



Generation Y (Gen Y) Issues in Medical Education at Private University in Shah Alam, Malaysia: Bridging the Gap

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Abstract

Background & Aims: As generation Y behaves differently from the previous generation which are the generation X and the Baby boomer's generation, expressions of concern arises especially among health educators (Schmidt, et al., 2012). Since generation Y have different requirements, health educators are having a hard time in figuring out the effective teaching styles that are suitable (White & Kiegaldie, 2011). Thus, this research is done to understand and suggest the appropriate approach in enhancing learning methodology for generation Y.

Methods: The sampling method used is focus group method, (n=28) which consist of students from BMS and MBBS Year 1 to 5.

Results: Majority of the students prefer an interactive classroom approaches. Most of them says that it is important to incorporate the use of technology during teaching and learning activities. They find that lecturers who keep the teaching and learning activities interesting and always taught them to analyse and think critically enhances their interest and concentration which helps them to understand a subject better. A two-way teaching where they ask questions among each other are preferred as well. Colourful diagrams, short text, and videos are the most preferable learning tools, and not to forget music especially instrumental genre.

Conclusion: As the issues that exists within generation Y is understood, the use of the stated methods is able to bridge the gap in terms of teaching and learning activities to suit their needs.

Key Words

Generation Y; Medical Education; Teaching Learning Approaches

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Introduction

In this era, we can see that generation Y population is slowly over-taking the older generations in many aspects. Some say that massive changes can be seen in the way the generation Y handle the current and global issues. Generation Y/Millennial or "Civic" generation are born from 1982 to 2002¹. Medical schools nowadays face challenges in preparing students to meet evolving health-care needs in society. However, the way that education is delivered to aspiring health professionals has not changed a bit².

Thus, this research is done in order to understand and suggest the appropriate approach in enhancing learning methodology for the Y generation. The educators which are teachers and lecturers from the older generation such as baby boomers and generation x are facing issues that they themselves do not understand when it comes to educating the Y generation.

The rationale of this study is to find a method or technique which helps the educators of Y generation increases their quality of teaching and to match with the learning approach of Gen Y. It is like finding the right key that fits the lock perfectly. By understanding the issues existed within the Y generation in medical education, educators can easily mold or create a new and improved curriculum which helps them delivering their knowledge efficiently and effectively.

The gap must be bridged or connected for knowledge to pass through. When in attempts to answer the age-old question of what motivates Generation Y students, educators often turn to motivational theory³. The Y generation must be understood generally as human behaves differently as an individual.

Methods

For this research, the study design that was used is a cross-sectional method. The targeted population

will be the students of private medical school, Shah Alam. Inclusion criteria: Students which are taking the MBBS and BMS courses as they are the medical students and also medical lecturers of the school. Exclusion criteria: Staffs and non-medical lecturers and students.

The sampling method is by using focus group method. The data is collected through a semi-structured group interview process. Focus groups are generally used to collect data on a specific topic. The data is collected and gathered from the focus group interview. The data was categorized to identify themes. Using the themes and connections between the themes, the data was interpreted within the context of the literature review. A list was created consisting of key points and important findings discovered as a result of categorizing and sorting the data.

Results

The data are coded and characterized into themes.

The themes among students (Generation Y):

The first theme that emerged is students (Gen Y) prefer to study by themselves by using the 21st century learning tools. It is a combination of self-directed learning and technology. The students (Gen Y) are visual, audio and kinesthetic learners. Next, when it comes to understanding a topic, the students prefer a mixture of both conventional and modern learning methods. This is because some of the subjects still need a conventional approach by the lecturers. Students (Gen Y) very much prefers guided learning.

Most students say that it is important to incorporate the use of technology during teaching & learning activities as this will enhance their interest and concentration. Students demand more exposure on clinical practices as an early exposure (Experiential learning). Lecturers that are flexible, who knows their students personally are more interesting and motivating. Students prefer lecturers who challenge the student's knowledge with their own area of expertise. Lastly students (Gen Y) does not favor lecturers who are not prepared, lack of skills in engaging and barely interacting with the students.

The themes among lecturers (Gen X & Baby Boomers):

Lectures implements interactive & two-way teaching to the students combine with the use of social media platforms, PowerPoint presentation and videos. Generation Y are described to have high levels of curiosity but somehow lack skills in identifying information which are important, reliable,

and necessary. Lecturers say that students prefer a friendly and comfortable environment for them to study. Lecturers feel that the effectiveness of their teaching methods are somewhat moderate and still needs improvements.

Discussion

In this research, it has been found that students demand change in the teaching styles of the lecturers so they can learn better as they think and behaves differently. Students demand more interaction between them and the lectures and certainly two-way learning method is preferred by the majority of generation Y. As been said by Gillispie (2016)⁴ a successful flipped classroom can be seen when the students are allowed to become critical thinkers, students and instructors are fully engage with one another, and a deep understanding of the material is fully developed.

Two- way teaching, interactive learning combined with the use of technology are the teaching & learning approaches that Gen Y prefer. The use of technology has been stated many times as important by the generation Y as this helps them to engage with lecturers during class without getting left behind. As been supported by (Lloyd et al. 2013)⁵ Generation Y are the first to grow up in an environment where health-related information is widely available by internet, TV and other electronic media. This is why their mind works differently from the older generations as they get fast exposures from different cultures and beliefs from all around the world.

Generation Y are visual, audio and kinesthetic learners. They learn differently when compared to previous generation. Generation Y are visual learners as mentioned by the majority of the students interviewed in this research. They will search for videos, colorful diagrams and visual materials as their learning tools. Sometimes music especially instrumental genre is used by the students. Students states that music are helpful and makes it easier for them to memorize a subject. This finding is also consistent with Frand (2006)⁶, which states that Generation Y do not remember and cannot imagine a world without digital technology. Digital natives multitask and prefer visuals to graphics and text. They are complicatedly connected or networked via cell phone, blog, Facebook, and YouTube, thriving on instant gratification and preferring games to work. Generation Y also prefers an environment where they can ask questions freely and comfortably especially during class. This classifies them as kinesthetic learners.

When it comes to understanding a topic, the

students prefer a mixture of both conventional and modern learning methods such as two-way learning. The students mention that sometimes, conventional learning method or known as one-way teaching is required in order for them to understand complex subjects. Lecturers will first teach and explain to them during class on a particular subject. After the class has ended, students will ask questions regarding the subject in areas that they do not understand.

Students also mentions that the main learning tool provided by the lecturers is a PowerPoint presentations. Although it is considered helpful which serves as a guideline and record for future use, sometimes PowerPoint presentation becomes uninteresting with certain lecturers. The students say that, short, brief text in point forms, accompanied by diagrams, pictures and videos which are added into the PowerPoint presentation makes its more attention-grabbing and stimulating. This finding is also the same with Azriel's et al. (2005)⁷ theory which states that a greater number of students may be reached and effectively taught when educators combines the use of instructional devices that supports various learning styles. For instance, students who learns with auditory means and as those who learn through visual means can be reached with a PowerPoint presentation.

The research participants (Gen Y) very much prefers guided learning. Students mention that they really enjoy the idea of a guided approach as lecturers will focus on small group of students. Tutorial sessions helps the lecturers to identify the students who are weak thus guides those students to progress better. Those personal advices given from the lecturers to each student boosts the students' motivation to improve.

Experiential learning is also one of the methods that generation Y desires. The students demand more hands-on approaches and activities in their modules as this helps to prepare themselves earlier before they advance into the clinical years.

Lecturers that are flexible, who knows their students personally are more interesting and motivating. When being asked to describe about defining the best lecturer, the students mentions that the attitude of the lecturer influence their interaction in class. In other words, the attitude of the students in class reflects the lecturers themselves. Lecturers who challenge the student's knowledge with their own area of expertise are intriguing. Students also made a point by demanding the lecturers to keep on testing their level of knowledge by simply ask question which makes them think outside of the box.

Students (Gen Y) does not favor lecturers who are not prepared, lack of skills in engaging and barely interacting with the students. Some lecturers who lack skills in teaching are also considered as an issue. Monotone, unstructured flow of knowledge brings confusion to the students which will then leads to boredom. Black's (2010)⁸ and Prensky's (2007)⁹ states that their participants mentioned experiencing boredom during lecture-only classes are consistent with the findings in this research. The intention of the lecturers themselves plays an important role in setting the atmosphere of the classrooms.

As lecturers are already progressing and adapting to the "new style" of teaching, it can be said that currently the teaching style of lecturer suits with learning style of students. Although some lecturers are still struggling with the changes, effort and improvements are what the Y generation seek within their lecturer.

Lecturers describes generation Y to have high levels of curiosity but somehow lack skills in identifying information which are important, reliable, and necessary. Lecturers do acknowledge the fact that students prefer a friendly and comfortable environment for them to study. This however contradicts with their style of learning during their student days. Thus, lecturers need time to change and adapt to the new demands of Generation Y.

Lecturers are now engaging with the use of technology to enhance interest in student when teaching. Adapting and implementing two-way teaching, interactive learning in class are the approaches that they use currently. This thus improves the process of transferring knowledge up to its highest potential and to be passed on effectively. Lecturers admit the fact that the effectiveness of their teaching methods are somewhat moderate and still needs improvements.

Bridging the gap between those differences requires time and improvement from both Gen Y and the medical educators. As they both needs to adjust themselves with the new changes. Like for instance, generation Y students acknowledge the fact that they need to have PowerPoint presentation. However, they emphasize that they do not need those lecture notes as a form of spoon-feeding but instead as guidelines to help them minimize the scope of study. Lack of skills from the lecturers in interacting, delivering knowledge in ways which are stimulating and intriguing are not well accepted and tolerated.

Above all that, personal engagement by the lecturers is valued and treasured by the students.

They want to get to know their lecturers personally and that will enhance the students' motivation to learn and excel better. With that being said, the only way to overcome this issue is for the lecturers to constantly improve, be proficient and allow themselves to become creative with their current teaching & learning approaches such as the use of social media platforms, PowerPoint presentation and videos. Lecturers should understand how Gen Y behaves, the way they think and what are the components that captures their interest when learning.

Conclusion

Even though there is a gap between the way generation Y learns and the teaching methodology used by the lecturers, there is a way to bridge between it through; change the teaching, learning approaches & activities so it will be more student centered and supported by technology.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest

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