



EMERALD POINTS

GLOBAL CLASSROOM

Multicultural Approaches and
Organizational Strategies in Teaching
and Learning Business and Economics

DAVIDE DE GENNARO
MARCO MARINO



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**GLOBAL CLASSROOM:
MULTICULTURAL APPROACHES
AND ORGANIZATIONAL
STRATEGIES IN TEACHING AND
LEARNING BUSINESS AND
ECONOMICS**

EDITED BY

DAVIDE DE GENNARO

University of Naples Parthenope, Italy

And

MARCO MARINO

Sant'Anna Institute, Italy



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India
Malaysia – China

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION: THE LANDSCAPE OF MODERN HIGHER EDUCATION IN BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

MATTHEW C. ROUSU

Susquehanna University, USA

Being able to reach students from different international backgrounds is difficult but important for educators. It requires employing methods that can allow students from multiple backgrounds to all learn the material. This is not easy, as students will come from wildly different school systems, family backgrounds, regions of the world with different cultural attitudes toward schooling, and with different natural abilities. It is an educator's job to push the top students while also making sure the course material is accessible to students who may struggle.

Most of the rest of the book will go into the challenges – and solutions – for teaching students from different international backgrounds. I want to start with a focus on how today's students are different, regardless of what country they're from. This starting point will show the importance of inclusive teaching methods.

It could be argued that never in history has there been such a shift in students' abilities to learn. Between COVID-19 and the rapid technological advances, today's students grew up in a world that is wildly different than what students in previous generations experienced.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated differences in training across students. Some students in college were in schools that only closed for a short period of time, while others might have missed a year or more of in-person education.¹ Some students did not view COVID-19 as being too disruptive or

¹ [https://ballotpedia.org/School_responses_in_New_Jersey_to_the_coronavirus_\(COVID-19\)_pandemic](https://ballotpedia.org/School_responses_in_New_Jersey_to_the_coronavirus_(COVID-19)_pandemic)

upsetting, while others lost friends and family members or suffered mental health issues during the pandemic.

Educators now face the daunting challenge of being able to provide to classrooms where the distribution of abilities and backgrounds are more varied. A typical classroom could have some students who are a grade level or two ahead and other students who are a grade level or two behind. This is not easy for educators.

But even before the pandemic, this generation of students was quite different. Students entering college now had a childhood with several features most people throughout the history didn't have. The first is access to a smartphone. Many of today's students had smartphones before they were teenagers. This alters the way they've learned to communicate and their understanding of what's possible. We take for granted that we can look up virtually any fact in moments – but throughout the history of the world, very few people have had this option. Similarly, online social networks were nonexistent throughout history but are something children today are aware of.

With access to a smartphone at a very young age, this is a dramatic difference in childhood that naturally will lead to students who are different. We don't fully understand how this has changed youth, but today's students think about the world differently and have a smaller attention span (Twenge).

A few other differences of this generation from other generations:

- A greater percentage of students openly identify as LGBTQ+ in many countries. In the United States, for example, 21% of Gen Z students openly identify as LGBT. Other countries have also seen sharp increases.^{2,3}
- What is difficult is many others might come from countries – or have religious backgrounds – that aren't as accepting. Professors have the difficult task of being inclusive to LGBTQ+ students while not completely alienating students who have different beliefs/upbringings and may not be as accepting. And my opinion, as someone who wishes for LGBTQ+ acceptance, is that alienating those with an initial noninclusive attitude is not the way to win allies. Therefore, teaching with some understanding on this issue is important, albeit difficult.

2 <https://news.gallup.com/poll/389792/lgbt-identification-ticks-up.aspx>

3 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2020>

- Mental health conditions, at least in the United States, have increased dramatically, and more students are requiring accommodations.⁴

So how can college professors engage this generation of students? Here are several tips.

First, recognize that attention spans have dropped and adjust teaching accordingly. As an economist by training, I would be happy in front of a blackboard or whiteboard with graphs and equations. That could be an entire class period, and I would be happy. But I also know I'm not normal. The average student today can generally focus for about 20 minutes.⁵ Given this fact, educators have two choices – to ignore it or adjust teaching styles based on this information. Naturally, I don't recommend ignoring. Finding a way to vary instructional methods every 20 minutes is a good goal. For example, if lecturing for 15–20 minutes, a professor could show a short video related to the topic, give students a problem, or ask them to discuss a concept in a group setting for a few minutes. This breaks up the lecture and keeps students more engaged.

Second, provide regular feedback with low-stakes assignments. Students today, when taking college classes, could come from wildly different backgrounds. Some are comfortable with a system that doesn't have many assignments or much feedback. But more students today appreciate feedback than in the past, and research has shown it helps students learn better.⁶ Another key consideration, it's good to offer these assignments early in the semester. That allows students to calibrate their expectations early in the course and removes some uncertainty and stress from students.

Furthermore, incorporate activities when possible. [Jean Twenge's](#) *iGen* shares how technology has changed today's children and young adults. There is also a great example of how we learn from there. Think about an iPhone game like *Angry Birds*. For those who've played, you quickly realize that it is incredibly intuitive, and you've learned how to play it in almost no time. For those who have not played it, you learn by doing, and it is fun. When possible, active learning can be powerful for this reason.

4 [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK587174/#:~:text=From%202008%20to%202019%2C%20the,\(Figure%204%2C%20bottom\)](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK587174/#:~:text=From%202008%20to%202019%2C%20the,(Figure%204%2C%20bottom))

5 <https://blog.gutenberg-technology.com/en/course-duration-and-its-impact-on-learner-attention-span>

6 [https://id.ucsb.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/assessing-learning/low-stakes-assessment#:~:text=Low%2Dstakes%20\(or%20%E2%80%9Cformative,ultimate%20grade%20in%20the%20course](https://id.ucsb.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/assessing-learning/low-stakes-assessment#:~:text=Low%2Dstakes%20(or%20%E2%80%9Cformative,ultimate%20grade%20in%20the%20course)

Then, consider mandatory tutoring hours. Within the United States, research has shown students from some demographic groups are less likely to attend tutoring hours than other groups because of how different cultures view asking for help. Mandatory tutoring hours could help students overcome this barrier. At Susquehanna University, the economics department implemented a tutoring system where tutors would be available in a classroom and students were asked to attend mandatory tutoring hours. Some students may not have needed much help from the tutors, but they still had an opportunity to complete their schoolwork. Others needed help, and the barriers to asking for help were greatly reduced because they were already at tutoring hours.

Finally, recognize that students will change quickly and be ready to adapt. Professors have always faced challenges in teaching students. But the challenges with today's students are severe. Wild differences in preparation across students and students whose upbringing differs so much from year to year means that professors must relearn the most effective ways of teaching. This is not easy. But to be successful in any classroom, it is essential.

REFERENCE

Twenge, J. M. (2017). *iGen: Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy—and completely unprepared for adulthood—and what that means for the rest of us*. Simon and Schuster.

Section I

UNDERSTANDING THE GLOBAL BUSINESS CLASSROOM

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BECOMING CULTURE, TRANSMITTING CULTURE

ANETA CHYBICKA^a AND ANDRZEJ PIOTROWSKI^b

^aPomeranian University in Slupsk, Poland

^bUniversity of Gdansk, Poland

ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to shed light on the processes by which culture becomes part of an individual's personality and the manner of its inter-generational transmission. The chapter outlines the roles of ego, cultural systems of punishment and reward, and modeling in the process of culture acquisition and transmission.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Scientific research indicates that a child developing in the womb has no awareness of individuality (Schmied & Lupton, 2001). It is a receptor pool receiving various types of stimuli. It is one with its surroundings, with what reaches it, and with what it experiences (Rees et al., 2010). At birth, a person can receive stimuli, although the still-immature nervous system experiences those stimuli differently than it will later in life (Clark-Gambelunghe & Clark, 2015). However, a newborn lacks the awareness that it is receiving stimuli or a sense of being separate from the stimuli.

The child is one with everything it experiences or perceives with any of its senses. Over time, with increased motor skills; with the acquired experience of contact with different types of stimuli, both pleasant and unpleasant; and with the development of the cerebral analyzers of incoming stimuli (mainly visual), which in the future will form the basis for hand-eye coordination, the infant

discovers that certain forms of matter are different from others. The difference lies in the fact that the child's body – that is, the separable part of the matter – is influenced by the drives and impulses occurring within it (Akhtar & Samuel, 1996). For instance, if parents hang a colorful, shiny object – a toy – over the child's crib, this provides a new stimulus drawing the infant's attention. Reflexively, the child wants to reach for the toy. This urge can be realized only by that part of matter that – later, with the development of language – we call the body. The child begins to distinguish between that part of matter which responds to and realizes the impulses (and later the urges and needs) occurring within it and that part of matter which remains unmoved by them. In this process, accompanied by the maturation of the cerebral analyzers of the impulses flowing from the sensory receptors and the nascence of hand-eye coordination, the child's sense of being its own body slowly emerges (Fast, 1992). This process results in the first element of Self – the body. Separating the body from the world as an element of Self is a relatively simple process compared to the process of creating individuality at the level of the psyche. The body is material; thus, in contact with another element of matter, it is easy to use senses to feel the boundary of the body.

Hence, the separation of the body from the rest of space, as a process based on easy locatable matter, occurs earlier than the emergence of a sense of psychological individuality in the child's psyche, crowned by the formation of ego.

1.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL INDIVIDUALITY

For the child to function in the world, a sense of psychological individuality is needed in addition to a sense of being one's own body, which becomes part of what is considered one's Self. As the process of learning language proceeds, the child begins to develop the ability to use vocabulary, over time being able to name objects and, later sensations (e.g., "I'm cold") and emotional states (e.g., "I'm angry"). Thus, the child begins to be self-aware (Bronson, 1963).

For this process to take place, the child must recognize the sensations coming from the body and senses as its own. Just as language creates the possibility of separating a part of space from oneself and using vocabulary to name it, thus causing it to cease to be a place that creates the possibility of something appearing and becomes something concrete (e.g., a chair), and just as silence is the space where sound has the possibility of appearing, which without silence could not appear, the child's emerging ego likewise creates the