Shifting to digital with 21st century skills

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Abstract

In this section, we have seven responses from several scholars for Nacu et al. (Educ Technol Res Dev 66:1029–1049. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-018-9603-0>)’s study. They have presented their perspective under the 21st century skills and educator roles in the context of online learning environments.

Keywords Educator roles · 21st century skills · Creative thinking

21st-century skills can be defined as the skills that include both knowledge and skill concepts. These express high-level skills and learning tendencies that need to be developed to be successful in the information age (Dede 2010).

Technology facilitates flexible and holistic learning environments and provides collaborative applications and interactions for online learning environments (Lee and Hung 2012). In these environments providing an effective learning process is very important and the educators’ contribution is nonignorable. In this regard, Nacu et al. (2018) have developed 10 educator roles that can cultivate autonomy and encourage learners as creative producers with 21st-century skills. In today’s world, online learning is more important, and in the limelight, a heuristic evaluation of educator roles can provide guidance for designing these environments.

In this special issue, we have seven responses in the context of theory, design, practice, contextual, policy, international and inclusion perspectives. All of these responses have presented a specific point of view to educator roles in the context of online learning environments.

Dr. Nussbaum, Barahona, Guentulle, Rodriguez, Lopez, Vazquez-Uscanga, and Cabezas presented their opinions from theory and design perspective. Critical thinking and creativity are very important components of 21st-century skills in both face-to-face and online learning environments. So they have focused on critical thinking and creativity with the intersection of grit. While presenting their ideas they took Nacu et al. (2018)’s heuristic evaluation to the center of their perspectives.

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Assaf has approached Nacu et al. (2018)'s article from a theoretical perspective as well. He has used the London Stock Exchange's Big Bang case as an analogy for the pandemic shift and presents an instructional interface model. He emphasizes that shifting to digital is not only a technology shift but also a mindset shift.

Dr. Wardrip presented a practical response to this article. In his response, he has focused on the educators' adaptation process of their instructional practice. He proposes that these online learning support roles can be helpful by creating awareness between educators for criticizing the presented technological tools' capabilities.

Dr. Meier has presented her ideas in terms of policy perspective by focusing on educators' professional development and the importance of organizational support.

Dr. Stefaniak has approached the article from a contextual and policy perspective. She has pointed out the deficiencies in educational systems and teachers' professional development, instructional resourcing, and social inequities.

Dr. Altınay, Dr. Altınay, Dr. Aydın, and Dr. Daglı have presented their responses from an international perspective. They have focused on critical thinking, critical friendship, and teamwork components. Also, they have put an emphasis on strong collaborations and network-based communication for setting international standards.

Dhingra has presented her ideas from the inclusion perspective and pointed out the importance of the relationship between online learning platform features and learning strategies and goals. She has also stated several questions for further studies.

With this special issue, we aimed to highlight the educator roles in online learning environments. Online learning designers should pay attention to not only the experiences of learners but also to how educators are enabled to support their learning (Nacu et al. 2018). The online learning environments, to be used by the educators who will take part in the training of individuals equipped with 21st-century skills, should also support the educators in this regard. Defining the roles and tasks is very important for an effective and productive learning process in this context. The proliferation of this kind of learning environment will help educators.

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