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Understanding The Alpha Generation: Elementary Teachers' Views on Their Characteristics, Vulnerabilities, And Parental Thinking

JENNY S. EKNADAN
Teacher III
Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc.
Master of Arts in Educational Management
jenny.eknadan001@deped.gov.ph

Abstract — This research aims to identify the characteristics of alpha generation students from the lens of preschool teachers at Santa Cruz Central Elementary School of Santa Cruz, Davao del Sur. In this regard, the research questioned whether there was a difference between alpha generation and Z generation students in terms of some variables. Besides, the class management techniques used for both generations and the change in parent profiles were discussed comparatively. The working group consisted of twelve teachers working at a public elementary in Santa Cruz Central Elementary School. This research used a content analysis method during qualitative analysis. The research findings revealed that the negative characteristics of alpha generation were more than positive characteristics. Alpha generation was found to exhibit behaviors such as being more curious, free from any rules, being more ill-tempered, more mobile, and more self-centered; moreover, they also had high self-esteem, and they were more emotional and more conscious. In terms of communication, Alpha generation was also determined to be more closed and behave. Considering classroom management techniques, preschool teachers were found to use the reconstructive approach for the alpha generation and traditional classroom management techniques. The research findings also indicated that alpha generation parents were more conscious and sensitive.

Keywords — Alpha generation, parent, classroom management, elementary teachers, elementary schools

I. Introduction

The rapid development in information and technology, especially the existence of the internet and various websites and the content it contains, has led to the change of mindset and behavior within society. Along with this change, the concept of cyberspace has emerged, and changes have occurred in the individual, social and community point of views. Considering the individual level, a fundamental change towards cyberspace has been created, and each individual in the virtual world could be divided into infinite numbers of identities. Such fake identities can cause individuals to demonstrate numbers of unethical behaviors such as editing photo, spreading hoaxes anonymously and taking peoples' photos without any permission as well as sharing it in social media, etc. In cyberspace (virtual reality), individuals can establish close ties with people they have never met before, which leads to social deterioration. At the community level, the

presence of cyberspace is related to the creation of a community model which is known as the digital and open democratic community.

Alpha generation is a generation that is born after the Z generation. The entire Alpha generation is the first-generation holding individuals born in the 21st century. In the study conducted on the post-Z generation in 2015, McCrindle identified that the participants called this generation is “Generation Alpha” (Nagy & Kölcsey 2019). Stefanov, Terziev and Banabakova (2019) used the term “homo tabletus” for this generation. This generation is considered to have been born in the 2010-2025 period. Those in alpha generation include infants, babies and those who are not yet born. Alpha generation, starting to learn at an early age, becomes a higher educated generation compared to the other ones. The fun and education of this generation depend largely on screens; moreover, it will be realized over time what kind of codes can be generated for global decision makers related to the exposure to the screen. The iPad was launched in 2010, when the eldest of this generation was born, and Instagram took its place on social channels and “app” became the word of the year. Therefore, the fixed screen experience of past generations is not able to address their fluid and fully mobile experiences. Screenager is a distinctive feature of this generation (Kaynak, 2019).

What is the most significant about this generation is the digital environment into which they are born. Technology, parents, educators, and other social interactions influence their everyday lives. The concept of “connection” is central to this generation, even more important than the previous Generation Z (Tootell, Freeman & Freeman, 2019). In general, the characteristics of this generation can be summarized as dependencies on screens and the touch screen world. Carter (2019) noted that this generation would rather communicate visually through images and audios than type messages, and they need much more attention as they are filthily pampered by their parents. He added that this generation is a technology literate generation. Barkowitz (2019) coined alpha generation as creative, Holroyd (2019) stated that the alpha generation learn in a longer period of time despite close interaction with online learning, and they grow up rapidly with the effect of technology. The researcher indicated that this generation is surrounded by material concepts and their ability to overcome problems is high. The characteristics of the alpha generation are presented by the researchers as follows (Schawbell, 2019; Barkowitz, 2019; Ramadlani & Wibisono, 2019).

Contrary to Barkowitz and Ramadlani & Wibisono negative point of views towards alpha generation, Schawbell (2019) positively considered alpha generation as the one that has far more opportunities and challenges. Having evaluated alpha generation with a critical eye, Nagy and Kölcsey (2019) emphasized that the characteristics attributed to the alpha generation involve prognosis, that is, estimations. However, Bennett, Maton, and Kervin (2018) argued that the alpha generation is a different “digital natives" generation, and that education needs to be fundamentally changed in order to meet the needs of “digital natives”.

This research aims to identify the characteristics of alpha generation students from the lens of elementary school teachers. In this regard, the research questioned the characteristics, vulnerabilities and parental thinking of the Alpha Generations. Besides, the class management techniques used for alpha generations and the thinking of the parents will be discussed. The participants consisted of twelve elementary teachers (12) working at a public school in Sta Cruz Central Elementary School in Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur.

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. Who are the Alpha Generation and what are their characteristics?
2. What are the vulnerabilities of Alpha Generation learners in the classrooms and in their homes?
3. What are the parents thinking about Alpha Generation learners?

Born to their millennial's parents, Gen Alpha are born between 2010 and 2025. Nearly 250 children are born every minute, amounting to 2.1 million Gen Alpha born every week and more than 130 million around the globe (Lamble, 2018). It is estimated that if all the members have been born by 2025, the number will reach two billion, signaling their humongous presence in future (Carter, 2019; McCrindle, 2019). Their birth year (2010) coincides with the year where "app" was the word of the year and witnessed the launch of iPad and Instagram – presently world's most preferred brand and social media application, respectively. They are born in an era of rapid advanced technologies operating 24*7*365 globally. Technology means the world to them. From entertainment, gaming, connecting to peers, and even education in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, their life revolves around technology. Recently, it was found that by the age of two, Gen Alpha master touchscreen and easily navigate through various apps on smartphones, which their predecessors took years (Turk, 2019), earning them the labels of generation glass, screenagers, digital natives, and connected or wired generation (Tootell et al., 2019; Williams, 2019).

To understand the ecology of Gen Alpha, observing cultural factors will provide a better understanding of their immediate context. In Australia, primarily an individualistic nation, McCrinddle and Wolfinger (2019) observed an unparalleled reality before Gen Alpha in terms of—(a) numbers of women and mothers being employed, (b) number of babies in paid or foster care, (c) parents being older, (d) families being smaller, and (e) lower household population. Given their parents, the millennial, have spent similar lives in this globalized tech-world, such observations may also encompass this new generation in collectivistic countries too like India, where preferences toward individualism is growing. In India, traditionally, family ethos, cultural norms, high parental power distance, and interpersonal self dominates. Over the years, introduction of Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization during the early nineties and later the IT revolution has transformed India socially, culturally, and financially. Gradually, millennials move toward cosmopolitan cities in search of better job opportunities and standard of life. From this

disequilibrium, emerged fragmented societies, paving way for nuclear families; dual-career jobs; proportionate rise in the standard of living; need for materialistic pleasures, furthered by the advent of consumerism and ICT.

In this backdrop, came the Gen Alpha, whose birth years nearly coincide with the global financial crisis of 2008. The worst economic disaster post the Great Depression of 1929, put their millennial parents into a zone of economic despair. Arriving as a ray of hope and shine, Gen Alpha ensured the continuity and stability in their parents' life. They are a gift to their stressed-out millennial parents, who prefer a small family with growing preference toward one baby family (Rampell, 2019). Subsequently, they are the most pampered and wealthiest in terms of materialistic possessions and gadgets, making them an instant gratification seeker, selfish and overindulged cohort (Carter, 2020).

Generation Alpha and Vulnerabilities

Mannheim (1952) suggested the term 'generational location' for the problem subjective to every generation and unique to every cohort belonging to a specific historical period. Gen Alpha bears no exception. Compared to their predecessors, they are born in a time when the world was recovering from the global financial crisis, new avenues of digital technologies and social media were up to penetrate the whole world, change in family structures, never-ending climate change debate, among others with the recent COVID-19 pandemic in the list.

For Gen Alpha, vulnerabilities emerging out of digital technologies are second to none. From psychological and physiological impact including cognition (Wilmer et al., 2019), sleep (Jha et al., 2019), and impaired social and emotional well-being (Augner & Hacker, 2019) to cyber threats and addiction, the list is ever growing. Gen Alpha life started connecting more with Alexa or Siri (voice box assistant of Amazon and Apple) than with their parents or friends. More than enjoying the outdoor activities or real-life play, they hop upon mobile games like PUBG, Xbox, and Pokemon, within their comfort zone inside home. Such has been the widespread use of online gaming that the American Psychiatric Association and World Health Organization have classified them as disorders, namely Internet Gaming Disorder and Gaming Disorder, in DSM-5 and ICD-11, respectively (APA, 2013; WHO, 2016). In one of the recent studies, it was found that an adolescent spent an average two hours on mobile gaming with sheer consequences on anger management and socialization, leading to loneliness and aggressiveness upon withdrawal (Arora & Jha, 2020).

Physiologically and psychologically, changes in brain plasticity (or neural wirings), cognition, sleep disturbances, and obesity, constitutes the future problematic trend for Gen Alpha. Neuronal changes due to games and internet use in children are uniquely sensitive to neural plasticity. It delays the development of microstructures in the cortical brain regions and reduction in brain tissue density, leading to deficits in cognition (Takeuchi, 2019). Sleep carries a major survival value for mankind but married with a casual attitude toward sleep followed by technology

use at night. The time meant for sleep is being trade-off with technology use at night-time by texting, chatting, playing games, and watching movies. Using such sleep eroding-devices leads to more screen time, further elongating the exposure to blue-light emitting diodes, leading to less production of melatonin hormone (or sleep producing hormone) and disrupting sleep-wake cycle (Figueiro & Overington, 2019).

In the opening line of a UNICEF report on Children in Digital World, Keeley (2019) alarmingly observed the growing access and easiness of bullies, sex offenders, and traffickers in targeting their prey, here children, while staying anonymous. With the growing technology, crimes have become digital in nature too. The report categorizes three types of digital risks — (i) content, when a child sees any unwelcome and inappropriate content like pornographic and violent images or any hate-speech or racist material; (ii) contact, when a child encounters someone seeking inappropriate behavior; and (iii) conduct, when a child does something risky.

Cyberbullying, a willful and repeated harm inflicted using computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2019), online child sexual abuse, and self-generated sexually explicit material has become quite common in the young generation. Nearly 53% of the sexual content and conduct victims are children less than ten years old (Internet Watch Foundation, 2019). Globally, one out of six parents admit their children experienced cyberbullying and one in six know a cyberbullied child (Ipsos, 2019).

In a recent survey, it was found that on average a child spent approximately 7-8 hours on mobile with the maximum time devoted to the internet, social media, gaming, and texting (Twenge, 2019). They have been lured to believe that every problem has solution courtesy technology and is available round the clock, much more than the availability of their caregivers. Technology has overpowered humans, impairing social and emotional skills, affecting relationships, which will become fatal as Gen Alpha grows up. Their immediate predecessors, Generation Z, was found to be the most vulnerable age group for suicide in the most youthful nation of the world, India (Patel et al., 2018; UNFPA, 2018). WHO (2016) further cautioned that suicide accounts for the second most leading cause in youths. Such worrying trend of their elders, who were either unknown to or partially exposed to the technology in their initial years of life, set a wrong precedent for Gen Alpha.

The change in family structure, child-rearing practices, and nature of the job in terms of helicopter parenting, small and nuclear family, dual-career family, and work from home put an excessive toll on the parents too. Theories by Bowlby (1973) and Freud (1923) had explicitly emphasized the importance of healthy parenting in the first two years deemed crucial for the development of a healthy attachment and relationship(s) for child in later part of life. However, the present pattern of parenting appears to be polarized with excessive love, affection, and continuous monitoring of the child on one hand and taking the help of babysitters/maids/foster caregivers during the time when they are out on the other.

Alpha generation children are born at a time when technological devices are getting smarter, everything is connected, and the physical and the digital are coming together. As they grow up, new technologies will become part of their lives, their experiences, their attitudes, and their expectations of the world. Some neuroscientists and psychologists point out that this will have many positive consequences, but also some negative ones that do not necessarily affect everyone equally:

Reduced attention span and concentration. As they are used to using several screens at once and quickly scanning information, their attention span and concentration is impaired.

Less time for socializing. Spending much of the day online, both inside and outside the home, reduces the time for learning, playing and socializing in more traditional ways. In fact, much of socialization is transferred to social networks.

Less development of creativity and imagination. Without questioning the skills that the Alpha generation will acquire thanks to new technologies, it should be stressed that as the use of physical toys is reduced, the development of imagination and creativity will suffer.

Reduced ability to achieve happiness. As psychologist Jean M. Twenge notes in her book *iGen*, there is a "link between the rise of smartphones and social media and the increase in depression, anxiety and loneliness in today's youth".

In short, the Alphas are presented as a generation profoundly marked by new technologies and social networks, with a more uncertain future in the face of rapid political and economic change, and with the pressure to lead the fight against climate change and the transition to a more sustainable planet.

Connectivism is a learning theory for the digital age that views knowledge as a network (Goldie, 2019; Mattar, 2019; Siemens, 2019). In this framework, learning involves accessing and creating knowledge using digital tools, and learners are self-directed knowledge seekers who engage in collaborative, global interactions (Goldie, 2019; Mattar, 2019; Siemens, 2019).

In this context, learning is all about making connections and drawing new insight from those connections (Goldie, 2019; Mattar, 2019; Siemens, 2019). For Generation Alpha, immersion in this ever-evolving network of information is second nature, and a critical aspect of engaging them will be to encourage them to become active creators and contributors, rather than passive consumers of information. Tech-enabled learning spaces with the tools Alphas need to access, create, and share digital content will be key.

Connectivism combines previous information with current information to create new meanings and understandings (Siemens, 2019). Elieson (2019) claims "one cannot learn something new without having first obtained certain prerequisite knowledge." Astin (2019) believes college administrators, including academic advisors, are fighting for student time against

these pre-requisite or even current experiences. Advisors are part of a "'zero-sum' game, in which the time and energy the student invests in family, friends, job and other outside activities represent a reduction in the time and energy the student has to devote to educational development." The idea is that knowledge is constantly changing with multiple influences, including but not limited to peers, technology, and media. Students find connections between their previous and current understandings. In this regard, students bring preexisting knowledge about particular majors and even regarding academic advising. The figure below explains how an incoming student would recognize the idea of academic advising in college.

From the model, each student views the definition of an academic advisor independently. Some students could see their advisor as a guidance counselor where others would see differences between advisors and counselors. Previous knowledge, experiences, and aspirations are driving the student's assumptions about academic advising and advisors (Bowen, 2019). Ellis (2019) encourages advisors to be aware that "previous high school advising experiences shape new college students' preliminary advising expectations." Siemens (2019) emphasizes the idea that knowledge is a series of interrelated webs from not only social interactions, but experiences, digital observations (commercials, websites), or even organizations. In the end, the interconnectedness of all the knowledge leads to learning. These previous experiences can be positive or negative, and the advisor is at the disadvantage of knowing very little about a student's background while advising.

II. Methodology

This is a study based on the qualitative research model. Qualitative study is an empirical research method that (1) examines a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, (2) the boundaries between phenomenon and its content are not clear (3) relies on multiple sources of evidence or data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2019). This research employed a holistic study design and represented a single unit of analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2019).

The qualitative method is utilized to explain, clarify, and elaborate the meanings of different aspects of the human life experience. Therefore, researchers can interpret people's experiences because they are involved in human activities. The principle of 'no harm' to participants ought to be considered by researchers, who should be aware of the potential harms that might be inflicted upon study subjects. Obviously, sometimes a conflict between the right to know (defended based on benefits to the society) and the right of privacy (advocated based on the rights of the individual) may happen (Bloor & Wood, 2021).

There are several effective strategies to protect personal information, for instance secure data storage methods, removal of identifier components, biographical details, amendments and pseudonyms (applicable to names of individuals, places and organizations) (Bloor & Wood, 2021). Researchers have the responsibility of protecting all participants in a study from potentially

harmful consequences that might affect them because of their participation. It is getting increasingly common for research ethics committees to seek documented proof of consent in a written, signed, and ideally, witnessed form.

The research population consisted of elementary teachers working in a public elementary school in Santa Cruz Central Elementary School of Santa Cruz, Davao del Sur during the school year of 2022-2023. The research population is the accessible group. A holistic context that can represent all the diversity, differences and richness in the population is tried to be obtained since there is no generalization concern in qualitative research. Therefore, 'purposive sampling' model is used in qualitative research. The main aim of this method is to gather detailed data from a particular setting, persons, or activities (Maxwell, 2019).

This research deployed a semi-structured individual interview form as a data collection tool. The interview form is prepared to obtain the same kind of information from different people by addressing similar subjects (Patton, 2019). The most significant opportunity that the semi-structured interview technique offers to the researcher is that it provides more systematic and comparable information since the interview is conducted in accordance with the interview protocol prepared in advance (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2019). With a view to ensuring the internal validity of the semi-structured interview form, the form was prepared after the conceptual framework was prepared, the related literature was conducted, and the experts' opinions were taken after the preliminary interviews were performed. For the data obtained from the interviews to be effective and efficient, an interview form consisting of five questions was prepared by taking into consideration that the questions are easy to understand, specific, open-ended, and far from any direction. The first part of the interview form includes questions regarding the participants' demographic information and the second part holds questions about the subject.

The obtained data were analyzed by the researcher. The data were coded and the data referring to each research question were grouped in themselves, which is called as a descriptive analysis. Subsequently, content analysis was used for in-depth data analysis with the help of the experts' views. Content analysis is defined as "a flexible research tool applicable to any form of communication and focusing on the content of a text (Cavanagh, 2019), the objective and systematic meaning of the content.

In content analysis, similar data are brought together, gathered under certain concepts and themes, and interpreted in a meaningful way. The aim of the content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2019). The elicited data were analyzed through frequency analysis within content analysis. The responses of the teachers and administrators were tried to be classified through frequency analysis techniques. According to the frequency of teachers' responses, a thematic classification under categories and frequency and tables depending on this thematic classification were analyzed. The study also offered direct quotes from the participants' views. Teachers were coded depending on the school names and types. The number appointed to the teacher was indicated at the end of the coding.

This study uses content analysis (Creswell, 2009). in deciphering and interpretation of its collected data. Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. As an example, researchers can evaluate language used within a news article to search for bias or partiality. Researchers can then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of surrounding the text.

III. Results and Discussion

The Alpha Generation and their characteristics

The participants, who were all teachers, were of the view that the distinctive characteristics of alpha generation depict that the negative behavior styles of alpha generation are much more than positive behaviors. Participants perceive technology addiction, ego-centricism and tendency to violence as negative characteristics of alpha generation. The most notable positive characteristics of alpha generation are having high levels of perception, tapping out with music, effective use of numbers, being careful and emotional. The other positive characteristics adopted by alpha generation were determined as the ability to tap out with music and effective use of numbers.

The vulnerabilities of Alpha Generation learners in the classrooms and in their homes

Mannheim (2021) suggested the term ‘generational location’ for the problem subjective to every generation and unique to every cohort belonging to a specific historical period of time. Gen Alpha bears no exception. Compared to their predecessors, they are born in a time when the world was recovering from the global financial crisis, new avenues of digital technologies and social media were up to penetrate the whole world, change in family structures, never-ending climate change debate, among others with the recent COVID-19 pandemic in the list, cyberbullying, sleep disorders, addiction to social media, less social interactions, higher intelligence bringing unrealistic self-esteem, inappropriate family values, and unrealistic educational assessment.

For Gen Alpha, vulnerabilities emerging out of digital technologies are second to none. From psychological and physiological impact including cognition (Wilmer et al., 2019), sleep (Jha et al., 2019), and impaired social and emotional well-being (Augner & Hacker, 2019) to cyber threats and addiction, the list is ever growing.

The parental thinking about Alpha Generation learners

Parental sentiments about the alpha generation open to new possibilities in parenting and education. Parents shared their thoughts about alpha generations in life as a whole: Gen Alpha began using technology at a younger age than any other generation, many Gen Alphas may struggle

in social situations; the internet has changed the way the Gen Alpha socializes; Gen Alpha faces an uncertain future, but they are getting more guidance from their parents; and we continue to learn more and more about Gen Alpha.

Discussion

As the world continuously undergoes rapid shifts brought about by post-modernity, education is also advancing and adapting technology within its curriculum models. In the present day, academic institutions are already accepting the need for better integration of technology into education. Long a hallmark of academic study, technological innovation may now be transforming the way institutions educate and students learn (Glenn, 2019). Universities are embracing transformational benefits such as distance education, advanced learning management systems, and the ability to work with research partners from all over the world (Glenn, 2019).

Various other studies confirmed that the inclusion of technology increases the learning and interactivity of students, and that modern students prefer to use technology for educational support (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2019). Interactivity, ease, convenience, and accessibility are prevalent factors that are steadily defining good education. In this perspective, technology has four roles in the sphere of education: 1) it is part of the curriculum, 2) it is used as an educational delivery system, 3) it is used to aid instructions, and 4) it is used to enhance the entire learning process, allowing education to be interactive rather than passive (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2019). The crucial challenge in this regard relates to teachers who might not be as technologically adept as the Alpha Generation (Prensky, 2020), and that changes in the current structures and mindset of institutions are usually slow, as is adoption of new pedagogical approaches (Romero, 2019). As such, the culture prevalent in academia will be greatly challenged. Universities would need to further diversify, not merely for social justice, but because students need to refer more to people who can represent them (Romero, 2019). In prioritizing the student-centered and community-based learning model, experiential learning would need to be included in mainstream teaching-learning, enabling students to reflect on the learning process and even learning from failed experiments (Romero, 2019).

Experiential learning focuses on learning-by-doing and the experiences gained through reflection on doing. It requires the student to take initiative, to make decisions, and be accountable for the outcomes. It is built upon actions of investigating, experimenting, problem solving, accountability, creativeness, and the integration previously developed through the process of doing (Itin, 2019).

New approaches to teaching, such as experiential learning, would need to be considered, approaches that will work for students who are vastly different from the typical in terms of culture, education and expectations (Romero, 2019). Universities would need to develop the soft skills that would be crucial in the modern world, including critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork and

communication abilities (Romero, 2019). Generation Alpha is a young generation and the body of research dealing with Generation Alpha is still relatively limited.

While technology is replacing jobs, it is also creating a slew of new ones, as evidenced by the current Fourth Industrial Revolution (McCrindle & Fell, 2020). Many students of today are garnering and honing skills in big data analytics, robotics, social media marketing, and app development (McCrindle & Fell, 2020). These skills will be crucial for jobs that are still yet to exist in the very near future, which will be saturated by today's learners and those to come. These jobs will both consider the changes witnessed by technology and demography. Careers in new industries such as cyber-security, software development, and cryptocurrencies will be available to Generation Alphas (McCrindle & Fell, 2020). They will be tenured in handling several jobs at once, continuously learning throughout their lifetime. They will also need to be adaptable, regularly upskilling and retraining to stay current with the changes they will face as they progress through their careers (McCrindle & Fell, 2020). The role of universities would be to harness these skills and prepare Generation Alpha students to embrace the digital world they know so well, to optimize skills and experience to co-create the solutions that our future will need.

The Generation Alpha students' learning style will be largely dependent and connected to technology. Technology advances will likewise have an impact on their learning effectiveness and the overall student experience.

Experiential learning will play a key part of the future teaching-learning approaches, especially to engage students and to enable them to co-create knowledge, and not just merely access information instantly. It will be about the translation of information, the interpretation of information and adding of value.

Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic tools will support the future teaching-learning environment, to provide a real experience with supporting social connections. In this sense, the challenge would be to bridge the literacy gap between teachers and students to enhance the social connections and interactions, and to develop soft skills that will foster a sense of belonging, of community and of sharing.

The lecturer stands central to creating a collaborative, critical-thinking, and co-creative classroom atmosphere (Steyn, 2019). This demands an educator with a robust academic point of departure; who is well-versed and educated; able to develop knowledge and transfer core disciplinary principles to a new generation of students; someone who understands educational theories as common; and the role of the university within broader society and the knowledge community. The instructor must think critically and imaginatively to create a classroom environment that is conducive to thinking and creating (Steyn, 2019) that is based on the Generation Alpha student's perceptions and expectations.

Higher education will in future most likely involve technology-integrated learning programs and options, far more career engaging and career preparation events, and scarce skill

development training and programs. The focus will shift from 'transfer of knowledge' to 'co-creation of knowledge', optimizing the skillset of the Generation Alpha student and their unique acceptance and understanding of technology advances.

If the Generation Alpha is only just approaching school age, it means there's only a decade until they'll be looking to apply for undergraduate programs. And if we consider that some Millennials are pushing the upper limits of their 30s, while others broke the Millennial-mold and had children early in their 20s, there's a good chance that Gen-Alpha will be appearing sooner, rather than later in the halls of higher education.

While things move so quickly these days that it'd take a brave individual to confidently (and probably quite wrongly) state what society will look like by the end of the 2020s, it would be equally short-sighted for universities to sit back and expect to adapt to new developments as they happen. If Generation Alpha are not yet out of short trousers, institutions can at least start to look at them in terms of demographics and just as crucial for that big first-degree decision, from what we know of their parents – the millennials, otherwise known as Generation Y.

So, what do we know about these new parents? For a start, they're already thinking about their kids' long-term education. It seems they've had such a struggle with student debt that they've started saving up to give their kids a debt-free education even while they continue to pay off their own fees.

This conscientious approach reflects more progressive attitudes in general. Gendered parenting roles continue to break the mold, with fathers spending more 'quality time' with their children than in previous generations, and household roles and earning patterns less predictable than their twentieth-century forebears. Crucially, millennials are the first generation of digital natives, with the vast majority of Gen-Y parents regularly using social media as a way to bond with their offspring.

And more than ever, the current generation of young and expectant parents are wise to the complex relationship between higher education, career, and life prospects – for example, rating teacher flexibility and creativity as more important than the level of a school's funding. Tomorrow's undergraduates will demand ever higher levels of personalization and adaptability from their programs and their professors, and this will be reflected in the way that institutions design and market their degrees. Expectations for individuals are high in the 21st century, and millennials want their kids to excel on their own terms, rather than learning by rote and following well-established paths.

While we don't yet know how Generation Alpha will behave, we have some clues as to who they will be. Demographics indicate that this generation will be more diverse, and generally wealthier – but with technological know-how crossing socio-economic borders to a far greater extent than today. They will, of course, live longer than preceding generations, which – combined with the shifting patterns we already see in education and careers – will mean a more extended,

less prescribed relationship with the education system. They may start work later, shift careers more frequently than their parents and grandparents, and like their parents, are likely to eschew traditional career structures in favor of flexible options aimed at work-life balance. Their undergraduate courses will need to match an age of geographic and technological freedom with online, campus, and modular programs.

Universities will want to form lifelong relationships with these students by valuing their individuality, responding to, and working with their personalities, and offering ongoing opportunities. A rigorous technological infrastructure will be a necessity, and courses should be affordable – which may mean finding new ways of spreading, sharing, or making back fees.

And more than anything, schools will need to be adaptable. Generation Alpha will be culturally diverse, free-spirited, and – in the best possible sense – demanding. Smart institutions and their marketing teams will already have begun thinking how to create the most desirable undergraduate opportunities for the class of 2031.

IV. Conclusion

Gen Alpha life started connecting more with Alexa or Siri (voice box assistant of Amazon and Apple) than with their parents or friends. More than enjoying the outdoor activities or real-life play, they hop upon mobile games like PUBG, Xbox, and Pokemon, within their comfort zone inside home. Such has been the widespread use of online gaming that the American Psychiatric Association and World Health Organization have classified them as disorders, namely Internet Gaming Disorder and Gaming Disorder, in DSM-5 and ICD-11, respectively (APA, 2019; WHO, 2019). In one of our studies, we found that an adolescent spent an average two hours on mobile gaming with sheer consequences on anger management and socialization, leading to loneliness and aggressiveness upon withdrawal (Arora & Jha, 2020).

Theories by Bowlby (1973) and Freud (1923) had explicitly emphasized the importance of healthy parenting in the first two years deemed crucial for the development of a healthy attachment and relationship(s) for children in later part of life. The present pattern of parenting appears to be polarized with excessive love, affection, and continuous monitoring of the child on one hand and taking the help of babysitters/maids/foster caregivers during the time when they are out on the other.

The study of researchers from Turkey, Apaydin & Kaya (2020) investigated pre-school teachers' perceptions of Generation Alpha pertaining to the classroom setup and learning process.

The members of Gen Alpha have had their lives documented online since before birth. Many have a massive following on social media platforms before even knowing how to read or write. Even though we are exploring and understanding the importance of doing ministry online,

experts consider that as Alphas grow, they will seek to experience authentic communities inside and outside the streaming world. They might do everything online: school, gaming, vlogs, entertainment, but also seek meaningful, physical, community connections in person, outside the media streams. We must not neglect the value of play, community, and interactions outside the streaming world. As Alphas continue to grow, they will be a bridge for past and future generations because they know well how to navigate online life and their offline reality (Frey, 2019).

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE

Jenny S. Eknadan

Jenny S. Eknadan, a 45-year-old teacher, was born on July 3, 1979, and currently resides in Ceboley Beach, Zone III, Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur. She completed her elementary education at Santa Cruz Central Elementary School and her secondary education at Sta. Cruz National High School. In 2001, she earned her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Cebu Technological University. Following her graduation, she successfully passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers in the same year. Presently, she is pursuing her master's at Rizal Memorial Colleges with a degree of Master in Educational Management (MaEM), a testament of continuous learning, career, and professional development.

Jenny has been in the teaching service for more than 20 years, showcasing her extensive experience and commitment to molding young minds. She became a Local School Board teacher before being hired permanently in the Department of Education. Currently, she serves as the Youth for Environment in Schools Organization (YES-O) and Grade Level Science Coordinator at the school. As she is affiliated with such organizations, she is making her way to demonstrate her

dedication to fostering both student development and environmental awareness, essential qualities in shaping future generations and contributing to nation-building. As of now, she is assigned to teach learners under the Special Program in Journalism and Gifted and Talented. Due to this, she aims to improve and develop her skills and expertise in teaching through acquiring a higher education.

Beyond her professional commitments, she is a devoted mother of two, a loving wife, and a caring daughter. In her leisure time, she indulges in her passion for cooking, considering it both a hobby and a creative outlet. Additionally, she finds joy in singing and dancing, embracing these activities as expressions of her passion for life. Jenny firmly believes that it's never too late for anything, particularly in education, as it is an essential lifelong skill for everyone to inculcate.