

Learner's 21st Century Skills and their Academic Performance in English

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Abstract

With advancements in information and the digital age, teaching and learning methods are evolving. Learners in the 21st century are required to adapt and upgrade their skills to stay with the trends. This study was conducted to determine the learners' 21st century skills and their academic performance in English in Balingoan District, Balingoan, Misamis Oriental, for School Year 2024-2025. Specifically, this aimed to find out the learners' level of 21st century skills; examine the learners' level of academic performance in English and determine the significant relationship between the learner's 21st century skills and their academic performance in English. The respondents were one hundred fifty (150) Grade 6 learners, using a stratified sampling technique. This study made use of the descriptive correlation method of research with an instrument that was patterned and modified from the study of Varona (2020). Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (r) were utilized to analyze and interpret the data gathered in the study.

The findings of the study revealed that the learners' 21st-century skills were high, particularly in communication. Moreover, the level of academic performance in English was satisfactory, based on the performance task. Hence, there is a significant relationship between the 21st century skills and academic performance in English. This study concludes that learners with stronger 21st century skills tend to demonstrate better academic performance in English. It is recommended that educators and school leaders should develop instructional strategies and interventions to further strengthen these skills, ensuring learners are better equipped for future academic and professional success.

Keywords: 21st-century skills, academic performance in English

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of technology and information has transformed teaching and learning, requiring learners to develop skills that match the demands of the 21st century. In response, the Philippines implemented the K to 12 Curriculum to align with global standards and prepare students for international competitiveness. Schools are expected to develop learners' critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, commonly known as the Four Cs, which are essential for success in modern society and future careers. However, many students still lack these skills, resulting in a mismatch between educational preparation and workforce demands, contributing to unemployment and reduced productivity.

To address these challenges, the educational system must integrate 21st century skills into all subjects while maintaining academic excellence. Learners need opportunities to acquire innovative knowledge and competencies that will help them succeed in school, work, and life. The traditional focus on reading, writing, and arithmetic is no longer enough in today's global and digital environment. Educators must therefore strengthen the integration of the Four Cs to prepare students for lifelong learning, responsible citizenship, and global competitiveness.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the level of learners' 21st century skills and their academic performance in English in Balingoan District, Balingoan, Misamis Oriental, during the School Year 2024-2025.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the learners' level of 21st Century skills in terms of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity?
2. What is the learners' level of academic performance in English based on Written Work, Performance Task, and Quarterly Assessment in the 4th quarter?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the learners' 21st Century skills and their academic performance in English?

Significance

The findings of the study would provide important information on learners' 21st century skills and academic performance that can benefit various stakeholders. District and Division Supervisors can use the data in planning programs, strengthening instructional supervision, and improving teacher training. School Heads may use the findings in curriculum implementation, resource allocation, and developing interventions and partnerships that support learners' development. Teachers can gain a better understanding of learners' strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to design effective teaching strategies and remedial programs. Learners will benefit through the identification of areas that need improvement, which can enhance their academic performance and confidence. Parents and guardians may also become more aware of the importance of supporting the development of 21st century skills at home. Furthermore, the study can contribute to existing knowledge and serve as a basis for future research related to 21st century skills and academic performance.

Scope and Limitations

This study focused on determining the 21st century skills and academic performance in English among Grade VI learners in Balingoan District for School Year 2024-2025.

The respondents were the 150 Grade VI learners in the schools where this study was conducted. The independent variables are limited only to learners' 21st century skills in terms of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Further, the dependent variables are also limited to learners' academic performance in English based on written work, performance task and quarterly assessment in the 4th quarter.

2. Literature Review

Learner's 21st Century Skills

Learners' 21st century skills refer to the abilities needed to think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and solve problems in various real-life situations. Educational institutions aim to develop these competencies to help students succeed academically, socially, and professionally in a rapidly changing world. The development of the 4Cs namely critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity is considered essential in preparing learners for global competitiveness and active participation in society. Studies emphasized that learners exposed to these environments tend to demonstrate improved academic performance, especially in English where communication and expression are highly important (Kocak et al., 2021). Gusta and Zakirman (2020) emphasized the importance of the 4Cs in developing globally competitive learners. Habets et al. (2020) further highlighted that collaboration, communication, problem solving, and critical thinking remain foundational skills in the 21st century.

Critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity are recognized as vital competencies that contribute to learners' success in school and future careers. Critical thinking enables students to analyze information carefully and solve problems effectively, while communication skills support meaningful interaction and engagement in learning. Collaboration enhances teamwork, accountability, and social skills, allowing learners to work productively with others toward common goals. Creativity, on the other hand, encourages innovation, idea generation, and effective problem solving through exploration and self-expression. Hitchcock (2021) explained that critical thinking is necessary for students' autonomy and participation in society. Kalwar et al. (2024) stated that effective communication allows learners to express ideas clearly and build meaningful understanding with others. Ritter et al. (2020) emphasized the urgent need to develop creativity among learners to address the increasing demand for innovative thinkers in education and society.

Academic Performance in English

Academic performance in English is widely recognized as a complex outcome influenced by multiple factors, particularly for learners of English as a second or foreign language. Shao et al. (2025) emphasized that student achievement in English is shaped by interacting academic, cognitive, and contextual variables. A British Council discussion involving stakeholders from government, academia, and the private sector highlighted that while English proficiency in the Philippines remains strong, there is concern about sustaining its global competitiveness. This is important because English continues to function as a key language in education, commerce, and law, making it essential for workforce readiness and national development. In support of this, Apridayani et al. (2024) found that writing assessment practices, including self-evaluation and teacher feedback, improve learners' reflection and writing quality. Quijano (2022) further revealed that grammar proficiency and sequencing skills are strong predictors of writing performance among Grade 7 learners in the Philippines.

Performance based learning and quarterly assessments are also central in evaluating English proficiency and academic growth. Kay (2020) explained that performance tasks measure higher order thinking skills such as communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking through authentic learning activities. Limbu (2025) supported this by showing that performance tasks enhance students' application of English in real reading contexts, contributing to better academic outcomes. William (2022) emphasized that these assessments ensure alignment between curriculum goals and student learning progress, while Bastasa et al. (2024) highlighted their role in evaluating English competency development. Supporting

this, Limna et al. (2022) found that 21st century skills strongly influence student performance and satisfaction. Coronel and Tan (2023) also showed that integrating these competencies improves achievement across subjects, and Varona (2020) emphasized that modern instructional tools and 21st century skills enhance classroom performance.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to assess the 21st century skill levels of learners in Grade VI and examine the relationship between these levels and their academic performance in English. The descriptive aspect of the design was used to determine the learners' 21st century skills levels using the survey questionnaire, focusing on the four C's: (1) critical thinking, (2) communication, (3) collaboration, and (4) creativity.

It also described their academic performance in English based on written works, performance tasks and quarterly assessment. The correlational component was examined to determine whether there is a significant relationship between 21st century skills levels and academic performance.

Participants

The respondents of this study consisted of one hundred fifty Grade VI learners who were officially enrolled in selected schools within the District of Balingoan, Division of Misamis Oriental during the conduct of the study. These learners were chosen as respondents because they were considered capable of providing the necessary information relevant to the study on 21st century skills and academic performance. As elementary learners preparing for higher levels of education, they were expected to demonstrate the competencies and skills needed in the 21st century learning environment. Their participation provided valuable data that helped determine the relationship between learners' 21st century skills and their academic performance in English.

Data Collection

The instrument used in gathering the data was a questionnaire composed of two parts.

Part 1 dealt with learners' 21st-century skills in terms of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. This was adopted from Varona's study (2020) entitled "21st Century Skills: Influence on Students' Academic Performance", and the questionnaire was patterned and modified from the source mentioned above.

Part 2 inquired about learners' academic performance in English. This involved the learners' written work (30%), performance task (50%) and quarterly assessment (20%) in the 4th quarter of School Year 2024-2025, found in the class record of the teacher adviser. This was based on the DepEd Grading System guided by DepEd Order No.8, s. 2015.

Data Analysis

The study used the following tests for in-depth analysis: weighted mean and standard deviation, and Pearson Correlation Coefficient.

To answer the first research question on the learners' 21st century skills level, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, weighted mean and standard deviation were used.

For the second research question on academic performance in English, including written works, performance tasks, and quarterly assessments, mean scores and standard deviation were calculated. These measures provided insights into the average performance and the variability of learners' grades.

To address the third research question on the relationship between 21st century skills and academic performance in English, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was utilized.

1. Results and Discussions

Problem 1. What is the learners' level of 21st Century skills in terms of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity?

Table 1
Summary of the Learners' Level of 21st Century Skills

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Critical Thinking	3.09	0.70	High
Communication	3.13	0.70	High
Collaboration	3.11	0.68	High
Creativity	3.04	0.71	High
Overall	3.09	0.70	High

Table 1 presents the summary of learners' level of 21st century skills with an overall mean of 3.09 interpreted as High. This indicates that learners generally possess strong 21st century skills necessary for academic success and lifelong learning. The findings show that learners are capable of critical thinking, effective communication, collaboration, and creativity. They are able to analyze information, express ideas clearly, work cooperatively with others, and generate original ideas. However, creativity obtained the lowest mean among the skill areas, suggesting that learners may still need more opportunities and support to further enhance their creative abilities.

The results further revealed that communication skills received the highest rating, indicating that learners are confident in expressing their thoughts, participating in discussions, and engaging in collaborative activities. Strong communication skills contribute positively to learners' academic performance, particularly in English, where effective expression and interaction are essential. On the other hand, creativity, although still rated high, showed the lowest mean, implying that learners may have limited opportunities to fully explore and express innovative ideas. This highlights the need for teachers to provide learner centered and engaging activities that encourage imagination, flexibility, and independent thinking. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of continuously strengthening 21st century skills to support learners' academic achievement and prepare them for future challenges.

Problem 2. What is the learners’ level of academic performance in English based on written work, performance task, and quarterly assessment in 4th Quarter?

Table 2
Summary of Learners’ Academic Performance in English

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Written Work	83.69	2.18	Adequate Knowledge of English Concepts
Performance Task	85.00	2.31	Strong Grasp of English Concepts
Quarterly Assessment	83.35	2.83	Adequate Knowledge of English Concepts
Overall	84.01	2.44	Adequate Knowledge of English Concepts

Table 2 presents the summary distribution of learners’ academic performance in English with an overall mean of 84.01, described as Satisfactory and interpreted as Adequate Knowledge of English Concepts. This indicates that learners in the Balingoan District demonstrate adequate competence in English and possess a solid foundation in the subject. The findings suggest that learners with strong 21st century skills are more likely to achieve satisfactory to very satisfactory performance in English. Learners performed highest in performance tasks, followed by written works, while quarterly assessments obtained the lowest mean. This implies that learners are more effective in demonstrating their understanding and skills through practical and interactive activities rather than traditional testing formats.

The results further revealed that performance tasks received the highest rating, indicating that learners are able to apply their knowledge effectively through presentations, projects, and other meaningful classroom activities. This suggests that learners are more motivated and engaged when tasks are connected to real life situations and allow active participation. In contrast, quarterly assessments obtained the lowest mean, although still interpreted as satisfactory. This may indicate that learners experience difficulties with traditional assessments that require recall, comprehension, and individual performance under time pressure. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of using varied assessment methods to better evaluate learners’ abilities and support the continuous improvement of their English performance.

Problem 3. Is there a significant relationship between the learners' 21st Century skills and their academic performance in English?

Table 3
Results of the Test on the Relationship between the Learner’s 21st Century Skills and their Academic Performance in English

21st Century Skills	Academic Performance			Overall
Written Work	Performance Task	Quarterly Assessment	As-	r-value
r-value	r-value	r-value		p-value
p-value	p-value	p-value		interpretation
interpretation	interpretation	interpretation		

Critical Thinking Skills	0.310 0.001 S	0.116 0.001 S	0.217 0.001 S	0.214 0.001 S
Communication Skills	0.316 0.001 S	0.219 0.001 S	0.313 0.001 S	0.283 0.001 S
Collaboration Skills	0.419 0.001 S	0.318 0.001 S	0.210 0.001 S	0.316 0.001 S
Creativity Skills	0.387 0.001 S	0.299 0.001 S	0.423 0.001 S	0.356 0.001 S

Table 8 presents the relationship between learners' 21st century skills and their academic performance in English. The overall correlation result showed a significant relationship between the two variables, indicating that learners with stronger 21st century skills tend to perform better academically in English. This suggests that the development of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity contributes positively to learners' academic growth and achievement. Teachers are therefore encouraged to continuously strengthen these skills through meaningful learning activities, while learners should also devote time to improving these competencies to support their future success.

The findings further revealed that all dimensions of 21st century skills had significant relationships with academic performance. Critical thinking was found to help learners in analyzing situations, solving problems, and making sound decisions in both academic and real-life contexts. Communication skills were also significantly related to academic performance, emphasizing the importance of expressing ideas clearly, participating actively in discussions, and avoiding misunderstandings. Collaboration skills showed a significant relationship as well, indicating that learners benefit from working effectively with others, sharing responsibilities, and participating in group activities. Among all the skill areas, creativity obtained the highest correlation, suggesting that learners who are able to think creatively and generate innovative ideas tend to achieve better academic performance. Overall, the results highlight the importance of integrating 21st century skills into teaching and learning to enhance learners' academic achievement and prepare them for future challenges.

2. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is hereby concluded that communication skills emerged as the highest in the learners' 21st century skills, demonstrating that Grade VI learners are generally effective in expressing ideas, listening to others, and participating actively in classroom interactions. Their strong communication skills enable them to demonstrate understanding of concepts, resolve uncertainties, and

contribute meaningfully to collaborative learning experiences. This strength in communication is reflected in the learners' academic performance in English, where performance tasks obtained the highest among the variables of academic performance in English, as these tasks allow learners to actively apply their communication skills, creativity, and understanding in meaningful and real-life activities. Hence, there is a significant relationship between the 21st century skills and learners' academic performance in English.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby proposed:

1. Teachers should integrate creative tasks into lessons, provide clear rubrics, and give feedback that enhances both content and creativity. This is to encourage learners to experiment with designs, layouts, and multimedia while seeking feedback to refine their work.
2. Learners can improve their performance in the quarterly assessment by studying regularly, reviewing lessons, participating actively in class through asking teachers or classmates for clarification on confusing topics, and managing time effectively.
3. Stakeholders are encouraged to develop learners' 21st century skills: communication, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration as these skills strengthen understanding, expression, and overall academic performance in English.

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