Gaps in the Multigenerational Classroom

Slide 1

Welcome to the Multigenerational gaps in the online/remote classroom

This however, could be called “bridging the Multigenerational Gaps” in the online classroom

My name is Keenan Flegel, I am from the Instructional Leadership and Development Centre (ILDC), and I am based out of the Regina and Moose Jaw Campuses.

Slide 2

Before we get started, it is important to recognize that the Saskatchewan Polytechnic Campuses are situated on Treaty 4 and 6 territories and the traditional homelands of the Metis. We are all treaty people and our work reflects a desire and commitment to creating a reconciled future.

Slide 3

This session is focused on creating a learning environment that works for all the individuals present.

In this session, we will:

• Define the generations, their ideas values and beliefs
• Discuss the challenges of a multigeneration online classroom
• Identify strategies for an effective multigenerational online classroom

The intent of this presentation is to encourage reflection and present some strategies as a starting point when thinking about bridging the gaps in the MGC and engaging all learner in the learning process.

Slide 4

Before getting started on the strategies, it is important to reflect on what the generations are and the events, values and characteristics that shape them.

We will be discussing the Boomers, Gen x, Gen y and Gen z in most detail as these are the generations that will be most prevalent in your online learning environments.

Discuss the time range and birth years for each

As you examine the generation time frames, please note that there may be some discrepancy from other sources as far as the time ranges go.

1. According to the cCenter or generational kinetic, The birth years for generations can vary among source because of two reasons:
People who talk about generations have reached different conclusions—and, frankly, a lot of people don’t do actual research, so they’re just guessing.

2. Generation birth years vary by geography, and you’ll see varying characteristics in different parts of the world. The big events that affect a generation can be dramatically different across the globe or at least regionalized or national in scope, and trends can hit at different times.

The first generation we will discuss today is the baby boomers

Think about the baby boomer growing up. Came home from school and...........(mom was home, they played independently) – how does this shape someone?

The are often described as:

- equating work with personal gratification (Cordinez, 2002).
- They tend to be “workaholics” yet optimistic in their ability to succeed (Zemke et al., 2000).
- long hours at the office, including evenings and weekends
  - building their career over the long term and loyalty to their employer
  - viewing themselves and their career as one and the same
  - commitment to quality and doing a good job
  - “hanging tough” through difficult work situations and policies

The technology of the era was the TV
Their approach to learning is in class participation, show me what to do and provide feedback to bring me closer to the process

Next we have Gen x, often referred to as “Latchkey kids”

Now Think about how they grew up? Came home to........... (no one, mom and dad were working, called latch key because they had keys to the house. They grew up very independent) They were as young as 8 going home alone.

They also saw how much their parents gave up for their careers, and many experienced their parents being laid off from work in the 1980s after years of dedicated service

**How do you see the above statements shaping Gen Xers?** a result of these life experiences, Xers tend to be skeptical, independent workers who highly value a balance between their work and their social life

Gen xers are often describes as:

- Independent and self-reliant (Sometimes referred to as “latch-key kids”)
- Entrepreneurial thinkers
- Resourceful / problem solvers
- Defy authority
- Reject the “pay your dues” mentality
· Loyal to individuals, not organizations
· Reality driven: how will a class help them in the real world?
  - In the classroom:
    · Want all the facts at the outset
  - Need to know exactly what the expectations are
  - Are impatient with rote/busy works or work that seems irrelevant
  - Don’t automatically respect expertise of the teacher
  - Are intolerant of instructors who can’t use technology
  - Want to know the relevance of everything they are expected to learn
  - Very visual
  - Need to see how learning will get them ahead

Technology of the Era: Personal Computer

Their approach to learning is one of skepticism, “why do I need to learn this? They like to learn on their own time.

Next we have Generation Y, Often referred to as Millennials or Generation Net

Think about them growing up, mom and dad both worked but it was realized that sending these kids home at 8 by themselves was not the best choice. Most in day care, afterschool programs and lots and lots of activities. They lived very scheduled childhoods and their parents are referred to as “hover parents” as they were always around and organizing thing for their kids.

Often characterized as:
those who Expect immediate feedback
· Not accustomed to negative feedback
· Short attention span
· Wired 24/7
· More accepting of authority than Gen X
· Sheltered (by their helicopter parents and politically correct world)
· Team oriented
· Strong sense of entitlement

  - In the classroom, described as:
    Collaborative
    Tenacious
    Can multi-task
    Needs supervision and structure
    Visual
Tends to be kinesthetic
Needs lots of visual stimulation

Technology of the era was the internet. This group wants to be connected to what they need and desires a personalized learning experience

Finally, we have Generation Z

Generation Z is often characterized as

- Digital integrators
  - Entrepreneurial
  - Close to family
  - Confident and open to change
  - Value honesty
  - More diversity
  - Want immediate feedback

What do you think the technology of the era is and their approach to learning?

And finally, the newest generation, Generation Alpha. This gen birth years start in 2010, some research says 2012. Of course this generation is not in our higher education classrooms just yet.

Some interesting points of this generation. The starting year is the same as when the Ipad was introduced and some or all may never get a license.

A researcher, Swanzen (2018) notes that generational spans are likely to decrease to 5-10 year instead of the traditional 15-20 years, because of the increasing exposure to global events and innovations worldwide. Take a moment to think about the impact of that.

Alright, before moving on to strategies, let’s take a moment to recognize stereotyping

Generational information is important to understand to start working with someone from a different generation (or culture for a matter of fact). This is a good starting point when working across the generational culture, but..... this can and often does lead to stereotyping. We need to meet people at the individual level, where they are at.

Yes, Generations think differently, dress differently, and often act differently both in and out of the classroom. However, a teacher who makes sweeping decisions or treats someone based on generational stereotypes alone is bound to find him or herself limiting an individual’s potential

Although we can identify different prevailing traits of generations, instructors should never stereotype their students based on age or generation or make assumptions about their students’ backgrounds.
In addition to the generational differences, students’ online learning may be affected by many variables—including individual learning style, study skills, language skills, exposure to technology, socio-cultural differences, geography, and socio-economic status. As instructors, it is important to be aware of our own biases.

Faculty have to view generational characteristics and beliefs not as right or wrong, but as different. As with religious or cultural differences, generational differences can be acknowledged. Being aware of our “generational prejudices and biases” and consciously moving beyond them will assist greatly as we develop learning opportunities that cross the generations of students in our classrooms.”

To demonstrate this, we can consider the following study. You might assume since millennials are ‘tech savvy’ that they would prefer online learning and technology as their learning source. However....

As you can see in this study looking for satisfaction in an online courses, millennials were least satisfied.

Some reasons for this found in the research were that millennials thought there was a lack of immediacy in online classes as well and responsiveness from faculty was slow. Some millennials also did not have interest in abandoning face to face classroom and thought that they learned less in the online environment.

A common misconception is that Millennials, since they are raised with technology, prefer a high level of technology integration in college classes. It is believed that these students possess unprecedented levels of skill with information technology. In a study, Kvavki found that Millennials’ preferred only a moderate use of technology in the classroom. Least preferred (2.2%) were courses delivered extensively online. Nearly 26% of the students preferred limited or no use of technology.

Now that we have sorted out stereotypes and classifying people to certain groups only based on their age and the danger in which this can lead us to, let’s discuss the challenges in the online learning environment.

Please take one minute to either write down or reflect on what you feel the challenges are in the Multigenerational Online Classroom....

As we can see by reflecting on the potential difference in generations and individuals learning styles we might begin to say the communication gaps between the learner and the instructor or between the learners might exist. Secondly, we might say that the difference in familiarity of the technology and interpersonal communication skills might exist. Finally, a classroom of many different individuals presents a different level of preparedness.

As we examine strategies to bridge the multigenerational gaps in the online classroom, take a look at the picture posted. This picture was retrieved from a presentation on engaging learners in the online and emote learning environments presented by Flower Darby. This picture features learners from an online course. What is interesting about this, is that in her presentation she did not talk about cultural or generational differences to learning. This panel, made up of online learners, clearly is made up of different generations. What this panel was asked was, “What are the biggest challenges of online learning?” The biggest challenge that they highlighted was the lack of feeling support in the online course.
So I encourage you, when thinking about student engagement in the online learning environment, to instead of thinking about generational differences and teaching different strategies for each generation, to focus on the similarities that exist as a great starting point.

IT is important to note, that through research, no matter the generation, there seems to be a need for communication and feedback, a desire for meaningful work or learning experiences that are connected to the interests of the individuals. People, no matter what generation, want to be heard and included in the learning environment and everyone, at some point desire social interaction.

Of course we can start to identify what teaching strategies we may bring into the classroom with a generalized view of each generation. As we can see, each generation might have some preferences. Read some from the slide

However, we can easily bring these into the learning environment as an approach that includes everyone.

Read some from the slides for all students

I think it is important, especially in this online and remote environment, that we start by focusing on some small strategies that are related to the similar desires and needs of our students.

Listed here are some strategies that we can start with. We will not go in depth on all of these but these are some important considerations.

1. Encourage an environment that all students (including the instructor) can learn together and from each other. Highlighting that we all have our own experiences with work and technology that may be different from each other. Instead of promoting or allowing the thoughts such as “teach the older people technology” consider using the phrase: “Teach someone who doesn’t know X.” This can promote a culture of mentorship and understanding. Again, we all have different experiences and exposures to technology, for example, that we can all benefit from each other. Find ways to connect your students so they can share this information such as using breakout rooms to encourage discussions about assignments, and encourage helping each other. You can also open discussion boards where students can communicate with each other, ask each other questions or just get to know each other. By doing this you can foster connections, even online, and create a learning community that is vibrant.

2. Finally, we will go into more detail about the final three. Find out who is in your class, Employ multiple techniques and strategies and have students reflect on the learning outcomes.

Darlene Smuchy (2008) suggests that Because generational, individual and life experiences differ, this can impact learning, it is important that instructors try to find out “who” is in their classrooms so that they are better prepared to help meet their needs:

One easy way to do this is to conduct icebreakers and energizers. This can be done at the beginning of the term or regularly throughout. Icebreakers can be done both synchronously or asynchronously. Tech such as zoom (chat or breakout rooms), discussion forums in Brightspace, emails, collaborative
documents using office 365 or the polling feature in zoom are just some ideas to conduct icebreakers in the online environment.

Finding out who is in your class, their life experiences and their experiences with technology can give you, the instructor a glimps into some of the strategies that may most effective and the appropriate technologies for your students. You icebreakers question can include many different prompts to glean the information that you want but BE SURE to avoid generalizations as well as be mindful to what questions students will be comfortable answering.

Next, varying your instructional approach using a variety on instructional strategies is important. Remember, your learners, regardless of their generation, all learn in different ways. Providing an approach that is varied will include all learners in the learning process.

We can simplify the picture by classifying instructional strategies into three groups:
1. Traditional 2. Active 3. Cooperative and Collaborative

Pause and Reflect

Traditional Techniques can include lectures, Assigned readings, videos and more. This approach works for some but as the research is suggesting should not be the primary or only method used in your instructional practice.

Some Active techniques include a flipped classroom approach (for those leading a blended or synchronous class), Student led case studies, written assignments, presentations, role play etc.

Whether it is a synchronous or ansynchronous class, all of these strategies can be effective.

Finally, as we think back to the researches suggestion that people want to be connected and social. A switch to online learning, especially for those who anticipated an in person class can leave many feeling lonely. Promoting cooperative or collaborative work is going to be very important.

Any thing from the active learning strategies presented previously but only in groups to collaborative assignments, case studies or presentations.

Encouraging connection is very important

Finally, Ask students to reflect on the learning outcomes

Remember what the research suggest that all generations want from their work and learning?
They all want meaning and content to be connected to their interests.

Have your students reflect on what the learning outcomes mean to them. How does this connect to their interests?

Ask, them to reflect on the idea that “by the end of the learning outcome, they should be able to do…. X” What does this mean to you, your learning or future goals?
Get your students to derive meaning from the learning outcomes.

This can be done at the beginning of the term or throughout the term as the learning outcomes and steps come up.

We are going to take a couple of minutes to watch this great video from Leah Georges from Creighton University. As you watch this clip, reflect on whether you agree with what she is saying and the impact of this approach to your learning environment.

I hope you enjoyed that clip, you can view her whole presentation on Youtube by either searching for Leah Georges, navigating the multigenerational workforce.

In closing, although there may be some merit to understanding the differences that exist among generations, it is important to not get hung up on these as they can limit relationship potential and your learners ability to learn. Please reflect on the final to research summaries presented here.

Thank you for viewing this presentation, I encourage you to complete the reflection and goal setting as presented here and follow up with your ILDC faculty for more support and suggestions.

Go through the slide

Thank you