with strong methodologies and significant contribution were chosen for analysis. Literature review is typically quantitative, involving a systematic, explicit, comprehensive and repeatable process of findings, analysing, and understanding original works by researchers and scholars (Creswell, 2014; Govindan & Bouzon, 2018).

To achieve the objective of this study, secondary data is used through a literature review as the research method. The analysis of sources included examining of key themes, learning practices used, as well as outcomes and challenges reported in each study. This process helps identify patterns and trends in the implementation of 21st century learning practices in history education, which are then combined to offer a comprehensive picture of effective practices, challenges faced and impacts on student engagement and achievement (Govindan & Bouzon, 2018; Yuwanti, Sari & Rusdiani, 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Components of 21st Century Learning in History consisted of: *Critical Thinking*; *Digital Literacy*; and *Collaboration and Communication*. The elaboration is following here:

Critical Thinking. According to R. Paul & L. Elder (2020), and other scholars, critical thinking is a concept that is related to an individual's intellectual level, especially in making logical reasoning in argue. It's really important for solving tough problems and making decisions (Guofang & Dianne, 2011; Facione, 2015; Paul & Elder, 2020).

Critical thinking plays a crucial role in history education as it enables students to recognize biases and different viewpoint in historical sources. By researching into the evidence and examining it thoroughly, students can establish connections between facts, make logical conclusions and grasp the complexities of historical events. This approach not only allows them to actively engage with the information, but also teaches them to question and assess it critically.

Digital Literacy. H. Spires & M. Bartlett (2012) categorized the different intellectual processes linked to digital literacy into three group: (1) finding and using digital content; (2) making digital content; and (3) sharing digital content. Based on this, digital literacy in history education, we can see how digital technology enhances students' educational experiences (Spires & Bartlett, 2012).

Digital literacy includes not only searching for and utilizing information but also producing and distributing content. Tools like data analysis software, online learning platforms and visualization applications assist students in accessing and comprehending historical sources more thoroughly.

Student are able to generate content such as documentaries and podcast, encouraging creativity and deeper comprehension. Sharing their project through social media and online learning platforms boots engagement and cooperation. In general, digital literacy supports student in cultivating critical technology and analytical skills crucial for their future.

Collaboration and Communication. Collaboration and Communication are essential components of 21st century learning. When students engage in group projects history class, they have the opportunity to collaborate, share ideas and gain insight from their classmates (Charles, 2015). This not only enhances their collaboration and communication abilities but also allows them to see things from different perspectives.

Project-based learning combines collaboration with hands-on experiences, enabling students to tackle historical challenges and enhances their critical thinking skills. Utilizing digital platforms such as

Kahoot, Google Meet further supports effective teamwork and communication among group member, ensuring everyone is actively involved. By adopting this approach, students might practice their interpersonal and communication skills, which are essential for both academic and professional achievements.

Impact of 21st Century Learning Practices on History Education are: *Student Engagement and Motivation; Learning Outcomes; Development of Critical Thinking Skills; Increasing Digital Literacy; and Collaboration and Communication Skills*. The elaboration is following here:

Student Engagement and Motivation. The impact of 21st century learning practices on student engagement with historical content shows a significant increase in student interest and motivation. Through hands-on projects, use of digital tools and collaborative activities, students are becoming more involved and excited about studying history.

K. Lezah & T. Rosy (2018) found that teaching methods adapted to the needs of students increase their motivation, curiosity and achievement. This approach not only makes student more enthusiastic but also helps them understand history more deeply (Lezah & Rosy, 2018).

The study of M. Niveetha, A.R. Ahmad & O. Norasmah (2021) found that incorporating teaching aids, or ABM (*Alat Bantu Mengajar*), and using different teaching methods can improve primary school students' attitudes, leading to increased motivation and creativity (Niveetha, Ahmad & Norasmah, 2021).

Various methods like presentations, Q&A (Question & Answer) sessions, gallery walk and debates were among the preferred methods by history students (Lezah & Rosy, 2018).

Learning Outcomes. The 21st century learning practices have shown an increase in academic achievement and student learning outcomes. The study shows that students' understanding of historical concepts, critically analyses historical sources and competence in digital literacy have increased.

Study by A. Rabaah, N.W.M.A. Wan & J. Adnan (2021) found that using tools like videos, articles and PowerPoint slides in teaching can make students more interested and boots their critical thinking. Students who engage in project-based learning demonstrate better academic performance and a deeper understanding of history (Rabaah, Wan & Adnan, 2021).

The study of entertainment education conducted by Mohd Zahar Kusnun & Affero Ismail (2016) and S. Rosmadi & Z. Hafizhah (2020) show that integrating entertainment in education is an interesting and helpful method to improve achievement also gain knowledge of history (*cf* Kusnun & Ismail, 2016; Rosmadi & Hafizhah, 2020; Mokhtar *et al.*, 2023).

Development of Critical Thinking Skills. The 21st century learning practices play an important role in the development of critical thinking skills. Students improve their ability to analyse historical evidence, recognize biases in sources and construct logical arguments.

According to N. Tzenios (2022) and K.H.D. Tang (2023), a student-centered approach not only increases engagement but also promotes a more meaningful and effective learning experience based on careful analysis (Tzenios, 2022; Tang, 2023).

Study by M.W. Loh & A.R. Ahmad (2022) found that using flipped classrooms can help students develop high-level thinking skills or KBAT (*Kebolehan Berfikir Aras Tinggi*). Technology allows students to access historical sources, analyse information critically and make arguments based on the evidence they find (Loh & Ahmad, 2022).

Increasing Digital Literacy. The integration of digital tools and resources in history education has enhanced students' capacity to access, evaluate, and create historical content. Students are improving their skills in using data analysis software, online databases, multimedia platforms, and other digital resources for historical research and presentation.

Studies conducted by A. Cecelia, M.M. Awang & A.R. Ahmad (2019) and S.N. Ayup, M.M. Awang & A.R. Ahmad (2019) highlight the importance of using technology in history education can make learning more engaging for students and lead to better results (Cecelia, Awang & Ahmad, 2019; Ayup, Awang & Ahmad, 2019).

Studies by D. Anita & A. Anuar (2022) on teachers' readiness for technology in M-learning, as well as studies by A. Nurhazirah *et al.* (2019) on the use of AR (Augmented Reality) in history learning, shows how technology enables deeper interaction with historical learning materials through digital formats (Anita & Anuar, 2022; Nurhazirah *et al.*, 2019).

Collaboration and Communication Skills. Collaboration projects and digital communication tools have proven effective in improving students' collaboration and communication skills. Students who work in group are able to share ideas, learn from peers' perspectives and improve their communication skills.

M.W. Sanga (2020) shows that the teacher's ability to provide opportunities for students to understand, analyse information, and establish partnerships between teachers and students can involvement in critical thinking and reflection activities (Sanga, 2020).

W.S. Kyle, N.K. Jolanta & M. Andrew (2021) found that using simulation methods and role play in adventure games can positively impact history learning. This approach not only makes learning more

interesting but also encourages collaboration among students (Kyle, Jolanta & Andrew, 2021).

Other studies by B. Hoy (2018); S.Y. Wong & S. Ghavaifekr (2018); and D. Rammos & T. Bratitsis (2019) also support the idea that history games can enhance students' active learning and communication skills (Hoy, 2018; Wong & Ghavaifekr, 2018; Rammos & Bratitsis, 2019).

Lastly, Challenges in Implementing 21st Century Learning Practices in History Education are: *Perceptions and Engagement*; and *Technology Challenges in History Teaching*. The elaboration is following here:

Perceptions and Engagement. History education is often seen as just memorizing facts that are not relevant to modern life. This leads to decrease in students' interest for studying history (Akhimullah, Ahmad & Awang, 2019).

Teachers and students face the perception that history is all about memorization, making it less appealing to students. According to M.M.L. Zulfiqar & A. Anuar (2021), students are required to put in a lot of effort to memorize the content in their textbooks (Zulfiqar & Anuar, 2021).

Furthermore, M.K. Kaviza (2019) and N.A. Ismady, A. Ahmad & N. Othman (2024) pointed out that students struggle to understanding the subject of history because of the memorization-based approach. This rote approach makes it difficult for students to remember and understand many facts also the development of historical events (Kaviza, 2019; Ismady, Ahmad & Othman, 2024).

Technology Challenges in History Teaching. According to N. Pusparani & A. Anuar (2021), using digital resources of history lessons can make learning more engaging for students and help them develop research skills. However, the impact of globalization and the widespread availability of internet and affordable mobile devices in Malaysia have also brought about challenges in the education system. If not managed properly, these technology advancements can have negative effects on learning (Pusparani & Anuar, 2021).

Additionally, Rosliza binti Awang (2020) pointed out many teachers struggles with technological challenges, such as lack of skills and difficulty using digital tools, which can hinder the effectiveness of history teaching (Awang, 2020).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, these 21st century skills not only enhance academic success in history but also provide students with adaptable abilities necessary for their future endeavors in higher education and beyond. In the future, it's crucial to show more support for bringing 21st century learning methods into history classrooms.

Schools should focus on helping teaching learn how to use technology in their lessons and incorporate digital materials for exciting historical studies.

Policy makers should invest in updating the history curriculum to include current global viewpoint and topics, making sure it stays interesting and sparks students' curiosity about history.

Embracing innovative pedagogy and a learning environment that encourages active student involvement, these methods will have an even bigger impact.

By adapting to educational advances and social changes, history education can keep growing and get students ready to face tough challenges and contribute meaningfully in this increasingly connected world.

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History Education in Malaysia

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