

Gen Y: Expectations of Quality in Higher Education

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Abstract: In higher education stakeholders' perspectives are important and should be taken into consideration by the education providers in order to improve quality process. In education industry there are three categories of beneficiaries such as students, stakeholders and overall society. This paper addresses the perspectives of stakeholders with specific reference to Gen Y. Now days, students have diverse profiles and their expectations are high from education providers. In learning and development process, curriculum as well as extra curriculum activities helps the students in overall development. This study emphasizes on quality of higher education which produce academically well and qualified graduates with good character. Higher education shapes the students in fulfilling the industry requirements.

Key words: Gen Y, quality higher education, stakeholders' perspective, stakeholders' expectations, development of students, TQM, quality control process

Introduction

Mannheim (1952) defined generation as a group of people born and raised in the same general chronological, social and historical context. In general there are five generations such as baby boomers (1946-64), Gen X (1964-80), Gen Y (1980-94) and Gen Z (1994-2001). Today most of the university students come under Gen Y as they born after 1980. They have several labels: Millennial Generation (Howe & Strauss, 2000), the 'Internet Generation' or the 'Digital Natives' (Prensky, 2001). Much of the current literature is based on the assumption that this generation differs from the previous generations in its work values and career expectations (e.g. Alsop, 2008; Ng & Gosset, 2013; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). However, while there is some evidence to suggest that Gen Y also has different expectations of education, learning styles and patterns of behavior (Boggs & Szabo, 2011; Twenge, 2009), relatively few empirical studies have focused on the Gen Ys' influence on the learning environment in higher education (HE).

Gen Y is greater part of India workforce. Following growth in higher education over the past decade, most of college graduates join new workforce. Today's Gen Y graduates are likely to have a distinct set of characteristics, perspectives and expectations from the people who are managing them. Previous research shows due to these characteristics, there is disconnect at the workplace. With this in mind, research is proposed to look more closely at the characteristics and expectations of Gen Y, their expectations about quality higher education and employability.

Quality in higher education is complex concept as compared to quality in industry. In industry quality

of product or service is well defined whereas in higher education quality deals with the students. Harvey and Green concurred that the differences between higher education and other service providers were transformation process in higher education frequently engage in cognitive transformation in the students and not just providing service for them. Due to the increasingly diverse student profile, it is crucial that stakeholders' views, especially the students', be taken into consideration by the higher education institutions for quality process improvement.

On the basis of literature review, it was found that meaning of quality differs. Quality values may be different to many higher education stakeholders as each thinks quality in different way because they may have incongruent interest in higher education. Quality of education is linked to various aspects such as students' intake, academic programs, program designs, lectures, teaching-learning methods, students' experience, academic and nonacademic support, employability, etc.

Gen Y was born in the internet era. Internet became an integral part of their social and personal life. Due to highly virtual connectivity all global events reach rapidly to every home. This generation of children is known as most precious generation. They are raised with proper attention, dedication and educated with continuous encouragement. Gen Y students are very clear with their strengths and weaknesses. They are ambitious, strongly motivated by money, status and career advancement, and expect rapid progress in these areas.

Literature review:

This study considered qualitative approach. Research papers based on quality of higher

education and generation y were reviewed in detail to study the gen Y expectations from higher education. Siew Fun Tang and Sufean Hussin carried out survey in two private universities of Malaysia and industries. Semi structured interviews were conducted to collect in depth qualitative data. Survey respondent consist of senior managers, employer, students, parents, dean, vice chancellor of the university, Malaysia governing council member, etc. According to this study, quality in higher education is not just making sure students know technical aspects but also making sure in building their character. They must be willing to take up more responsibilities. Employers pointed to quality in higher education as to produce graduates with certain expected level of academic achievement as well as good character and soft skills such as communication, interpersonal and working in teams. Previous literature emphasize on team work.

A team can provide a reservoir of knowledge, experience and skills; it can give strength and encouragement and friendship. As member get to know each other there is potential for trust building, decreasing anxiety and building an ethos conducive to personal development and growth. Teams can provide honest feedback in supportive surroundings as well as challenging individuals to push themselves. It can be safe place to practice, to explore and to experiment. (Elisabeth Dunne, Mike Rawlins, 2000).

Today higher education institutions must respond to new challenges that require flexibility speed, complexity and provide learners both skills and effective work tool in order to produce quality. In Drucker's view, the focus of society is educated person. Japanese Ishikawa noted that 'People create quality, not equipments' and 'Quality begins with education and ends with education.' Quality is matter of behavior. Society as a whole is interested in quality products and services. Deming mentioned total quality management (TQM) focuses upon consumers. TQM in education has focused on the product/process model. This model follows the analogy with output (production).

- Input- students
- Process- Education
- Product- Graduates
- Quality control- Evaluations
- Customers/Stakeholders- employers, consumers, society.

Research study carried by ILM and Ashridge Business School examined the attitudes and expectations of generation Y graduates and their managers in relation to work. According to this study, generation Y graduates are ambitious, strongly motivated by money, status and career advancement and expect rapid progress in these areas. Graduates value a high degree of freedom and autonomy in the way they carry out work. Gen Y wants a boss that is more of a coach and friend

than a manager in the traditional sense. They value their work life balance. The students believe in open conversation.

Findings of previous research suggest that Gen Y students would benefit from more work experience prior to taking on full time job. Real world practical application and work experience into degree programs is crucial. Money, status, rapid career growth, work life balance, flexibility, etc are very important to current generation. When it comes to motivation, students firmly focused on the self. They are highly ambitious in terms of career plus graduates favour freedom and independence. So its challenge for higher education institutes to transform strong focus of self and individual drive in to effective team membership and achieving team goals rather than only personal goals.

The reliable indicators of quality in higher education by students are effective teaching and learning, personal development, supportive learning environment, improved communication skills and information availability, accuracy and accessibility. Ramsden defines good teaching involves giving clear explanation through interesting lessons and providing useful and timely feedback. Being supportive of students' problems is also essential. Kettunen and kantola describe teachers as a key position for quality assurance in higher education and their sense of ownership is important in ensuring quality in teaching and learning. Kehm agrees that the teacher plays cast role in facilitating leaning experience by creating opportunities for acquiring such skills in the classroom. In particular students should be involved in internal quality assurance activities such as teaching and learning. The sense of responsibility and high level of engagement between the teachers and students makes quality assurance effective.

A study on students' perception of quality in higher education by Hill et al. suggested that social or emotional support systems are important factors. Current generation expects supportive leaning environment. Srikanthan and Dalrymple suggest that one of the important aspects of quality in higher education is the significant commitment by university and individuals and providing student's supportive environment. As mentioned earlier the teacher's role is vital in class room teaching. Teachers' response towards promoting an atmosphere that motivates self directed and cooperative learning is crucial. Teachers who exhibit professionalism by showing respect for students and demonstrate commitment in ensuring leaning are definitely supportive in creating supportive learning environment for students.

Gen Y students are tech savvy as compared to previous generations. It means they view information availability, accuracy and accessibility factor as important quality value. They are familiar

with the online universe that they may even have the more updated facts than their teachers. They use technology extensively for variety, stimulation and access to information. It changed the way they communicate and relate to learning. Hence, information is expected to be easily available especially in the electronic mode which warrants for quick availability and accessibility.

Conclusion:

On the basis of literature review, Gen Y students are idealistic, sociable and achievement oriented. They have versatile profiles. Their views about emerging trends are advanced. Coaching and mentoring current generation is challenging for educational institutions. Gen y is raised with high dedication in a period of economic prosperity. So their expectations are high for pay, benefits, work-life balance, interesting and challenging work in order to maintain lifestyle. Family socio economic status is responsible for their high expectations for pay and benefits. At higher education institution, students should be prepared to be work ready with personal development and improved communication skills. They should possess certain qualities as critical analyzing, problem solving, thinking inventively, logical reasoning, confidence and ability to see things from different perspectives.

In order to support above qualities, Kehm points that these skills together with the subject specific leaning outcomes must be clearly defined and the curricular be revised to teach and assess them. These skills can be acquired and cultivated over a period of time. Higher education institutions can nurture these skills using several ways. Education must integrate the emerging trends and adapt their offerings to support new generations. On the basis of previous literature, the main conclusion is derived that students should be interested, willing to receive quality education, to apply quality culture at their future jobs or as a citizen consumer of products and services.

New dimensions of higher education and college education must be based upon changing knowledge or more precisely change of use of knowledge by integrating subjects, getting ready for taking environmentally friendly decisions, developing the

capacity of acquisition, development and use of knowledge essential to the success of quality approach. At university, quality higher education tends to have good governance, positive impact of teaching on quality of graduates, engagement in research and development of new knowledge and positive impact to the community. Quality is not an adoption of a standard. For assessing quality in higher education, institutes should invest in good facilities or resources then students' satisfaction will be higher. It gives students' positive feedback and good experience. It helps in university's good publicity which brings more number of students means more funds. That fund can be reinvested in better facilities and resources. So it is a virtual circle.

Quality in higher education as meeting all stakeholders' expectations especially parents. Parents' main concern is about their children's experience at the university. For higher education providers, students' thinking about learning experience in order to achieve success in future is very important. Quality higher education require huge capital investment in people, systems and facilities to ensure excellent learning and non-learning experiences for the students and expected return on investment to be even greater. Higher education institutions with their excellent campuses, brand value and brand promise are the ones that parents will send their kids.

Based on all above given facts we can conclude current generation- Gen Y is idealistic, sociable, achievement oriented, much independent than earlier generations, tech savvy, updated with facts and findings, focused, prefer practical experience rather than bookish knowledge, prefer friendly coach or mentor over traditional boss/ manager, prefer open and friendly communication. Gen Y students perceive quality higher education as institute that adequately trains and capable of providing the means to a graduate to be competent, versatile and independent in his/her major field of study. It means an increase in the quality and quantity of employment opportunities. Here quality refers to the standard and reputation of the employing company, remuneration and benefits, learning and career progression potential. Quantity refers to employability.

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