



## Teaching and Motivating Gen Z in Prosthodontics

Dental education is evolving with the technologies and associated concepts and so are the students we teach. Generation Z (Gen Z), born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, brings a different set of expectations and learning styles compared to previous generations. They have grown up with technology, rely on digital tools for information, and seek careers that feel meaningful. To engage them effectively, educators need to rethink traditional teaching methods and find ways to connect with their motivations.<sup>1</sup> This applies to prosthodontics but also all other domains of dentistry and medicine.

Unlike earlier generations that adapted to digital learning later in life, Gen Z has always had access to instant information. They are comfortable with online resources, video tutorials, and interactive platforms.<sup>2</sup> Long lectures and passive learning often do not hold their attention, but hands-on experiences, case-based discussions, and visual demonstrations can make a lasting impact. Beyond their learning preferences, Gen Z students also value purpose in their work. They are interested in how their careers can make a difference, whether through improving patient care, advancing technology, or contributing to sustainability. Prosthodontics offers many opportunities to restore not just smiles but also confidence and quality of life, making it a field well suited to their aspirations—if presented in a way that resonates with them.

To teach and motivate this generation effectively, educators should consider using technology in the classroom and clinic. Digital resources, such as virtual simulations, 3D printing, and artificial intelligence in treatment planning, can help make complex prosthodontic concepts easier to understand. Interactive approaches also encourage engagement. Instead of relying solely on traditional lectures, educators can introduce case-based discussions, small group collaborations, and hands-on workshops that allow students to apply what they learn in meaningful ways.

Gen Z is accustomed to receiving quick responses in their digital interactions, and they expect the same in education.<sup>2</sup> Regular feedback, whether through digital assessments, structured mentorship, or one-on-one discussions, helps them stay motivated and improve their skills. At the same time, they want to see the impact of their work. Showing them how prosthodontics can change lives (eg, by treating patients with congenital conditions, trauma, or severe dental wear) helps reinforce their commitment to the domain. Clinical exposure, ethical discussions, and outreach programs can further deepen their sense of purpose for their studies.

Finally, supporting students' well-being is essential. Gen Z is more aware of mental health and work-life balance than previous generations, and they value an environment that promotes both professional growth and personal resilience.<sup>3</sup> A culture of open communication, mentorship, and peer support can help them navigate the challenges of dental education while staying engaged and motivated.

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In conclusion, teaching Gen Z requires a shift from passive learning to more interactive and purpose-driven approaches. By integrating technology, activating participation, providing supportive and constructive feedback, and highlighting the real-world impact of prosthodontics, teachers can inspire a new generation of skilled and dedicated professionals—a true challenge, but also real motivation for all us mentors!

On behalf of the entire Editorial Board team,



Irena Sailer, Editor-in-Chief

## REFERENCES

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