ORIGINAL ARTICLE

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

ISSN: 2692-5206, Impact Factor: 12,23

**American Academic publishers, volume 05, issue 06,2025**

Journal: https://www.academicpublishers.org/journals/index.php/ijai

# ENHANCING STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF MACHINING PROCESSES THROUGH INTERACTIVE AND GAMIFIED LEARNING TOOLS

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**Abstract:**Machining processes, including turning, milling, and grinding, are vital to modern manufacturing, ensuring precision and adaptability in producing high-quality components. However, traditional teaching methods often fail to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, limiting students' understanding and engagement. This study investigates the impact of interactive and gamified learning tools on enhancing students' comprehension of machining processes in a mechanical engineering course. Using a mixed-methods research design, the study assessed the outcomes of innovative pedagogical strategies, including project-based learning, flipped classrooms, and virtual simulation labs, compared to traditional lecture-based instruction. A quasi-experimental approach with pre-test and post-test assessments was conducted on 150 undergraduate students, divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group utilized interactive tools and real-world case studies, while the control group followed conventional methods.

Findings revealed that the experimental group demonstrated significant improvement in knowledge acquisition, engagement, and satisfaction compared to the control group. Gamified and interactive tools effectively bridged theoretical-practical gaps, fostering deeper cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in the learning process. These results underscore the potential of active learning methodologies to enhance educational outcomes in machining processes, preparing students to meet the demands of advanced manufacturing industries. The study highlights the need for integrating innovative tools into engineering curricula to foster a balanced and comprehensive understanding of machining principles.

**Keywords:** Machining processes, Interactive learning, Gamified learning, Project-based learning, Flipped classroom, Virtual simulations, Engineering education, Knowledge acquisition, Student engagement, Manufacturing education

## INTRODUCTION

These processes enable the precise shaping [1] and finishing of materials, which is critical for producing high-quality components in various industries [2]. Understanding these techniques is vital for effective technological preparation and resource management in machine-building production [3]. A strong foundation in machining equips students with the expertise to meet industry demands and contribute to the advancement of modern manufacturing systems.

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Machining processes [4] ensure precision and accuracy in the production of components. These techniques are essential for maintaining dimensional accuracy, tolerances, and surface finishes, which are crucial for the interchangeability of parts. Additionally, machining processes can be adapted to different materials and designs, enhancing production flexibility [5] and enabling customization to meet specific requirements. A solid understanding of machining principles is crucial for students in mechanical engineering and related fields. Theoretical knowledge [6] helps students interpret mechanical drawings, tolerances, and specifications, which are vital for successful design and manufacturing processes. Feedback from industry professionals emphasizes the importance of graduates possessing both theoretical and practical machining skills to meet the demands [7] of modern manufacturing. The integration of manufacturing principles into curricula ensures that students are prepared for future roles in the industry. While advancements in automation and digital tools have transformed manufacturing processes, a comprehensive understanding of traditional machining techniques remains [8] indispensable for students to fully comprehend modern manufacturing systems and their complexities.

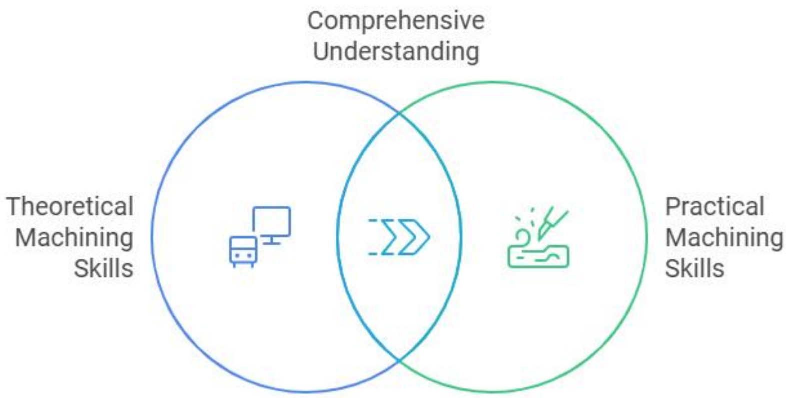


Figure. 1 Comprehensive Manufacturing Education

Educators often struggle to effectively convey intricate machining principles without practical demonstrations, and traditional hands-on training can be resource-intensive and unfeasible in large classroom environments. These methods provide immersive, interactive experiences [9] that allow students to practice machining tasks in a simulated environment, overcoming the limitations of physical equipment.

The gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills significantly impacts students' understanding of machining operations. Addressing this gap is essential for enhancing students' competencies in machining [10]. Incorporating virtual factory software and simulation labs can bridge the gap by providing realistic environments for practice. The demonstration method has shown to significantly improve students' understanding and practical skills in machining courses. Emphasizing process-oriented evaluations can help assess and enhance students' practical competencies. Conversely, some argue that a strong theoretical foundation is crucial for understanding complex machining concepts [11], suggesting that without it, practical skills may lack depth and context. Balancing both aspects remains a challenge in engineering education. Research indicates that gamified learning environments stimulate competitiveness

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and cooperation, making complex concepts more accessible and enjoyable. Studies show that gamification increases student engagement and promotes collaboration among peers in figure 2.

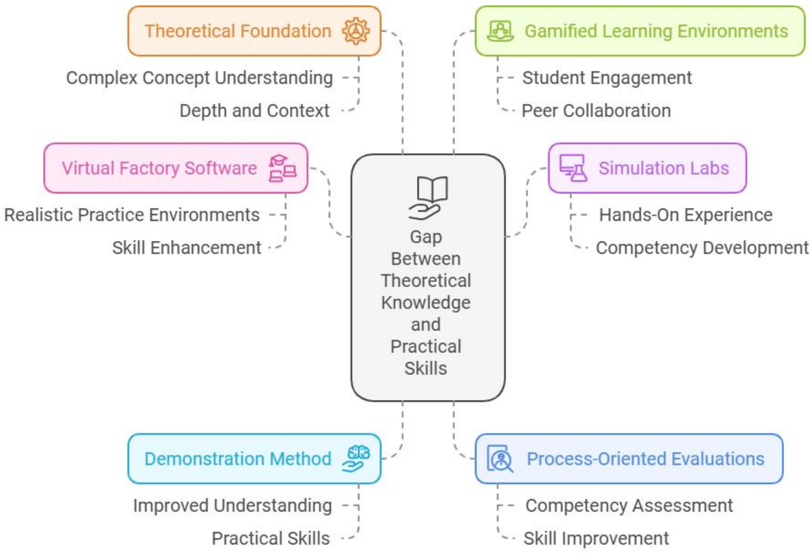


Figure. 2 Gap Between Theoretical Knowledge and Practical Skills

Digital gamification tools, especially during distance learning, provide personalized learning experiences and facilitate interaction among students. Platforms like MinecraftEdu and Storyboard enhance [12] cognitive skills and maintain student interest through engaging content delivery. The effectiveness of these tools varies among students, highlighting the need for tailored implementations to meet diverse learning preferences. While gamification and interactive tools offer substantial benefits, challenges such as technology access inequality must be addressed to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students. The machining processes of turning [13], milling, and grinding hold a pivotal role in both manufacturing industries and mechanical engineering education. These processes not only enable the production of high-precision components [14] but also provide students with critical hands-on experience and foundational knowledge of manufacturing principles. Understanding and mastering these techniques are essential for developing practical engineering skills, designing manufacturable components, and addressing real-world challenges.

In today's manufacturing landscape, sustainability [15] and innovation are increasingly influencing machining practices. Eco-friendly techniques and energy-efficient processes are becoming integral to addressing contemporary industry demands. By integrating these advancements into educational curricula, future engineers are equipped to tackle challenges while contributing to the development of sustainable manufacturing systems. However, teaching these processes effectively remains challenging, given the complexity of the concepts, traditional reliance on lecture-based approaches, and limited access to physical laboratories.

## METHODS

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This study explores the effectiveness of innovative pedagogical approaches in teaching advanced manufacturing processes in mechanical engineering. A mixed-methods research design was employed to assess the impact of these approaches on student learning outcomes, engagement, and satisfaction. The study utilized a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the innovative pedagogical approaches [16]. The approaches included project-based learning (PBL), flipped classrooms [17], and integration of digital tools such as simulations and virtual labs. Students were divided into two groups: the experimental group, which experienced the innovative approaches, and the control group, which followed traditional teaching methods.

The study was conducted with 150 undergraduate students enrolled in an advanced manufacturing processes course in a mechanical engineering program at a university in Uzbekistan. Participants were randomly assigned to the experimental group (n=75) or the control group (n=75). Both groups were matched on key demographics, including prior academic performance, age, and gender in figure 3.

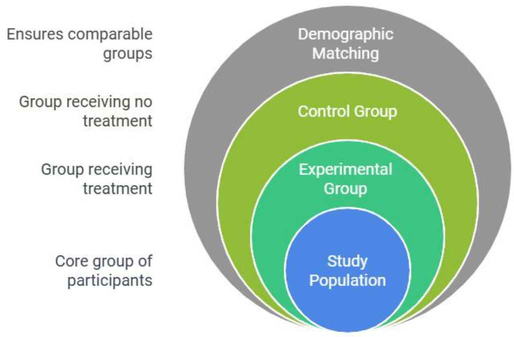


Figure. 3 Study Design in Manufacturing Processes Course

The intervention spanned 16 weeks, corresponding to the duration of the course. Experimental Group: This group engaged with project-based learning assignments, flipped classroom sessions, and digital tools for simulations and virtual labs. Real-world case studies and industry-relevant scenarios were incorporated to enhance the learning experience. Students collaborated in small teams to design and optimize manufacturing processes, applying theoretical knowledge in practical contexts. Control Group is traditional lecture-based teaching methods were used, supplemented by conventional hands-on labs and textbook assignments.

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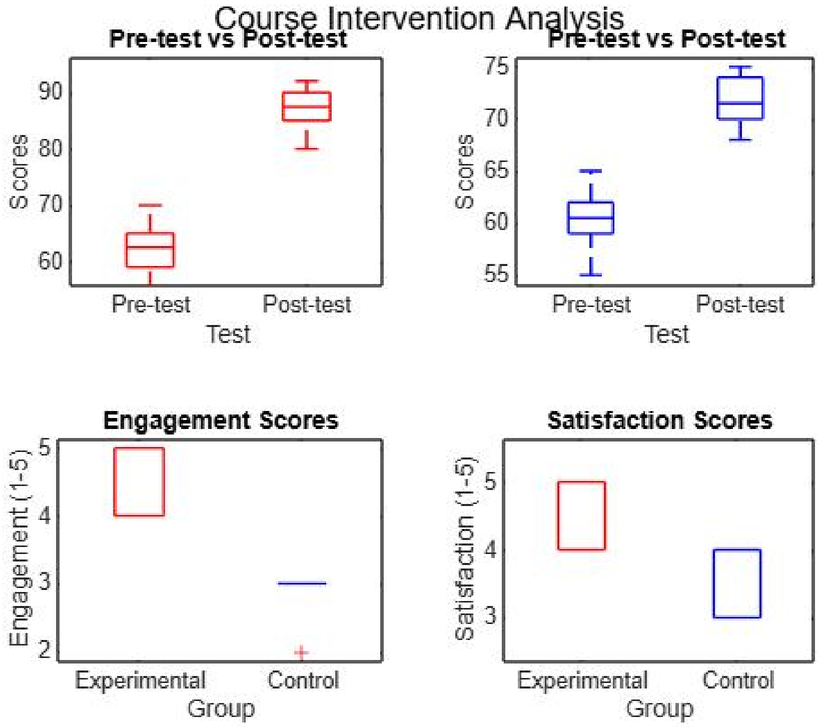


Figure. 4 course intervention analysis

Figure. 4 compares the pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental group. The pre-test represents students' initial knowledge before the intervention, while the post-test measures their knowledge after the intervention (which included project-based learning, flipped classroom sessions, and digital tools). A larger improvement in post-test scores suggests that the teaching methods used in the experimental group were effective in enhancing students' understanding of the material. Scientific Explanation is similar to the previous plot, this boxplot compares the pre-test and post-test scores for the control group, which followed traditional lecture-based teaching methods. This allows for a comparison to see if the traditional methods yielded similar or less improvement compared to the experimental group. If the post-test scores show little improvement compared to the pre-test scores, this may indicate that the traditional methods were less effective in promoting learning.

This boxplot compares the engagement scores between the experimental and control groups. Engagement is measured on a Likert scale (1-5), reflecting students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in the learning process. The experimental group, which engaged in active learning (e.g., project-based assignments, flipped classrooms), is expected to show higher engagement levels compared to the control group, which followed traditional lecture-based instruction. The boxplot compares the satisfaction scores of the experimental and control groups. Satisfaction is measured on a Likert scale (1-5), and it reflects students' perceptions of the relevance, clarity, and applicability of the teaching methods. It is hypothesized that the experimental group, which used more innovative and interactive learning methods, will report higher satisfaction compared to the control group, which used more traditional methods. These plots help assess the effectiveness of the intervention by comparing knowledge acquisition before and after the course. A greater improvement in the experimental group suggests that the innovative teaching methods were successful in enhancing student

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learning. Engagement Scores Engagement is a critical factor in promoting deep learning. Higher engagement in the experimental group supports the idea that active learning methods foster greater cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement. Satisfaction Scores is higher satisfaction scores in the experimental group can indicate that students perceived the learning experience as more valuable and relevant, validating the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used. These plots collectively provide insights into the impact of the intervention, comparing it to traditional teaching methods, and highlight areas where the experimental approach may have had significant advantages.

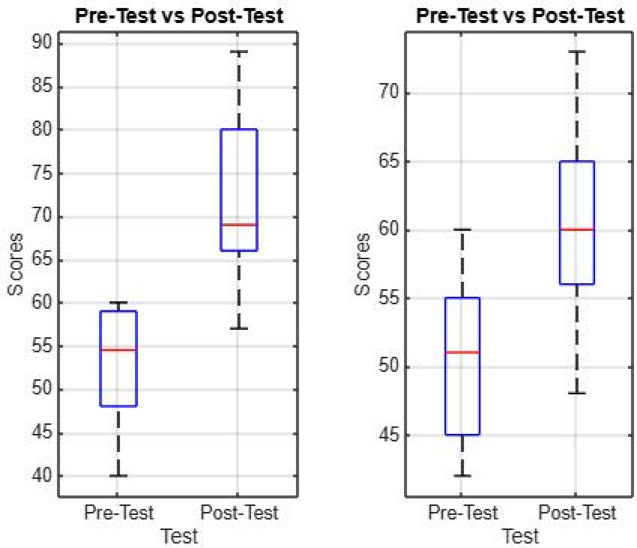


Figure. 5 Experimental Group: Pre-Test vs Post-Test and Control Group: Pre-Test vs Post-Test

Figure. 5 shows the distribution of pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental group. The pre-test scores represent the baseline knowledge of the students before the intervention, while the post-test scores reflect the knowledge gained after participating in the intervention (which may include project-based learning, flipped classrooms, and digital tools). The primary goal of this plot is to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. If the post-test scores show a significant improvement over the pre-test scores, it suggests that the intervention was successful in enhancing students' knowledge and understanding of the course material. This can be observed by a noticeable shift in the median and overall distribution of scores from pre-test to post-test. The plot displays the distribution of pre-test and post-test scores for the control group. These students followed traditional lecture-based instruction, with pre-test scores representing their knowledge before the course and post-test scores representing their knowledge after the course. The control group helps compare the effectiveness of traditional teaching methods against the experimental intervention. If the post-test scores show a smaller improvement compared to the pre-test scores, it indicates that traditional methods were less effective in fostering knowledge acquisition and retention. The plot helps highlight the difference in learning outcomes between the experimental and control groups.

These plots allow for a visual comparison of the distribution and central tendency (medians) of pre-test and post-test scores. The size of the interquartile range (IQR) and any outliers are also informative about how students' knowledge varied within each group. A significant increase in post-test scores, particularly in the experimental group, would suggest

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the positive impact of the innovative teaching methods. A smaller increase in the control group suggests that traditional teaching methods were less effective in improving students' knowledge.

**RESULTS**

The expected trend is that engagement levels will increase across all three dimensions as students become more involved in the hands-on, real-world learning activities. Cognitive engagement reflects the mental effort students invest in learning, emotional engagement captures their intrinsic motivation and interest, and behavioral engagement measures their participation in class activities and projects. The plot shows the engagement levels in the control group, who received traditional lecture-based teaching methods. Like the experimental group, the data shows three dimensions of engagement (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) at three intervals during the course. The expectation is that the control group's engagement will show a smaller improvement compared to the experimental group, reflecting the limitations of traditional teaching methods. Traditional lectures may not foster as much intrinsic motivation or active participation as the more dynamic, hands-on methods used in the experimental group. The cognitive and emotional engagement scores might show modest improvement, while behavioral engagement (participation in activities) is expected to show the least increase. "Experimental Group Engagement (Pre, Mid, Post)" this plot demonstrates the effects of innovative teaching methods on students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement, showing higher growth in engagement due to active learning. "Control Group Engagement (Pre, Mid, Post)" this plot shows a comparison of engagement in students receiving traditional instruction, typically showing lower growth in participation, interest, and mental effort compared to the experimental group.

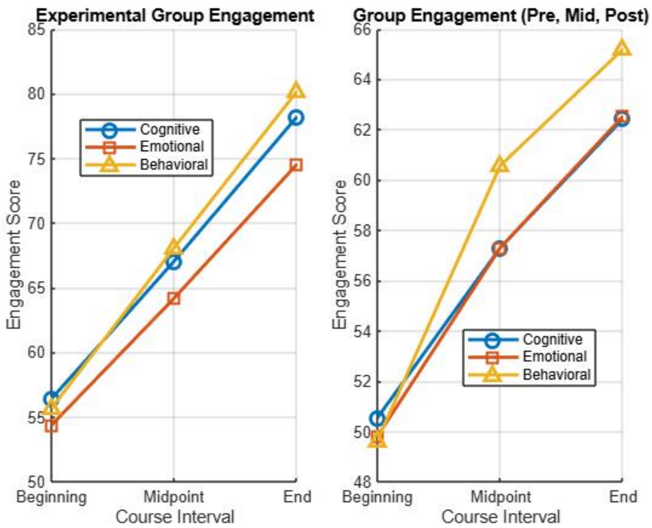


Figure. 6 Experimental Group Engagement (Pre, Mid, Post) and Control Group Engagement (Pre, Mid, Post)

Figure. 6 visualizes the changes in engagement over time for the experimental group, which received an innovative teaching approach such as project-based learning, flipped classroom sessions, and digital tools. The plot shows three dimensions of engagement:

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cognitive, emotional, and behavioral, measured at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the course.

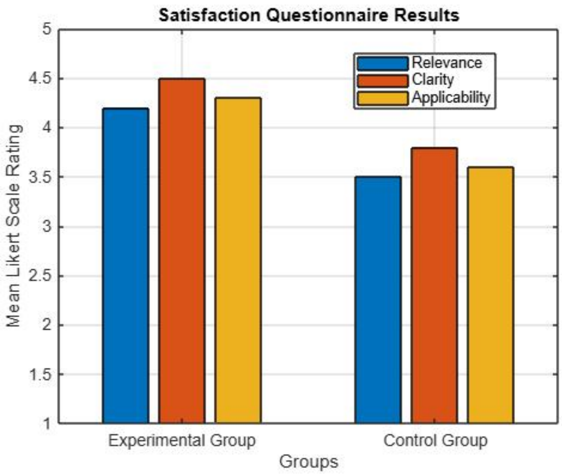


Figure. 7 Satisfaction Questionnaire Results: Comparison Between Experimental and Control Groups

Figure. 7 represents the results of a Likert-scale questionnaire used to assess students' perceptions of their learning experience. The data compares two groups: the experimental group (engaged with innovative teaching methods such as project-based learning, flipped classrooms, and digital tools) and the control group (received traditional lecture-based instruction). The plot visualizes the average ratings for three key aspects of the students' learning experience. Relevance of Teaching Methods measures how well the students felt the teaching methods aligned with their learning needs and real-world applications. Clarity of Teaching reflects students' perceptions of how clearly the content and instructions were communicated. Applicability of Teaching Methods assesses the perceived practicality and usefulness of the teaching methods in preparing students for their future careers.

The experimental group is expected to show higher satisfaction across all three aspects due to more engaging and relevant teaching strategies, while the control group might show more moderate or lower ratings, reflecting the more traditional, less interactive instructional methods. The data provides insights into how innovative teaching methods can enhance students' perceptions of their learning experience in mechanical engineering education.

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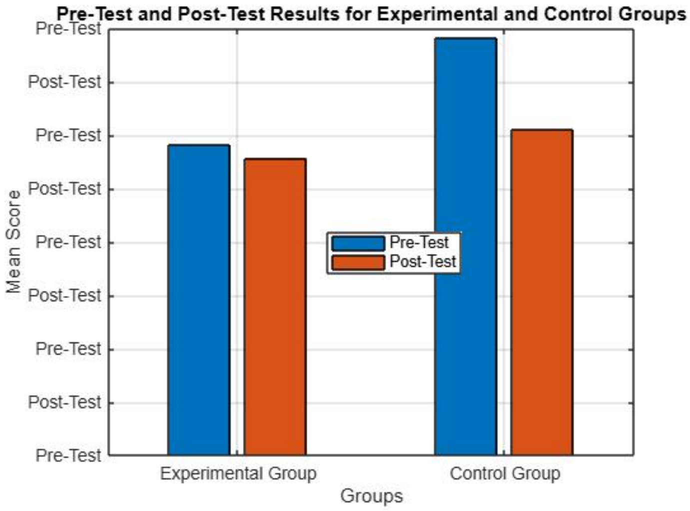


Figure. 8 Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores Between Experimental and Control Groups

Figure.8 compares the average scores from pre-test and post-test assessments for two groups the Experimental Group and the Control Group. The Experimental Group was subjected to innovative teaching methods, such as project-based learning, flipped classroom sessions, and digital tools, while the Control Group received traditional lecture-based instruction. The pre-test score represents the baseline knowledge of the students before the intervention, and the post-test score represents their knowledge after the intervention. The plot shows mean scores for both the pre-test and post-test for each group. A larger increase in the post-test scores in the Experimental Group would suggest that the intervention (innovative teaching methods) effectively enhanced learning. A smaller increase or no significant change in the Control Group would indicate that traditional methods resulted in less significant improvement in students' understanding. The paired t-test results (p-values) are displayed, which assess whether the difference between pre-test and post-test scores is statistically significant for each group. A p-value less than 0.05 indicates a statistically significant improvement, meaning the teaching method likely contributed to the observed change in learning outcomes.

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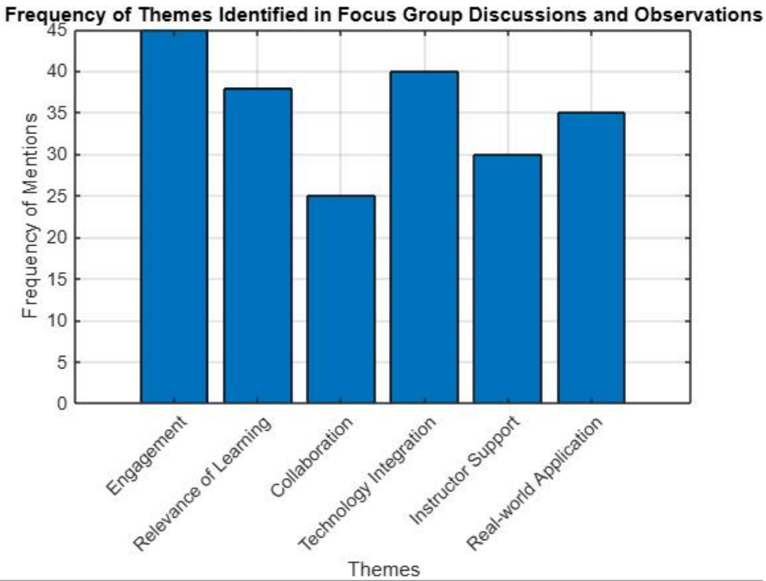


Figure. 9 Frequency of Themes Identified in Focus Group Discussions and Observations

Figure. 9 represents the results of a thematic analysis conducted on focus group transcripts and observation notes. The plot visualizes the frequency with which specific themes or topics were discussed by students, reflecting the effectiveness of the pedagogical approaches in the course. The chart includes several themes relevant to the learning experience and pedagogical effectiveness. Engagement, Relevance of Learning, Collaboration, Technology Integration, Instructor Support, Real-world Application. Each bar's height corresponds to the number of mentions or frequency that a particular theme was referenced by participants in the focus group discussions or observed during the course. A higher bar for Engagement suggests that students frequently mentioned how engaged they felt with the course content, which may indicate that the teaching methods effectively maintained their interest. A high frequency for Technology Integration suggests that digital tools and virtual labs played a significant role in students' learning experiences. Themes like Instructor Support and Real-world Application may reveal that students found these aspects either more or less relevant in relation to their learning objectives.

This plot is essential for gaining insights into the qualitative impact of the pedagogical interventions and provides a visual summary of student perceptions based on the qualitative data collected. It highlights the most discussed aspects of the course, allowing instructors and researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of different teaching methods based on student feedback.

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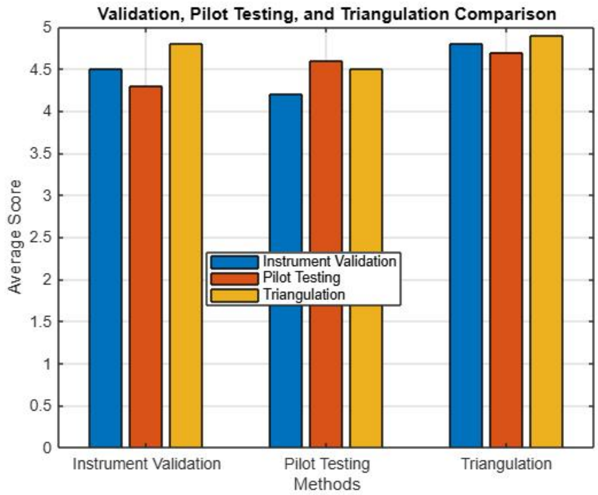


Figure. 10 Comparison of Instrument Validation, Pilot Testing, and Triangulation Effectiveness

Figure. 10 presents a comparison of the effectiveness of three key methods used in the research process: Instrument Validation, Pilot Testing, and Triangulation. Each method is evaluated based on its ability to ensure the reliability and credibility of the study findings. Instrument Validation this method measures how well the research tools (such as surveys and questionnaires) align with the intended constructs. The score represents expert ratings on the content validity of the tools. A higher score indicates that experts believe the tools effectively measure the intended concepts. Pilot Testing this phase tests the clarity and applicability of the instruments with a small cohort before full-scale implementation. The score reflects the feedback on how well the tools were received in terms of ease of use, clarity, and practical application. Higher scores suggest that the instruments are clear and applicable for the target group. Triangulation this method involves using multiple data sources and research methods to cross-verify findings, enhancing the study’s credibility and reliability. The score reflects how well the triangulation process (combining quantitative, qualitative, and different data sources) supported the study’s results. Higher scores indicate strong credibility and reliability of the findings. The grouped bar chart compares these three methods, highlighting their relative effectiveness in ensuring the validity and reliability of the research. The higher the average score, the more effective the method in contributing to the overall credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the efficacy of incorporating innovative pedagogical approaches, such as project-based learning, flipped classrooms, and gamified digital tools, in enhancing students’ understanding of machining processes. The experimental group demonstrated notable improvements across several dimensions, including knowledge acquisition, engagement, and satisfaction, compared to the control group, which followed traditional teaching methods.

The significant improvement in post-test scores for the experimental group highlights the impact of interactive learning approaches on knowledge retention and understanding. By engaging with practical assignments and simulations, students were able to apply theoretical

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concepts in real-world scenarios, solidifying their comprehension of complex machining principles. These results align with prior research emphasizing the role of active learning in fostering deeper cognitive engagement and improving learning outcomes in engineering education.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study provide valuable insights for curriculum developers aiming to enhance machining education. Integrating project-based learning, simulations, and gamified tools into existing courses can better prepare students for industry demands. Furthermore, emphasizing sustainability and innovation in machining practices can align curricula with emerging trends in manufacturing. Balancing traditional instruction with interactive methods ensures that students develop both theoretical and practical competencies.

This study demonstrates that innovative teaching approaches significantly enhance students' understanding, engagement, and satisfaction in learning machining processes. These findings advocate for a shift in engineering education toward more interactive and application-oriented methods, equipping students with the skills necessary to excel in modern manufacturing environments. However, addressing technological and logistical challenges remains crucial to ensure equitable and effective implementation of these strategies across diverse educational contexts.

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