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Unlocking Gen Z: The Power of Compassionate Teaching

By: Nor Haniza Hasan & Khairon Nisa Shafeei

In the modern educational environment, instruction goes beyond knowledge transfer and focuses on creating a supportive environment, particularly for Generation Z students. This group, characterized by tech-savviness, social awareness, and mental health awareness, requires a shift in teaching approach. To truly engage with them, educators need to recognise the importance of compassion in the classroom.

Generation Z, a rapidly changing generation, faces higher rates of anxiety, depression, and burnout due to excessive screen time and limited face-to-face interactions. Smith and Lee (2025) found that excessive screen time and fear of missing out are associated with a decline in Gen Z well-being. Moreover, traditional teaching methods that focus solely on content delivery are no longer sufficient. Thus, compassionate teaching is essential to support Gen Z students' growth and success, which also helps to nurture their well-being and engagement. This approach directly impacts their performance.

Understanding the needs of students is only one aspect of compassionate teaching. It entails recognising the strong correlation between emotional well-being

and academic success. Compassionate teaching makes room for the creation of a welcoming classroom where students feel appreciated, acknowledged, and accepted, which in turn encourages their desire to learn (Dyer et al., 2023). This support is significant for Gen Z, a group that values emotional ties and authenticity. Students who believe their teachers genuinely care about their students' mental health and personal growth are more likely to stay engaged and motivated even when facing setbacks. According to research, students who experience compassionate teaching perform academically and personally, exhibiting a stronger sense of social awareness and engaging in meaningful experiences (Gorny-Wegrzyn & Perry, 2021).

Another key dimension of compassionate teaching is cultivating a growth mindset among Gen Z students, which encourages them to view failure as an opportunity for growth rather than a limitation. By appreciating growth and effort more than results, educators can inspire students to embrace challenges and keep learning, even when setbacks occur. This approach boosts confidence, promotes productive group interactions, and collective development (Zhou & Frisdahl, 2023).

Compassionate teaching, rooted in flexibility, is also essential for Gen Z students who face multiple responsibilities, including part-time jobs, extracurricular activities, and family commitments. This

approach adjusts deadlines, offers alternative assessment methods, and acknowledges students' needs. This empathetic approach, claimed by Dyer et al. 2023, is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and well-being among students, contributing to their overall success by allowing them to succeed on their own terms.

A big part of compassionate teaching involves creating a safe, welcoming environment for all, promoting social justice movements initiated by Gen Z. This approach encourages equality, diversity, and inclusion in classrooms, fostering a sense of community and openness for students to participate, share their thoughts, and have meaningful conversations. In addition to improving learning, this transparency gives students a sense of belonging to a community, which makes the learning environment more positive and productive.

Educators can incorporate compassion teaching into lessons by actively listening to students, providing individualized support, promoting mindfulness exercises, and setting the tone for the classroom by modelling empathy. Students are allowed to express worries or difficulties, take a moment to reflect on their lives as a quick relaxation technique, and educators can model empathy by setting the tone for the entire classroom by being kind, understanding, and patient. Doing these

can help to enhance students' emotional well-being and reduce stress.

All in all, compassionate teaching aims to create a supportive environment for Gen Z students, enhancing their academic success and overall well-being. In the classroom, teachers who exhibit empathy, adaptability, and genuineness can promote engagement, growth, and resilience.



Picture 1: Compassionate teaching

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