

Lived Experiences of English Teachers Handling Generation Z Students: A Phenomenological Study

Emilie Varona Calizo¹ and Dhan Timothy Mahimpit Ibojo²

¹Faculty Member, Mapawa National High School, Division of Davao de Oro, DepEd, Philippines

²Faculty Member, Assumption College of Nabunturan, Davao de Oro, Philippines

Abstract— This study delved into the lived experiences of English teachers in managing Generation Z students, with focus on the challenges they face, the strategies they employ, and the insights they gain in today's rapidly shifting educational landscape. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the researcher gathered narratives from eight secondary English teachers through guided interviews to better understand how they navigate the realities of teaching learners shaped by technology, social media, and instant access to information. Findings revealed that teaching Generation Z students presents distinct challenges such as maintaining their focus, managing classroom behavior, and addressing gaps in reading comprehension and critical thinking. Despite these difficulties, teachers have adapted by incorporating interactive strategies like multimedia integration, contextualized lessons, flexible instruction, and gamified activities to sustain engagement and deepen learning. They also highlighted the importance of collaboration among colleagues, responsive leadership, and opportunities for continuous professional growth in helping them stay motivated and resilient. The study concludes that handling Generation Z learners demands more than content expertise it requires creativity, emotional intelligence, and openness to change. With the right support systems and a mindset geared toward innovation, teachers can effectively meet the needs of 21st-century learners. Recommendation: Schools and institutions are encouraged to provide ongoing training and collaborative spaces that empower teachers to evolve alongside their learners.

Keywords— classroom challenges, digital-age learners, English education, Generation Z, qualitative phenomenology, student engagement, teaching strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Technology has really transformed how education functions in today's world, mostly how teachers interact with their students. Generation Z, or those born from the mid-1990s to the late 2010s, grew up around technology and are accustomed to quick, interactive and digital learning.

In the U.S., educators have found that Gen Z students have shorter attention spans, that they prefer digital, interactive content to traditional instruction and this tends to be more difficult to engage (Twenge, 2017). Likewise, schools in the United Kingdom find that traditional methods of teaching are not as effective as students are even more likely to respond to quick visuals rather than lectures or reading from a textbook (Ofsted, 2019). All of these problems indicate a critical need to re-envision education to better fulfil the needs and preferences of Gen Z learners.

In the Philippines, education has attempted to modernize it with the K-12 Curriculum as well as the inclusion of 21st century skills. Yet, Filipino teachers are still finding it challenging to adapt with the demand of learning from Generation Z students. There are a lot of these, they are easily distracted, have small attention spans, and are

reliant on accessories. As pointed out by Macabenta et al. (2023), the demand for more technology-mediated, flexible pedagogical approaches is increasing in the country but few teachers are adequately prepared for this.

In Maragusan, secondary schools such as Mapawa National High School, Maragusan National High School, and Saint Vincent Academy of Maragusan Inc. face similar challenges. English teachers in these schools are expected not only to teach language skills but also to engage students who are accustomed to quick information, visual content, and construct connectivity. Many educators express difficulty in keeping students focused, encouraging deep learning, and maintaining discipline in a tech-saturated environment. Despite their best efforts, some teachers find it overwhelming to balance traditional goals of literacy with the demands of modern digital learning.

The situation points to a pressing problem, as English teachers are increasingly challenged to adjust their teaching practice, maintain student engagement, and still ensure academic achievement among Generation Z learners. Yet, these remains a gap in understanding how

teachers themselves are coping with these challenges on the ground, especially in rural or developing areas.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the lived experiences of English teachers at Mapawa National School, Maragusan National High School, and Saint Vincent Academy of Maragusan, Inc. in handling Generation Z students. By examining their daily struggles, instructional strategies, and coping mechanisms, this research hopes to provide insights that can support teacher development, inform policy, and help create a more effective and engaging English language learning environment.

Research Questions

This study aimed to investigate the lived experiences of English teachers handling Generation Z students at Mapawa National High School, Maragusan National High School, and Saint Vincent Academy of Maragusan, Inc., focusing on their unique perspectives, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights within the educational landscape.

In particular, the following research questions were asked:

1. What are the lived experiences of English teachers in handling Generation Z students?
2. What challenges do the English teachers encounter when handling Generation Z students?
3. What coping mechanisms do the participants use to address the challenges in handling Generation Z students?
4. What insights do English teachers gain from their experiences in handling Generation Z students?

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design for this study used a qualitative phenomenological method. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is an inquiry method helpful for investigating and comprehending a phenomenon. Furthermore, as the goal of the study was to understand how people interpret their lives, this was also the most appropriate research methodology. The participants' thoughts regarding the causes, motivations, goals, and values surrounding the experiences were of interest to the researcher. Additionally, the researcher made every effort to appropriately record the viewpoints of the

participants. It was emphasized that long conversations allowed for a better understanding of their experiences.

Additionally, phenomenology was a qualitative research method used to explain the ways people perceive a certain phenomenon (Giorgi, 2012). By setting aside prejudices and previous notions about human experiences, emotions, and reactions to circumstances, phenomenological studies aimed to understand human nature. By doing so, the researcher was able to explore the viewpoints, emotions, perceptions, and understandings of those who had firsthand contact with the phenomenon or relevant scenario. Additionally, data from the research participants were gathered using In-Depth Interviews (IDI).

Research Locale

This study was conducted in three schools located in Maragusan, Davao de Oro: Mapawa National High School, Maragusan National High School, and Saint Vincent Academy of Maragusan. These schools represents both public and private institutions and situated in rural.

Mapawa National High School located about five kilometers from the town center, is the largest in Maragusan East District. Maragusan National High School serves as a central educational institution in the West District, while Saint Vincent Academy, offers a private school perspective within the same locality.

The selection of these schools allowed the researcher to explore the lived experiences of English teachers working with Generation Z learners in a diverse yet close-knit educational environment.

Research Participants

The research participants were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability type of sampling technique. The selection was based on the personal judgment of the researcher to identify individuals who could provide rich and relevant data. The participants were eight English teachers from Mapawa National High School, Maragusan National High School, and Saint Vincent Academy of Maragusan, Inc., who met the following criteria: (1) currently teaching English in junior or senior high school; (2) aged between 22 and 45 years old; (3) had at least three years of experience teaching Generation Z learners; and (4) were actively teaching during the time of the study.

An orientation was conducted prior to data collection, during which participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. They signed an informed consent form indicating their voluntary participation. Data were gathered through In-Depth Interviews (IDI) to explore their lived experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and insights in teaching Generation Z students.

To ensure confidentiality, code names were used in the transcription and reporting of data. Preliminary activities including participant selection, validation, and conduct of interviews were carried out from January to March 2025. Transcription, translation, thematic analysis, and the presentation of findings were conducted from March to May 2025.

Data Collection Procedure

The data for this study were gathered using a researcher-made Interview Guide, specifically designed for conducting In-Depth Interviews (IDI). The focus of the data collection was to explore the lived experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and insights of high school English teachers in handling Generation Z learners. As Creswell (2009) emphasized, following a systematic and ethical process is essential to ensure the accuracy, credibility, and reliability of qualitative research findings. The following procedures were carefully observed:

First, the thesis proposal was submitted to the Institutional Ethics Review Committee to ensure the study complied with established ethical standards. Upon receiving approval, the researcher submitted a formal request to the Schools Division Superintendent, along with the ethics clearance. After evaluation, the division office issued an endorsement letter, which allowed the researcher to conduct the study in the identified schools: Mapawa National High School, Maragusan National High School, and Saint Vincent Academy of Maragusan, Inc. Second, the participants were selected through purposive sampling. Each participant was given a one-on-one orientation explaining the study's purpose, methodology, and procedures. Informed consent was obtained through signed consent forms, confirming their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw at any stage of the study. Third, materials necessary for data collection were prepared, including the validated Interview Guide and an audio recorder to ensure the accuracy of responses. Fourth, the in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face in accordance with DepEd

Order No. 35, s. 2022, which permits the full implementation of face-to-face classes. The format encouraged open sharing of insights and allowed the researcher to probe for clarification where necessary. Fifth, all interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed verbatim. Data files were stored securely on a password-protected device and backed up on a USB drive. Code names were used to protect the identities of the participants.

This process ensured both ethical compliance and the integrity of the data collection, from the approval of the ethics review to the issuance of the division endorsement and the responsible handling of participant data.

Data Analysis

After the data were gathered through in-depth interviews, the responses of the participants were carefully organized, examined, and analyzed to explore their lived experiences as English teachers handling Generation Z students.

Following Creswell's (2009) steps in qualitative data analysis, the process began with the verbatim transcription of the interview recordings. This ensured that the exact words of the participants were preserved. The transcribed data were then read multiple times to gain a general understanding and to reflect on the meaning conveyed in the responses.

The next step involved initial coding, where significant statements and ideas were identified and grouped based on similarities. These codes served as the foundation for deeper analysis. Through this process, patterns across the data were recognized and categorized.

After coding, thematic analysis was conducted to determine recurring themes, topics, and ideas that frequently appeared in the interview responses. These themes reflected common experiences, challenges, motivations, coping mechanisms, and insights shared by the participants in teaching Generation Z learners.

Finally, the major themes were organized under broader categories to represent the core findings of the study. Each theme was presented and discussed in the subsequent chapters, supported by relevant literature and direct excerpts from the participants' narratives to provide clarity and authenticity to the findings.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

In qualitative research, the trustworthiness of the study was paramount to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. While quantitative research often employed measures of dependability and legitimacy, qualitative research was evaluated based on criteria established by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which included credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These four criteria guided the methodology of this study to ensure that the research findings were both valid and meaningful.

Credibility. The trustworthiness in the truth value of the findings of the study. Polit and Beck (2014) reinforced that with the credibility the study is measuring what it is supposed and its findings are the true lived experiences of the participants. It is checking if the responses are true and valid of the participants.

In this study, a number of strategies were employed to establish credibility. The researcher employed credible qualitative methods (in-depth interviews; purposeful sampling method) to choose the English teachers dealing with students from Generation Z. The researcher was also acquainted with the school environment and culture at an early stage, as the researcher is also an English teacher, and has close relationship with colleagues who became the participants.

Some time prior to the interviews, the informants received letters of informed consent for the purpose of promoting openness and honesty in the sharing of their stories. Interviews were the main source of theme identification and drawing conclusions. All transcripts were reviewed for accuracy to ensure that the participants' own ideas and perspectives were reflected accurately in the findings.

Transferability. The degree to which findings from a study can be applied to other contexts with similar characteristics. This study involved only twelve English teachers from three schools in Maragusan, Davao de Oro; thus, the findings can be applicable other English teachers of Generation Z learners particularly in rural or public school which offers extensive materials.

The findings in this study contribute significantly to knowledge around teaching practice, and could have implications for teachers, school principals, educationalists and educational policy-makers in enhancing teaching practice and designing teacher

education programmes for the new generation learner. Such experiences and strategies would also assist their counterparts in other comparable institutions in dealing with the challenges of teaching Generation Z more efficiently.

Dependability. The stability of data over time and under different conditions. It involves ensuring that the findings are consistent and can be repeated. In this study, the researcher ensured dependability by properly recording all interviews through audio devices and supporting them with field notes.

In this study, interview responses that were expressed in Bisaya or Filipino were translated into English without changing their original meaning. The researcher carefully followed the coding process during data analysis to maintain the accuracy and consistency of results. Every step in the data collection and interpretation was documented to show transparency and coherence throughout the study.

Confirmability. The degree of neutrality in the research findings as stated by Shenton (2004). It means that the results should be based on the participants' responses and not on the researcher's personal bias or assumptions.

The researcher ensured that the findings were derived purely from the participants' shared experiences in teaching Generation Z students. The interpretations were based on what was revealed during the interviews and not influenced by the researcher's own perspective. Although the researcher is an English teacher as well, personal biases were set aside to give space for honest and authentic voices of the participants. Reflexivity was practiced throughout the study to acknowledge, but not impose, the researcher's position in the context of the research.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics is a fundamental part of any research involving human participants. As Bryman and Bell (2007) emphasized, ethical concerns must be anticipated and addressed throughout the research process. In this qualitative-phenomenological study, the researcher carefully observed ethical guidelines to protect the rights, privacy, and dignity of the participants. The study was also guided by the principles outlined in the Belmont Report (as cited by Miracle, 2016): Respect for Persons, Beneficence, and Justice.

Respect for Persons was upheld by treating each participant as an autonomous individual capable of making informed decisions. Participants were fully informed about the purpose, objectives, and methodology of the study, in line with Sarantakos (2005). Prior to the conduct of the in-depth interviews, participants were given an orientation and asked to sign an informed consent form, indicating their voluntary participation. They were assured of their right to withdraw at any point in the study without any consequences. Confidentiality was maintained by using code names in all transcripts, and participants' identities were not revealed in any part of the report. In addition, participants were given a copy of their interview transcript to validate the accuracy and credibility of their responses.

Beneficence was observed by ensuring that no harm came to the participants during or after the study. The language used in the interview guide was non-offensive, non-discriminatory, and free of any form of bias. The study aimed to produce meaningful findings that could benefit both educators and institutions by highlighting the lived experiences and challenges of English teachers handling Generation Z students. All materials were validated prior to use to further ensure the integrity of the process.

Justice was observed by selecting participants fairly, based on clearly stated inclusion criteria. The burden and benefits of participation were equally distributed, and only questions relevant to the objectives of the study were asked. The researcher ensured that all findings were presented honestly, and the data were not misrepresented or selectively reported. No exaggeration, falsification, or fabrication of data occurred.

In compliance with Republic Act 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012, the researcher also safeguarded the privacy of participants by protecting their personal information. All data collected were kept confidential and securely stored. Audio recordings and transcripts were saved on a password-protected device and backed up on a USB drive accessible only to the researcher.

Finally, the researcher declared that no conflict of interest, funding influence, or affiliation affected the conduct and interpretation of the research. Transparency and honesty were practiced throughout the process to uphold the credibility and ethical integrity of the study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter shows the results and discussions of the study. The sequence of the presentation was based on the order of the research questions in the interview guide. The presentation of the discussions was divided into four subsets: a) the lived experiences of English teachers in handling Generation Z students, b) the challenges encountered, c) the coping mechanisms employed to address these challenges, and d) the insights gained from their experiences.

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of English teachers in teaching Generation Z students?

This section responds to the 1st main research question: "What are the lived experiences of English teachers in teaching Generation Z students?" The data were gathered from responses to three guiding questions focused on the teachers' day-to-day classroom experiences, their understanding of Gen Z learners' preferences, and the kind of preparation or training they received to handle this generation effectively.

Experience in Teaching Generation Z Students. The emerging themes in this structured theme were challenging, exciting yet challenging, rewarding and challenging, presenting both challenges and opportunities. These were the wide range of experiences encountered by the English teachers, marked by both challenges and opportunities.

In this study, the findings revealed that several teachers described their experience as predominantly challenging. They emphasized the behavioral and academic characteristics of Generation Z students, which required adjustments in traditional teaching methods. While some teachers acknowledged the difficulties, they also found teaching Generation Z exciting due to the students' energy and digital fluency.

On the other hand, other English teachers expressed that despite the difficulties, the experience has been rewarding, as it pushes them to innovate and grow professionally. Finally, some teachers noted that working with Generation Z students bring a balance of obstacle and opportunities for growth, particularly in adapting teaching approaches to digital natives.

This finding reflects the observations of Seemiller and Grace (2016), who emphasized that Generation Z students are independent, entrepreneurial, and thrive in learning environments that are personalized and tech-

enhanced. Similarly, Tarigan et al. (2023) noted that teachers today must constantly adapt to keep up with Gen Z's digital preferences and fast-paced engagement styles. De Villa and Manalo (2020) also found that the modern classroom dynamic pushes educators to rethink conventional strategies in favor of more interactive, student-centered practices. Furthermore, Cilliers (2017) described Gen Z learners as resourceful but easily distracted, which challenges teachers to design learning experiences that are both meaningful and stimulating. The teachers' reflections in this study clearly align with these views affirming that teaching Generation Z requires not just instructional skills, but also creativity, empathy, and adaptability.

Difference of Learning Preferences with other Generations. The emerging themes in this structured theme were preference with videos, preference with interactive and stimulating materials, preference with visuals and hands on activities, technology driven, preference with applications and internet and unique engaging with topics and lessons.

One of the differences that teachers noticed when teaching Generation Z students is their learning preferences compared to older generations. These students show a strong preference with videos, preference with interactive and stimulating materials, preference with visuals and hands on activities, technology-driven, preference with applications and Internet, unique in engaging with topics and lessons. The findings revealed that these preferences reflect not only their digital upbringing but also their need for dynamic and immersive learning experiences. Teachers consistently observed that Gen Z students preferred visual materials and interactive activities over traditional lectures or textbook-based methods.

Moreover, the respondents noted that Gen Z students are highly comfortable with using technology as a learning tool. Digital platforms, educational apps, and online-content capture their interest more effectively than print materials. However, teachers reported that students' limited attention spans make it challenging to sustain engagement during lessons, and multitasking during class is common.

This aligns with the findings of Seemiller and Grace (2017), who explained that Generation Z learners value immediacy, visual information, and learning through digital formats. Kouropoulos and Keldsen (2016) added

that Gen Z students expect flexible, tech-driven environments that reflect how they access information daily. Sladek and Grabinger (2014) similarly found that these learners favor short-form, on-demand learning experiences, which explains why long lectures and static readings may not hold their attention. Lisenbee (2016) further emphasized the need for teachers to rethink content delivery and integrate student-centered digital tools that make learning both interactive and relevant. These insights support what the teachers in this study experienced—that Gen Z's learning preferences require educators to shift from rigid instructional styles to more engaging and responsive practices.

Training to Teach Generation Z Students. The emerging themes were learning from experience and self-study, training on inclusive and engaging learning activities, using digital tools, training about the 21st century skills, trained in general teaching methodologies, by embracing technology, from experience and professional development seminars.

In this study, the findings revealed that most participants shared that they were not formally trained to teach this specific generation. Instead, they learned primarily through personal teaching experience, self-study, peer collaboration, and professional development seminars. Some expressed that while they received general training on teaching methodologies or 21st-century skills, these did not specifically focus on the behavioral traits, learning preferences, or technological expectations of Gen Z students. Others highlighted that real growth came from navigating classroom realities, exploring digital tools independently, and adapting to students' needs in real-time.

This echoes the concern raised by Lisenbee (2016), who pointed out that teacher preparation often lacks focus on real-world technology integration and managing digital behavior in the classroom. Seemiller and Grace (2016) emphasized that Gen Z learners need teachers who can facilitate interactive, personalized, and digitally relevant instruction an area where many teachers still feel unprepared. Similarly, Tarigan et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of equipping educators with practical strategies to cope with fast-evolving digital trends and classroom dynamics. Sedanza et al. (2023) further suggested that current teacher education must move toward student-centered designs that consider generational differences, especially in communication and attention. These insights show that the professional

preparation of teachers must evolve to meet the demands of today's learners and the digital environment they grow up in.

Motivations to Teach Generation Z Students. The emerging themes were their inventiveness, curiosity and receptivity, creativity, and potential, motivated to know each one, their enthusiasm for technology and creativity, their creativity and openness, requiring teachers to guide digital platforms, integrity as teacher keeps one going, motivated with students' growth.

The findings revealed that despite the challenges they face, the participants expressed various motivations that drive them to continue teaching Generation Z students. Many shared that they are inspired by Gen Z's creativity, curiosity, and openness to new ideas. Others highlighted how this generation's enthusiasm for technology, innovation, and social awareness pushes them to stay relevant and continuously improve their teaching strategies. A few participants also mentioned personal reasons such as their sense of duty as educators, their desire to make a difference in students' lives, or the fulfillment they feel when seeing students grow academically and emotionally. Some teachers found motivation in forming connections with learners, while others were encouraged by the belief that their role extends beyond content delivery to mentorship and guidance.

This aligns with Seemiller and Grace (2017), who described Gen Z learners as socially aware, creative, and eager to make an impact quality that can inspire educators to go beyond traditional instruction. Whitehead (2023) explained that teachers find renewed purpose when they see themselves as facilitators of growth, especially in environments where students respond to innovation and relevance. In addition, Sedanza et al. (2023) emphasized that Gen Z's openness to feedback and student-centered engagement creates opportunities for teachers to develop more meaningful classroom relationships. These insights confirm that the motivation to teach Generation Z goes beyond duty it is grounded in connection, adaptability, and the desire to nurture potential.

RQ2: What challenges do the English teachers encounter when handling Generation Z students?

This section presents the results to the 2nd major research question: 'What challenges do the English teachers encounter when handling Generation Z

students?' Three specific research questions were used to collect data for this question highlighting the challenges of the research informants on handling Generation Z students.

Challenges Faced Dealing with Generation Z Students. The emerging themes were Keeping Students' Attention, Students' Behavior, Students' Dependence on Technology, Problem with Spelling and Short Retention, Difficulty in Writing and Reading Comprehension. The results showed that the participants shared that one of the major challenges they encountered is sustaining the students' attention and focus.

Most teachers observed that students today are easily distracted, especially when lessons are not visually engaging or technology-based. The overuse and dependence on gadgets such as phones and tablets not only reduce their attention span but also interfere with deeper learning, writing, and comprehension. Teachers also mentioned that many Gen Z students struggle with in-depth discussions, critical thinking, and academic perseverance.

Additionally, emotional concerns such as anxiety, sensitivity to feedback, and mental health issues were frequently cited, making classroom management more complex than ever.

These findings reflect the description of Hill et al. (2017), who characterized Gen Z students as learners who are easily bored and prefer fast-paced, tech-driven activities. Seemiller and Grace (2016) also noted that Generation Z tends to expect efficiency and instant results, which can lead to frustration when learning requires patience or critical reflection. Lisenbee (2016) emphasized that teachers need specific training to handle technology-integrated classrooms, especially when student behaviors are shaped by constant digital exposure. Likewise, Tarigan et al. (2023) pointed out that Gen Z's digital dependency often impacts their ability to focus, write effectively, and engage deeply with traditional academic tasks. The challenges described by teachers in this study affirm that working with Generation Z requires adjustments not only in strategies, but also in expectations and emotional support.

Challenging Specific Behaviors or Characteristics of Generation Z Students. The emerging themes were short attention span and retention, frequent use of digital

devices, getting bored with long discussions, reliance on gadgets, low frustration tolerance, tendency to multi-task. The participants noted that certain behaviors and personality traits commonly observed among Generation Z students make classroom instruction more difficult.

Many teachers mentioned that Gen Z learners become easily bored with long discussions, struggle to maintain focus, and often rely on fast, surface-level information from the internet rather than engaging in deeper thinking. Some students were described as emotionally sensitive, quick to give up on tasks, or reluctant to participate in traditional classroom interactions such as group discussions or oral recitations.

A few teachers even observed that some students preferred digital communication over face-to-face interaction, which sometimes affected their ability to express themselves clearly.

These observations are consistent with the findings of Hill et al. (2017), who described Gen Z students as learners shaped by instant access to technology, leading to shorter attention spans and lower tolerance for delayed gratification. Seemiller and Grace (2016) also emphasized that this generation is highly individualistic and values autonomy, which sometimes results in resistance to traditional classroom structures. Kalogeropoulos (2019) further noted that early and constant exposure to screens can affect focus and patience, especially during deep learning tasks. Meanwhile, Tarigan et al. (2023) acknowledged that Gen Z learners often display emotional sensitivity, requiring teachers to apply more empathetic approaches to classroom discipline and guidance. These studies confirm what the participants in this research experienced: while Gen Z students are bright and capable, their behavioral traits demand a rethinking of classroom routines, expectations, and teacher-student relationships.

Observed Learning Gaps. The emerging themes were reading and writing proficiency, critical thinking and attention to details, lacking mastery in foundational skills, reading comprehension, struggle with deep reading, patience and problem-solving. The findings reveal that many teachers notice learning gaps, especially in reading and writing.

Several participants shared that their students struggle with reading comprehension and have difficulty expressing ideas through structured writing. Instead of engaging in deep reading, students tend to rely on summarized or simplified content, often taken from the internet.

Also, teachers observed that some students have poor spelling skills and short retention of lessons. These gaps make it harder for teachers to help students build on concepts over time, and many felt that these issues are connected to students' heavy reliance on technology and digital platforms.

This finding is supported by De Villa and Manalo (2020), who emphasized the growing need to strengthen literacy and writing instruction in the face of students' growing dependence on technology. Madden (2017) also pointed out that Gen Z's exposure to fragmented online information may hinder their ability to analyze, synthesize, and retain knowledge. Popova (2017) warned that while digital tools can support learning, overreliance on them can lead to a lack of depth in reading and writing performance. Furthermore, Sedanza et al. (2023) argued that one key challenge for English teachers today is helping Gen Z learners move from passive consumption to active production of language, especially in reading and writing tasks. These insights align well with the participants' experiences, showing that the learning gaps they observed are a result of both technological influence and evolving learner habits.

RQ3: What coping mechanisms do the participants use to address the challenges in teaching Gen Z students?

This section presents the results to the 3rd major research question: 'What coping mechanisms do the participants use to address the challenges in teaching Gen Z students?' Three specific research questions were used to gather data and information for this major research question. The questions were intended to gather information on the strategies and practices employed by English teachers to effectively manage the challenges posed by Generation Z students. Through this inquiry, insights were gained into how educators adapt their teaching methods, support student engagement, and maintain their own professional well-being in the face of evolving classroom dynamics.

Effective Strategies in Engaging Students in their Learning. The emerging themes were incorporate

technology, making connections to current affairs, tech-based lessons, using differentiated instruction, using interactive teaching strategies and peer activities. The findings showed that teachers shared a range of strategies they use to keep Generation Z students engaged in the classroom.

One of the most common approaches is incorporating technology into lessons whether through videos, digital presentations, online games, or interactive apps. Participants said that using these tools helps capture students' attention and makes learning feel more relevant to their daily lives.

Others found that project-based learning, real-world applications, and giving students choices in how they demonstrate their learning also worked well.

These methods helped make the classroom more student-centered and gave learners a sense of ownership over their education. Group activities, peer work, and discussions connected to real-life issues were also mentioned as effective ways to maintain engagement.

These practices are supported by Whitehead (2023), who emphasized that student-led, flexible lessons help learners feel more invested and motivated. Seemiller and Grace (2017) noted that Gen Z prefers learning that is personalized, visual, and collaborative making tech-based and project-based learning strategies particularly effective. Sedanza et al. (2023) also highlighted the need for English Language Teaching to move away from one-size-fits-all instruction and adopt varied, student-centered approaches. Sladek and Grabinger (2014) added that Generation Z thrives in environments that promote active engagement, peer collaboration, and meaningful application of skills. The strategies mentioned by the teachers in this study strongly align with these perspectives, demonstrating that effective engagement for Gen Z goes beyond entertaining students it means designing experiences that are relevant, participatory, and empowering.

Administrative Support in Addressing Needs and Challenges. The emerging themes were access to digital learning tools, access to professional development opportunities, provision for training and updated technology, and support for collaborative activities. Teachers shared that school leadership plays an important role in how well they're able to respond to the needs of Generation Z students. Many mentioned that

their schools provided essential resources like projectors, TVs, internet access, and even backup materials when equipment was damaged. Others said they appreciated being given access to professional development through trainings and LAC sessions, and that their administrators encouraged collaboration among teachers. They felt that support from the school helped them adjust more effectively to the demands of today's learners.

This reflects the view of De Villa and Manalo (2020), who stressed the need for institutional support to help teachers adapt to 21st-century classroom demands. Whitehead (2023) similarly noted that teachers feel more confident and motivated when their school leaders provide resources and foster a collaborative environment. Sedanza et al. (2023) added that school support systems must empower teachers by providing space for innovation, feedback, and professional growth. The experiences of the teachers in this study affirm that when schools actively listen to and support their teachers, those teachers become more capable of delivering meaningful and responsive instruction to Generation Z learners.

Maintaining Motivation and Enthusiasm Despite the Challenges Encountered. The emerging themes were focusing on the positive impact, rekindle passion to teach, continuously learning new teaching methods, need to be patient, job to keep going, and reminded self to make a difference. The findings revealed that many teachers admitted that teaching Generation Z can be exhausting, but they shared that what keeps them going is their passion for making a difference. Some said they feel fulfilled when they see their students grow, even in small ways. Others mentioned that they stay motivated by learning new teaching strategies, connecting with fellow educators, or simply reminding themselves why they chose this profession. They acknowledged that staying patient, being flexible, and focusing on positive outcomes help them push through the difficulties.

These reflections echo the findings of Nosidlak (2024), who emphasized the importance of teacher authenticity, emotional connection, and purpose in sustaining motivation. Whitehead (2023) also pointed out that teachers are more resilient when they feel that their work has meaning, especially in a fast-changing educational environment. In addition, Sedanza et al. (2023) noted that teaching Generation Z can be personally rewarding when educators embrace innovation and focus on

learner growth. The stories shared by the participants show that motivation in teaching isn't just about rewards or recognition it's deeply rooted in dedication, heart, and the belief that teachers can help shape the future, one student at a time.

RQ4: What insights do English teachers gain from their experiences in teaching Generation Z students?

This section presents the results to the 4th major research question, 'What insights do English teachers gain from their experiences in teaching Generation Z students?' Three specific research questions were used to collect data for this question, highlighting the perspectives and realizations of the participants regarding the strengths, challenges, and strategies associated with teaching this generation. The responses offer valuable insights into the unique traits of Generation Z students, the ways in which teachers adapt to these traits, and the key lessons they have learned from their teaching experiences. These insights shed light on the evolving nature of education in the digital age and how teachers navigate the complexities of Generation Z's learning preferences, behaviors, and needs.

Insights Gained from Experience in Teaching Generation Z Students. The emerging themes were adaptability and flexibility not optional, not all learning takes place in school, gen z thrives on relevant learning, need to learn to use digital platforms, and integration of new trends. The findings revealed that teaching Generation Z has taught them to become more adaptable and open to change. They realized that flexibility is no longer optional it's essential. They also learned that students respond better when lessons are connected to their interests, such as technology, current events, or real-world issues.

Others mentioned that building genuine relationships with their students was just as important as delivering content.

For many, the experience of teaching Gen Z helped them grow not just as educators but also as individuals who learn alongside their students.

These insights reflect what Seemiller and Grace (2017) emphasized: Gen Z students expect learning to be collaborative, personalized, and purpose-driven. Popova (2017) supported this by advocating for learning environments that are co-constructed by students and

teachers ones that embrace dialogue, exploration, and shared meaning-making. Nosidlak (2024) further explained that teachers who reflect on their experiences become more responsive and empowered, especially when working with students who challenge traditional expectations. The teachers in this study echoed those ideas through lived experience, showing that their work with Generation Z has helped them grow not just professionally, but personally as well.

Learning about Self as English Teacher Working with Gen Z Students. The emerging themes were becoming more resilient, inventive, and adaptive crucial to establish relationships with learners, becoming more patient, tech-savvy, and open-minded, building supportive environment, teaching more than just delivering contents, becoming more patient and emphatic, adapting to new strategies, gen z students need teachers, and becoming more adaptable and creative. The findings revealed that working with Generation Z has helped them discover a lot about themselves both personally and professionally.

Many realized they had become more patient, flexible, and creative than they initially thought. They shared that adapting to Gen Z's learning style pushed them out of their comfort zones and encouraged them to explore new strategies, tools, and ways of thinking.

Some also expressed that teaching Gen Z reminded them that their role goes beyond academics—they are also mentors, motivators, and role models. In facing the daily challenges, they saw themselves growing in resilience, empathy, and a deeper sense of purpose.

These realizations affirm the insights of Whitehead (2023), who emphasized that modern teachers are no longer just content experts but must also be facilitators of growth, adaptability, and emotional support. Nosidlak (2024) echoed this, noting that educators grow the most when they allow their students to challenge and teach them in return. Meanwhile, Popova (2017) explained that personal growth is inevitable when teachers take on the role of co-learners—constantly adjusting to meet evolving student needs. The reflections of the teachers in this study show that teaching Generation Z not only transforms students, but transforms teachers as well.

Changes or Improvements that could Enhance Teaching and Learning Experiences of Gen Z Students. The emerging themes were incorporate technology in a

meaningful way modernizing assessment techniques, keeping with the change, understanding their interests and learning styles, focus on better training for teachers, need for more, technology integrated materials, need to learn digital platforms, strong foundation in basic English and shift toward more personalized and student-centered learning. The findings revealed that teachers shared several suggestions on how to improve the teaching and learning experience for Generation Z students.

Many emphasized the need for more meaningful integration of technology not just using gadgets, but using them to encourage collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking.

Some recommended updating assessment methods to include more project-based and real-world applications.

Others highlighted the importance of teacher training focused on digital tools, differentiated instruction, and strategies for supporting students' mental health. There was also a strong call for building classrooms that are more student-centered, inclusive, and responsive to learners' interests and emotional needs.

These recommendations reflect the ideas of Whitehead (2023), who emphasized the value of personalized, tech-enhanced learning environments that empower both teachers and students. De Villa and Manalo (2020) similarly advocated for teacher development programs that equip educators to handle digital demands and emotional needs in the modern classroom. Sedanza et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of rethinking the English Language Teaching (ELT) framework to align with the realities of Gen Z learners, especially in terms of feedback, relevance, and choice. Tarigan et al. (2023) also supported the move toward more flexible and student-centered approaches that focus on real-world communication and critical thinking. These voices in the literature mirror what the participants in this study envisioned: a classroom where innovation, relevance, and empathy come together to support a generation that learns and lives differently.

Implications for Practice

This study offers several implications for English language teaching, particularly for educators handling Generation Z students. Teachers' experiences—both rewarding and challenging—highlight the need for adaptive, student-centered approaches and ongoing

professional support. The shift in learning preferences among Gen Z learners calls for instructional practices that are interactive, visual, and tech-integrated. Schools should invest in digital tools and provide training that enables teachers to deliver meaningful and engaging lessons. Additionally, the lack of specific training in handling Gen Z students suggests the need to revise professional development programs to include digital classroom management, social-emotional learning, and relational teaching strategies. Teachers' motivation, often drawn from their students' growth and creativity, underscores the importance of fostering a supportive school environment. Recognition of teacher efforts, well-being initiatives, and opportunities for growth can sustain teacher enthusiasm. At the same time, challenges such as short attention spans, emotional sensitivity, and behavioral issues point to the need for workshops on mental health awareness, resilience-building, and values education.

Addressing learning gaps in reading, writing, and comprehension requires targeted interventions and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Effective strategies identified by teachers—such as student voice, real-world applications, and collaborative learning—should be institutionalized and shared through peer support and demonstration sessions.

Finally, administrative support remains critical. Providing not just resources but also time, trust, and responsive leadership empowers teachers to innovate and adapt. The findings call for a more flexible, personalized, and holistic educational approach that meets the evolving needs of both learners and educators.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study explored the lived experiences of English teachers in handling Generation Z students. While teachers face challenges in engagement, behavior management, and learning gaps, these also became opportunities for professional growth and deeper student connection. Findings highlight the distinct needs of Gen Z learners shaped by their digital environment. Addressing these requires continuous teacher support through relevant training, updated tools, and responsive school leadership. The study also affirms teachers' willingness to adapt when provided with proper guidance. Ultimately, teaching Gen Z goes beyond adapting to trends—it calls for understanding their world and meeting them with empathy and innovation. With the right support, teachers can continue to make

meaningful, lasting impacts on this generation of learners.

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