Gen Z Teachers

Dreams and Challenges

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Published by

Aasaan Publications

St. Xavier's College of Education (Autonomous)

[Re-accredited (4th Cycle) at 'A+' Grade by NAAC]

Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli– 627 002, Tamil Nadu, India.

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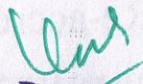|	
First edition	: April, 2023
ISBN	: 978-93-841921-9-8

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Price: Rs. 500/-

Printed at: Anto Art Crafts, Sivakasi

Principal
St. Xavier's College of Education
(Autonomous)
Palayamkottai - 627 002

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Content

Part I: Introduction to Gen Z

Part II Education for Gen Z

Reshwan, R. (2019). Generation Z Characteristics in the Workplace: Current managers and bosses would be wise to learn what makes Gen Zers tick at work.

Shefaly, S., Valerie, C., Priyadharshni, R., & Emily, A. (2021). Learning styles, preferences and needs of generation Z healthcare students: Scoping review. *Elsevier Nurse Education in Practice*. Volume 57.

Soban, M., Lateef, A., & Paracha, A. (2021). Determining the Entrepreneurial Intentions of Youth/ Generation Z: A Study of Youth Intent towards Entrepreneurship. JOUR, Vol – 10. P. 143 -157.

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Exploring the Newbies of Digital Native Gen Z

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Introduction

Digital natives are commonly recognized as the millennial generation. This includes Gen Z, who spent their entire lives bounded by computers, digital devices, and the world of social media, which made them contend with the use of technology. The Digital Age is also known as the Information Age, Computer Age, Silicon Age, or New Media Age, which started in the middle of the 20th century (Zimmerman, 2017). A rapid transfer from a traditional revolution to an economy that is largely based upon information caused the digital generation. The Oxford Dictionary (2017) describes Gen Z as the generation born in the late 1990's or the early 21st century. Gen Z is described as 'the group of people who were born between the late 1990's and the early 2010s' (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2021). The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2019) defined Gen Z as 'the generation of people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s'. The United States Library of

Congress explains that defining generations is not an exact science. However, Gen Z is observed as a revolutionary generation because of their aspirations and ideas to formulate the world into an enhanced place. This chapter highlights the characteristics, expectations, and problems of digital natives.

Characteristics of Gen Z

Entrepreneurial: The digitally-led educational landscape of today means that Gen Z is getting exposure to the empowerment of entrepreneurialism at an early stage and starting to apply those skills in the right way. They perceive their work to produce the desired result along with financial motive and they want to be paid now for today's work. Gen Z happily accepts any job that gives a steady income and other benefits, even if it is not their dream job. They create apps in their leisure time that make them overnight millionaires, and they have a shrewd sense of the business world. (Pangestu, 2020), strongly recommended that policymakers start integrating financial education as a compulsory part of every school curriculum, irrespective of different levels.

Stressed Strivers: Gen Z is considered to be the loneliest generation growing each year because of high academic pressure, burdened with cut-throat competition, lack of

adequate sleep, mental illness and so on. Dependence on digital technology is a burning concern of parents, teachers, and Governments. The descriptive analysis conducted by (Surat et. al., 2021), found that the level of addiction, depression, anxiety, and stress among Gen Z is high. Therefore, it is understood gadget addiction can interfere with the mental health of users. Gen Z is also the most likely generation to get help when they have mental health issues. It is encouraging to note that while they feel immense stress and pressure, many of them are working to find resources to help them cope and improve.

Shrewd Consumers: The shopping behavior of Gen Z is crucial to comprehend. They have an appetite for higher-quality products and keep themselves on top of cultural trends. Gen Z uses social media to build their brand, is willing to pay more for it, and views their purchasing decisions as an expression of their values and identity. According to the study (Kahawandala, 2020), Gen Z shoppers are developing unprecedented shopping habits and preferences. The results indicated the influence of computer literacy, peer and social influence, and social media identity on the purchasing decisions of Gen Z. They are not only consumers but also

opinion shapers. Hence, marketers see them as an important element or consumer group.

A Cohort of Creators using Technology: Gen Z have digital confidence and are capable of creating personal trademarks through digital innovations such as photo editing, mobile apps, gaming, meme creation, video editing, from Instagram to many social media platforms, thereby feeling enthusiastic about sharing their content through other sources. The findings of Buzzetto-Hollywood (2018) showed that students overwhelmingly see the value in enhancing their technology skills, especially in such areas as computer software applications, information management, and cyber security. Having grown up with technology, they are identified as ambitious, success-driven, and universal in their perspectives.

Impact of Societal Change on Gen Z Learners

Gen Z values societal change. They accept same-sex marriages, interracial marriages, and single-parent families more than previous generations. They also tend to be more progressive in general, regarding their social and political views. Their awareness of issues around them is higher than the previous generations. Gen Z shows vertical defiance and horizontal conformity. This means that they all show a desire to reject parental and societal values of appearance, gender expression as well as caste-based discrimination. There is an inclination to define themselves as more open-minded and norm-divergent than the previous generations. Earlier, Indians used to prefer living in a joint family, but moving on the path of western culture, they now want to live with privacy in nuclear families. Responsibility towards the elderly is in decline due to the current generation's desire for freedom. The interests of Gen Z prefer western songs, movies, foods such as cookies, pancakes, waffles, brownies, vegetable pasta, egg-rice, French toast and many more from restaurants and online ordered food which is called cultural penetration, thereby disconnecting them from their roots.

Personality Traits of Gen Z

i. Gen Z are multi-taskers, able to shift from one task to another giving little importance to accuracy

ii. Spend more time with their friends and develops new relationships from different demographic socio-groups

iii. Open-minded, ready to express their opinion and raise questions to elders on any matters

iv. Appreciation and recognition are the greatest motivation

v. The written language used by Gen Z is short forms and emojis

vi. Self-reliant as most of the parents of Gen Z have jobs outside their home where children are left alone in the house

vii. Prone to numerous crimes such as cyberbullying, hacking, cyber theft, loss of identity and online threats

viii. Prefers to work independently

ix. Ownership of their health and fitness, their marriage, family, jobs, and careers and

x. Environmentally aware and values an eco-friendly and healthy lifestyle.

Expectations of Gen Z

Due to inexperience and age, the elderly often makes the mistake of ignoring the ideas of Gen Z. Contrary to their thoughts, Gen Z holds a different perception regarding everything and is persistently swamped with updated information so they can come up with an out-of-the-box solution. It is expected that ample opportunities be given to acknowledge their views and work. Gen Z appreciates a secure job, financial stability, and prefers working for big companies. They choose jobs that reflect their passions and look for informal and relaxed environments where they can have their own well-defined office space. The initiation of cloud computing enables everyone to work from anywhere and anytime without compromising their freedom. They are brought up in an environment where they are directly related to the latest technology so elders should facilitate their learning with various learning materials and support their will to learn new things. Gen Z is the rule-breakers, who desire to work on their terms to give their best. It is their expectation not to control their thoughts and work. They would not mind quitting or changing their job if they felt inconvenient. Individuals expect to be a part and parcel of uplifting society in the right way than their previous generations. They are the new advocates of change worldwide. So, they are expected to associate themselves with organizations that address various issues in their way. Gen Z are the future of the workforce, capable of taking things into their own hands and bringing innovations. The business world can utilize Gen Z by providing attractive salaries and fulfilling their expectations.

Problems of Gen Z

Technology Addiction: Gen Z is the most known smartphone generation. The excessive use of technology can cause mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. It can also reduce self-confidence, life satisfaction, and emotional stability. Growing up with these technological advances can have strengths and weaknesses. They even experience Nomophobia or fear of being without a mobile phone, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Internet Gaming disorder, Internet Addiction disorder, Facebook Addiction disorder, Selfitis, and Phantom Vibration Syndrome at a higher level of anxiety. The excessive use and attraction of digital devices are raising concerns about the harmful effects of digital device radiation, which can cause headaches, decreased concentration, local irritation, burning, and other symptoms (Hoque, 2018).

Threat of Artificial Intelligence to White Collar Jobs: There is an increase in reliance on technology to do jobs previously done by humans. During the last decades, customer service, food preparation, and factory workers are replaced by technology. Being unemployed for a long period in youth have been correlated to decreased happiness, job satisfaction, and other mental health issues. Despite numerous actions, the risk for Gen Z of entering into criminal activities remains at a high level. This risk is strongly connected to the lack of education, employment, and training of the young population (Novkovska, 2018).

Mental Health Problems: Gen Z with mental health disorders is more likely to be dissatisfied, absent, suspended, or expelled from educational institutions. Their learning is negatively impacted because of poor concentration, distractibility, inability to retain information, poor peer relationships, and aggressive behavior. Also, the feeling of loneliness in Gen Z may be related to the fact that they are generally less accustomed to facing and dealing with adversity and other factors (Brafman, 2021).

Drug Addiction: Gen Z is found consuming drugs at large. Substance abusing youth are at higher risk than non-users for mental health problems, including depression, conduct problems, personality disorders, suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide, and suicide. A study by (Nahvizadeb, 2014) on high school students found that the highest drug use prevalence pertained to cigarettes and hookah, followed by alcohol, opium, ecstasy, cannabis and heroin.

Conclusion

Gen Z is different from others as they connect themselves throughout the globe. Even toddlers play with smartphones and they understand the use of technology and can accustom themselves easily to the introduction of new software or devices better than their previous generations. There are negative aspects as well when using technology with the wrong motive. No doubt, this generation is considered to be the future leaders and change makers of the economy and society. Understanding Generation Z's unique characteristics will help higher education educators re-think what they are doing in their classrooms. We need to become conscious about our students' learning needs. Although it may not be possible to work individually with each and every student, we can try to understand their learning needs and implement new ideas. Students' achievements are our greatest gift.

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