

# Gen Z Teachers

## Dreams and Challenges



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# **Gen Z Teachers: *Dreams and Challenges***

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## Teaching-Learning Strategies for Gen Z Learners

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### Introduction

The people those who born after 1995 is known as Gen Z. The Gen Z are accustomed to biracial, multiracial offspring, and are open-minded to parents (Pew, 2014). Gen Z are different from other generations in terms of scientific advancements, business and entrepreneurship, sports, entertainment, and social service (Popova, 2017). They have different motivations, learning styles, characteristics, skill sets, and social concerns. Understanding Gen Z mindset and goals are paramount to supporting, developing, and educating them through higher education. They always have a 'we'-centred mentality, one in which the majority of the centre of their concerns are around the well-being of everyone rather than solely themselves (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). They are more cautious with their



use of social media after watching the previous generations endanger themselves and their prospects (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Gen Z has been engaged in the extensive use of wireless technology applications (apps), non-verbal symbolic communication, and wireless access on a global scale (Carter, 2008). According to Shatto and Erwin (2016), Gen Z have easy access to streaming services so that they can watch programming at their convenience on a multitude of devices. Williams (2015) contended that Gen Z have their eyes open and are very much aware of societal issues, mindful of the future, taking in information instantaneously and lose interest just as fast.

### **Gen Z Learners**

The generation of the learners are classified based on the values of a large group of people who are born in a particular period, their political thoughts, economics, technological and social change (Popova, 2017). The teaching experience of the past has proved that teacher-centred methods of education is conservative, flat and limited in tools and technologies.

### **Characteristics of Gen Z Learners**

**Digital Natives:** They grow up with internet access and they have no separation between in-person and online experiences.



***Socialize Online:*** They rely on social media to connect watching and spend more hours in a day on Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram and YouTube.

***In-person Interaction:*** Even though they are tech-savvy they also value face-to-face interaction and collaboration and prefer in-person learning activities with their classmates.

***Expect Personalized and On-demand Experiences:*** They watch movies through Netflix and buy online shopping and are very much influenced by the online advertisement and suggest content and recommend the product.

***Shorter Attention Spans:*** Due to the pervasiveness of on-demand services and gadget usage their span of attention has been decreased compared to millennials.

***Practical:*** Their pragmatic attitude extends their attitude towards self-reliance, independence and self-directed learning. Thrives on the opportunity. Guide them in how to achieve their goals. (Veluchamy et. al., 2016).

### **Learning Preferences of Gen Z learners**

Gen Z students prefer to engage in hands-on learning opportunities in which they can immediately apply what they learn to real life. They also know the concepts that their learning has broader applicability to more than just a practice



example. Gen Z students have preference for intrapersonal learning. The technology helped Gen Z learners to be comfortable and accustomed to learning independently (Seemiller & Gracpe, 2017). Understanding Gen Z characteristics and context can provide insight into what has influenced the perspectives of this new generation of college students. Gen Z students view peers and instructors as valuable resources and like to have the option to work with others on their terms, often after they have had a chance to think through a concept, problem, or project on their own.

### **Community Engagement**

Community engagement also seems to be different from those of previous generations. Community engagement opportunities that make a lasting impact on an underlying societal problem appeal more to Gen Z students than do short-term volunteer experiences that address the symptoms of that problem (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). The social change mentality of Gen Z students can serve as a motivator to get them involved in other forms of community engagement if given the opportunity. This interest in innovation and entrepreneurship opens up opportunities for higher education to offer a wider variety of community engagement experiences.



## **Re-thinking Teaching and Learning Strategies for Gen learners**

Schwieger and Ladwig (2018) discussed a newer generation students, Gen Z, who have unique characteristics and expectations. Seemiller and Grace (2016) stated that Gen Z considers themselves loyal, thoughtful, compassionate, open-minded, and responsible. The use of technology is not the only strategy that should be re-think. Some of the teaching and learning strategies are as follows;

- i. Think digital in all assignments, assessments, activities and break the content into short segments
- ii. Make information graphical and bite-size and rethink how to communicate
- iii. Respect the time of the Gen Z students and provide individualized instruction
- iv. Use Social Media approaches to learning and setting students for a career
- v. Provide access to various resources and
- vi. Acknowledge that this generation sees themselves smart, creative, and hardworking

**Short Online Quizzes:** Students can answer the short quizzes in the classroom using their cell phones.



**Team/Small Groups:** They can foster more creativity. Working with small groups they can write excellent and narrate paragraphs themselves as the character of short stories (Rothman, 2018).

**Active Learning Activities:** Short summaries in teams or individuals can be given as a task 'One Minute Papers' are very effective for this purpose.

**Games:** Gen Z students are virtual gamers, and they love game challenges. They can be very active and put forth a lot of concentration on the games.

**Caring and Feedback:** Caring about their progress in the classroom gives them constant and positive feedback. Positive words help to motivate them to do their task.

### **Learning Strategies for Gen Z**

**Learning by Doing:** Gen Z want to tackle challenges and problems by conducting their own research. Hands-on learning is the most effective method which makes them learn more fun and interactive.

**Learning via Video:** They spend most of their time online, so the video is already a prominent one in teaching-learning and personal development of Gen Z. Through online videos, they learn the content easily.



**Social Learning:** Social learning allows students to learn from each other through observation and participation, solving problems faster by combining complementary skills, and adopting solutions that students wouldn't otherwise think of alone. They engage themselves, share their knowledge and co-create with others both in online and offline mode.

**Personalized Learning:** Classroom activities and instruction of the learners can be in multiple formats by involving them in adaptive learning. Learning and assessment are tailored for each student without overburdening students and teachers.

**Hybrid Learning:** They use the learning tools like Google classroom and engage in a fun learning environment. They create and play learning games using online quizzes.

### **Friendly Classroom for Gen Z**

**Cross-disciplinary Alignment:** Connect and promote learning across several subjects, from STEM to arts and language.

**Student-informed Learning:** They are given more opportunities to consume classroom materials, complete assignments, receive assessments and access resources.

**Experiential Learning:** Build opportunities for community-centred learning. Through Authentic learning activities, they engage in a meaningful way.



**Integrated Technology:** Using technology for the effective involvement of Gen Z learners in the teaching-learning activities.

**Visual Aids:** They use audio-visual aids and innovative digital teaching materials for their assignments and learning activity.

### **Conclusion**

Gen Z grew up during the economic recession. They are mobile natives who spend their time in mobile technology. Gen Z and their Gen X parents are far less focused on the bells and whistles of campus life and more concerned with the practical and tangible benefits of higher education. They use social media to communicate integrity and articulate values in ways that allow potential applicants to align themselves with the institutions in a meaningful, informed context. So, to educate those students teachers should update themselves with new technology in teaching. Teaching-learning strategies may be personalized based on the learner's needs.

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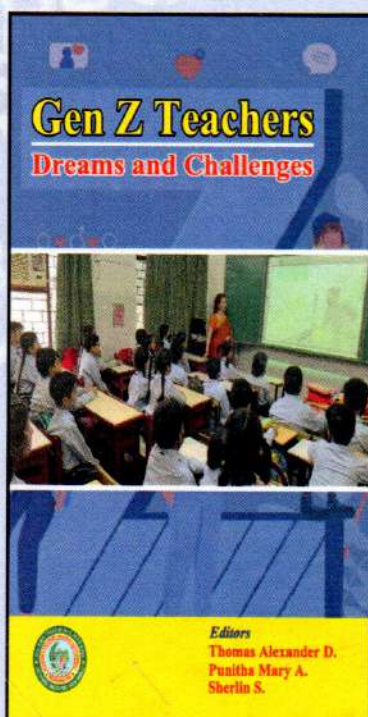


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**T**echnology can't replace teachers ... but teachers who use technology will probably replace teachers who do not. Since, we are in the era of technological explosion, technology influences the field of education too. In the present context of teaching-learning process, all the learners belong to Gen Z category who are digital natives and the most of the teachers are digital immigrants; this technological gap remains as the greatest challenge for the 21st century teachers.

Gen Z have been exposed to the internet and various social networks, producing a hyper cognitive generation, very comfortable with collecting and cross-referencing many sources of information and with integrating virtual and offline experiences. They constantly evaluate unprecedented amounts of information and influences. They are more interested in establishing their identities than the previous generations who have been in the struggles of human life. Thus, the expectations, demands and needs of the learners are changing and accordingly the teachers have to update themselves. The teachers with technology, understand the ideology of Gen Z, can be efficient teachers; otherwise, they will be completely ignored by the Gen Z learners.

"Technology will never replace great Teachers,  
but in the hands of great teachers, it's transformational"

- George Couros.

