Compare the Generations in Today's Schools

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Before I start with my reflection to this module, I would like to state clearly from the very beginning that I categorically reject the idea of labeling people based on their age as a way for denoting what they can and cannot do. Simply put, these labels are a living proof of how stereotypical we tend to be towards other people who are different from us.

In her article, Black (2010) said, "each generation seems to lament the characteristics of the generations that follow" (p. 92). This might be partly due to a generation gap in thinking and looking at things from different perspectives. Due to this evident difference, it is important to learn more about today's students' needs and characteristics in order to assist them and help them achieve their goals more effectively (Schrum& Levin, 2015). Interestingly, historians and sociologists as well as educators tend to categorize students into generations. In this article, I would like to talk about the most recent four of them: Boomers, Gen Xers, Gen Yers AKA Millennials, and Gen Zers.

Baby Boomers are those who were born between the mid-1940s and early 1960s, usually referred to as Boomers. Boomer college students were mostly male Caucasians who enrolled full time and aged between 19-22 (Black, 2010). They were a very large population who lived through the Vietnam war, Sputnik, and Free Speech Movement at Berkeley (Schrum& Levin, 2015). The majority of the Boomers were presumed to be heterosexual and came mainly from middle class families. Additionally, Boomers had general learning orientation and attending college to them was a privilege, not an expectation. Boomers also were known for rejecting organized religion and had low debt after college (Black, 2010). As many of us would guess, Boomers did not grow up surrounded by a lot of technology like nowadays, so their expectations from their teachers were different. For example, a Boomer would depend on a pen and pencil more than an iPad or laptop for taking notes and doing homework.

Following Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, are those born between the mid-1960s and early 1980s (Schrum& Levin, 2015). They lived through the Cold War and the time when AIDS and divorce were predominant. They became of age by the beginning of the 21st century when personal computers were becoming a norm in middle class houses. Most of them are comfortable using many electronic gadgets but they might not be as engaged with technology as their children. Gen Xers nowadays are school teachers and leaders. They are not as old school as the Boomers; meanwhile, they are not so dependent on technology as the

Millennials (Schrum& Levin, 2015).

Millennials, AKA Gen Yers, are those who were born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s (Schrum& Levin, 2015). Millennials are today's students and are more diverse than ever (Black, 2010). Unlike Boomers, Millennials are majorly women and have different sexual orientations. Roehling et al. (2010) argue that Millennials "have been raised in an environment in which individuality is highly valued and information, entertainment, and social interactions are unlimited and at their fingertips" (p. 1). Given that, teachers must take into consideration the needs and expectations of students in order to help them achieve their goals. There are so many things to consider in this aspect, such as the class atmosphere, students' attitudes and behavior, student's enthusiasm, etc. Unfortunately, Millennials are faced with the notorious challenge of students' debts as the school tuition is sky socketing. Therefore, the schools and teachers should take enough time to decide what might best serve these students' needs. For example, vocational training and community colleges have been a common option for Millennials to avoid expensive tuition.

Finally, Gen Zers are those born in the 1990s and are reaching their adulthood in the 2010s. They are born in a world where technology is ubiquitous. They are surrounded with electronic devices and probably would be able to speak to the machines before they speak their mother tongue. This generation is referred to as digital natives. They communicate mostly through social media using emoticons more than text. They conceive digital media faster than other previous generations, and that is why educators tend to focus on the usage of games in the educational process. Most importantly, they are good at multitasking.

References:

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