

Generation Z And the Transformation of Commerce Education: An Empirical Study of Students' Perceptions, Learning Preferences and Educational Expectations

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Abstract

The rapid transformation of higher education, digital learning and employment expectations has created a need to understand how Generation Z students experience and evaluate commerce education. This empirical study examines the perceptions, learning preferences, educational expectations and factors influencing satisfaction and engagement among Generation Z commerce students. The study adopted a descriptive research design and collected primary data through a structured questionnaire, supported by secondary information from books, journals, articles and online sources. The analysed dataset comprises 66 respondents, predominantly students in the 18–20 age group and students enrolled in private institutions. Percentage analysis, tables and charts were used to interpret the responses. The findings indicate mixed perceptions of the present education system and curriculum. Respondents expressed a notable preference for practical and skill-based learning, updated and industry-oriented curricula, reduced emphasis on examination-oriented approaches, technology-enabled teaching and improved educational infrastructure. At the same time, traditional lecture-based teaching remained the most frequently selected teaching method, followed closely by interactive classroom learning. The findings suggest that Gen Z commerce students do not reject traditional education entirely; rather, they expect a blended model that combines structured classroom teaching with practical exposure, interaction, technology and career-oriented skills. The study concludes that commerce education needs to become more industry-relevant, experiential, flexible and student-centred while retaining effective elements of conventional teaching.

Keywords: Generation Z, Commerce Education, Learning Preferences, Student Perception, Educational Expectations, Skill-Based Learning, Digital Learning, Student Engagement

1. Introduction

Commerce education plays an important role in developing knowledge and competencies related to accounting, finance, economics, business, taxation and management. However, the educational expectations of Generation Z differ from those traditionally associated with earlier student cohorts. The original study identifies Gen Z commerce students as digitally oriented learners who increasingly value practical exposure, interactive learning, flexible learning options, technology and career readiness.

Generation Z students have grown up in an environment characterised by smartphones, social media, internet-based information and digital services. Consequently, their expectations of educational institutions extend beyond the transmission of theoretical knowledge. They increasingly seek opportunities to connect classroom concepts with real business situations through case studies, projects, internships, simulations, industry interaction and skill-development activities.

The present education system is therefore being evaluated not only in terms of academic knowledge but also in terms of relevance, employability, flexibility, technological integration, assessment practices, faculty support and the quality of learning resources. The supplied study reports that students hold mixed views about the present system and curriculum, while also identifying strong demand for practical and skill-based learning.

This study focuses specifically on Generation Z commerce students and examines their perceptions of the present education system, their preferred learning approaches, factors influencing satisfaction and engagement, and the changes they would like educational institutions to implement. Such evidence can help institutions align commerce education more closely with changing learner expectations without assuming that all Gen Z students have identical preferences.

2. Background and Context of the Study

The original manuscript explains that commerce students increasingly encounter a labour market in which academic qualifications are accompanied by expectations relating to digital literacy, communication, problem-solving, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, data analysis and professional certifications. This creates a perceived gap between academic learning and workplace requirements.

Technology has also changed the way students access information. Online learning platforms, digital resources and mobile applications provide flexibility and immediate access to learning materials. However, technology does not automatically produce effective learning. Students may still require faculty guidance, interaction, mentoring, appropriate infrastructure and structured opportunities for application.

The study consequently treats educational quality as a multidimensional issue involving curriculum relevance, teaching–learning processes, learning resources, faculty support, assessment, technology, infrastructure, practical exposure and student engagement.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Gen Z and Changing Educational Expectations

The literature reviewed in the original manuscript broadly characterises Gen Z learners as technology-oriented, career-conscious and responsive to flexible and interactive learning environments. The supplied references discuss changing educational expectations, the digital economy and the need to rethink higher education value for Gen Z learners.

3.2 Curriculum Relevance and Industry Exposure

The review highlights concerns that commerce curricula may not always adapt quickly enough to changing business practices. Students are reported to value case studies, internships, project-based learning and exposure to emerging areas such as digital marketing, financial technology and entrepreneurship. Stronger academic–industry collaboration is therefore presented as an important avenue for improving educational relevance.

3.3 Teaching Methods and Learning Preferences

The literature reviewed in the manuscript suggests that Gen Z learners generally value interactive, student-centred and technology-supported approaches. Blended learning, discussions, collaborative activities and digital resources can complement classroom instruction. The present study is important because its own results show that students continue to select traditional lectures at a relatively high rate, indicating that the transition should not be interpreted as a simple replacement of lectures with digital learning.

3.4 Assessment and Examination Practices

The reviewed literature identifies concerns about examination-oriented learning and excessive dependence on memorisation. Continuous assessment, practical evaluation and application-oriented activities are presented as possible approaches for improving conceptual understanding and reducing excessive dependence on memory-based examinations.

3.5 Employability and Skill Development

The literature emphasises the need to connect commerce education with employability skills such as communication, problem-solving, digital literacy and entrepreneurship. This theme is strongly reflected in the present study, where practical and skill-based learning emerged as the leading student recommendation.

3.6 Technology, Digital Access and the Learning Environment

Technology provides opportunities for flexible learning, but the literature also identifies challenges involving connectivity, access to devices, interaction and quality. Institutional infrastructure, learning resources and faculty support therefore remain relevant even in technology-enabled environments.

3.7 Faculty Support, Mentoring and Student Well-being

The original review indicates that Gen Z students value approachable faculty, academic guidance, career counselling and supportive learning environments. Stress, competition and examination pressure can influence perceptions of education. A student-centred approach therefore includes not only teaching innovation but also mentoring and institutional support.

3.8 Research Gap

The reviewed themes show substantial discussion of Gen Z learning behaviour, digital education and commerce education. However, the present study contributes a focused empirical assessment of how commerce students themselves evaluate the current education system and what changes they prioritise. The study brings together perceptions of the education system, learning preferences, faculty and resource-related factors, preferred teaching methods and student recommendations within a single survey framework.

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the perceptions of Generation Z commerce students towards the present education system.
2. To assess students' views regarding the effectiveness and relevance of the curriculum.
3. To identify the learning preferences of Generation Z commerce students.
4. To examine factors influencing students' satisfaction, engagement and learning experience.
5. To identify the teaching–learning methods preferred by the respondents.
6. To identify students' suggestions for improving the present education system.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the perceptions and preferences of Generation Z commerce students.

5.2 Sources of Data

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to commerce students. Secondary information was drawn from books, journals, articles and online sources relating to Gen Z learning behaviour, commerce education and higher education.

5.3 Sample and Sampling

The Chapter IV analysis and Chapter V summary in the supplied manuscript are based on 66 respondents. The methodology section of the original manuscript states a sample size of 60. This discrepancy must be checked against the original response dataset before journal submission. For consistency with the reported tables and interpretations, the present restructured paper uses 66 as the analysed sample.

5.4 Sampling Technique

The original study reports the use of convenience sampling.

5.5 Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire covers respondent profile, perception of the present education system, learning preferences, factors influencing satisfaction and engagement, suggestions for educational improvement, preferred teaching–learning methods, and institutional measures for improving student satisfaction and engagement.

5.6 Tools for Analysis

The original study uses percentage analysis supported by tables and charts. The present paper retains that analytical approach because it is the method reported in the supplied manuscript.

5.7 Ethical and Data-Quality Note

Before journal submission, the researcher should verify the final respondent count, questionnaire coding, percentages, source references and any claims based on external statistics. The manuscript should also state the voluntary nature of participation and the confidentiality/anonymity procedure used, if these were followed during data collection.

6. Results and Analysis

6.1 Gender Profile

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Male	32	46%
Female	34	52%
Others	0	0%
Total	66	100%

The respondent profile shows near-balanced participation, with female respondents forming a slightly larger share than male respondents. No respondent selected the ‘Others’ category. The original table reports rounded percentages, while its narrative uses more precise percentages; the final journal version should standardise rounding.

6.2 Age Group

Age Group	Respondents	Percentage
Below 18	11	17%
18–20	48	73%
21–23	5	8%
Above 23	2	3%
Total	66	100%

The 18–20 age group constitutes the largest share of the sample. This indicates that the findings predominantly reflect the views of younger undergraduate-age respondents.

6.3 Year of Study

Year of Study	Respondents	Percentage
I Year	57	86%
II Year	0	0%
III Year	7	11%
Postgraduate	2	3%
Total	66	100%

The sample is strongly concentrated in the first year, which limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised across all years of commerce education.

6.4 Type of Institution

Institution	Respondents	Percentage
Government	5	8%
Aided	1	2%
Private	60	91%
Total	66	100%

Private institutions account for the overwhelming majority of respondents. Consequently, institutional-type comparisons should not be presented as representative unless a more balanced sample is collected.

6.5 Mode of Study

Mode	Respondents	Percentage
Offline	49	74%
Online	10	15%
Hybrid	7	11%
Total	66	100%

Offline learning remains the dominant mode of study among respondents, while online and hybrid modes account for smaller shares.

6.6 Perception of the Present Education System

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	10	16%
Strongly Disagree	8	13%
Disagree	35	53%
Neutral	11	17%
Agree	2	3%
Total	66	100%

The responses indicate a mixed but generally critical perception of the present education system. Disagreement forms the largest response category, while a smaller group expresses agreement. The results suggest that a substantial proportion of students do not believe that the current system fully meets their expectations.

6.7 Perception of Curriculum Effectiveness

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	9	14%
Strongly Disagree	8	13%
Disagree	23	35%
Neutral	23	35%
Agree	Not reported in source table	Not reported

The original table records 66 respondents but lists only four response categories, with 23 respondents each under Disagree and Neutral. The source manuscript's narrative states that another 23 respondents agree, which would make the total exceed 66. This item must therefore be checked against the original dataset before publication; no corrected value is invented here.

6.8 Learning Preferences

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Prefer learning independently	14	12	21	19	66
Like interactive and group learning	9	13	25	15	62

The independent-learning item shows divided preferences, with the largest group remaining neutral. The interactive/group-learning item has 62 recorded responses in the source table rather than 66, so the missing four responses should be verified before final publication. The findings nevertheless indicate that respondents do not display a single uniform learning preference.

6.9 Faculty Support and Learning Resources

Factor	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Faculty support	14	8	25	17	2	66
Availability of resources	7	7	29	21	0	66

Neutral responses are prominent for both faculty support and availability of resources. At the same time, a meaningful group reports that these factors positively influence their learning experience. This supports the view that educational quality depends not only on curriculum content but also on the support environment surrounding students.

6.10 Student Suggestions for Improving the Education System

Suggestion	Respondents	Percentage
Updated and industry-oriented curriculum	12	18%
More practical and skill-based learning	23	35%
Reduced exam-oriented approach	15	23%
Increased use of technology in teaching	9	14%
Flexible learning options	3	6%
Improved teacher–student interaction	4	6%
Total	66	100%

Practical and skill-based learning is the most frequently selected improvement, followed by reducing the examination-oriented approach and updating the curriculum to reflect industry requirements. Technology, flexible learning and teacher–student interaction receive smaller but still relevant shares.

6.11 Preferred Teaching–Learning Methods

Method	Respondents	Percentage
Traditional lecture method	18	27%
Interactive classroom	17	26%
Practical / hands-on learning	12	18%
Case study and problem-based learning	7	11%
Group discussion and activities	9	14%
Digital and e-learning methods	3	5%
Total	66	100%

Traditional lecture teaching has the highest individual share, closely followed by interactive classroom teaching. Practical learning, group activities and case/problem-based learning collectively indicate a substantial demand for active learning. Digital/e-learning methods receive the smallest individual share in this item. The finding is important because it suggests that Gen Z students may prefer integration of digital and active methods rather than a complete shift away from classroom teaching.

6.12 Institutional Measures to Improve Satisfaction and Engagement

Institutional Measure	Respondents	Percentage
Effective mentoring and guidance	9	14%
Improved infrastructure and facilities	19	29%
Extracurricular activities	9	14%
Innovative and technology-based teaching	13	20%
Regular feedback and recognition	7	11%
Supportive and inclusive environment	9	14%
Total	66	100%

Improved infrastructure and facilities receive the highest proportion of responses, followed by innovative and technology-based teaching. Mentoring, extracurricular activities and supportive environments also receive notable support. The results reinforce the multidimensional nature of student satisfaction.

7. Discussion

The results indicate that Generation Z commerce students cannot be characterised simply as learners who want only digital education. Instead, the evidence points towards a blended educational expectation. Students continue to select traditional lectures as an important teaching method, but they also express a strong preference for practical, interactive and skill-based learning. This combination suggests that the challenge for institutions is not to discard conventional teaching but to redesign it around application, interaction and relevance.

The strong preference for practical and skill-based learning is consistent with the employability concerns identified in the literature review. Commerce education involves subjects that can be connected naturally to business situations, accounting applications, financial decision-making, entrepreneurship, taxation practice, digital commerce and data analysis. Greater use of live projects, case studies, internships and simulations could therefore strengthen the connection between theory and practice.

The results concerning curriculum relevance further indicate the importance of maintaining alignment with contemporary business requirements. Students' recommendations for updated and industry-oriented curricula suggest that curriculum revision should be continuous rather than occasional. Industry interaction, practitioner inputs and exposure to current business technologies may help institutions maintain relevance.

The findings concerning infrastructure and faculty support show that educational transformation cannot be achieved through technology alone. Students require appropriate physical and digital resources, accessible faculty, mentoring, feedback and an inclusive learning environment. A balanced ecosystem is therefore more appropriate than a technology-only strategy.

The preference distribution for teaching methods also reveals an important contradiction: although the study describes Gen Z as digitally oriented, only a small share of respondents selected digital/e-learning methods as their preferred primary method. This may reflect the respondents' actual learning context, the dominance of offline study in the sample, or a preference for face-to-face interaction. The finding should be explored further in a larger and more diverse sample.

8. Implications of the Study

8.1 Implications for Commerce Curriculum

Commerce curricula should incorporate contemporary business applications, digital finance, entrepreneurship, data-oriented skills, case analysis and industry-relevant projects while retaining strong conceptual foundations.

8.2 Implications for Teaching Practice

Faculty can combine lectures with case studies, problem-solving, group activities, demonstrations, simulations and practical assignments. The evidence supports a blended pedagogy rather than an exclusive dependence on either lectures or digital learning.

8.3 Implications for Institutions

Institutions should strengthen infrastructure, learning resources, mentoring, feedback mechanisms and opportunities for extracurricular and experiential learning. Industry partnerships can provide students with exposure to real business environments.

8.4 Implications for Employability

Practical and skill-based learning can be linked with communication, digital literacy, analytical ability, entrepreneurship and professional competencies. Such integration may improve students' readiness for employment and further professional education.

8.5 Implications for Educational Policy

The findings support broader policy directions that emphasise flexibility, multidisciplinary learning, skill development and experiential education. However, institutional implementation should be evaluated through student outcomes rather than policy adoption alone.

9. Major Findings

7. The analysed sample contains 66 respondents, with female respondents forming a slightly larger proportion than male respondents.
8. The majority of respondents belong to the 18–20 age group.
9. First-year students constitute the dominant share of the sample.
10. Private institutions are substantially overrepresented in the respondent group.
11. Offline learning is the dominant mode of study.
12. Students express mixed and, in important respects, critical perceptions of the present education system.
13. Students show mixed preferences between independent and interactive/group learning.
14. Faculty support and availability of resources are recognised as relevant to student satisfaction and engagement.

15. Practical and skill-based learning is the most frequently selected recommendation for improving the education system.
16. Reducing an excessive examination orientation and updating the curriculum are also major student priorities.
17. Traditional lectures remain the most frequently selected individual teaching method, but interactive and practical methods are also strongly represented.
18. Improved infrastructure and facilities are the most frequently selected institutional measure for improving student satisfaction and engagement.

10. Recommendations

19. Increase practical and skill-based components in commerce courses through live projects, case studies, simulations and industry-linked assignments.
20. Review and update commerce curricula periodically to reflect contemporary business and employment requirements.
21. Reduce excessive dependence on memory-based examinations and strengthen application-oriented assessment.
22. Use technology as a complement to classroom interaction through digital resources, multimedia, learning platforms and appropriate online activities.
23. Improve classrooms, libraries, laboratories, digital resources and other learning facilities.
24. Strengthen faculty mentoring, academic guidance and career counselling.
25. Increase opportunities for internships, industrial visits, seminars, workshops, business competitions and entrepreneurship activities.
26. Provide regular formative feedback and recognition to encourage student engagement.
27. Develop supportive and inclusive learning environments that encourage participation and collaboration.
28. Offer appropriate flexibility through blended and self-paced learning resources while maintaining meaningful faculty–student interaction.

11. Limitations of the Study

29. The study is limited to Generation Z commerce students and therefore may not represent students from other academic disciplines.
30. Convenience sampling limits the generalisability of the findings.
31. The sample is heavily concentrated among first-year students and private institutions.
32. The study relies on self-reported questionnaire responses.
33. The analysis is primarily descriptive and uses percentage analysis; inferential statistical testing was not reported in the original manuscript.
34. The study captures perceptions at one point in time, and student expectations may change as technology, employment conditions and educational practices evolve.
35. The manuscript contains several data inconsistencies that should be reconciled with the original response file before journal submission.

12. Conclusion

This study examined the perceptions, learning preferences and educational expectations of Generation Z commerce students. The findings demonstrate that students have mixed views of the present education system and that a substantial proportion expect greater relevance, practicality and skill orientation. Practical and skill-based learning emerged as the leading recommendation, while curriculum updating and reducing excessive examination orientation were also prominent priorities.

At the same time, the results show that traditional teaching has not become irrelevant. Traditional lectures remain the most frequently selected individual teaching method, while interactive classroom learning follows closely. This suggests that effective commerce education for Gen Z should not be framed as a choice between traditional and modern education. Instead, institutions should combine structured conceptual teaching with practical application, interaction, technology, mentoring and industry exposure.

The study therefore supports a transformation of commerce education towards a more balanced, experiential and career-relevant model. Such transformation should be evidence-based and responsive to actual student needs. Larger and more diverse future studies using inferential statistics and comparative samples can further establish whether the patterns observed in this study differ by gender, year of study, institution type, location, access to technology or other relevant characteristics.

13. Scope for Future Research

36. Conduct studies with larger samples covering government, aided and private institutions.
37. Compare Gen Z commerce students across different regions and institutional settings.
38. Examine differences in perceptions by year of study, gender, mode of learning and exposure to internships.
39. Use inferential techniques such as chi-square tests, correlation, regression or factor analysis where the questionnaire and sample size support them.
40. Study the relationship between learning preferences and academic performance or employability outcomes.
41. Examine the impact of artificial intelligence, generative AI tools and emerging digital technologies on commerce education.
42. Compare Gen Z expectations with those of other student generations or age cohorts.

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