



CARNEGIE  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY

# CollectivED

**Working papers from CollectivED;  
The Hub for Mentoring and  
Coaching**

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## Teaching-teams not Teaching-solo: The secret to retaining Gen Y teachers

### *A Thinkpiece Working Paper by Anne Knock*

Recently, I spent some in a school with teaching teams comprised of early to mid-career teachers who fit neatly into the \*Gen Y demographic. For the uninitiated this means that they were born in the early eighties, through to 1990. These teachers were passionate and committed, they loved the kids and loved their job. Within the shared learning spaces, the content was well-structured, teachers had clear roles throughout the learning session, and most importantly, the students were engaged in the activities. The learning environments I observed, each with around 90 primary students, had a calm and productive culture.

I watched the teacher activity in the space and their interactions, I could see how much the teachers enjoyed working together. At regular intervals, they would check-in with one another to make adjustments or talk about students. Should an issue emerge with a student, one would deal with it, while the others kept the learning humming.

The success of this shared learning environment was, in part, due to the effectiveness of the teaching team. I asked them about this context,

***“Would any of you want to go back to one-teacher with one-class?”***

The answer was a resounding ‘No’. They loved the idea of the team, the collaboration and collegiality and the sense of collective effectiveness.

Perhaps prioritising teaching teams may have wide-ranging benefits:

*Australia as a nation is failing to retain the best people in the teaching profession. Attrition rates are worryingly high with researchers estimating around 30% to 50% of teachers leaving in the first five years. (McKinnon and Walker, 2017)*

What if teacher isolation played a part in this departure? Would a teaching-team approach in the learning environment more closely align to the preferences of Generation Y?

McCrindle Research states that “by 2020 most Baby Boomers will have retired while Generation Y will dominate employment, comprising 42% of the workforce” (emphasis mine) and that is only a few short years from now. I believe that moving away from traditional, privatised pedagogy will provide better for job satisfaction for teachers, and will be better for the students.

### Who are Gen Ys?

Very tech savvy – bringing social media and productivity skills to the workplace.

The global generation- culturally diverse, mobile careers, travellers and globally aware

McCrindle Research (MR) have outlined the top five factors for Gen Y to attract and retain and meet their workplace needs) I have looked at these through the lens of the Gen Y teacher.

### Work/Life Balance

Whether we like it or not, work-life ‘in-balance’ trumps when pressure rises. Can AI take away parts of the role that are routine and time-consuming, to enable focus on more rewarding and relational aspects of being a teacher?

### Workplace Culture

Social connection with co-workers is an important retention factor. Teaching-teams in a shared space, may meet this need. Counter to the isolation and stress of one teacher to 30 students, “they want community, not a workplace. Friends, not just colleagues” (MR).

### Varied job role

A well-functioning teaching team enables variety and teachers are able to grow in their strengths and pursue passions. Differentiation across the shared classes and a cross-curricular approach also creates the context to try new things.

### Management style

How we lead and manage Gen Ys matters. Rather than an authoritarian, top-down approach, preference is for more open and honest communication. Also providing regular support, mentoring, feedback and recognition. These attributes support a culture of trust.

### Training

Investing in growing teacher capacity is a critical retention strategy, “Generation Y’s who receive regular training from their employer are motivated to stay with their

employer" (MR). Considering how important culture and the social elements of the role are to Gen Ys, then team-

based professional development is even better.

### References

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