

THE DIGITAL GENERATION - ENGAGING AND EDUCATING

* C. Jeba Evangeline, Assistant Professor in Education, Meston College of Education, Chennai.

** S. Devasahayam Selvakumar, Principal, Meston College of Education, Chennai.

ABSTRACT

Teaching in the 21st century means that our students belong to the digital generation. These students learn in different ways and this lesson will help us to teach and understand them better. Members of the digital generation thrive on creative and engaging activities, varied sources of information, and a more energetic environment. Teachers need to adapt teaching and learning approaches by understanding more about the minds of these young people. This media-rich lifestyle has a significant impact on the thinking patterns and behaviour of younger generations. In the past decade it had become obvious that this was no longer a time for tinkering with the curriculum, and otherwise engaging in yet more incremental change. It is a time for transformative change in educational practice. Issues concerning a digital generation are closely linked to questions about how we develop an education system that is able to face the challenges of the 21st Century. This may lead to quality educational practices where students spend less of their precious in-school time tapping at keyboards and touch screens.

Key Words: Digital Generation, 21st Century learners, Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Today's students are born digital -- born into a media-rich, networked world of infinite possibilities. But their digital lifestyle is about more than just cool gadgets; it's about engagement, self-directed learning, creativity and empowerment. Teachers and parents can understand how students learn, communicate, and socialize in many different ways than any previous generation.

The Digital Generation defines how students in the 21st century are used to interacting with the world. These students who are growing up constantly connected to the world around them through smart phones, tablets, and computers. Because of this hyper connectivity, students will learn differently. It is important to understand how they learn and interact with the world in

order to teach more effectively. Teachers should change their teaching methodology and adapt to their needs. Members of the digital generation thrive on creative and engaging activities, varied sources of information, and a more energetic environment.

Teaching must aim to match that constant stimulation, or else you run the risk of losing student interest and engagement. Though this may seem a momentous task, but engaging our students only requires some creative lesson planning and exciting activities. If our lessons are full of interesting activities that require different skills and thought processes, our students might not miss their various screens throughout the school day. Designing lessons that fully engage our students does not have to be an impossible task. As long as our lessons involve a lot of student-driven learning, we will attain some level of engagement. The digital generation is not going to learn by sitting at their desks listening to lectures. They must be involved in at every stage of learning in order to be fully engaged.

The concept of a digital generation has been dominating the public discourse on the role of digital media in young people's lives. Issues concerning a digital generation are closely linked to questions about how we develop an education system that is able to face the challenges of the 21st Century. The Digital Generation is growing in economic strength, social influence and potential, and is having some very expected and unexpected impacts on our society. Because they have grown up with mobile devices that can simplify life and keep them connected to people.

- The Digital Generation is Open to Alternative Providers
- The Digital Generation is a Very Active Mobile User
- The Digital Generation is concerned about Debt
- The Digital Generation Trusts Traditional Providers
- The Digital Generation Expects Personalized Communication

ENGAGING DIGITAL GENERATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Today's workforce is the first in history to include workers from five different generations. While this adds welcome diversity, it also poses some significant challenges for keeping the workers engaged and on board. Consider the general mindset of each group toward office meetings, as an illustration of this challenge:

- Traditionalists (born prior to 1946) will typically arrive early and expect a paper agenda;
- Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) will expect a PowerPoint presentation and are willing to put in extra hours required if the meeting runs long;
- Generation X (born between 1965 and 1976) employees will prefer to watch a video and expect the meeting to end by 5pm to honour work-life balance boundaries;
- Millennials (born between 1977 and 1997) will want the meeting to have a strong purpose, and will use collaborative digital tools to share meeting information and expect others to do the same; and
- Generation Z (born after 1997) employees will want to call in from a remote location, no matter what the time is, because they view the workplace as an anytime-anywhere proposition.

While each workforce generation has come from a different era in the workplace, the different generations may have more in common than employers realize, from wanting the business as a whole to succeed to wanting success in their individual careers. Interestingly, workers from all five generations agree on the characteristics of an ideal leader:

- a) Leads by example;
- b) Is accessible;
- c) Challenges and holds others accountable;
- d) Acts as a coach and mentor; and
- e) Helps others see how their roles contribute to the organization.

Despite technology, communication and work style preferences, there are universal attributes that cross generations and can lead to team bonding. Whether it's the way employees care about their families or their vision for the team's success, those common threads can be the beginning of a more cohesive and engaged multi-generational team. This bonding breeds an atmosphere of trust and a valuable level of respect for what each individual brings to the table, no matter what generational group they are in.

EDUCATING DIGITAL GENERATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Digital media are here both a resource for these students' learning but also something they reflect on; concerning information sources, how they collaborate, both within and

between schools, and about content creation. Based on these five dimensions can be elaborated, which highlight different aspects of how we understand media illiteracies as part of school- based learning.

- a. Basic skills
- b. Media as an object of analysis
- c. Knowledge building in subject domains
- d. Learning strategies
- e. Digital Building/Cultural competence
- f. Educating the Digital Generation

Today's students have grown up with advanced technology. Most of them are carrying around smart phones that are more powerful than many classroom computers. Consider how their experiences with technology shape their interaction with information and with other people. Students post opinions on blogs, share videos on YouTube, upload podcasts to iTunes, create personal Facebook pages and more. Our students thrive on expressing themselves in a variety of ways. Students visit Web sites that welcome them and know their interests, calling them by their screen names. They create avatars that represent them.

Our students expect personalization. Students text and instant message to whom they want, engage in online environments with which they want, and control their computer desktops. Our students demand freedom. Students engage in online interactive environments with others around the world, socializing, creating, and gaming. Our students thrive on social interaction. Students look up topics on Wikipedia, use an online dictionary to learn to pronounce a word and click on sites to check the weather and get the news. Our students demand immediate information—what they want, when they want it. Students' instant message to several people while searching the Web, engaging in an online discussion, watching a television programme, and texting on the phone.

CONCLUSION

In the past decade it has become obvious that this is no longer a time for tinkering with the curriculum, and otherwise engaging in yet more incremental change. This media-rich lifestyle has already had a significant impact on the thinking patterns and behaviour of younger

generations. It is a time for transformative change in educational practice. This may lead to quality educational practices where students spend less of their precious in-school time tapping at keyboards and touch screens.

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