

Next Gen Learners: New Demands, New Responses

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Abstract: - The digital world with its glamour and grandeur has left none of the sectors untouched with its midas touch. It has opened a new gateway for the educational sector where the students once enter have become the Gen Zers, the Next Gen learners, having imbibed in them the thoughtfulness & innovativeness of the technological applications & system that has created a novel and a more advanced educational world where automated technology has provided for them with a new lens of vision & innovative modes of learning. This paper aims to bring out the use of mobile technology and social networking sites for the Next Gen learners and are able to meet their demands.

The use of technology in the form of mobiles, tablets, smart phones, laptops and the inclusion of social networking sites via blogs, face book, twitters, whatsapp, google, you tube have sharpened the intellect of students and have made them more smarter & wiser as compared to the Millennials, the budding generators of technology.

Technology that has forayed into educational realm has the power to thrive education to newer heights. The only requirement is the meticulous use of digitization. The Gen Zers being bombarded with so many digital information has to learn to channelize the digital power in an organized manner and in the thoughtful direction. Students of today are the leaders of tomorrow. So let's hope for a mindful sensible creative technocrats who can raise the nation's pride to zenith by a constructive use of digitization.

Key words: Digital, Next Gen Learners, Millennials, Technology, Education, mobile technology, social networking sites, mindful, creative, technocrats.

Each generation's heritage is passed on to the next generation. Thriving in the digitalized world of this 21st century, the Gen Zers are equipped with the heritage of technological advancement inherited from their predecessors, the Millennials. Here the quote of Brad D. Smith is worth mentioning:

"Millennials and the generations that follow are shaping technology. This generation has grown up with computing in the palm of their hands. They are more socially and globally connected through mobile internet devices than any prior generation. And they don't question they just learn".

Relating to the topic of our theme: Next Gen Learners: New Demands, New Responses, I would like to dive deeply into the topic considering the sub theme that is the role of mobile technology & social networking sites for Next gen learners.

The Gen Z world is hard to imagine without technology. The impact of the technological implications on the Gen Zer's gene pool is so acute that they can't even think of their existence without it. The technological advancement being at the zenith, the students of the digital world are flooded with a pool of information through various sources of mobile technology and social networking sites. The tempting and knowledgeable apps on mobile with distinguished features can be claimed to be the boon for the students. The learning apops on androids and smart phones, have brought a colossal impact on the creativity OF THE Gen Zers leading them to be more insightful and practical savvy in their approach towards gaining knowledge & information. The use of internet on mobile phones and computers have been tremendously worthy in connecting the Gen Zs to gain access to the global information through you tube and other video sharing websites. There is also no denying the fact that social media via face book, instagram, skype, blogs, twitters, twoo, whatsapp, and many such other leading media sites have been so influential and impactful for students' learning that seems to be challenging the traditional educational practices and demanding more flexible and non conventional pedagogical approach and practices.

As per the third quarter of 2017 statistics report, "the most popular social network were you tube and Face book with an 30 percent penetration rate each. Whatsapp was ranked third with 28% each. India ranks second among countries with the most face book users, accounting for 11% of global face book audiences in April 2017".

The report is worth mentioning here considering today's scenario as most of the users of these social networking sites are none others but our Gen Zers who with their techno savvy approach are able to procure easy access to educational learning that appears to be more stressful in the class room teaching.

Now here the thoughts of Jennifer Fleming needs to be viewed which goes on like this- "Teaching in the internet age means we must teach tomorrow's skills today".

The readily available information at the click of a button on mobile internet devices and social networking sites have managed to create an ultra high environment of learning that is appreciable for propelling student's cognitive skills & easy learning of concepts which is just the ticket to practical knowledge experience.

Next gen learners are resistant to rote learning or cramming the lengthy concepts mentioned in the texts. Nor they have the patience to mug up the contents delivered by the teachers in a tedious classroom environment and accept them with a lack of logic or reasoning. They are the profound seekers of practical knowledge that will help them to procure best suited jobs by providing them the skills to compete with the fast paced digital world supplementing their sustainable growth & survival.

The technological era is demanding for a diligent but a smart learner who could be efficient in coping with the challenging job situations such as team bonding, collaborative thinking, leadership skills, achievement of work goals, managing and organizing resources, optimum and apt use of human resources and at the same time respecting diverse views provided at the work place.

Such transversal skills call for new responses to be introduced in our educational practice to enhance learning oriented & outcome oriented approaches. Now here is to be recognized the prominence of a qualified and techno savvy smart educator. As per Pascarella and Terenzini – “If there is a truism in higher education, it is that student activity increases learning”.(1991, 2005)

Digital world is full of permutations and possibilities. As compared to the humdrum atmosphere with limited students’ activity, the class room lectures end up with just focusing on the delivery of content and fails to identify students’ intellect, their interests, their creativity that ultimately ends up in their succumbing to the situation that leads to poor learning.

There are innumerable education portals on Web world that educators can emulate for their up gradation and can effectively meet their teaching commitments. One of such widely used portal is Pan World Education that has lead to a sharp rise in educator’s approach to teaching by training & mentoring them with latest digitalized teaching tools offering them with optimum resources and lesson planning samples that is setting up a bench mark in raising the standard of class room teaching.

A unison of Web technology & class room teaching opens up a vista of learning for the Gen Zers that help the educators to grease the wheels of developing a keen understanding of the content in their minds. For instance, through the use of “Young Digital Planet”, students are provided a platform to gain domain knowledge through the application of mobile comprehensive curriculum. Developed in HTML 5, the MCC can be hooked with a wide range of mobile devices including Apple & Android based tablets & Smart phones, students can easily gain access to convenient learning anywhere anytime as desirable. Here the opinions of Coates & Prensky needs to be emphasized which states- Students may be more likely to access tech sophisticated sites (as opposed to studying the text, which they are traditionally and anecdotally liath to do),

as anytime learning on the Web online resources better matches their digital learning styles, and the ability to view or listen to the explanation multiple times can help learners who need repetition”.(2007, 2001a, 2001b).

So the prominence of MCC lies in the fact that MCC rich with all multimedia features like videos, animations & various interactive sessions keep the learners allured and engaged in multiple learning. As compared to the traditional educational practices, where the teachers need to work diligently in preparing handy teaching aids, the MCC with its tempting features like glossaries, biographies, maps, highlights & book marks serve to accelerate & excel the pace of students learning. Due to its extensive reporting system, the MCC is supplemental in keeping the students abreast of their progress reports One of the greatest profoundness of such digital planets is that they envisage students’ power of identification, analysis & assessment while making wisely choices of the information which are flooded with many authentic & unauthentic interpretations.

Moreover, most of the social networking sites like Face book & Whats app allow a teacher to create a group of community practice for students outside the class room to enhance their coherent skills through the instructions & guidance of their team mates. Embedded with the features like comment, post, tag, share, like, the face book not only is a source of recreation for the students, but its utility can also be praiseworthy in the sense that it supplies the learners with a discussion platform, a personal space where each and every student express themselves freely & confidently that paves their way towards a secure and more familiar work atmosphere. In the views of Wegner- “Communities of practice help foster a culture of learning in which learners share their prior experience and learn from the experience of others”.(1998)

And last but not the least the mobile devices & social networking sites are an asset for today’s Gen Zs. Being user friendly and possessed with upgraded technology these digital weapons cum applications are rightly moving the needle and are a sure shot path of success for the Gen leaders and for the forth coming generations.

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