

IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON THE NEW GENERATIONS: EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

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Introduction:

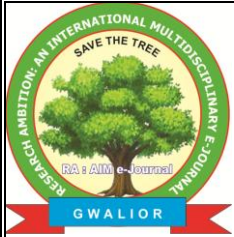
Our world today is marked by rapid changes in technology, particularly in information technology and the mass media. These changes which have come to stay, have completely revolutionalized our lives and our day to day reality, bringing with it vast possibilities for education and employment while at the same time creating many cultural and social changes which are yet to be fully realized, understood and responded to by young persons, parents, educators and those responsible for guiding them. We therefore try to analyse the impact of such environment on the persons of the younger generations who are technologically savvy but need to be helped in understanding the consequences of the use or abuse of such technology on their lives and future possibilities. We begin by studying the different generations, their environmental realities and the consequent influence on their personalities and characteristics.

Different generations over the past century:

William Strauss and Neil Howe two American authors presented a Generational Theory that states that people in a particular age group tend to share a distinct set of beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours because they were born and grew up in a particular period in history that has influenced their lives. They call this a social generation. It covers roughly a span of twenty years which is about the length of one phase of life: childhood, young adulthood, midlife and old age. An average life could be taken to consist of 80 years spanning four phases or periods which are that of

Childhood → Young adulthood → Midlife → Elder hood.

According to the authors, members of the same generation share what they call an age location in history: they are influenced by the historical events and social trends while they are in that particular phase of life. Thus the Generational Theory presents a generation as an aggregate of people born every 20 years



The generations within the last century are the Silent Generation → Baby Boomers → Gen X → Gen Y → Gen Z as follows:

1. Silent Generation (1925–1945)
2. Baby Boom Generation (1946–1964)
3. Generation X (1965–1979)
4. Generation Y (1980–2000)
5. Generation Z (2001–to the present)

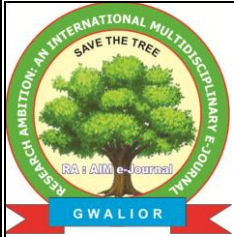
The New Generations or the Gen Y and Gen Z are also called the millennials and the centennials. Those falling within the age group of 16 to 36 years, that is, those who were born between 1980 and 2000 are called millennials. While those below 15 years of age, that is, they were born between 2001 and 2016, are called centennials.

The New Generations and Digital Technology:

Generation Y also known as Millennials, Digital Natives, Generation Me. Millennials are likely the most studied and talked about generation to date. They are the first generation in history that have grown up totally immersed in a world of digital technology, which has shaped their identities and created lasting political, social and cultural attitudes.

Generation Z are also known as iGen, Neo-Digital Natives, Gen Tech, the Centennials. According to a Frank N. Magid Associates of a white paper, generation Z exhibit positive feelings about the increasing ethnic diversity and they are more likely than older generations to have social circles that include people from different ethnic groups, races and religions.

Generation Z were the first generation to have widespread access to the internet from an early school age. With the web revolution that occurred throughout the 1990s, they have been exposed to an unprecedented amount of technology in their upbringing.



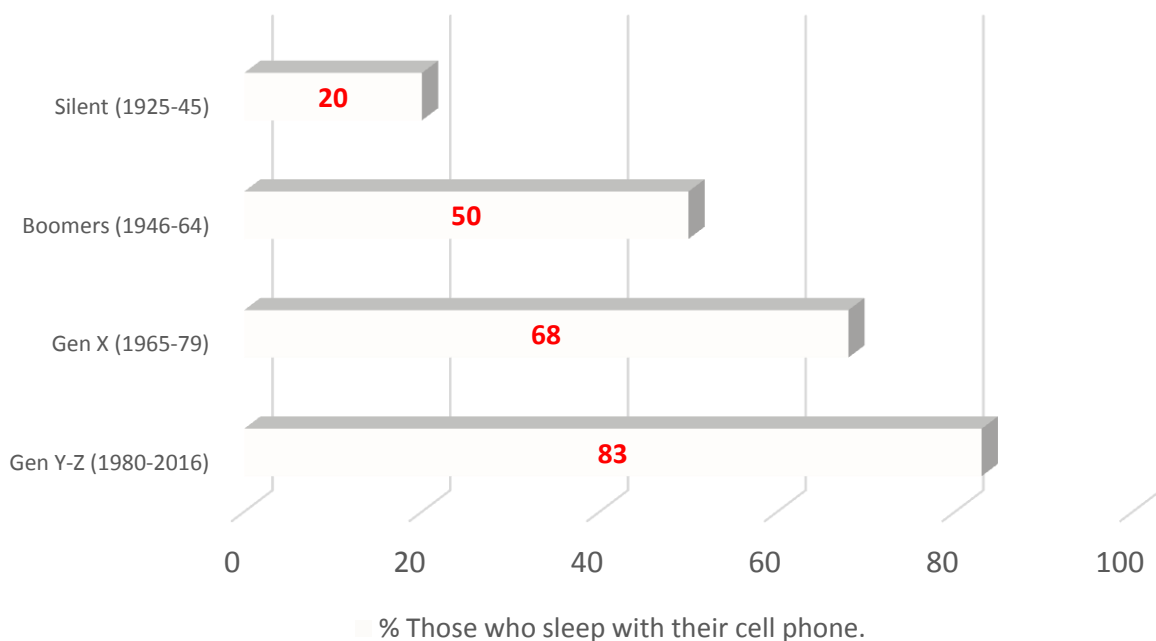
Generation Z is described as having a 'digital bond to the internet', and it is argued that it may help youth to escape from emotional and mental struggles they face offline. In a survey of 2014, 41% of Generation Z spend more than three hours per day using computers for purposes other than schoolwork, compared to 22% in 2004.

It is observed that smart phones offer the potential for deeper involvement in learning and more individualized instruction, thereby making this generation potentially better educated and more well-rounded.

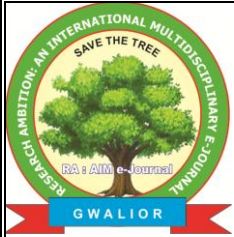
On the other hand, some researchers and parents are concerned that the prevalence of smart phones will cause technology dependence and a lack of self-regulation that will hinder child development.

The following study reveals the percentage of each generation who sleep with their cell phone on the bed or near their bed.

PROFILE (PEW Research Center 2015)



GEN Y & GEN Z:



Who are they? Educational implications:

It is important to study and analyse the characteristics of these two generations in order to understand their environment and address the educational implications for them

1. Gens Y & Z are Special:

These generations were brought up with a feeling that they are special. Being children of nuclear families, they receive a lot of attention, praise, are greatly sheltered, befriended and carefully guided by their parents whose entire lives centre around their one or two kids. Thus this feeling special can be attributed to their upbringing. Their parents may belong to the Late Boomers or the Gen X and are often called “helicopter parents” because of the way in which they follow up their children’s lives or activities. to lead well-structured lives based on adherence to clear and mutually agreed-upon rules.

Many of them have been raised to believe that they can accomplish anything. Parents, teachers, coaches and all adults who have been part of their lives, have drilled it into their heads that “if you believe you can achieve it, you probably can.”

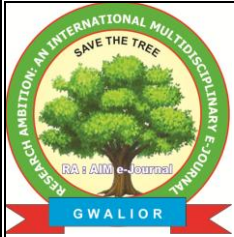
Educational implications:

The educational implications for such children would be to recognize their being special by regular dialogue, affirmation and feed backing, in pairs or individually as a kind of mentoring.

Such children need to feel affirmed that what they are doing is important and that they are on the right track. This type of recognition encourages them to work hard and increases their motivation and performance satisfaction. One challenging aspect is how to become co-journeymen and not so much as authority figures in the process of accompaniment while keeping proper boundaries of course.

2. Gens Y & Z are Technologically Savvy

They are the first generation to grow up constantly connected to the world and are labelled “Digital natives in a land of digital immigrants.” Nonetheless, the gains in technical expertise and informal knowledge may be offset by students’ shorter attention spans and lack of depth in learning.



Although Gen Y and Z may be adept at obtaining data, they may lack the sophistication to understand, evaluate the information they retrieve. They may also lack critical or analytical skills needed to evaluate the information they find. In other words, they may know how to access the information, but they may not know what to do with it. (*CIBER 2008; Franklin 2005; Hall 2006*).

Educational Implications:

For such young learners it would be important to make use of technology for information and formation. Films and video clips may be used in class or in community viewing.

A filtered use of internet through computers may also be used as an educational resource. However precautions have to be taken, as a result of their curiosity, or just by accident, they could find pornography fairly easily on the internet. They may find this upsetting or confusing as pornography portrays an unrealistic image of sex and relationships.

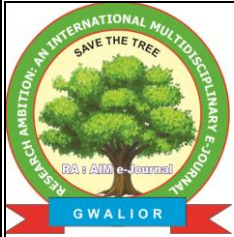
3. Gens Y & Z are Family-Oriented (PEW Research Center 2015)

The same survey said that they thrive on interpersonal contact with the family as a driving force towards their happy and less stressful lives. “Thanks to the importance Gen Y & Z place on family bonds, the family unit today is closer than ever.” They confirm that this emphasis on family is a “global phenomenon.”

Educational implications:

Contrary to popular belief, these generations want to have a close relationship with authority figures, just as they did with their parents. They want to feel that those who accompany them care about them personally. They prefer to work with superiors who are approachable, supportive, good communicators, and good motivators, just like their parents.

Thus it would be imperative to make their parents/families partners in formation. Gens Y & Z want an environment where the lines of communication and rules are explicit and firm. They dislike ambiguity. As a result, they seem to prefer a more lengthy orientation period to digest the information and understand what is expected and the reasons why.



From the beginning of the academic year it would be important to clearly delineate appropriate and non-appropriate behaviors, like regarding timeliness, dress code, use of social networking, multitasking during lectures, house rules, objectives of formation, goals, etc. Thus a directive approach would be quite effective in bringing about adhesion to norms and rules.

4. Gens Y & Z are Multi-taskers

Multi-tasking can enable them to accelerate their learning by permitting them to accomplish more than one task at the same time. However, they are likely to inappropriately multitask with technology. They are accustomed to using technology when they should be studying or are in class. They may not understand how this multitasking be perceived as rude or distracting.

Educational Implications:

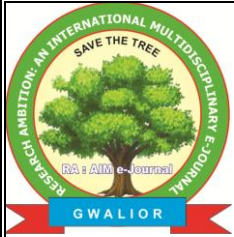
Clear rules about multitasking are essential. Those closely involved in formation, may role model appropriate technology use by avoiding multitasking (eg, avoid use of a hand-held device during lectures or meetings). Education may champion “technology-free” periods and encourage opportunities to practice silence, stillness, self-reflection and meditation.

5. Gens Y & Z – The Most Educated Generations

Without a doubt, educational achievement and getting a college education is very important for Gens Y & Z. The majority of them think that education is a big factor to achieving success in life and while this is true, it is equally important that they acquire the right type of education which will also bring them happiness and meaningfulness in life.

Educational implications:

Such youngsters expect to be actively involved in their learning, they do not do well being passive learners. The key is to encourage engagement, and that engagement will keep students from getting distracted in the classroom. We may consider creating learner-centered classroom environments to engage them.



These generations may easily get distracted and feel bored with only lecture type of instructions. Group discussion may help them better understand and learn more as they are able to participate and share their thoughts. When lectures are used, teachers may incorporate multimedia presentations.

6. Gens Y & Z are Team-oriented

After years of collaborating at schools, sports teams and peer-to peer networks, most of them like working in groups and they highly prefer a sense of unity and collaboration over division and competition. Teamwork is something they actually enjoy, because working together is far more effective than doing it alone.

Contrary to previous generations, most of them were brought up in an atmosphere of equal relationships and co-decision-making, and they have a community-oriented “we can fix it together” mindset.

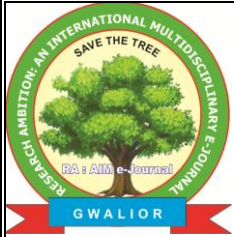
Also, the 2007 Greenberg Millennials Study found that when respondents were asked about the best way to address the challenges facing society, the leading choice by far was “through a collective social movement.”

Educational implications:

Gen Y and Z are particularly concerned with what peers think, therefore providing them with objective information is useful. Any feedback should be immediate, behaviorally based, and specific, and as clear and simple as possible.

Verbal and written feedback from teachers, mentors and significant adults are useful tools. When weaknesses and struggles are identified, educators may collaboratively assist them in taking active roles in developing a plan for improvement.

If they become defensive, educators may let them know they see the defensiveness and discuss how this may interfere with their growth process in formation. This could evolve into a mentoring discussion about accepting feedback as an integral part of their formation and eventual transformation.



On the positive side, a particularly effective tool for motivating Generation Y & Z is praise from superiors and peers. Teachers may find creative ways to recognize the positives. E.g., give positive strokes when the opportunity arises, students also appreciate it when successes and positive feedback are publicly acknowledged.

7. Gens Y & Z are Civic-Oriented

These generations have a strong sense of community both on local and global scale. Compared to previous generation, they focus on larger societal needs rather than individual needs.

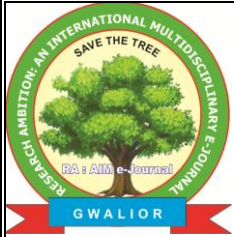
Educational implications:

Being aware of the social evils & injustices, Gens Y & Z can be more immersed with the struggles of the people particularly the poor and the marginalized strata of society. They can be encouraged to be politically active particularly through the social media about their views and opinions. They can be helped to develop critical thinking about social issues and their far reaching consequences on society at large.

8. Gens Y & Z are Global Citizens

The majority of these generations see themselves as global citizens, who have a responsibility to make the world better. A global citizen respects and values diversity, is outraged by social injustice, is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place and takes responsibility for their actions.

They are globally minded, which enables them to contribute to the general welfare of society. Gens Y & Z also showed a strong global response to world issues. With more access than ever, they take global trends and localize them to their own place and experience. They're the first truly "glocal" generation. Globally, 93% of millennials believe that it's their obligation to treat others with respect, regardless of race, gender, religion, political viewpoint or sexual orientation, the survey said.



Educational implications:

Educators would do well to support and encourage the expansion of their social, collective consciousness and global concern.

9. Gens Y & Z want Balance in Work & Life

They aren't as willing as former generations to sacrifice their personal life in order to advance their careers. They appreciate the balance of "work hard – play hard".

Educational implications:

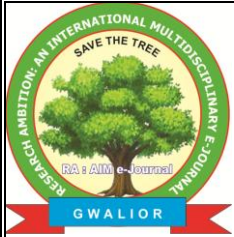
Being accompanied in going through the rigors of education, they desire to find meaning, fulfillment, and fun in the process.

Summary and Conclusion:

Flexibility and adaptability are required to successfully work with Gens Y & Z. They need understanding, acceptance and, appreciation. They think and behave the way they do and those educating them may need to find a way to work within that framework.

Accompanying these generations may involve two major roles. The first is to create good **mentoring** relationship. This may mean setting expectations, summarizing progress, discuss concerns and issues and patiently guiding them to achieve goals. Forming a close relationship may indeed pose a great challenge, particularly in an organization that is so hierarchically structured.

The second one is **parenting** role in bringing them up. Relationship with parents are the comfort zone for these generations of Y & Z. Educators may function as good parent figures to help them in the learning process. This ongoing and dynamic relationship may provide a safe environment for them not to be defensive as they listen and grow through feedback and dialogue even as rules are implemented and the objective demands of formation are required of them.



This may in turn demand from those involved in education to be mentally and physically present. There may be a need to persist even when one feels persistence is not working and may simply take comfort in the knowledge that we do not get the pleasure of seeing that all of the hard work has paid off until Gens Y & Z “have moved out of the home”.

Educators may become comfortable with a strong, directive role, not dissimilar to the parenting role, where rules are clear and firm. Early identification of those who are perpetually lagging behind or appear scattered and help them cope with the desired goal vis-à-vis their level of learning ability is necessary.

Focusing on deeper-level growth, Gens Y & Z may be asked to self-reflect on strengths and weaknesses before providing feedback. Mentoring may also imply teaching skills on silence, stillness, meditation and self introspection.

Admittedly, the approaches and strategies described here are supported only by knowledge and advice gleaned from other disciplines and anecdotal experience. May be there is still much we need to know about Gens Y & Z!

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