

Millennial and Gen X Teachers: Generational Divide

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The millennial and Generation X populations comprise a substantial segment of the contemporary teaching workforce, yet their classroom practices are shaped by markedly different formative contexts. Generation X teachers developed professionally during periods characterized by more hierarchical school structures and limited technological integration (Requillo et al., 2024) and often approach teaching with a strong emphasis on autonomy, practicality, and clearly defined instructional routines (Ghamrawi et al., 2025). Their experiences foster a preference for structured lesson delivery, content mastery, and disciplined classroom management (Reyes et al., 2020). In contrast, millennial teachers entered the profession during an era of rapid digital transformation and learner-centered reforms (Kutsyuruba et al., 2025), which has influenced them to prioritize collaboration, inclusivity, and flexibility in instruction (Cruz & Barrameda, 2023). As a result, while Gen X educators may emphasize stability and consistency in pedagogical approaches (Dogan & Arslan, 2025), millennial teachers are more likely to experiment with innovative strategies and adapt their teaching to diverse and evolving student needs (Marrero Galván et al., 2023).

These generational differences are particularly evident in the integration of technology and the design of learning experiences. Millennial teachers, often described as digital natives, tend to embed technology as a central component of instruction, using interactive platforms, multimedia resources, and online collaboration tools to enhance engagement and participation (Marrero Galván et al., 2023). Their teaching frequently reflects constructivist principles (Kutsyuruba et al., 2025), where students actively co-create knowledge through discussion, exploration, and digital interaction. Conversely, Generation X teachers, although capable of using technology, are more inclined to employ it selectively and purposefully (Ghamrawi et al., 2025), ensuring that it supports rather than dominates the learning process. Their instructional strategies often reflect a balance between traditional methods (Requillo et al., 2024), such as direct instruction and guided practice, and incremental technological adoption. This divergence suggests that millennial teachers may excel in creating dynamic and technologically enriched environments (Loganathan & Hashim, 2020), whereas Gen X teachers may provide more structured and cognitively focused learning experiences (Reyes et al., 2020).

Differences in teacher efficacy and professional commitment further distinguish these two groups. Millennial teachers often report higher levels of self-efficacy in implementing new pedagogies and adapting to change (Morales, 2025). This confidence frequently translates into a willingness to take instructional risks, personalize learning, and foster supportive classroom climates that encourage student voice and participation. In contrast, Generation X teachers tend to exhibit efficacy grounded in accumulated experience, demonstrating confidence in classroom management, curriculum delivery, and long-term instructional planning (Reyes et al., 2020). Their sense of commitment is often characterized by resilience and loyalty to institutional

norms. While millennial educators may drive innovation and responsiveness, Gen X teachers often anchor educational practice in experience-based judgment. Generational differences in efficacy can shape both teaching approaches and student learning outcomes (Josephine & Jones, 2022).

Teaching Self-Efficacy

Teaching efficacy has become a central construct in school psychology due to its strong influence on instructional practices, teaching effectiveness, and student achievement (Klassen et al., 2014). It refers to teachers' beliefs in their capacity to influence student learning and produce meaningful academic outcomes (Eren et al., 2025). Rooted in Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977), self-efficacy reflects the confidence teachers have in managing classroom demands, delivering instruction effectively, and addressing diverse learning needs (Bandura, 1977, as cited in Barni et al., 2019). This belief system is not merely about skill, but about perceived capability, shaping how teachers approach challenges, persist through difficulties, and ultimately impact student success (Eren et al., 2025; Karim et al., 2025).

Teacher efficacy is closely linked to individual personality traits and value systems. Drawing on the Five-Factor Model of Personality, research by Djigić et al. (2014) indicates that teachers high in openness to experience and conscientiousness tend to exhibit stronger efficacy beliefs. These traits support adaptability, creativity, and a sense of responsibility, qualities essential for effective teaching. Furthermore, Barni et al. (2019) argue that teachers' values shape their professional goals and behaviors, which in turn determine how they engage with students and navigate school environments.

Values also play a critical role in reinforcing both self-efficacy and well-being. In a study by Schwartz and Boehnke (2004), involving 227 Italian

high school teachers, conservation values, such as stability, order, and responsibility, were found to be positively associated with teacher efficacy across different motivational levels. Teachers who prioritize consistency and commitment are more likely to feel capable and effective in their roles. Deeply held values provide a stable internal framework that guides teachers' decisions, strengthens their sense of control in the classroom, and sustains their confidence when facing instructional challenges.

Personal Growth Initiatives

In the context of teacher professional development, Kostiainen and Pöysä-Tarhonen (2025) argued that teachers derive strong professional fulfillment from meaningful interactions with students and from observing student progress, particularly in academically diverse classrooms. However, the limited recognition and feedback they receive points to a gap between effort and institutional support. Opportunities for intellectually challenging tasks and collegial engagement emerge as critical drivers of growth. Hence, professional development is most effective when it is embedded in collaborative and reflective practice rather than isolated training activities.

Collaborative instruction is a mechanism for both professional satisfaction and pedagogical improvement. When teachers engage in shared practices, they are better positioned to exchange strategies, refine their approaches, and respond to diverse learner needs. This aligns with the concept of personal growth initiative, which refers to an individual's active and intentional involvement in self-improvement (Weigold et al., 2024). As outlined by Malik et al. (2015), it encompasses readiness for change, planfulness, intentional behavior, and the effective use of resources. These dimensions emphasize that teacher development is not passive but requires

deliberate effort, strategic thinking, and sustained engagement with both internal motivations and external supports.

According to Muir et al. (2021), professional experimentation fosters teacher development. For instance, the deliberate use of student assessment data enables teachers to identify learning gaps and adjust instructional strategies with greater precision. This process reinforces a cycle of reflection and adaptation that is essential for continuous improvement. Similarly, Büyükgöze (2015) suggests the inclusion of personal growth initiative in shaping teachers' developmental trajectories. Teachers' individual differences in motivation and goal orientation can significantly influence how teachers engage with professional learning opportunities.

Teaching Performance

According to Galvan et al. (2023), the entry of millennials, often labeled as “digital natives,” has intensified generational diversity within the teaching profession. There is a clear divide between digital natives and digital immigrants, particularly in how technology is understood and used in instruction. For instance, millennial teachers tend to integrate ICT more intuitively and seamlessly into their pedagogy (Onjewu et al., 2025). In contrast, Generation X teachers, often considered digital immigrants, approach technology more deliberately (Anzari et al., 2021). This distinction reflects not only differences in technological exposure but also deeper variations in instructional mindset. In terms of technology integration in teaching, millennials lean toward interactive and technology-driven learning environments while Gen X teachers emphasize structure and pedagogical control.

According to Reyes et al. (2020), generational teaching profiles often differ in competence-centered, empathetic, and innovative orientations. For

example, while competence remains a shared foundation across generations, millennial teachers are more strongly associated with empathy, while Generation X teachers are characterized by flexibility, effectively blending competence with adaptability in response to classroom demands. While millennials may prioritize relational and technologically enriched teaching, Gen X educators contribute a more balanced and experience-driven approach that integrates multiple teaching dimensions.

A Self-Determination Theory Perspective on Generational Differences in Teaching Efficacy

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1980) posits that individuals have three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These needs influence motivation, engagement, and overall well-being. Applied in the comparative generational teaching efficacy, both Millennials and Generation X individuals have been shaped by environments that emphasize autonomy and personal control. This fosters independence and decision-making, which may enhance their sense of efficacy, as individuals are more likely to believe in their capabilities when they experience ownership over their actions.

The SDT highlights the importance of self-improvement activities, such as goal setting and reflection, in promoting motivation and well-being. Millennials and Generation X individuals often engage in personal development activities, such as extracurricular involvement, social engagement, and professional experiences. These activities contribute to their sense of competence, which may positively influence their teaching performance. By recognizing the unique characteristics and needs of millennial and Generation X teachers, more effective support systems and

interventions can be designed to enhance their performance and contribute to improved learner outcomes.

RESEARCH FOCUS: Level of Efficacy, Personal Growth Initiatives and Teaching Performance of Millennial and Generation X

This study examined the levels of self-efficacy, engagement in personal growth initiatives, and teaching performance among millennial and Generation X teachers by providing insights into how these factors differ between the two groups and how they relate to teaching effectiveness and professional development.

The study was conducted at a public integrated school in in the District of Lezo, Aklan in the Philippines. Using a comparative cross-sectional research design, it involved forty-six (46) teachers equally distributed between the two generational groups. Data were gathered through questionnaires following the approval of research permissions from relevant authorities. The collected data were coded, encoded, and processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

For analysis, descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to describe the data, while an independent samples t-test was applied to determine significant differences between groups at a 5% level of significance.

In terms of the level of teaching self-efficacy, Table 1 shows the results of the evaluation across four key areas. The data indicate that both Generation X and millennial teachers exhibit a “very high” level of teaching self-efficacy, with Generation X teachers ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.802$) and millennial teachers slightly higher ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.434$).

In school leadership and decision-making, millennial teachers report slightly higher self-efficacy ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.56$) than Generation X teachers ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.85$). This difference reflects millennials' comfort with collaborative leadership and technology, enabling them to confidently influence decisions, share ideas, and participate in school committees. This may also be attributed to their ability to use digital tools for communication and coordination. In contrast, Generation X teachers demonstrate strong leadership efficacy grounded in experience, though their approach tends to be shaped by more hierarchical systems, resulting in slightly lower confidence in shared decision-making.

Table 1

Level of teaching self-efficacy of the Generation X and Millennial teachers

Teaching Self- Efficacy	Generation X (1960-1980)			Millennials (1981- 1996)		
	Mean	Description	SD	Mean	Description	SD
School Leadership and Decision Making	4.23	Very High	0.85	4.27	Very High	0.56
Student Motivation and Academic Support	4.22	Very High	0.78	4.48	Very High	0.48
Classroom Management and Discipline	4.39	Very High	0.82	4.53	Very High	0.44
Parental Involvement and Engagement	4.33	Very High	0.91	4.58	Very High	0.54
Grand Mean	4.29	Very High	0.8	4.47	Very High	0.43

Scale: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41- 4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

Similarly, millennial teachers' self-efficacy in student motivation and academic support ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.48$) is slightly higher than that of Generation X teachers ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.78$). Millennials often employ personalized, student-centered strategies and integrate technology to engage

learners, including those with limited support at home. This enhances their confidence in motivating students and supporting academic success. Generation X teachers remain highly effective; however, their reliance on more traditional approaches may not always fully address diverse student needs.

Millennial teachers also demonstrate the highest self-efficacy in classroom management and discipline ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.44$), while Generation X teachers also show a very high level ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.82$). Millennials tend to manage classroom behavior using student-centered approaches, such as positive reinforcement and technology-based tools, allowing for more flexible and dynamic discipline strategies. In contrast, Generation X teachers rely on structured routines and rule-based management, which are effective but less flexible for individual student differences.

In parental involvement and engagement, millennial teachers ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.54$) again report higher self-efficacy than Generation X teachers ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.91$). Millennials are more inclined to use digital communication tools such as social media, email, and online platforms, which enhance parent engagement and communication. Generation X teachers remain effective in engaging parents but tend to rely on more traditional methods, such as parent-teacher conferences, which may be less immediate and convenient.

Research suggests that generational cohorts differ in their approaches and attitudes toward teaching. Millennials tend to value teamwork and inclusivity (Stephens, 2021), while Generation X teachers emphasize pragmatism and stability (Edge et al., 2016). These differences may explain the slightly higher levels of parental involvement and decision-making engagement observed among millennial teachers.

In terms of the comparative personal growth initiatives of millennial and Generation X teachers presented in Table 2, the analysis covers three key areas: awareness and readiness for change, goal setting and planning, and active growth and resource utilization.

The results show that both Generation X and millennial teachers exhibit a “very high” level of personal growth initiatives, with Generation X teachers (M = 4.45, SD = 0.835) and millennial teachers (M = 4.47, SD = 0.437). These findings indicate that both groups value continuous self-improvement and professional development. However, Generation X teachers demonstrate slightly stronger tendencies in certain areas, possibly due to differences in their approaches to change, goal setting, and resource utilization.

Table 2

Level of personal growth initiatives of the Generation X and Millennial teachers

Level of Personal Growth	Generation X (1960-1980)			Millennials (1981- 1996)		
	Mean	Description	SD	Mean	Description	SD
Awareness and Readiness for Change	4.47	Very High	0.84	4.48	Very High	0.54
Goal Setting and Planning	4.33	Very High	0.88	4.37	Very High	0.48
Active Growth and Resource Utilization	4.54	Very High	0.87	4.55	Very High	0.45
Grand Mean	4.45	Very High	0.84	4.47	Very High	0.44

Scale: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41- 4.20 High; 2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

Among the areas examined, Generation X teachers scored highest in active growth and resource utilization (M = 4.54, SD = 0.868). This reflects their proactive attitude toward self-improvement and their ability to effectively use available resources, such as professional development programs, mentorship, and community support. Their strong performance aligns with

their generational characteristics of being self-reliant and pragmatic. However, Generation X teachers obtained relatively lower scores in awareness and readiness for change ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.908$) and goal setting and planning ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.955$). These results suggest that while they can utilize resources, they may be less inclined toward systematic planning or seeking external assistance, reflecting a preference for independence. In contrast, millennial teachers scored highest in active growth and resource utilization ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.549$), indicating a strong commitment to continuous learning and personal development. Millennials are often described as adaptable and open to change, which explains their proactive pursuit of growth opportunities. The relatively low standard deviations indicate consistency in responses among millennial teachers.

Millennials obtained comparatively lower scores in goal setting and planning ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.765$) and help-seeking ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.485$). Although still rated “very high,” these findings suggest a tendency toward action-oriented approaches rather than structured planning or reliance on others. This may reflect their inclination toward independence and creativity in addressing challenges.

These findings are consistent with Day and Leitch (2001) that teachers with strong personal growth initiatives are more proactive, adaptable, and effective in facilitating learning. The results confirm that both Generation X and millennial teachers demonstrate high levels of personal growth, which contribute to their professional effectiveness.

Table 3 presents the teaching performance of Generation X and millennial teachers. The results show that both groups demonstrate a “very high” level of teaching performance, with Generation X teachers ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 0.815$) and millennial teachers slightly higher ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.44$). These indicate that both groups are highly competent in teaching, with strong

performance across key instructional areas. The slight advantage of millennials may be attributed to their adaptability to modern teaching approaches, collaborative orientation, and integration of technology.

Table 3

Level of teaching performance of the Generation X and Millennial teachers

Level of Teaching Performance	Generation X (1960-1980)			Millennials (1981- 1996)		
	Mean	Description	SD	Mean	Description	SD
Content Knowledge, Planning and Preparation	4.57	Very High	0.8	4.63	Very High	0.45
Classroom Management	4.63	Very High	0.83	4.67	Very High	0.46
Relationship and Leadership	4.63	Very High	0.83	4.66	Very High	0.47
Grand Mean	4.61	Very High	0.82	4.65	Very High	0.44

Scale: 4.21-5.00 Very High; 3.41- 4.20 High;2.61-3.40 Moderate; 1.81-2.60 Low; 1.00-1.80 Very Low

In terms of content knowledge, planning, and preparation, both groups achieved very high ratings, with Generation X teachers ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.80$) and millennials ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 0.45$). This reflects strong mastery of subject matter and effective lesson preparation. Millennials' slight advantage may be due to their ability to integrate contemporary teaching strategies, while Generation X teachers rely on their extensive experience and established practices.

For classroom management, both groups again demonstrated very high performance, with Generation X teachers ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 0.83$) and millennials ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.46$). Millennials' use of creative and technology-driven strategies may enhance student engagement, while Generation X teachers benefit from their experience in handling diverse classroom situations.

In relationship and leadership, both groups also achieved very high ratings, with Generation X teachers ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 0.83$) and millennials slightly higher ($M = 4.66$, $SD = 0.47$). Millennials' collaborative and community-oriented approach may contribute to their slight advantage, while Generation X teachers demonstrate strong leadership through experience and interpersonal skills.

The findings support Lagmay and Florendo (2025) that although teaching approaches may vary across generations, both Generation X and millennial teachers demonstrate strong professional competence and commitment to improvement.

As shown in Table 4, the results indicate that there is no significant difference between Generation X and millennial teachers in terms of teaching self-efficacy [$t(48) = -0.962$, $p = 0.341$]. This suggests that both groups possess similar levels of confidence in managing classrooms, delivering instruction, and promoting student learning outcomes.

Table 4

Difference on the level teaching self-efficacy

Generational Cohort	Level of Efficacy	Df	t value	p value
Generation X (1960-1980)	4.29	48	-0.962 ^{ns}	0.341
Millennials (1981-1996)	4.47			

^{ns} $p > 0.05$, not significant

This similarity may be attributed to shared professional experiences, continuous training, and institutional support, which contribute to comparable levels of self-efficacy regardless of generational differences. Both groups face similar teaching challenges, such as addressing diverse student needs and maintaining classroom engagement, which strengthen their confidence over time. Moreover, Generation X teachers draw on extensive experience, while

millennials leverage modern tools and innovative strategies, resulting in complementary strengths that lead to comparable efficacy levels.

As reflected in Table 5, the results show no significant difference in the level of personal growth initiatives between Generation X and millennial teachers [$t(48) = -0.091, p = 0.928$]. This indicates that both groups demonstrate similar levels of engagement in personal and professional development. This finding may be attributed to a shared institutional culture that promotes continuous learning, professional development, and adaptability. Both groups are expected to set goals, utilize resources, and respond to changes in the educational environment. Training programs, workshops, and mentorship opportunities further reinforce these practices across generations.

Table 5

Difference between the level of personal growth

Generations	Level of Personal Growth	df	t value	p value
Generation X (1960-1980)	4.45	48	-0.091 ^{ns}	0.928
Millennials (1981-1996)	4.47			

^{ns} $p > 0.05$, not significant

The importance of lifelong learning in the teaching profession encourages both groups to pursue growth opportunities. While Generation X teachers tend to rely on experience and practicality, millennials adopt more flexible and innovative approaches. These complementary tendencies result in similar overall levels of personal growth initiatives. Studies have shown that Generation X professionals prefer structured and stable environments (Requillo et al., 2024; Ghamrawi et al., 2025; Reyes et al., 2020; Dogan & Arslan, 2025), while millennials favor inclusive and growth-oriented settings (Kutsyuruba et al., 2025; Cruz & Barrameda, 2023; Marrero Galván et al.,

2023). Despite these differences, both groups remain committed to professional development and continuous improvement.

Table 6 presents the results of the t-test on teaching performance between Generation X and millennial teachers. The findings indicate no significant difference in teaching performance [$t(48) = 2.35, p = 0.08$]. This suggests that both groups demonstrate comparable proficiency in key teaching areas, including lesson planning, classroom management, and student engagement.

Although generational differences exist in teaching styles and approaches, both groups exhibit high levels of competence. Generation X teachers bring experience and stability, while millennials contribute innovation and adaptability. These complementary strengths contribute to similar levels of teaching effectiveness.

Table 6

Differences in the teaching performance

Generations	Level of Teaching Performance	df	t value	p value
Generation X (1960-1980)	4.61	3	2.35	0.08
Millennials (1981-1996)	4.653			

^{ns} $p > 0.05$, not significant

Both groups also benefit from formal training, professional development opportunities, and shared teaching responsibilities, which establish a common standard of competence. Despite differences in background and approach, effective teaching remains grounded in shared skills, continuous learning, and professional commitment. Teachers across generations share similar values and practices in teaching (Polat et al., 2019; Geeraerts et al., 2018).

Conclusion

The teaching profession continues to evolve, making it essential to understand how educators from different generations perform and grow within this dynamic environment. Teaching effectiveness is shaped more by individual competencies, institutional support, and professional commitment than by generational identity. Supportive environments that foster professional development and collaboration play a more critical role in enhancing teaching performance than age-based distinctions. Ultimately, effective teaching is driven by skill, support, and dedication rather than by generational categorization.

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