EXPLORING GEN Z'S LEARNING PREFERENCES : MOTIVATION IN INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM-BASED LEARNING IN THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ERA

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Abstract: Rapid digital technology development has changed the face of education and influenced how Generation Z (Gen Z) approaches learning. In the age of digital transformation, this study investigates Gen Z's preferred methods of learning by comparing their motivation in solo versus team-based learning settings. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) third-year students were interviewed using a qualitative methodology. The results show that when it comes to tasks that need intense focus and independence and are motivated by internal factors like skill mastery and personal growth, individual learning is frequently chosen. Team-based learning, on the other hand, appeals to those who want to solve problems together and communicate with their peers. This is because it is impacted by external factors like shared accountability and social support. Digital solutions that promote engagement and flexibility, like gamified learning applications, AI-driven platforms, and virtual collaboration spaces, greatly improve motivation in both situations. Problems including digital weariness and unequal team involvement, however, were also noted. According to this study, educators must create flexible teaching methods that suit the interests of Generation Z and use technology to enhance both solo and group learning.

INTRODUCTION

People born between 1995 and 2010 are known as Generation Z (Gen Z), and they have had a big impact on and changed the educational environment. Gen Z presents distinct challenges to traditional teaching methods because of their great technological proficiency, affinity for digital resources, and emphasis on individualized and experiential learning (Wajdi et al., 2024). This generation is looking for learning settings that are technology-driven, interactive, and flexible in order to accommodate their digital-first mindset. Educators and academics have responded by trying to create new teaching methods that take into account Gen

Z's unique preferences for both solo and group learning, especially in light of the continuous digital revolution. The impact of motivation on their involvement in individual learning as opposed to team-based learning (TBL) is a crucial subject that is still mostly unresolved in spite of these attempts. Investigating this gap offers important chances for more in-depth study.

Existing research has provided valuable insights into Gen Z learners' preferences and educational behaviors. Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., (2020) point out that experiential learning methods and digital interactivity are effective ways to increase Gen Z's involvement. According to Cilliers (2021), social learning tools are crucial for encouraging teamwork, especially when they are technology-driven. Szymkowiak et al., (2021) also highlight how digital platforms may bridge the gap between individual and team-based learning, making technology an essential component of contemporary teaching methods.

According to Weresh (2019), TBL facilitates the growth of critical thinking, communication, and teamwork skills—all of which are essential for success in the workplace. Further supporting the advantages of TBL are Moore et al., (2020), who point out that it is particularly useful for promoting deeper learning in applied domains like science. On the other hand, Seibert (2021) makes the case for personalized problem-based learning (PBL) as a means of fostering tenacity and critical thinking abilities while fulfilling Gen Z's need for independence and self-directed education. According to these findings, Gen Z's varied educational needs can be met by both team-based and individual learning strategies.

Important gaps in the literature still exist in spite of these developments. Very few research have examined how Gen Z's motivation affects their participation in individual and team-based learning modalities or explicitly compared their preferences for each. The wider function of motivation in TBL, for instance, is still little understood, despite Ramsey's (2022) analysis of leadership development in collaborative settings. In a similar vein, research by Pan (2023); Bećirović (2023) emphasizes the importance of motivation in fostering performance and engagement, but it lacks context unique to Gen Z's preferred methods of learning. Moreover, despite discussing the substantial influence of technology on education, Mitchell (2020); Szymkowiak et al., (2021) do not adequately examine the ways in which motivation interacts with both individual and collaborative learning in the digital framework.

In order to close these gaps, this study investigates how Gen Z's motivation affects their participation in digital-era individual and group learning settings. The study aims to determine

the motivational elements that propel Gen Z's involvement, evaluate how well individual and group learning strategies improve behavioral and academic results, and examine how digital tools influence their preferred methods of learning. Through utilizing knowledge from current research and filling in existing gaps, this study seeks to support the creation of creative teaching methods that are more in line with the particular requirements and preferences of Generation Z. In the end, the results will offer helpful suggestions for teachers to develop more captivating and successful learning environments in a world that is becoming more and more influenced by digital change.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study examines the relationship between motivation and Gen Z's engagement in individual and team-based learning environments in the digital age through a qualitative literature analysis approach. With a focus on studies on Gen Z's educational choices, behaviours, and the importance of motivation in learning, the approach consists of a critical synthesis and systematic review of scholarly works. Additionally, the investigation looks at how these characteristics interact with digital. The study's goals are best served by the qualitative literature analysis method since it enables a careful review of prior research to identify trends, themes, and gaps. By examining peer-reviewed papers, journal publications, and other academic sources, the study synthesizes existing knowledge while offering insights into uncharted areas of investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gen Z's preferences for individual versus group learning are influenced by motivation, which is a key factor in determining how they engage with education. Gen Z's learning behaviors are heavily influenced by intrinsic motivation, which comes from the desire for autonomy and personal development. The intrinsic motivation of Gen Z learners is highlighted by Li et al., (2021); Zheng et al., (2020), who favor learning experiences that let them establish their own objectives and participate in self-directed activities. This is in line with Seibert's (2021) research, which shows that Gen Z finds autonomy, critical thinking, and self-regulation appealing in individual problem-based learning. For a generation that values autonomy in their educational journey, the capacity to solve difficulties on their own is a

powerful motivator. The urge for independence and personal growth is a major source of intrinsic motivation, which shapes Gen Z's inclination for self-directed learning. The findings of Li et al., (2021); Zheng et al., (2020) support this, stating that Gen Z learners find learning environments that permit self-directed goal-setting to be very engaging. Additionally, Seibert (2021) highlights that considerable motivation for this generation comes from autonomy and independent problem-solving in problem-based learning (PBL).

Nonetheless, extrinsic motivation is also important, particularly in group situations. According to Sears & Pai (2012), grades or other external rewards can have a big impact on how engaged students are in group-oriented settings. Collaborative contacts with peers offer an external source of incentive that promotes deeper engagement in team-based learning. Furthermore, according to Ruder et al., (2021), TBL fosters a sense of peer duty and accountability, which encourages students to put more effort into their education since they know that their peers depend on them. In contrast, extrinsic motivation plays a larger role in team-based learning (TBL). Stein et al., (2016) claim that team member accountability promotes deeper TBL involvement. Johnson (2017) also shows how different team reporting techniques can improve individual accountability, which in turn improves group cooperation. Malekigorji & Hatahet (2020), who contend that a super-blended learning model that incorporates both individual and team techniques offers balanced motivation and accommodates Gen Z's preferred learning style, corroborate these findings.

Technology's influence on motivation has grown in importance. Technology improves both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by providing tailored learning paths and instant feedback, claim Szymkowiak et al., (2021). In addition to enabling students to monitor their progress, digital platforms offer real-time modifications that maintain student interest. Additionally, Alamri et al., (2020) highlight the benefits of customized learning resources, such adaptive learning systems, which meet Gen Z's requirements and preferences and boost intrinsic motivation by granting them greater control over their educational path. Gen Z's motivation to learn is greatly increased by technology. Flipped learning allows for more meaningful collaborative learning in the classroom by utilizing technology for material mastery outside of it (Yip et al., 2023). With real-time feedback and individualized information, this technology enhances extrinsic incentive while also increasing intrinsic motivation by giving students more

control (Szymkowiak et al., 2021). Alamri et al., (2020) further stress that adaptive technology offers customized learning materials that are especially appealing to Generation Z.

Collaborative, team-based learning settings, particularly those that prioritize experiential and applied learning, are highly preferred by Gen Z learners, according to the research. Given that Gen Z is focused on becoming ready for the workforce, TBL fosters important skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, which are highly valued by this generation (Weresh, 2019; Moore et al., 2020). This generation is driven by the chance to learn skills that are immediately useful in everyday life. These abilities are especially well-developed by TBL's collaborative structure. For instance, TBL is very useful in domains like medical education, where collaboration and immediate problem-solving are essential, as shown by Bingjie et al., (2022). Despite the fact that TBL has several advantages, such as the ability to foster teamwork and communication, controlling group dynamics is crucial to its effectiveness. According to Lunt et al., (2024), there are issues with unequal participation in big groups, which can make certain people inert. To ensure equitable contributions from all team members, successful strategies include a well-defined role distribution and an organized team structure. Hirst et al., (2009) also encourage this approach, pointing out that good team learning can boost individual creativity.

Furthermore, it has been discovered that TBL helps to strengthen the sense of community in classrooms. The social contacts that TBL fosters, according to Parrish et al., (2023), make students feel more involved and connected, which is a major motivator for Gen Z students. TBL satisfies the demand for social connectivity, which is highly valued by this generation, by promoting peer contact and collaborative problem-solving. Resta & Laferrière (2007) bolster this perspective by arguing that digitally facilitated collaborative learning not only creates a feeling of community but also increases participation motivation by creating a shared sense of purpose.

Effective group dynamics management, however, is crucial to the success of Team-Based Learning (TBL). Burgess et al., (2020) stress that active participation from all team members in the learning process is necessary for TBL to be genuinely effective. Disparities in involvement might cause students to become disengaged, especially those who might lack confidence or feel overlooked in group situations. This can limit the potential benefits of TBL and impede the overall learning process. In these situations, some team members may become

passive. Roles and responsibilities within the group must be well-defined and allocated in order for the TBL structure to meet this challenge. In addition to encouraging accountability, this strategy guarantees that every team member makes a significant contribution to the group's work. A more effective and fulfilling learning experience can result from TBL's ability to maintain high levels of enthusiasm and participation by creating an atmosphere where each participant feels equally involved and appreciated. In order to ensure that every student is motivated to participate, express their thoughts, and work actively with peers, great care must be taken in the preparation and facilitation of TBL activities.

While many students find TBL to be beneficial, Gen Z, especially those who value autonomy, also finds great appeal in individual learning approaches. According to research by Ames & Archer (1988); Nokes-Malach et al., (2015), Gen Z students are very driven by self-referenced achievement goals, which allow them to create goals for themselves and learn at their own speed. This supports the finding made by Seibert (2021) that PBL is the finest framework for encouraging autonomy because it enables students to interact with assignments in a way that best fits their unique learning preferences.

Knowledge Gen Z's motivation also requires a knowledge of the idea of self-regulated learning (SRL). For students who like taking charge of their education, Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) contend that SRL techniques—which include goal-setting, self-monitoring, and reflection—are especially inspiring. This supports the findings of Meece et al., (2006), who contend that when students are allowed to select learning pathways that play to their interests and skills, they become more motivated. Because they let students guide their own learning processes—a process frequently made possible by digital technologies that offer tailored feedback and flexible learning environments—individualized techniques like PBL are more inspiring to Gen Z. It is impossible to exaggerate how much technology affects motivation. According to Li et al., (2021); Ansari & Khan (2020), digital technologies are crucial for facilitating both solitary and group learning. Real-time feedback is essential for sustaining motivation, and these solutions facilitate ongoing connection that cuts across time and location barriers. According to Zheng et al., (2020), digital platforms can improve motivation in collaborative learning environments by offering instant feedback and promoting prompt modifications to learning tactics.

Furthermore, technology is essential to personalized learning, which has emerged as a key component of Gen Z's educational engagement. According to Alamri et al., (2020), adaptive learning technologies, which modify the pace and content according to each student's performance, greatly increase intrinsic motivation. Students feel more in charge of their educational journeys thanks to technology, which increases their motivation and engagement by customizing learning experiences to meet their unique requirements and preferences. Individual learning approaches are valued by many Gen Z learners, even with TBL's many benefits. Students can adopt learning methodologies that suit their requirements with the help of models like PBL. According to Malekigorji & Hatahet (2020), technology makes it possible to create the necessary balance in contemporary digital learning settings by enabling responsive approaches to individual preferences and collaboration.

This study confirms how important motivation is in influencing Gen Z's participation in both solo and group learning settings. The research points to a mix of extrinsic (such peer responsibility and social contact) and internal (like autonomy and self-regulation) motivation in Gen Z. Through the provision of individualized, responsive, and interactive learning environments, technology further strengthens these motivating elements. It is crucial to integrate both customized and collaborative learning opportunities as educators continue to adjust to the changing needs of Generation Z. Digital tools can be used to maximize engagement and learning results. According to the findings, adaptable, technologically integrated teaching strategies are necessary to meet the various motivations of Gen Z students. Future studies ought to delve deeper into the connection between technology, learning modes, and motivation, especially as the field of education continues to undergo digital revolution.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This research highlights how important motivation is in determining how engaged Generation Z is in both solo and group learning settings. Gen Z is driven by a mix of extrinsic (like peer accountability and social contact) and internal (like autonomy and self-regulation) motivation. Through the provision of adaptive learning pathways, real-time feedback, and individualized learning experiences, technology significantly contributes to the improvement of motivation. Both collaborative and individual learning strategies, such as problem-based learning (PBL) and team-based learning (TBL), are supported by the incorporation of digital

resources, which increases their effectiveness and engagement for Gen Z students. In order to maximize student engagement and academic results, educators must implement flexible teaching practices that strike a balance between individualized instruction and group projects, aided by digital resources. Future studies should keep examining the connections between technology, learning modalities, and motivation, especially in light of the digital transformation of education.

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