

## CONFUCIANS IN THE 21ST CENTURY SKILLS: AN EDUCATIONAL STUDY OF THE READINESS OF THE STUDENTS IN TODAY'S PEDAGOGIC TRENDS

Joaquim Dias Soeiro

School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts

Taylor's University, 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor D.E., Malaysia

Email: joaquim.soeiro@taylors.edu.my

Kandappan Balasubramanian

School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts

Taylor's University, 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor D.E., Malaysia

Email: Kandappan.Balasubramanian@taylors.edu.my

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### ABSTRACT

*With the education research pointing to utilization of digital platforms, such as social learning sites (Web 2.0), there are more needs to meet and enhance today's students' capabilities. Using the lens of the student perspective through the RASE pedagogical framework, this study covers the essence of the development of 21st century skills among the Asian students and how those capabilities are in-line with the P21 framework. The study was conducted at a private university in Selangor, Malaysia, with 249 students as respondent. This study used quantitative research approach to identify the Asian student learning capabilities through Edmodo, a social learning site. The significant results from the correlation and regression analysis open the researcher to map the Asian capabilities to the 21st century skills from the P21 framework. This study can be considered as a starting point towards P21 framework among the academicians in Asian countries.*

Key words: Confucius, P21 Framework, Social Learning Site, Edmodo, Asian students, Capabilities.

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### Introduction

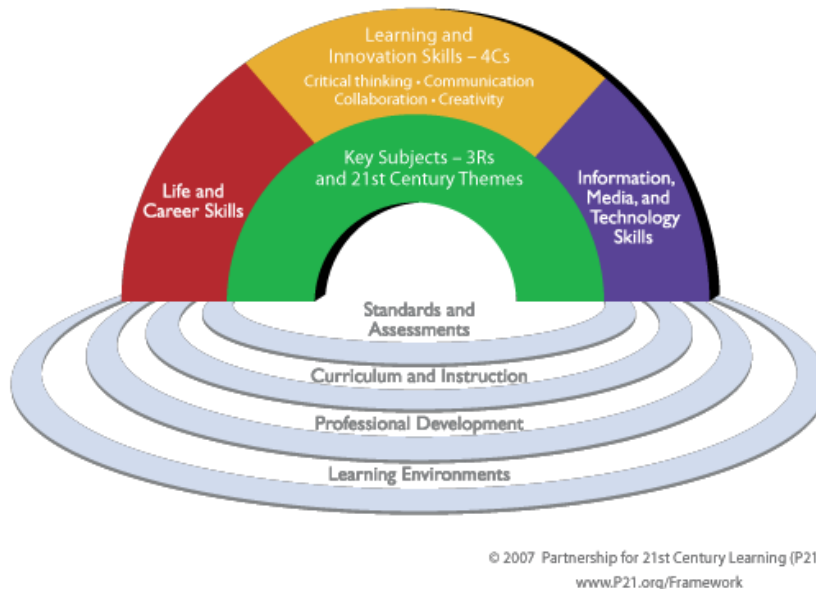
In Malaysia, students in private universities can be divided in two major categories: Asians and non-Asians knowing that Indonesia, China and Korea are the main origins. The purpose of this study is not to generalize the findings but to investigate within the students' capabilities in order to further social, cultural or educational researches. Researches exist regarding the cultural or educational aspect of the learner but very few are related to the emerging paradigm of the 21st Century Learning framework. The Confucius way of learning, as part of most Asian countries, values behaviors, efforts, respects, sensibilities and rationalities in the learning process (Tweed and Lehman, 2002). Previous researches on the learning preferences were done in the field of hospitality, tourism and culinary arts. For instance, Balasubramanian, Jaykumar and Fukey (2014) showed the interest from Asian students to use web platform such as Edmodo in a learning context. Can Asian learners bloom in the 21st Century Learning paradigm? There are various learning styles and today's high competitiveness of the private education forces institutions to be ahead of pedagogic strategies to vary the teaching styles and learning experiences. Furthermore, the 21st Century Learning framework supported by educationists and developed by Partnership for the 21st century learning (2016) shows that discipline specific knowledge is not sufficient and it is important that capabilities development contribute to the learning experience. By using the findings from Balasubramanian, Jaykumar and Fukey (2014), it could be interesting to further their work by (1) identifying the Asian student learning capabilities through social learning platform and (2) investigating the readiness of the Asians students to cope with the 21st Century skills developed in the P21 framework. The aim of this study is to investigate through the RASE Pedagogical model the readiness of student studying in an Asian environment, in this case Malaysia. The current study has been divided in various parts: after reviewing the existing literature, the authors will be defining their key conceptual frameworks and developing their hypotheses. The data analysis will be reflecting the findings collected through a precise methodology. The study will be ending with a discussion and a conclusion summarizing the whole research.

### Literature review

According to Hall and Ames (1987, p64) and Wong (2004) the conception and over usage of "rote learning", "spoon-feeding", teacher centered style and heavy memorization of the knowledge in Asians classroom is a misconception of the way it is. Confucius learning style has nothing to do with memorizing as an absorption of information but a more thorough, systematic and organized methodology integrating reflection, wisdom, critical thinking, synthesizing in an open minded, fair and autonomous way (Hall and Ames, 1987; Kim, 2003). The lecturer has a predominant place in the learning experience of the student and one the main role is to generate creativity and critical thinking. 'Love of learning' (hsueh), 'reflecting' (ssu), 'realizing' (chih), 'living up to one's word' (hsin), and 'signification' (yi) are the central development powers (Hall and Ames, 1987, ch.1) in the Confucian concept. Those powers will be important in the transformation of the student and will help the development of the mind. Core values, behaviors, awareness, open-mindedness, reflection and meta-cognition are key element in the Confucius learning style (Confucius, 1993a; Confucius, 1993b; Elliott and Tsai, 2008). Also, according to Corcoran (2014), western learning theories such as Behaviorism, Liberalism, Connectivism, and Humanism can be observed in the Confucian concept.

“For businesses it’s no longer enough to create a product that’s reasonably priced and adequately functional. It must also be beautiful, unique, and meaningful”; Pink (2005) informed in his book that young generation will need to become more and more competitive and the development of skill such as creativity, empathy or imagination for instance. For the past decade, U.S. has developed a new learning paradigm aiming all the public schools of the country (Partnership for the 21st century learning, 2016). The new learning paradigm, called 21st Century Learning is emphasizing on key skills that a student must have. The learner, by developing those skills, will then able to develop abilities and competencies that will be useful in their future career and necessary to be competitive (Wagner, 2008; Jenkins, 2009; Glossary of education reform, 2016; Learning- theories.com, 2016).

Figure 1: P21 Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning



The term “21st century skills” do not only refers to a set of skills or knowledge but also to habits and character traits. The P21 Framework is also supported by the Institute of museum and library services (2016), an American legal institute, which identify the directions that the teacher will have to adopt in their pedagogic strategies. The development of knowledge remains important but the development of skills will also have its importance. Cultural and social competencies are as important as digital and media literacies; those competencies will be developed in accordance with other key skills such as collaborative problem solving, adaptation, multitasking, distributed cognition, collective intelligence, networking and negotiation (Jenkins, 2009). P21 classify the above list of skill into few categories: Learning and Innovation Skills, Life and Career Skills, Information, Media and Technology Skills. The evaluation methods, summative or formative, should include technologies in order to assess but also to let the learner experience and learn at the same time. The use of technologies also makes the learning experience more efficient and productive (Partnership for the 21st century learning, 2016).

RASE pedagogical model was developed to provide support for teachers and lecturers to use online learning platforms. This model involves four specific dimensions which are Resources, Activities, Support and Evaluation. The aim of the RASE model is to make student’s learning experiences more student-centered and more engaging and collaborative, following didactic strategies. The Resources focus on the medium used to teach the content while the Activities are the engaging tools used to deliver it. The Support and Evaluation are needed to control the delivery and assimilation of the content. The RASE model follows also the pedagogic aims by developing knowledge, skills and behaviors to ensure that learning outcomes are being achieved (Balasubramanian, Jaykumar and Fukey, 2014).

**Conceptual framework and hypothesis development**

The conceptual framework focuses on the investigation of Asian students readiness, and to identify the new learning capabilities through social learning platform (Edmodo-based) among the Malaysian University students.

The following conceptual framework supports to shed light on the following developed hypothesis:

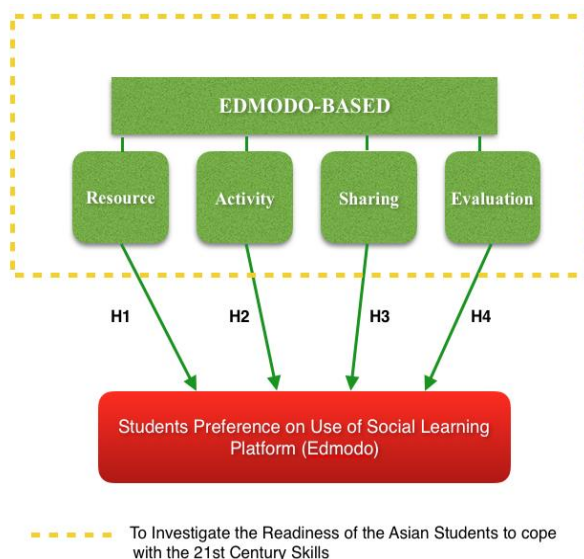
Hypothesis 1 (H1): There is a positive impact on student’s preference to use Social Learning Platforms through accessing the Edmodo-based resources.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): There is a positive impact on student’s preference to use Social Learning Platforms through Edmodo-based activities.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): There is a positive impact on student’s preference to use Social Learning Platforms through Edmodo-based sharing information.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): There is a positive impact on student’s preference to use Social Learning Platforms through Edmodo-based evaluation.

Figure 2: A Conceptual Framework on Asian Students readiness and preference on use of Social Learning Platforms (Edmodo)



**Methodology**

Research methodology refers to the nature of research design and gain knowledge about the world and instructs the researchers in the way the research is constructed and conducted (Sikes, 2005). This study mainly relies on quantitative research approach to address the objectives by gathering and analyzing of numerical data with a sample of 249 respondents of private university at Selangor, Malaysia. All respondents were targeted with purposive sampling technique, the most practical method in order to collect primary data. The Independent variable in this study will cover the personal data of the students, use of Edmodo for RASE pedagogical model and finally the dependent variable will be student preference on use of Edmodo as a learning platform to cover all components in RASE pedagogical model.

**Data analysis and findings**

The quantitative results of this study are analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS), measuring the frequency, mean and standard deviation. The university student preferences to use Edmodo platform were analyzed by using a 5 pointed Likert-scale. Finally the results were analyzed and grouped in terms of Resources, Activity, Support and Evaluation (RASE) pedagogical model to understand the student preference and to investigate the students’ abilities in comparison to the 21st Century Skills.

**Demographics of the respondent**

The results in the table 1 show that the female respondent (55.4%) is higher than male ones (44.6%) and also show that most of the respondents were above the age of 20 years (65.9%) where the remaining respondents fall between the ages of 18-20 (32.9%) and 15-17 (1.2%) respectively. With respect to respondents (students) enrolled course followed by degree (90.8%), diploma (8.0%) and only (1.2%) were master programme in this study.

Table 1. Demographic Breakdown of the Respondent (n=249)

	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	111	44.6
Female	138	55.4
Total	249	100.0
<b>Age</b>		
15-17	3	1.2
18-20	82	32.9
Above 20	164	65.9
Total	249	100.0
<b>Enrolled Course</b>		
Diploma	20	8.0
Degree	226	90.8
Master	3	1.2
Total	249	100.0

Reliability of the study

In the research study, reliability of the measures was assessed by examining the consistency of the respondents' answers to all items in the measure (Nunnally, 1978). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were used to measure the internal consistency of each measures and the below Table 2 shows the overall reliability (internal consistency) of the study was found to be coefficient alpha of 0.966, which is deemed acceptable (Wang and Qualls, 2007).

Table 2. Overall Reliability of the Study (n=249)

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
0.966	0.966	25

Correlations of the study

In the present study correlation analysis was employed since "correlation analysis involves measuring the relationship between two or more variables; it considers the joint variation of two measure" (Churchill, 1979). The results of the correlation in the Table 3 prove that it is significant as all the variables correlation coefficient is less than 0.90 and significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 3. Correlation of the Study

Scales	1	2	3	4	5
Resources	1.00				
Activity	0.810**	1.00			
Sharing	0.780**	0.872**	1.00		
Evaluation	0.750**	0.797**	0.855**	1.00	
Student Preference	0.800**	0.735**	0.745**	0.682**	1.00

Note: \*\* All the Correlations are significant at the 0.01 Level (2-tailed)

Regression Analysis

The results in Table 4 validate that there was a positive correlation with a R2 of 0.678 and "F" value of 128.6 at a significant level of p < 0.000. It is interesting to know through regression analysis that the students preference towards accessing the resources (H1) and sharing information (H3) among the peers and teachers through Edmodo (online platform) were accepted as it was significant with the p-value of 0.000 and 0.002 respectively wherein the other two variables (H2 and H4); Activity and Evaluation was rejected as the results shows it was not significant (p-value: 0.433 and 0.874). Moreover, constructs jointly explain 67.8% of the variance (R2) which is considered as very good.

Table 4. Regression Analysis Output

Dependent Variable: Student Preference on Use of Edmodo as Learning Platform				
Independent Variables	$\beta$	t-value	pb	Hypothesis
H1: There is a positive impact on student's preference to use Social Learning Platforms through accessing the Edmodo-based resources.	0.540	8.28	0.000	Accepted
H2: There is a positive impact on student's preference to use Social Learning Platforms through Edmodo-based activities.	0.065	0.79	0.433	Rejected
H3: There is a positive impact on student's preference to use Social Learning Platforms through Edmodo-based sharing information.	0.277	3.11	0.002	Accepted
H4: There is a positive impact on student's preference to use Social Learning Platforms through Edmodo-based evaluation.	-0.012	-0.16	0.874	Rejected

Note: R<sup>2</sup> = 0.678, F = 128.6, P<0.00<sup>b</sup>

Discussion and conclusion

In exploring the Asian students' preference of using social learning platform such as Edmodo to connect with the 21 Century Learning framework, it appears that most students hold positive preferences towards accessing and sharing information based on the tested hypothesis (H1 and H3 accepted). These results coincide with those of Hall and Ames (1987) and Kim (2003) who believe that the Confucius learning style is more towards autonomous way. The results also show that the Asians' classroom style is becoming more collaborative by using social learning platform for accessing and sharing the resources among the peers and the teachers. This also supports the statement of Hall and Ames (1987) and Wong (2004) that the Asian's classroom is no more spoon-feeding and heavy memorisation of the knowledge. The findings show that Asian students also extends their interest towards learning engagement through online learning platform as it drives to improve various skills such as communication, collaboration, information literacy, leadership, creativity. It is interesting to highlight that most of the new acquiring skills among the Asian student truly resembles those of the 21st Century Learnig framework explained in the initial stage of this study.

A combination of traditional in-class instruction and online classroom activities via Edmodo is significantly verified to be an effective factor in generating more positive attitudes towards learning. It is strongly suggested that teachers should do more to utilize useful Web 2.0 tools in order to extend their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. They should also change their teaching strategies offering

their students innovative opportunities to improve their self confidence, to monitor their own learning and to practice their learning skills in and outside the classroom.

### Limitations and Future Research

The study has shown some limitations. First, the study has been carried out only in one of the private university among several in Malaysia. Therefore, generalisation of results has to be exercised with caution. Secondly the students' learning is attached with the teachers, so the teacher's preference of using social learning platforms should be included too. Thirdly, this study is a cross-sectional study, so the causal relationships between the variables cannot be empirically validated as informed in the introduction. This research forms the starting point for future research in the area of social learning platform among Asian students in higher education at Malaysia. It also highlights the use of social learning platforms to enhance the students' learning skills and interest towards online activities in and outside the classroom. This study offers insight on the potential of the Asian student's capabilities towards the P21 framework. The results from the present work cover a small population in Malaysia. Therefore, we deem that the future studies involving a larger sample would improve the validity of the results. Moreover, cross-cultural studies are recommended to compare students' preference of using social learning platform with the other Asian countries.

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