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**Sarita Jidnesh Bhogare**

Assistant Professor,

Swayam Siddhi College of

Management and Research,

Bhiwandi, Maharashtra, India

# A detailed study of Innovative Pedagogies fostering learning and development of Generation Z students in higher education, with a crucial focus on their mental well-being

**Sarita Jidnesh Bhogare**

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## Abstract

Modern pedagogies are creative, imaginative, and successful teaching practices that transform how students understand by making teaching more interesting, personalized, powered by technology, and interrelated with real-world expectations. They go beyond traditional classroom teaching and promote innovative thinking, learning through participation, collaborative work, flexibility, and implementation in real life.

Born approximately between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z has been characterized as the most emotionally delicate and technologically connected generation. Their mental health is impacted by a variety of factors, including academic pressure, technology overload, social comparison, economic insecurity, and rapid social changes. Gen Z's mental health is formed by a unique blend of digital life, pedagogic pressure, economic uncertainty, and social shifts. Compared to prior generations, people are more mindful, opinionated, and proactive about mental health despite suffering higher levels of stress and worry.

The given research paper describes many innovative tools for learning and development of Generation Z students in higher education. The paper also throws light on sustaining the mental health of this generation of children. Sustaining the welfare of students involves education reforms, family support, digital balance, and accessible mental health options. Students today (particularly Gen Z) expect immersive, digital, engaging learning. Education systems seek to improve innovation, analytical thinking, cooperation, and wellness. In higher education, innovative teaching methodologies promote involvement in learning, critical thinking, individualization, application in real-life, and going beyond conventional lecture-based instruction.

**Keywords:** Pedagogy, technology, mental well-being, holistic learning

## Introduction

Pedagogy is a method of imparting the idea or carrying out an activity to make everyone who learns in a tension-reduced environment. The innovative approaches of teaching, together with an examination of how the process of teaching influences innovation. Innovative Pedagogy is the process of proactively incorporating new teaching techniques and methods into the classroom to improve student performance and address real problems to promote fair learning.

Innovative pedagogical approaches and the incorporation of technology are driving a paradigm shift in the teaching-learning process in higher education. Higher education concentrates on the value of experiential, holistic, and inquiry-driven learning, striving to build well-rounded, competent persons with 21st-century abilities. Higher education allows learners to have freedom in selecting different pedagogies to boost teaching-learning most effectively for the students. It is a constant journey of improvement, where educators are encouraged to adapt and innovate to suit the increasing requirements of learners and the demands of society.

Innovative pedagogies are current teaching approaches that integrate new ideas, technology, and creative practices to improve learning outcomes and satisfy the requirements of today's learners. Global higher education is rapidly changing as a result of increasing workforce expectations, technology challenges, and expanding learner profiles, specifically Gen Z. The

**Corresponding Author:**

**Sarita Jidnesh Bhogare**

Assistant Professor,

Swayam Siddhi College of

Management and Research,

Bhiwandi, Maharashtra, India

basic purpose of innovative pedagogies is to generate instruction experiences that are individualized, adaptable, interesting, and outcome-driven.

Innovative pedagogies in higher education are evolving towards student autonomy, customisation, technological integration, mental wellbeing, equity and inclusivity, etc. These approaches develop future-ready graduates capable of thriving in a fast-changing world. Innovative pedagogies are essentially student-centered, highlighting the value of knowing how students learn in contrast to only concentrating on the material that teachers present. By giving the needs, passions, and learning inclinations top priority, this method creates an atmosphere in which they actively participate in their educational process. Teachers can better engage students and increase their motivation by moving away from traditional teaching approaches and toward a more tailored educational experience. This will ultimately result in a deeper understanding and long-term retention of the material.

Integrating innovation into the learning process is another characteristic of creative pedagogies. The integration of digital resources, such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and online platforms, provides for a more dynamic and engaging educational experience. These technologies not only streamline access to a wealth of knowledge but also enable students to engage in simulations and interactive projects that resemble scenarios from the real world. This technological infiltration enables a more hands-on approach to learning, where students may experiment, create, and solve issues in an enclosed and supportive environment.

Moreover, contemporary teaching methods emphasize collaboration and diversity, as well as understanding the different needs of learners. Peer learning and group projects help adolescents develop an understanding of belonging and learn from one another, which promotes their social and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, these pedagogies are made to be adaptive and flexible, embracing various methods of learning and speeds while ensuring that every student feels encouraged and appreciated. Innovative pedagogies prepare learners for both academic performance and meaningful participation in society by emphasizing mental health and accessibility and attaching educational content to real-life situations.

### Review of Literature

The given study emphasizes understanding different innovative pedagogies in higher education for Generation Z students. Special emphasis is on studying these strategies and their effect on the mental well-being of students in higher education. These studies primarily focus on understanding learning preferences and cognitive development of these students. Given below are the key highlights from different research links.

- **Prime focus on active learning:** Generation Z students could learn better from project-based learning and ongoing assessments. These strategies enhance Self-control and the ability to think critically.
- **Application-based learning:** Real-world applications help students understand theory better. This process makes the learning deeper. Students find it easier to relate concepts to their practical know-how.
- **Psychological Strategies:** For Generation Z students to successfully control their learning, psychological strategies like mindfulness and self-control are

essential.

- **Technology-based learning:** A blend of technology and human based can upgrade the teaching learning process in depth.
- **360-degree learning:** Innovative teaching methodologies integrate overall development of students with prime attention to practical learning and concept theory.

These findings emphasize how crucial it is to change teaching methods to satisfy the shifting requirements of Generation Z students with the goal of preserving their mental wellness and educating them for the workforce.

### Further content

#### Innovative Pedagogies in Higher Education

Innovative pedagogies involve unique, creative, and student-centered teaching approaches that boost learning outcomes by integrating technology, real-world application, and active learning strategies. They were created to satisfy the requirements of today's learners—especially Gen Z—who look for collaborative, versatile, and modern educational settings.

Different teaching pedagogies may be implemented for students to have holistic learning and development. These could be:

- **Project-based learning:** Teaching approach wherein students actively participate in projects that are both personally and practically relevant. a method of teaching that encourages critical thinking, collaborative work, and creativity by having students actively participate in meaningful and real-world projects.
- **Peer learning:** Peer learning is a method of instruction that enables students to strengthen their knowledge by coaching one another. In an atmosphere of supervision, one student teaching another can enhance learning and retention.
- **Internships:** An internship is an opportunity for job training provided by an organization for a specified length of time. An internship can be rewarded, unpaid, or partially paid (in the form of an allowance). Internships are typically flexible with the needs of learners and can be either full-time or part-time.
- **Simulation-based learning:** Simulation-based instruction involves the use of models that replicate actual life situations, allowing learners to practice and acquire critical skills without the dangers involved with realistic scenarios. This strategy is particularly useful in industries such as medicine, airlines, and companies, where hands-on knowledge is necessary for mastery.
- **Universal design for learning:** It is a theory of education that seeks to optimize the learning process for every person by providing numerous methods for communication, visualization, and action and expression. It is a dynamic model that fosters versatility, integration, and active involvement in the learning process in order to cater to varied learners. Teachers can build more effective and accessible learning environments for all learners by employing UDL techniques.

Learning management systems, game development, virtual reality (VR), and blended learning could be some

methodologies for IT-based teaching.

### Discussions

Generation Z is the group born roughly between 1997 and 2012, known as Generation Z. They are the first generation to grow up fully in the digital age.

Generation Z is characterized by their remarkable digital skills, adaptability, and increased social consciousness. However, they face significant challenges related to mental health, shorter attention spans, and a heavy dependence on technology. With the right support—such as innovative educational approaches, inclusive environments, mental health programs, and opportunities for creative expression—this generation can drive meaningful change.

### Characteristics of Generation Z

- Known as "digital natives," Generation Z (born roughly 1995–2012), daily routines are shaped by technology, particularly social media and smartphones.
- This generation has an active belief in entrepreneurship and is very competent at digital communication and

online learning.

- They favor flexible work schedules and frequently choose side projects and freelancing over conventional 9–5 jobs.
- Gen Z prefers brief, visually appealing, and interactive content on sites like TikTok and Instagram Reels because they are adept at multitasking and have shorter attention spans.
- This generation places great importance on mental health, boldly confronting issues like loneliness, stress, and anxiety.
- Gen Z aspire for holistic lives that improve their general health.
- Gen Z follows a balanced approach to work and life and places a strong emphasis on adaptability and meaningful engagement in their employment.
- They seek accessible and encouraging leadership in their workplaces.
- By being adept at using digital productivity tools, they increase their productivity and performance at work.

### SWOT of Generation Z

1	S- Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Born in the age of digital technology.</li> <li>• Engrossed in technology.</li> <li>• Knowledgeable with social media, smartphones, the internet, etc.</li> <li>• Adaptable to evolving technological</li> <li>• Socially engaged and brand-aware</li> <li>• Demonstrate a spirit of entrepreneurship, startup culture, and freelance labor.</li> <li>• Incredibly passionate about self-improvement, self-care, and independent learning.</li> <li>• In search of financial security</li> <li>• Focusing on elevation.</li> </ul>
2	W- Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to continual digital stimuli, they typically have short attention spans, lack sustained focus, and dislike long texts or lectures.</li> <li>• They have high levels of stress and worry.</li> <li>• They frequently exhibit digital weariness, cyberbullying, and false information.</li> <li>• Their mental health issues are on the rise.</li> <li>• They frequently exhibit impatience.</li> <li>• They require quick answers and want feedback.</li> </ul>
3	O- Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A variety of platforms that facilitate freelancing, e-commerce, content production, and digital entrepreneurship enable people to forge their own professional pathways.</li> <li>• Flexible job options that are accessible from almost anywhere in the world.</li> <li>• An increasing focus on social change leadership</li> <li>• There are professional prospects in fields including artificial intelligence, data science, cyber security, digital marketing, gaming, and creative technology.</li> <li>• Support groups, wellness companies, and counseling services are just a few of the new support options being made possible by the growing awareness of mental health.</li> </ul>
4	T- Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsteady labor market influenced by artificial intelligence and automation.</li> <li>• It is becoming more difficult for people to find work locally due to the growing global competition for jobs.</li> <li>• Problems associated with excessive social media use include addiction, feeling isolated, and exposure to cyberbullying and online harassment, all of which can have a damaging impact on mental health.</li> <li>• Financial strains brought on by growing living and educational costs.</li> <li>• Global and environmental disasters like pandemics, climate change, and geopolitical tensions cause anxiety that affects one's personal and professional life.</li> </ul>

### Mental health

- A key aspect of wellbeing is mental health, which enables people to deal with challenges in their lives, see their potential, seek education and employment, and make constructive contributions to society.
- Mental health is recognized as a fundamental human right and has both intrinsic and instrumental importance.
- Due to a variety of individual, familial, community, and structural factors, mental health varies greatly among people on a complex continuum.
- Even while many people exhibit resilience, people who experience difficult circumstances are more likely to experience mental health problems.
- A wide range of diseases and psychological disabilities fall under the category of mental health issues, which are commonly curable at modest prices.
- Among the most prevalent issues facing Generation Z are anxiety, depression, stress/burnout, loneliness, and an increasing number of identified mental diseases.

### Issues faced by Indian Students

- Young people are frequently subjected to long study sessions and stress due to competitive tests and steady employment.
- Many Gen Zers who are starting their careers find it difficult to manage work and personal obligations, and polls show that this imbalance is a major factor in their mental health problems.
- In India, there is a growing demand for therapy and mental health resources as young people realize that asking for help is not a sign of weakness.
- Mental-health problems arising or crystallizing during teenage/early adult years can affect education, career, relationships, and long-term well-being. Addressing them early helps avoid chronic issues.
- Better understanding and reducing stigma. Because Gen Z tends to be more open to discussing mental health than older generations, there's a chance to normalize seeking support, talking about feelings, and building healthier norms.
- Need for accessible support. Affordable therapy, mental-health services, supportive work/school environments, community awareness — these all become important.
- Self-care, peer support, balance. Recognising stressors (social media overload, overwork, unrealistic expectations), setting boundaries, healthy sleep/rest, meaningful offline connections — these help mitigate mental-health risks.

The landscape of education is evolving with the rise of Education Technology and innovative learning methods, such as immersive experiences through augmented and virtual reality, personalized learning systems, micro-learning, and hybrid educational models.

### The Gap between Gen Z and Teachers

The first generation to have spent their entire childhood in a digital world is Generation Z. Compared to many educators who received their training in the pre-digital or early-digital eras, their learning preferences, expectations, and behaviors differ significantly. This discrepancy causes a big gap in educational environments, such as training programs, institutions, and classrooms. In higher education, teachers become facilitators or coaches. A few of the parameters are listed below.

#### Parameter 1: Environment

- **Generation Z:** Students exist in a world where social media, smartphones, and instant access to information rule. Engaged in learning with quick knowledge retrieval, gamification, interactive apps, and videos. Prefer an approach to schooling that is centered on multimedia and looks good.
- **Teacher/facilitator:** Gen X and Millennials make up a significant portion of this population and have varying degrees of digital engagement. They usually use traditional teaching techniques, such as lectures, taking notes, and learning from texts. The fast development of digital tools could intimidate a lot of people.
- **Gap:** Children look forward to using technology in their education. Teachers may view technology as disruptive, difficult, or difficult to use. Successful

collaboration involves finding a balance between instructor worries and student expectations.

#### Parameter 2: Communication

- **Generation Z:** Make use of short and simple digital communication tools like voice messages, SMS, emojis, memes, and reels. Conversational and cooperative contacts are preferred, and getting prompt feedback is given top priority.
- **Teacher/facilitator:** Stress the value of formal communication techniques like emails, organized conversations, and hierarchical exchanges. Digital or informal communication is frequently seen as rude or immature.
- **Gap:** In the classroom dynamic, tone misunderstandings frequently occur. Teachers often see students as being too casual or unserious, and students often feel that their teachers are unapproachable.

#### Parameter 3: Learning

- **Generation Z:** Individuals prefer active, experience-driven learning approaches, including projects, conversations, role-playing, and practical exercises. They place a high emphasis on adaptability, independence, and the freedom to choose how they want to learn. On the other hand, students find rote memory and lengthy lectures difficult and ineffective for their educational involvement.
- **Teacher/facilitator:** Emphasize the importance of formal communication methods such as emails, structured discussions, and hierarchical interactions. Informal or digital communication is often perceived as impolite or immature.
- **Gap:** Tone misunderstandings are common in the educational environment. Students frequently believe that their teachers are distant, and teachers frequently perceive students as being overly informal or careless.

#### Parameter 4: Handling emotion

- **Generation Z:** People are becoming more open about their struggles with stress, worry, and emotional difficulties. They actively look for safe spaces, understanding, and support. They also have a tendency to be very sensitive to criticism and unfavorable comments.
- **Teacher/facilitator:** Came from a time when there was little public discussion of mental health. Have faith in "tough love," discipline, and resiliency. may see emotional expressiveness as "excuse" or "weakness."
- **Gap:** While professors believe their pupils are too sensitive, students frequently feel that their viewpoints are not understood.

#### Parameter 5: Handling emotion

- **Generation Z:** challenge established authority, customs, and regulations. looks for reasons to give instructions. emphasizes cooperation and equality.
- **Teacher/facilitator:** Expect respect for established systems, respect for authority, and devotion to rules. Keep in mind that asking questions could be interpreted as disrespectful.
- **Gap:** While Generation Z perceives instructors as



authoritative, teachers frequently see Generation Z as rebellious.

#### Parameter 6: Diversity

- **Generation Z:** Diversity highlights the significance of mental health and the necessity for a balanced approach to work and personal life by embracing each person's own identity. It ensures that all views are heard and respected in society while fostering creativity and innovation and advancing social justice.
- **Teacher/facilitator:** Conventional routes to success are made possible by the fundamental components of discipline, diligence, and a dedication to academic brilliance, which also contribute to personal stability.
- **Gap:** Confusion and misalignment in personal aspirations can result from misconceptions about life goals, sources of inspiration, and the meaning of success.

#### Gap Analysis

Given below are the implications of differences between teachers' and students' varying wavelengths on the study of the given research. It also tells us how the gap can be reduced.

#### Implications of the Gap

Students in higher education frequently feel demotivated and disengaged due to current circumstances, which can seriously impair their educational experience. Teachers must contend with the challenges of sustaining student engagement and managing classroom dynamics in this setting, which adds to their stress. Misunderstandings can occur and have a detrimental effect on kids' behaviour, performance, and general health. Additionally, these circumstances reduce student participation in the classroom, which stifles chances for group learning. In the end, this stagnation stifles innovation in teaching techniques by keeping teachers from investigating fresh, practical approaches to improve student learning.

#### Bridging the gap between teachers and students

Teachers/facilitators should use technology in ways that improve student engagement and learning opportunities. Increased involvement and knowledge retention can be promoted by using active learning techniques. Giving students timely feedback is crucial because it helps them recognize their strengths and areas for development. Furthermore, fostering a supportive learning environment requires being aware of students' mental health concerns and handling these matters sensitively. Lastly, providing individualized and adaptable learning opportunities helps address students' varied requirements and guarantees that each person can succeed academically.

Students are urged to speak clearly and respectfully while exhibiting a sincere desire to learn more than just using digital shortcuts. They must understand the constraints that educators encounter and participate actively and cooperatively in the educational process. Project-based and personalized learning are essential because they offer customized, practical applications that improve topic comprehension and engagement. Effective language scaffolding and prior knowledge activation are essential for supporting multilingual and diverse learners. Furthermore, the use of non-linguistic representations and collaborative

learning is crucial for improving comprehension and fostering social skills.

Generation Z (born approx. 1995–2012) is entering the workforce with values, expectations, and work styles that differ significantly from previous generations. Their digital upbringing, desire for purpose, mental-health sensitivity, and fast-paced expectations create new challenges. A few of the Gen Z characteristics that are predominantly seen in students enrolled in higher education are:

- High expectations and recognizing work-life balance.
- Craving for instant career growth (promotions, salary hike, etc.)
- Importance of work culture in regulating self-worth.
- Short-term association with employers. Always finding an employer of choice.
- Looking towards emotional support.
- Digital savvy, fond of technology gadgets.
- Low love for traditional roles.
- Need for engagement.
- Heavily influenced by social media.

A significant change in HR strategy is required when Gen Z enters the workforce. Conventional HR regulations created for Millennials or Boomers are no longer adequate. Organizations need to adjust to digital HR procedures, flexible work schedules, humble leadership, and a culture that fosters learning.

Businesses that cater to Gen Z's demands will have a workforce that is driven, creative, and prepared for the future. Resistance will result in talent shortages, attrition, and disengagement.

#### Conclusion

Gen Z gravitates towards concise and captivating content, seeking to understand the rationale behind information. They favor learning that incorporates technology, emphasizing both experiential and personalized approaches. In higher education, the teaching and learning process is centered on several key methodologies. These include experiential learning, which enables students to engage directly with their subjects, and hands-on learning that encourages practical application. Digital learning further enhances accessibility, while inquiry-based learning fosters critical thinking through questioning. Additionally, real-world projects help bridge theoretical knowledge with practical skills, and competency-based pedagogy focuses on achieving specific outcomes. Storytelling as a pedagogical tool enriches the learning experience by making content more relatable and memorable.

#### Suggestions

Priority should be given in learning environments to a learner-centered approach that emphasizes the importance of education while recognizing the vital role of teachers. These environments must be meticulously developed and set up to support inquiry-based and independent learning, which calls for a high level of professionalism. In order to enhance the learning process, they should also be highly tailored, taking into account the unique needs of both individuals and groups. Sensitivity to different variances fosters an environment where all kids feel valued, making inclusion a fundamental characteristic. Additionally, as peer collaboration and community links enhance the learning

process, social connections are crucial for good learning.

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