Modernisation of Kazakhstan and the digital generation

[Kulsariyeva Aktolkyn]

Abstract **— This article is about modernisation presented on example of the Republic of Kazakhstan.The in-depth analysis includes implementations of generational theory and closely covers the Y generation.** *(Abstract)*

Keywords **—** generation, modernisation, innovations, technologies, education. *(key words)*

I.   Introduction

Nowadays the developing countries are trying to catch up to the first world countries. In order to shorten the gap and achieve sustainable growth rate the developing countries must go through modernisation. Especially now in the age of globalisation where the world has even less boundaries, the free flow of ideas, knowledge transfer and waves of innovations engulf every corner of this planet. The key to successful modernisation is not only modernisation of the technology, state system but the nation itself. For nation to become modernised there has to be willingness and initiative on behalf of the people of the nation as well as the appropriate education system must be established. The Republic of Kazakhstan currently is in progress of modernisation and can serve as a great example of developing country.

II.   Modernisation

In recent years the word modernisation has been repeatedly emerging in Messages addressed to the nation by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Such occurrences emphasise the importance of the modernisation for effective functioning and development of the Kazakhstan's state system. This year the President announced the strategy of the social and economic modernisation, which grants a priority to empowerment of Human Capital. The model of education system(schools, universities and other educational institutions) along with financial and social resources is one of the main factors of the development of Human Capital.

Ideally the modernisation should guide us to the life that would live up to the universal ambition of all generations in our country. One of the dynamic definitions to the modernization was given by Johannes Berger: "Modernization is the internal achievement of a society; the particular processes of modernization support each other in combination; the leading nations do not impede the followers; the processes of modernization are converging in a common goal"[1].Every generation has its own values, mode of life and mindset, and it

Kulsariyeva Aktolkyn
line 1: KazNPU
line 2: Kazakhstan

is essential to account for all of them to create a successful strategy of the modernisation.

III. Generations

A. *Generational theory*

In 1991 on the crossroad of different disciplines the partnership of american scholars Neil Howe and William Strauss has produced a book "Generations"[2] which would become a groundwork for the Strauss-Howe generational theory. In the book they retrace American history from 1584 to nowadays and made some prediction into future till 2069 in series of generational biographies. Their definition of the generation is the population born in the span of approximately 20 years with characteristic to its generation beliefs and behaviours, shared memories of historic events and social trends in certain phase of life. Howe and Strauss analysed that every 4 generations form a cycle followed by the new cycle, a new chain of 4 generations. The most interesting in this findings is that each generation of the second cycle has similar features as respective generation of first cycle in exactly the same order.

This hypothesis has been tested in several countries and yielded legitimately positive results, making the theory quite plausible. The pragmatism of this lovely theory is that companies devising their marketing strategy would need to determine their target population with specific characteristics. Since in our times of market relationships it is not surprising to see educational institution as a business entity. This theory might be useful not only as indicator of psychological features of generation of their students, but as essential part of the equation to find the effective way to improve quality and promote their services.

Carl Mannheim defined generation: "…the social phenomenon 'generation' represents nothing more than a particular kind of identity of location, embracing related 'age groups' embedded in a historical-social process"[3]. While the nature of class location can be explained in terms of economic and social conditions, generation location is determined by the way in which certain patterns of experience and thought tend to be brought into existence by the natural data of the transition from one generation to another. People live their lives bound by what they accept as correct and true. That's how they define "reality" and by evaluating their "reality" we can see their fate. Obviously each and every generation has its own life drama which establishes "program" for the future. One of the way to understand the essence of a generation is to determine and critically inspect the main historical events, that formed specific values and mindset of the generation.

The term "values" is the cornerstone of the generational theory. According to sociologists the generational values form on subconscious level in children of age 12-14 under influence of socio-political and socio-economical events and a parental upbringing. Howe and Strauss started count of generation from 16th century using data on middle class which is absolute majority in the USA. Whereas the russian scientists took as a start point 20th century and used the same model as Howe and Strauss. Taking in consideration that our country due to its common history with Russia share the same vital historical events we can conclude that the model of our russian colleagues with some minor corrections would fit for our country's case.

B. Silent generation

"Silent generation" born in period 1920-1941, so-called for its endurance, conservatism, law-abiding (and who would dare to be not law-abiding in revolutionary regime and war times?!). Their values were shaped under the influence of social innovations of October Revolution, famine of pre-war collectivisation, atrocities of The Great Patriotic War.

That was the generation of our grandparents. Nearly all population of this generation came from villages (auls), which was part of patriarchic-traditional world of Kazakh culture. Consequently due to integration of Kazakhstan into USSR nearly everything: traditions, lifestyle patterns, households and even the way they dressed changed in Kazakhs' lives. The radical changes brought tragical consequences to majority of our native population. A painful adaptation to rapidly changing conditions resulted in an emergence of psychological stress and inferiority complex, which has not completely faded even to today's date.

"Silent generation" was a generation with huge psychological traumas, identity crisis. They have lived through the soviet and fascists "slaughters". The motto of this tormented generation was: "To survive no matter what it takes". Their main ambitions would be to survive, to get roof above the head, to get settled in the city and to give a russian education to their children. This generation appreciates unbending rules, exact orders and strict hierarchy. The people of this generation, who passed famine and hard times of war, are prudent, cautious and economical. They prefer to save rather than to spend and would never consider getting a loan in the bank unless it is absolutely necessary. People of these ages know the price of bread crumbs, and tend to save everything in store as they know the true meaning of hunger.

A. Post-war generation

Generation of post-war "baby-boomers", who was shaped in period of 1942-1963. This generation of residents of socialistic superpower, who lived in times of triumph of the USSR over their arch rival USA. They had mentality of a winner—the victory in the Second World War, First man set to the space (famous "Earth, bow to the Man") nearly fanatical faith in the bright future of socialism despite attempts of "rotten capitalism" to take over the world. This generation was fostered by collective values and standards of ideological machine of Communist Party.

The post-war generation had subconsciously formed a bias towards consumption, as their parents' generation's message was—"we have spilled tears, sweat and blood, so you could live in prosperity and comfort". Nowadays we can see that message was received: the luxurious cars, excessively large and pompous palaces and villas in countrysides are pretty common among the postwar generation. The values of this generation revolves mostly around material wellbeing.

B. Generation X

Generation X (unknown generation, generation of changes) born in period of 1964-1985, brought up during clash of two systems—capitalism and socialism. Their parents worked very hard, they all were through the standard kindergartens, they spent their childhood in yards under watch of their neighbours, were self sufficient and usually left to themselves. Apparently, because of that they are very independent, active and curious. For generation X knowledge has immense value, they like to study and the education they received were all-round and systematic. They appraise variety and flexibility and look forward to changes.

The generation of "cold war" have been through many social and political changes - steady deterioration of socialistic camp, "perestroika", local version of "wild capitalism". The X-generation had seen intense dramatical events which fortunately happened mostly without bloodshed: the iron curtains, fall of Berlin wall. This generation has been through a lot but stood tall and strived to adapt to the new reality. Thus it is believed that they will take the lead in the future modernisation to come.

E. Generation Y

Generation Y was born in period of 1986-2007. is a Web generation who chose to live in a virtual world rather than in real. Their childhood were spend in times of financial instability, collapse of former superpower USSR, formation of sovereign Kazakhstan, transition from planned to market economy explosive rate of adoption of digital technologies. This generation is independent and has opportunity to build new Kazakhstan from ground up in the new changed world. They live in epoch of globalisation, in the world of unprecedented variety of cultures, languages, ideologies, spiritual experiences.

If generation X was grown-up in a barred country, with computer and technical lagging behind by 10-15 years, then their children—generation Y has the almost same opportunities and live in the same informational, conceptual, and cultural domains as their western counterparts. They grew on the same books about Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings, watch the same movies about Shrek and Avatar, can travel all over the world, study in the same world universities, as Stanford, Cambridge, Oxford. They are ambitious, confident (sometimes overconfident)… They prefer to receive rather than give or share. They enjoy getting education, thus with development of alternative sources of education like distant learning, seminars or diplomas, they enjoy the freedom of choice and tend to collect great amount of certificates and diplomas through out their lives. Their education got less extensive, the knowledge they gain is more specialised and based on practical applications.

IV. Digital generation

All this features of the generation that we have listed so far are very important for educational and psychological purposes and for management of educational institutions. The need of the generation shapes the trends in education. For the purpose of managing of consumers, it is necessary to understand what common characteristics and values are shared in representatives of target age groups. For example, let`s take customer`s behaviour. If generation X likes malls for the time saving aspect, then generation Y likes them because of its entertainment aspect: ability to play, go to the cinema, eat gourmet food, enjoy battles in the virtual world. Today malls become a family entertainment centre and someday it might become the educational centre. It is argued that the most effective form of education for generation Y can be expressed as "Edutainment" (education+entertainment). And these circumstances should not be overlooked in contemporary system of education. J.G. Hogle came to this conclusion: "Research suggests that gaming in its various forms can motivate and interest learners, increase retention of subject material , and improve reasoning skills and higher order thinking"[4]. And it certainly has business application, the educational games in apple app store are sold by millions, new investors and developers rush to exploit new emerging market in sphere of mobile gaming.

For Web generation, who is today`s main consumer of schools and universities services, we have to propose adequate educational tools for their generation. Nowadays young people do not like reading books, they don`t like paper medium, they consume a huge amount of information from display screens. That is why we have to speak to them "in their own language" in education to give them wanted format of "education from the screen", using electronic textbooks, interactive methods and implementing entertainment elements as well. Professor Souza commented advantages of implementing new technologies:"Digital textbooks can be easily added to and revised on ongoing basis. Thus they represent a tool that accretes power and value year after year. The digital textbook becomes shaped increasingly to address real areas of student difficulty - ultimately enhancing student learning and satisfaction to an extent probably not achievable with any other currently available approach"[5].

It is not a secret that in educational institutions different generations with different level of computer skills meet. If teachers have a high level of so-called "computer anxiety", coming from insufficient functional digital proficiency common to their generation, whereas their students are entirely involved in the digital culture, into the world of unbelievable variety of gadgets. The Y generation spends more time in virtual world than in real one. In the virtual world they live different live which is not always correlated with the reality. They have a power to be someone else, maybe the better version of themselves or maybe someone entirely different, the choice is on them. This extra freedom of virtual space is very attractive to the new generation. Thus to appeal to them, it will require the development of the innovational educational technologies and creating of new scripts of lessons to the teachers with implantation of IT technologies. This might event prove to be useful at motivating students and certainly would make their study time more entertaining and effective.

Immediate adoption of electronic education by educational organisations, radical change of the system of advanced training will finally lead to shortening the digital proficiency gap between the teachers and students. With some effort one of the barriers that prevents the successful interaction in educational process of new generation will be lifted. The process of modernisation of education is a multi-aspect process, connected to political, social and economic development of the country, and with teacher`s competence requirements etc. Today in Kazakhstan it is encouraged to take advantage of IT technologies in educational sphere. In his Message the President N. A. Nazarbayev calls people to active development of informational technologies, it's great to see the speed of socio-economic development of the country, the Ministry of Education and Science creates new structures to advance teacher`s qualification in Nazarbayev`s Intellectual Schools.

As Strauss and Howe wrote: "History creates generation. And generation creates history". In new chapter of Kazakhstan's history with only 23 years passed from declaration of independence the new generation appeared the Y generation. The generation with modern perspective on the world, new demands, high expectations, grand plans, with all new and different challenges to face. The difference between generations was never that big before, in modern culture the dynamics of the changes and wave of innovations make it hard for other generations to stay in tune and leaves no time to catch up. Thus the conflict of the parents and children on basis of lose of authority in some aspects of life. However from this conflict we can find new methods to influence and guide new generation towards brighter future and help them to form their own subjective reality, psychology, emotions, values, art.

V. Conclusion

Nowadays world is deeply connected with IT technologies and rate of adoption of new technologies serves as indictor of progress of modernisation. As technology evolves so does the end user. The Y generation interested in deeper integration of technologies in educational process. Their demand makes trends in education system and paves wave for new psychological and sociological techniques.

References

1. Berger, Johannes (1996). Modernisierung und Modernisierungstheorien, in: Leviathan, *Heft 1, S. 8–12*, pp. 45-62.

2. Neil Howe, William Strauss (1992). Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069, HarperCollins, 544 pages.

3. Mannheim, Carl (1927). The sociological problem of generations. The problem of generations, Routledge, pp. 293-294.

4. Hogle, Jan (1996). Considering Games as Cognitive Tools: In Search of Effective "Edutainment", University of Georgia, pp.8-9.

5. Souza Jane, Bingham Paul (2005/2006). Integration of available and new technologies to raise student understanding and engagement. In journal of Educational Technology Systems, 34(2), pp. 189-198.