My ideal teacher: the Gen Z's choice

BINABISE, Nonita Jane P. (1), CARIAGA, Judy Ann S. (2), PERALTA, Evelyn A. (3), PALABAY, Rianne Joy O. (4), ANCHETA JR, Oscar O.(5)

(1) https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4390-3087; Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid La Union Campus. College of Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, San Fernando City, LA Union (SFC-LU), Philippines.. nbinabise@dmmmsu.edu.ph.

(2) https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2608-8203; Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid La Union Campus. College of Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, San Fernando City, LA Union (SFC-LU), Philippines.. jcariagat@dmmmsu.edu.ph.

(3) https://orcid.org/0009-0009-6863-9437; Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid La Union Campus. College of Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, San Fernando City, LA Union (SFC-LU), Philippines.. eperalta@dmmmsu.edu.ph.

(4) https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0237-0802; Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid La Union Campus. College of Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, San Fernando City, LA Union (SFC-LU), Philippines.. rpalabay@dmmmsu.edu.ph.

(5) https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5530-4288; Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid La Union Campus. San Fernando City, LA Union (SFC-LU), Philippine. oancheta@dmmmsu.edu.ph.

A B S T R A C T

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach to examine Generation Z's perceptions of an ideal teacher. The transformative mixed-methods design aimed to uncover their preferred teaching styles, how they envision the ideal teacher, and ways educators can meet their expectations. The findings indicated that experiential learning is these students' most favored and effective teaching style. Furthermore, Generation Z students believe an ideal teacher should embody positive values, provide emotional support, and be technologically proficient. They also emphasized that teachers should focus on skill enhancement, stay attuned to current trends, adapt to the digital age, and be mindful of individual differences to meet their expectations. This study offers valuable insights into how educators can align with Generation Z's expectations based on the data gathered from respondents. As a result, an instructional guide was developed, outlining preferred teaching styles and suggesting activities that can help teachers implement these methods effectively.

RESUMO

Este estudo examinou as percepções da Geração Z sobre um professor ideal, utilizando uma abordagem de métodos mistos sequenciais explicativos. O design transformativo de métodos mistos teve como objetivo descobrir os estilos de ensino preferidos, como eles imaginam o professor ideal e maneiras de os educadores atenderem às suas expectativas. Os resultados indicaram que a aprendizagem experiencial é o estilo de ensino mais apreciado e eficaz para esses alunos. Além disso, os estudantes da Geração Z acreditam que um professor ideal deve incorporar valores positivos, fornecer apoio emocional e ser proficiente em tecnologia. Eles também enfatizaram que os professores devem se concentrar no aprimoramento de habilidades, manter-se atualizados com as tendências, adaptar-se à era digital e estar atentos às diferenças e necessidades individuais para atender às expectativas da Geração Z. Este estudo oferece insights valiosos sobre como os educadores podem alinhar-se às expectativas da Geração Z, com base nos dados coletados dos respondentes. Como resultado, foi desenvolvido um guia instrucional, que delineia os estilos de ensino preferidos e sugere atividades que podem ajudar os professores a implementar esses métodos de forma eficaz.

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Introduction

In today's fast-paced world, driven by rapid scientific and technological advancements, knowledge is unprecedented, continually bolstered by innovations like cloud computing. Knowledge is fundamental to societal progress, shaping communities where members unite around shared objectives, mutual support, and collective learning. Education, therefore, plays a vital role in cultivating confidence and awareness and equipping individuals with the advanced skills necessary to coexist harmoniously with the environment, promoting sustainability and prosperity for all. Deeply rooted knowledge and local wisdom are essential for sustaining communities and providing effective solutions for development while maintaining a stable identity amidst rapid social changes.

Moreover, fostering motivation to acquire knowledge is critical in enabling individuals to contribute positively to their communities. Motivation is crucial in learning, significantly influencing what, how, and when people choose to learn. Various theories propose that students are motivated by tangible rewards, aspirations for personal growth and recognition, engaging tasks, enriched environments, and acknowledging their individuality. Indeed, student motivation is fundamental to ensuring high-quality education (Kim & Jung, 2022).

Each new generation of students demands tailored teaching and learning strategies that address their unique needs. As societal dynamics evolve, assessing and adapting our educational practices becomes increasingly important to create optimal learning environments, particularly for Generation Z (Gen Z) students. Understanding the distinctive characteristics and challenges of these students is crucial. Research indicates that Gen Z students are forward-thinking, diverse, pragmatic, and technologically adept, positioning them as a generation with the potential to influence global trends significantly (Gomez & Conley, 2023).

Cook (2020) emphasizes that Gen Z students excel in immersive educational experiences that challenge them. Educators are instrumental in providing a solid foundation for these students, guiding their development as future leaders. This study explores how students of education perceive two distinct roles: the ideal teacher and their evolving self-image as educators. It underscores the importance of pedagogical education and continuous professional development in effectively preparing teachers to meet future generations' needs.

The study examined participants' perspectives on the integration of technology in education. The findings discussed in the existing literature reveal that the school under investigation is well-equipped with the technological infrastructure needed to support the teaching-learning process. Each classroom has an interactive whiteboard, and every teacher can access a tablet computer. Additionally, nearly all students possess personal technological devices, predominantly smartphones, though fewer own laptops or tablets. This discrepancy

highlights that while teachers receive technological support from the Ministry of National Education, students primarily rely on their resources without external aid (Ozkan, 2021).

Prensky (2019) categorizes the educators responsible for teaching these students as digital immigrants—individuals who were not born into the digital age but have adopted many aspects of modern technology. Understanding these students' cognitive processes, interests, and preferred learning methods is crucial for designing effective and engaging educational experiences tailored to their needs.

Their proficiency in processing vast amounts of information makes them competent students and valuable team members in professional settings. This generation is enthusiastic about learning, particularly when challenged and given opportunities to influence their school or workplace environments. As the first true digital natives, they are characterized by a quest for truth, reflected in their consumption patterns and behaviors. Modern technology has interconnected them to an unprecedented degree, both among themselves and with the broader population, accelerating generational shifts and technological advancements. This transition presents challenges and opportunities for companies and educational institutions, influencing enrollment and retention strategies. They often choose higher education based on passion, prioritizing careers that offer personal fulfillment and financial rewards, particularly in computer science and video game development (Lopez & Watson, 2021).

Today's generation experiences technological advancements shaping knowledge acquisition and learning processes in various parts of the world. The internet, in particular, facilitates rapid access to information across diverse fields, enhancing efficiency and saving time. Online technologies are crucial in modern educational methods, especially among young individuals who rely on quick information searches and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. This study explores how technology and the internet influence their learning processes and preferences for acquiring knowledge. Conducted among 498 active users of an online knowledge-sharing community, the research addresses various forms of knowledge acquisition in contemporary youth (Szymkowiak et al., 2021).

Researchers and studies have generally defined Generation Z (Gen Z) as individuals born from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s, marking them as the first generation to grow up with widespread access to the internet and portable digital technology from a young age. This constant exposure to digital media has significantly shaped their behaviors and preferences, particularly their reliance on electronic devices for communication, learning, and entertainment. This has also influenced their attention spans, learning styles, and expectations in educational and professional settings (Turner, 2022). Raised in an era of instant communication through social media, Gen Z members often expect their ideas to be acknowledged and respected in academic and professional environments.

As true digital natives, they have integrated their lives and social interactions heavily online, forming friendships and navigating social dynamics through digital platforms. Gen Z

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demonstrates an intuitive grasp of internet tools and social media, quickly adapting to new technological advancements. In contrast, millennials, born just before or during the internet's infancy, sometimes take longer to acclimate to online social norms and technological developments. They tend to approach internet use with a learning mindset, enjoying the process of mastering new tools and technologies.

Millennials generally exhibit optimism in decision-making, often adopting an entrepreneurial and innovative approach. At the same time, Gen Z individuals tend to be more risk-averse and cautious due to witnessing economic instability. They prioritize security and success through established channels. In team environments, Gen Z members typically prefer working independently to solve problems, whereas millennials thrive in collaborative settings, enjoying social engagement within their workspace.

Career aspirations also differ significantly: Millennials traditionally viewed higher education as a natural progression toward a corporate career, whereas Gen Z often opts for alternative paths, including online learning, real-world experiences, and starting careers earlier, often before or immediately after high school (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022). This generational shift reflects evolving attitudes toward education, career paths, and workplace dynamics shaped by technological advancements and social influences.

Educators and institutions are grappling with the challenge of capturing and maintaining the attention and interest of Generation Z students. This generation has grown up with instantaneous access to information and communication channels at their fingertips, shaping their preference for online socialization over face-to-face interactions, which impacts society in both positive and negative ways. Understanding their perspectives and expectations is crucial for planning their successful futures.

Many Gen Z students express excitement and nervousness about the future, which is understandable given that most of their teachers believe they will pursue careers that have not yet been conceived. While educators cannot predict the exact nature of their future work, they can equip them with lifelong learning skills, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and proficiency in utilizing available tools. Research indicates that these learners are particularly drawn to peer stories and often seek information through platforms like YouTube.

To engage students effectively, educational programs can develop and regularly rotate student video stories on their websites. These narratives can highlight experiences such as internships, competitive events, student organizations, first-year experiences, or career paths of graduates. Although many universities implement such initiatives at the institutional level, creating these resources at the program level may require additional resources and support from public relations departments for scripting, templates, or editing (Schwieger & Ladwig, 2018).

In addressing mental health issues among students, teachers can leverage technology not as a distraction but as a tool for providing information and engagement. Recognizing and

respecting diverse perspectives within the student population is crucial. Instead of using an authoritative teaching approach, engaging students individually and sensitively considering their emotional states can significantly impact their learning experiences. Educators can foster inclusive and supportive learning environments by delving deeper into how students' backgrounds and identities shape their worldviews (UMASS, n.d.). Language and dialect play integral roles in culture, offering insights into effective communication with students. Understanding how words are employed enables educators to engage meaningfully with their students (Roskos, R. & Neuman; S. B., 2020). As the inaugural generation of digital natives, Generation Z possesses more excellent technological proficiency than their teachers, posing challenges within the classroom. They may sometimes prioritize their smartphones over classroom instruction, diverting attention from the lesson (Incik, 2022).

This study is underpinned by several theoretical frameworks that inform various aspects of the research process. According to Gillis (2020), digital natives, encompassing Millennials and Gen Z, are highly adept at using technology due to their upbringing in a digital environment. Teachers must be proficient in modern technology to effectively adapt teaching methods to meet Gen Z's preferences and expectations. Prensky's distinction between digital immigrants and digital natives further emphasizes the significant differences in technological literacy between older generations and today's students (Ch'ng, 2021). Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) provides a framework for enhancing learning outcomes, particularly emphasizing active, visual, and kinesthetic learning styles preferred by digital natives (Mijatović, 2019).

Additionally, the 21st-century skills framework highlights the critical skills such as creativity, critical thinking, and information technology that students need for future workplaces. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) promotes inclusive teaching strategies that accommodate diverse student needs and enhance learning environments. These theories guided the research in conceptualizing variables, interpreting findings, and developing strategies to enhance teaching styles and methods, aiming to define the ideal teacher for BEEd students at DMMMSU-MLUC.

This study addressed the varied learning styles among Generation Z students, recognizing that a singular teaching approach may only effectively engage some learners. Focusing on the specific context of Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid La Union Campus (DMMMSU-MLUC), the research sought to illuminate what qualities and practices constitute an ideal teacher for Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012. The study answers critical questions: What teaching styles do Generation Z students prefer? How do they perceive an ideal teacher? How can educators best meet their expectations? Additionally, the research aims to develop practical instructional inputs that can guide teachers in adapting their teaching methods to better resonate with Generation Z's preferences and learning needs.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to enhance teaching effectiveness and student engagement at DMMMSU-MLUC. By providing insights into the preferred teaching

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styles of Generation Z and outlining the characteristics of an ideal teacher from their perspective, the findings will empower educators to refine their instructional approaches. This, in turn, is expected to foster a more responsive educational environment where teachers are better equipped to meet the diverse learning preferences of their students. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on effective pedagogy in the digital age, supporting educators in preparing Generation Z students for future challenges and opportunities in an increasingly dynamic world.

Methodology

Research Design

The research employed an Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methodology. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2017), the transformative mixed methods design integrates one of four designs (convergent, explanatory, exploratory, or embedded) within a transformative framework, guiding the mixed methods approach. This methodology was utilized to merge and analyze quantitative and qualitative data collected in the study, facilitating comprehensive data examination for the research findings.

Sources of Data

Participants in this study were Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students at Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University - Mid La Union Campus (DMMMSU-MLUC) during the 2023-2024 academic year. For research question 1, which focused on Generation Z students' preferred teaching styles, 153 respondents completed the survey questionnaire out of 253 BEED students, selected via simple random sampling. For research questions 2 and 3, exploring Generation Z's perceptions of an ideal teacher and how teachers can effectively meet their expectations, 15 respondents were selected based on specific criteria: willingness to participate, ability to represent the class comprehensively, and preferably being dean's list students. Research question 4 involved synthesizing findings from questions 1 to 3 to illuminate BEED students' perspectives on their ideal teachers and educational needs.

Data Collection

Several research questions guided the methodology used to gather data for this study. Firstly, Research Question 1 aimed to uncover the preferred teaching styles of Generation Z learners. A researcher-developed survey questionnaire was administered to Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students at Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University - Mid La Union Campus (DMMMSU-MLUC) to ascertain their preferences in teaching methods.

Secondly, Research Questions 2 and 3 explored how Generation Z learners perceived their ideal teacher and how teachers could effectively meet their expectations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to address these questions. This approach allowed for systematic data collection aligned with the research questions and facilitated in-depth insights into

participants' perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were advantageous for gathering detailed data while enabling participants to actively engage in the interview process (Ahmad & May 2018). A structured set of guide questions ensured a coherent flow during the interviews, with follow-up inquiries used to clarify and expand upon participants' responses. All data collection activities were carried out through face-to-face interactions. Before distributing survey questionnaires and conducting interviews, researchers clearly explained the study's objectives and procedures to ensure participant understanding and cooperation.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data for Research Question 1, overall means were employed to describe the Preferred Teaching Styles of Generation Z students. The scale used to determine these preferences ranged as follows in Table 1.

Table 1.

Means employed to describe the Preferred Teaching Styles of Generation Z students.

Weight/Scale	Mean Range	Visual Interpretation
5	4.21 - 5	Very Highly Preferred
4	3.41 – 4.20	Highly Preferred
3	2.61 - 3.40	Moderately Preferred
2	1.81 - 2.60	Lowly Preferred
1	1 - 1.80	Not Preferred

Research Questions 2 and 3 involved conducting structured interviews with BEED students to validate the survey questionnaire data. A coding and thematic analysis approach was used to interpret the responses gathered through these interviews.

Research Question 4 encompassed synthesizing the study's findings from Research Questions 1, 2, and 3—the initial step involved distributing the questionnaires to participants, followed by conducting semi-structured interviews. The collected data were subsequently coded and thematized to derive meaningful insights and conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were meticulously observed throughout the data collection process. Before commencing the survey, the researchers sought permission from class captains of each section to ensure their consent for participation as respondents. Additionally, the researchers respectfully requested the class captains' approval before approaching students for their availability to complete the survey and interview.

The researchers ensured that all procedures for collecting student data were conducted with care and confidentiality. Once participants obtained consent, the researchers conducted face-to-face interviews and administered surveys according to ethical guidelines.

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Results and Discussion

The following section presents the results and discussion derived from the study on the preferred teaching styles and perceptions of an ideal teacher among Generation Z students in the Bachelor of Elementary Education program at Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University - Mid La Union Campus (DMMMSU-MLUC) for the academic year 2023-2024. This analysis explores the findings from survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to investigate how teachers can effectively meet the expectations of Generation Z learners. The results offer insights into the teaching methods students prefer and shed light on their perceptions of what constitutes an ideal educator.

The Preferred Teaching Styles of Gen Z Students

Table 2 presents the preferred teaching styles of Gen Z students based on the data gathered from hundred fifty-three (153) BEEd students at Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University. The table contains ten (10) teaching styles: Experiential Learning, Collaborative or Group Style, Demonstrator or Coach Style, Interactive Style, Facilitator or Guide Style, Lecture Style, Inquiry-Based Learning, Socratic Method, Flipped Classroom, and Problem-Based Learning.

Based on the gathered data, 8 out of 10 listed teaching styles fall under the category of very highly preferred, ranging from 4.27 as the lowest to 4.39 as the highest. Experiential learning is Generation Z's most preferred teaching style, with an overall mean of 4.39.

Table 2.

Preferred Teaching Styles of Gen Z Students

Teaching Styles	Mean	Visual Interpretation
1. Experiential Learning	4.39	Very Highly Preferred
2. Collaborative or Group Style	4.33	Very Highly Preferred
3. Demonstrator or Coach Style	4.30	Very Highly Preferred
4. Interactive Style	4.29	Very Highly Preferred
5. Facilitator or Guide Style	4.28	Very Highly Preferred
6. Lecture Style	4.28	Very Highly Preferred
7. Inquiry-Based Learning	4.27	Very Highly Preferred
8. Socratic Method	4.27	Very Highly Preferred
9. Flipped Classroom	4.18	Highly Preferred
10. Problem-Based Learning	4.09	Highly Preferred

The findings indicate that Gen Z students prefer hands-on learning experiences over other teaching styles. Experiential learning, through experience, helps students enhance their theoretical knowledge, skills, and understanding. By learning from their mistakes, students grow as the learning process unfolds.

As Tan (2023) noted, experiential learning offers students invaluable opportunities to explore curiosity, learn from mistakes, and grow in a low-risk environment. This approach goes beyond traditional academic instruction by fostering essential life skills such as self-motivation, problem-solving, leadership, and communication. Students strengthen interdisciplinary connections by applying their knowledge in diverse contexts, which are increasingly vital in our interconnected world.

Ultimately, experiential learning empowers students to discover their passions, laying the groundwork for fulfilling careers and future endeavors. The 21st Century Skills Framework highlights how this model bridges the gap between classroom concepts and real-world applications through hands-on experiences and reflective practices.

To effectively implement experiential learning, educators can adopt a four-phase framework: learn, do, reflect, and act. This method deepens understanding and fosters a collaborative learning environment. Engaging with peers enhances the experience, making learning more dynamic and enjoyable. Data shows that collaborative learning styles received the second-highest mean score among students, reflecting Gen Z's preference for activities that enhance critical thinking, social interaction, and communication skills. By prioritizing experiential and collaborative learning, educators can better meet the needs of today's students, preparing them for success in both academic and professional settings.

Ivan Andreev (2022) notes that collaborative learning leverages group dynamics to enhance the learning experience through teamwork. In this model, students work in pairs or groups to solve problems, complete tasks, or grasp new concepts, actively engaging in processing and synthesizing information beyond rote memorization.

The 21st Century Skills Framework emphasizes the importance of collaboration as an essential skill for thriving professionally and personally. Students are encouraged to take shared responsibility in collaborative efforts and value the unique contributions of each team member.

For this generation of students, demonstrating concepts rather than merely explaining them is particularly effective. The data shows that the demonstrator or coach style ranks third among preferred teaching methods. Today's learners benefit from teachers who actively demonstrate concepts, especially in mathematics and science, where step-by-step processes are crucial.

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Interestingly, despite its traditional nature, the lecture style remains highly preferred by Gen Z, with a mean score of 4.28. Although one of the oldest methods, the lecture is an effective way to share information in the 21st century.

However, problem-based learning (PBL) received the lowest mean score of 4.09, although it is still highly preferred. This suggests that while Gen Z students favor active learning, they may be less inclined towards problem-solving and self-directed learning. PBL emphasizes self-directed research, collaboration, and critical thinking, with educators acting as facilitators. According to the 21st Century Skill Framework, schools must focus on core subjects and integrate critical thinking and higher-order skills to prepare students for the future, as today's life and work environments demand much more than just content knowledge.

Perceived Ideal Teacher of Gen Z Students

Based on the interview conducted with the students about the perceived ideal teacher of Gen Z students, the following themes were unveiled: ***positive values***, ***emotional support***, ***fair-minded***ness, ***inclusive teach***ing, ***logical think***ing, and ***technological litera***cy.

P***ositive Values***. Teachers have the power to cultivate self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-worth. They are responsible for being positive role models, shining examples of who students can aspire to be.

As stated by respondent 5, "*Gen Z students perceive an ideal teacher as a good role model that will influence them to become better and responsible pe*ople." Respondent 6's statement follows this: "*They value educators who show genuine interest in their well-being and provide support beyond academics*." As a backup to the statement of respondent 8, "*From my perspective, Gen Z perceives an ideal teacher as someone they can comfortably interact with and someone who can appreciate their humor and see them as friends*." Lastly, from the statement of respondent 15, "*As a student in Generation Z, I can confirm that when a teacher is approachable and stays connected to the students, both teaching and learning become more enjoyable.*"

Learners benefit significantly from teachers who embody positive values, as these educators foster a classroom culture of respect, empathy, and cooperation. Such an environment supports students' sense of value and understanding, enhancing learning and personal growth.

Research highlights the significant influence of role models on student development. Positive role models shape students' moral reasoning and empathy. Schwartz and Zamboanga (2021) note that such role models help cultivate students' conscience and ethical behavior by exemplifying conduct that influences their values and actions. Teachers, in particular,

profoundly impact students' empathy and altruism through their behavior and example. Effective role models increase the likelihood that students will develop into empathetic individuals who act for others' benefit without expecting material rewards, leaving lasting impressions that guide them through life's challenges (Ziv, 2020).

Therefore, educators must be intentional and self-disciplined, as their actions and attitudes consistently shape students' behavior and worldview.

Emotionally Supportive. This pertains to how teachers' emotional support comprises their demonstration of genuine concern for and care for their students, respect for their students, and desire to understand students' feelings and points of view. Emotional support of the teacher satisfies the student's psychological needs and stimulates learning motivation. Works directly with students to identify emotional and behavioral problems and develop a plan to enable them to achieve their potential in school.

Respondent 12 stated, "*I belong to the Gen Z's; for me, an ideal teacher is someone who knows to feel their students, a teacher who knows their limitations when it comes to activities right after the previous activity they give to the students*," followed by the statement of respondent 10, "Gen Z appreciate a teacher who is genuine transparent and relatable they value educators who are not afraid to show their true selves and share personal experiences."

Creating emotionally supportive environments allows teachers to leverage peer support in caring for individual students. Teachers must understand that emotional support can positively influence how at-risk children perceive their relationships with educators. As UMASS (n.d.) highlighted, educators have significant potential to aid students dealing with mental health challenges. Instead of discouraging the use of technology, teachers should explore ways to harness it to provide information and foster student engagement. Emotional support from teachers involves building positive relationships and environments by actively responding to students' needs, supporting their interactions, and demonstrating genuine care, respect, and empathy. This approach requires understanding students' emotions and perspectives while maintaining consistency and reliability in their support (Lobo, 2023).

Fair-minded. This pertains to the equitable treatment of all students by teachers. Fairness stands as a critical attribute of effective educators. When teachers demonstrate fairness, they earn respect, and students perceive the classroom as a safe and inclusive environment where they feel valued.

Respondent 2 stated, "*I think an ideal teacher should know how to assist and understand his or her students despite their disparities and behavior on how they see and act to a certain scenario.*" Respondent 8 said, "*Someone who can offer equal and diverse learning opportunities to every student.*"

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Fairness is one of an ideal teacher's most essential and practical qualities. A teacher must be impartial and treat all students equally. Creating a fair classroom environment fosters trust and respect among students and is a valuable lesson in fairness. According to Cook (2020), students thrive in fully immersive educational experiences and relish the challenges they present. Walker (2008) argues that effective teachers prepare thoroughly for lessons, manage time efficiently to maintain student engagement, foster confidence by setting high expectations for all students, demonstrate fairness by accommodating individual learning needs, and enhance learning through creative activities. Walker also emphasizes that effective teaching involves creating emotional connections with students, maintaining an optimistic outlook, fostering a sense of belonging, approaching students with compassion, forgiving their mistakes, and acknowledging one's errors (Kahveci, 2023).

Inclusive Teacher. This pertains to teachers implementing inclusive teaching practices, which involve intentionally fostering a learning environment where every student is treated fairly, has equitable access to learning opportunities, and feels valued and supported in their educational journey.

As respondent 4 stated, "*Ideal teachers for Gen Z can promote inclusivity and collaboration in learning environments*." This is followed by respondent 6, "*They value authenticity and a sense of connection. They appreciate approachable, understanding teachers who create a learning space where everyone feels respected and heard. Teachers who are not just knowledgeable but also relatable can make a significant impact on their learning experience.*"

Inclusive teaching fosters the development of compassion, empathy, and respect among students, enhancing their emotional intelligence as they understand the impact of their actions, which supports their emotional and mental growth. It involves intentionally creating a learning environment where all students receive fair treatment and equal learning opportunities and feel respected and supported throughout their educational journey (Inclusive Teaching, 2023). By addressing participation disparities, inclusive teaching ensures equitable engagement of all students. This approach includes creating an inclusive classroom atmosphere, adapting instructional methods to accommodate diverse backgrounds, establishing guidelines for discussing contentious topics, and deepening the understanding of racial and socioeconomic issues among educators and students (Inclusive et al., 2021).

Logical Thinker. This theme is all about having the ability that everyone needs without exception. This ability is essential for teachers to analyze a situation or problem using reason and coming up with potential solutions.

Respondent 3 stated, "*And also since we are in the 21st century, we need teachers with high-order thinking skills to meet the needs of the learners.*" Moreover, respondent 9 supported this by saying, "*An ideal teacher is not just imparting knowledge that students must learn academically but what students should learn in their lives.*"

Empowering students with logical reasoning skills involves more than just teaching outcomes—it is about imparting the process. A way to help your students develop logical reasoning skills is to encourage collaboration and discussion. Collaborating and discussing with peers can help your students practice their logical reasoning skills, as they must explain their ideas, listen to different perspectives, and justify their claims. You can facilitate collaboration and discussion by using group work, debates, or peer review activities and creating a safe and respectful learning environment. Cook (2020) emphasizes that developing the intellect of these students requires a solid groundwork from educators. Also, Başerer (2020) defines logical thinking as effectively utilizing diverse concepts and their meanings, proposing suggestions based on inferences, and engaging in reasoned thinking.

Technologically Literate. Technological literacy is a crucial theme in Gen Z's perception of an ideal teacher. Understanding how students engage and learn through technology enables teachers to advocate for innovative technologies that enhance teaching effectiveness and unlock new educational potential. This underscores the importance of teachers being digitally literate advocates for appropriate technological integration.

Respondent 6 stated, "*They value educators who show genuine interest in their well-being, provide support beyond academics, use technology effectively in teaching, and foster a positive and inclusive classroom environment.*" Followed by respondent 10, "*Teachers can use educational apps, online resources, and multimedia tools to enhance learning experiences and make lessons more engaging.*"

Teachers use digital media properly for their effective communication and collaboration towards effective teaching. Teachers promote technological literacy among students, focusing on harmless, permissible, and answerable aspects for their better achievements. To effectively cater to Generation Z's and subsequent students' learning preferences, educators must adapt to rapidly evolving technology, embrace students' multitasking tendencies, and embrace environments rich in technology for teaching and learning (Hartman et al., 2019). As pointed out by Prensky, our digital native learners are pretty different from the previous generation, so trying to use all this technological knowledge for educational purposes seems to be an efficient idea to propel language development. Nowadays, students play an active role in their language learning process, considering all the technological knowledge they already have and access to the target language through the Internet (Ch'ng, 2021).

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Meeting Gen Z's Expectations.

Based on the interview conducted with the students about how teachers can meet Gen Z's expectations, the following themes were uncovered, these themes are: ***emphatic***, ***sensitivity to individual differences and needs***, ***adaptive to digital evolution***, ***fosters inclusivity, imposes skill enhancement***, ***flexible***, and ***conscious of today's trend***.

Empathic. The theme centered around empathy emphasizes the importance of teachers connecting with their Generation Z students by demonstrating an understanding of their feelings. This connection is crucial for meeting students' expectations, particularly those who learn and think differently. Feeling understood and supported enhances motivation, promotes self-awareness, and empowers students to advocate for themselves.

Respondent 1 stated, "*To meet my expectations, the teacher should have empathy to know the feelings or situations of students,*" followed by respondent 2, "*So the teacher will not just merely deliver instructional content, but also they will support student's emotional and psychological.*"

Teachers should demonstrate empathy, which involves understanding and resonating with the feelings and situations that students experience. This means actively listening to students, recognizing their emotional and personal challenges, and responding with compassion and support. By fostering an environment where students feel heard and valued, the teacher can better address their needs and create a more effective and nurturing learning atmosphere. Cooper (2023) suggests that profound empathy involves a thorough understanding of oneself and others, recognizing the significance of all current and past relationships and their influence on learning. This entails the capacity to empathize with every student and to take accountability for their requirements.

Sensitivity to Individual Differences and Needs. Being mindful of individual variations and requirements is crucial. These differences play a significant role in shaping educational outcomes. Educators can boost student engagement, motivation, and academic success by comprehending and attending to these diversities. Acknowledging individual disparities also promotes a sense of inclusion, positively affecting students' self-esteem and overall welfare.

Respondent 8 stated, "*As teachers, or one of the future teachers, we are aware that each student has unique learning styles, and we must understand their individual needs and lend an ear to their concerns.*" This is followed by the statement of respondent 15, "*In doing so, the teacher can meet the diverse needs and interests of the learners.*"

Acknowledging and embracing individual differences are essential for creating inclusive classrooms that meet the diverse needs of students. This involves recognizing students' unique backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities. Through valuing these differences, educators can create a supportive and dynamic learning environment where all students feel respected and understood. According to education (2024), differentiated instruction refers to customizing teaching methods, content, and assessment to accommodate the varied needs of students. This method enables educators to adjust their teaching based on individual learning styles, interests, and capabilities. In offering diverse instructional activities, resources, and assessment approaches, educators can involve students at their unique levels, nurturing a feeling of proficiency and encouraging active engagement in learning.

Adaptive to Digital Evolution. The theme of adapting to digital evolution emphasizes that 21st-century teachers need to possess strong technological knowledge and skills to support and assist their students effectively. Given that Generation Z students frequently use their smartphones for various daily tasks, they can utilize these devices to access their class textbooks or manuals online.

As stated by respondent 4, to meet Gen Z expectations, "*Teachers can embrace technology, incorporate digital tools and platforms into lessons to enhance engagement and accessibility,*" followed by the statement of respondent 6, "Integrating technology, fostering creativity, and encouraging critical thinking are crucial." Respondent 7 added, "*Teachers need to embrace technology as an integral part of learning since it is an integral part of our generation today.*" Lastly, according to respondent 11, "*To meet our expectations, teachers should use tech tools for teaching, use pictures and videos.*"

We need to reconsider not only the use of technology but also explore alternative assessment methods and tools for presenting material to Generation Z students. Modern technology allows for the inversion of the classroom, transforming it into the focal point of active learning rather than merely the initial encounter with learning materials. As pointed out by Prensky, our digital native students are quite different from the previous generation, so trying to use all this technological knowledge for educational purposes seems to be an efficient idea to propel language development. Nowadays, students play an active role in their language learning process, considering all the technological knowledge they already have and access to the target language through the internet.

Fosters Inclusivity. The theme of fostering inclusivity emphasizes creating a classroom environment that welcomes individuals with diverse identities and backgrounds. Embracing diversity in education entails valuing and appreciating these differences, acknowledging them as valuable assets that enhance the learning environment and contribute to educational excellence.

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As stated by respondent 6 and 2, to meet the Gen Z expectations, *"Teachers should integrate technology, fostering creativity, encouraging critical thinking are crucial and foster a positive learning environment,"* followed by the statement of respondent 5, *"Teachers can create opportunities for group projects, peer-to-peer learning, and collaborative activities that allow students to work together towards common goals*." Lastly, from the statement of respondent Seven, "*Teachers should also prioritize inclusivity and diversity in their teaching practices, ensuring that all students feel represented and valued."*

Teachers offer diverse materials and activities that cater to all students' learning preferences, integrate various cultural backgrounds and viewpoints, and promote innovative thinking. Inclusive classrooms are crucial as they nurture each child's sense of belonging, ensure they are seen and understood for their unique identities, and recognize their intrinsic worth. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) advocates for creating a flexible learning atmosphere where information is presented in multiple formats, students engage with content through various methods, and they have options for demonstrating their learning. Incorporating these universal design principles enhances the learning environment's inclusivity, ensuring that students feel equally valued and respected for their contributions and perspectives. Furthermore, the findings of this study, particularly regarding the theme of fostering inclusivity, are strongly corroborated by Ancheta, O. J., Casem, R. Q. (2024) and Ancheta, O. J., and Ochoco, C. A. E. (2023 & 2024). works on the Indigenous Peoples Education Program (IPEd) and MTB-MLE. Ancheta's study highlights the importance of creating an inclusive educational environment that respects and integrates the diverse cultural identities of students, particularly those from Indigenous communities.

Imposes Skill Enhancement. Focusing on skill development, this theme addresses teachers' efforts to acquire, sustain, and progress in specific competencies within their chosen field.

As stated by respondent 1, "To meet the Gen Z expectations, teachers should be trained well," followed by the statement of respondents 2 and 3, *"Teachers should attend seminars or trainings to develop their counseling skills, behavioral management, and on how to handle diverse learners."*

Teachers, particularly those instructing Gen Z students, must possess solid pedagogical skills to enhance the educational experience in their classrooms. Practical pedagogical abilities improve the delivery of subject matter and promote comprehension, retention, and practical application of knowledge. Integrating study skills into classroom practices can significantly enrich learning and support long-term retention. According to Cook (2020), Gen Z students thrive in immersive educational experiences that challenge them. To effectively nurture these students, teachers must establish a solid foundation of educational practices. The 21st-century

skills framework emphasizes that teachers play a crucial role in shaping and enhancing educational quality. Today, teachers are expected to deliver hybrid teaching approaches that cater to diverse learning needs. This framework identifies specific skills teachers should acquire to meet these demands effectively.

Flexible. This theme encompasses adjusting teaching methods to suit individual student needs and being open to experimenting with new approaches. By tailoring strategies to accommodate the unique requirements of each student, educators can create an environment that effectively supports their learning.

As stated by respondent 15, "*Being flexible is also something to consider, as today's generation is more advanced than before. This will create hands-on experiences for the learners.*" A statement respondent 8 follows this, "*It is our responsibility to employ a variety of strategies and methods to address these needs- which allows us to deliver personalized learning experiences and to align with Gen Z's expectations; educators need to be adaptable, compassionate, and empathetic toward their students.*"

Every generation of students we teach needs different approaches and strategies to learning and teaching to the needs of the students, especially the Gen Z students. As the different generations become more expansive, evaluating our methods and determining what is and is not practical in providing the best possible learning environment is crucial. Schukei (2023) emphasizes that each succeeding generation of students necessitates diverse teaching strategies that effectively meet their needs. As generational shifts occur, it is crucial to critically assess our teaching practices to ascertain what is effective in creating optimal learning environments, particularly for Generation Z students. Understanding the unique challenges and characteristics of these students is essential. This study illustrates that future-focused Gen Z students are cohesive, diverse, pragmatic, and highly adept with technology, positioning them as a generation capable of significant global influence.

Conscious of Today's Trend. Staying abreast of current trends in education involves teachers staying informed about the latest accepted methods for effective teaching. Conscientious also entails completing tasks meticulously and efficiently, leading conscientious students to produce work of high quality consistently.

As stated by respondent 6, "*To meet the Gen Z expectations, teachers should be staying current with pop culture trends that enhance rapport.*"

Diligent educators are highly structured and compelling, consistently delivering high-quality lessons and activities to their students. Understanding current trends in popular culture is essential for teachers because it relates directly to student's lives and experiences. Pop culture is a source of ideas, knowledge, inspiration, and interest, particularly in enhancing

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listening comprehension skills. Based on Gillis (2020), This digital literacy has made these generations very comfortable with and fluent in the use of technology. Teachers should be able to use modern technology proficiently to adapt to their expectations and Gen Z's preferred teaching styles and methods.

Conclusion

The study delved into the preferred teaching styles and perceptions of an ideal teacher among Generation Z students enrolled in the Bachelor of Elementary Education program at Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University - Mid La Union Campus (DMMMSU-MLUC) for the academic year 2023-2024. Through survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, insights were gathered on how teachers can effectively meet the expectations of these learners.

The findings revealed that Generation Z students at DMMMSU-MLUC strongly favor experiential learning as their preferred teaching style, highlighting a desire for hands-on learning experiences that enhance practical skills and theoretical understanding. This approach, characterized by learning through direct experience and reflection, enriches academic knowledge and fosters critical life skills such as problem-solving, leadership, and communication. It aligns well with the 21st Century Skills Framework, emphasizing the integration of classroom learning with real-world applications through structured phases of learning, doing, reflecting, and acting.

Collaborative or group learning emerged as another highly preferred teaching style among Gen Z students, emphasizing their value on active engagement, social interaction, and cooperative problem-solving. This method promotes peer-to-peer learning and enhances critical thinking skills, aligning with educational theories that advocate for learning environments enriched by student collaboration.

Additionally, the demonstrator or coach style was favored by students, indicating a preference for teachers who actively demonstrate concepts and facilitate interactive learning experiences. Despite being one of the more traditional teaching styles, lectures also maintained significant popularity among Gen Z students, highlighting their continued relevance when delivered effectively to engage and inform learners.

Generation Z students emphasized several critical qualities regarding the perceived ideal teacher. They value educators who exemplify positive values, serving as role models who inspire self-confidence, respect, and personal growth. Emotional support was highlighted as crucial, with students valuing teachers who demonstrate empathy, understanding, and genuine care beyond academic instruction. Fairness and inclusivity were also identified as important traits, with students appreciating teachers who create inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity and treat all students equitably.

Moreover, Gen Z students expect their ideal teachers to be logical thinkers who can effectively analyze and solve problems and to be technologically literate, leveraging digital tools to enhance learning experiences and connect with students effectively in today's tech-driven world. These findings underscore the importance of teachers evolving their skills to meet modern learners' evolving needs and expectations.

Recommendations to effectively meet these expectations include incorporating experiential and collaborative learning strategies into pedagogical practices, fostering a supportive and inclusive classroom culture, and enhancing teachers' technological literacy. Professional development programs should focus on equipping educators with the skills to integrate technology into teaching, promote diversity and inclusivity, and cultivate empathetic and supportive relationships with students. In aligning teaching practices with the preferences and needs of Generation Z students, educators can create engaging, effective, and empowering learning environments that prepare students for success in the 21st century and beyond.

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