

Factors Motivating a Multigenerational Workforce towards Teaching Job Roles in Higher Education

Mahnoor Sahrash

PhD Research Scholar,
Dept. of Management Studies,
Osmania University, Hyderabad, India
mahnoor.ameen@gmail.com

Abstract:

The concept of a multigenerational workforce has been around for the past decade but has found renewed resonance in the higher education sector, internationally. While an interesting aspect of human resource management as well as organizational behavior, generational study per se, has not been dealt with the kind of resourcefulness and insight in the Indian context.

Quite a few noticeable studies have been made with regard to multiple generations at the workplace but with regard to multiple generations coexisting as teaching faculty has largely gone unnoticed in the field of research. Though reasons abound for this oversight, it has been seen that as the inherent challenges of intergenerational differences spill over across various sectors, the changing scope of education will also be impacted by the intergenerational differences prevailing among teaching faculty.

Different generations bring with them different outlooks, perceptions and motivations. That there is a difference has been established through studies on generations and generational cohorts for the past many decades. It has been firmly established that different generations bring with them different perceptions and outlooks, not to mention different work styles and expectations from the job. While perceptions differ, so do the outlook towards motivation towards a job role.

This paper is an attempt to understand the inherent differences in motivating factors for different generations in the teaching job roles in higher education.

Key Words: Demographics, Multigenerational Workforce, Motivation, Generational Cohort

JEL Codes: J1: Demographic Economics, M5: Personnel Economics

Introduction:

The concept and related research for multigenerational workforce owes its relevance to a more fundamental concept prevalent in Organisation Behaviour, workforce diversity. Made relevant over decades of activism and crucial socio-political changes, not to mention cultural changes at the workplace, workplace diversity took centre stage as a marker for more representation for women at the workplace. It later evolved as a practice to involve various types of groups that were either underrepresented or underprivileged. Thus, paving the way for a diverse and inclusive workplace.

While diversity and inclusivity have been largely used to depict underrepresented groups, the realization of age as a marker for differentiation gained currency about a decade ago when America realized that for the first time, there would be four generations working together. An interesting observation, given that each generation is defined specifically by what they have been influenced by during their formative years.

Twenge, Campbell & Campbell identify three major concerns with regard to future research for multigenerational study. Namely:

1. There is a need to develop models that show transmission of variables of interest, such as, attitudes, values, personality, etc. through cohorts and cohort-members.
2. A need to identify generational cut-offs in the context of historical and/ or cultural events.
3. The need to identify models to predict future behavior for cohorts identified.

It has been concluded by them that though generational labels may stick around to be used, they should be acknowledged as general groupings rather than precise descriptors.

Neil Howe and William Strauss (Strauss & Howe, 1991), are traditionally seen as pioneers of theorising on generational cohorts and their research still provides a skeletal framework for intergenerational study.

Research Objectives:

The paper has the following research objectives:

1. To define and understand generational cohorts.
2. To understand the relevance of a multigenerational workforce in the field of higher education in India.
3. To analyse the factors that motivate a multigenerational workforce in the higher education sector.

Review of Literature:

The Oxford Dictionary defines generation as ‘all of the people born or living in about the same time, regarded collectively’.

One of the earliest definitions, quoted by Jean Twenge, is ‘generational cohorts include individuals born around the same time who share distinctive social or historical life events during critical development periods (Schaie, 1965).

Therefore, Twenge concludes that each generation is influenced by broad forces, namely, parents, peers, media, critical economic and social events and popular culture.

Taking this definition further, it is helpful to understand that, generations then, each have specific life events that they share with their own cohort members, in the past, specific to their own country or geographical location, and in the very recent past, more globally.

Generations are usually defined as being around 17-20 years in length, keeping in account the biological growth of the cohort. According to Strauss and Howe (1991) this time period is correct to map cultural changes between the generations.

According to Kondratieff (1979) and Thompson (2007), the twenty year gap also helps to map the economic growth or decline for the given cohort.

As per the comprehensive and slightly varied definitions given by researchers for the purpose of generational study, Insead’s review has coined the following definition for generation:

‘generations are cohorts of individuals who have grown up in the same historical and social context, whose shared formative experiences instill in them beliefs, values and general dispositions that differ from those of others born and raised in different contexts and time periods.’

However, according to Ng et al (2012), the start and end dates for defining generations should be seen as ‘guideposts’ rather than absolute boundaries.

Implications of a Multigenerational Workforce in the Workplace

It is also imperative to note that there has been certain implications identified by Chavez (2015) with regard to multiple generations as faculty in higher education. According to Chavez, implications towards educational leadership, learning and effectiveness, discrimination and fairness and the access and legitimacy take centre stage. The focus towards fair opportunity and the need to understand diversity was highlighted in the study.

Hannay and Fretwell () in their article brought out the differences among generations in terms of Centrality of Work, Personal Interaction, Technology, Need for Attention, Loyalty and External Locus of Control. The similarities exist as per a Gallup Report, cited by Giancola (2010), that Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y, look for the same attributes and characteristics in organisations and jobs, placing interesting work, opportunities to grow, high quality management and good compensation as priorities.

According to Twenge et al (2010), Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y continue to value intrinsic rewards more than all other rewards. It is also important to note that all generations currently participating in the workplace recognize the importance of communication; they just don't come to a consensus with the mode of communication(Hannah & Fretwell).

Generations Defined:

While what a generational cohort is has been discussed at length, it remains to be seen which is the most feasible break-up of these cohorts. For the sake of this research, generational cohorts have been defined as follows:

Baby Boomers- Born between 1946-1964

Generation X- Born between 1965-1982

Generation Y- Born between 1983-1995

Generation Z- Born in 1996 and after

It is interesting to note that birth year as a definition of generational cohorts, while being convenient, ignores certain key human aspects. By definition, each cohort is expected to have shared experiences and influences but it is rarely true globally. At least for Baby Boomers and Generation X. Generation Y and Generation Z, though, are far more connected globally and have almost similar influences.

The Higher Education Sector in India

The Higher Education Sector in India has grown with leaps and bounds over the past decade- from 436 universities in 2009-10 to 903 in 2017-18 and from 26,000 colleges to over 39,000. Student enrolment is at 36.6 million, being the third largest, after China and USA.

As the country is poised to have the largest young and working-age population by 2030, it is also expected to provide for about 20% of the young talent pool supplied by the non- OECD G-20 countries

India has always had a vibrant education sector and also one of the most comprehensive. Higher education, within the country is represented by a vast network of universities, privately-run stand-alone institutions and smaller scale skill-building institutions.

Legitimacy for higher education as we define in our country is derived through a system of affiliations, directly leading to the apex body, the University Grants Commission, either through affiliations to universities or as registered stand-alone institutions.

The university affiliation model, which has helped strengthen a network of colleges across the country, creates a separate set of institutions that have their own set of policies towards teaching and non-teaching faculty, owing to the affiliation rules practiced.

What makes this set of institutions a focus of this research paper, is the fact that this network of local colleges bear the responsibility of providing education to the maximum set of youth in the country.

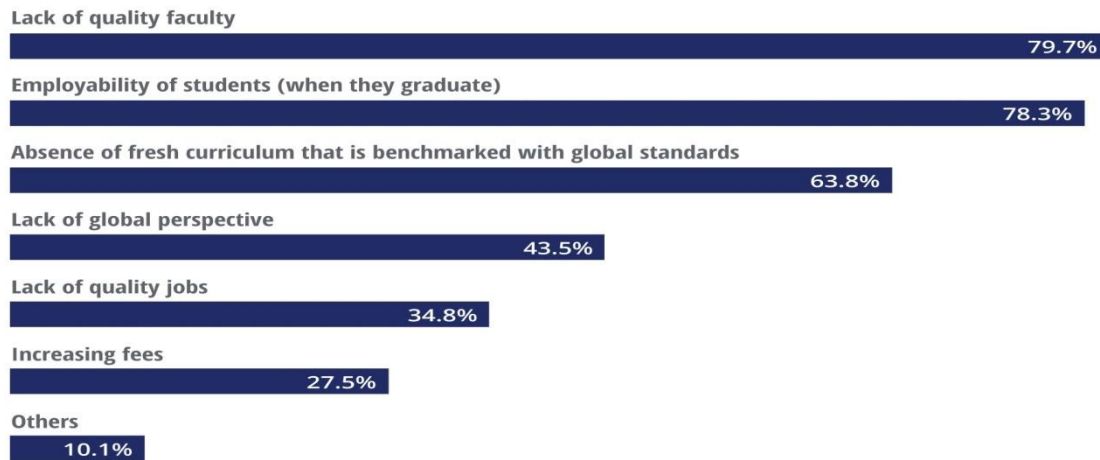
The focus therefore, is in the teaching faculty that enables this provision. An observation that can be made across colleges in the state of Telangana, and, by extension, in the country.

While higher education has a well-established network of colleges and stand-alone institutions, there are certain jarring facts that come to light with regard to the quality of teaching and learning that is being provided. Deloitte Insights, the research arm of the Deloitte company recently published key findings as part of its Deans Summit, 2019.

FIGURE 1

Lack of quality faculty and student employability top the list of problems faced by Indian higher education

■ Frequency (in percent)



Source: 2019 Deloitte Deans Survey.

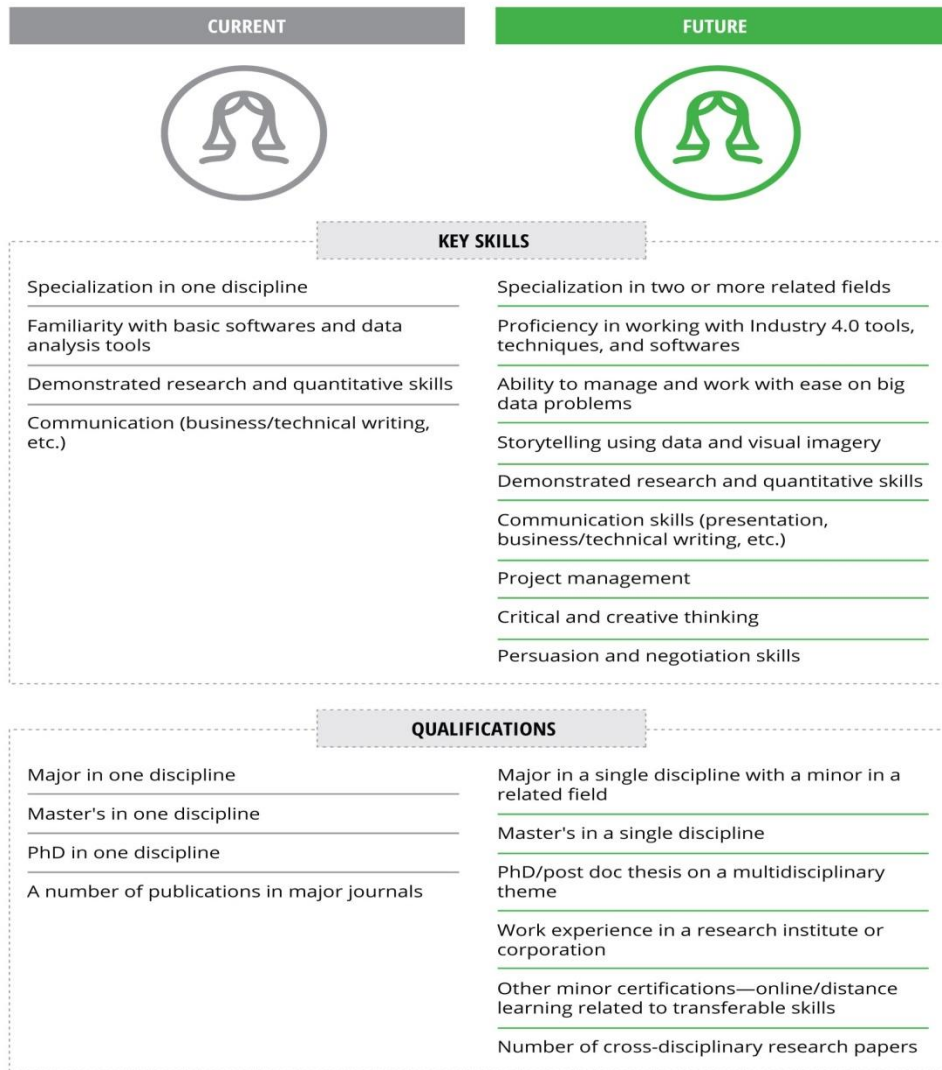
Deloitte Insights | deloitte.com/insights

Among the key issues plaguing higher education, lack of quality faculty is the top most problem for institutions. This phenomenon is made more intriguing by the presence of multiple generations in the teaching community.

Deloitte Insights goes on to propound the Educator 4.0, a new-age instructor that can build the skill gap and at the same time play a prominent role in developing higher education to compete at world-class standards.

FIGURE 3

Current and future educator profiles in the Indian higher education system



Source: Deloitte analysis.

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Motivating a Multigenerational Workforce- As evidenced from research

It has been seen that though there has been quite a comprehensive amount of research that has gone into the study of multiple generations at the workplace, there is a lack of research in the education sector, which is also seeing age diversity in all its glory.

With regard to available literature on the association of age with motivation, it has been discovered that there are two overarching observations. One set of research that has identified differences, and then there is another that has concluded that such differences are negligible. While drawing up the

fundamental differences in age cohorts, when the focus is on basic psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence and relatedness, all cohorts show an overall consistency.

While Giancola(2006) had concluded through research that perceived differences generations was not substantial. While Giancola's conclusions were backed by research further conducted by Wong et al (2008), it is interesting to note that such studies concluded that differences in motivation were a result of age difference rather than generational difference. Research by Finegold, Mohrman and Spreitzer (2002) also found no evidence to really link motivation and generational groups and motivation.

The changing scope of higher education and better job and growth opportunities has been one of the many reasons why younger generations are becoming increasingly prevalent in the higher education sector, as teaching faculty.

This pattern has also brought about interesting changes towards how the teaching job role is perceived and how the responsibilities are understood and fulfilled. The changing nature of the teaching job role also plays a crucial part in making teaching an interesting vocation to turn to, with teaching paving way for mentoring and facilitating.

Within this milieu, owing to the inherent differences exhibited by different generations, it has been seen that there are different factors that motivate different generations in a similar workspace. It is crucial to understand these underlying differences because this understanding will pave the way for drafting better HR policy for rewards, career progression and job descriptions.

For the purpose of understanding to what extent there is a difference, a questionnaire based study was conducted.

Research Methodology

The sample for this study is the teaching faculty of private undergraduate college in the state of Telangana. A sample size of 840 respondents were administered a questionnaire that, in addition to demographic variables, provided a set of 16 items for the construct of Motivation, each with a 5 point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree(1).

The Situation Motivation Scale as developed by E. L. Deci and R.M. Ryan (1985,1991) was used to create a set of a 16 item questionnaire to measure the construct of Motivation. The SIMS as it is known has 4 internally consistent factors, namely, Intrinsic Motivation, Identified Regulation, External Regulation and Amotivation

While intrinsic motivation refers to performing an activity for itself, in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction inherent in the activity, extrinsic motivation pertains to a wide variety of behaviours where the goals of action extend beyond those inherent in the activity itself. The understanding of this comes from Self-Determination Theory as propounded by Deci and Ryan (1985).

The Cronbach alpha for the 16 items was found to be 0.8, thus being subject to the approval of reliability.

The Bartlett's Test for sphericity to identify whether factors being considered are relevant or not, was found to be less than 0.001 and the KMO test to find out the adequacy of the data to conduct further analysis. With a KMO > 0.5 the items were found sufficient for further analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

A sample size of 840 respondents was administered a set of 16 Likert-Scale statements on what motivates them on a job. The following findings attempt to throw some light on the inherent changes across generational cohorts.

Table 1.0

Demographic Profile

N=840

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
Below 25 years	14	1.7
26-39 years	210	25.0
40-55 years	392	46.7
56-74 years	224	26.7
Gender		
Male	589	70.2
Female	250	29.8
Professional Qualification		
Masters Only		
PhD	350	41.7
NET Qualified	238	28.3
	252	30.0

Designation

Head of the Dept	114	13.6
Associate Professor	31	3.7
Assistant Professor	579	68.9
Lecturer	116	13.8

Tenure

0-5 years	350	41.7
6-10 years	224	26.7
11-15 years	140	16.7
15-20 years	98	11.7
More than 20 years	28	3.3

It has been observed that in the sample of 840 respondents, the most prevalent generational cohort is Generation Y (26-39 years), Generation X (40-55 years) and Baby Boomers (56-74 years). Generation Z, that is, the first group, aged 25 years and below, is a very small part of the overall sample.

Other noticeable observations on the demographic profile is that the a major portion of the sample has the Assistant Professorship designation, at 68.9% of the sample. This points to an obvious job description issue prevailing in private colleges in the state of Telangana. For private colleges to designate a faculty member as an Assistant Professor, there are no strict norms to be followed. A tenure decided by the internal management and the existence of the NET certification proves to be a ground for designating a faculty member as an Assistant Professor.

While at the University level, it is seen that qualification and seniority are considered as parameters for designating a faculty member as an Assistant, Associate or of a Professor cadre, private colleges are not required to set up these parameters for its faculty members.

Table 2.0

Descriptive Statistics for the 16 item list of motivators

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Earning a salary commensurate with the work I do	840	4.35	.704
Doing work that is engaging and interesting	840	4.85	.357
Doing work that positively impacts society	840	4.72	.551
Being able to strike a balance between professional and personal commitments	840	4.63	.577
A friendly and relaxed work environment	840	4.72	.520
Doing work that challenges me	840	4.68	.500
Having a superior who is an active mentor	840	4.40	.664
Having the freedom to experiment	840	4.50	.620
Having job security	840	4.42	.691
Having authority to supervise others' work	840	4.00	.708
Being rewarded and recognized for the work I do	840	4.30	.614
Doing work that is relevant to the skills I have been trained and / or qualified in	840	4.58	.614

Having an opportunity to learn new things	840	4.78	.451
Receiving relevant feedback for my performance	840	4.53	.645
Working in a job role widely perceived as prestigious	840	4.25	.722
Having enough opportunities for career advancement	840	4.57	.642
Valid N (listwise)	840		

The standard deviation figures mentioned in the table above point to more or less uniform approach towards motivating factors on the job. The average for all 16 items points towards a uniform approach towards motivating factors. The highest mean observed is 4.85 for the item ‘Doing work that is engaging and interesting’. This points to an expectation of having an enjoyable and engaged workplace. The lowest mean is recorded for the item ‘Having authority to supervise others’ work’. This observation points to an overall disinterest in the actively seeking authority in order to stay motivated.

Inter-item correlation was found to be positive at 0.05% and 0.01% level of significance.

In order to understand further the inherent differences between age cohorts, two-way ANOVA was conducted in order to understand different the approach towards motivating factors is.

Table 4.0

One Way ANOVA for difference of variance among age cohorts and level of agreement with motivating factors.

One-Way ANOVA (Fisher's)

Item	F (critic.)	df1	df2	P (sig.)
Earning a Salary Commensurate with the work I do	18.98	3	836	< .001
Doing work that is engaging and interesting	2.19	3	836	0.088
Doing work that positively impacts society	19.99	3	836	< .001
Being able to strike a balance between professional and personal commitments	15.27	3	836	< .001
A friendly and relaxed work atmosphere	79.86	3	836	< .001

One-Way ANOVA (Fisher's)

Item	F (critic.)	df1	df2	P (sig.)
Doing work that challenges me	21.46	3	836	< .001
Having a superior who is an active mentor	9.28	3	836	< .001
Having the freedom to experiment	12.30	3	836	< .001
Having Job Security	5.52	3	836	< .001
Having authority to supervise others' work	3.70	3	836	0.012
Being rewarded and recognized for the work I do	12.30	3	836	< .001
Doing work that is relevant to the skills I have been trained for	22.76	3	836	< .001
Having an opportunity to learn new things	18.60	3	836	< .001
Receiving relevant feedback for my performance	15.74	3	836	< .001
Working in a job role widely perceived as prestigious	9.14	3	836	< .001
Having enough opportunities for career advancement	43.94	3	836	< .001

A One-Way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of different generational cohorts on the motivation of the teaching faculty. The one way ANOVA shows that for the Critical value of $f(3, 836)$ is greater than the significant value, .000, with the second item on the scale being an exception.

All items measuring motivation therefore, point to the existence of difference among generations towards what motivates them. In other words, one way Analysis of Variance helps us determine the effect of generational cohort, as observed through age, on what motivates them.

However, two items stand out, where the f (critical) value is lower than the significant value- 'Doing work that is engaging and interesting' and the item 'Having authority to supervise others' work'. These two items can point to the inaccuracy of the widely held belief that engaging and interesting work is something that all generational cohorts are in agreement with. Another interesting observation is that the second item with no variance, also points to an overwhelming disagreement with authority influencing motivation.

Suggestions:

While research has concluded in two distinct ways, the relevance of a multigenerational workforce, in the light of the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there does exist a difference in motivating factors among different generational cohorts. While organisations are quick to understand the needs of a gender diverse workforce, age diversity is something that should be given more importance. The reason why there is a difference among generational cohorts towards their understanding of motivation is, is because of the inherent characteristics that they have imbibed owing to their life events and influencing factors.

Organisations that are looking to scale up, in this context higher education institutions that have to embrace change head-on will have to alter their approach towards motivating their workforce by understanding the different needs of the different generations that are employed with them.

Higher education in India has had a long-storied history, but if this sector is to become more flexible and adaptable to the changing landscape of skill-building and education, then regulations need to change to reflect the diversity of its own workforce.

Conclusion:

While it has been observed that there seems to be different generations bring with them different ideas of the workplace as well as different approaches, it has to be understood that it will be fruitful to ensure that all generations that work together in a similar set-up, with similar job roles, need to be motivated in a similar way. While that might not always be possible, it is the responsibility of higher education institutions to ensure that they identify what sets apart the different generations of teaching faculty with regard to motivating factors.

With new changes in the education policy on the horizon and with a raging global pandemic that has changed the way we teach and learn, it is now even more important that different generations of teachers step up to the challenge and adapt, in order to survive.

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