Understanding How GenZ Learns?

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Abstract

The study explores the evolving learning dynamics between Gen Z and educators/facilitators, highlighting the generational shifts in preferences and behaviors that impact facilitative style—conducted in two phases. The research involved over 300 GenZs on the verge of transitioning from an educational forum to an organizational setup and 10 facilitators from diverse backgrounds. Using multiple data collecting methods like interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys the goal was to bridge the gap between learners' and facilitators' experiences at an organizational level, aiming to enhance the learning process.

Ten key themes emerged, including GenZ's persona, preferred learning environments, in-session experiences, the transition from education to the workplace, learning motivations, online versus offline learning, the role of facilitators, facilitator's expectations of GenZ, challenges faced by GenZ, and factors to consider when planning sessions.

These themes were used to develop a learning framework that offers educators insights into how GenZ learners are perceived by facilitators and vice versa. Along with it, the framework

maps the factors and the group preferences that would lead to an optimal learning zone. For example, when it comes to the environment of learning, the cohort strongly prefers to learn in small groups with like-minded people. At the same time when it comes to motivation, the awareness of what the session entails for the group has a stronger impact, along with other factors.

This adaptable framework can be applied by facilitators to enhance session effectiveness and improve learning outcomes.

Keywords: GenZ persona, Learning and Development, Facilitation, Organizational shifts

1. Introduction

Learning is one of the most applied concepts and is common to everyone. It is the human nature to learn from our surroundings and adapt to changes. According to some of the theorists we are born with innate intelligence which is often talked about in the nature-nurture debate. The nurtured believer often associates intelligence with an acquired trait through various experiences and learnings in life. Agreeing that certain reflexes we are born with while most of the actions and behaviors we learn from our environment.

Behaviorists also assume that behaviors are learned and have proven similar concepts through various psychological experiments of conditioning and reinforcements. But apart from these traditional theories, there has been a trending shift in learning preferences and behaviors with every generation. As society is advancing with changing times, the tools and modes that were used for learning have also changed.

Through this study, we aim to understand the current trends in learning of a GenZ, specifically GenZ who have currently entered the workforce and are on the near hindsight of entering the corporate sector.

According to World Population Prospect 2022, there is a 52% share of GenZ and Millennials in the overall population in India in 2021. With that 20% of the global GenZ population is in India.

In our collective experience of collaborating with diverse organizations, we often hear about hiring many Gen Zs (Born 1995-2010) in the organization. We also hear differences related to their working styles, learning styles, and the difficulty in mutual ability to work across generations. We have recognized a compelling challenge faced by both Gen Z employees and their supervisors.

The purpose of the study is to:

(i) Understand how GenZ learns primarily those who are entering the workforce.

(ii) Identify their attitudes, behaviors and motivators.

(iii) Identify ways one can be more sensitive to GenZ's Learning Preferences.

Now that they are entering the workforce, it becomes essential to understand how they prefer to learn and how could things be made easier for them. How could they get accustomed to the learning style and behavior of the organization they are joining as well as how can organizations bring in certain changes that could assist them in entering the workforce?

Through our study using multiple methods, we aim to capture data that help us understand these changes that can be implemented in the work sector so that the process of individual and organizational growth is effortless and more efficient.

According to the Institute of Emerging Issue (2012), they are an ethnically diverse and technologically advanced generation (Arora, Gaidhani, Sharma; 2019). They are often assumed to be driven in their career prospective and not someone who looks to settle down. They prefer transparency, flexibility, and personal freedom (Bascha, 2011).

Compared to millennials and boomers who are the go-to cinema population, GenZ prefers to sit in their comfort zone and bring a big screen to their home. With the 'follow' culture boomed after the coming of apps like Instagram, this generation is often influenced by new-age influencers.

In the context of learning, many theorists have worked in this field and attempted to understand different learning styles. Kolb is one of the most influential theoreticians in the field. He published his work on learning style, learning cycle, and educator's role.

2. Literature Review

2.1 What are Learning Styles?

David Kolb was the first psychologist who gave a theory around learning styles. According to him individuals use and prefer different learning strategies or styles that correspond to how effective and comfortable they are when learning.

Learning style refers to concept that individuals differ in their use of strategies, mode of instruction or study to learn most effectively. Some learn better when engaging with a reading material, while some learn more effectively by actually applying or experiencing a concept.

According to David Kolb, there are four stages in the learning cycle in which often the learner uses all the bases. The four stages are:

- Concrete Experience: An individual with CE orientation focuses on individual experiences and dealing with human situations. They are open to experiences and learn from them. People using this approach emphasise more on feeling more than thinking.

- Reflective observation: It focuses on observing situations and reflecting on them by describing them. Individuals who often learn by observing and then reflecting on their experiences lie under this style.

- Abstract conceptualisation: Individual with AC orientation rely largely on logic, ideas, and concepts. They focus on thinking in comparison to feeling. They give rise to new

ideas and concepts. They can also indulge in modifying the established concepts and theories.

- Active Experimentation: As the name suggests, individual with AE orientation actively experiments and influence their environment. They believe in doing rather than observing.

Together these four learning styles further categorise an individual according to the elements they use in conjunction.

1. Divergent: Individuals who make use of both concrete experience and reflective observation are considered to be using diverging learning styles. They have the imaginative ability and has awareness of meaning and values. They often look at a single situation through multiple perspectives and add their meaning to it.

2. Assimilating: Assimilating learning style entails individuals who avail reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation for their learning. They indulge in inductive reasoning and carry the ability to create theoretical models. Through observations, they assimilate knowledge and transform them into abstract concepts.

3. Convergent: Convergent learning style is dominated by their ability to actively experiment and conceptualise new or already established concepts. They often indulge in decision-making, problem-solving, and practically applying concepts.

4. Accommodative: Individuals who make use of both active experimentation and concrete experience are accommodative learners. They actively engage in applying concepts and experience them.
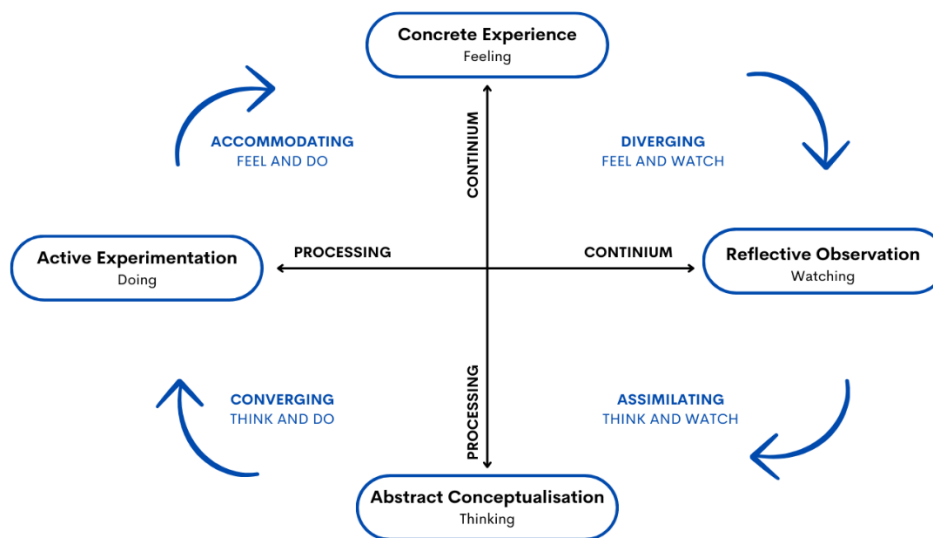
Figure 1: Kolb's Cycle

It can be summarized that according to Kolb learning is a cyclic process which involves four kind of styles i.e., thinking, doing, watching and feeling. For an efficient and effective learning experience it is important to include all the four stages in the learning journey of an individual. Though for each individual the levels of these styles and preferences for their use would vary.

Building on Kolb's theory of learning styles, Honey and Mumford also added 4 dimensions to it. These 4 dimensions are:

Reflectors: they learn best when they can observe others and think about what they have just observed. They use the both concrete experience and reflective observation.

Theorists: They learn best by understanding the theory behind why something is the way it is. They enjoy analyzing and assimilating information to form their own theories. They value logic and rational thinking.

Pragmatics: They learn best when they can see how what they are learning can be put into practice in the real world. They like to take a new idea they have learned and immediately try to put it into practice. They want to seek out new ways to use what they have learned in practice.

Activists: They learn best by doing. They use both active experimentation and concrete experience to comprehend any concept.

2.2 Educator's Role

There can be different roles that an educator can play or is expected of him. A few roles that were defined by Kolb are as follows:

- Facilitators: They help educators get in touch with their personal experiences and reflect on them. They usually work with a warm affirming style to extract their interests and motivation. They tend to work towards creating a personal relationship with the learners and join them in their journey.

- Expert: Some educators tend to take the role of a subject matter expert and some learners need to have someone with accurate credibility. An expert helps their learners organise and connect their insights to the imparted knowledge. They often adopt an authoritative, reflective style of teaching. They can also be looked upon as a model for their learners.

- Evaluator: They are the standard setter. They often evaluate their learners to guide their learning journey. They help them master the application of the knowledge base and help them grow their skill set to meet performance requirements.

- Coaching: In this role, the educator helps the learner achieve their goals by guiding them in a more personal relationship. They often work with a collaborative and encouraging mindset. They help the learner through their personal experiences and create personal development plans for them.
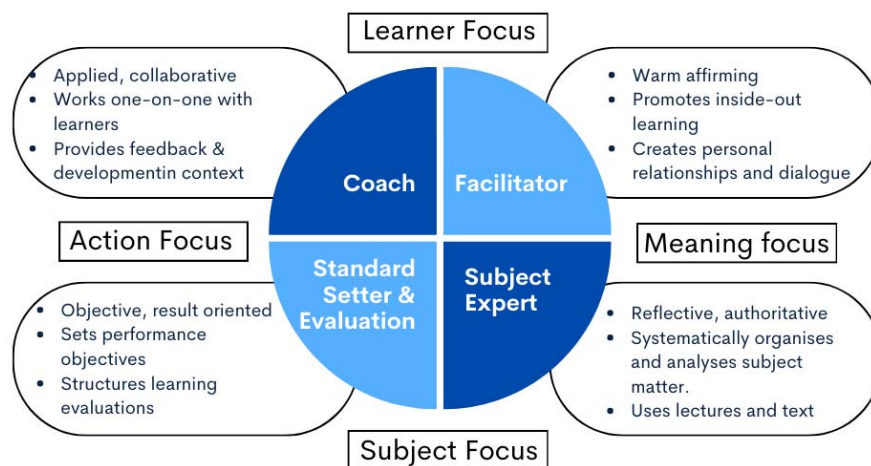

Figure 2. Educator's Role and Learning Cycle

There are multiple researches that have been done in the recent past in regards to GenZ learning and their changing preferences. GenZs are perceived as the more technological advanced cohorts. With internet pacing up, the access to information at the click of the button has influenced the level of motivation and efforts this new generation would put in to their own learning.

In one of the research conducted on young people who actively use online peer-to-peer knowledge sharing community it was found that the respondents were more partial towards leaning through online mobile application and video content. It was also discovered that the students preferred to learn with teacher who integrate modern technologies into their curriculum and moved beyond the classroom hours for learning (Andrzej et al., 2021).

In one of the studies conducted in North Macedonia on 'Understanding and Teaching GenZ in Higher Education' mentioned that the faculty often perceived students as passive and not interested in studying. They believe that the students behave inadequately towards teaching. They are less present in the class, indifferent to studies, passive, that they cannot provide a conductive environment for studies (Elena., 2020).

More than 50% of the educators who participated in this study mentioned their struggle to activate/motivate the students.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The current study focuses on understanding how GenZ learns, and what are their preferred mode and format of learning. What motivates them to learn and their attitude toward learning?

The research conducted used a mixed-method approach. There were two phases of the study. In the first phase, we interacted with over 300 GenZ through various methods. In the second of the study, we reached out to 10 facilitators/trainers through interviews. Hence the ratio of the interaction of GenZ and Trainers was 30:1 which is typically the ratio seen in real life as well.

The target age group for GenZ is 18 to 28yrs i.e., people who are born between the years 1995 to 2010. We took an overarching age group because we understand that every change is continuous and cannot be broken down into a starting point and an endpoint. Along with the age group, certain parameters are kept in mind i.e.,

(i) The group should be a mix of both people currently working in the corporate sector and students who are in the final or second of their college. (Basically, people who would soon be joining the workforce).

(ii) The students should have 0-3 years of experience working (including internship).

3.2 Methods

(i) In the first phase of the study triangulation was applied and hence, three methods were used namely, Interviews, FGDs and Surveys.

(ii) Interviews and FGDs focused on similar targeted themes while the surveys tapped into different themes and opinions of GenZ.

(iii) In the second phase of the research, only Interviews were used to get an in-depth understanding of the experiences of facilitators/trainers.

Hence both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. This would give the research-rich and diverse data to study and map out certain findings that could be used by organizations in planning their interventions and learning processes. The focus of the research is not only to understand how GenZ learns but also to tap into their motivator and attitude towards learning.

3.3 Tools

1). Focused Group Discussion: As the name suggests, focused group discussion is focused on a particular theme or topic of interest. It is ideally conducted in groups of 7-8 people. Using FGD in the current context benefits the exploratory nature of the study and makes it easier to reach out to a larger number of people and listen to their experiences of learning. Through discussions, the idea is to also capture the differences amongst the generation itself and see emerging themes.

2). Semi-structured Interviews: As the name suggests, in this method, the interview is not completely structured. The researcher steps into the interview with a few of the questions that they would like to explore with the participant. The participant drives the interview process by giving it direction through their answers. The researcher is free to ask questions that are not part of the questionnaire and take the interview into a completely unexplored pathway. Hence this method was also used in this study, to give the participant freedom to help us explore the different avenues of learning.

3). Surveys: For quantitative data survey method was used. Through surveys, the aim is to tap into the existing knowledge base and witness if there is something different that emerges from the current understanding of learning. The close-ended questions allow clarifying and verifying if the present idea about how GenZ learns is intact or if has it changed.

3.4 Sampling

For this study convenience, snowball and purposive sampling was done wherein the participants were selected based on their availability to the researcher. There were certain parameters according to which the participants were chosen, and they were asked to lead more people to match the requirements for the study. The target age groups were 18 to 28 years i.e., people born between the year 1995 to 2010.   Through our study, we were able to reach out to around 300 GenZs, out of which 112 participated in the FGDs and Interviews and 200 in surveys.

4. Result

The data from both phases of the study were combined for a more cohesive approach. Data from both sources of knowledge gave insights on how to bridge the gap between imparting knowledge and actual learning for the GenZ.

The method of thematic analysis was used to interpret and make meaning of the data collected through qualitative methods. Along with basic inferential statistics was used for the survey data.

Both data sets were compared and analyzed. This approach provided us with a holistic

understanding of the problem statement resulting in a successful exploration of the purpose of the study.

The following themes emerged as a result of the data collected.

4.1 Persona of the GenZ

During FGD conversations there were some apprehensions in being labeled as a GenZ. While some of the participants agreed to the label, most of them refused and casually laughed off when they were tagged as GenZ. There were a few participants who resonated with parts of being a GenZ while others strongly rejected association with some parts of it.

Contrastingly, in interviews, most of the people agreed to be associated with GenZ. It is gripping to see the outplay of association in these formats. There might be a possibility that due to the presence of others, people were not comfortable accepting that association while because interviews were more intimate people were comfortable making that association. This thought also emerges because of the beliefs amongst participants that the term GenZ itself is tainted and carries some stereotypes that people might not be comfortable being associated with.

4.1.1 Technology + Short attention span

With the emergence of Generation Z, there has been a significant increase in the use of technology. They are often referred to as the "i-gen" due to their strong presence on various social media platforms. This generation is enthusiastic about experimenting with what they share online, which sometimes leads to a competitive environment.

When asked how they prefer to learn a new topic, 46% of the participants opted to watch a YouTube video, followed by 36% choosing then to find a solution on their own.

In addition, Gen Z participants have mentioned that "We, GenZ, really like making friends online. People sometimes think we're all about negative stuff, but don't judge us just based on that. We're more than those stereotypes. Life for us is pretty fast and we focus on getting things done. Even when we order food, it has to be here in under 30 minutes. We just like things to happen quickly and don't want to be held back by old ideas about who we are."

Engaging and keeping Generation Z focused can be challenging for educators. The facilitator notes that they appear restless and prefer to receive information in small, easily digestible portions. They are unlikely to devote hours of their day to a learning session unless they see its value or merit.

Their short attention span is a result of their constant use of social media and the instant gratification it offers. This impatience is also reflected in their learning patterns. They struggle to sit through longer sessions and easily lose focus. Therefore, they often emphasize the need for interesting content that captures their attention and prevents them from shifting their focus. Just as scrolling through Instagram provides new information with every swipe, they seek continuous engagement. Once their focus is diverted from the lesson, it becomes difficult to redirect their attention to the original topic.

4.1.2 Culture (dress and language)

Various experiences of participants highlighted the new culture they have built for themselves which includes the way they dress up, the slangs they use, etc. Just from a look one can guess who a GenZ is, they are usually dressed in baddy clothes, crocs, some printed t-shirts, and a vibrant range of sneakers. This dressing can also be seen in the corporate setting wherein from a tie, shirt, and a pant, most of the people are seen wearing t-shirts and jeans to meetings.

Their language comprises different slang words, associative conversations, conversations based on associations and references to a meme and other trendy things. This often creates an outsider environment for people engaging with them which includes facilitators/trainers.

4.1.3 Risk takers

Other than the culture, the GenZs are also perceived as someone who is a risk-taker. The majority of them are open to challenges and adventure, they are not afraid to touch and be in unknown waters, instead, that is what excites them.

4.1.4 Aesthetics + Opinionated

Gen Zers talked about how their generation is opinionated with a response to everything. They are more aware of what is happening around them especially in social contexts as they have a constant influx of information from different sources.

Several of them mentioned their love for aesthetics and how they often try to incorporate elements of it into their everyday life.

4.1.5 Rigidity to experiencing new things

They are also perceived to be fluid, open to things and not rigid with things to experience. Facilitators shed light on the carefree nature of GenZ and their love for themselves. They are self-centered which is reflected in their conversations where there is significant use of 'I'.

All these characteristics of the Gen Z population add to the difficulty that the trainers experience in their interactions with them. It takes significantly more time for them to build a connection with GenZ.

4.2 Zone of Optimal Learning

4.2.1 What is Learning?

The definition of learning is different for everyone, it was found that for GenZ the idea of learning comes with its applicability and implementation. For them, learning is gathering information or knowing something new and then employing that learning in their personal lives, if unable to do so, the knowledge is comprehended as mere information for their brain to store.

As mentioned by one of the participants, "Learning is like grabbing info or finding something new, then using it in our lives. If it doesn't fit, we just store it in our brains as data."

Along with it, another component that the data pointed at was need identification. The participants want to know the value addition a learning session would entail and if it would cater to their personal needs and goals in life.

4.2.2 Learning Alone or in a Group Setting?

Out of 112 GenZ participants, who were part of Interviews and FGDs, around 30 participants talked about their preferences for learning in an isolated environment and individual learning.

Out of the 30 people, who held conversations around it, almost 80% of them shared their preferences and need for an isolated environment. They believed that learning on their own using the resources in hand helped them learn better.

Gen Zers responded that they prefer learning alone, in their personal space. This gives them a chance to change their frequency of learning according to their pace liberating them from the larger group. It gives them more flexibility in terms of number of hours and the time of the day.

This aligns with the facilitator's observation. In their experience, the current generation prefers working in small group settings (10-15 people), which is often perceived by them as GenZ's disapproval of working in collaboration.

However, it contrasts with the perspective of Gen Zers, as 49% of them, according to a survey, expressed a preference for collaborative learning.

While 20% of the participants emphasized the effective impact of collaborative learning.

Few of the GenZ participants who showed an inclination towards group learning talked about their preference to be surrounded by like-minded people and to be in small groups of people who share similar motivations. Having the space to discuss and learn from different people is something of their interest and would like to be a part of it. One of the GenZers mentioned that working in a group seemed to be better when they were supposed to dive deep into any concept. Hence, for them to understand a broad concept that requires depth was easier to touch upon in a group setting.

The data pointed to having both approaches as a part of the learner's journey. Hence it becomes important to give the GenZ that flexibility to shift from a group to an individual learning environment. Learning in their own space allows them to reflect and learning in groups empowers collaboration, practicality, and exchange of lived experiences.

4.3 Expectations from an In-Session Experience?

4.3.1 Interactive Sessions

One of the emergent themes for GenZ was sessions being interactive. The sessions should give space for the learners to hold meaningful discussions with both the participants and the facilitator, actively participate in the learning journey, collaborate and at the same time build a healthy competitive environment.

4.3.2 Need for an Expert

Lev Vygotsky, in his theory of Learning and Development, talked about the Zone of Proximal Development. This zone is defined as the space between what a learner can obtain on their own and what they can obtain with the guidance of an adult or in collaboration with a more competent peer. The GenZ participants mentioned their preference to have an expert or a more knowledgeable individual while learning a new skill that they want to be efficient in. This is where the role of an educator also comes in. They can take multiple roles to leave participants with a rich experience.

4.3.3 Sources of Information

Two of the most preferred applications for gathering information and learning by GenZers are YouTube and Google. The quick and accurate response these two platforms provide grabs the attention of its users. Along with it, chatGPT was mentioned in some of the narratives. Its ability to simplify things for the population and the assistance it provides in almost everything an individual does is at the core of its popularity.

4.3.4 Content - Visuals

In the context of format and configuration of knowledge, the GenZ participants shared their inclination towards having it in a visual format. This includes techniques or concepts like mind maps, presentations with different elements, diagrams, figures, etc.

Similarly, for skills like communication, the majority of the GenZ participants in the survey chose conceptually mapping the concept and constructing a visual representation of different concepts and their relationships instead of listening to stories and narratives, peer teaching, Socratic questions and more.

Many researchers have talked about how visuals are connected to one's emotions as well as if we reflect we realize that more than often we visualize information that comes our way to have a better grasp of it. Hence, using visuals for better learning is a fine technique to captivate their attention. This is how most of the social media also works.

Most of the GenZ participants mentioned in Interviews and FGD about their preference to use YouTube as a pool of knowledge. In addition to providing quick solutions, YouTube videos also give a framework and image to one's thoughts and ideas.

This generation is often related to being aesthetic and creating innovative visuals and therefore, this finding is validated.

Regarding material, GenZ prefers receiving content in the form of videos as well as tangible takeaways like handouts that can be revisited. The material should encompass case studies, narrative and other elements that encourage exploration beyond what's taught.

Parallel to that, though most of the facilitators acknowledged the impact of case studies, around 30% of them also highlighted the shift in GenZ's preference from traditional paper case studies to a more narrative format. Storytelling helps them draw parallels and compare their experience with someone else's.

48% of the GenZs chose to have information shown in a multimedia format to make it more comprehensive and captivating.

61% of the GenZs preferred information or concepts explained using real-life examples followed by watching a video about it.

4.4 Preference for Learning Larger Concepts?

Regarding understanding the concept, 57% of the GenZ participants preferred detailed information on the topic in comparison to having the concepts in quick tips and tricks. They also favoured understanding the larger concept first and then getting into the details of that concept.

On the flip side, the experience of the facilitators is quite different. Most of the facilitators shared that GenZ wants information in bite-sized portions.

When GenZs perceive a topic to be of high value, they tend to engage deeply with it otherwise, they look for crisp information.

Divergent opinions as such may be a possible result of disengagement and disconnection for both learners and facilitators.

4.5 Classroom to Cubicle

As Generation Z approaches the end of their educational journey and prepares to enter the workforce, it marks a significant transition in their lives. As a result, it's crucial to comprehend their experiences and how they perceive their upcoming journey. We must consider how easy or difficult the transition has been for them and what they expect from their new organizational environment.

Most of the GenZs talked about the shift from learning at an individual level to a group setting. It was interesting to hear this perspective as it is often assumed that the educational setup promotes peer learning more strongly as compared to an organizational setup.

GenZs currently in the working corporate setting shared their experience of being in touch with someone new every day and being in a space where they must work with new faces almost every day.

Another transition in their approach towards learning from books to videos. People of Generation Z talk about their hook to content in the form of video which includes visual as well as mental stimulants.

For a few Gen Z participants, the shift from educational setup to organizational structure was perceived as a shift from instructional to experiential learning. They talked about how now role plays, presentations and different activities enrich their learning experience. During the conversations, the importance that other people's experiences play was also highlighted. The participants talked about enjoying and learning from the shared experiences of people from their fields.

The organizational space allows them to experiment and learn from actually applying their

knowledge in the field and learning from that experience. This new space also provides them the room to learn from other's experiences and from someone who has walked a similar path as them.

In addition to the transitions mentioned above, a significant number of participants also talked about how in an educational setting the area of learning was vast and spread across different domains but in the working environment, the learning often limits itself to the needs of the industry and not the individual need.

4.6 Beyond the Screen: Online Vs Offline

Often the debate has been if today's generation prefers learning in an online mode or an offline mode. It has often been presumed that the GenZ, because of their association with technology, would prefer learning in an online modality.

Facilitators in their conversations mentioned how they often prefer to teach in a classroom setting but it is something that is often rejected by this generation. They rather like to be out in the open and have more outbounds. Along with it, more than 60% of trainers shared their perception that GenZ prefers to learn in an online modality, which in turn has created a challenge for them to hold that screen presence.

Contrastingly, it was found that the majority of the participants preferred offline as a mode of learning. Statistically 67% of the GenZ preferred having sessions in an offline setting and this percentage is only of the people who filled out the survey, there were also other narratives captured through other methods that spoke of their preference for offline sessions.

In conversations with GenZs about the advantages and disadvantages of both the modalities, in FGDs, the group found online to be more disadvantageous. Interestingly, in interviews, there was a mixed response towards their willingness to learn in an online and offline setting.

4.6.1 What do GenZs like about In-Person Learning?

Participants appreciate the practical approach, the ability to learn from interactions and observations, the creation of a group learning mindset, the pressure and competition that facilitated learning, engaging in discussions and Q&A with experts, active learning through various activities, and the opportunity to learn from expert presenters and interact with different participants in Offline learning.

4.6.2 What do GenZs like about Online Learning?

Some important factors for a good learning experience include accessibility and ease of joining, the option to access recorded sessions, availability of reading material, learning from expert presenters, and the ability to choose a suitable time for learning.

4.6.3 Disadvantages of In-Person Learning

Participants spoke about how it is easy to lose focus even in an offline setting and hence at the end, the success of any session highly lies with the content and the facilitator along with the participants themselves.

4.6.4 Disadvantages of Online Learning

Online learning has perceived disadvantages, including creating a restricted learning environment, limiting practicality, and potentially fostering lethargy.

4.7 Decoding GenZs Learning Drive

Humans are driven by their innate needs and desires. As life progresses, we tend to work towards fulfilling those needs and that motivates us to do even the basics.

One of the motivators that emerged in the experiences and conversations of GenZs, during all three methods of data collection, was the need to know how the session would be beneficial to the group. another major motivator for the participants was to know how and where they can apply their learnings i.e., the value addition these sessions bring in.

In some of the responses, the participants also talked about the role of relevance of the topic and their interest in it.

It also motivates people to attend the session if they know some people who are going to be part of the session. That familiarity with the group eases the process of being part of the session.

Knowing about the credibility of the facilitator also makes it easier for the group to trust the process.

In most of the interviews, people talked about how their motivation to attend a session comes from an external push like deadlines and the consequences of it not being done in a learning environment. This was mostly talked about in the context of someone giving them a mandate to be a part of the learning session and how that has often pushed them towards attending the session. Further exploring this area brought us to an understanding that this kind of environment and pressure can be built by someone the individual looks at a higher hierarchy than themselves or by someone who in their perspective is the more knowledgeable. Often the pressure to finish excites and puts the individual in a position that drives them to be included in the process.

Apart from that, there were other ideas like providing incentives like certificates, a good venue, minimal fees, etc.

4.8 The Dynamic Role of the Facilitator

In any learning session, the role of a facilitator becomes crucial. For both trainers and GenZ, one of the essential elements that enhance their learning journey is the use of relevant and relatable examples to explain concepts. These examples, for better relatability, should include real-life experiences as well as anecdotes of how can it cater to their individual needs.

This need for relatability and relevancy has caused some of the facilitators to shift their gears from using case studies to storytelling in their sessions. In their experience, 70% of the facilitators interviewed shared using storytelling as their strongest pursuit to improve the learning journey of GenZs.

We humans are storytellers, also known to be homo- narrans. For centuries our ancestors have communicated to us through their narratives and stories in the form of symbols and hence it has been imbibed in us since childhood.

30% of the facilitators highlighted the preference of GenZs for a more narrative format.

Along with it, around 70% of the facilitators interviewed revealed that they use storytelling to enhance GenZ's learning experience.

Along with it, GenZ expects facilitators to have humour that reaches people of all ages and is relevant to the context. There is no requirement for unnecessary chatter but a need for impactful associations.

Therefore, the group often expects the facilitator to use a similar approach to reach their audience.

In the experience of a GenZ, an educator should have a persona that the audience can draw similarities to and have some sense of homogeneity. The participants should feel a sense of connectedness either through their aura or the language that they use. It should be friendly and comforting.

4.9 Facilitator's Expectations from GenZs

Facilitators play a large role in the learning experience of learners. They facilitate and bring them to a point of self-discovery and insight.

As much as the aim of the study is to build a more inclusive space for GenZ, it is also to enhance their learning journey by bridging the gap between them and the facilitator. Hence, we tried to tap into their experience with GenZ as well. In those conversations, we were able to tap into certain expectations they have from a GenZ learner.

Almost 50% of the facilitators stated their expectation from GenZs to bring their 100% in the sessions, to park their work outside the boundary of the space and to be there without any judgements and constraints of time. At times, facilitators are left with the feeling of not being given a chance to bring about that learning curve in their learner's journey.

Almost 80% of the facilitators mentioned the need for a mindset shift. They mentioned that often GenZers come in with a close mindset towards learning. Because of the influx of information presented at the bare click on their phones, they think that they know everything which is often untrue. They need to be open to experiencing and undergoing change.

4.10 A Facilitator's Struggles

Every learning curve brings its challenges. As facilitators, a few challenges that they have to face with Generation Z is first and foremost to keep their emotions in check. Due to certain perceptions and unreliability, they carry in the context of GenZs, at times, it becomes difficult to connect emotionally with them. Unlike people from older generations who come in sessions with a need to build a relationship with the facilitator, this generation lacks it completely.

There is a lack of commitment to the process of learning which is reflected in their behaviours like coming in late, not bringing or taking back the material that is provided to them and many more.

The biggest challenge facilitators face as mentioned above is being able to hold their screen presence in an online learning format. Almost 70% of the facilitators interviewed showed their concern about this.

4.11 Forming the Session Blueprint

70% of the facilitators mentioned the importance of understanding the needs and expectations of their clients and the learners in planning the sessions. Usually, organisations map competencies to their employees and accordingly schedule a training session or a workshop.

Apart from that at a personal level, the facilitators consider the demographics of the participants that are coming in, their age, designation, working experience and many more to understand and develop the content for a session.

According to this data captured, the sessions involve various elements like activities, energizers, quizzes, discussions, etc., to cater to the group's needs. For GenZs they mentioned they try and keep bite-size information and for other generations, some more depth is required, this duality of needs, at times, poses a challenge for the facilitator. Hence, they usually prefer to have GenZ and other generation groups separately.

5. Researcher's Cut

Listening to different and unique voices of Gen Zers has provided valuable insights and a clear understanding of their needs and attitudes towards learning. Engaging in such conversations helps us foresee the shift towards which we as a community are moving. The last section of the report highlights the essential information captured in the research and builds on it to formulate a practical and testable framework.

This framework would serve as a guide to all the readers from various industries to formulate a space for better functioning and learning of GenZ where not just the group but also other stakeholders can benefit. The ultimate goal is to establish a comprehensive and mutually beneficial space for growth, where both learners and educators/organisations can grow.

5.1 Why is Now the Right Time to Understand the Gen Z?

It is important to understand lived experiences because GenZ is soon going to take a larger and more dominant section of the workforce in the future. Hence, it becomes important for organisations to understand the needs and preferences of Generation Z to accommodate them and work with them that would benefit both. Operating from three different methods, we were able to capture the distinct yet indistinguishable experiences of the participants. Largely, the qualitative data was captured. Certain themes were capsulated by the aim of the study.

The hesitancy of the GenZ participants in the FGD to identify as a GenZ was intriguing. As discussed earlier, the possible reason could be the availability of more intimate and one-on-one conversations with the researcher.

This links to their sensitivity towards how they are perceived as well as their apprehensions to be associated with certain stereotypes.

5.2 Stepping Stones in the Process of Learning

The group also created a persona for GenZ according to their perception of them. The persona embraced their difference in attire and language, their preference for certain values and beliefs as well as their willingness towards change. One of the most highlighted attributes is their short attention span and how the use of technology in all aspects of their lives has resulted in it. This further concerns the facilitators because of the challenge to keep engagement alive in an online format.

The short attention span and influx of information can lead to their inability to accept the knowledge being provided. There is a possibility that due to the availability of information at their fingertips, they are unable to build that relationship with their educators resulting in a huge gap.

Researchers have found that learning is an essential phenomenon to build new neural connections and strengthen existing ones. And it is important to experience and implement those learning to keep the connections intact. Learning through one medium can make things stale resulting in no development (Anderson, 2013).

An interesting data that emerged was GenZs preference to learn in an isolated environment. Though they understand the need to work in groups and situations prefer it as well, they require some space and time for themselves.

Hence, having both approaches as part of the learner's journey is needed. It becomes important to give GenZ flexibility to shift from a group to an individual learning environment. Learning in their own space allows them to reflect and learning in groups empowers collaboration, practicality, and exchange of lived experiences. Another key finding is GenZs preference for an offline mode for learning. They believe that learning in person along with like-minded people offers them with an opportunity to learn from and about different perspectives.

This data point seems to be astonishing because of the assumption that due to this generation's tech savviness and ease with technology, they would prefer attending sessions online.

5.3 "What Is in It for Me?"

In the experience of the facilitator, they too prefer having sessions offline because it allows them to connect with the learners. But one of the most prominent challenges they face is not having the group in the session completely. Their attention span and focus are tangible and shift every second.

The definition of learning according to GenZs is based on applying and implementing it. The learning should add to their growth in their reality.

Through different data points, this research was able to point out how important it is for

GenZs to be part of things that are helping them grow. If there is no value addition for them, they will look at it as a mere waste of their time and energy. Hence, need identification and sessions based on those needs become essential.

At the same time, for facilitators, the most important step in planning is to understand the needs of the group and the client. This need for identification makes the session much more effective.

It emerged that both the groups, i.e., GenZs and Facilitators, work according to the needs and requirements of the group but maybe the possible gap in the experience is because of a lack of effectively communicating the same.

Lastly, in enhancing one's learning journey, it is essential to tap into their motivators. For the GenZ population, their basic motivator was to add some value to their future. Learning skills that would cater to their needs was another motivator. The session should be able to internally motivate them and awaken their interest.

They would prefer going to a learning session that would allow them to use their knowledge.

Knowing the credibility of the knowledge imparted is another important factor to check. They often tend to indulge in the practice of checking the credibility of the source and if that is not found they would not be interested in being a part of it.

5.4 "I Like What I See..."

In the context of the format and configuration of knowledge, GenZ is more inclined towards having it in a visual format. According to the "picture superiority effect", our brain remembers visual information more than words. Hence, it helps to associate concepts with images for the learners to remember.

Research has also shown that visual cues trigger emotions and this is because visual stimuli are encoded in the medial temporal lobe of the brain where emotions are also processed.

Vygotsky in this theory of learning, mentions the need for more knowledgable and how an expert can help fill the space between what a learner can do on their own and what they can do with the help of an expert, also known as Zone of Proximal Development. The participants mentioned their preference to have an expert or a more knowledgeable individual while learning a new skill that they want to be efficient in. This is where the role of an educator also comes in. They can take multiple roles to leave participants with a rich experience.

Kolb worked with commitment around the concept of learning. Both his work on the Educator's role and Learning cycle can be applied here.

External motivation could include some incentives like certifications, venue other than the premise of regular visits, hampers, etc. With it sometimes push from a senior or a more knowledgeable person would lead to being driven to be part of a learning setup.

5.5 Where Are Gen Z's in the Kolb Cycle?

Through participant's narratives it could be inferred that for the majority of them, GenZ lies

between the space of learning through concrete experiences and active experimentation. Their preference for practicality and implementation can be navigated through the two steps of the cycle. According to Kolb, an individual who learns most efficiently through both concrete experiences and active experimentation is known to be accommodative. In line with his description of an accommodative learning style, through this research, it was found that Generation Z favours learning by doing things, carrying out plans and tasks as well as saying yes to new experiences.

At the same time, the whole generation cannot be grouped into having one learning style and it was also evident in the conversations that in certain situations reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation is also needed.

For example, some participants also talked about preferring to learn in a solitary setting and reflect on their experiences. With this narrative, they tend to be categorised as divergent learners who base their learning on concrete experience and reflective observation. More such instances can be pinned to see the extent to which GenZ can fit in that categorisation. Overall, through this study, the group seems to be more inclined towards being an accommodative learner.

5.6 The Lens Through Which a GenZ Sees a Facilitator...

In the data, we also see how participants along with their persona created a persona for the facilitator as well. The generation needs to associate their learning with real-life examples and experiences. They want to be challenged by the educator and at the same time want them to be amiable, having a similar sense of humour and a persona they can reach.

Considering the four educator's roles i.e., facilitator, expert, evaluator and coaching, most of the participants defined preferred educator persona to be of a facilitator. A facilitator is someone who helps the learner get in touch with their personal experience and reflect on it. At the same time, other traits could be picked up from other roles.

For example, the trait of a coach to help learners apply their knowledge in real-life contexts and reach their goals, having a collaborative and encouraging style of facilitating, the trait of an expert to know their subject in the truest way possible and for an evaluator to help learners be master in the applying the skills to meet their performance requirements.

All these traits were something that the GenZ mentioned in their persona of an educator, most of the description resembling a facilitator.

Another key trait that the participant expects from the facilitator is to be a good and effective storyteller. From advertisements to movies, we are in touch with different narratives all the time.

Stories facilitate our imagination and hence we often prefer learning through stories. It enables its reader to experience and reflect on the psychological archetypes at play.

5.7 Looking at Learning Through a New Perspective...

The insights captured from the research study build a new framework that could be tested and

applied in real life.

The framework sheds light on how facilitators perceive GenZs to be and vice versa. Certain factors play an impactful role in learning and the framework guides us with the preferences of Gen Zers for those factors.

E.g., the group prefers having moments of experiencing and reflecting on the learnings in the sessions themselves. This further escalates the process of transference for them.

All the factors and preferences of the cohort help them reach a space of optimal learning.

The Genz Learning Framework
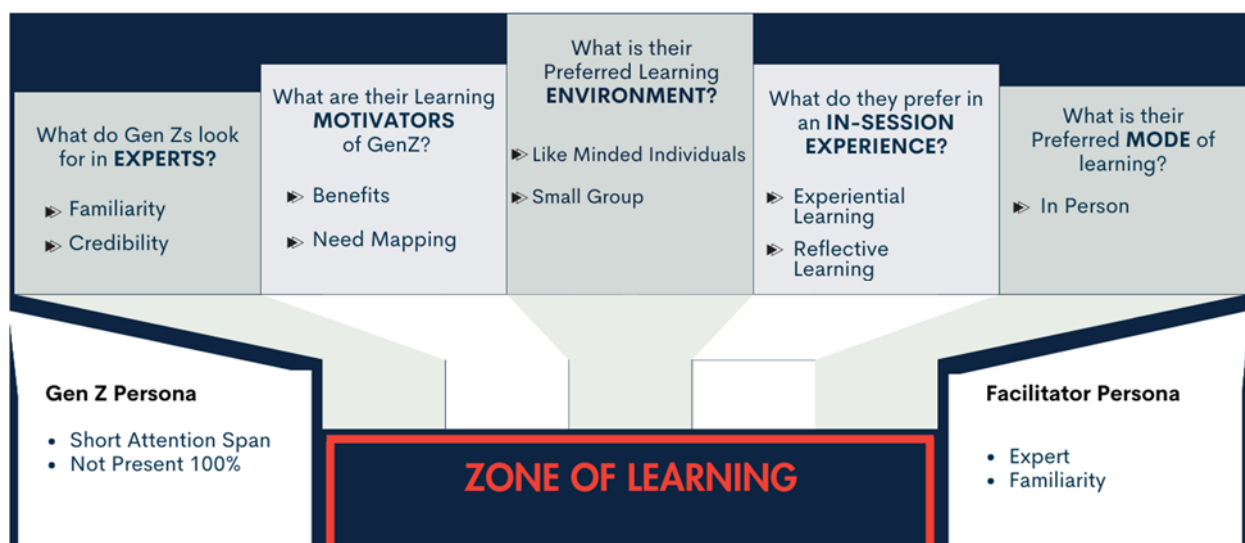
The image is a visual representation of the learning preferences and characteristics of Generation Z (Gen Z) within a "Zone of Learning." It outlines:

1. **What Gen Z looks for in experts:** Familiarity and credibility.

2. **Their learning motivators:** Benefits and need mapping.

3. **Preferred learning environment:** Like-minded individuals and small group settings.

4. **In-session experience preferences:** Experiential and reflective learning.

5. **Preferred mode of learning:** In-person.

The image also highlights key traits of the Gen Z persona, such as having a short attention span and not being fully present, contrasted with the facilitator persona, who is described as an expert with familiarity.

This in-depth understanding of learning preferences and its application in designing sessions

and modules would help organizations be more inclusive. Further focusing attention of policy makers on creative aspect that can be incorporated in the learning and development of an individual. The attempt of this study is to bridge the gap between generations as well as the learners and the facilitators. Their diverse background and preferences being acknowledged and incorporated in the everyday.

The findings of the study also assist facilitators to bring changes in their facilitation and push their horizons to create something more meaningful by keeping in mind what motivates the cohort. For any learning it is essential to tap into the need of an individual to make them more accountable of their growth in the organization. The preference of GenZs for interactive, experiential experiences highlight the need for policies to emphasize on blended learning, more personalized connect and relevancy of content.

Informed Consent

Obtained.

Provenance and Peer Review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request.

Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that there are no competing or potential conflicts of interest.

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