СОЗДАНИЕ СТУДЕНТООРИЕНТИРОВАННОЙ СРЕДЫ ОБУЧЕНИЯ ДЛЯ ПОКОЛЕНИЯ *Z* В БЕЛОРУССКОМ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОМ УНИВЕРСИТЕТЕ

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В статье рассматривается проблема адаптирования среды обучения к потребностям студентов поколения *Z*, описываются отличительные особенности данного поколения, анализируются меняющиеся роли студентов и преподавателей в студентоориентированной среде обучения, объясняются преимущества среды обучения данного типа для поколения *Z*, предлагаются способы перехода к студентоориентированой среде обучения для повышения эффективности процесса обучения студентов поколения *Z*. Описанные в статье методы имеют практическую значимость в процессе перехода к студентоориентированной среде обучения в Белорусском государственном университете на факультете международных отношений.

Ключевые слова: студентоориентированная среда обучения; студенты поколения *Z; Moodle;* БГУ; ФМО.

CREATING STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR GENERATION Z STUDENTS IN BELARUSIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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The article deals with the problem of adapting the learning environment to the needs of Generation Z students, provides the specific traits Gen Z students, analyzes the changing roles of both the teacher and the learner in the student-centered learning environment, explains the benefits of this type of educational environment for Gen Z learners, offers the ways to move to a learner-centered environment to boost efficiency among Gen Z students. The methods described in the article have practical significance in the process of shifting towards the student-centered educational environment in Belarusian State University, Faculty of International Relations.

Key words: student-centered environment; Generation Z learners; Moodle; BSU; FIR.

As educators, we sometimes stick to the general notion of having students in our class and teaching them applying the latest methods and Web 2.0 technologies, but we forget about the generational peculiarities. Students belonging to different generations learn, interact, and progress differently. Today's educators deal with Generation Z learners — people born between the late 1990s and early 2000s and seen as tech-savvy, pragmatic, open-minded, individualistic, socially responsible and fast decision makers. Gen Z are digital natives able to find and extract information quickly. The specific traits distinguishing Gen Z students from those born and raised earlier and not exposed to the overwhelming use of technologies are important for educators to be able to adapt teaching methods and strategies to the needs of this particular generation of learners.

Teaching is a complex and sophisticated process involving many aspects and demanding a teacher to be flexible enough to keep up with the changing needs of the emerging type of learners. Such learning environment creates a new teacher with the roles that shift to those of a mediator, supervisor, instructor, mentor, tutor, etc., and creates challenges in building a new environment with a student being the leader and the central element.

What is the role of a teacher in the educational process today? To answer this question, we need to look at the definition of the concept "learning" which is the core issue in the process of education. The learning theories are subject to constant development; and over the past decades, there has already evolved a new school in which philosophical, behavioral, constructive, heuristic and cognitive approaches overlap, thus presenting an integrated view to defining "learning". It isa dynamic process of actions involving mental work to acquire new skills through understanding and exposure to discovery, choice of strategies most applicable for problem solving, exercised and improved through social interaction. In this process, an educator's role is not regarded as a central element — it is shifted to give way to learners to set the aims, find ways to rich them, share and improve the knowledge and acquired skills.

In this prospective, Gen Z students represent the most favourable audience for implementing a learner-centered environment with an educator being a tutor rather than a teacher in a traditional sense. Gen Z never knew a life without Internet, cell phones, laptops, and web-technologies, which made them tech-savvy, relying heavily on user-friendly technology tofind and extract data to solve their

problems, help coordinate their activities. They are brilliant at generating a query for Google search engine, though sometimes they lack the critical thinking skills to evaluate sources for credibility. Regarding how good at using technologies the Gen Z are, it is obvious that we should be looking for the most efficient way to implement the goals of the learning process so that we integrate technology with teaching Gen Z learners successfully and shifting them to the center of the new learning environment.

With this change of focus on the learner, we can regard a student-centered classroom (or learning environment) as one where the focus of instruction is transferred from the teacher to the student, making them autonomous and independent in their studying process, and responsible for their learning process, and giving them an active, leading role in the educational process. This approach allows for the development of such skills as independent problem-solving, time management and lifelong learning. In a teacher-centered learning environment, on the contrary, the teacher possesses the active role, while students undertake a passive and receptive one.

What can be done to move to a learner-centered environment to boost efficiency among Gen Z students?

— *Making your academic group work as a community.* For this purpose, different lesson plans should be created — undertaking the role of a supervisor, be prepared to provide students with a problem, give clear instructions, help to distribute the roles if needed. During the class discussion, the teacher activates, facilitates, and directs the discussion in which students, in their turn, speak freely putting forward their ideas and being either critised, or supported, both ways learning— either a rational attitude to the critics, or self-awareness due to being praised.

— *Creating a course in an online environment.* Belarusian State University uses Moodle as an online educational platform to move away from face-to-face environment to the one, that our Gen Z students are more acquainted with. One of the services that proved to be effective when used for such distant class is creating a timeline for historical events using a web application. The timeline is uploaded to Moodle platform on the forum created by the teacher where peers can see, analyse, asses other students' timelines. Students choose to work either individually, or in groups/pairs to collect, analyse and choose the essential information on the topic, apply theoretical knowledge to complete the task, acquire research and analysis skills. As for the assessment of the task, it is carried out by the students, which on the one hand develops their critical thinking and assessment skill, and on the other hand forms a rational attitude to being criticised by peers or raises self-awareness by being praised for strong points or creative presentation of ideas. In this model of a lesson, focus shifts from a teacher to students, the latter managing the task from beginning to end under the supervision of a teacher undertaking a role of an instructor.

— *Replacing worksheet tasks with project-based learning activities*. In an academic assessment-based learning environment, it is necessary to complete a variety of tasks as home assignments for better grades and test results; though on a par with decent grades learners need to develop practical skills —team working, collaboration, undertaking the roles that can be developed in practice only. Moreover, project-based activities complement learning by provoking a student's interest and motivating them to look into the issue. Project-based learning (PBL) is even more efficient if used as a distance learning class (e.g. on Moodle platform).

— *Letting your students drive the bus.* Successful transfer from a teacher-centered model requires students' active participation and involvement in creating their own, learner-centered environment. The teacher's role consists in explaining the skills students are expected to acquire by the end of the module/ term/ year/ course, the problematic field to be studied, and in providing students with a selection of tasks (mode assignments) that can be used. Given a choice, students may develop these ideas and come up with absolutely unexpected and bright ideas to facilitate and foster better learning. In this case, Gen Z representatives try on the role of a leader, which is especially essential for them.

— *Creating a long-term project* to last as long as the module/ term/ course to let your students see the whole picture and master the subject matter. It may be best implemented in history classes— by providing students with a framework of topics and subtopic to let them structure the mind maps to be filled in by the end of the module/ term / course. Considering the clip thinking of the Gen Z learners and their tendency to rely more on short-term memory, this model proves to be effective due to the visualization, presentation of key events, dates, etc. and the possibility of viewing the whole picture to make connections.

— *Providing continuous assessment.* In a traditional classroom, student's performance evaluation is presented in marks for the graded tasks and carried out through testing, written papers

or exams. For Generation Z, obtaining clear feedback and further instructions is crucial in the overall educational process. In terms of student-centered environment, it is not informative for a learner to have his progress measured by arithmetic means only — they need a useful feedback with clearly set tasks and goals to improve their performance and achieve mastery, as well as rewards and positive reinforcement in the form of a narrative feedback. This approach will encourage learners to work further to achieve goals and master the required level. Self-assessment is another method that may be used to measure student's progress in a student-centered learning environment that involves students in evaluating their own work and learning progress where students revise their work; identify their own skill gaps, where their knowledge is weak; articulate what to focus their attention on in learning; set individual goals; track their own progress. This part of assessment motivates students to stay involved and encourages responsibility for their learning process. Another way to assess is to plan a peer assessment, for which you need to supply students with clear instructions, criteria and methods.

A student-centered learning environment is efficient and comfortable for Gen Z learnersto form their own system of tasks (informative, learning, practical) to complete self-work as well as to master individualised learning methods, to learn how to search and assess information for credibility, how to solve tasks in project-based learning and reflexive studying. The centennials also undertake complete and sole responsibility for their own progress and mastery; learn self-discipline, effective time management techniques and are prepared for continuous learning and for entering the workforce as specialists with a set of required skills and knowledge.