Designing Environments that Support and Engage Generation Z: Investigating the Impacts of Digital Technologies in the Learning Environment

ABSTRACT

Designers of today are challenged to create environments that effectively support a digitally savvy generation without dismissing fundamental human needs. Modern educational systems are leveraging technology in “blended learning” models, a mix of online and face-to-face interaction in effort to create a self-directed experience and accelerate cognitive learning. These new learning models are radically transforming the educational landscape for high school students; however, little qualitative research has been conducted to understand the associated impacts to students’ wellbeing, social learning, and engagement level.

This ongoing study seeks to understand how learning environments can better support, engage, and challenge Generation Z, and specifically investigates the effects of self-directed online education on the motivation level, social development, and wellbeing of high school students. A public high school in Virginia serves as a preliminary case study. An exploratory method is applied, using a combination of online survey and semi-structured interviews with students and instructors. Using words and graphics, the poster will highlight challenges created by providing young students with the autonomy to work anywhere. Significant impacts to wellbeing, engagement and social learning will be visually represented with graphs.

This knowledge is intended to help designers and administrators create learning environments and policies that effectively support and engage Generation Z.