Building gen z work character through the among learning system in vocational education
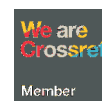
Author Name(s): Siti Mariah, Esther Hesline Palandi, Soeparwati Soeparwati

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Building gen z work character through the among learning system in vocational education

Siti Mariah[1*)], Esther Hesline Palandi[2], Soeparwati Soeparwati[3]
[1] Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia
[2] Politeknik Negeri Malang, Indonesia
[3] Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study explores the development of Generation Z s work character through the implementation of the Among Learning System in vocational education. Employing a qualitative research methodology based on library research and literature review, the study critically examines existing theories and practices related to character building, generational characteristics, and innovative learning models within vocational contexts. The Among Learning System, rooted in cultural and communal learning traditions, emphasizes holistic personal development, including ethics, discipline, responsibility, and collaboration key attributes for preparing Gen Z students for the dynamic world of work. The analysis reveals that integrating culturally grounded learning methods like the Among Learning System effectively nurtures essential work ethics and soft skills among vocational students. This system fosters not only technical competence but also interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that are critical for employability and professional success. Findings from the literature highlight the challenges Gen Z faces in adapting to workplace demands, such as digital distractions, preference for instant gratification, and diverse learning needs. The Among Learning System addresses these challenges by promoting self-regulation, communal responsibility, and reflective practices within the learning environment. This study contributes to vocational education by offering a framework for educators and policymakers to incorporate culturally relevant pedagogies that align with Gen Z s unique characteristics. It also underscores the importance of character education alongside technical skills development in vocational training to produce well-rounded, resilient graduates ready to meet future workforce challenges. Further empirical research is recommended to validate these theoretical findings and explore the practical implementation of the Among Learning System across diverse vocational settings.

Corresponding Author:

Siti Mariah,
Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa
Email: siti.mariah@ustjogja.ac.id

Introduction

In the contemporary world of work, character development has emerged as a critical component of vocational education, especially for Generation Z (Gen Z), who are entering the workforce with unique characteristics and expectations (Maloni et al., 2019). Gen Z, typically defined as individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, demonstrate distinct learning preferences, work

attitudes, and social behaviors shaped by digital technology and rapid societal changes. Despite their technological adeptness, concerns have been raised about their readiness to meet the ethical, interpersonal, and professional demands of the modern workplace (Smith & Kouchaki, 2021). Therefore, vocational education faces the pressing challenge of not only equipping students with technical skills but also fostering strong work character traits such as discipline, responsibility, collaboration, and resilience (Ahmad et al., 2023).

Existing educational models often focus predominantly on cognitive and technical competencies, while the cultivation of work character remains underemphasized (Zhang & Tian, 2024). This gap becomes more evident when addressing Gen Z s specific needs, who require learning environments that align with their values and modes of engagement (Parker, 2017). The Among Learning System, rooted in indigenous communal values and cultural heritage, offers a promising pedagogical approach that integrates character building with vocational training (Goleman et al., 2012). This culturally grounded system emphasizes holistic learning, where personal and social development complement skill acquisition.

Previous studies have examined character education and generational learning preferences separately, yet few have explored the integration of culturally based learning systems such as the Among Learning System within vocational contexts for Gen Z (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020). This research addresses this gap by investigating how the Among Learning System can effectively build work character among Gen Z vocational students, thus contributing a novel perspective to vocational pedagogy that blends tradition with modernity (Kuleto et al., 2021).

The urgency of this research lies in the increasing demand for vocational graduates who are not only technically competent but also possess the work ethics necessary to thrive in a complex, globalized economy (Tlili et al., 2022). Strengthening work character through culturally relevant education offers a sustainable pathway to produce resilient, adaptable, and ethical professionals (Dunas & Vartanov, 2020).

The objective of this study is to explore the role and effectiveness of the Among Learning System in fostering work character development in Gen Z students within vocational education (Andrianto et al., 2025). This research benefits educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers by providing a theoretical framework and practical insights for integrating character education into vocational training tailored to Gen Z s unique learning profiles (Chillakuri, 2020).

In summary, this study fills an important research gap by combining generational characteristics, character education, and indigenous learning systems, thereby offering innovative strategies to enhance vocational education s responsiveness to contemporary workforce demands (Saleem & Fatima, 2018).

Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a focus on library research and literature review. The qualitative method is selected to gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of the development of Generation Z s work character through the Among Learning System within vocational education settings (Van Lierop, 2023). This approach allows for an exploration of existing theoretical frameworks, educational models, and empirical findings relevant to the topic (Kuleto et al., 2021).

The data sources used in this research consist primarily of secondary data obtained from academic journals, books, dissertations, official reports, and credible online publications (Ochis, 2024). These sources were carefully selected to provide comprehensive insights into the characteristics of Generation Z, principles of the Among Learning System, vocational education pedagogy, and character development theories (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020).

Data collection was conducted through systematic literature review and library research. The process involved identifying, selecting, and reviewing relevant scholarly works and authoritative documents that address the key themes of the study. Keywords such as Generation Z, work character, Among Learning System, vocational education, and character education were used to guide the search in academic databases and digital libraries. This method ensured a thorough compilation of pertinent literature that supports the analysis and synthesis of the study's subject matter (Cooper et al., 2019).

The data analysis followed a thematic analysis method. This involved categorizing and coding the collected literature based on recurring themes related to Gen Z's learning characteristics, cultural and educational aspects of the Among Learning System, and the integration of character building within vocational education (Huang, 2021). Through critical analysis and interpretation of these themes, the study identifies patterns, contrasts, and gaps in the existing knowledge, enabling the construction of a coherent conceptual framework (Mau, 2024).

By employing a qualitative literature-based methodology, this research provides a robust foundation for understanding the potential of the Among Learning System to nurture essential work character traits in Gen Z vocational students, thereby offering valuable implications for educators and policymakers (Santoso et al., 2020).

Results and Discussion

Results

The analysis of existing literature and theoretical perspectives reveals a multifaceted relationship between the Among Learning System and the development of Generation Z's work character within vocational education. Generation Z, characterized by their digital nativity, desire for meaningful engagement, and preference for collaborative and experiential learning, presents unique challenges and opportunities for educators seeking to cultivate essential work-related values and competencies (Burns, 2020). The Among Learning System, deeply rooted in indigenous communal traditions and holistic learning principles, emerges as a culturally resonant pedagogical approach that addresses these generational needs while fostering critical work character traits such as responsibility, discipline, empathy, and resilience (Näkk & Timoštšuk, 2024).

Vocational education traditionally emphasizes technical proficiency and practical skills essential for labor market readiness. However, as the nature of work evolves towards increased complexity and interpersonal dynamics, character attributes have become equally vital (Dean, 2017). The Among Learning System's emphasis on communal values and personal integrity aligns with contemporary calls for a more integrative educational model that bridges cognitive skills with affective and ethical development (Binkley et al., 2012). This system encourages students to engage not only as individuals but as part of a broader community, promoting accountability, mutual respect, and shared responsibility–qualities indispensable for success in modern workplaces (Keller, 2019).

Literature demonstrates that Gen Z learners thrive in environments that validate their need for connectedness, autonomy, and purpose (Malik, 2024). The Among Learning System facilitates this by creating a learning ecosystem where students participate actively in collective activities, rituals, and reflective practices that nurture self-awareness and social cohesion. Through such immersive experiences, vocational students internalize work ethics not as abstract concepts but as lived realities grounded in cultural meaning and interpersonal relationships.

Moreover, this learning model addresses some of the common challenges observed in Gen Z students, including tendencies toward digital distraction, impatience for immediate results, and fragmented attention spans (Gravett, 2020). The Among Learning System's structured yet flexible framework helps students cultivate self-regulation and perseverance by embedding character lessons within communal support networks and consistent routines. This contrasts with more

fragmented or purely cognitive educational approaches that may overlook the holistic formation of character (Paasonen, 2021).

Previous studies often highlight a disconnect between technical training and character development in vocational settings, with few integrating indigenous pedagogies that valorize moral and social virtues (Sadouni, 2023). By centering the Among Learning System, this study contributes a novel perspective that reconciles modern vocational demands with traditional wisdom, offering a pathway for educators to foster work character that resonates deeply with Gen Z students' cultural identities and learning preferences (Graham, 2018).

The findings underscore the importance of embedding character education within vocational curricula through culturally responsive teaching methods (Robertson, 2023). This integration not only enhances students' employability by equipping them with vital soft skills but also supports their personal growth and spiritual well-being. In doing so, vocational education can transcend its functional mandate and contribute to the formation of well-rounded individuals capable of ethical decision-making, collaboration, and lifelong learning.

In practical terms, the Among Learning System encourages vocational institutions to rethink pedagogical strategies by incorporating community-oriented projects, mentorship programs, and reflective dialogue sessions that mirror the system's principles (El-Menawy & Saleh, 2023). These strategies foster an inclusive learning environment where Gen Z students feel valued and empowered, thereby increasing their engagement and commitment both academically and professionally.

In conclusion, the synthesis of literature affirms that the Among Learning System is a promising approach to building Gen Z's work character within vocational education. It responds effectively to the generational characteristics and contemporary workforce expectations by promoting an integrated development of technical skills and ethical virtues. Future research should consider empirical investigations to validate and expand upon these theoretical insights, including case studies and longitudinal analyses in diverse vocational contexts, to further elucidate the practical applications and outcomes of the Among Learning System in nurturing resilient and principled future professionals.

Generation Z Characteristics and Their Impact on Work Character Development

Generation Z, the cohort born roughly between 1995 and 2010, exhibits unique traits that distinctly influence their learning preferences and work attitudes. Their upbringing in an era dominated by digital technology has shaped their cognitive processes, social interactions, and value systems. One prominent characteristic is their fluency with digital tools, which facilitates quick information access but also predisposes them to shortened attention spans and a preference for immediate feedback. This digital immersion impacts their motivation, often favoring experiential and collaborative learning over traditional lecture-based methods.

In the context of vocational education, Gen Z s expectations for relevance and authenticity challenge conventional pedagogy focused mainly on technical skill acquisition. They seek learning environments that foster not only competence but also personal meaning and social connection. This generation values autonomy yet desires guidance, expecting transparency and inclusivity in educational processes. Their pragmatic outlook towards education is intertwined with concerns about employability and social impact, which frames their engagement with character-building initiatives.

However, several studies have noted potential vulnerabilities within Gen Z, such as lower resilience and reduced face-to-face communication skills, which can hinder their professional readiness. They may struggle with sustained focus and emotional regulation, essential traits in demanding work environments. Thus, vocational education faces the critical task of not only imparting vocational skills but also cultivating robust work character attributes such as discipline, integrity, teamwork, and perseverance.

Understanding Gen Z s distinct profile is foundational to designing effective character education. Without addressing their unique psychological and social needs, attempts to build work character risk being perceived as outdated or irrelevant. The Among Learning System, with its cultural roots and holistic orientation, aligns well with these generational traits by fostering communal engagement, reflective practice, and contextualized learning.

Table 1. Alignment of the among Learning System with Gen Z′s Expectations and Needs in Vocational Education

Aspect	Generation Z Characteristics and Expectations	Challenges/Vulnerabilities	Among Learning System Alignment
Learning Preferences	Seek relevance, authenticity, personal meaning, and social connection. Desire autonomy balanced with guidance.	Risk perceiving traditional pedagogy as irrelevant or disengaging.	Fosters contextualized, meaningful learning through cultural roots and communal engagement.
Educational Values	Value transparency, inclusivity, and practical outcomes tied to employability and social impact.	May struggle with low patience for abstract or disconnected learning.	Emphasizes inclusive, transparent processes grounded in community and real-life contexts.
Emotional and Social Skills	Require social connection but may have limited face-to-face communication skills.	Exhibit reduced resilience, emotional regulation, and sustained focus.	Promotes reflective practice and interpersonal skills through communal and relational learning environments.
Character Development Needs	Need cultivation of discipline, integrity, teamwork, perseverance alongside technical skills.	Work character attributes may be undervalued or neglected in skill-focused curricula.	Integrates character education holistically with vocational skills via experiential and communal activities.
Motivation and Engagement Drivers	Pragmatic approach to education with concern for career readiness and meaningful contribution.	Potential disengagement if learning lacks immediate relevance or connection to personal values.	Creates authentic learning experiences that link personal growth with social responsibility and community involvement.

This system s emphasis on relationship building and moral cultivation directly addresses Gen Z s need for meaningful interaction and ethical grounding. Furthermore, it encourages adaptability and empathy skills increasingly critical in a globalized and rapidly changing labor market. Through the lens of Gen Z characteristics, it becomes clear that work character development must integrate digital literacy with soft skills and ethical sensibilities.

Hence, this study highlights the necessity of evolving vocational pedagogy to accommodate Gen Z s complexities, blending technical training with culturally informed character education frameworks like the Among Learning System.

The Among Learning System: Cultural Foundations and Pedagogical Principles

The Among Learning System originates from indigenous educational practices emphasizing communal values, moral responsibility, and holistic personal development. At its core, this system integrates social learning, cultural rituals, and mentorship to cultivate not only skills but also character traits aligned with community well-being. It functions as a counterbalance to individualistic, outcome-driven educational models by fostering interconnectedness and shared accountability.

Pedagogically, the Among Learning System employs experiential learning cycles, including observation, participation, reflection, and internalization. These stages immerse students in practical tasks framed within cultural narratives, encouraging the embodiment of virtues such as honesty, humility, diligence, and respect. The system also leverages storytelling, peer collaboration, and elder guidance to transmit not only knowledge but also ethical values and social norms.

One critical feature is its focus on relational dynamics, where learning occurs within a web of social bonds rather than isolated instruction. This relational approach nurtures emotional intelligence and collective responsibility, which are essential components of work character. By embedding character education in everyday interactions and communal activities, the Among Learning System facilitates gradual yet profound transformation in students   attitudes and behaviors.

Table 2. Core Features of the among Learning System for Generation Z Learners

Aspect	Description	Alignment with Gen Z Needs	Impact on Vocational Education
Balance of Autonomy and Guidance	The system provides learners freedom to navigate their growth while offering culturally appropriate support.	Resonates with Gen Z s preference for personalized learning coupled with connectedness and mentorship.	Supports self-directed learning while ensuring learners remain guided and supported, improving engagement and outcomes.
Flexibility and Adaptability	Accommodates diverse learning styles and is adaptable within various vocational education contexts.	Addresses Gen Z s diverse preferences and need for flexible, relevant learning experiences.	Enables inclusive pedagogy that can cater to different learner profiles, enhancing accessibility and effectiveness.
Cultural Reinforcement of Identity and Belonging	Embeds character development within familiar cultural frameworks that nurture authentic internalization of values.	Strengthens Gen Z s motivation through a sense of identity, community, and meaningful connection.	Promotes deeper ethical commitment and sustainable character development beyond superficial compliance.
Linking Individual Growth to Community Advancement	Connects personal development with social responsibility and communal well-being.	Aligns with Gen Z s social consciousness and desire to contribute positively to society.	Redefines vocational education as holistic formation of responsible citizens and ethical professionals.
Redefinition of Vocational Education Purpose	Transforms vocational training from mere skill acquisition to ethical and civic formation.	Meets Gen Z s call for education that is meaningful, impactful, and socially relevant.	Enhances the broader societal impact of vocational education and prepares graduates for complex, value-driven workplaces.

Additionally, this system values the balance between autonomy and guidance, allowing learners to navigate their growth path while receiving culturally appropriate support. This balance resonates strongly with Gen Z   s desire for personalized yet connected learning experiences. The system   s flexibility also accommodates diverse learning styles, making it highly adaptable within vocational settings.

Culturally, the Among Learning System reinforces identity and belonging, which are crucial for sustaining motivation and ethical commitment. By situating work character development within familiar cultural frameworks, students are more likely to internalize values authentically rather than superficially conforming to external standards.

Moreover, this approach promotes sustainability by linking individual growth to community advancement, aligning personal success with social contribution. It redefines vocational education as a process of becoming responsible citizens and ethical professionals rather than mere skill acquisition.Thus, the cultural and pedagogical foundations of the Among Learning System present a holistic, culturally grounded framework ideally suited to the complex developmental needs of Gen Z vocational students.

Integrating Work Character and Technical Skills in Vocational Education

Vocational education traditionally prioritizes technical skill mastery essential for job readiness. However, in a competitive and rapidly evolving labor market, technical skills alone are insufficient. Employers increasingly emphasize work character attributes such as punctuality, teamwork, ethical decision-making, and resilience. Integrating these character dimensions with technical competencies presents both conceptual and practical challenges for educators.

The Among Learning System offers a viable solution by seamlessly merging character education into skill-based training. This integration occurs naturally as students engage in collective tasks requiring coordination, accountability, and problem-solving within culturally meaningful contexts. The experiential nature of vocational tasks within the system fosters the simultaneous development of technical proficiency and essential soft skills.

Furthermore, character development through the Among Learning System enhances students' capacity for lifelong learning–a critical attribute in vocational fields where technology and work processes continuously change. By fostering reflective habits and self-discipline, students are better prepared to adapt, update their skills, and navigate workplace complexities ethically.

Studies indicate that students exposed to such integrative pedagogies demonstrate improved motivation, satisfaction, and performance. They are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes toward their profession and sustained commitment to ethical standards. These outcomes suggest that character and technical education are not competing priorities but complementary elements that mutually reinforce vocational readiness.

Moreover, vocational educators play a crucial role as facilitators and role models within this integrated framework. Their ability to embody and promote work character sets the tone for students' learning experiences and outcomes. The Among Learning System encourages educators to adopt mentorship roles that prioritize character formation alongside skill instruction.

In this light, vocational education institutions are urged to reconceptualize curricula and pedagogy to embrace holistic approaches that value character as equally important as technical expertise. Such reforms align with global workforce trends and ethical imperatives to prepare socially responsible professionals.

Therefore, integrating the Among Learning System within vocational education not only meets Gen Z's developmental needs but also addresses contemporary labor market demands for well-rounded graduates.

Addressing Challenges in Developing Work Character Among Gen Z

Despite its promise, building work character among Gen Z students through the Among Learning System faces several challenges. Foremost among these is the tension between modern digital influences and traditional communal values embedded in the system. Gen Z s digital immersion often cultivates individualistic tendencies, rapid gratification, and fragmented attention, which may conflict with the patience, reflection, and collective responsibility emphasized in the Among Learning System.

Additionally, some students may initially resist culturally based pedagogies if they perceive them as irrelevant or incongruent with their personal identities shaped by globalization and diverse media influences. Overcoming such resistance requires sensitive facilitation that honors students' backgrounds while gradually immersing them in communal values.

Another challenge lies in the training and preparedness of vocational educators to implement the Among Learning System effectively. Many educators may lack familiarity with its cultural underpinnings or pedagogical strategies, necessitating professional development and institutional support.

Furthermore, institutional constraints such as rigid curricula, limited resources, and assessment systems focused narrowly on technical outcomes may hinder the full integration of character education. Overcoming these structural barriers demands advocacy and policy reforms that recognize the holistic goals of vocational education.

Parental and community support also significantly impacts the success of character-building initiatives. For Gen Z, whose values are influenced by family and social networks, alignment between home, school, and community expectations is crucial. Creating partnerships among these stakeholders enhances the authenticity and sustainability of character development.

Despite these challenges, incremental adoption of the Among Learning System, adapted to local contexts and learner profiles, has demonstrated positive shifts in student attitudes and behaviors. This evidence underscores the feasibility and value of culturally grounded character education, even amidst modern complexities.

Thus, addressing these challenges through collaborative, context-sensitive strategies is essential to realizing the full potential of the Among Learning System in fostering Gen Z work character.

Implications for Vocational Education Policy and Practice

The findings of this study carry significant implications for vocational education policymakers, curriculum designers, and educators. Recognizing the centrality of work character to employability and professional success, vocational education systems must move beyond purely technical training models to embrace holistic pedagogies like the Among Learning System.

Policy frameworks should mandate the inclusion of character education components that are culturally relevant and generationally appropriate. This requires revising curricular standards, assessment criteria, and teacher training programs to support the development of ethical, social, and emotional competencies alongside vocational skills.

In practice, vocational institutions should foster environments that promote community engagement, mentorship, and reflective learning–core elements of the Among Learning System. Investments in educator capacity building are crucial to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary for this integrative pedagogy.

Moreover, collaboration between educational institutions, families, and local communities should be encouraged to create supportive ecosystems for character development. Such partnerships ensure that the values taught within vocational settings resonate with students' broader social and cultural realities.

For Generation Z, educational practices that respect their digital fluency and desire for meaningful connections while guiding them toward collective responsibility can bridge the gap between modernity and tradition. This balance enhances student engagement and prepares graduates not only for employment but also for ethical leadership in their communities.

Future research and pilot programs should continue to explore practical models for implementing the Among Learning System across diverse vocational disciplines and regions. Longitudinal studies are particularly valuable to assess the sustained impact on student outcomes and workforce integration.

Ultimately, integrating culturally grounded character education into vocational training holds promise for nurturing a new generation of skilled, principled, and socially conscious professionals capable of navigating the challenges of a rapidly evolving world.

Conclusion

Building Gen Z work character through the Among Learning System in vocational education offers a culturally grounded and holistic approach that effectively addresses the unique learning preferences and developmental needs of this generation. By balancing autonomy with guidance, fostering a strong sense of identity and belonging, and linking individual growth to community advancement, the system nurtures essential work ethics such as discipline, responsibility, and collaboration. This approach not only enhances technical competence but also cultivates the moral and social qualities vital for professional success and ethical citizenship. Consequently, integrating the Among Learning System into vocational education provides a meaningful pathway to prepare Gen Z students as resilient, engaged, and value-driven workers equipped to meet the complexities of the modern workforce.

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