

GENERATIONS Z AND ALPHA AS CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

DOI: [10.56177/AUA.PHILOLOGICA.2.26.2025.art.35](https://doi.org/10.56177/AUA.PHILOLOGICA.2.26.2025.art.35)

Senior Lecturer PhD RAMONA IULIA HERMAN
"1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia

Abstract: *The evolution of modern society, accelerated by rapid technological advances and profound social changes, has led to the emergence of generations with distinct characteristics that are influencing the world in unprecedented ways: Generation Z and Generation Alpha. These two cohorts of young people have become pillars of global transformation, standing out for their adaptability to complex technological environments, as well as for the specific values and behaviors that shape family dynamics, educational methods and traditional parental roles. This interaction between generations represents not only a challenge, but also an opportunity for teachers and parents to rethink their approach and to contribute to the harmonious development of their children. It is important for them to support the development of balanced mental health and to collaborate with schools and institutions to create a safe and educational environment. Parents and teachers must adopt proactive measures to prevent online risks and promote responsible education that addresses both digital safety and the emotional and social development of children. This paper aims to highlight the distinctive characteristics of Generation Z and Alpha, by identifying the main difficulties encountered by teachers and parents and also to offer practical solutions for building balanced relationships, in order to harmoniously develop the personality of these young people.*

Keywords: *parenting; teacher training; generational education; educational relations; technological development.*

1. Introduction

The accelerated evolution of modern society, driven by rapid technological advancement and deep social changes, has resulted in the emergence of generations with unique characteristics that influence the world in transformative ways: Generation Z and Generation Alpha. These groups of young people stand at the forefront of global change, defined by their ability to navigate complex digital environments and by values and behaviors that shape family life, educational practices, and traditional parenting roles. This dynamic offer both challenges and opportunities for parents and educators to reassess their approaches and foster children's healthy development. This paper seeks to explore the distinctive features of Generations Z and Alpha, identify the main obstacles faced by parents and educators, and provide actionable strategies to create supportive relationships that contribute to children's emotional and social well-being.

2. Characteristics of Generations Z and Alpha

Generation Z – the keyword for this generation is "internet".

This includes people born between 1995 and 2010 according to Rothman¹, or, in a less restrictive version, after 1995 Cilliers². In other words, they are the children of generations X or Y. Having had access to technology since the first years of life, they cannot imagine the world without the internet. People of this generation are used to obtaining and using information through technology. Not knowing any other way, this generation will continue to be influenced by the media, virtual friends and advertising, in a positive or negative way. Having a high degree of independence, they will seek answers to all questions, considering that they do not need parents or teachers to guide them, Benjamin³ indicated.

Generation Z characterizes itself as self-confident, with a sense of humor, addicted to the phone, internet and social networks, according to Vinh⁴. In 2001, Prensky⁵ published the article *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants Part 2: Do They Really Think Differently?* in which he highlights a series of characteristics that individualize this generation: clothing styles, different forms of socialization and communication, respectively in the online environment, the relationship with parents and the attitude towards family, the way of expressing affection, the attitude towards work, etc. The author calls people from this generation "digital natives", because he considers them to be native speakers of the digital language.

Csobanka⁶ highlights the paradox of virtual relationships, because multiple connections appear due to the desire to have friends and socialize, but the real result is that people find, sometimes late, that they are actually alone. For this generation, presence translates into "being online", and absence into being "offline".

The skills of using devices have also led them to reorganize their learning activity. In contrast to classic textbooks, they believe that they learn faster and more efficiently by experimenting or seeking answers to their questions, discovering through personal experience rather than listening to what others tell them, and their interest can be maintained as long as the information is relevant to their topics of interest. Otherwise, their attitude to learning will be superficial. For this reason, they show little interest in printed text and face-to-face interactions.

¹ Rothman, D. A Tsunami of Learners Called Generation Z. 2016.

² Cilliers, E. J. The challenge of teaching Generation Z. *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 3, nr. 1, 2017, pp. 188–198.

³ Benjamin. În Williams, K. C., Page, R. A., Petrosky, A. R., & Hernandez, R. Marketing to the Generations. *Journal of Behavioral Studies in Business*, vol. 3, 2010, pp. 1–17.

⁴ Vinh, T. Q. Understanding Generation Z Students to Meet Target's Learning Preference in the International Integration Age. În *HUFLIT International Conference on Ensuring a High-Quality Human Resource in the Modern Age* (proceedings), 2020.

⁵ Prensky, M. *Teaching Digital Natives: Partnering for Real Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2010.

⁶ Csobanka, Z. E. The Z Generation. *Acta Technologica Dubnicae*, vol. 6, nr. 2, 2016, pp. 63–76.

⁷ Tapscott, D. *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation Is Changing Your World*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009.

⁸ Cran, C. *Leadership in the Multi-Generational Workplace*. Synthesis at Work Inc., 2010.

⁹ Bonchiș, E. (coord.). *Generația Z: o perspectivă psihologică și educațională*. Iași: Polirom, 2021.

Due to rapid access to information, the slow pace at which things happen causes them discomfort, boredom, irritability, distrust, mentions Tapscott⁷.

Generation Alpha - the keyword of this generation is "more...."

They use technology because they believe it is easier for them to learn or work in this way. Moreover, they respect and appreciate situations in which generations X and Y manage to teach them or show them effective things in a short time, highlights Cran⁸.

A study conducted by Barna Group and World Vision in 2018-2019, cited by Bonchiş⁹, reveals this generation's orientation towards career and financial success, but the hierarchy of priorities includes the following:

1. completing their studies;
2. financial independence from their parents;
3. traveling;
4. career;
5. becoming spiritually mature;
6. to know exactly who they are;
7. to enjoy life before having responsibilities;
8. to follow their dreams and then become parents;
9. marriage can occur after the appearance of children.

The Australian sociologist and demographer McCrindle¹⁰ was the first to introduce the term "Generation Alpha". This name highlights the beginning of a new series of generations, marking a change from the names used for previous generations. Generation Alpha is recognized as the second authentic generation of the 21st century, including children born between 2010 and 2025. The main characteristic is that for them the learning process began very early, through influences coming from parents, educators, technology and social interactions from various environments Apaydin & Kaya¹¹. Born in the last decade, these children have had a digitalized environment, according to Reis¹², so they prefer to communicate visually, through images, or auditory, and less through text, mentions Carter¹³.

¹⁰ McCrindle, M. The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the Global Generations. Sydney: McCrindle Research Pty Ltd., 2014.

¹¹ Apaydin, Ç., & Kaya, Ş. F. An analysis of the preschool teachers' views on Alpha Generation. European Journal of Education Studies, vol. 6, nr. 11, 2020.

¹² Reis, T. A. Study on the Alpha Generation and the Reflections of Its Behaviour in the Organizational Environment. Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science, vol. 6, nr. 1, 2018, pp. 9–19

¹³ Carter. In Ramadlani, T., & Wibisono, S. Visual Literacy and Character Education for Alpha Generation. Proceedings of the International Seminar on Language, Education and Culture (ISoLEC), 2017.

Also, another characteristic of this generation is the increased adaptability, as these children are used to "navigating" a rapidly changing world and are able to adapt to new technological and social contexts. Generation Alpha benefits from exposure to numerous cultural influences through global connectivity, which contributes to a greater openness to diversity. Generation Alpha is educated from an early age to attach great importance to physical and mental health, and technology plays a significant role in supporting and managing these aspects.

The jobs of Generation Alpha will capitalize on the creativity of these children. Professions related to digital product design, multimedia content production, streaming or influencer marketing will be increasingly prevalent among them, and access to digital tools will allow them to create and distribute content faster than any previous generation. They will likely be much more involved in activities such as creating video games, films or music, but also in data management and digital marketing. A number of studies provide a comparative analysis of the characteristics of Generations Z and Alpha.

Below, we present, in tabular form, the findings of a study conducted by Apaydin and Kaya.

Variables	Characteristics of Generation Z	Characteristics of Generation Alpha
Behavior	Curiosity	Very high curiosity
	Stubborn and temperamental	Even more stubborn and temperamental
	Introverted	More introverted
	Respects rules	Does not respect rules
	Active	More active
	Respectful	Less respectful
	Expects support	Displays self-sufficiency
	Adapts to external environments	Has more difficulty adapting
Personal Traits	Egocentric	More egocentric
	Emotional	More emotional
	Watches cartoons	Watches content that includes violence
	Displays empathy	Lower capacity for empathy
	Compliant with authority	Less compliant with authority
	No attention issues	Experiences attention problems
Academic Skills	Knowledgeable	More knowledgeable
	Open to learning	Even more open to learning
	High linguistic intelligence	Lower linguistic intelligence
	Understands easily	Understands even more

		easily
Relationship with Technology	Uses technology	Uses technology even more extensively
	Low dependency on technology	Increased dependency on technology
Relationship with Peers	Positive relationships with peers	Conflictual relationships with peers
	Effective communication with friends	Poor communication with peers
	Equality among peers	Desire to be a leader

Table 2.1. Comparative analysis of the characteristics of Generations Z and Alpha according to Apaydin & Kaya¹⁴

3. Challenges and solutions for parents and teachers of children from generations Z and Alpha

In a social, economic and technological environment in continuous transformation, parents of children from generations Z and Alpha face a multitude of challenges. Advanced technology, rapid access to information and changes in society's values put pressure on parents who must guide their children through an increasingly different world from the one they grew up in. In addition, generations Z and Alpha will experience a reality in which virtual communication, online education and diversity of learning methods become an integral part of their daily lives, and parents will have to manage these new realities to ensure a healthy balance in their development.

One of the major challenges is early exposure to technology. This generates concerns about the impact on the cognitive, social and emotional development of the little ones. Parents must find a balance between the benefits of technology and the associated risks, such as screen addiction, sleep problems and the impact on mental health. According to research by McCrindle¹⁵ in *The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the Global Generations*, this balance is becoming increasingly important as technology plays an increasingly important role in the lives of children in these generations.

According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO)¹⁶, excessive use of social media can lead to an increased risk of depression and anxiety among young people. Constant access to social comparisons and unrealistic beauty standards can lead to lower self-esteem.

¹⁴ Apaydin, Ç., & Kaya, Ş. F. An analysis of the preschool teachers' views on Alpha Generation. *European Journal of Education Studies*, vol. 6, nr. 11, 2020.

¹⁵ McCrindle, M. *The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the Global Generations*. Sydney: McCrindle Research Pty Ltd., 2014.

¹⁶ World Health Organization. *Spotlight on adolescent health and well-being*. Jo Inchley, Dorothy Currie, Sanja Budisavljevic, Torbjørn Torsheim, Atle Jåstad, Alina Cosma, Colette Kelly & Ársæll Már Arnarsson (eds.). Geneva: WHO, 2020.

Dr. Mosley¹⁷, in his book *Happy Families. Your Child's Mental Health Guide*, states that parents can help reduce the negative effects of social media on their children's self-esteem and mental health by promoting a balance between their online and offline lives, communicating openly, setting limits on their children's online time, engaging and supporting them in offline activities, and fostering an emotionally supportive environment.

Parents from previous generations may have difficulty understanding the values and perspectives of Gen Z and Alpha children, especially when it comes to accepting diversity and personal priorities. In order to reduce these differences and facilitate understanding of these children, they need to educate themselves on these issues, provide opportunities for children to communicate openly, listen to their opinions and experiences, accept change, and adapt to social and technological realities.

Another important aspect, seen as a challenge among parents, is the safety of children, as cyberbullying, grooming and exposure to inappropriate content are increasingly common in the online environment. To protect them, parents must find appropriate technological protection measures. Continuous collaboration between parents and children is essential for creating a safe online environment. By using parental control tools, educating children about online risks and monitoring their activities, parents can significantly reduce the dangers associated with the online environment.

National Bullying Prevention Center, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Common Sense Media, Family Online Safety Institute, Childnet International are some of the platforms that offer resources and guides to combat cyberbullying and grooming, as well as safety filters and effective parental control applications.

Drug use among young people, especially those from generations Z and Alpha, is a major global problem, with significant implications for their health. In Romania, according to the National Drug Situation Report of the National Anti-Drug Agency¹⁸, cannabis and new psychoactive substances (NPS) are the most commonly used drugs.

To prevent drug use among young people, authorities and parents must implement effective prevention and intervention measures. According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO), school education about the risks of drug use and mental health promotion are essential to prevent this behavior. Educational campaigns and prevention programs must be integrated into schools and communities to provide young people with the correct information.

Parental support also plays an essential role in preventing drug use. Studies show that adolescents who have parents actively involved in their lives and who

¹⁷ Mosley, B. *Familii fericite. Ghidul sănătății mintale a copilului tău*. București: ZYX Books, 2024.

¹⁸ Agenția Națională Antidrog. *Raport național privind situația drogurilor 2023. România – evoluții și tendințe*. București: ANA, 2023.

openly discuss the risks of drug use are much less likely to become substance users.

In addition, legislation can play a significant role in limiting young people's access to drugs. Strict regulations on the sale and distribution of substances to minors, together with measures to monitor online behavior, can substantially reduce the risk of drug use among adolescents.

Regarding the **challenges faced by teachers in relation to these two generations**, we would like to mention the fact that social, economic and technological changes in recent decades have led to the emergence of new generational characteristics that also profoundly influence the educational process. Generation Z (born approximately between 1995 and 2010) and Generation Alpha (after 2010) are the first “digital native” generations, and their relationship with school poses a series of challenges for teachers. These challenges concern both the teaching method and the management of students’ socio-emotional and behavioral aspects.

Studies show that the new generations have a shorter attention span, due to constant exposure to the digital environment and to short and fast-paced content, says Turner¹⁹. Teachers are thus faced with the difficulty of maintaining student interest throughout the lesson, requiring more interactive teaching methods.

Generations Z and Alpha expect the use of technology in school: tablets, apps, digital platforms, according to Prensky²⁰. Teachers who do not adopt these tools risk being perceived as irrelevant.

Young people value individuality and freedom of choice. They expect education to be adapted to their interests and needs according to Schroer²¹. Teachers need to move from standardized teaching to a more flexible and student-centered approach.

Numerous studies indicate an increase in anxiety and stress levels among young people, associated with social pressure and online comparisons, according to Twenge²². Teachers are often called upon to play an emotional support role, which requires skills in the field of emotional intelligence.

Unlike previous generations, students from Generations Z and Alpha question traditional authority. Respect is conditioned by the authenticity and competence of the teacher, not just by his formal status, indicate Seemiller & Grace²³.

We present below proposed solutions for each challenge, as found in specialized literature.

¹⁹ Turner, A. *Generation Z: Technology and Social Interest*. *The Journal of Individual Psychology*, vol. 71, nr. 2, 2015, pp. 103–113.

²⁰ Prensky, M. *Teaching Digital Natives: Partnering for Real Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2010.

²¹ Schroer, W. J. *Generations X, Y, Z and Alpha: The Changing Definition of "Generation"*. *Journal of Intergenerational Studies*, vol. 12, nr. 3, 2018, pp. 45–57.

²² Twenge, J. M. *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy – and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*. New York: Atria Books, 2017.

²³ Seemiller, C., & Grace, M. *Generation Z Goes to College*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016.

Challenge	Proposed Solution	Source
Reduced attention span	Interactive lessons, gamification, micro-learning	Prensky (2010), Turner (2015)
Need for constant digitalization	Integrate apps, multimedia, hybrid learning	Seemiller & Grace (2016)
Demand for personalized education	Differentiated learning, student autonomy	Schroer (2018)
Increased anxiety and stress	Social-emotional learning, counseling	Twenge (2017)
Authority skepticism	Build trust through authenticity	Turner (2015)
Information overload	Interdisciplinary projects, critical thinking training	Seemiller & Grace (2016)
Social comparison pressure	Foster resilience, focus on personal progress	Twenge (2017)

Table 3.1. Challenges and solutions for teachers working with Generations Z and Alpha.

4. Conclusions

Faced with the challenges faced by Generations Z and Alpha, parents must be informed and prepared to manage the balance between technology use and real interactions. It is important that they support the development of balanced mental health and collaborate with schools and institutions to create a safe and educational environment. Parents must adopt proactive measures to prevent online risks and promote responsible education that addresses both digital safety and the emotional and social development of children. Through a joint effort and adapted to current needs, parents can support children from these generations to overcome challenges and develop in a healthy and balanced way.

The challenges brought by Generations Z and Alpha force teachers to continuously adapt. Educational approaches must be more dynamic, more inclusive and more oriented towards the integration of technology and the socio-emotional development of students. Education can no longer be viewed solely as a transfer of knowledge, but as a complex process of developing skills for life in a constantly changing world.

Bibliography

- AGENTIA NATIONALA ANTIDROG. *Raport național privind situația drogurilor 2023. România – evoluții și tendințe*. București: ANA, 2023. Disponibil la: <https://ana.gov.ro/cele-mai-recente-date-privind-consumul-de-droguri-in-romania/>
- APAYDIN, Ç., & KAYA, Ş. F. *An analysis of the preschool teachers' views on Alpha Generation*. *European Journal of Education Studies*, vol. 6, nr. 11, 2020. Disponibil la: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3627158>

- BENJAMIN. ÎN WILLIAMS, K. C., PAGE, R. A., PETROSKY, A. R., & HERNANDEZ, R. *Marketing to the Generations. Journal of Behavioral Studies in Business*, vol. 3, 2010, pp. 1–17.
- BONCHIȘ, E. (coord.). *Generația Z: o perspectivă psihologică și educațională*. Iași: Polirom, 2021. ISBN 978-973-468-384-0.
- CARTER. ÎN RAMADLANI, T., & WIBISONO, S. *Visual Literacy and Character Education for Alpha Generation. Proceedings of the International Seminar on Language, Education and Culture (ISoLEC)*, 2017.
- CILLIERS, E. J. *The challenge of teaching Generation Z. PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 3, nr. 1, 2017, pp. 188–198.
- CRAN, C. *Leadership in the Multi-Generational Workplace*. Synthesis at Work Inc., 2010.
- CSOBANKA, Z. E. *The Z Generation. Acta Technologica Dubnicæ*, vol. 6, nr. 2, 2016, pp. 63–76. Disponibil la: <https://doi.org/10.1515/atd-2016-0012>
- MCCRINDLE, M. *The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the Global Generations*. Sydney: McCrindle Research Pty Ltd., 2014.
- MOSLEY, B. *Familii fericite. Ghidul sănătății mintale a copilului tău*. București: ZYX Books, 2024.
- PRENSKY, M. *Teaching Digital Natives: Partnering for Real Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2010.
- RAMADLANI, T., & WIBISONO, S. *Visual Literacy and Character Education for Alpha Generation. Proceedings of the International Seminar on Language, Education and Culture (ISoLEC)*, 2017.
- REIS, T. A. *Study on the Alpha Generation and the Reflections of Its Behaviour in the Organizational Environment. Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, vol. 6, nr. 1, 2018, pp. 9–19.
- ROTHMAN, D. *A Tsunami of Learners Called Generation Z*. 2016.
- SCHROER, W. J. *Generations X, Y, Z and Alpha: The Changing Definition of "Generation". Journal of Intergenerational Studies*, vol. 12, nr. 3, 2018, pp. 45–57.
- SEEMILLER, C., & GRACE, M. *Generation Z Goes to College*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016.
- TAPSCOTT, D. *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation Is Changing Your World*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009.
- TURNER, A. *Generation Z: Technology and Social Interest. The Journal of Individual Psychology*, vol. 71, nr. 2, 2015, pp. 103–113. Disponibil la: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jip.2015.0021>
- TWENGE, J. M. *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy – and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*. New York: Atria Books, 2017.
- VINH, T. Q. *Understanding Generation Z Students to Meet Target's Learning Preference in the International Integration Age*. În HUFLIT International Conference on Ensuring a High-Quality Human Resource in the Modern Age (proceedings), 16 octombrie 2020.
- WILLIAMS, K. C., PAGE, R. A., PETROSKY, A. R., & HERNANDEZ, R. *Marketing to the Generations. Journal of Behavioral Studies in Business*, vol. 3, 2010, pp. 1–17.
- WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION. *Spotlight on adolescent health and well-being*. Jo Inchley, Dorothy Currie, Sanja Budisavljevic, Torbjørn Torsheim, Atle Jåstad, Alina Cosma, Colette Kelly & Ársæll Már Arnarsson (eds.). Geneva: WHO, 2020.
- <https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/status-of-mind.html>
- https://cursuri.psihoeducatie.ro/pluginfile.php/43/mod_resource/content/4/Cap%201%20PERSPECTIVE%20PSIHOEDUCA%C8%9AIONALE%20.docx_watermark%20%281%29.pdf