

# Contemporary Approaches in Public Administration: Generation Z

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## Abstract

Public institutions are responsible for providing services to individuals referred to as the public while carrying out their activities according to their establishment objectives. Contemporary management practices are exhibited during the provision of these services. Otherwise, institutions retain their functionality and become efficient. Looking at society's structure today, the generation known as Generation Z is increasing, and their place within society is expanding. The structure and expectations of Generation Z differ from those of other generations. Due to the expanding generation and changing expectations, public institutions that are their counterparts need to adapt to this situation and exhibit contemporary and strategic approaches. As a result, various changes and developments are taking place in public institutions.

## Introduction

It is known that certain elements, such as sovereignty, territory, and people (citizens), are necessary for the formation of states. Among these elements, the human element holds a vital place. There are many connections and mutual rights and responsibilities between the individual, i.e., citizen, and the state. Just as individuals are obliged to fulfill their responsibilities towards the state as citizens, it is seen that the state is obliged to meet the citizens' demands and provide them with services.

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Based on this obligation, states carry out various activities to solve the problems and meet the needs of individuals living on their sovereign territories. While carrying out these activities, states use various intermediaries. As it is known, the most common intermediary among these is the public institutions and organizations that act as a bridge between the state and its citizens and are the hand of the state that reaches the citizens. When the establishment objectives of public institutions are examined, they are obliged to serve individuals and fulfill citizens' demands in the best possible time and conditions according to their field of activity, acting on behalf of the state.

The target audience of public institutions obliged to provide services to people undergo changes and developments over time, forming new human profiles. As a result of these changes and developments, it is inevitable for the new human profiles to have new and different expectations. Of course, public institutions responsible for providing services to people exhibit contemporary approaches to carry out their services effectively and renew themselves constantly with strategic approaches in the face of changing conditions. Looking at the structure of the people who are living today and receiving services from public institutions, it can be seen that the population of the generation called "Generation Z" is increasing and taking up a broader place in society every day. Like all people, this generation also has demands from society, people, and the state while continuing their lives. Growing up in a digital world intertwined with technology, this generation's expanding place in society is causing changes in people's expectations of public institutions. These changes are leading the institutions and organizations responsible for providing services to the public, meeting the demands of society, and ensuring satisfaction to seek new contemporary approaches and innovations to provide better services and ensure satisfaction with changing generations, demands, and conditions. This study examines how public institutions exhibit contemporary approaches and adapt to changing conditions based on changing human profiles and changing world.

This section explains the contemporary management approach, generation concept, generations and their sub-dimensions, public institutions, and Generation Z. Conducting our study on the example of a public institution does not mean that the issue concerns only public institutions. The emphasis on public institutions is to avoid confusion by using more than one concept, and relations with Generation Z are a fact that is valid for all organizations, both public and private.

## **1. Contemporary Management Approach**

The term contemporary, which has been used frequently in the last few hundred years, is often used to explain that something has been updated and modernized according to the requirements of the current time and has become capable of meeting the demands of the age. Considering the meaning of the word contemporary, it can be explained as revising itself according to the current era, that is, the time and conditions in which it exists. Being contemporary is not a choice; it is a necessity. History is a catalog full of states, institutions, and organizations that have disappeared because they could not renew themselves. (Argüden, 2004).

The contemporary management approach is a style of approach that has been developed by utilizing the principles and recommendations of contemporary management theory, which is essential in eliminating the dysfunctions that emerge due to the current conditions and are equivalent to progress in modern times. The main objective of this approach is to increase functionality by using an efficiency-boosting method to take management techniques to higher levels and achieve new successes. Each new era is the result of changes and brings specific innovations that are unique to it. Individuals or institutions that can act following the conditions of the age are considered contemporary. (Türkel, 1982).

Change is one of the most commonly used expressions seen in every aspect of life. Based on the phrase “the only constant in life is change,” change has been present in every period of an individual’s existence. Change is a movement. The recent change, on the other hand, is a vertical movement. (Leblebici, 2008).

The present time is a period that has witnessed significant and major changes in the history of humanity. Today, globalization, the development of communication and transportation activities, and the ability of individuals to share their knowledge with people anywhere in the world, as well as the ease of influencing and interacting with each other, have provided favorable conditions for indirect changes to occur rapidly. This movement of change, manifested in all parts of the earth and all cells of the social structure, has started to be experienced more intensively due to the development of technology that contributes to change. Like all units of society, managing this change or developing new contemporary approaches according to the shape of change is one of the duties and needs of public institutions. (Saroğlu, 1999).

With the cumulative effect of the knowledge capital that humanity has brought to the present day, it is observed that recent years have been years of severe and rapid transformations. The public sector is also taking its share of this transformation. It is seen that the understanding of governing the public with rigid rules based on bureaucracy and hierarchy, which derives its power from them, is transforming into a public administration understanding that is increasingly based on democratic and transparent foundations and can flexibly respond to market demands. A change of shell in the management approach that has expired and can no longer find all segments of society feel its interlocutor. (Tortop and/ Eyp, 2007, s. 516).

The sentence “It is seen that the understanding of governing the public with rigid rules based on bureaucracy and hierarchy, which derives its power from them, is transforming into a public administration understanding that is increasingly based on democratic and transparent foundations and can flexibly respond to market demands” means that in the evolving landscape of public administration, the term “flexible” refers to the openness of public institutions and governance to change and innovation in response to the conditions and challenges they face. The phrase “market demands” suggests that this change and development can be shaped according to the demands and dynamics of individuals, and can be reshaped according to people’s profiles and dynamics. (Iık, 2013, s. 108).

The changes in management approaches have both internal and external reasons. *Internal reasons* are situations that develop due to decision-making and practices within an institution and do not involve compulsion or difficult-to-solve problems as much as external reasons. In the presence of external reasons, it is seen that change is not a choice but a necessity for the institution and that change is a requirement for success, as there is no possibility of changing the situation outside. (Bircan, 2002, s. 15)

One of the main external reasons for change is adapting to changes in the structure of individuals that the institution addresses. Differences in the structure of individuals become more pronounced in specific periods depending on the generations that appear in the world during a specific period. During these periods, visible changes occur in the structure of institutions in order to keep up with the times. In this case, discussing a strategic management style is possible.

### **1.1. Strategic Management**

One of the contemporary management styles is the concept of a strategic approach. Strategic decision-making is a new approach. A behavior or

method previously tried by the same institution is not a strategy but rather the implementation of a known method. In contrast, strategic management is a stage of reconstruction that did not exist before. Accordingly, management styles combined with strategy are identified with contemporary management approaches due to their inclusion of a new tactical way of responding to events that are different from previous ones (Kutlu, 2002).

*Strategy* can be defined as a different behavior style or movement pattern than the ones previously tried by different individuals or organizations to achieve a targeted point or level. The main aim of determining a different behavior style and movement pattern is to ensure that competitors cannot predict the action taken and thus cannot take precautions while aiming to achieve an effective and fast result. Strategy is a collection of plans that includes important policies, goals, and objectives. The understanding of strategic management is the event of an individual or institution using all the resources, opportunities, and energy at its disposal with an entirely focused will to achieve its mission, vision, and goals and become successful. Decisions taken with strategic approaches will influence the individual or institution's subsequent decisions and, ultimately, the results it will achieve (Barca, 2009). In the face of the situations in which they find themselves or the likely developments that they may encounter, strategies of public institutions include their instant, short, medium, or long-term goals, the institution's leading principles, and priority policies that will serve its primary purpose, charts showing the results of their activities, the ways and resources they will use to achieve their goals (Çelik, 1994).

*Strategy* can be defined as a roadmap based on tactical capital that enables an organization to make informed decisions at every step toward achieving a target while providing logistical advantages to outperform competitors. Developing a strategic approach aims to increase an organization's sensitivity towards individuals or topics falling within its purview and enable it to effectively carry out its responsibilities within the limits of its existing conditions, resources, and abilities. Strategy provides a vital momentum and roadmap for organizations operating under environmental factors involving sudden change, high levels of uncertainty, and related risks. In this context, strategy plays a vital role in the success of organizations. In unsuccessful organizations, the most significant factors are inadequate or identifying the wrong strategy (Gürer, 2006, s. 94).

The concept of strategy began to take a more prominent place in the business world in the 20th century (Aktaş, 2015). In management sciences, the strategy concept is a roadmap that an organized structure will follow

to achieve its goals and gain an advantage. The strategy involves analyzing the organization's environment, resources, and capabilities to align them with the objectives and engage in a planned activity to guide institutions and gain an advantage over competitors. In the case of institutions without competitors, it aims to enable the organization to exceed its previous performance by aligning its environment, resources, and capabilities with its objectives. Strategy is the art of analyzing developments and environmental changes, making logical moves to overcome obstacles, and taking advantage of favorable situations (Baykal, 2018).

The concept of strategy is encountered in almost every aspect of life today. Initially, the term strategy was more closely associated with military fields and battlefields, but over time, it has also become an essential roadmap in management science (Söyler, 2007, s. 104). It is observed that public institutions are also among the management areas where strategy is used. Today, it is well known that strategy plays a vital role in increasing effectiveness and providing quality service in public institutions and non-profit organizations that fully meet the demands of individuals and many other sectors (Güven, 2015).

On the other hand, strategic management demonstrates a management movement in which institutions make plans by considering the existing situation and determining potential future situations accordingly. Public services have their structures and approaches aimed at the social benefit. Public institutions adopt an approach that focuses on solving social issues without thinking about making a profit in the service delivery process. For these reasons, people are constantly changing also causes public institutions to need more modern management approaches (Durna and/& Eren, 2002, s. 55).

Considering all these facts, institutions that have made their strategic plans and have been able to implement and manage them successfully can effectively achieve their goals at the level required by the era. In contrast, institutions that do not have a specific strategy or have been unable to implement a strategic management process are ineffective.

## **2. Generation Concept**

The era that emerged as a result of temporal changes and some unique innovations brought along with it a group of individuals who lived in the same period and shared common characteristics. When their standard features and the typical period they live in are considered, this group of individuals with shared values is called a "generation" (Lamm and/& Meeks, 2009).

In many areas, especially in temporal terms, individuals who belong to time sets that have arisen through joint social movements are called “generations” worldwide. In other words, a “generation” is an intersection set composed of individuals born close to each other. It refers to a group of individuals exposed to the same social problems and favorable social climate conditions to a great extent under ordinary circumstances, having similar destinies, receiving the same rewards, and enduring the same burdens. Cultural belonging and dominant values of the period are always present, and behavioral and ideological norms are shaped based on these facts (Kırık and Köyüstü, 2018).

Today, the facts that individuals within a generation are still alive and active show that that generation is still an active generation. There are multiple generations actively existing today. The existence of more than one active generation at the same time creates more than one feature in the social field, and accordingly, a number of requirements arise, and it is important to carry out separate examination, study and implementation for each of them. The main focus of this section is to provide a detailed explanation of the Z generation and to examine the interaction areas of this generation. Before delving into the characteristics of this generation in detail, it would be beneficial to mention the X, Y, and Z generations to make the study more understandable.

**Baby Boomer Generation:** Individuals from the generation that covers the period from 1946 to 1964 are known to have a work-oriented and comparative nature. Additionally, inspired by the increase in birth rates in the years following the war, they were named “Baby Boomers.” (Mücevher and Erdem, 2018, s. 63). With some exceptions, it is the oldest of today’s active generations. The majority of individuals in the generation are retired and have largely withdrawn from social activities and retreated into the background.

**X Generation:** This generation covers the period from 1965 to 1980. They are also known as the transitional generation, as this was when technological advancements slowly began to affect people’s lifestyles (Levickaite, 2010). Considering the dates covered by the generation and today, in addition to being the most experienced individuals in business life in general, senior managers in both private organizations and public institutions are included in this generation.

**Y Generation (Millennials):** This generation covers the period from 1981 to 1996. Growing up in a period where technological advancements were rapidly developing and accessing information became easier, individuals

from this generation have a profile adaptable to innovation and change (Aka, 2018, s. 121). They have a wide audience in business life. As of today, when active generations are considered, it appears as the middle generation. Due to its intense interactions with both Generation X and Generation Y, it is a bridge generation that can adapt to both generations and has characteristics of both generations.

**Z Generation:** This name is given to individuals born between 1997 and 2012, considered a generation born into technology (Çetin and/& Karalar, 2016, s. 159).

As long as the concept of time exists, the generational concept, which is a temporal concept, will continue to exist. The latest generation to emerge and whose individuals are currently part of the active population is the Z Generation, which will be discussed in detail in this section.

### 3. Generation Z

Generation Z (also known as Gen Z) is a group of individuals who fall between the millennial and alpha generations. They are also commonly referred to as “zoomers.” Many researchers studying this group consider individuals born in the mid-1990s as the beginning of this generation. The end of this generation is considered to be individuals born in the early 2010s. This social group, introduced to technology and the Internet as they grew up, is often called a digital generation (Ardıç and/& Altun, 2017).

Despite having close ranges, many national and international sources define this generation with slightly different years. For example, Oxford Dictionaries describes Generation Z as individuals who began to enter society as adults in the second decade of the 21st century. Social scientists and students conducting research internationally also define this generation as individuals born from the late 1990s to the early 2010s. Some online dictionaries define Generation Z as the generation composed of individuals born at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s.

According to a statistical result from Statistic Canada, one of the statistical results obtained from some developed countries worldwide, Generation Z is defined as the period between 1993 and/& 2011; similarly, according to the Mc. Crindle Research Center, an international research firm, Generation Z, is defined as those born between 1995 and 2009, covering a fifteen-year period that began with increasing birth rates parallel to the increasing technological opportunities and the spread of health care.



Based on the scans mentioned above regarding Generation Z, when the intersection of definitions and age ranges is taken into account, it can be concluded that Generation Z broadly covers a period of more than 20 years, ranging from the first quarter of the 1990s to the third quarter of the 2010s. This points to a demographic structure that is a candidate for being the most active within society.

To better understand the characteristics of the Generation Z population, it is necessary to sift through their common traits. Looking at these traits, individuals belonging to Generation Z have embraced a free lifestyle, do not like to be tied down to anything, and have a lower sense of responsibility compared to previous generations. They are loyal technology customers, consider online digital platforms as their living space, and use social media and similar platforms daily. They have a high desire to question the situations they encounter, have easy access to information due to the advantages of technology, possess practical intelligence, have a dynamic perspective that develops in the same direction as technology, value quality, and emphasize making comparisons (Taş et al., et al., 2017, s. 1038).

Generation Z is seen as the youngest and least experienced population group in society today in public administration. With their rapid involvement in all aspects of life, it is known that they play an active role in reshaping the social structure. In Turkey, the population of Generation Z is estimated to be in the millions. Generation Z's impact is felt in areas such as social structure, culture, population ratio, market, and the like, and their mastery of technology provides computational contributions to the social structure. (Altuntug, 2012, s. 204)

### **3.1. Public Institutions and Generation Z**

Taking into account the characteristics of Generation Z, based on their birth years, who grew up intertwined with technology and have easy access to portable and digital instruments in almost every aspect of life since birth, this generation is referred to as the first virtual and social generation, who are intelligent, technology-savvy, individualistic and free-spirited. They are attentive to almost every development in the technological field, familiar with online and digital platforms, active on almost every social media platform, possess a questioning and research-based personality, and can access desired information quickly thanks to their technology usage skills. They are capable of developing solutions to events that are outside of the norm and based on technology, possess intellectual, physical, and mental dynamism at high levels, are easily adaptable to change and desire change

and have a consumption-heavy rather than a savings-oriented tendency (Taş, et al., 2017).

According to data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), the generation that has reached around 20 million in our country constitutes approximately 25% of the population. Considering the birth years of this generation, it can be seen that they have now become adult individuals who are increasingly becoming influential in society in terms of having a say, making demands, and expressing their needs. This generation is commonly referred to as Generation Z.

As these individuals begin to take their place in society, it can be seen that they have different worldviews and expectations compared to the traditional and classical individuals of other generations due to the conditions they grew up in and the way they were raised. Some of these expectations are from the government. Public institutions meet these expectations by providing individuals with services through government agencies. In this context, public institutions must provide satisfactory answers to individuals' expectations and ensure their satisfaction. Considering the characteristics of the Z generation listed above, it creates a feeling that the conventional, classical approach of public institutions will not satisfy this generation. Changing generations and their expectations compel public institutions to adopt new approaches, be open to change, and act in a contemporary and strategic manner beyond the usual practices (Karasoş, 2014, s. 258).

Many organizations, particularly those in the private sector, have changed their strategies in response to the changing demands of the new generation. Even political parties have started to make contemporary and strategic moves that appeal to Generation Z, as evidenced by their leaders' press statements. In such a situation, public institutions must develop an approach and strategy that aligns with the current conditions. As a result, it is now observed that many public institutions have established social media accounts and are becoming more involved in the digital world (Hafizođlu, 2021, s. 141). In addition, an adaptation to the characteristics of Generation Z in public institutions should not be in a way that would disrupt the lives of other active generations, and a balance should be maintained. In this regard, the negativities that may be experienced in terms of generation conflict should be taken into consideration.

Because we are living in the digital age, many public institutions have started to conduct their operations online via the Internet. As a result of these observations, it has been noticed that a large percentage of middle-aged people have become accustomed to conducting their transactions face-

to-face and consider this method to be more reliable and secure. Additionally, since individuals over middle age are less proficient in the Internet and digital realm than Generation Z, they tend to seek assistance from those who belong to this generation when conducting these types of transactions. As a necessary component of a contemporary and strategic approach, public institutions have started to implement feedback surveys for service satisfaction, opinions, and suggestions following online transactions. Thus, since most of those conducting these transactions are Generation Z, their feedback will broadly reflect the opinions and lifestyles of this generation. Considering that public institutions will take into account the feedback, opinions, and suggestions obtained from these surveys to develop current and strategic initiatives, it is anticipated that there will be a more distinct adaptation toward Generation Z in the approaches implemented in public institutions soon (Tekedere and Arpacı, 2016, s. 386).

Indeed, it would be inaccurate to suggest that all the expectations held by this generation are valid. It is a fact that they have embraced both the positive and negative aspects of their lifestyle and the digital technology era they were born into and that they are an indicator of detachment from society. Considering that public institutions are present in almost every aspect of life, public institutions must develop strategies to eliminate the negative characteristics embraced by this generation, not only when providing services or meeting the demands of individuals but also to preserve the structure of society (Hafizoğlu, 2021, s. 146).

At the same time, it is known that public institutions are among these business environments where these individuals step into business environments with the adulthood stage. Generation Z also takes its place in institutions as employees and managers. Therefore, in today's world where changes are experienced at an extraordinary speed, the fact that the Z generation is not only in demand as a service expectation but also in public institutions as employees and managers is effective in accelerating the changes in the profiles of public institutions in terms of digital technological aspects.

### **Conclusion And Recommendations**

As a result of all these developments and observations, adaptation towards the styles of the Z generation is observed in public institutions. In the coming years, to demonstrate effective management, the ideas of the Z generation must be implemented in the policies of public institutions. However, it is also crucial to take measures against the negative characteristics of the Z generation that

conflict with the ethical values of the social structure. Increasing educational organizations targeting this generation must eliminate their thoughts and behaviors that could lead to negative social consequences and turn them into less harmful or maximally beneficial for society. Contemporary approaches to developing crisis management strategies aimed at developing managerial actions in the face of possible crises arising from differences between the Z generation should be developed. On the other hand, since the Z generation will take place as managers and employees in public institutions, studies should be conducted on this situation. In order to avoid confusion, balance and a uniform method of action are required as a form of implementation in every institution that appeals to the society. Accordingly, a dual practice is generally not encountered in any institution, and this situation is contrary to the principle of discrimination, except for positive discrimination. As a matter of fact, it is important that these changes and transformations, which occur for the purpose of adaptation towards Generation Z, be made in a way that will not harm the national cultural codes and the basic characteristics of other active generations.

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