21ST CENTURY EDUCATION FOR GEN Z LEARNERS

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“If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow”.

- John Dewey

The words of Dewey, an American Philosopher who is well-known for his pragmatic and democratic educational philosophy, reflect the need for seemingly unending change in education. The world is changing and will continue to change dramatically – the dress, eating habits, culture, health and most especially, the learners and so must the educators.

Most students today belong to the so-called Generation Z. According to Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, Generation Z is the generation of people born between in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Mccrindle.com.au described Gen Z students as social, global, digital and mobile. They are intelligent, independent and extremely capable. They are asking bigger question and seeking valid answers. They are skilled together with technology and comfortable with the changes and trends. Thus, most of them can’t leave home without smartphones on their pockets; access to Internet is considered a necessity; and iPads, tablets and other devices available should be carried along.

With these characteristics, the battle of educators against poor quality of education has been more challenging. Gen Z students who are considered 21st century learners need to have 21st century education. In this era, teachers must have the essential knowledge of the learners in order to understand them more. They need to use different teaching techniques and strategies to motivate the students to attend classes and listen attentively.
to discussion. Thus, teachers must be innovative and flexible so they can easily adapt to rapid changes.

Although some teachers are already use technology like giving online assignments, researching using the internet, utilizing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) equipment and ICT-based applications in the classroom and the like, there are so much more to learn and to do to harness the capabilities of our 21st century learners.

According to the National Education Association, every child should possess strong content mastery, as well as the “Four Cs”: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Stocks, in the book Preparing 21st Century Students for a Global Society, pointed out that using the ‘Four Cs’ to engage students is imperative. As educators prepare students for this new global society, teaching the core content subjects—math, social studies, the arts—must be enhanced by incorporating critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. We need new tools to support classroom teachers and education support professionals in their profession, whilst they implement new strategies in their classrooms.”

Integrating the Four C’s may seem to be very demanding but teachers can start doing this with the “Big Cs”: challenges, choices and changes. Learning to accept that, indeed, there are challenges to face, that is, to keep up with the demands of the ever changing world including advancement in technology is the first step. This means letting go of the old ways that seemed to have worked years or even decades ago. Next is looking for the choices or alternatives to the previous practices in order to adapt to the present needs. This may be done through intensive research which leads to innovation. Lastly, making the step to initiate the changes. The only way to change is to do what has to be changed. As Alan Watts, a British writer once said, “The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance.”
References:

https://brightdrops.com/quotes-about-change

https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Generation%20Z

