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BEYOND LECTURES: INSIGHTS FROM BUSINESS DISCIPLINES (REFLECTIONS, TRANSFORMATIONS, AND THE HUMAN SIDE OF TEACHING)

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT
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Beyond Lectures: Insights from Business Discipline-

(Reflections, Transformations, and the Human Side of Teaching)

Chief Editor
Dr. Azila Jaini

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Patron:
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Saunah Zainon
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Advisors:
Dr. Nor Hazila Ismail
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INNOVATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES: TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION IN PREPARING GEN-Z FOR FUTURE WORKFORCE DEMANDS

Yuslizawati Mohd Yusoff, Khairunnisa Rahman

Introduction

Generation Z or pronounced as Gen-Z being defined as individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, has grown up in a highly digital and interconnected environment. Their familiarity with technology, preference for interactive learning and demand for practical knowledge have significantly reshaped expectations within educational settings (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Higher education institutions are increasingly challenged to prepare students for a rapidly evolving and technology-driven workforce. As Gen-Z enters universities worldwide, educators must reconsider traditional teaching approaches to better meet the needs of this new generation of learners. However, many universities still rely heavily on lecture-based instruction, which often emphasizes passive learning and memorization rather than the development of critical workplace skills.

In response to these challenges, higher education institutions are increasingly adopting innovative teaching strategies to enhance student engagement and better prepare graduates for future workforce demands. Some of the approaches such as student-centred learning, technology-enhanced education and experiential learning have proven effective in developing essential competencies among the university students such as problem-solving, collaboration, creativity and adaptability. These competencies are widely recognized as crucial for success in the twenty-first-century workforce (World Economic Forum, 2023). Therefore, transforming higher education through innovative teaching strategies is very essential to ensure that Gen-Z students are adequately equipped to navigate the complexities of modern professional environments.

Generation Z Learners

Generation Z students are often described as digital natives who have grown up with smartphones, social media and instant access to information. Instantly, they are highly comfortable with digital technology and prefer learning environments that incorporate multimedia content, interactive activities and online collaboration tools (Prensky, 2001; Seemiller & Grace, 2016).

In addition to their technological fluency, Gen-Z students tend to value practical and career-oriented learning experiences. They are particularly motivated when they can see clear connections between academic knowledge and real-world applications. According to Deloitte (2022), young learners increasingly prioritize skill development, employability, and career readiness when evaluating educational experiences. This expectation places significant pressure on universities to ensure that their academic programs are aligned with industry needs and workforce trends.

Furthermore, Gen-Z learners often exhibit shorter attention spans due to their constant exposure to digital media. Consequently, traditional long lectures may not effectively sustain their engagement. Instead, teaching methods that involve active participation, interactive technologies, and collaborative activities are more likely to capture their attention and enhance knowledge retention. By recognizing the related characteristics of Gen-Z allows educators to design learning environments that are both engaging and relevant to the needs of modern students.

Student-Centred and Active Learning Approaches

One of the most effective ways to address the learning preferences of Gen- Z is through the adoption of student-centred and active learning approaches. Student-centred learning shifts the focus from instructor-led knowledge delivery to active student participation and engagement. In this model, students take greater responsibility for their learning by engaging in discussions, collaborative problem-solving, and independent inquiry.

Problem-based learning (PBL) and project-based learning are particularly valuable approaches within this framework. These methods require students to analyse real-world problems, conduct research, collaborate with peers, and propose practical solutions. Through this process, students develop essential workplace competencies such as critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and decision-making (Hmelo-Silver, 2004).

Freeman et al. (2014) found that students in active learning environments performed better academically and were less likely to fail compared to those in traditional lecture-based classes. These findings highlight the importance of incorporating interactive learning methods that encourage students to engage deeply with course content rather than passively receiving information. Research has demonstrated that active learning strategies significantly improve student performance and engagement in higher education.

By adopting student-centered pedagogies, universities can cultivate a more dynamic and collaborative learning environment that prepares Gen-Z students to handle complex challenges in the workplace.

Integration of Digital Technologies in Teaching

Technology integration is another critical component of innovative teaching in higher education. Given Gen-Z's familiarity with digital tools, incorporating technology into the learning process can significantly enhance engagement and accessibility. Digital platforms such as learning management systems, online discussion forums, and collaborative software enable students to access resources, communicate with peers, and participate in learning activities beyond the traditional classroom setting.

Blended learning and flipped classroom models are particularly effective technology-enhances of a teaching strategy. In a flipped classroom, students shall be able to review instructional materials such as recorded lectures, readings, or videos before attending class. Classroom time is then dedicated to interactive discussions, problem-solving activities, and collaborative learning exercises (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). This approach encourages deeper engagement with course content and allows instructors to provide more personalized support.

Furthermore, emerging technologies such as virtual simulations, artificial intelligence, and digital learning analytics are transforming educational practices. These technologies allow educators to create immersive learning experiences and provide personalized feedback that supports individual learning needs. As digital transformation continues to shape the modern workplace, integrating technology into higher education also helps students develop the digital literacy skills necessary for future careers.

Experiential Learning and Industry Collaboration

Experiential learning is another essential strategy for preparing Gen-Z students for workforce demands. Experiential learning emphasizes learning through practical experience and reflection that enable students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts. This shall include the service learning, internships, simulations and industry-based projects.

According to Kolb (1984), experiential learning enhances knowledge retention because students actively engage with the learning process through experience and reflection. By

participating in practical activities, students develop valuable skills such as problem-solving, adaptability and professional communication.

Collaboration between universities and industry partners also plays a crucial role in enhancing workforce readiness. Industry partnerships can provide students with opportunities to work on real business challenges, interact with professionals, and gain insights into workplace expectations. These experiences not only strengthen students' employability but also ensure that academic curriculum remains relevant to industry needs.

As global industries continue to evolve due to technological advancements and economic changes, experiential learning initiatives help link the gap between academic knowledge and professional practice.

Conclusion

The emergence of Gen-Z in higher education has created both challenges and opportunities for educators. Traditional teaching methods that rely heavily on lectures and passive learning are increasingly insufficient to engage digital-native learners or prepare them for the demands of modern workplaces. To address these challenges, higher education institutions must embrace innovative teaching strategies that align with the learning preferences and career aspirations of Gen-Z students.

Student-centred learning approaches, technology-enhanced education and experiential learning opportunities provide effective pathways for developing critical competencies such as creativity, collaboration, problem-solving and digital literacy. These competencies are essential for navigating the complexities of the twenty-first-century workforce.

Finally, transforming higher education through innovative teaching strategies will not only enhance student engagement and academic success but also ensure that graduates are equipped with the knowledge, skills and adaptability required to thrive in a rapidly changing global economy.

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