

Teaching to Different Generations in Today's Classroom

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Introduction

Higher education is seeing a mixture of genders, race and for the first time ever, generations. Research conducted on how different generations approach and deal with different learning opportunities presented to them in today's educational setting is limited. How different generations work together, as well as learn from each other, within the same educational context is valuable to today's educator.

Millennials

34%



Born 1981 – 2000
Age 8 – 27
Traits: loves multitasking, entrepreneurial, tolerant of people, attitudes and beliefs

Y
Generation



Baby Boomers

33%

Born 1945 – 1964
Age 44 – 63
Traits: work is a necessity, workaholic, efficient & perfectionistic

Implications

Each generation has differing attitudes related to their work, leading, following, managing as well as how they are managed. Each generation has differing beliefs regarding pay, time off, benefits and other employment opportunities. Each generation believes the educational system should instruct them in specific ways. As the educational system combines different generations into the same classroom environment there are going to be complications. As educators, it is important to gain an understanding of how each generation learns best and ways to facilitate their learning and learning experience.

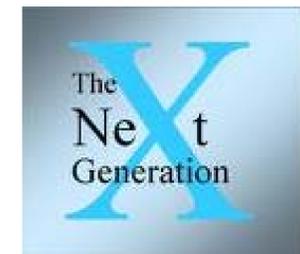
Conceptual Framework

This research is based on Hammill's (2005) work showing that people learn differently based on their generational background.

Generation

Xer's

21%



Born 1965 – 1980
Age 28 – 43
Traits: work is a contract, likes immediate feedback, likes freedom

Traditionalists

12%



Born prior to 1945
Age 64 – 80
Traits: loyal, respectful, believes hard work is a way of life

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Student Attitudes vs. Technology Barriers: Who Wins???

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Conclusions
Despite the fact that their skill competencies are not strong and the barriers to technology integration appear to increase with age older learners indicated that those factors had no significant bearing on their beliefs about integrating technology into education. These students support technology integration into education, even when their general computer skills are relatively weak and even though they are currently encountering integration barriers.

Results/findings

This study found as age increases self-ascribed computer skill competency decreases. This study found as age increases learners express that barriers to integrating technology into education also increases.

Analysis found no such correlation between age and beliefs. An increase in age appears to have no significant impact on the learner's beliefs about integrating technology into education.



Methodology

A three section instrument was administered to all students from an undergraduate leadership course taught within a technology framework. The sections included:

- Computer skills; self-ascribed ability in many technology literacy areas
- Beliefs; technology integration and classroom instruction
- Barriers; technology integration into education

SPSS was used to analyze all data.

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Introduction/Need for Research

For technology integration into education, the question isn't if, it isn't when, it's how? How do we successfully utilize technology's power to increase student learning? How do we run with the latest and greatest integration methods when many students cannot even walk with yesterday's computer skill set?

The assumption that all students are computer savvy is dangerous. Over the last 30 years the rise of adults participants (older than 25) in undergraduate classes has been significant (Seftor and Turner, 2002). If these students are not as computer proficient as their classmates does it affect their thoughts about technology integration into those classes?

This research examined the relationship between computer skill proficiency and beliefs about technology integration into education.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

This research is based on Aizen's (2001) theory of planned behavior (TPB). This theory states that people act according to their inherent needs, which are impacted by their attitudes and their perceived control over their behavior.

References

- Ajzen, I. *Nature and operation of attitudes*. Annual Review of Psychology. 2001. 52:1 .
- Seftor, N. S., Turner, S. E. 2002. *Back to school: Federal student aid policy and adult college enrollment*. Journal of Human Resources. 37:2.

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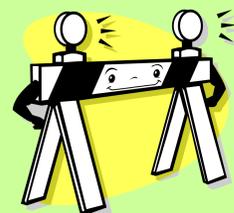
Technology integration into education is no longer a someday proposition, the question isn't if, it isn't when, the question is how? How do we successfully utilize the power of technology to increase student learning? How do we run with the latest and greatest integration methods when some of our students cannot even walk with yesterday's computer skill set?

The assumption that all of our students are computer savvy is a dangerous one. We are seeing more and more non-traditional students on our college campuses. Over the last three decades the rise of adults participants (over the age of 25) in undergraduate classes has been significant (Seftor and Turner, 2002). If these students are not as computer proficient as other students in their classes does this affect their thoughts about technology integration into those classes?

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