

ht**insight**

NEW-AGE CAREERISTS

FIRST OF THREE- PART SERIES

Youths question country's faulty education system

SURVEY REPORT Youngsters say the current schooling system that focuses more on rote learning doesn't equip them with practical experiences to cope with contemporary professions

Ayesha Banerjee
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NEW DELHI: Has education failed to equip millennials and Gen-Z'ers with the right skills to negotiate their way to success at work?

The verdict is damning—education is not contributing significantly to employability, say India's Generation Z, also known as Gen-Z'ers or iGeneration, born during the mid-1990s, and the millennials preceding them.

In this age of self-love through selfies, youngsters also feel self-development and good personalities increase chances of employment, a Hindustan Times-MaRS Monitoring and Research Systems survey indicates.

Today young people are feeling out of their depth in workplaces revolutionised by artificial intelligence and automation. This is because of lack of career counselling services in colleges and universities.

Inadequate academia-industry linkages are also not equipping them with enough practical experience to easily

negotiate through the first years of their working life.

The survey, to assess the efficacy of India's education system, connected with 1,680 young professionals, both men and women and graduates and above, aged between 21 and 27.

Those surveyed are employed for three years or less, pursuing new-age careers in digital entertainment and media, retail, e-commerce, social media, digital advertising and media, BPO and start-ups and work in six base metros: Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai.

Only 26% of the respondents feel that their education has contributed highly to their personality development or interpersonal management skills, the two key traits required for interviews and employment.

On the problems faced, 74% say their college and university syllabus and courses are not updated regularly. Eighty per cent feel they missed out on opportunities for personality development while studying.

Employees from India's financial capital Mumbai (89%) and Kolkata (86%) and Hyderabad (84%) feel they lack practical



• Youths say the education system needs to be overhauled at the primary level.

work experience because of inadequate industry-academia linkages. Seventy nine per cent say colleges and universities do not have counselling services on place.

Why this does not surprise Ashish Rajpal, founder of global learning company XSEED, is not hard to fathom.

A Harvard graduate in education, he feels development of skills to solve real-life problems, communicate and collaborate with others are critical to succeed in 21st century workplaces.

However, the current schooling system focuses more on memorising facts such as historical dates, scientific definitions and mathematics formulas. Consequently, young people leave schools with grades and certificates but are lacking in practical skills and confidence.

Samrithi Sharma, a computer science and engineering graduate working with Paytm in Noida agrees. Her college in Amritsar failed to equip students with the ability to think logically—a must in engineering careers.

"Education in tier-2 or 3 cities is very generic, not like what they teach in the IITs," she says.

Interestingly, 26% of millennials and

Gen-Z'ers feel they have secured jobs through the sheer power of their personalities.

Thirty per cent of these respondents are from digital entertainment and media and social media.

Self-development, 24% respondents feel, results in job offers. Personal initiatives to improve their skills pay rich dividends, say 29% from social media.

Her disappointment with the highest annual package of just ₹5 lakh in her college placements spurred on Sharma to do her own research to "crack a high-salaried e-commerce job". She trawled the net to find out from LinkedIn or Naukri.com what hirers were looking for in sectors she was interested in. "I had to then work on my communication skills and confidence levels. Guidance from friends in IIT also helped," Sharma says.

Himanshu Pratap, team leader in sales and marketing, Justdial, in Noida, however, agrees with the 21% survey respondents who feel contribution of education to their current jobs has been "high".

This graduate from a B-school in Dehradun says his teachers' advice that he

get digital media and six sigma certifications helped him land a job.

Though the scenario looks bleak, Rajpal, who quit an international corporate career in Paris to pursue his passion to work for the education sector in India, feels there is hope if the system is overhauled at the primary level.

"Today we work with over one million children in over 3,000 schools and have visible evidence that foundation for employability skills can be laid early at the elementary schooling stage," he says.

For that, Rajpal says, children will need to understand the world around them by asking questions, experimenting and drawing inferences rather than repeating what is there on the textbook. They should be given the opportunity to "make and break" things that solve real-world problems.

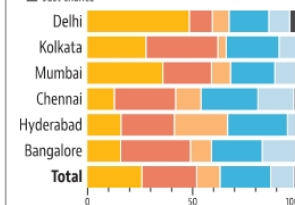
Giving children the freedom to express their own thoughts and feelings without fear is critical too.

When children learn how to understand, apply and communicate early in life, they also gain the confidence to take on new and difficult problems in the workplace when they grow up, he adds.

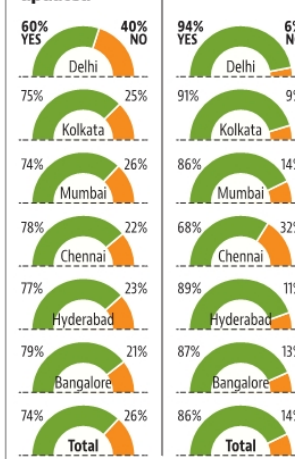
From classrooms to open plan offices

What makes young professionals employable? Find out what they think

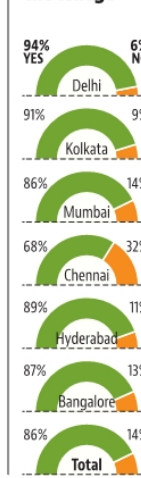
Who gets the credit for your current job?



Syllabus and content of course are not updated



No industry linkage with the college



they speak

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ASHISH RAJPAL, founder, XSEED

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SAMRITHI SHARMA, professional

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SECOND OF THREE-PART SERIES

Passions driving youths' quest for jobs

SURVEY FINDINGS Most young professionals are following their hearts, and once they are clear about what they want, they pursue jobs doggedly

Ayesha Banerjee
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NEW DELHI: Can Superman and Spider-man get someone's career off to a flying start?

Visual effects or VFX artist Vinay Thakur, who has helped create some of the magic in fantasy adventure films like Sujoy Ghosh's *Aladin*, starring Amitabh Bachchan and Riteish Deshmukh and Rakesh Roshan's *Krrish*, is convinced they can.

After clearing his Class 12 exams in Bathinda in Punjab, Thakur was desperately looking for a direction in life when friends suggested that he go for a design and animation course because of his fondness for the DC and Marvel comics' superheroes.

He moved to Chandigarh and completed a professional diploma in animation and VFX (visual effects using computer-generated imagery) at animation institute Maya Academy of Advanced Cinematics (MAAC). That led to his first job and soon he found himself in Mumbai, working on Bollywood films as compositor (integrating 3D objects and live action to create a single scene).

Most young millennials and Generation Z professionals today are following their hearts, stumbling on careers while exploring their passions. Once they are clear about what they want, they pursue jobs doggedly, not bothered

about the number of interviews they have to give, the second part of the Hindustan Times Education and MaRS Monitoring and Research Systems survey on Efficacy of Education reveals.

Connecting with 1,680 young professionals aged between 21 to 27, employed for three years or less, the study indicates that 79% respondents do not attach much importance to career counselling. More women (26%) than men, however, feel the need for some sort of guidance as do 23% employees in the age group of 21 to 23.

Achal Khanna, CEO of HR professional group, The Society for Human Resource Management India (SHRM) feels that to understand Gen Z'ers, people born in the mid-1990s, just stepping into their first jobs, it is important to know that the work they do is as important as the reputation of the company and the salary. They strive for differentiation through education, reputation, brands and technology, and especially money, she says.

Training too is not an intrinsic part of 63% respondents' career plans, a majority (75%) of them from Chennai.

But, as some sectors require trained staff, 48% of the respondents from digital advertising and digital media, 46% in social media and 41% in digital entertainment and media say they opted for training before employment.

On the importance of training, Thakur, with no prior painting or sketching skills, says he had to learn "everything from scratch." VFX artists have to have extensive knowledge of the human anatomy, 3D modelling, lighting, texturing, animation and compositing.

Keen to start earning a salary, young professionals say they don't feel disheartened if they are rejected by more than one company. Based on the number of interviews the respondents appear for, Kolkatans struggle a little with 3.2 interviews while Mumbaiers on an average have 2.9 interactions with hirers.

For Tanseer Ahmed M Banglewale, working as an animator at New Zealand-based Weta Digital, the first inter-



■ VFX artist Vinay Thakur's fondness for DC and Marvel comics' superheroes led him to pursue a design and animation course. He has helped create the magic in fantasy adventure films such as *Aladin* and *Krrish*.
ARJIT SEN/HT

view of his career was a disaster. "I obviously did not hear from them," he laughs. The next few potential employers did not want him either, but determined to get a foothold in an organisation, he made a demo reel of his work and showed it to the department head at animation studio Rhythm and Hues. "He refused to believe I had made it—that made me feel even more proud of my work," says Banglewale.

He was "scooped up by the company and in two months was working on a huge Hollywood project. From there I moved to DreamWorks (Animation) and then Industrial Light and Magic and am now with Weta Digital," he says.

Before settling in their current jobs, the respondents say they make it a point to check out three to four industries. Digital entertainment and media generates the maximum interest (49%) followed by e-commerce (37%), social media (37%) and modern retail (31%).

Vishal Mehra, senior vice-president at IT education and training organisation Aptech and head of Team ICAP

(Industry Connects, Alliances and Placements) says he has seen demand for design and VFX experts increase every year. "Though there have been job losses in the IT sector, the demand for digital media and entertainment professionals is tremendous."

Refusing to disclose names, Mehra says he has "just now been tapped by a big industry player for 80 to 100 graphic designers".

Their skills are in great demand but "we do not have enough people qualified to do it," he adds. Demand for even basic rotoscoping (animation technique which requires work, frame by frame, to trace over motion picture footage) skills can "guarantee kids at least four job offers".

On what organisations expect from Generation Z today, Khanna says candidates are now required to be domain agnostic, possessing the ability to work across systems. Firms are also seeking professionals with a good academic background and sound technical knowledge.

Thirty-seven per cent of those sur-

veyed expressed interest in e-commerce and social media, with 45% Hyderabad residents opting for social media and 42% for e-commerce.

Not surprisingly, younger professionals are very sure of their preferences.

Ninety six per cent working for digital entertainment and media like their jobs and say if they have other options, 33% will want to work in social media and 22% in television.

Both Thakur, now working with Technicolor India in Bengaluru, and Banglewale, derive tremendous satisfaction from their jobs. "My first project (Golden Compass) as an animator won an Oscar for VFX. We were ecstatic. It was a win against the Transformers and Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End," says the latter.

To other youngsters looking for jobs now, Thakur has this advice: "Work hard, don't expect early success and learn the process—understand that the work you do in life will lift you up, not the money."

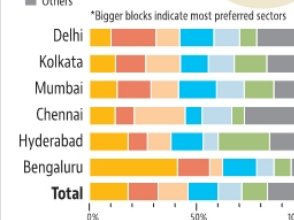
Changing job scenario

Today professionals do not attach much importance to career counselling, training

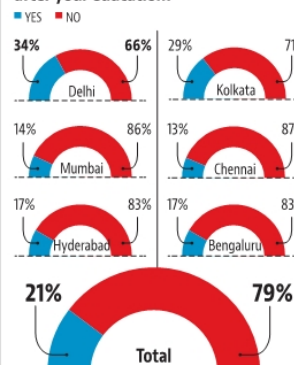
Most preferred job*

- BPO/call centre
- Digital ad/media
- Digital entertainment & media
- E-commerce
- Modern trade retail
- Social media
- Others

On an average how many job interviews did you give before you got this job?
2.9 Male **2.5** Female



Did you opt for career counselling after your education?



METHODOLOGY: 1,680 professionals, graduates and above, aged between 21 and 27, participated in the HT-MaRS survey. Employed for three years or less, they were pursuing careers in digital entertainment and media, retail, e-commerce, social media, digital advertising and media, BPO and start-ups. Cities covered were Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai.

TOMORROW
Happiness at work

Though there have been job losses in the IT sector, the demand for digital media and entertainment professionals is tremendous. I have just now been tapped by a big industry for 80-100 graphic designers. Their skills are in great demand but we do not have enough people qualified to do it.

VISHAL MEHRA, senior vice-president, Aptech

Happiness makes them tick at work

SURVEY REVEALS Most young professionals are ready to abandon their jobs for better career and growth opportunities if they do not have peace of mind at workplace

Ayesha Banerjee
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NEW DELHI: An offer letter is a great document but it does not guarantee happiness.

Many of today's young professionals are not happy at work, sticking around just for the salary. Peace of mind and happiness are highly valued. Otherwise, beware! They're ready to abandon ship for better career and growth opportunities.

In the third part of a Hindustan Times-MaRS Monitoring and Research Systems survey, young workers in various organisations talk about taking a break from work, about things that make them tick at work and their future plans.

Just 30% respondents say they are happy at work, 47% among them from Mumbai and Hyderabad, and 32% from Delhi. Men (31%) are more satisfied with their jobs than women (29%).

Thirty four per cent employees aged between 25 and 27 are happier than 24% in their early twenties. Happiness levels are also high in social media (38%) followed by 34% in digital entertainment and media. Mumbaiers rate their jobs at 8.5 on the scale of one to 10. Hyderabad comes a close second, followed by Delhi at 8.1.

Yogesh Chabria, motivational speaker and author of the Happonaire Series, says the work ethics of young people, especially Generation Z, whose birth years start in the mid-1990s, are clearly defined.

"They know they won't spend their life in (one) company and while they are there they look at it as a two-way relationship. They are looking to move ahead and grow. Their success is guided by the fact that they are constantly looking to grow their knowledge and skill set," he says. Forty three per cent feel career growth and opportunities matter, most of them (52%) from Kolkata and 44% from Delhi and Bangalore. Salaries are key for 38% of the respon-



■ Aadi Sardana (left), head - marketing for retail stores, and Garima Gakhar (second from left), assistant manager, leasing, with their colleagues at Select Citywalk in Delhi's Saket. Both appreciate the fact that every employee has a voice in their organisation and are not looking for a change in job at the moment. SAUMYA KHADELWAL/HT

dents, including 51% from Kolkata and Mumbai. Thirty per cent respondents like the work they do, 36% among them from Bengaluru.

Garima Gakhar, assistant manager, leasing, at New Delhi's Select Citywalk, involved in letting out space for showrooms, says her master's degree in fashion management from the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) gave her good grounding in brand management, marketing and finance and legal matters. Once an intern at the Saket mall doing a project on shopping centres for the NIFT, she was hired there later. "In an industry like ours it's important to learn how to use your common sense, your grasping power and learn from your work," she says.

Networking and socialising with colleagues is important for 24% employees, including 30% from Bengaluru and 26%

from Chennai.

Twenty three per cent survey participants appreciate the chance they get at work to maintain work-life balance, including 33% from Bengaluru.

Aadi Sardana, 23, head - marketing for retail stores - specifically for perfume couture and watches - owned and franchised by Select Citywalk, says she is motivated to give 100% to her job because every employee's opinion matters to her organisation's managers, and everyone's made to feel a part of the team.

Overseeing events and promotions for brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, US Polo, Dior and Chanel, this Modern School alumna and graduate from Boston University, says she values this feeling of "belonging" to her organisation. A year with a luxury goods department store Bergdorf Goodman in

New York city left her feeling unhappy as she was "always the outsider there, no matter how good my experience with them looked on my resume."

Chabria, who has addressed the European Parliament on his vision for a globalised world based on meritocracy and holistic values, says Gen Z's expectations at work are focused on two areas - the first is they want to learn and grow. They don't like restrictions and also want work-life integration, where besides work they like to travel, have fun and explore the world.

About 39% professionals feel optimistic about the progress of their careers - most of them (49%) from Bengaluru, 46% from Hyderabad and 43% from Delhi.

Even though they are not too hung up on career planning, 36% professionals say they might in future opt for another

function in the current industry.

Only 21% young employees want to grow vertically in the present function within their current industry.

Despite stepping into their first jobs just recently, 44% employees have started hankering for a break and want to do an educational course for better career growth.

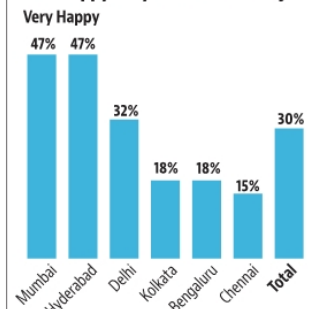
Both Sardana and Gakhar want to work independently in their later years. The former wants to run a fashion consulting company for luxury brands, and the latter wants to work as advisor to international brands opening outlets in India.

Right now, however, the two young women, who love to shop, have access to an entire mall the whole day, grabbing lunch or coffee or browsing the latest fashion trends in clothing. They are not looking for a change at the moment.

Well-defined work ethics

Youth know they won't spend their life in one firm and while there they look to grow

How happy are you in the current job

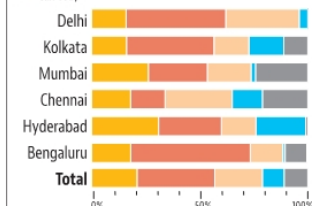


38% of the people working in social media sector are very happy with their job

22% is the happiness level in BPOs/call centres, which is lowest in the industry

How are you planning to move ahead in your career in next 2 years

Growing vertically in present function within same industry
 Joining other function within same industry
 Joining other company in the same industry
 Joining other industry
 Can't say



47% of the people working in Digital Advt/ Digital media are joining other function within same industry

23% of the people working in E-commerce are joining other function within same industry

METHODOLOGY: 1,680 professionals, graduates and above, aged between 21 and 27 participated in the HT-MaRS survey. Employed for three years or less, they were pursuing careers in digital entertainment and media, retail, e-commerce, social media, digital advertising and media, BPO and start-ups. Cities covered were Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai.