

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING AS A SIGNIFICANT APPROACH TO BUILD XXI CENTURY SKILLS

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***Annotation:** Project-based learning as a learner-centred and innovative approach to learning has endless real-world applications that avail a variety of strategies that are essential for lasting success of learners in the 21st century. Students benefit from this method driving their own learning through communication, collaboration, problem solving and critical thinking. This article provides basic insights into the importance of this contemporary approach highlighting the contribution of it in developing 21st century skills.*

***Key words:** project-based learning, approach, method, 21st-century skills, teaching and learning, opportunities, students.*

In this digitally revolutionized and globally developed century it is highly important to educate a person from the cradle to the career path with the most updated and innovative methods. Today learners from the youngest age need the knowledge and skills that enable them not only to survive in this rapidly changing world but to achieve success at schools, colleges, universities and future jobs. If we want to train our students to perform better in any sphere, we need to nurture them with opportunities to learn 21st-century skills.

21st-century skills are not the skills of the remote future but of today. They are more significant and necessary to students now than ever before.

One of the rational and practical approaches teachers can employ to teaching to develop those skills is project-based learning. It is an instructional methodology that gives students a great chance of learning by implementing the skills and knowledge around projects. It is a student-centred approach as it appeals to students' personal differences encouraging all of them for deeper learning in-context. Apart from classic teaching approaches in which students are mostly required or expected to memorize the information, project-based learning approach organizes learning around projects which are effective tools of student-driven and teacher-facilitated learning. Most importantly, this method focuses on 21st century skills such as critical thinking, reasoning, creativity, decision-making, problem solving, ability to use technology appropriately, cross-cultural understanding and strong communication. Moreover, it develops personal and social responsibility of students which is increasingly significant in educating and upbringing the younger generation.

Project-based learning is not a novel concept in education. Having been introduced in the 20th century, it has been widely followed in European countries mostly in medical and business education. As for our country, project-based learning is not widely used in teaching and learning as it is needed. We mostly include some elements of this method into teaching such as giving presentations, searching for current issues and searching for information to deal with it etc. However, not always all aspects and stages of the method are fully followed. Therefore, it is advisable that the curriculum which we use need to be considered including project work more into teaching and learning. The curriculum based on the project is designed aiming at engaging students using real-world problems. Hence, project-based learning is an integrative approach since real-world challenges are not almost always solved using information or skills from a single subject area. In project-based learning students are required to become engaged in inquiry, research and action plans to help address the issue or challenge that they are working on. While accomplishing the task students usually utilize the content knowledge and skills from multiple academic areas to successfully complete the project. They work in teams dividing their tasks depending on their capabilities, cooperate and discuss their findings so that they will be able to sort out the most relevant ideas, provide optimal solutions to the problem they are investigating. In turn, solving highly complicated problems necessitates the fact that students have both fundamental skills of the subject area and 21st century skills that can be referred to as teamwork, collaboration, research, communication, problem solving, time management and employing high tech tools. With the set of these skills, students become managers of their own learning process that is led and mentored by a skilled teacher.

In project-based learning the following learning experiences happen frequently:

Students plan what to do and divide their roles in a team;

They search for necessary information, compare the information they found from different sources before finalizing an assignment and analyze;

They make conclusions based on the analysis they do upon the findings on facts or information;

Students make an effort to deal with the complex problems and suggest their solutions;

Students can suggest more than one solution for that problematic situation as a project work should not result in only one way of solution;

They generate their main ideas, solutions or suggestions about how to approach a problem and prepare for delivery;

They present their final product with the help of multimedia presentations, conferences, posters, blogs, videos, models, advertisements or other media tools;

The products may be shown with an exhibition with the attendance of parents, other

teachers and students.

Students provide feedback to peers, comment on their work or assess other students' work;

Finally, students answer questions related to their project work in front of an audience.

These points demonstrate that students who are engaged in the project are involved in thinking, contributing to a team effort, and working creatively when they confront new challenges. Moreover, they feel personal and social responsibility while accomplishing the task, and make decisions considering various points of view of their peers.

Thus, it is highly suggested to use this method in teaching since it provides an opportunity to better and deeper learning. Nevertheless, the role of a teacher is also important. In order to make project-based learning one of the productive ways of fostering students' creativity, teachers are required to be able to motivate students all the time to create something new. Students should feel freedom, flexibility and an encouraging atmosphere in order to be more creative in what they prepare in their project groups. Also, teachers should use the time effectively, thus, teachers should review and reconsider the activities before starting the project so that these activities enable students to learn new materials broadly. In other words, students should be encouraged to collect extensive knowledge on the project subject as well as develop their certain skills.

As a final analysis, wisely and timely followed project-based method leads to creative and effective learning that may contribute to the development of highly important 21st century skills.

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