


Chapter 8

Educational Leadership: Embracing the Benefits and the Challenges of the Millennial Leader in the Educational Organization

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ABSTRACT

Millennial leaders face many challenges when leading an organization. Their primary challenges involve their characteristics as a generational cohort and the benefits and challenges contained within them. Additional challenges that millennial leaders face while leading organizations are the interactions that they have with the other members of the organization from different generational cohorts. This chapter explores the benefits and challenges of millennial leadership, specifically in the educational setting, and presents rationales, examples, and solutions dealing with these challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Millennial Leaders face a complex dichotomy when leading organizations. Despite entering their leadership roles earlier than previous generations and having different values than the people they are leading, Millennial Leaders must still successfully lead their organizations. With the Baby Boomer generation population in the workforce decreasing and many of the Generation X population choosing to do things outside of the workforce, the Millennial population makes up the majority of the workforce

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(McCleskey, 2018, p. 50). It is also for this reason that Millennials are becoming Leaders at a younger age than their counterparts.

Millennial Leaders are learning to navigate organizational logistics and leadership simultaneously and both come with challenges and opportunities. Michael Fullan, an expert in the field of education and leadership, calls this type of leader a “Lead Learner” because they must “be apprentices and experts at the same” (Fullan, 2022). This chapter will explore the differences between Millennial leaders and leaders from other generations in the educational setting, highlights their strengths and weaknesses, and provides insights and tools for the staff members that work with them.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Millennials are categorized as people who were born between the years of 1982 to 2000 (Carter, 2016). At the writing of this book chapter, the oldest Millennials are forty years old while younger Millennials are twenty-two years old. The researcher finds it important to note that while the people who were born between the years of 1982 to 2000 are all considered Millennials with similar characteristics, there are notable differences between Millennials who were born at the beginning of the time period and those that were born at the end of the time period. An example of this is that older Millennials are generally children of Baby Boomers and younger Millennials are children of Generation Xers (Carter, 2016). Even this singular difference significantly modifies the characteristics between the two subgroups. Due to the sometimes vast differences between these two subgroups, the researcher will discuss only the characteristics that both older Millennials and younger Millennials share.

Although this book chapter will focus on the Millennial Leader, many comparisons will be drawn between the Millennial Leader and members of other generations, specifically Baby Boomers and Generation X. The Baby Boomer generation consists of people that were born between the years of 1946 to 1964 and the Generation X generation consists of people that were born between 1965 to 1981. At the writing of this book chapter, Baby Boomers range in age from fifty-eight to seventy-six and Generation Xers range in age from forty-one to fifty-seven. The ages and the years in which the members of a different generation were born is important because each generation has various characteristics that are specific to them.

Carter (2016) refers to this as Generational Identity Theory. In his discussion of this theory, Carter states that “members of a generational cohort or people born between a select range of calendar years will experience historic events and develop a set of cultural norms at common relative ages, thereby influencing the cohort’s collective perceptions of society and history” (p. 9). Members of the various generations experienced different events as they were growing up and learning to

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