

# CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES IN TEACHING 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS AT MALAYSIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: DO ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AND TEACHER'S ATTITUDES MATTER?

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**Abstract:** The implementation of 21<sup>st</sup> century education is a key factor for successful education reform. Due to a lack of empirical research, practices to develop students' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills at the primary school level are still unclear. The purpose of this study was to identify teachers' contemporary practices and the influences of environmental factors as well as teachers' attitudes on these practices. A quantitative research design was used to achieve the objectives of the study. A total of 400 primary school teachers from the state of Penang, Malaysia was sampled. Three instruments were used to collect the required data; the Teachers' Practices in Teaching 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Questionnaire (37 items), Environmental Factors in Teaching 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Questionnaire (12 items) and the Teacher' Attitudes in Teaching 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Questionnaire (35 items). The data were analyzed with descriptive analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM). The results showed that primary school teachers adopted five contemporary practices in teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The inquiry-based instructional approach was the most preferred practice, followed by the communicative language teaching approach, constructivist learning approach and problem-centered instructional approach. The technology-based instructional approach, however, was the least preferred practice. Results of the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach showed that supporting environmental factors had positive influence on both teachers' practices and attitudes. Additional results indicated positive mediation role of teachers' attitudes on their practices of teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Implications for the research findings were discussed in this study. As supported by the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory, this study found that environmental factors could drive teachers' adoption of contemporary practices. In addition, teachers' attitudes have positive effect on their applications of these instructional practices as emphasized by the Theory of Planned Behavior. Educational implications and suggestions for future research are also discussed in this paper.

**Keywords:** Pedagogical practices, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, primary school students, environmental factors, teachers' attitudes