The Influence of Intergeneration Differences on Work Attitude

Dr. Yih-Yeong Lin, Department of Human Resource Development, Hsiuping Institute of Technology, Taiwan
Dr. Yu-Ching Huang, Department of International Business Management, Hsiuping Institute of Technology

ABSTRACT

Generation differences comprise a complex set of behaviors. The defined generations in Taiwan are more arbitrary and somehow differ from the U.S. Until now, there are four generations in Taiwan, Traditional Generation (born before 1949), Boomers (born in 1950-1965), Gen Xers (born in 1966-1981), and Millennials (born after 1982). Each generation has its unique work ethic, perspective on work, preferred ways of managing and being managed, work style, and ways of viewing loyalty and work times. As Bohlander (2001) stated, “You can’t teach an old dog the same way you teach a puppy” (p. 22). Today’s leaders need to be concerned about changes in the makeup and expectations of their workforce.

The purpose of this study was to determine if differences existed among the three workplace generations on (a) their level of job satisfaction, (b) their work ethic and work value including perceptions of the ideal teachers, (c) their relationships with colleagues and students, and (d) their concerned topics and openness to changes. This study adapted both quantitative and qualitative approaches using a cross-sectional survey and nine interview questions. A cross-sectional survey was designed to analyze generation difference on job satisfaction and perceptions of an ideal teacher. Interviews yield rich insights into faculty members’ experiences, opinions, values, attitudes and feelings. The results of this study identify the age and generational differences which may assist today’s school leaders in distinguishing positive aspects and trends among generations and in building a positive climate to foster their contributions.

Keywords: generation differences, Traditionalist, Boomers, Gen Xers, Millennials, human resource management

INTRODUCTION

Generation differences comprise a complex set of behaviors, and each generation has its unique work ethic, perspective on work, preferred ways of managing and being managed, work style, and ways of viewing loyalty and work times. As Bohlander (2001) stated, “You can’t teach an old dog the same way you teach a puppy” (p. 22). Today’s leaders need to be concerned about changes in the makeup and expectations of their workforce. The objectives of this paper are to explore the overall generational differences in Taiwan, to find out workplace conflicts between different age cohorts, and to develop recommendations of human resource management for today’s leaders.

The Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if differences existed among the three workplace generations (traditional generation, boomers, and generation Xers) on their level of job satisfaction, their perceptions of the characteristics of a good teacher, their attitudes toward being a teacher, their perceptions of instruction efficacy, their relationships with colleagues and students, their concerned topics, and their openness to changes.

This study explored the following questions:
1. What differences were there in the perceptions of job satisfaction based on intergeneration difference?
2. What differences were there in the perceptions of the characteristics of being a college teacher based on intergeneration difference?
3. What differences were there in the perceptions of work ethics based on intergeneration difference?
4. What differences were there in the perceptions of instruction efficacy based on intergeneration difference?
5. What differences were there in the perceptions of relationships with colleagues and students?
6. What differences were there in the concerned topics based on intergeneration difference?
7. What differences were there in the attitude toward change?
Significance of the Study

This paper briefly introduced an experience in generational differences. The results of this study provided information to Taiwan’s higher education leaders regarding faculty member’s level of job satisfaction, their values, attitudes and work behaviors. Each generation may react very differently to the same situation. The results of this study may assist today’s leaders in distinguishing what positive aspects and trends both Boomers and Gen Xers and in building a positive climate to foster their contributions. There were some limitations that affect the generalizability of the findings in this study. First, the results of this study could not be generalized beyond the stated population. Second, the findings of the study were limited to the extent that the subjects were willing to report their true feelings and beliefs. Third, the participant responses might be influenced by their personal definitions, and they might tend to provide socially desired answers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Definition of Generations

While American define generation groups as Generation Silent (born in 1920-1942), Baby Boomers (born in 1943-1960), Gen Xers (born in 1963-1981), and Millennials (born after 1982), the defined generations in Taiwan were more arbitrary and somehow differ from the U.S. There is still no precise definition of years. The exact demographic boundaries of generations are not well defined, depending on who is using the term, where and when. The generally accepted definition of “Millennials” is children and teenagers who came of age at the dawn of the millennium (the year of 2000), or the teens and twenty-somethings born after 1982. There are two generations between traditionalists (born before 1949) and millennials (born after 1982). 1965/1966 become the year in the middle of the two generations.

Traditional Generation (born before 1949). Traditional Generation was defined as the people born before 1949 that grew up in the time when Taiwan society was constantly in a state of instability. Taiwan was originally a province of China. However, in 1949, the communists seized Mainland China forcing the nationalists to retreat to Taiwan. The leaders of the Republic of China (Taiwan) hoped someday that the communists would be driven out of China. Therefore, they started to build Taiwan as a military base for such purpose. The government proclaimed Martial Law in 1949, and the martial law rules were not lifted until 1987. The martial law curtailed the basic human rights of Taiwan's people. The establishment of new political parties and newspapers was banned by the rules. Under KMT's one-party dictatorship, people in Traditional Generation did not dare defy the rulers. The distinguish traits were respecting authority, negative attitudes toward politics due to Martial Law, hardworking, less knowledgeable of laws and rules, high job stability and loyalty.

Baby Boomers (Born in 1950-1965). After 1949, the communists seized Mainland China forcing the nationalists to retreat to Taiwan. After the end of War, birth rates spiked. The explosion of new infants became known as the baby boom. A baby boomer is a person born between 1950 and 1965. Following the war, many countries experienced an unusual spike in birth rated, a phenomenon commonly known as the baby boom. There is some disagreement as to the exact beginning and end dates of the baby boom, but the range most commonly accepted is as starting in 1950 and ending in 1965. The gross number of births was the indicator, births began to decline from the peak in 1950s until a sharp decline from 1964 to 1965, resulted from birth control policy in Taiwan. This makes 1966 a good year to mark the end of the baby boom in Taiwan. Older baby boomers were raised without desktop computers, and many did not even have TVs as children. Baby Boomers were born during the prosperity of economic growth. They valued friendly and warm relationships with co-workers. Taiwanese Baby Boomers were similar to American as team oriented. They were optimistic economically. They followed the cultures of Traditional Generation to respect authority, had high job stability and loyalty, and valued morality. However, Boomers have often found difficulty managing their time and money due to an issue that other generations have not had a problem with. Because the Baby Boomer's generation has found that due to modern technology their parents are living longer, their children are seeking a better and longer college education, and they themselves are having children later in life, the boomers have become "sandwiched" between generations.
**Generation X (Born in 1966-1981).** Born between 1966 and 1981, Generation X was also known as the New Generation. Gen Xers experienced the democratic development, while Taiwan's political system has moved away from authoritarianism toward democracy. They grew up during enormous industrial development. They were the first generation to be familiar with international business and global society, but they experienced Taiwan being isolated internationally. For example, the first 7-11 convenient store chain entered Taiwan, and the first fast food restaurant McDonalds was imported. However, the U.S broke off the diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and the UN replaced Mainland China as the representative in 1970s. They grew up in the information explosive era with Cable TV and Internet. Gen Xers are both opened and conservative about everything; they are modernized but appreciate traditions. The generation X period saw the rise of hippies and countercultures. By the time older Gen Xers became teenagers, the personal computer revolution had begun. As young adults, Generation X drew media attention in the late 1980s and early 1990s, gaining a stereotypical reputation as apathetic, cynical, disaffected, streetwise loners and slackers. According to Huang (1998), the characteristics of Gen Xers were well educated, creative, proactive, altruistic, materialistic, and skeptical. They had a basic feeling of financial insecurity. They enjoyed spending money on vacations, and they more likely avoided family responsibility and chose being single.

**Millennials (Born after 1982).** The generally accepted definition of “Millennials” is children and teenagers who came of age at the dawn of the millennium (the year of 2000), or the teens and twenty-somethings born after 1982. The people born after 1982, were often defined as Millennials, which was sometimes called Generation Y. The statistics showed that the rates of teen homicide, violent crime, abortion, and pregnancy were higher than any other generations (Ministry of Interior, 2000). They lived closely with new technology. They were much more individualistic and innovative. Money was increasingly more important as a measure of meaningful work. The stereotypes of Generation Y were future oriented, disrespectful for authority, less trustworthy, and lack of job loyalty. They were considered to be the lost generation because they no longer followed the Chinese traditions and enjoy foreign cultures.

**Generational Difference and Work Attitude**

Many researchers studies generational differences in order to help traditionalists, baby boomers, Gen Xers and Millennials work better together (e.g., Coolidge, 1999; Jurkiewicz, 2000; Jurkiewicz & Bradley, 2002; McGuinnes, 2000; Merritt & Neville, 2002). Many studies of generational differences effects on job satisfaction have been reported (McGuinnes, 2000; Rhodes, 1983). It is generally believed that baby boomers tend to report higher satisfaction than Gen Xers (e.g., Doering, Rhodes, & Schuster, 1983). Generation differences comprise a complex set of behaviors, and each generation has its unique work ethic, perspective on work, preferred ways of managing and being managed, work style, and ways of viewing loyalty and work times (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Every generation is influenced by its period's economic, political and social events, so it follows that generational context also may affect the way they work (Dittmann, 2005; Howe & Strauss, 2000). Generational differences cause conflicts in the workplace. The current major work place generations in Taiwan are Tradition Gen, Boomers and GenXers. To work with people effectively, managers have to identify generational differences. A lack of understanding across generations can have detrimental effects on communication and working relationships and undermine effective services (Dittmann, 2005). Age cohort is a group of people who share a given historical or socially structured life experience; the effects of which are relatively stable over the course of their lives and such effects serve to distinguish one generation from another (Jurkiewicz, 2000). People resemble their eras more than they resemble their parents. Due to the individual development history and social background, some similarities and differences about generation definitions exist between the U.S. and Taiwan.

**METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to determine if differences existed among the three work place generations (traditional generation, boomers, and generation Xers) on their level of job satisfaction, their perceptions of the characteristics of a good teacher, their attitudes toward being a teacher, their perceptions of instruction efficacy, their relationships with colleagues and students, their concerned topics, and their openness to changes.
Research Design

This study adapted both quantitative and qualitative approaches using a cross-sectional survey and nine interview questions. Due to the research budget and time constraints, the sample was selected using a stratified cluster random sampling technique. Four schools were randomly selected in the Mid-Taiwan area. One hundred faculty members from each of the four institutions were selected to participate in this study. Thus, a total of 400 surveys were sent to the randomly selected faculty at each of the institutions. A total of 282 (70.5%) subjects completed the survey that provided the data used in the data analysis. Also, interviews yield rich insights into faculty members’ experiences, opinions, values, attitudes and feelings. In this study, 20 faculty members from the four institutions were selected to participate the interview process. 10 of them were males (2 traditionalists, 4 baby boomers, 4 Gen Xers) and 10 of them were females (2 traditionalists, 4 baby boomers, 4 Gen Xers). In the interview process, in-depth, loosely or semi-structured interviews were used to encourage each interviewee to talk about their work, relationship with students and colleagues, and attitude toward change. There were 9 structured interview questions on ensuring the validity, reliability and generalizability of results.

Intrumentation

Survey Questionnaires. The instrumentation was divided into three parts. The survey was developed by the researcher. There are three components in the questionnaire: (a) demographic information, (b) job satisfaction, and (c) characteristics of a good teacher. The following demographic variables were included in this study: gender, age, academic rank, administrative duty, length of employment, and monthly salary. The job satisfaction instrument was developed by the researchers. This part of the questionnaire consists of 16 questions, answered on a six-point Likert scale. Each of the item indicators refers to a variable in the work environment. These items also attempt to measure attitudes in the two areas that comprise the job satisfaction definition of the two-factor theory of Herzberg et al. (1959). The respondents indicated their levels of agreement with each variable in their current job. For the job satisfaction instrument, the reliability coefficient for the overall job satisfaction was .86. the reliability coefficient for extrinsic satisfaction and intrinsic satisfaction subscales were .71 and .75, respectively. For characteristics of being a good teacher, this part of the questionnaire consists of 15 questions, answered on a six-point Likert scale. These items also attempt to measure perceptions of the characteristics of a good teacher. For the characteristics of being a good teacher instrument, the reliability coefficient was .68.

Interviewing Questions. The following questions were given to participants: (1) How did you become a college teacher? (2) What’s your teaching philosophy? (3) Name some things that make you feel good about teaching in a college; (4) What are your strategies of highly instruction efficacy? (5) Name some things that you think the most important about ideal working conditions; (6) How are your relationships with students and colleagues? (7) What are the most rewarding and the most troublesome aspects of being a college teacher? (8) What are your most concerned topics in your daily lives? (9) What do you think about school change?

RESULTS

Summary of the Quantitative Part

A total of 282 subjects completed the survey. There were more teachers of Boomers (142 or 50.3%) than in any other age group, 85 or 30.2% were younger, 55 or 19.5% were older. The majority (58.5%) of the respondents were males. A total of 230 of the respondents or 81.6% were married, while 52 or 18.4% of the respondents were single. Among them, 22% have doctorate degrees, 76.7% hold master’s degrees, and less than 2% hold bachelor’s degrees. The majority (58.8%) of the respondents worked in their current institution for 1-10 years. The majority (70.9%) of the respondents were instructors. Most Gen Xers earned doctoral degrees and hold professional rank as Assistance professors, compared to that most Boomers only have master’s degrees with professional rank as instructors. Over half (66.1%) of the respondents had no official administrative duty.

Interest in the job satisfaction of individuals in education has been increasing. Relationships among job satisfaction variables are considered very complex. A total of 282 (70.5%) usable returns provided the data used in the
data analysis. The data indicate that there are significant differences on faculty overall level of satisfaction across age cohorts ($F(2,279) = 3.413, p < .05$). Follow up Tukey pairwise comparison tests indicate that faculty of Tradition Generation (age above 53) have higher level of satisfaction compared to faculty of Generation X (age 23-36) ($p < .05$). The comparison of job satisfaction among different generations is described as Table 1.

Herzberg’s (1959) motivation-hygiene theory proposed that hygiene factors, such as, quality of supervision, pay, policies, physical working condition, and job security affect job dissatisfaction; and motivator factors, such as promotional opportunities, responsibility, recognition, and achievement affect job satisfaction. The data did not indicate any significant differences among the three age cohorts regarding their level of satisfaction with the extrinsic factors ($\chi^2(2) = 4.314, p = .116$). However, the data indicated a significant difference among the three age cohorts regarding their level of satisfaction with intrinsic factors ($\chi^2(2) = 11.274, p < .05$). The intrinsic satisfaction ranking for Baby Boomers was significantly higher than Gen Xers ($U = 141.5, p < .05$), and Tradition Gen was significantly higher than Gen Xers ($U =12.00, p < .05$).

Faculty opinion toward the characteristics of a good teacher and factors that affect instruction efficacy may be varied widely. The following top three preferences were listed by each of the groups (Table 1 & 2).

Table 1: Level of Job Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COHORT</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>$F$ or $t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26-41 (Gen Xers)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>.7437</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42-57 (Baby Boomers)</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>.8361</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above 58 (Tradition Gen)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>.8363</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Gen Xers conception of the characteristics of being a good teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Gen Xers Top Five Preference</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A teacher tries to understand his/her students and design specific course contents to satisfy students’ needs.</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>A teacher places great emphasis upon students’ learning interests.</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>A teacher has good relationship with students.</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>.680</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Baby Boomers Top Five Preference</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A teacher is a subject matter expert who works hard in preparing course contents in advance</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>A teacher places great emphasis upon students’ learning interests</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>.743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>A teacher has good relationship with students.</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>.493</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Traditionalists Top Five Preference</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A teachers’ classes are well-managed, well-disciplined, and orderly</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>.548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>A teacher uses many instructional methods</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>.516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>A teacher’s students discuss almost anything with him/her without fear or hesitation and the teacher can assist students to solve their problems</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>.493</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions were given to participants: (1) How did you become a college teacher? (2) What’s your teaching philosophy? (3) Name some things that make you feel good about teaching in a college; (4) What are your strategies of highly instruction efficacy? (5) Name some things that you think the most important about ideal working conditions; (6) How are your relationships with students and colleagues? (7) What are the most rewarding and the most troublesome aspects of being a college teacher? (8) What are your most concerned topics in your daily lives? (9) What do you think about school change? The purpose of these questions was to obtain written narratives regarding thoughts and feelings about working in a higher education institution. Effective interviewing is a complex task requiring attendance to a range of skills and information all at the one time.
Work Ethic and Instruction Efficacy. The purpose of the career choice as a teacher influences their attitudes toward jobs. Traditional generation and baby boomers view their teaching career sacred. They enter this career because they love to teach and believe that they can promote growth and economic productivity to benefit the society. Boomers are self-regulated and devoted to themselves without considering issues of job overload and compensation. Opposite to the older generations, Gen Xers enter teaching careers for high salary, long vacations with pays, high prestige and social status, and stable job nature. Gen Xers are criticized as lazy, inpatient, and irresponsible. They do not care about the school’s vision or mission. They can hardly adapt to the bureaucratic structure. They always complain about the requirement of taking an administrative duty or being a mentor teacher.

Faculty’s opinion toward the factors that affect instruction efficacy may be varied widely. The instructional strategies of Traditional Generation are lectures and quizzes. Boomers also lecture the class but use multimedia, such as projectors in class and to provide students the opportunity for practical learning experiences. Gen Xers’ course requirements and evaluations are more diverse, including group projects, oral presentations, and small-group discussions. Gen Xers use technology to facilitate out-of-class discussions. Among the three generations, most faculty members’ opinions are significantly more negative about using different ways including punishments to affect teaching efficacy.

Transcript

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did you become a college teacher?</td>
<td>Because I love teach. My mother is a retired college teacher. She inspired me to become a good teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your instructional strategies?</td>
<td>I think lectures are most useful, and quizzes during the next class meeting are necessary to review the course content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s your teaching philosophy?</td>
<td>Teaching makes a difference. That depends on what I teach, how I teach and why I teach in the way I do, and what I have done to improve my teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you become a college teacher?</td>
<td>Being a teacher, we got the power for making a difference to each of our students and the society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your instructional strategies?</td>
<td>I believer any instructor interested in improving their teaching would benefit from enriching teaching effectiveness. Most of the class meeting time, I lecture. But to make the class more interesting, I sometimes use Power Point presentation, or arrange activities in computer lab.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s your teaching philosophy?</td>
<td>I often attend workshop with some concerns. I need to take time to develop teaching methods or updating course materials. I need to find the evidence of teaching effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you become a college teacher?</td>
<td>I have a doctoral degree, so I apply for a job as a college teacher. It is good to be a teacher. I have two month summer vacation each year and high pay on my teach and research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question: What are your instructional strategies?
7th Gen Xer: The class requirement in my class always includes class discussion, group reports, field study, some quizzes.

Question: What's your teaching philosophy?
17th Gen Xer: As the old formula: subject matter expertise plus generic methods, such as plan a lecture, lead a discussion group equals teaching.

Relationships with Colleagues and Students. Traditionalists and Boomers appreciate it when the young colleagues ask them for advice or ideas. Gen Xers complain that the Boomers’ promotion track is based on tenure rather than performance. Boomers, on the other hand, complain that Gen Xers are not loyal to their jobs; if they cannot get what they want, they would leave. Traditionalists and Boomers prefer face-to-face communications. They admire someone who is courteous, polite, respectful, and considerate. Gen Xers prefer efficient and convenient communication ways. Gen Xers encourage students to use e-mail to declare absents or ask questions. They use telephones as the major communication tool even if the other person is in the next room. For communication skills, they choose a more directed way and think that polite manners are hypocritical. Students prefer to get along with Gen Xer teachers than Traditionalists or Baby Boomers. However, when students have problems, they seek help or counseling from Baby Boomers. They enjoy hanging around with Gen Xers but more students trust Baby Boomers for clarifying their confusions and solving their personal and academic problems. For Traditional Generation, the relationship with students only occurs in the classrooms. Teachers feel that students are so out of control, while students think that those teachers have lost connections to the modern society and fashions. There is a deep generation gap between Tradition Generational teachers and New Generation students.

Transcript

Question: How are your relationships with students or colleagues?
1st Traditionalist: I arrange tea time break with my colleagues every day. I enjoy having a private chat with my colleagues and students.

Question: Could you tell me some things that you think the most important about ideal working conditions?
12th Traditionalist: I hope that the young colleagues and students can be more courteous and polite. I hope they show their respect to the aging faculty members.

Question: How are your relationships with students or colleagues?
14th Baby Boomer: The young colleagues and students need to say “please,” “thanks,” and “sorry” more often. I don’t like their attitude during official meetings.

Question: Could you tell me some things that you think the most important about ideal working conditions?
15th Baby Boomer: Everything is fine as long as we are creating the kind of campus culture we seek. People should be more respectful and considerate.

Question: How are your relationships with students or colleagues?
7th Gen Xer: I like to have a private room and save my time for research and rest instead of hanging around. However, I like to attend students’ meeting and parties.

Question: Could you tell me some things that you think the most important about ideal working conditions?
7th Gen Xer: The university should provide each faculty members a computer, and a personal phone line. We don’t need so many meetings.
Concerned Topics and Openness to Change. The Traditional Generation seldom talks about job-related issues. They prefer to talk about their families, the social phenomenon, and leisure activities. Boomer is the most likely group that enjoys talking about job-related issues. They are concerned with the school’s mission plans, new policies, and personnel decisions. Most of the Boomers’ highest degree is masters, and most of them have professional rank as instructors. Boomers are considered to be worried and pessimistic. They feel pressure of being discharged because most of their young colleagues have doctorates with professional rank as assistant professors. Boomers are described as self-absorbed and are focused on issues pertinent only to them, such as aging and retirement issues; they have not given much thought or effort to assisting Gen Xers as they transition into the workforce. Gen Xers get together to talk about the leaders in their divisions, their interactions with students, their teaching methods, and their career paths.

Gen Xers seize opportunity while boomers often wait until they are given an opportunity. Although Gen Xers are considered more competitive, risk-taking, and flexible to new challenges, their skepticism and individualism make them hesitate to support the organizational visions and goals. Gen Xers are afraid that changes may affect their personal interests. Among the three generations, Boomers show most positive attitudes toward changes. Boomers have the sense of urgency for a college to change, and are supportive to strategic plans and decisions of their colleges.

Transcript

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>What do you think about school change?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd Traditionalist</td>
<td>I care about if the school can survive in the competitive market or not. I am concerned with the school’s mission plans, new policies, etc. However, I don’t have the abilities to make changes or assist the school. The youngsters have a hand in determining their own fate and also the fate of the institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Baby Boomer</td>
<td>I am hesitated. I am so satisfied with my current working conditions. However, if my school needs me, I will do my best to do anything to help the school. I have been in this school for many years. It’s time for me to pay back. I support every school decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th Gen Xer</td>
<td>Actually, I don’t like any change. As a faculty member, I focus on adapting myself to the campus culture. If I have the chance to get an administrative duty as a leader, I will lead changes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

Discussions

The Generational Gap. There were more teachers of Boomers (142 or 50.3%) than in any other age group, 85 or 30.2% were younger, 55 or 19.5% were older. The current work place generations are Traditionalists, Boomers and Gen Xers. As Traditionalists and Boomers approach retirement age, the first Millennials born after 1982 will enter the job market. To work with people effectively, administrators have to identify the age and generational differences. Since Generation X and Baby Boomers comprise the workforce today, most of the researches focus on the differences and similarities of these two cohorts (e.g., Coolidge, 1999; Jurkiewicz, 2000). There are differences and conflicts between Boomers and Gen Xers.

Job Satisfaction. The data indicate that there are significant differences on faculty’s overall level of satisfaction across age cohorts (F(2,279) = 3.413, p < .05). Follow up Tukey pairwise comparison tests indicate that faculty of Tradition Generation (age above 53) have higher level of satisfaction compared to faculty of Generation X (age 26-41) (p < .05). According to the stages of career development, Boomers are in the mid-career stage (42-57) and Gen Xers are in the early career stage (26-41). Many Boomers have reached a professional plateau and face mid-life crisis. Many Gen
Xers are fitting into the chosen career, increasing competence, and learning organizational rules and norms. Gen Xers think that there is no upward movement possible even if they perform at their peak. They need to seek opportunity elsewhere because aging Traditionalists and Boomers are not retiring due to lack of financial planning and the personal satisfaction derived from work.

Work Ethic and Work Value. Faculty opinion toward the characteristics of a good teacher and factors that affect instruction efficacy may be varied widely. The top ranking for Traditionalists conception of the characteristics of being a good teacher was a teachers’ classes are well-managed, well-disciplined, and orderly. The instructional strategies of Traditional Generation are lectures and quizzes. The top ranking for Baby Boomers conception of the characteristics of being a good teacher was a teacher is a subject matter expert who works hard in preparing course contents in advance. Boomers also lecture the class but use multimedia, such as projectors in class and to provide students the opportunity for practical learning experiences. Traditionalists and Boomers enter the teaching career because they love to teach and believe that they can promote growth and economic productivity to benefit the society. The top ranking for Gen Xers’ conception of the characteristics of being a good teacher was A teacher tries to understand his/her students and design specific course contents to satisfy students’ needs. Gen Xers use technology to facilitate out-of-class discussions. Gen Xers enter teaching careers for high salary, long vacations with pays, high prestige and social status, and stable job nature.

Relationships with Colleagues and Students. Traditionalists and Boomers appreciate it when the young colleagues ask them for advice or ideas. Traditionalists and Boomers prefer face-to-face communications, and like to hear “please,” “thanks,” and “sorry.” They admire someone who is courteous, polite, respectful, and considerate. Gen Xers prefer efficient and convenient communication ways. Gen Xers encourage students to use e-mail to declare absents or ask questions.

Concerned Topics and Openness to Change. Theoretically, Gen Xers enjoy challenging works, quickly react to the environment and make a decision, but boomers are slow to make decisions and tend to resist changes. In this study, although Gen Xers are considered more competitive, risk-taking, and flexible to new challenges, their skepticism and individualism make them hesitate to support the organizational visions and goals. Gen Xers are afraid that changes may affect their personal interests. Gen Xers seize opportunity while boomers often wait until they are given an opportunity. Among the three generations, Boomers show most positive attitudes toward changes. Boomers have the sense of urgency for a college to change, and are supportive to strategic plans and decisions of their colleges.

RECOMMENDATION TO TODAY’S LEADERS

Today’s educational leaders should recognize and acknowledge the differences among generations. Failure to recognize the differences may result in miscommunication, misunderstandings, and harsh feelings, creating dysfunctional supervisor-employee relationships (O’Bannon & Doverspike, 2001). Also, leaders should clearly state career path opportunities. Gen Xers and Gen Yers like challenges and are sensitive to how a job improves their personal portfolios of skills and capabilities. Each organization needs to offer broad and attractive advancement possibilities. Moreover, leaders should build an organizational climate to support different generational needs. The Boomer leaders should support Gen Xers’ styles of thinking, learning, and communicating, and respect the different perspectives they bring into the workplace. The top administrators should be able to value Gen Xers’ independence, autonomy, and innovation, and give them the responsibility to set priorities, make decisions, and solve problems. In addition, leaders should establish thorough orientation programs. Because today’s teachers enter the career with different reasons, there is a tremendous need to expose new teachers to the educational environment in a structured way. The programs include the introduction of the college missions and the organizational rules and norms, experience sharing by highly evaluated teachers, discussion on teachers’ moral and social responsibilities, and clarification of salary structure and job evaluation systems. Finally, leaders should provide adequate technology. While Gen Xers incorporate technology into their daily life, schools should provide adequate personal computers in offices and prepare more projectors in classrooms.
CONCLUSION

This paper briefly introduced an experience in generational differences. Each generation may react very differently to the same situation. Their differing experiences generally give those differing values and influence their attitudes and behaviors. Then values, attitudes, preferences, and behaviors become the filter through which members of a cohort interpret subsequent life experiences. Their differing reactions, perceptions, and attitudes do not make them wrong or right. Patrick (1996) suggests that manners, treating everyone decently and with respect, will bridge the generational gaps. Lack of acceptance of differences causes some miscommunications and misunderstandings in the workplace. It is evident that different generations can complement each other in the workplace and work smoothly together if managed well. For example, the more technologically proficient Gen Xers can serve to upgrade the skills of Boomers in this area, and Boomers can mentor the Gen Xers by exhibiting the positive attitudes toward jobs, by sharing the work ethics and loyalty, and by discussing teaching experiences. Today’s leaders should be able to distinguish what positive aspects and trends both Boomers and Gen Xers can bring to the workplace and build a positive climate to foster their contributions.

REFERENCES