

CHAPTER 3 THE 21ST CENTURY SKILLS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with 21st-century skills that generally refer to the high-level skills and learning trends that students need to develop in order to succeed in the information age. These skills are required by educators, business leaders, academicians, and governmental institutions in 21st-century society and business life. Moreover, the chapter will address the issues related to Inclusive Education.

While education turns into a rapidly growing phenomenon in the information age we live in; the fact that everyone has access to information is seen as an important indicator of the level of development of countries. On the other hand, education is an important tool for world politics and economy with the function of raising qualified human labor. Along with social changes, education has begun to be treated as a human right that all people should benefit from equal opportunities without any discrimination (Akçamete, Büyükkarakaya, Bayraklı & Yıldırım, 2012).

According to UNESCO (2014), Inclusive Education is defined as “a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education.”

2. 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

a. 2.1 What are the “21st century skills” and why are they important?

i. 2.1.1 The context in which the 21st century skills were developed

It is difficult to predict what kind of jobs current first-graders are going to work in the future. However, it is already clear that they will need to use their critical thinking, objectively evaluate the information received, generate original ideas, be able to work in a team, constantly learn as well as change and analyze themselves.

As we see the modern world, it seems to be unsettled, dynamic and demanding. The pace of life is increasing, everyday life forces us to be active, open minded and ready for change. We face the challenge of effectively entering a world of complex relationships, connections and solutions. Nothing is simple, nothing is obvious and unambiguous. Known methods do not always work, and solutions passed down from generation to generation do not work at all.

More and more often we feel confused and we are afraid of how we are going to make it in this harsh reality. How are our children going to make it? Can you help us with that? We naturally turn our attention to school (widely understood – from kindergarten to university) and the teachers who work there. After all, there are experts in school, people who are ready to support the development, broaden the horizons of thinking and help to master new useful skills. But the question is, is the teacher himself ready to overcome this challenge? Does he have the competencies to educate children and adolescents in currently desired directions? Unfortunately, the answer to such a question is not obvious and unambiguous. However, before accepting or rejecting such an approach, the following questions must be answered:

- What are the key competencies and according to what regulations are they presented for the discussion on human education and development?
- What is the school's capacity to respond effectively to the need for competence development for children and youngsters?
- What obstacles effectively hinder or even make this impossible?
- What role does the teacher himself have to play in this regard? How is he prepared for that?

Current educational activities related to key competencies are based on the 22th May 2018 recommendation of The European Council (2018) on key competences for lifelong learning.

The problem of these competences was raised by the European Union much earlier, in 2006, when the countries of the European Union adopted a recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning. The Council (2018) explained that “key competences are those whose training is needed by all – fulfillment and personal development, employment, social inclusion, a sustainable lifestyle, a successful life in a peaceful society, healthy life management and active citizenship”. They are developed considering a lifelong learning perspective, from early childhood to lifelong learning, through formal, informal, and self-directed learning in all contexts, including family, school, workplace, neighborhood, and other communities. It should be emphasized that all eight competencies identified by the Council are equally important and each of them is significant for a successful life in society.

ii. **2.1.2. The 21st century skills according to the European Council**

There is no advantage among them, none is more important than the others. We need all these competencies to be effective in the face of the challenges of the 21st century. The European Council (2018) has identified eight key competencies in its system:

1. Literacy competence
2. Multilingual competence
3. Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering
4. Digital competence
5. Personal, social and learning to learn competence
6. Citizenship competence
7. Entrepreneurship competence

8. Cultural competence.

awareness

and

expression



Figure 1. Map on how/where to acquire skills

“As the situation changes radically in the 21st century, we as humanity are entering a crisis, which in both, social and personal life, means one simple thing – a situation for which we do not have pre-prepared solutions. Creating new, unconventional, unprepared solutions to a new challenge requires creativity that has to be encouraged.”

Essential 21st century skills that are mentioned in various sources – creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration. Creativity is often described as the ability to act in situations without a known solution. The creative process combines questioning, exploration and intuitive imagination, also combining incompatible elements. Along with playfulness and experimentation, technical skills, perseverance, failure and tolerance of uncertainty play an important role here. Creativity also includes the ability to work in a team with different thinkers.

In the last century, expertise was indicated by a single diploma, and it was enough to keep a job for life. In the 21st century, it is clear that knowledge will need to be constantly updated, existing skills strengthened, and new ones learned in order to be able to look openly and critically at ongoing changes, and to successfully adapt to a changing labor market.”

According to Laužikaitė (2010), the head of the association “Kūrybinės jungtys” (eng. Creative connections), critical thinking is more relevant now than ever – every day we are facing situations where we must choose which information we can call right and how not to become a victim to fake news. “By not being able to think critically and question the information we receive, we are becoming more vulnerable and easier to manipulate,” says the creative learning expert.

Other equally important skills are leadership and personal growth. These are the things that help you understand and rethink who you are, what you desire. These are habits that help you constantly learn, grow, achieve goals, and take responsibility. Creative learning experts recommend talking to children about what is success, happiness, do they feel happy themselves, what makes them happy and why? The conversation can be started much earlier than it would seem to be needed.

The OECD (2005) states that improving the quality of teacher education is a systematic change that is likely to lead to a better school performance.

We must talk about responsible and flexible education systems that respond qualitatively to the educational needs of children, youngsters and adults. One of the most significant criteria is the development of the ability to learn, which is inseparable from the idea of lifelong learning. We should pay even more attention to the development of research, technology and innovation, closer regional and international cooperation, and partnerships to achieve the key goal of inclusive, equitable and high-quality education and lifelong learning for all.

It is important to build a bridge between human skills and wisdom. Skills are being trained and they get improved very quickly. And wisdom is derived from experience.

iii. **2.1.3 The 21st century skills in the contest of the lifelong learning**

The 21st-century skills enable individuals to respond to the needs of the century in which they live, to survive, and to be productive, can be acquired largely through education. In this context, while primary school is a basic and important educational step in acquiring 21st-century skills for students with its multi-faced range of courses, curricula are also the primary guides in this step.

According to Beers (2011), the 21st century is considered the beginning of the digital age with unprecedented growth in technology and subsequently with the information boom. New technologies and tools are renewing and constantly improving themselves almost without entering our daily lives.

Parallel to this change, in the 21st century, the abilities that people should have in business life, as civil citizens, and in the context of self-actualization differ considerably compared to the 20th century, and expectations from individuals also change (Dede, 2009; Wagner, 2008a). Individuals of our age are now expected to be able to adapt to rapid changes and developments, to use the information obtained in their lives, and accordingly to have a place in the society, to make the right decisions, to be productive, and to have the skills needed to live in the society.

The 21st-century skills that express high-level skills and learning tendencies that need to be developed in order to be successful in the information age are the skills that include both knowledge and skill and emerge by blending these two concepts (Dede, 2009).

Many institutions or organizations have classified 21st-century skills in different ways (as above mentioned). Belet Boyacı and Atalay (2016) points out that 21st-century skills are categorized as learning and renewal, life and career, information, media and technology skills in P21 (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009); creative thinking, effective communication, high productivity, digital age literacy at NCREL (North Central Regional Education Laboratory, 2003); creativity and innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving and decision making, communication and collaboration, digital citizenship, technological applications and concepts, research and knowledge fluency in NETS/ISTE (International Society for Technology Education, 2007); interaction with heterogeneous groups, and use of technology tools in the OECD (2005). It is seen that creativity, critical thinking, working in collaboration, and problem-solving are emphasized in all classifications of 21st-century skills.

The Partnership P21 (2009), addresses 21st-century skills under three categories; learning and renewal skills, life and career skills, and information, media, and technology skills. Learning and renewal skills consist of problem-solving and critical thinking, collaboration and communication, creativity and renewal skills.

According to this classification, life and career skills consist of flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-management, social and intercultural skills, leadership and responsibility skills; Information, media, and technology skills consist of information literacy, media literacy and information, communication and technology qualification (technology literacy) skills. Considering that the skills that individuals need to develop in order to survive and adapt to society can only be acquired through education, it can be stated as a necessity to raise individuals who can meet the demands of the 21st century and cope with the problems of the age (Tutkun, 2010).

Although individuals can acquire 21st-century skills through education at all educational levels from primary school to higher education, it is considered important that these skills are taught to students, especially from the primary school level. Because primary school is a very important step in laying the foundations of skills that individuals will use in their lives, such as making decisions, thinking independently, solving problems, and thinking critically (Silva, 2009).

In the 21st century, it is very important to raise individuals who can not only access information but also who can produce knowledge, cooperate and work in teams, take responsibility, have verbal and written communication skills, think, be creative, flexible, research and have problem-solving competence. It is possible for students to develop themselves cognitively, socially, and emotionally only if they can communicate effectively, develop their language skills, and use their native language correctly and with the subtleties of the language. These competencies are in line with 21st-century skills.

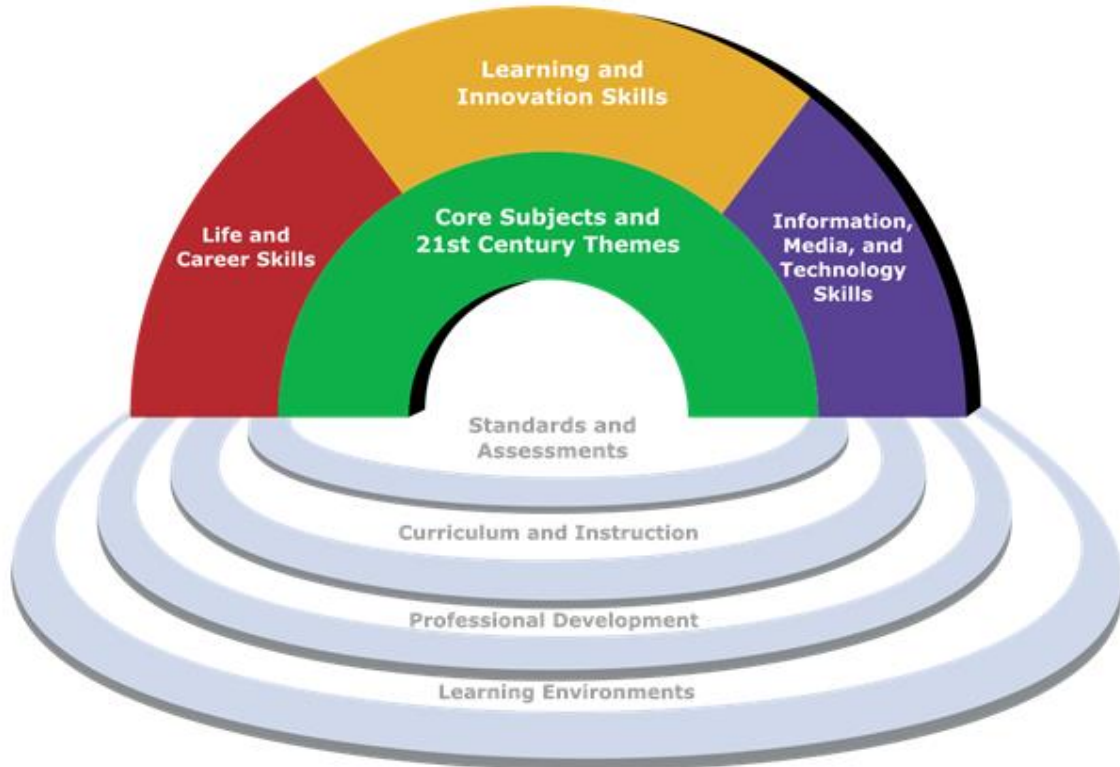


Figure 2. Core Subjects and 21st Century Themes by Partnership for 21st Century Skills
://www.21stcenturyskills.org/

According to this table prepared by the P21 platform with the contributions of teachers, academics, and leaders in the business world; It presents the skills that 21st-century students should acquire and useful topics to learn, as well as the systems that can be used to support these skills. The subheadings of the skills in the table are also listed as follows:

1. Learning and Renewal Skills
 - Creativity and Renewal
 - Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving
 - Communication and Cooperation
2. Information, Media and Technology Skills
 - Information Literacy
 - Media Literacy
 - Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Literacy
3. Life and Professional Skills
 - Flexibility and Adaptability
 - Entrepreneurship and Self-orientation
 - Social and Intercultural skills
 - Productivity and Responsibility
 - Leadership and Responsibility

In this list, “communication, adaptation, and innovation” skills constitute the main skeleton of the skills that 21st-century individuals will need. The reason is that a new world is being formed, where technology

is developing rapidly and increasingly taking up more space in our lives. Technological advances shorten distances and increase the speed of all kinds of communication and production. Among these changing balances, the winner will be the one who adapts the fastest to the new.

As for adaptation, it is enabled through communication. Moreover, the resources we have access to information are increasing. The Internet is becoming a resource pool. Getting the right information without drowning in this pool is enabled through technology and information literacy. Moreover, this new constantly changing world expects you to constantly produce, more importantly, to produce new things and keep up with this change. Therefore, innovation skills will be indispensable skills that the individuals of the future should have.

All these skills that are expected to be acquired in the 21st century are closely related to the concept of lifelong learning as a whole. Continuing lifelong learning activities for students to develop their knowledge and competencies in a perspective related to personal, civic, social, and/or employment skills will be an approach appropriate to the requirements of the age.

b. 2.2 Inclusive education

i. 2.2.1 An introduction to inclusive education

As countries try to strengthen their national education systems, they also continue to have great difficulties in finding ways to involve all learners in this process and ensuring that each individual has equal opportunities for educational development. Education as a fundamental human right is enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Within the scope of the declaration, it is considered important to “fight global poverty, improve health and enable people to play an active role in their societies”. Inclusive education is, simply, a fundamental right that everyone has access to education without discrimination. (UNESCO, 1994; Stubbs, 2008; Haug, 2017).

Inclusive education is a philosophy that brings together students, families, educators, and members of society for the purpose of school-based acceptance, belonging, and becoming a society. (Salend, 2011).

The main purpose of inclusive educational practices is to eliminate exclusion and discrimination that may arise from prejudices and negative attitudes regarding the different characteristics and circumstances of individuals in educational environments. Because education directly affects all individuals of society, an inclusive education system is central to building a society with a highly qualified educational experience and without discrimination. Although awareness of inclusive education has increased recently, the presence of children who are out of school for different reasons or who continue to experience negative educational experiences indicates the need for improvements in this area.

Inclusive education is a philosophy based on the belief that education is necessary for every person to participate in society. This understanding acknowledges differences in people and argues that every child has a right to education. When an inclusive education program is implemented, it benefits both socially and academically individuals who need special education and their peers. Acceptance first develops in the school environment, then moves to home and work in the community. Inclusiveness is an educational philosophy and advocates the goal of every individual to participate in social life in every sense.

ii. 2.2.2. Basic principles of inclusive education

According to the research of Inclusive Education done by Sue Stubbs;

- All children should be given the opportunity to alternately express and use the aspect that they are good at.
- Adaptations should be tailored to the needs of all students.
- Current technology should be used effectively.
- Inclusiveness should not only be considered in a physical context, but also in terms of cognitive, social, affective, educational practices.
- Arrangements for the student should be made without parsing it.

iii. **2.2.3 Main motive of inclusive education**

According to the Amnesty International, the main motive of Inclusive Education is 'Discrimination'. Discrimination between people starts at a young age depending on the gender, income, ethnic origin, languages they speak, religions they believe, disability, or completely other reasons. Today, unfortunately, this distinction prevents every child from having the opportunity to receive equal education and to participate in social and cultural activities.

Amnesty International describes discrimination as a situation in which a person cannot enjoy human rights and other legal rights equally with others due to an unfair distinction in terms of policy, law, or treatment.

Discrimination is a process related to all negative attitudes and behaviors that are fueled by prejudices against members of a group or group. Prejudices and therefore discrimination lead to negative thoughts towards the group or group members they are developed in, as well as attitudes that include negative emotions ranging from dislike, contempt, avoidance, and hatred. (Göregenli, 2008)

- Direct discrimination: It clearly refers to the unequal treatment of a person, group, or segment of society due to differences in faith, language, religion, or ethnicity, and so on. Different treatment: includes a wide range of forms of discrimination, from openly mocking, denigrating, or denigrating, to disseminating hate speech that incites discrimination against these groups. Mistreatment of a student in the classroom due to his/her ethnicity and constant exclusion of a student due to his/her appearance are examples of discrimination in the educational environment.
- Indirect discrimination: It describes attitudes that are difficult to recognize, operate through innuendo or indirect forms of expression, or sometimes discriminate certain segments in terms of their consequences, although they do not create any seemingly problematic situations. "Ignoring " is one of the most obvious forms of such discrimination. An example of this type of discrimination is that in the classroom environment, the teacher ignores the statements of the student who is labeled naughty and cares more about the statements of the successful student.

Besides, inclusive education is justified on three separate bases according to UNESCO:

A. Educational Justification:

- Inclusive schools develop teaching methods that respond to individual diversity, and this is for the benefit of all students.
- In a differentiated/diversified teaching based on the student's educational performance and individual needs instead of standard teaching, it is much more likely that all students will participate in and benefit from learning processes.

B. Social Justification:

- Inclusive schools will create the foundation for a more just and inclusive society by creating an attitude change.

C. Economic Justification:

- Schools that teach all students together cost less than a more complex education system in which different schools are established for different groups of students.

iv. **2.2.4. Benefits of inclusive education**

- All students, regardless of their ability and ability, have equal rights.
- They can get individual help from a teacher in the learning process.
- Children with special needs can acquire social skills and communication skills.
- They can get a quality education and, in the future, - to study at a university, to master a profession, to become a full and independent member of society.
- Ordinary children can develop human qualities such as empathy, patience, tolerance.

v. **2.2.5. Inclusive Schools**

- Inclusive school is a concept used to describe schools that believe that all students can achieve despite their differences, develop a common understanding, and value personal rights and equality.

- In an inclusive school, students from all cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic groups, students whose mother tongue is different, students who have just joined the existing society are seen as important components of the school.
- An inclusive school expresses an educational orientation that embraces and values differences rather than a strategy or practice.

vi. **2.2.6. Features of inclusive education**

A. Dedicated Leadership

Administrators in leadership positions in inclusive schools (e.g., headteachers) and teachers (e.g., group heads) play an important role in setting a vision for the school in the context of inclusiveness, finding support for this vision, and working with school staff to make the school a successful school. Many studies show that leadership can be the most important support or the biggest obstacle to the development of an inclusive school. Managers and teachers in leadership positions take part in matters basically such as;

- helping students, staff and families understand inclusiveness as the school's core philosophy.
- leading school staff in implementing new approaches implemented in the understanding of inclusive education.
- encouraging and supporting teachers to implement new methods and strategies that support inclusiveness.
- educating families and the local community about the school's understanding of inclusiveness.

B. Democratic Learning Environment

An inclusive school cares about individual differences, cares about student participation, and supports all stakeholders of the school (teachers, students, administrative staff, and families) to take responsibility and responsibility for learning and teaching activities.

One of the most important features of an inclusive school is equality. In an inclusive school, all students and staff are treated with respect and fairness, and all opinions and contributions are valued.

Another important feature is collaboration; all stakeholders inside and outside the school have an understanding of working together for the success of the school and its students.

One of the most basic requirements of an inclusive school is democratic classroom environments. In these classroom environments, students can share their ideas, jointly set class rules, and have the right to make decisions about their own learning and the qualities of the learning environment.

C. Supportive School Culture

Creating a safe, positive, and strong school culture is one of the most important steps towards becoming an inclusive school. Here are some steps that school administrators and teachers can take in creating an inclusive school culture;

- inviting families and local community representatives to visit schools and classes for helping with projects and taking part in teaching,
- providing students with opportunities to actively participate in teaching and to lead,
- encouraging all stakeholders in the school to submit recommendations and lead the implementation of the submitted recommendations,
- supporting small or large-scale events and celebrations that support differences in school.

D. Inclusive Content

In inclusive classrooms, teachers should organize content and teaching activities in a way that addresses different learning styles and includes students with different skills and interests, considering personal and cultural differences.

Content presented in inclusive classrooms should appeal to students, research topics should be interesting, and the content should be differentiated according to students' learning needs

Educational materials should be enriched to cover student differences. In the courses, the existence of individual differences in related subjects and the importance of preserving them should be emphasized.

E. Inclusive Teaching

Teachers who have adopted inclusive education aim to organize materials, lesson plans, teaching strategies, learning environment, educational goals according to the understanding of inclusion and to meet the academic and social needs of students.

Some of the opportunities that a teacher who has adopted inclusive teaching can offer to students with different learning requirements are as follows:

- preparing working papers at different levels,
- creating individual work calendars with students who experience difficulties in regular work,
- providing the ability to select assessment approaches in which students can best demonstrate what they have learned (poster presentation, oral presentation, drama, etc.).

F. Inclusive Classroom Management

It is to minimize the barriers to the work of teachers and students, to use the appropriate teaching time and to ensure the participation of students in activities.

- Managing resources, people, and time in the classroom.
- Ensuring that students respect themselves and their environment.
- Ensuring the active participation of the student in the learning processes.
- Processing the processes that are involved in changing behaviors that prevent all students from participating in learning processes.

As a result, steps and methods that will be useful to follow for the dissemination of inclusive education and its practices should be among the priorities of education policy.

The primary steps to be taken to disseminate inclusive education in all countries may be determined as to speed up information and awareness-raising activities in this regard; to update curricula and educational materials to support inclusive practices and to develop training for teachers. The proposed steps offer a holistic perspective that will lead to positive changes in the entire education system.

Taking these steps into life requires all actors associated with education to work collaboratively. Every step along this path and every project to be implemented is valuable and has the potential to be an important milestone for the settlement and internalization of inclusive education.

3. SUMMARY

Right to Education Act 2009 ensures education to all children irrespective of their caste, religion, ability, and so on. It is essential to build an inclusive society through an inclusive approach. In doing so, we have challenged commonly held beliefs and developed a new set of core assumptions. Inclusion is more than a method of educating students with disabilities. It stresses that each child, regardless of the intensity and severity of his or her disabilities, is a valued member of society and is capable of participating in that society.

A good inclusive education is one that allows all the students to participate in all aspects of the classroom equally or close to equal. To meet the challenges, the involvement and cooperation of educators, parents, and community leaders is vital for the creation of better and more inclusive schools. The Government of India is trying to improve its education system focusing on the inclusive approach. The challenges can be overcome by raising awareness of human rights in communities and publicising positive examples of disabled children and adults succeeding in inclusive education and in life beyond school as a result. We need to develop an inclusive design of learning to make the education joyful for all children so that the education for them is welcoming, learner friendly and beneficial and they feel as a part of it not apart from it. Therefore, Inclusion arose as a good solution to the question of how to educate these children more effectively.

This new constantly changing world expects you to constantly produce, more importantly, to produce new things and keep up with this change. Therefore, innovation skills will be indispensable skills that the individuals of the future should have. All these skills that are expected to be acquired in the 21st century are closely related to the concept of lifelong learning as a whole. Continuing lifelong learning activities for students to develop their knowledge and competencies in a perspective related to personal, civic, social, and/or employment skills will be an approach appropriate to the requirements of the age.

In conclusion, it is important to develop education focused on the development of 21st century competences and build a common educational environment for children and youth, where schools and cultural institutions have a common mission to fulfill. In schools, teachers know very well the needs, language and aspirations of children and young people, and cultural institutions have resources that can become a field for experiments and creative activities.

Taking into account the changing educational needs and the age of information overload, we are looking for opportunities for personal communication, direct and equal communication. We need to realize that culture and education are vital to human development. Art education and art creation enrich the education system.

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