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MAIN CHARACTERISTICS AND STEREOTYPES OF GENERATION Z: ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN EXPERIENCE

ABSTRACT

The article considers and analyzes a new generation of students who have specific abilities and skills to work with modern digital devices. The term «digital natives», determined by the American researcher M. Prensky, has its synonyms – generation Z or network generation. Each generation is distinguished by certain values inherent in its representatives, has its own objectively determined, spontaneously formed social program, which depicts the state of material and spiritual culture, type of social relations, specific material and ideal relations through which the generation is formed. Generation Z also has its values and features. The aim of the study is to analyze the views of foreign researchers on the main characteristics and stereotypes of Generation Z as a new generation of students of higher education. Therefore, it is not surprising that many scientists, both practitioners and theorists (including psychologists, educators, and methodologists) pay close attention to the development of digital technologies and their impact on worldviews, relationships with other people, life in general. A number of characteristic features of Generation Z has been highlighted and characterized: freedom, personalization, information control, honesty, cooperation, entertainment and satisfaction, speed, desire for innovation. Two approaches to assessing the capabilities of modern students – Generation Z have been presented, and both positive and negative stereotypes of the generation (distraction syndrome, Internet addiction, health problems, social immaturity, low motivation, selfishness, narcissism, etc.) have been analyzed. Each subsequent generation (generation Z, Alpha) will always be different from the previous generation, because there are many different factors (external or internal) that affect the formation of the generation. The task of modern education is to study and analyze the changes taking place in ICT, the educational process, society and to predict the impact of these changes on the educational process and on students.

*Keywords***:** *digital natives, Generation Z, main characteristics and stereotypes, network generation, learning, multitasking.*

ОСНОВНІ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ Й СТЕРЕОТИПИ ПОКОЛІННЯ Z: АНАЛІЗ ЗАРУБІЖНОГО ДОСВІДУ

АНОТАЦІЯ

У статті розглянуто та проаналізовано нове покоління студентів, які мають специфічні здібності та навички роботи з сучасними цифровими пристроями. Термін «цифрові тубільці», визначений американським дослідником М. Пренським, має свої синоніми – покоління Z або мережеве покоління. Кожне покоління

вирізняється певними цінностями, притаманними його представникам, має свою об'єктивно зумовлену, стихійно сформовану соціальну програму, яка зображує стан матеріальної та духовної культури, тип суспільних відносин, конкретні матеріальні та ідеальні відносини, завдяки яким формується покоління. Покоління Z теж має свої цінності та особливості. Метою дослідження є аналіз поглядів зарубіжних учених на основні характеристики та стереотипи покоління Z як нового покоління студентів вищих навчальних закладів. Тому не дивно, що багато вчених як практиків, так і теоретиків, зокрема психологи, педагоги, методисти, приділяють пильну увагу розвитку цифрових технологій та їх впливу на світогляд, стосунки з іншими людьми, життя загалом. Виділено та схарактеризовано ряд характерних ознак покоління Z, а саме свобода, персоналізація, контроль інформації, чесність, співпраця, розваги та задоволення, швидкість, прагнення до інновацій. Представлено два підходи до оцінки можливостей сучасних студентів – покоління Z, та проаналізовано як позитивні, так і негативні стереотипи покоління (синдром розсіяної уваги, залежність від Інтернету, проблеми зі здоров'ям, соціальна незрілість, слабка мотивація, егоїзм, нарцисизм тощо). Кожне наступне покоління (покоління Z, Альфа) завжди буде відрізнятися від попереднього покоління, оскільки існує багато різних факторів (зовнішніх чи внутрішніх), які впливають на формування покоління. Завданням сучасної освіти є вивчення та аналіз змін, що відбуваються в ІКТ, освітньому процесі, суспільстві та прогнозування впливу цих змін на навчальний процес та на учнів. Наголошено на тому, що перед вчителями стоїть завдання – зрозуміти мову, якою користується покоління Z, використовувати стиль спілкування та навчання, типовий для цифрових вихідців у класі, адаптувати матеріал до мови покоління Z, інакше прірва між двома поколіннями поглибиться.

Ключові слова: цифрові уроженці, покоління Z, мережеве покоління, основні характеристики та стереотипи, навчання, багатозадачність.

INTRODUCTION

The current explosion of digital technologies has led to a new generation of students who have specific abilities and skills to work with modern digital devices. They are called "digital natives". The term was first used by American learning technology promoter and education expert Mark Prensky in 2001 (Prensky, 2001). In "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants" the author called a group of young students who are easy to master computers, digital media, video games and various programs, and because they were born in the age of information technology.

So, "digital natives" are those who were born in the age of digital technology. The most popular names for this audience today are the term "Generation Z" or "Network Generation". An important aspect of Generation Z is the widespread use of the Internet since a young age. This is a generation that cannot remember a time without the Internet, computers and the Google search engine.

Each generation is distinguished by certain values inherent in their representatives. According to N. Howe and W. Strauss (2007), values can change throughout the life, but the value "core" formed in childhood and adolescence remains unchanged. That is, each generation has its own objectively determined, spontaneously formed social program, which depicts the state of material and spiritual culture, the type of social relations, specific material and ideal relationships through which the generation is formed.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The article aims to analyze the main characteristics and stereotypes of Generation Z as a new generation of students which is based on the views of foreign researchers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

It is important to note that Generation Z, which grew up with computers, Internet, mobile phones, digital cameras, iPads, smartphones (iPod, iPad) and other digital communication devices that store information in small casing with larger functions, is absolutely different from others generations. Therefore, it is not surprising that many scientists and practitioners (including psychologists, educators, teaching methodologists) pay close attention to the development of digital technologies and their impact on worldview, relationships with other people, life in general.

The guidelines of their research are quite broad – from general statistics on the development of ICT and their use in higher education – to the impact of these technologies on the human brain. Thus, D. Batorski (2010), G. Penkowska (2010) analyze a wide range of resources (potential), which are almost completely ignored in the process of traditional learning. M. Bartoszewicz and H. Gulińska (2013), E. Lubina (2009) draw their attention to the problems associated with the introduction of distance learning in higher education institutions.

In this perspective, we can assume that the quality of the built and dynamically changing learning environment, including virtual, largely depends on the competence of a teacher as an organizer and moderator of the teaching and learning process. K. Kaliszewska-Czeremska, S. Laconi (2015) and others point out that the important issue of their research is the readiness of teachers to teach today's young generation, which is developing at a previously unknown speed due to the technological revolution. The teachers' readiness for distance learning is a key factor in creating an environment of distance education of appropriate quality. What past generations have called "technology of the future", Generation Z sees as an integral part of everyday life. This is the main difference which distinguishes them from previous generations, whose childhood passed to the "technological boom", which not only significantly changed their way of life, but also their worldview.

Foreign researchers prove that children born in the digital age are naturally adapted to multitasking. Given this, M. Ledzińska, E. Cherniawska (2013), I. Mokwa-Tarnowska (2014) believe that the organization of the educational environment needs interdisciplinary, integrated approach taking into account the achievements of the relevant branches. It is especially useful in the training of future teachers of English, given its multifaceted (comprehensive) nature, as well as in forming the ability to take into account the individual approach to the formation of the worldview of each participant in the educational process.

The following methods were used to realize the issue of the study: analytical method for collecting, processing and systematizing scientific information on the research problem, study and generalization of foreign scientists' experience, interpretation and comparative analysis.

RESULTS

Since the early 2000s, topics related to generational theory, their attitudes toward new media, today's youth, and the network have become a trend for Western science and social discourse. At the same time, the palette of network generation assessments is becoming more diverse: from admiration for their abilities, creation of so-called "myths"

about their extraordinary technological potential, to their complete debunking and indignation about their lost opportunities. Thus, in the modern scientific field there are two approaches of assessing the capabilities of modern students – Generation Z. Proponents of the first of them declare that the digital generation uses new technologies more creatively and efficiently than previous generations (Nosova, 2012; Tapscott, 2008). Proponents of the second approach, on the other hand, argue that modern students are no different from those born earlier, except that they played on tablets from an early age (Kirschner, Bruyckere, 2017; Carr, 2008).

Emphasizing that the new media have changed the patterns of behavior of Generation Z and affected some brain functions, D. Tapscott (2008) evaluates many of these changes as positive. In particular, permanent multimedia experience has led to the fact that the consciousness of this generation has become «sharper» in the perception of visual objects and orientation in space. Video games have improved the coordination of their hands and eyes, which is very important for them to make quick decisions. The amount of operative memory has not increased (perhaps even decreased), but the amount of technological knowledge, skills and speed of their use has increased. This gives them the opportunity to instantly find the necessary information, "sift and sort" it, evaluate and turn it into knowledge. At the same time, he emphasizes that video games, on the one hand, develop peripheral vision, recognition of visual images on the screen, systematic thinking and performance skills, on the other hand, suppress the activity of the frontal lobes of the brain that control memory and emotions. The author argues that in chronic gamers, the frontal lobes are switched off even after they stop playing (Tapscott, 2008).

Agreeing with the previous author, S. Nosova (2012) adds that the new generation has a completely new set of social skills. The activity of their life position is realized not in participation in mass socio-political events (demonstrations, rallies, etc.) that support existing social and political institutions or oppose such, but in the use of photo and video cameras of their mobile devices (iPhones, iPods, iPads). etc.) for documentary recording of certain events for the purpose of their placement and discussion in the network (Nosova, 2012).

American researchers point to the phenomenon of multitasking, which a new generation has. Media multitasking involves the use of at least one additional device to work with a specific digital medium. Research shows that Generation Z is spending more and more time on media use and its duration has almost doubled in the last ten years. In tests that examine the cognitive skills needed to perform many tasks simultaneously, multitasking achieves much weaker results in people who usually focus on only one task. They have difficulties in the case of frequent changes of tasks and it was noted in a situation typical of this group of people. Researches also note that the process of attention changes under the influence of learning. However, multitasking leads to more superficial and less efficient information processing.

Referring to the research of scientists from the British Library in London, M. Spitzer (Spitzer, 2012; Spitzer, 2013) draws attention to several important conclusions arising from the above research. Firstly, Generation Z is able to use the Internet for searching any information and for learning. Secondly, the Internet plays a very important role in their lives when it comes to communicating with friends and acquaintances. Communication via the Internet also encourages the development of language competences (they communicate in a foreign language). Thirdly, the Internet is an entertainment for them, including music and games. Especially it is important for them in the time of rapid development of online games, which are usually called electronic sports games (e-sports).

In general, describing the main characteristics of the new generation, national and foreign researchers identify a number of characteristic values: freedom (they expect and demand freedom, choice and diversity in all areas of their lives); personalization (in contrast to previous generations, who are accustomed to consuming mass products, they prefer an individual style not only in consumption but also in the organization of their jobs); control (acting in the presence of a huge number of media channels, learned to control information, instantly recognizing hoaxes and lies); honesty (they expect honesty from everyone, they can forgive mistakes, but not deception); cooperation (which often goes beyond joint work and common social actions and takes the form of co-creation) – is their natural state; entertainment (so important and necessary that they always want to have fun while working and do not see clear boundaries between their work and play); speed (with high-speed computer technology, they expect only quick answers, decisions and actions; the absence of them makes their work dull, restless and irritable); the desire for innovation (being in a continuous stream of technological change, they want to have the latest technical "toys") (Nosova, 2012; Tapscott, 2008).

Instead, there is a different view of digital natives / Generation Z. Studies conducted by independent teams in countries such as Austria, Australia, Switzerland, the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, and Belgium call into question the existence of the digital generation. Thus, P. Kirschner and P. Bruyckere (2017) put forward the antithesis: digital natives are a myth. The results of their research showed that most young people are not more advanced in modern technology or in the possession of extraordinary abilities. In fact, most of them are just passive consumers of the media. This is confirmed by a study conducted among first-year students at the University of Hong Kong in 2013, which showed that Generation Z can use technology on a huge scale, but mainly for entertainment, communication, contact with friends and the world. Most of them are ordinary consumers, not creators of Internet content (Kirschner & Bruyckere, 2017). However, the results of a report by the European Union show that only about a quarter of respondents used websites that allow them to create files or write blogs themselves. Most respondents used ready-made content on the Internet (Wyniki Raportu europejskiego EU Kids Online, 2011).

The authors of these studies argue that modern students do not have in-depth technological knowledge, but only superficial knowledge of basic computer programs, and use the Internet mainly to access social networks or send e-mail. As M. Bullen (Bullen et al., 2008) points out, these students know nothing about the additional capabilities of the devices they use every day. Although there was no evidence that students have in-depth knowledge of technology, and interviews showed that students use technology in a very contextual sense. In terms of learning, they use these technologies quite passively: reading information from Wikipedia or downloading files with lecture content. The conclusions of M. Bauerlein, is in line with this. On the example of American youth, the author claims that, despite all the opportunities provided by the network to the younger generation, young people have become neither more educated nor more literate in terms of obtaining information. Moreover, young people read less and write worse. The period from the late 20th–early 21st century was quite successful, optimistic about providing this generation with money, civil rights, which in general made them positive. But the Internet, which seemed to be supposed to expand the boundaries of the mind, on the contrary, narrowed the minds of young people to the limits of their own social circle. The whole world entered them through the network, depriving them of the need to "go out into the world". Their minds refuse the

cultural heritage of the whole world, they are engaged in census (borrowing) of texts, pictures, videos, etc. Despite of it, M. Bauerlein clarifies that his negative assessments do not apply to the behavior and values of young people, but only to their intellectual abilities (Bauerlein, 2009).

Neurobiologists, including the previously mentioned M. Spitzer and J. Bauer, indicate that in their studies they did not find any evidence that digital media accelerates or deepens the process of brain development or in any other positive way affects its development. Describing the transformation of his own thinking under the influence of the Internet and networking technologies, N. Carr notes that even an adult who frequently uses the Internet now has to struggle with himself to force himself to read a relatively long text to the end. What can we say of teenagers who are almost constantly "connected" to computers or mobile support with web support? (Carr, 2008).

Polish researchers agree with them. W. Sikorski (2015) confirms that the use of the Internet and new media leads to greater superficiality. Instead of deep reading, today they have casual reading, and instead of immersion in learning, Gen Z is now surfing the network. Deep mental work, which is the main condition for learning, has been replaced by digital sliding in the net, and surfing and browsing are superficial processes that leave little information in the brain. In this context, G. Chorab (2016) draws attention to the external side of using social networks: viewing Twitter, Facebook or other forms of Internet communication is depthless and attention is always focused on the next stimulus (Sikorski, 2015; Chorab, 2016).

M. Żylińska (2012) proves that digital dementia is a neurological result of the excessive use of digital technologies in information processing. In the age of the Internet, where any problem is solved by a search engine, and the recipient makes these decisions uncritically, some mental abilities, such as problem and creative thinking, have no room for existence and consolidation. Prolonged overload of digital technologies and mass media leads to technological brainwashing. As a result, the overload of tasks and information caused by a constant connection to the Internet makes it impossible to analyze information and develop appropriate behavior (Żylińska, 2012).

D. Tapscott (2008) summarizes all the negative stereotypes that have developed in modern society about the representatives of this network generation. According to him, these people:

– cannot concentrate, suffer from distraction syndrome;
– cannot communicate in the real world;
– have a network dependency,
– spend time online instead of going for sports,
– avoid personal communication,
– have health problems;
– have passion for video games that can be compared to alcohol and drug addiction;
– are socially immature, unable to live independently – live with their parents;
– do not respect authors' rights and infringe it;
– used to insult others online with impunity;
– have weak motivation;
– do not know how to set goals;
– suffer from selfishness and narcissism;
– Social networks and You-Tube give them the opportunity to feel in the spotlight (Tapscott, 2008).

At the same time, according to D. Tapscott (2008), the network generation is not only "unlost" and has no "fatal flaws", but makes the world a better place. We are impressed by this position and we also believe that traditional education is not suitable for them. Because they can access information instantly online, and the amount of knowledge becomes obsolete very quickly in any profession, modern education should not focus on the transfer of knowledge, but on how to learn (Tapscott, 2008).

As we can see, that modern students are not easy. S. Jones (2013) says that the active use of the Internet and new technologies has caused a generation gap (Jones, 2013). Generation Z perceives the world and the phenomena that take place in it differently, makes different choices of content and gives it different meanings. These differences cause many problems in education.

CONCLUSIONS

As practice shows, for understanding to be possible, teachers must first understand the language used by Generation Z. They must move towards each other in order to continue to walk together. M. Prensky (2001) recommends using the style of communication and learning typical of digital natives in the classroom, although it does not mean that it should be unique or dominant. In his view, it is necessary to adapt the material to the language of Generation Z, otherwise the gap between the two generations will deepen.

Thus, no matter how the generation of students is called, it will always be different from the previous generation, because there are many different factors (external or internal) that affect the formation of the generation. The task of up-today education is to study and analyze changes taking place in ICT, in the educational process, society and to predict the impact of these changes on the educational process and on the learners.

Further research should be dedicated to a more detailed study on Generation Z in higher education institutions of Ukraine.

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