

Generation Alpha and the education

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Abstract: *The children of the new age went to school. These are the children of the generation Alpha who do not receive information through traditional channels. These are the children who play, learn and interact through technology. They do not want to and do not read in the traditional way. From a very young age, they have been in contact with information technology, successfully working on it, even before they have spoken. Alpha children are independent and curious, they have their own view of the world, which is different from that of their parents and teachers. Communicating with them requires an approach that is based on negotiation and compromise on the part of adults. Parents and teachers should understand, accept and support them more and criticize and educate them less violently. All this raises the question of whether teachers are prepared to teach and take into account these new features of the alpha generation, which has already started school and interacts with the education system. Conflict situations often arise between teachers and children, in which educators fail to respond adequately and professionally to parents*

Keywords: GENERATION ALPHA, EDUCATION, PARENTS, TEACHERS

1. Introduction

The role of the school in the education and upbringing of children is a key point in the field of pedagogy. This issue has come more and more to the fore in recent years as technology has developed rapidly. They have become accessible to a larger proportion of the population and have entered people's lives from a very early age. Already, children from a very young age are being introduced to and beginning to spend part of their daily lives with digital devices. They play games, watch videos and movies, communicate with their friends through their tablets and phones. It is this development of technology on the one hand, and the mass use of it by people on the other, that is leading to the emergence of Generation Alpha children.

This is the generation born between 2010 and 2024, the generation that handles technology much better than most adults. Communicating with them requires an approach based on negotiation and compromise on the part of adults. Parents and teachers need to be more understanding, accepting and supportive. All of this raises the question of whether teachers are prepared to teach and take into account these new characteristics of the Alpha generation who have already started school and are interacting with the education system. Conflict situations often arise between teachers and children in which educators fail to respond appropriately and professionally, according to parents.

The purpose of this report is to explore the attitudes of children of the Alpha Generation towards school and education and to consider the issue of whether schools can meet the development and interests of children of this generation. There is not yet enough research on this topic and, due to the age of the generation, we cannot say with certainty how it will develop and what its strengths and successes will be.

2. Problem discussion

A few decades ago, generations changed over an interval of about twenty years. Modernity is shrinking our generational frame to a dozen years. From there, the behavioral patterns and beliefs that characterize generations change rapidly, and differences (especially with a non-neighboring generation) become drastically disparate. At the same time, these differences inevitably come together "under one roof" in the home, education, work, and should be recognized and accounted for. [3] In the 1990s, William Strauss and Neil Howe concluded that being born in a particular period predetermines people's skills, thinking, values and behaviour. Scientists have been able to identify periods of time during which most people hold similar values. They are formed in children under 12-14 years under the influence of social events, technical opportunities, family upbringing. The child simply lives in certain conditions and absorbs everything that happens. This is imprinted on a subconscious level. As a result, each generation acts in a certain way.

From 1963 to 1984, members of Generation X were born. 1984-2000 was the time of Generation Y. After 2000, children of

generation Z began to be born. And now there is talk of the special Alpha generation. About children caught in the whirlwind of rapid technological development and social change. They were raised by Generation X and Y parents.

The Alpha generation are the children of the Millennials, and are often the younger siblings of the Zeta generation. The generation's name was proposed back in 2005 by Australian social researcher Mark McCrindle. While writing his book, "ABCs of XYZ: Understanding Global Generations," it became clear to him that a new generation would soon emerge, and there is as yet no official name for it. McCrindle decides to conduct a poll to find out what people think it should be named. In Understanding Generational Alpha, McCrindle points out that "as a research agency with a keen interest in generational analysis, we decided to test a few names with a survey of Australians. When we asked what they thought the next generation should be called, many people suggested 'Generation A', as we had already reached the end of the alphabet with Generation Z." But Generation Alpha represents a whole new generation, born entirely in a new century. Going back to the beginning of the Latin alphabet, this name did not feel appropriate for this next generation. Furthermore, it all happened right after the Atlantic hurricane season in 2005, when there were so many storms that the normal alphabetic names were exhausted, and so the Greek alphabet was used for the first time, starting with hurricane alpha an, hurricane beta, etc." McCrindle goes on to say in his work that he used the Greek alphabet instead of the Latin one so that there would be no return of the old, but the beginning of something new. The author attempts to predict future characteristics by analyzing demographics - age of parents (older), cultural mix (more diverse), socioeconomic (slightly wealthier), family size (smaller), life expectancy (longer). In addition, there is research on their parents - the millennials (or Generation Y), which gives us an idea of what they will look like - more likely to move and change jobs, be materially secure, technologically equipped and supported in many aspects of their lives, such as childcare. Generation Alpha will be the largest generation as we have a larger population than ever before. They will live longer and be more culturally diverse than previous generations. Technology is making them the most globally connected generation. Generation Alpha is the first generation to form in the age of portable digital devices, and for many of them, their pacifiers are not a rattle or a set of keys, but a smartphone or tablet. This is a generation born into the world of iPhones, YouTube and Instagram. They consider themselves social, global and mobile as they will work, study and travel between different countries and pursue many professions. The Alpha generation will develop much earlier in many ways: physical maturity comes earlier, so adolescence for them will start earlier. While adolescence begins earlier, it will continue later. Adult life that was once measured in marriage, children, mortgages and careers will now shift into later years. This generation will stay longer in the education system and at home with parents. Generation Alpha is defined by technology devices like smartphones and tablets, video games, driverless trains, autonomous cars and smart speakers that talk to you. These technologies have

been developed within their generation and it's all they know. Technology is also being adopted faster than ever. While it took radio 38 years to reach 50 million users, television 13, the iPod only four, the internet three, Facebook only one, Pokémon Go took only 19 days to reach those users! Generation Alpha has been bred as "screen users" to a greater extent than the fixed screens of the past could facilitate. It's nearly impossible to tear Generation Alpha away from their devices, which have been in their lives since the day they were born. They have been using these devices since before they could speak, so we have yet to see what the impact of their interaction with the screens will be. Going forward, it is very likely that the Alpha generation will never use a wallet, disposable plastics, listen to a radio, participate in written exams, or set an analog alarm clock. Parents are increasingly aware of the negative consequences of too much time spent with technology - the isolation and anti-social impact. However, there is also a view that is positive about the use of technology toys - they increase connectivity, facilitate communication and develop social and global skills.

The Alpha generation may never see a camera that requires film and they will never have to wait for it to be developed. The only phones they've ever seen also take pictures, record videos, have internet access, and capabilities to play games that are quite different from landlines. Presumably their parents will steer them towards a more formal education. In this way, from an earlier age, the Alpha generation will have access to more information than any generation before. It is also predicted that every second child of the Alpha generation will receive a university degree. Generation Alpha will outperform even the vaunted and sophisticated Generation Z in terms of education, with 90% completing secondary education, compared to 80% today, and the majority of them continuing to study in some form. Many future occupations do not yet figure as of yet, with 65% of those entering primary school today expected to enter completely new occupations that do not yet exist. While technology is replacing jobs, it is also creating many new ones. Many of these students are now learning skills in robotics, coding, social media marketing, app development, and big data analytics. [4]

There are still too many unknowns in predicting the possible development of the children of this generation. The difficulties are compounded by the strong impact of the Kovid pandemic, which has gripped the world for two years, and the volatile political situation in Europe.

Parents, teachers and researchers are asking too many questions that have yet to be answered.

3. Objective and research methodologies

As youth issues researcher Simon Schnetzer points out, as quoted by Die Welt, an affinity for digital technology will be the biggest challenge in dealing with the children of the Alphabet generation. They are hyperflexible and find it difficult to conform to temporal and spatial relationships, such as in special spaces like kindergartens or schools. [9]

Parents of children of this generation express concerns that their children spend extremely long periods of time on mobile devices. This process has also increased as a result of the pandemic that has swept the world and forced schools to switch to distance learning. In Bulgaria, primary school students were less in a distance learning environment and more in class.

In order to track parents' and children's attitudes toward education, school, and teachers' authority, we conducted a survey involving parents, grandparents, and other relatives associated with raising and educating Generation Alpha children. The idea for this research came about as a response to many parents sharing that their children aged 3 - 11 are different, they can't tear them away from their digital devices and they feel that learning at school is not tailored to the characteristics of the new generation. Parents believe that somewhere there is a disconnect in their communication with

teachers. Is this really the case or does it come from the specifics of Generation Y parents. Flexibility and creativity are important in the work and education of Generation Y members. They do not recognize seniority, experience, qualifications. They believe that they are entitled to a job with high status and a lot of free time without putting in much effort. They work to have fun. Generation Y support a return to family-oriented living. They are generally very social, socially responsible, value relationships, seek work-life balance, loyal and sensible, on the 't- with new technology. [7] Education in moral and family values, better education based on the modernization of the education system are at the core of the understanding of the people of this generation. All these characteristics of the parents of the Alpha Generation also explain their demands on the education system, the dilemmas about educational approaches they face when confronted with the children of the next generation.

In this regard, we prepared the survey to find out whether education is still a value for the children of the Alpha generation and whether they continue to attend school willingly, and whether teachers are still an authority among them.

When asked, "Do you think children of the Alpha generation are different from other generations?" 62 percent of respondents thought children of the Alpha generation were different from other generations, 38 percent said no, just very over-satisfied.

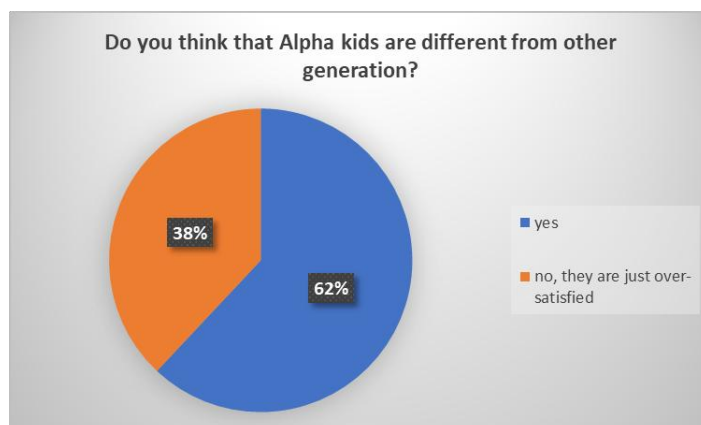


Fig. 1 Diagram of for the percentage distribution of responses to the question

To the question "Is he willingly attending nursery, kindergarten, school?", 64 percent answered positively, 6 percent negatively, 28 percent - differently and 2 percent that he is bored there.

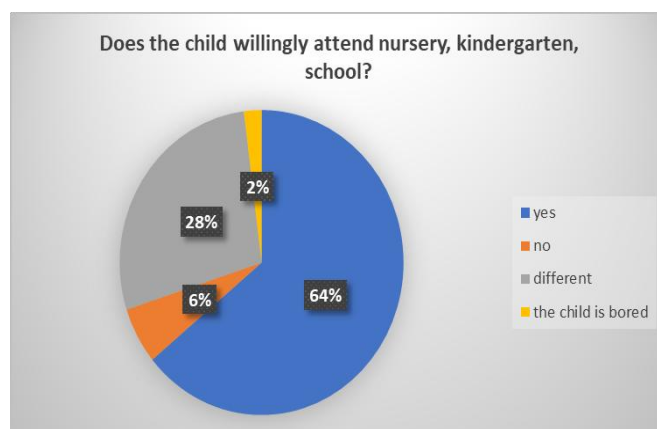


Fig. 2 Diagram of for the percentage distribution of responses to the question

When asked, "Do you think teachers and educators are an authority figure for your child?", 74 percent responded positively, 6 percent negatively, and 20 percent could not decide.

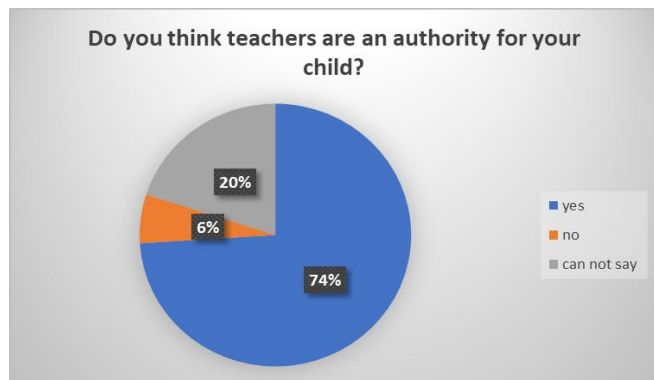


Fig. 3 Diagram of for the percentage distribution of responses to the question

When asked, "Do you think the topics in the curriculum meet the interests and developmental level of Generation Alpha children?", 54 percent responded negatively, 24 percent responded positively, and 22 percent could not decide.

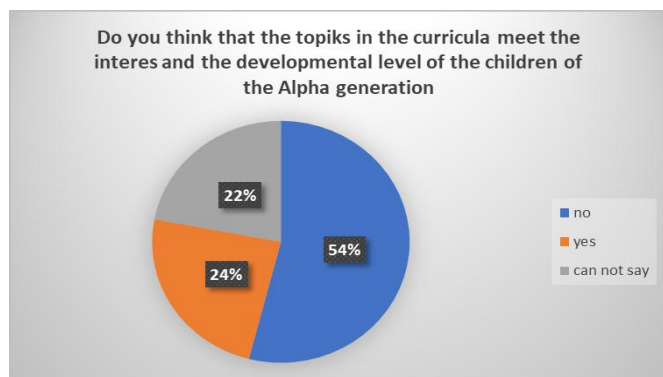


Fig. 4 Diagram of for the percentage distribution of responses to the question

The following main conclusions can be drawn from the study, and the report does not claim to be exhaustive on the subject:

1. Generation Alpha children are eager to go to school, which shows that this primal value - the desire for better education of young people - has not changed despite the development of technology and distance learning opportunities..
2. Children have established friendly relationships with their classmates. Building and maintaining friendships is extremely important for a child's growth. As Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bagriana Ilieva points out - school is an institution in the school education system where children are educated to acquire a degree, but also where they are educated and socialized. In addition to these functions of the educational institution can be superimposed the social one, since in the period of primary education social groups and relationships are formed. In groups, observance of rules is required, which students learn under the guidance and responsibility of the teacher. The social function thus learned can be considered crucial and used in the later life of the now adults. Pre-school and school education provides children with knowledge, values and social skills that enable them to integrate into society and behave adaptively there, and not be part of interpersonal problems. In order to integrate into the present complex society, each person also needs a certain set of social skills to effectively control emotions, to build normal human relationships, to communicate and cooperate with others, and other structural components that are part of the content of emotional intelligence. [1]
3. Eachers remain an authority for children and their parents, which should be fully utilized by both parties. Parents and teachers should work closely together and organise or be

involved in the preparation of various joint initiatives in order to foster in children a desire to participate actively in the learning process, to inculcate common human values..

4. Adapting student teachers' curricula to the use of different e-platforms, such as eTwinning, in conjunction with the study of traditional subjects. The inclusion of these platforms will emphasize the possibilities of integrating the project method into the educational process in preschool and primary school age through the use of digital educational resources. Students will be able to become familiar with a technological model for planning and implementing project work, as well as the criteria for evaluating the project presentation and project product. In this way it is expected to make learning more attractive for this digital generation. [2]
5. Students are motivated to attend classes, and this motivation should be increased and sustained because it depends on the interest in the information that is conveyed and that underlies the cognitive activity. [8]
6. There is a need to bring about a change in education for the Alphabet Generation, teachers should use modern methods which, thanks to current advances in high technology, provide a wide choice of technical products that can support education at different levels. [6] Visual tutorials could be created because more and more reliance has to be placed on visual suggestion, to which the text has a commentary and complementary function. This is a long process, in which advertising clips, trailers, and other forms that have been nurturing for decades a new visual culture and a new attitude to the perception of the content of the teaching material will take their place. [5]
7. In the curricula it is good to include, along with traditional subjects, new subjects that, on the one hand, meet the requirements of this digital generation, but on the other hand, help them to form as individuals..

4. Conclusion

The topic of educating the children of the Alpha Generation will continue to excite their parents, teachers and of course their future employers. But the results of the survey, as well as a study of materials about the children of this generation, give reason to argue that however different these children may be, education in traditional human values and ancestral traditions, communication and time spent together should continue to be the basis of interaction with them. Encouraging interaction with grandparents will preserve the moral values that parents seek to educate children to. Teachers and educators continue to have a meaningful and formative role in the lives of young children, and so they must continue to help the Alpha Generation establish itself in this new world while maintaining its humanity. Their educators and teachers must therefore help them to establish themselves in this new reality.

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