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LKS Faculty of Medicine
Bau Institute of Medical &
Health Sciences Education
香港大學鮑氏醫學及衛生教育研究所

BIMHSE LUNCHTIME SEMINAR SERIES

Advanced Professional Development Programme

in Health Professions Education

Seminar 3

Gen Z Learners in Health Professions Education: From Traits to Tactics

to be delivered by



Prof Julie Chen
Dept. of Family Medicine and
Primary Care and BIMHSE



Dr Tomasz Cecot
School of Biomedical Sciences



Prof Edmond Choi
School of Nursing



Prof Andrew Kuk
Dept. of Ophthalmology

June 2, 2026 (Tuesday) 12:30 - 2:00 pm
Seminar Room 2, G/F, Laboratory Block

Enquiry: imhse@hku.hk



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Gen Z Learners in Health Professions Education: From Traits to Tactics

Session Overview

What does the literature say about how Gen Z learn and the approaches teachers can use to facilitate learning?

Julie Chen (FMPC/BIMHSE)

From the front lines of teaching: Tactics that work (?)

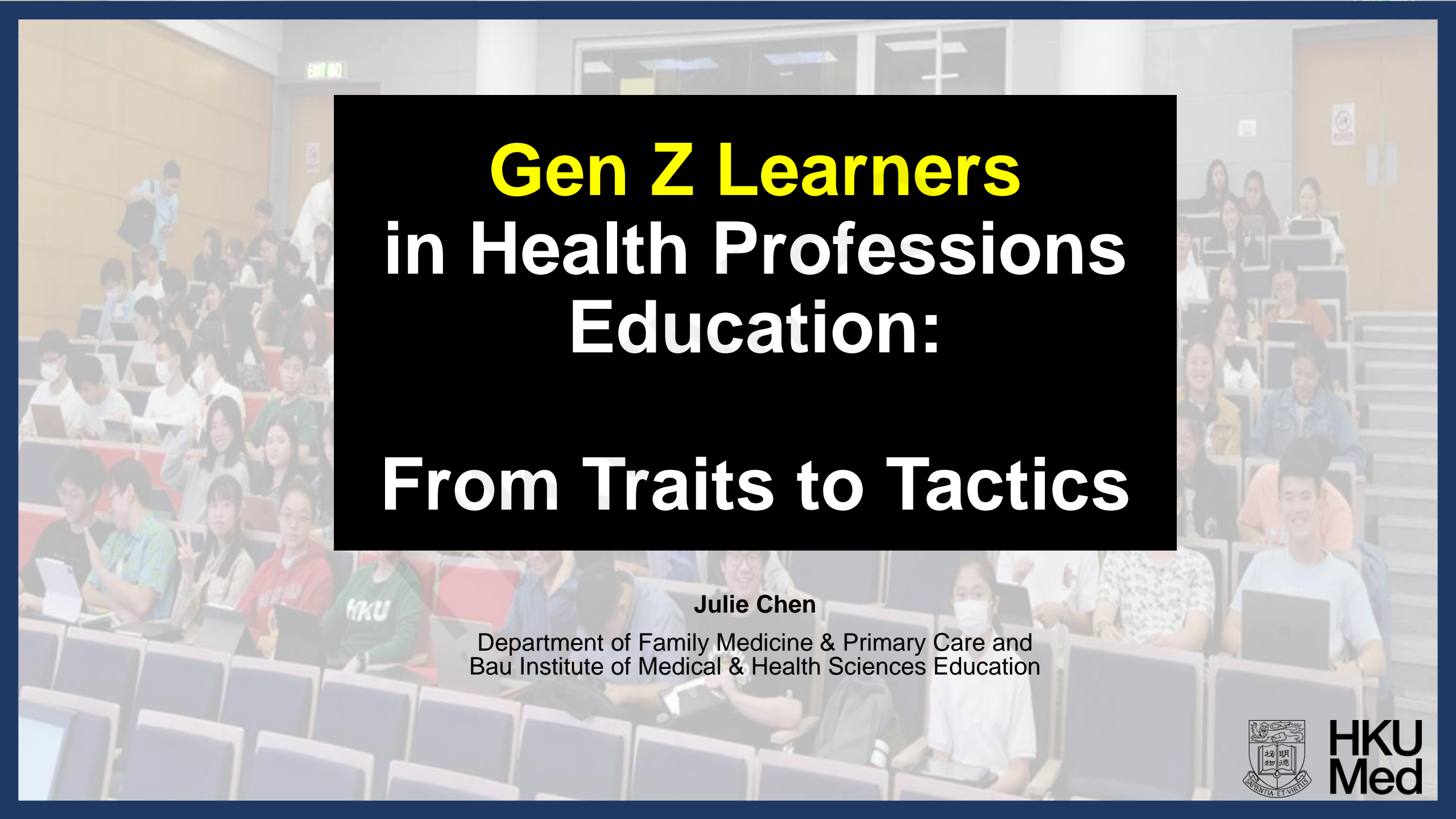
Tom Cecot (SBMS), Andrew Kuk (SClinMed), Edmond Choi (SON)

Response from Gen Z: Are these approaches and tactics really helping students learn?

Cassie (MBBS), Nancy (MBBS), Raphael (BNurs-ALT)

Discussion





Gen Z Learners in Health Professions Education: From Traits to Tactics

Julie Chen

Department of Family Medicine & Primary Care and
Bau Institute of Medical & Health Sciences Education



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Generation Z

Generational Cohort Theory

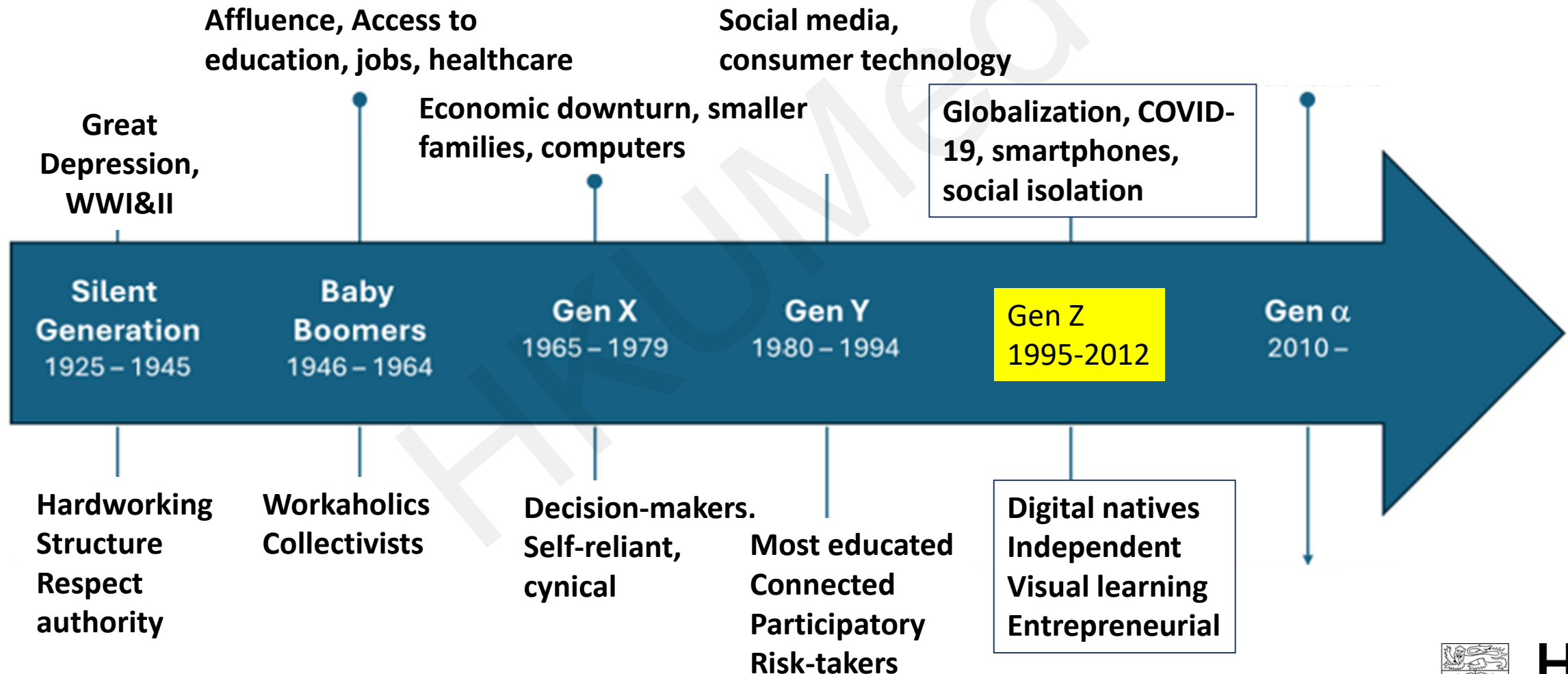
Individuals from a particular generation tend to have **similar behaviors, values and perceptions** that are shaped by similar life experiences and witnessing common historical events¹

Understanding the generational characteristics and educational expectations helps to **identify unmet needs and optimize learning to enhance motivation to learn** and career satisfaction

1. Parker K. (2023) How Pew Research Center will report on generations moving forward. Pew Research Center.



Generational Influences and Characteristics^{2,3}



2. Cecconi C et al. (2025) Generational differences in healthcare: the role of technology in the path forward. Front. Public Health

3. Shorey, S. et al. (2021). Learning styles, preferences and needs of generation Z healthcare students: Scoping review. Nurse education in practice



Gen Z Healthcare Learner scoping reviews

- Scoping review x 2 (2021 Singapore³; 2025 Switzerland⁴)
- 17 papers in each with some overlap
- Original research, perspective papers
- Included students in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, allied health
- **Main themes:**
 1. Self identity and perception
 2. Learning styles and preferences/expectations
 3. Impact of clinical environment
 4. Recommendations for teaching

3. Shorey, S. et al. (2021). Learning styles, preferences and needs of generation Z healthcare students: Scoping review. Nurse education in practice

4. Buyck, Michael. (2025). Where are we in the clinical education of Generation Z healthcare professional learners? A scoping review of current practices, challenges, and future directions. Privat-docent Thesis



Self-identity and perception

- Rely heavily on **technology** in daily living (i.e spend on average 9 hours/day on devices which may result in **underdeveloped social skills** (informal communication, tardiness, dress)⁶ **and at risk for mental health concerns.**^{3,4,5}
- Due to exposure to constant technological stimulation, may display **short attention span** and may seek instant gratification³
- **Socially conscious**, concerned for the environment, social justice and cultural inclusion. This may be due to news and opinions being readily shared on social media^{3,5}
- Motivated by a **sense of purpose and a desire to contribute** positively to the world³

5. Jayatissa, K. A. D. U. (2023). Generation Z—A new lifeline: A systematic literature review. Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities

6. Papadimos TJ. (2025) Hippocrates, the first aphorism, and decorum: A personal view of caution and guidance regarding Gen Z students. Med Teach.



Learning styles and preferences

- **Individualised, flexible**, self-paced learning^{3,4}
- **Engaging**, visual, discussion, simulation, case studies³
- **Hands-on learning** over classroom-based⁷
- **Simplified**, bite-sized information⁸
- Teachers who were accessible and provided **mentorship**, effective communicators, provided **feedback** (short, practical, immediate) and set realistic expectations^{3,4,7}

7. Dodson, T. M., & Thompson-Hairston, K. (2024). A scoping review of gen z nursing students: learning preferences and educator strategies. Teaching and Learning in Nursing

8. Schenarts PJ. (2020) Now Arriving: Surgical Trainees From Generation Z. J Surg Educ.



Clinical environment

- Prefer supportive and empowering clinical environment: Feel **part of the healthcare team**, meaningful **engagement with patients** and their families³
- Awareness of **mental health**, stress and place value on work-life balance^{3,9,10}

9. Suliman S, et al. (2024) Is medical training solely to blame? Generational influences on the mental health of our medical trainees. Med Educ Online.

10. Han P, et al. (2024) The early career resilience experience of generation Z newly graduated registered nurses in standardized training in the emergency department: a qualitative study in Shanghai. BMC Nurs. 2024



Recommendations for teaching Gen Z



Digital natives \neq Digital Literacy

Skills-building



Social challenges >> professionalism issues

Structured programming

Role modelling



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Recommendations for teaching Gen Z



Motivated by social
consciousness

Opportunities for
community
engagement



Part of clinical team

Assistant Internship
Choice of placements



Byte-sized
information

Time for reflection
to consolidate
learning



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Recommendations for teaching Gen Z



Mental health and guidance

Teacher and student training

Mentorship

Support resources



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**Next,
the view from the front lines...**

**Dr Tom Cecot (SBMS)
Prof Andrew Kuk (SClinMed)
Prof Edmond Choi (SON)**



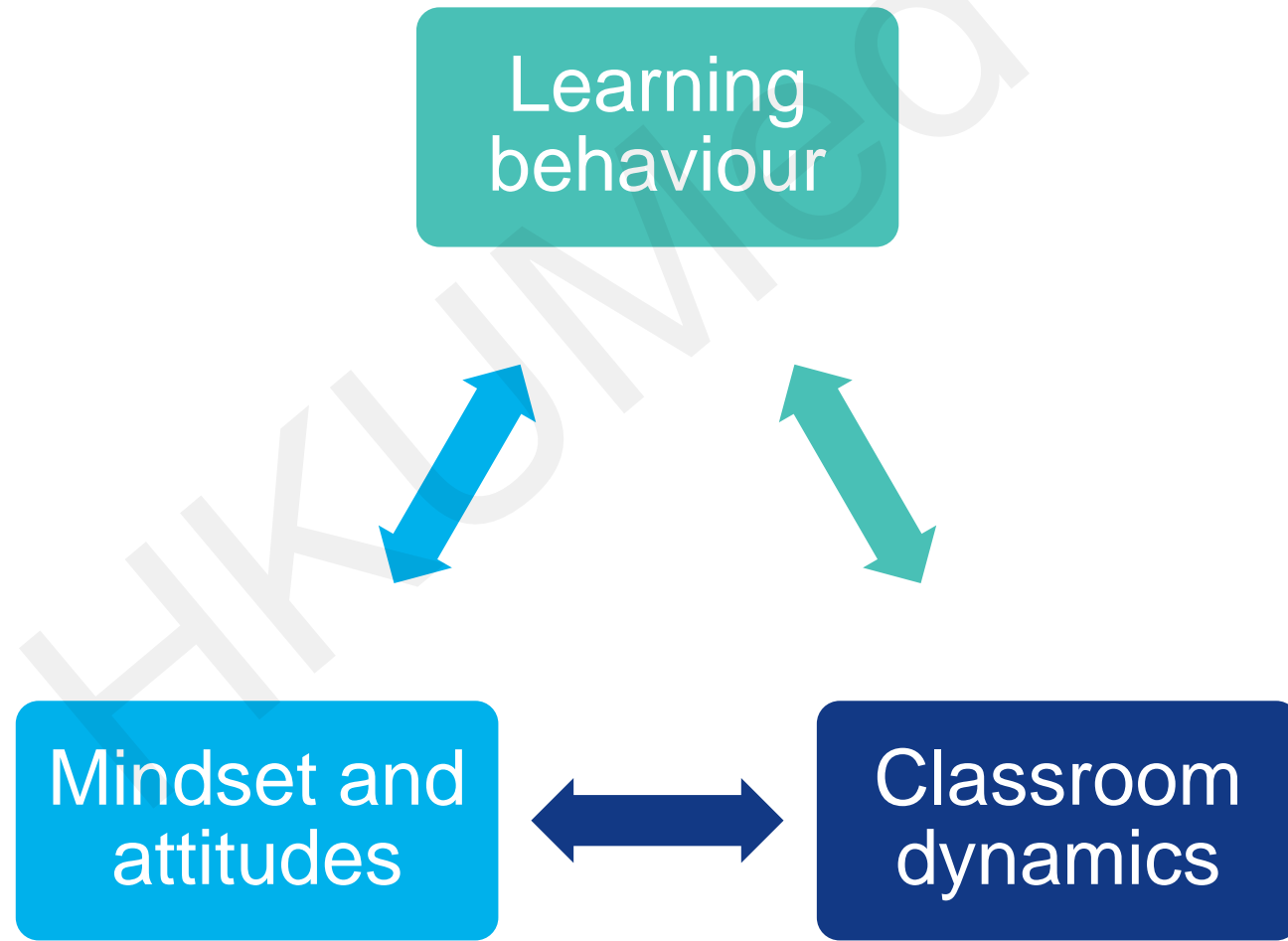
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The landscape of learning and teaching has evolved significantly.

Today's students have already adjusted to this new reality.

As educators, we need to evolve alongside them.

Key Areas of Observed Change





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Learning behaviours

1. Virtually no one uses printed textbook

Loss of exposure to structured, linear knowledge
(beginning → middle → end)



What it means?

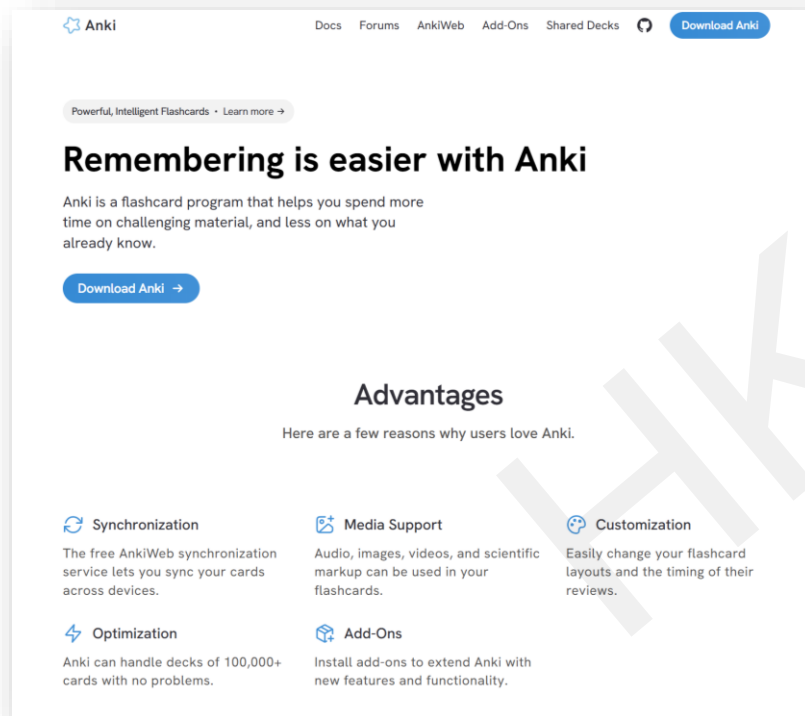
Students no longer build structured mental frameworks because linear, textbook-based learning has disappeared.

Wolf (2018)

What to do?

Explicitly scaffold structure: how concepts connect, not just what they are

2. When preparing for exams, students rely heavily on question banks and repeated patterns rather than underlying explanations.



What it means?

Pattern-matching replaces genuine understanding, so knowledge collapses when questions are rephrased or applied clinically.

Kansal & Patel (2024); Haycocks et al.(2024)

What to do?

Explicitly scaffold structure: how concepts connect, not just what they are



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Classroom dynamics

3. After asking a question students immediately go on-line to find answers



Minimal pause time for thinking

Phones/laptops activated instantly

What it means?

Students treat knowledge as something to look up rather than to hold internally, reducing their tolerance for uncertainty.

Sparrow et al.(2011); Gong & Yang(2024)

What to do?

Delay answers deliberately
Ask: “Explain your reasoning first—then verify”
“Use natural intelligence not the artificial one”

4. Attention drops easily during lecture

Playing games

Watching football match

Watching Youtube



Planning holidays

Playing chess

Checking Instagram/WhatsApp

What it means?

- Their environment they grow up was organized differently
- The mismatch is not aligned with expectations/pre-conditioning

Bradbury (2016)

What to do?

Front-load relevance at every transition: vary the format to match how they process



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Mindset and attitudes

5. Emotional safety is extremely important



What it means?

Without psychological safety, students simulate compliance while genuine learning and questioning silently shut down.

Edmondson et al..(2016); Bitar et al.(2025)

What to do?

Shift from authority to collaborative mentor:
create space for honest questions

The new role of the teacher

From delivering content → to scaffolding understanding

Create conceptual scaffolding

Make concept relationships explicit; students no longer absorb structure from textbooks or linear study

← Observations 1, 2

Demand reasoning

Require reasoning before verification; build internal knowledge, not external dependency

← Observation 3

Change teaching formats

Front-load relevance at every transition and vary the format to match how students process

← Observation 4

Support

Create psychological safety so students engage genuinely, not performatively

← Observation 5

“Students don’t fail because they lack content: they fail because they never built the model.”

Internal model construction must be explicitly designed into teaching

References



1. Wolf M. **Reader, Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World.** New York: Harper; 2018.
2. Kansal S, Patel RE. **A medical student perspective on question banks as a learning resource: a prescription for passing?** *J Transl Med.* 2024;22(1):1064.
3. Haycocks NG, Hernandez-Moreno J, Bester JC, Hernandez Jnr R, Kalili R, Samrao D, Simanton E, Vida TA. **Assessing the difficulty and long-term retention of factual and conceptual knowledge through multiple-choice questions: a longitudinal study.** *Adv Med Educ Pract.* 2024;15:1217–1228.
4. Sparrow B, Liu J, Wegner DM. **Google effects on memory: cognitive consequences of having information at our fingertips.** *Science.* 2011;333(6043):776–778.
5. Gong C, Yang Y. **Google effects on memory: a meta-analytical review of the media effects of intensive Internet search behavior.** *Front Public Health.* 2024;12:1332030.
6. Bradbury NA. **Attention span during lectures: 8 seconds, 10 minutes, or more?** *Adv Physiol Educ.* 2016;40(4):509–513.
7. Edmondson AC, Higgins M, Singer S, Weiner J. **Understanding psychological safety in health care and education organizations: a comparative perspective.** *Res Human Dev.* 2016;13(1):65–83.
8. Bitar A, Boman J, Kristoffersson E. **Burnout and psychological safety: a questionnaire study of medical students.** *J Med Educ Curric Dev.* 2025;12:1–8.



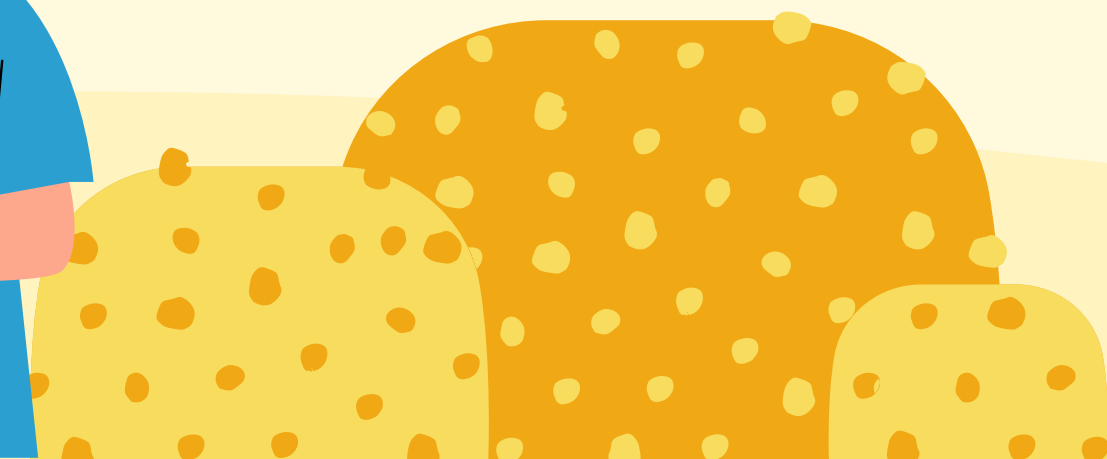
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TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FOR THE GEN Z MINDSET

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Beyond the Facts

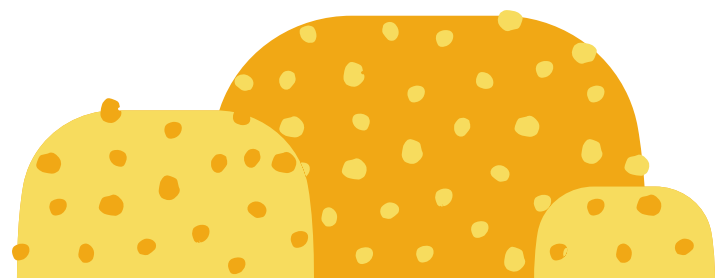
CLINICAL REASONING

We should avoid focusing excessively on rote memorization of hard facts.

Clinical reasoning represents the thinking process crucial for high-stakes bedside practice.

BEDSIDE REALITY

Training Gen Z in decision-making methodologies transforms them from static knowledge consumers into dynamic problem-solvers in rapid clinical situations.



Student-Centered

Elevating Student Voice

We must champion student-centered learning. Gen Z students deserve an active role and a loud voice in shaping their educational journey.

Likes and Dislikes

Regularly check in with cohorts to discover what truly resonates, what fails to engage, and how they perceive their own optimal learning patterns.



Bridges of Dialogue

Anxiety can often silence Gen Z in traditional classrooms. We must establish multiple channels for asking vital questions:

Face-to-Face Interactions: Crucial for establishing real rapport.

Anonymous Digital Pipelines: Using Google Forms or live polling tools to provide a pressure-free venue for quieter students to ask anything.

lll

問題 回覆 設定

Questions / Comments to Edmond Year 2025 to 2026

Please feel free to give me any comments and ask any questions
It is anonymous!!!!

Please select a course *

- NURS7505 Introduction to Nursing Research (MSC in Nursing)
- NURS7106 Epidemiology and Critical Appraisal (Master of Nursing)
- NURS4604 Community & Global Health Nursing (BN)
- 其他: _____

What are your comments/ questions???

詳答文字

Please leave your email if you want me to contact you (optional)

簡答文字



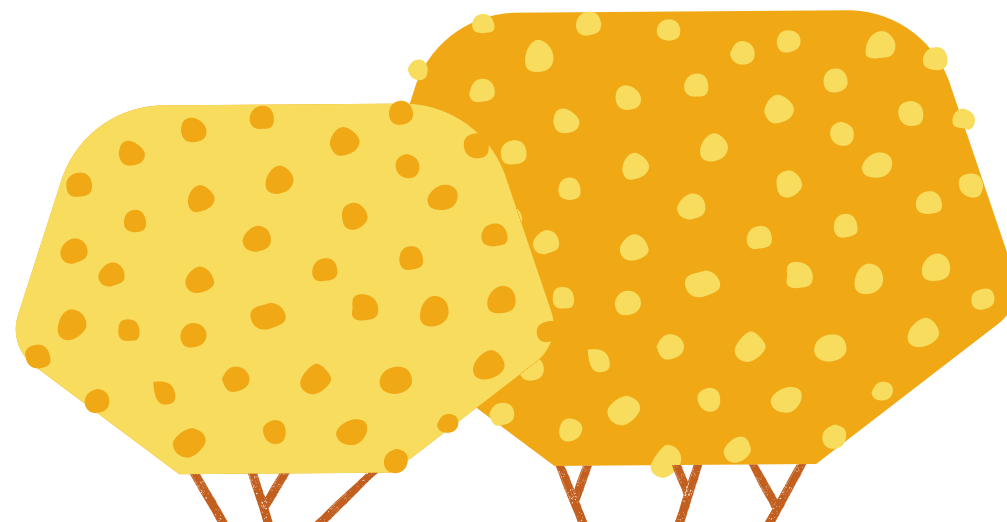
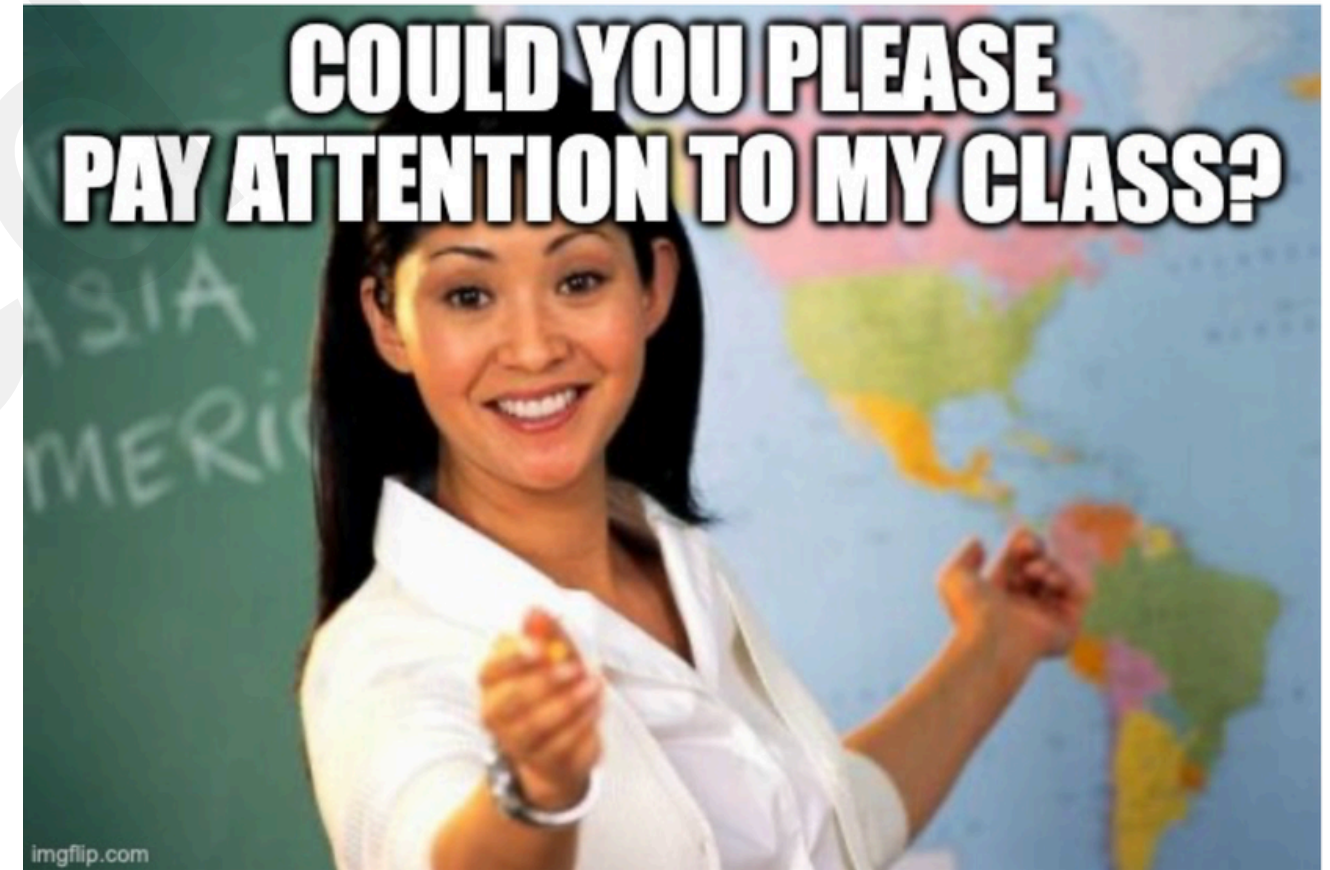
Face-to-Face

Anonymous

Visual Combat

In a hyper-connected world filled with endless notifications, we must design our presentation decks to actively capture attention.

Make learning fundamentally enjoyable. Leverage beautiful layouts, clean visual hierarchy, subtle humor, or well-timed academic memes to hook visual-first learners.



Mental Safety

They often experience higher levels of anxiety and fear of failure. Creating a psychologically safe environment where it's okay to make mistakes (especially in simulation) is crucial.

