

ISBN 0970-8405

Personnel Today

JULY - DECEMBER, 2019

VOL. XXXX • No. 2

**Half - Yearly Journal
of NIPM**

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Mr. Sandip Samaddar
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National Institute of Personnel Management
Southend conclave, Tower Block
3rd, Floor, 1582, Rajdanga Main Road
Kolkata - 700 107*

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Skilling Millennials to remain Entrepreneurial through New Age Education

Dr. Purushottam Bung

Abstract

The workforce of today, in the age group of 20-35, whom we call Millennials share a unique composition of characteristics VIZ; attitudes, behavior, values, beliefs and way of life. They are different from the characteristics of earlier generations.

Under this context it is important to understand their (millennials) mindset, needs and expectations so that we can align and adapt our education policy and practices to meet their requirements (physical, mental, emotional and cultural).

Attempt has been made in this paper to discuss the implications of this paradigm shift on education which has to reorient with a strong emphasis on skilling - reskilling - upskilling with an entrepreneurial mindset than just bombarding the learners with information, which we call as New Age Education.

Introduction

Millennials have been shaped by the forces of globalization, making the society increasingly connected and interdependent in terms of economic integration, information exchange, cultural diffusions and travel. As a result, Millennials operate in environments that not only integrate vertically the multiple generations, but also integrate horizontally individuals across national and cultural boundaries.

Whereas earlier generations of the workforce, characterized by the following, is quite contradictory to that of Millennials;

1. Conservative in their thoughts and actions
2. Believe in remaining focused on one thing at a time
3. Individualistic as remaining competitive is more important
4. Inclined to work in hierarchical kind of environment
5. Conventional in their approach which is rule based
6. Risk avoiding or risk neutral behavior

7. Little scared of technological advancements
8. Believe that knowledge is supreme, skill is secondary

Under such circumstances, i.e. when there lies a huge gap in how these two generations of the workforce think, believe and act, it becomes important to understand the newer generation and make required changes in the way we educate them so that smoother transition can be made to meet the requirements of newer generation.

Current Scenario

Millennials - the fascinating generation, most educated one that dominates today's workforce (estimated at 75% of the global workforce by 2025) are characterized by the following attributes;

1. Fascinated by new technologies (computers and internet are part of life)
2. Believe that "It's cool to be smart"
3. Are diverse racially and ethnically and hence embrace inclusivity

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4. Gravitate towards group activity and collaboration
5. Believe that doing is more important than knowing (Having right set of skills is more important than knowledge)
6. Believe that multitasking is a way of life
7. Believe that staying connected is essential
8. Zero tolerance for delays and expect instant responses
9. Favor experiential learning (trial and error with a willingness to accept failures) than rule based and logical approach to learning

Moreover, the Millennials have been shaped by the forces of globalization, making society increasingly connected and interdependent in terms of economic integration, information exchange, cultural diffusions and travel. As a result, Millennials operate in environments that not only integrate vertically the multiple generations, but also integrate horizontally individuals across national and cultural boundaries.

How we can bridge the gap?

Given the paradigm shift in the composition (demographic and psychographic) of the future workforce, it is important to align and adapt our education policy and practices with the expectations of the Millennials (physical, mental, emotional and cultural)

Attempt has been made in this paper to discuss the implications of this paradigm shift on education which has to reorient with a strong emphasis on skilling - reskilling - upskilling with an entrepreneurial mindset than just bombarding the learners with information.

Implications for educators:

Meeting the expectations of the Millennials through New Age Education characterized by the following attributes;

1. Learning has to be experiential, interactive and authentic. Extensive usage of activity based learning, project based learning, immersive learning, simulations, games, laboratory experiments, etc. to make the learning experiential, interactive and authentic.
2. Creating conducive learning environment which is innovative, personalized, trans-disciplinary and flexible. This calls for a new thought and ideology which revolves around students, their interests and careers that they want to explore. Offering wide range of program options with a never imagined bouquet of courses (physical, digital, blended, etc.)
3. Focusing on the futuristic skills demanded by the Millennials and industry alike than the ones that are perceived by the educators like; critical thinking, problem solving, analytics, global orientation, decision making, cognitive flexibility, people management, creativity, negotiation, etc.
4. Frequent and continuous updating of curriculum catering to the needs of Millennials vetted by the experts and delivered using innovative pedagogical tools like; case based teaching (text, audio and multimedia cases), role plays, storytelling, workshops, projects, activities, industrial visits and tours, TED talks, competitions, etc.
5. Making learning more of fun through Setting up the informal forums/platforms for the learners like; Communication club, Reading club, Movie club, Yoga club, Cultural club, etc., and organizing series of activities and competitions to strengthen their soft skills (communication skills, presentation skills, interpersonal skills and other soft skills) and also the hard skills (domain specific skills)
6. Strengthening the linkage of an educational institution with the industry and building a robust interface with the industry (local/district level/state level/ national level/ international/ global) and should result in win-win kind of situation. Industry should get the benefits of training their personnel by providing them a platform for continual education offered by the Institution and seeking consultancy and research services offered by the Institution. Similarly, Institution should get the benefits of better internship and placement opportunities for their students offered by the industry and keeping its curriculum and pedagogy contemporary through frequent interaction with the industry.

7. Inculcating entrepreneurial attitude amongst learners at all levels has become the underlying philosophy of the new age education as recruiters are now focusing on corporate entrepreneurship, where-in they have people working as if it were their own organization. The emphasis on creativity and innovation has further emancipated the need for entrepreneurial mindset among the problem solvers and decision makers of the organization. Entrepreneurship is now not restricted to the comprehension of running one's own business but also extended to running the business for which he/she is working - which is popularly known as Intrapreneurship. Entrepreneurial mindset, Entrepreneurial Zeal, and Entrepreneurial Energy are the key competencies that recruiters look for in future employees along with the other competencies. This signifies the importance of entrepreneurship education.

Conclusion

India being the youngest nation with a huge workforce in the working age group of 20-35, it becomes extremely important to train the Millennials in the futuristic skills and develop entrepreneurial mindset among them. Otherwise the situation could become disastrous. This is possible only through replacing our current education policy with the New Age Education policy and practice and embracing it to the core.

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