

Breaking the Mould & Rewiring Management Education

Dr. Hemlata Agarwal

Professor, S. R. Luthra Institute of Management, Sarvajanik University, Surat, Gujarat

Abstract

Introduction: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, release of New Education Policy and entry of the new generation - Gen Z, who are "location-aware" and speaks a "technological-language" in higher education as well as in work force has posed a challenge to not only educational institutes but also to recruiters. These Gen Zer's are not fascinated to attend classes, listening to lectures, preparing notes, or mugging up for exams, In Its Place, they wish to participate in the learning process by doing practical things themselves. This necessitates a reflection on our teaching practices and learning environment to keep the students engaged in the classroom.

Objective & Methodology: This paper will review Generation Z's learning preferences from the existing literature as well as by way of an online survey to uncover some of the complex realities and challenges faced when educating Generation Z. MBA Sem III students, batch 2019-21 of a self-finance MBA institute were invited to participate in an online survey through google doc. **Findings:** It was found that there is a need to alter approaches of teaching to align to the beliefs and learning styles of these Generation Z. Teaching practices, course matter, and goals needs revamping to make it pertinent and connecting to this new generation of learners.

Keywords: Generation Z, Management Education, Learning Environment, Teaching Practices, Technology

Article Publication

Published Online: 30-Nov-2021

*Author's Correspondence

Dr. Hemlata Agarwal

Professor, S. R. Luthra Institute of Management, Sarvajanik University, Surat, Gujarat

hemlata.agarwal[at]srlimba.ac.in

© 2021 The Authors. Published by International Journal of Management and Development Studies

This is an open access article under the

CC BY-NC-ND license
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)



1. Introduction

Generation	Born year range	Dominant behavioural characteristic
Traditionalists	1900 – 1945	Loyal and discipline
Baby Boomers	1946 – 1964	Responsible, strong work ethics
Generation X	1965 – 1980	Independent thinkers, efficient
Generation Y	1981 – 1994	More social, confident, less independent
Generation Z	1995 – 2012	Poor communication skills, extensively engaged to technology

Source: MacKenzie, & McGuire, (2016), Glass, (2007) and Wiedmer, (2015).

Generations are interconnected by common experience, life experiences and common values. Different generation cohort represents a different set of behavioural characteristics that is widely contributed and influenced by their surroundings of the era. Those who are born between the years 1995-2012 are termed as Gen Z. Earlier to them are the other generations such as the Traditionalists/Veterans (1900-1945), Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), and Generation Y (1981-1994). They all differ from each other exceedingly when think about the values, goals, and morals. They are all associated with various attributes and qualities that roughly define them as a unified group (McCrinkle, 2016).

The bases of their association are based on the economic conditions, cultural norms and mores, technological advances, and world events, all aiding to mold the views and beliefs of each generation.

Characteristics of Gen Z

Generation Z, also known as "Digital Natives," "Me Generation," "I Generation," and "Generation N" (Feiertag & Berge, 2008), was born between 1995 and 2012 and is the successor to Generation X. They were born during a

difficult era, which included issues like as terrorism, global political instability, and environmental concerns. They are the first generation to be exposed to digital technology such as social networking sites and the avalanche of information available on the internet (Turner, 2015). Generation Z, according to Seemiller and Grace (2016), is loyal, thoughtful, caring, open-minded, and responsible. Generation Z is dedicated to bringing about positive improvements in our society. And according to Seemiller and Grace (2016), this is an issue because they prefer to work alone and occasionally lack inventiveness.

In addition to Technology access and increased diversity, significant cultural developments in societal standards and world events have influenced the values of this generation. As a result of these incidents, Gen Zers have become more cautious and security conscious. Gen Zers, according to Forbes, will be cautious with their money and debt.

Gen Zers Learning Expectations and Values

Use of technology has direct impact on the learning expectations and values of Gen Zer's in numerous ways:

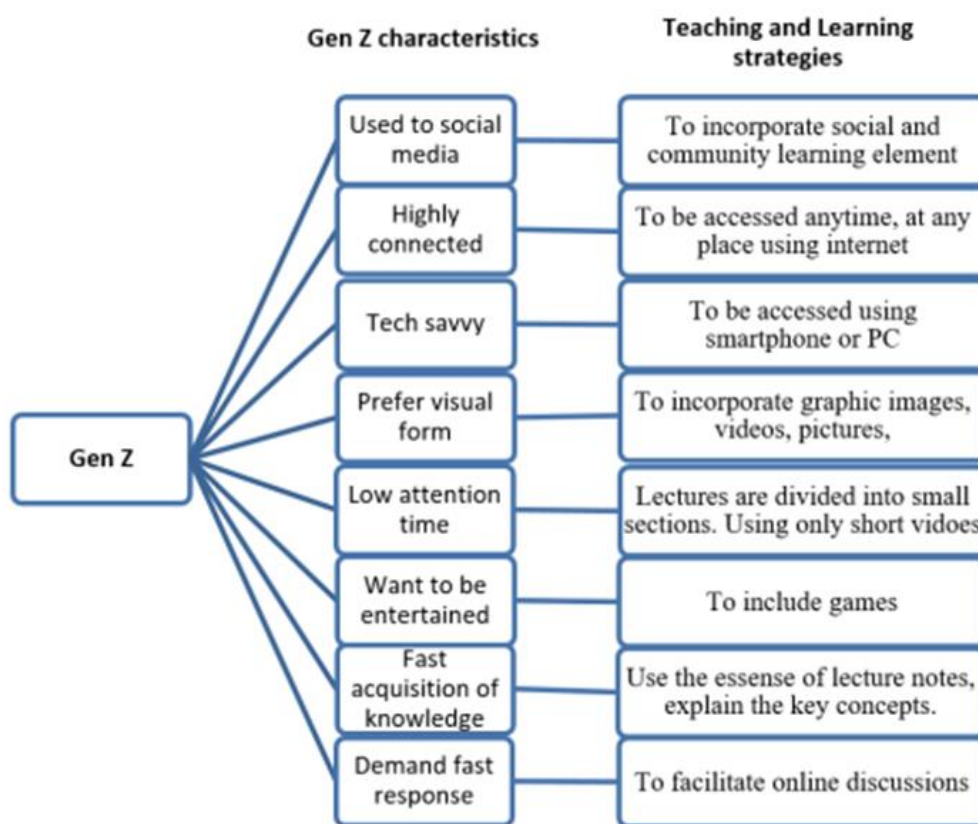


Chart1: Teaching and Learning Strategies (Amelia 2018)

Use of technology has direct impact on the learning expectations and values of Gen Zer's in numerous ways:

- Gen Z students appear to have a shorter attention span. This generation has grown up with a steady stream of information and clips that are no longer than 6 seconds long, such as Facebook postings and YouTube videos (Rothman, n.d.).
- Visual modes of learning, such as pictures, video games, and movies, appear to be more engaging and successful for these students (Rothman, n.d.). This age group has a strong distaste for auditory learning (lecture and debate). Interactive games, collaborative projects, advance organizers, challenges, and whatever else they can do is appreciated (Rothman, n.d.).
- Because they are digital natives, they have ready access to information, which has made them accustomed to technical tools. They want quick results and regular feedback. They want rapid responses and may not be willing to take the time to verify the legitimacy or reliability of the sources they locate (Fudin, 2012).
- Gen Zers aren't scared to experiment, explore, or attempt new things. They take advantage of opportunities to learn more about whatever interests them, frequently through online research. They are

not afraid to communicate with others on a global scale, and they are more accepting of cultural diversity (Fudin, 2012).

- These digital natives anticipate fast responses and have immediate access to information. They watch more videos on YouTube than previous generations (Claveria, 2017).

2. Need and scope of study:

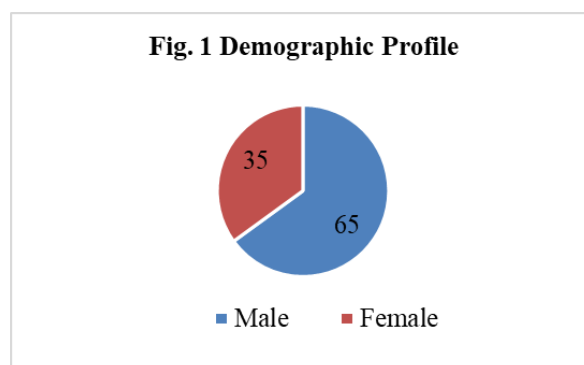
The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, release of New Education Policy and entry of the new generation - Gen Z, who are "location-aware" and speaks a "technological-language" in higher education as well as in work force has posed a challenge to not only educational institutes but also to recruiters. These Gen Zer's are not fascinated to attend classes, listening to lectures, preparing notes, or mugging up for exams, In Its Place, they wish to participate in the learning process by doing practical things themselves. They are accustomed to a constant flow of information and process it in a unique way. Speed, nonlinear processing, multitasking, efficient technology use, individualism (not like teamwork), and individualized work are all characteristics of their learning. Because they learn in various ways, many questions about teaching methods arise. To keep kids engaged in the classroom, we must reflect on our teaching approaches and learning environment.

3. Objective & Methodology:

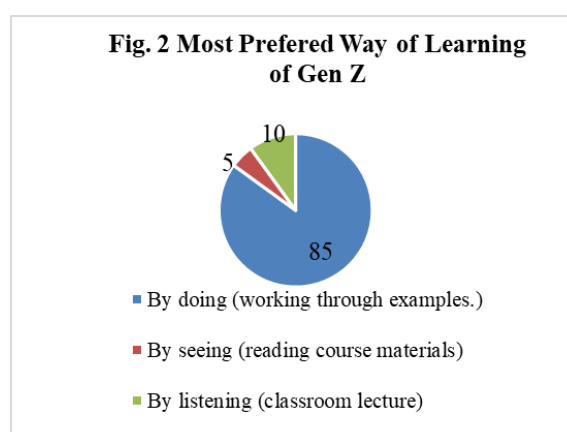
This paper has tried to review Generation Z's learning preferences from the existing literature as well as by way of an online survey to uncover some of the complex realities and challenges faced when educating Generation Z. MBA Sem III students, batch 2019-21 (200 students) of a self-finance MBA institute were invited to participate in an online survey through google doc. The data was analyzed using weighted average on a 7-point Likert scale on various parameters like Learning preferences of Gen Z, learning Aids for class, Preferences for book versions and Web-Based Material Preferences.

4. Analysis:

In the current scenario when online learning has become the norm, traditional learning methods of learning necessarily be reinvented to new teaching techniques laying the groundwork for improved employability and career progression of Gen Z. The study reveals following learning preferences of Gen Z.



Most of the respondents were male (65%) and were in the age group of 21- 24 years.

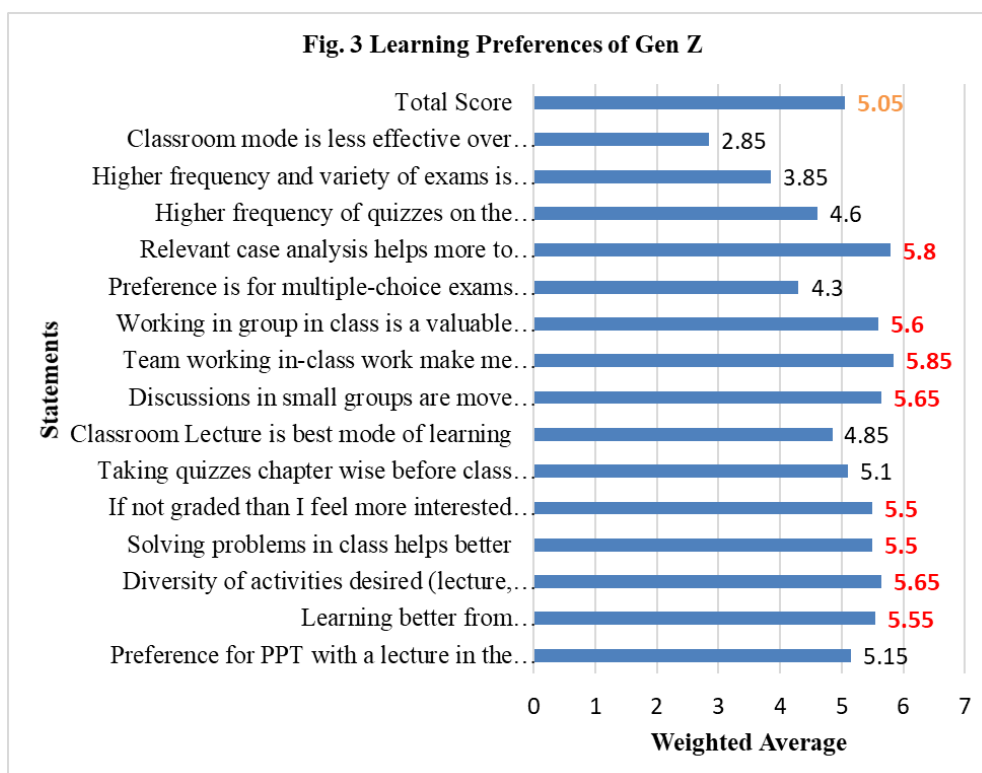


When asked what their most preferred way of learning is then 85% of them said by doing (working through examples). Most of them wanted practical experiences such as projects, internships, and live work. It can be said that they prefer teachers as facilitators rather than lecturers. Gen Z wants to be part of the process of learning, not passive bystanders.

The preferences of Generation Z for learning material were measured on 7-point Likert scale where 7 meant strongly agree and 1 meant strongly disagree (see Table 1 and Fig 3)

Table 1: Learning Preferences of Gen Z

Statement	Weighted Average
Preference for PPT with a lecture in the classroom	5.15
Learning better from news/video/YouTube clips	5.55
Diversity of activities desired (lecture, group, work, discussion, problem-solving)	5.65
Solving problems in class helps better	5.50
If not graded than I feel more interested and willing to learn	5.50
Taking quizzes chapter wise before class is immensely helpful in learning	5.10
Classroom Lecture is best mode of learning	4.85
Discussions in small groups are move effective for learning	5.65
Team working in-class work make me more willing to take part in class conversations	5.85
Working in group in class is a valuable way to learn	5.60
Preference is for multiple-choice exams compared with essay exams.	4.30
Relevant case analysis helps more to learn than simple lectures	5.80
Higher frequency of quizzes on the readings or assignments are preferred	4.60
Higher frequency and variety of exams is more preferred to earn better grades	3.85
Classroom mode is less effective over online learning mode	2.85
Total Score	5.05



Despite that Gen Z grew up with technology, yet most of them prefer in-person communication and are better at focusing on a classroom but they do have a shorter attention span. In fact, a blend of pursuits (problem-solving, work, discussion, lecture, group) in a large class is more preferred over just texting and videoconferencing (5.65). They wish to learn with other students on an in-class activity and feel more prepared to participate in class discussions (5.85). They enjoy analysing relevant cases to learn (5.80). For them, having group discussions in smaller groups with other students will add more value to learn (5.65). Most of them like doing group work in class is a valuable way to learn the material (5.60).

Generation Z has grown up with easy access to more information than any of the generations before them. As a result, they expect to be able to find and access a wider mix of learning materials the moment they need them, no matter what the circumstances are. But they are not very fond of frequent quizzes on the readings or assignments (4.80) or taking frequent exams or other ways to earn grades (3.85).

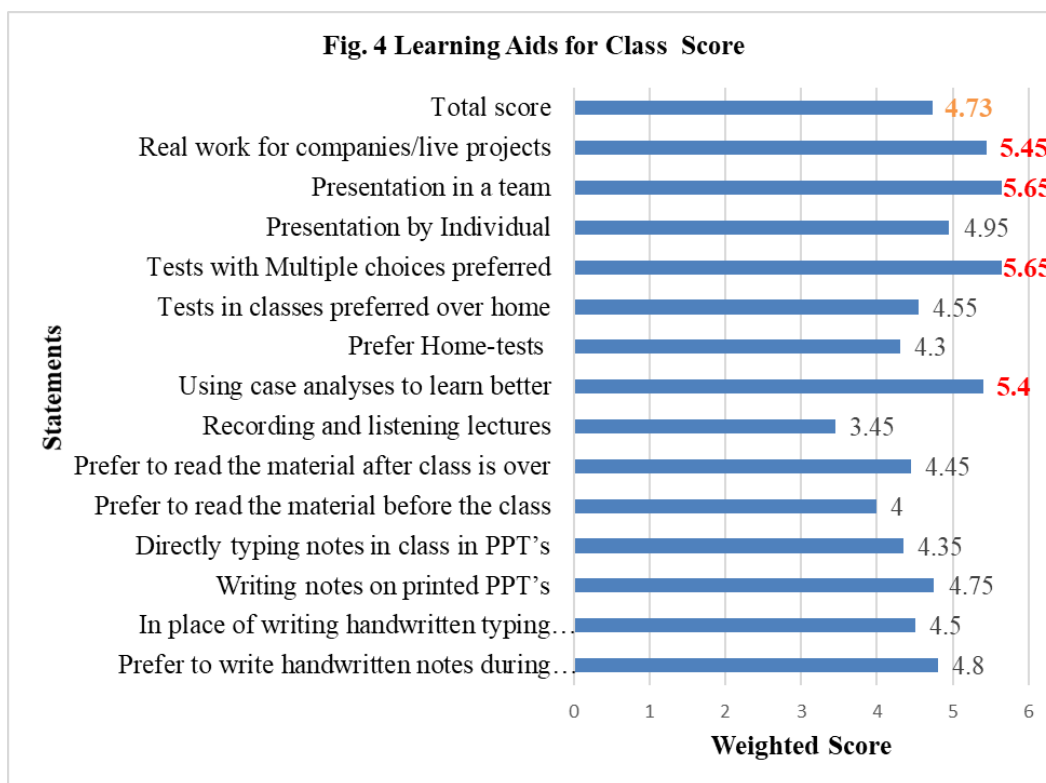
Generation Z wants to quickly find answers to problems, and they would prefer to watch a 3-minute video than read page after page of text (5.55).

From the above its very apparent that Gen Z desire that their teachers pay more attention towards communicating the subject's value rather than focusing on "marks" they can fetch from mugging up the concepts. They look for more interactive classes rather than just teaching via books/PPT mode. They want their teachers to help them manage the time in between projects, Mid semester exams, Remedial exams, project viva's, module quiz and the likes. They being digital natives are also wanting their teachers to be techno savvy and creating a YouTube channel for learning as desirable way of learning for them. They urged to have more cases which are relevant to the topics and use more simulations to understand the concepts. Imbibing current affairs in class lectures for better way for leaning. They are good with individual as well as group presentations during online classes and do not mind doing self-reading but would desire more focus on practical learning, live case studies, more of on field work.

Once the learning preferences of Gen Z was understood, it was important to comprehend what their most preferred learning aids for class could be (Table 2 and Fig. 4).

Table 2: Learning Aids for Class

Statements	Score
Prefer to write handwritten notes during lecture	4.80
In place of writing handwritten typing notes in class is easier	4.50
Writing notes on printed PPT's	4.75
Directly typing notes in class in PPT's	4.35
Prefer to read the material before the class	4.00
Prefer to read the material after class is over	4.45
Recording and listening lectures	3.45
Using case analyses to learn better	5.40
Prefer Home-tests	4.30
Tests in classes preferred over home	4.55
Tests with Multiple choices preferred	5.65
Presentation by Individual	4.95
Presentation in a team	5.65
Real work for companies/live projects	5.45
Total score	4.73



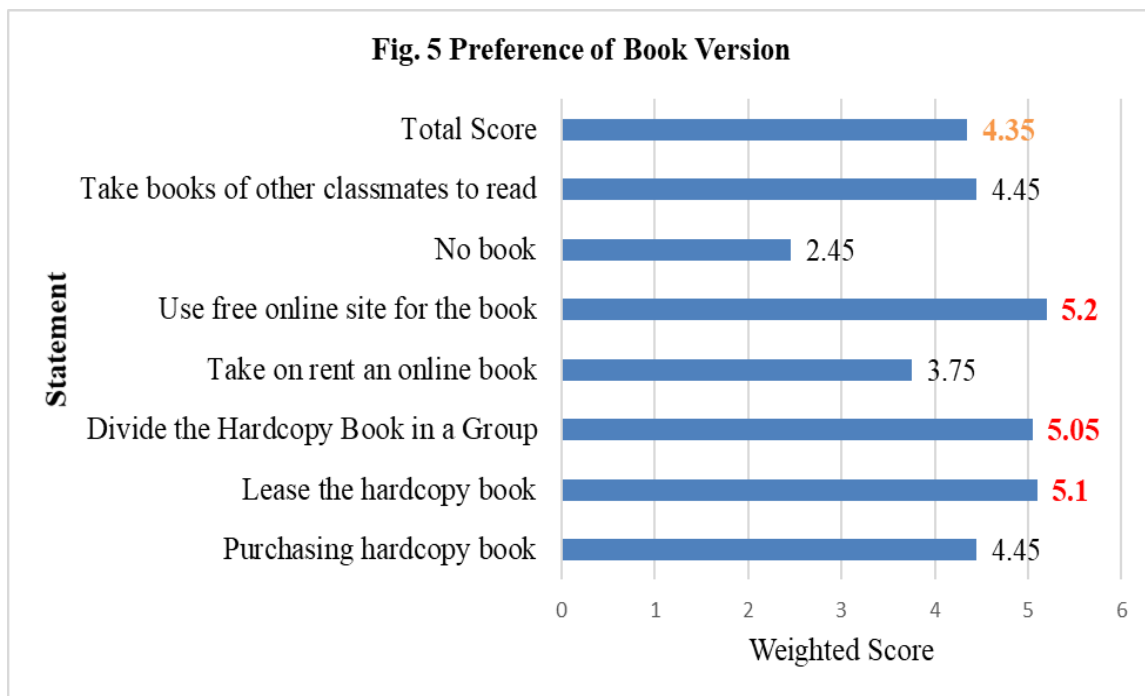
Digitally savvy Gen Z students are less likely than their millennial counterparts to prefer taking notes by hand (4.50) and to do not much prefer teacher-led testing (4.30) or self-directed coursework (4.30). They prefer Team presentations (5.65) and learning through case analysis (5.40) than listening to recorded lectures (3.45) or reading material before (4.00) or after (4.45) the class.

The continual overload of information has made Gen Zers resourceful learners with a short attention span. As a result, blended educational methods that integrate online conversations with in-class cooperation will cater to Gen Z's social nature and prove to be more effective in engaging them in learning. While Generation Z students may regard themselves as tech smart, their assessment of their ability to use technology for educational reasons may be erroneous. We should not presume that since they have been using technology almost since they were born that they know how to utilise it competently, successfully, or appropriately for studying in our college courses.

From the table below it is obvious that many students find replacements for needed textbooks involving renting and getting free online site (Table 3 and Fig. 5).

Table 3: Preference of Book Version

Statements	Score
Purchasing hardcopy book	4.45
Lease the hardcopy book	5.10
Divide the Hardcopy Book in a Group	5.05
Take on rent an online book	3.75
Use free online site for the book	5.20
No book	2.45
Take books of other classmates to read	4.45
Total Score	4.35

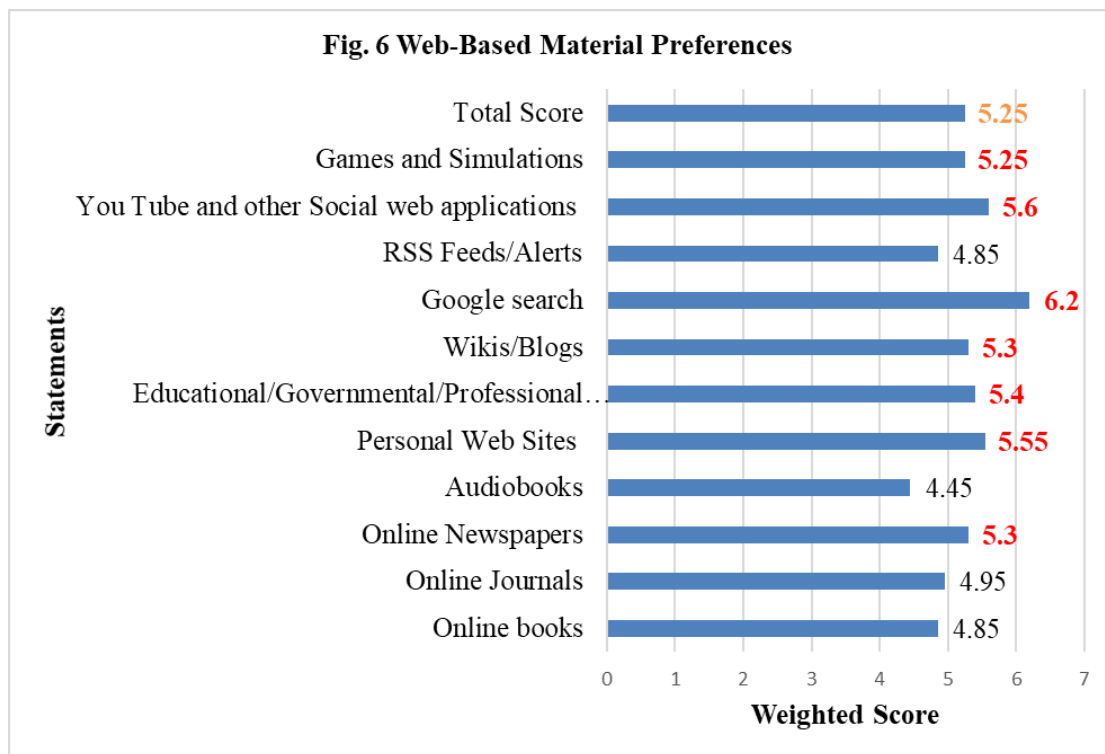


From the survey the inclination to use free e-books (5.20) seems high. They do not like renting book online (3.75) in fact they would like to rent a hardcopy (5.10) and share them with their group (5.05).

When Generation Z was asked on the sorts of internet sources utilized for assignments, they came up with following preferences (Table 4 and Fig. 6).

Table 4: Web-Based Material Preferences

Statements	Score
Online books	4.85
Online Journals	4.95
Online Newspapers	5.30
Audiobooks	4.45
Personal Web Sites	5.55
Educational/Governmental/Professional Web sites	5.40
Wikis/Blogs	5.30
Google search	6.20
RSS Feeds/Alerts	4.85
You Tube and other Social web applications	5.60
Games and Simulations	5.25
Total Score	5.25



It is not surprising that among these Gen Z wanted websites (5.55) with study materials in the classroom (5.40), Social web applications/blogs (5.30) e-newspapers (5.30), Simulations (5.25). Of all the above Google search (6.20) is the most preferred web-based material they look for, they wanted smartboards/digital textbooks (5.60).

5. Conclusion:

It is tough task to teach the present Gen Z (born between 1997-2010). Their constant presence on social media (Instagram/WhatsApp/Facebook/Twitter and others) by way of their smartphones keep them inhabited. They stay online almost for 12-15 hours a day. For them downloading of lectures from google search later when they want is easier than to sit and listen at a long-stipulated time in a controlled environment.

It was observed that there is a need to alter approaches of teaching to align to the beliefs and learning styles of these Generation Z. Teaching practices, course matter, and goals needs revamping to make it pertinent and connecting to this new generation of learners. Here are few suggestions for consideration -

6. Implications:

Students, regardless whether they belong to the same generation, are never a homogeneous bunch. The educator's purpose is to figure out what learning experiences and assistance pupils require so that they can achieve in college and beyond.

Educators should approach Generation Z the same way they approach teaching in general - by employing teaching best practices, meeting students where they are, assisting students in progressing to where they need to be, and adapting to technological changes in order to provide students with the most enriching learning experience possible. Here are a few possible inferences:

For Faculties

- Instead of removing gadgets from the classroom, teachers could incorporate them into activities that encourage students to seek out reliable information. Teaching proper searching skills, evaluating sources, using databases, and synthesizing a large amount of content should be prioritized during semesters.

- While teaching, teachers should break from the curricula and discuss current events. They must show Gen Z that the content they are learning has relevance on a global scale.
- To engage Gen Z students in learning process, key is to inspire their minds, regardless of the medium. It is essential to expose them to real life situations, help them overcome their curiosities using technology and their own creative ways to learn.

For Course Designers

- As unique individuals, students have different needs and preferences, there is no one-size-fits-all therefore, course designing should be done for multiple generations, keeping in mind the diverse faculty skills available to the industry.
- The syllabus should be brief with basic concepts and act as trigger to explore more to apply their knowledge to real-world situations in place of being exhaustive.
- With the introduction of any new subject, related resources must be built to support the teachers without impeding teacher's freedom to handle their subjects in his or her own way.

For Administrators

- While creating systems and processes for today's enrollments, respect that next Generation (alpha) will enter soon to break them. So be prepared for timely upgradation of the system.
- Continuous evaluation of performance and investing in new tools, technologies, and updated faculty credentialing is a must along with maintaining the bond with the alumni association.
- It would be wise to have a budget and staff in the long-term for things like - instructional design, faculty development and building brand of the institute.
- Need is to create a digital learning environment at the institute by using online technology such as bulletin boards, blogs, Canvas, or social networking sites where students can interact, ask questions, and share information relevant to the course at any hour.

References

- Amelia Natasya Abdul Wahab et al (2018). MOOC Implementation in Addressing the Needs of Generation Z Towards Discrete Mathematics Learning. Journal of Theoretical and Applied Information Technology, 15th November 2018. Vol.96. No 21 © 2005 – ongoing JATIT & LLS
<http://www.jatit.org/volumes/Vol96No21/4Vol96No21.pdf>
- Claveria, K. (2017). Unlike Millennials: 5 ways Gen Z differs from Gen Y. Vision Critical. Retrieved from <https://www.visioncritical.com/gen-z-versus-millennials-infographics/>
- Fudin, S. (2012, March 29). Gen Z & what does it mean in your classroom? USC Rossier Online. Retrieved from <https://rossieronline.usc.edu/gen-z-what-does-it-mean-in-your-classroom2>
- Feicrtag, J., & Berge, Z. L. (2008). Training Generation N: How educators should approach the Net Generation. Education Training, 50(6), 457-464.
- McGuire, R. & Mac Kenzie, J. (2016). The First Generation of the Twenty-First Century. Retrieved November 8, 2016, from [http://magid.com/sites/default/files/pdf/ Magid Pluralist Generation Whitepaper.pdf](http://magid.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Magid%20Pluralist%20Generation%20Whitepaper.pdf).
- Rothman Ph.D., D. (n.d). A tsunami of learners called generation Z. Retrieved from http://mdle.net/Journal/A_Tsunami_of_Learners_Called_Generation_Z.pdf
- Seemiller, C., & Grace, M. (2016). Generation Z goes to college. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Retrieved from: "Preferred Learning Methods of Generation Z" by Arlene J. Nicholas Dr. (salve.edu), https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1075&context=fac_staff_pub
- Turner, A. (2015). Generation Z: Technology and Social Interest. The Journal of Individual Psychology, 71(2), 103-113. doi:10.1353/jip.2015.0021.