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Challenges or opportunities?**

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“Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it.” George Orwell¹

This quote, from George Orwell, aptly speaks to the debates concerning not only intergenerational differences, but also how different generations perceive themselves and the extent to which such claims are accurate!

Common terms that distinguish generations include *silent* generation (born 1925–1945), *baby boomer* generation (1946–1962), generation *X* (1963–1981), generation *Y* or ‘*Millennials*’ (1982–2000), and generation *Z* or *iGen*, (1997 and 2012). These classifications typically focus around motivational and value differences. Presuming global uniformity, there is the danger of creating inappropriate stereotypes for some specific contexts and students. As our papers on COVID-19 illustrated, the impact of COVID-19 upon students across the age spectrum from infancy to early adulthood has created additional legacies in their lives. Higher education student groups in particular disciplines and institutions may be homogenous or heterogeneous (age diverse) with respect to the generations present in the cohort. While the possibility of intergenerational learning is promoted with heterogeneous groups, for some groups, the differences may cause conflict and tension

¹ George Orwell (1903-1950), English writer.

George Orwell, Sonia Orwell, and Ian Angus, eds., *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Volume 4: In Front of Your Nose 1945-1950* (Secker & Warburg, 1968), 51.

between students and the tutor as to how best to handle divergence of educational need, expectation and sometimes beliefs and attitudes.

It is frequently argued that when there are differences between generations, often due to specific socio-economic, cultural and historical contexts, access to university, pedagogic strategies and resource availability meld together to shape the expectations and experiences of both the students and the academic staff. In recent years considerable attention has been given to the impact of these intergenerational differences in workplace, education (all sectors) and social settings. With intergenerational social mobility being a goal of Higher Education at socio-historical moments, particular with disadvantages or marginalised groups, understanding generational differences, when and where they apply, aids the academic teacher in their facilitation of student learning and the promotion of intergenerational social mobility.

In a previous edition of this Journal (Vol 10, Issue 2, 2023), such differences were explored by a team from Slovakia, who studied the differences between first- and second-generation university with respect to study choices. Two years on, in this edition, three papers explore aspects of these phenomena. I trust readers will find the different papers of interest and provoke reflection on their relevance to contemporary practises in Higher Education across the globe, revealing the challenges and opportunities that arise within and between generations of students and academic teachers.

Editorial Team
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