Assessing Technological Self-Conception: Are Business Students Ready to be Citizen Developers?

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Abstract

Generation Z students have begun their college experiences in earnest. They are confident in their perceived ability to command technology and are often heralded as Digital Natives, emphasizing they came of age with computerization and ubiquitous personal devices during the internet era. However, the digital native narrative belies a narrow definition of technology that may not align with practical demands. A concern exists that those who are simply users of technology are at risk unless they can develop technological solutions themselves. This project attempts to understand the technological self-conception of business students with regards to being a technological developer versus simply being a technology user in preparation for incorporating low-code/no-code tools and workflow automation activities into the curriculum. These tools make incorporating developer activities into non-technical courses and programs feasible in a way that was not possible before, encouraging what is sometimes called "citizen developers." A survey, designed with consideration of the Theory of Planned Behavior, is used to understand student pre-disposition and self-conception. In the survey responses, students expressed confidence in their technological abilities, but few had even heard of workflow automation or low-code/no-code tools. Students initially indicated tepid interest, if not a disinterest, in development activities generally. By the survey's end, though, students reported that these tools and approaches could be valuable and that they were interested in learning more on how to use them, indicating an openness to becoming involved in development activities and beginning the journey of moving beyond just using technology towards becoming citizen developers.

Keywords: citizen developer, low-code no-code, Design Thinking, Theory of Planned Behavior, workflow automation, Digital Natives, Generation Z