



A Caring Teacher Impacts Students' Willingness to Learn

What is this Research About?

Prior research with high school students documents the importance of caring teachers and how they support student engagement. Very little research exists on how Millennial and Generation Z students define caring in college or university faculty. In this study, the researchers conducted interviews and focus groups with Millennial and Gen Z undergraduate students to examine the meaning of faculty caring in historically difficult courses such as history, chemistry, biology and mathematics.

What did the Researchers Do?

The researchers conducted in-depth interviews and hosted focus groups of 31 Generation Z and Millennial students to gain insight into their perceptions of instructors. The researchers identified reoccurring themes such as humour and active learning pedagogical practices by using line-by-line analysis as a measure of teacher caring.

What did the Researchers Find?

The researchers found that instructor caring was a reoccurring theme. Students identified faculty attitudes (e.g., enthusiasm, encouragement) and in-class teaching behaviours (e.g., use of humour, use of active learning techniques) as two ways that university faculty can demonstrate caring. Students directly related teacher caring to their motivation to learn. The researchers suggest that university instructors can show students that they care simply by using effective teaching practices and showing enthusiasm.

SoTL

Snapshot

A synopsis of a scholarship of teaching and learning journal article

➔ How to Implement this Research in Your Classroom

Students often look for characteristics such as empathy, relatability, approachability and encouragement as measures of how much a teacher cares about their students. In many instances, when instructors acknowledge students' lives as more than just their courses, students associate this trait with a caring instructor. Instructors can focus on simply using effective teaching strategies such as active learning to demonstrate that they care for their students.

➔ Citation

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➔ Keywords

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