

EDUCATION PLUS

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John J. Kennedy

Education, often regarded as the foundation of societal progress, thrives not only on structured curricula but also on other types of guidance and support provided to learners and educators alike. Two indispensable components of this are mentorship and coaching. While these terms frequently echo in academic discourses and institutional meetings, their implementation often falls short. Against this backdrop, it may be worthwhile to understand the relevance, challenges, and potential of mentorship and coaching in India's education system, supplemented by global perspectives and evidence-based insights.

Distinct roles

Mentorship and coaching, though often used interchangeably, have distinct definitions and roles in education. Mentorship involves a long-term relationship where an experienced individual provides guidance and support to mentees, fostering their personal and professional growth. Conversely, coaching is more goal-oriented and performance-driven, focusing on enhancing specific skills through structured sessions. Both are vital for a comprehensive educational experience, benefiting students and teachers. According to a study published in the Journal of Educational Psychology, mentorship contributes significantly to students' academic success,

Beyond the buzzword

How mentorship and coaching can help transform the Indian higher education system



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emotional well-being, and career readiness. Another study published in the Harvard Educational Review (2020) has found that coaching has improved teachers' teaching efficacy and job satisfaction.

In India, however, incorporating mentorship and coaching in educational institutions remains sporadic. Many institutions lack the awareness or resources to implement these frameworks effectively. According to a 2022 report by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), only 15% of Indian higher education institutions have formal mentorship programmes for students, and an even smaller percentage extend these to

faculty members. Resource constraints are a major impediment. A survey by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) in 2021 revealed that 65% of colleges cite inadequate funding and a shortage of trained personnel as primary barriers. Additionally, a cultural focus on traditional teaching methods often sidelines the importance of personalised guidance.

Globally, institutions in the U.S., the U.K., and other nations have demonstrated the transformative potential of mentorship and coaching. For instance, Stanford University's "First-Generation Mentorship Programme" has reported a 25% increase in student retention rates among its par-

ticipants. Similarly, the University of Oxford's peer-mentoring initiative for educators has led to a 30% improvement in teaching effectiveness, as per their 2021 annual report. In the corporate-academic partnership realm, initiatives like IBM's "SkillsBuild" in collaboration with universities worldwide have shown remarkable success. A 2020 study by McKinsey highlighted that students and educators involved in such programmes were 40% more likely to achieve their career objectives.

Benefits

When properly implemented, mentorship and coaching create a ripple effect of benefits. Personalised gui-

dance enhances learning outcomes and helps students identify their strengths and address weaknesses, leading to improved academic performance. A supportive mentor can help students build emotional resilience and navigate challenges like stress and anxiety, which are prevalent in the highly competitive educational environments today. For teachers, coaching provides actionable feedback and professional development, ultimately enhancing classroom engagement and student outcomes, thus empowering them. Mentorship bridges the gap between academia and industry, ensuring students are better prepared for real-world challenges and

career-ready. Several steps are imperative to foster a culture of mentorship and coaching in India. First, intervention at the policy level is crucial. Educational policies must mandate mentorship programmes and allocate dedicated funding. Second, regular workshops and certifications can equip educators with the skills needed for effective mentorship. Third, awareness campaigns highlighting success stories and global best practices can inspire institutions to adopt these frameworks. Finally, using technology and digital platforms can democratise mentorship by providing students and teachers access to experts from around the globe.

Integrating mentorship and coaching into the Indian higher education system holds transformative potential. These interventions can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, foster emotional intelligence, and create a workforce that is not only competent but also adaptable. Moreover, such programmes can position India as a global leader in educational innovation. Mentorship and coaching, therefore, are not mere buzzwords but essential elements of a meaningful education. By learning from global successes and addressing local challenges, Indian educational institutions can pave the way for an inclusive and impactful educational ecosystem.

The writer is a Professor and Dean, Christ University, Bengaluru.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Charpak Bachelor's Scholarship

An opportunity offered by the French Government. **Eligibility:** Indian nationals or OCI card holders who are 23 years or younger at the time of application and have completed secondary school in India and applied for a Bachelor's degree starting on September 1, 2025. Students must have never previously studied at an educational institution in France.

Rewards: €860 and other benefits.

Application: Online

Deadline: February 28

www.b4s.in/edge/CBSS3

Charles Wallace India Trust Short Research Grants

Offered by the Charles Wallace India Trust (CWIT) in support of the British Council India.

Eligibility: Indian citizens between 25 and 45 years residing in India working in the arts or heritage conservation sectors who have either completed PG with at least four years of research experience or are in the final stages of their doctoral studies. They should be proficient in English.

Rewards: £1,750 (one-time).

Application: Online

Deadline: February 28

www.b4s.in/edge/CWITRI

Post-Matric Scholarship for OBC Students

Offered by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, and managed by the Department of Welfare of SC/ST/OBC.

Eligibility: Students from an OBC community domiciled in Delhi and pursuing studies in a government-recognised institution at the post-matriculation level with at least 75% attendance in the previous year. Annual family income not exceeding ₹250,000.

Rewards: Up to ₹10,000 (tuition fees) and annual academic allowance of up to ₹10,000.

Application: Online

Deadline: May 31

www.b4s.in/edge/PMDS1

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

Set achievable goals

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help



OFF THE EDGE

Nandini Raman

After B.Tech. Industrial Biotechnology, I cleared GATE 2024 (Rank 3388). I didn't opt for higher studies as I want to work in a PSU or a private sector where there won't be much stress. What are my options? Thivya

Dear Thivya,
You can consider joining PSUs that recruit based on the GATE score but many have a higher cut-off than your rank. You can also explore PSUs that conduct entrance exams across the biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and food processing industries. In the private sector, check biotech and pharmaceutical companies like Biocon, Serum Institute of India, Cipla, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories and others. Food processing industries companies like ITC, Nestle, and Hindustan Unilever are also potential employers and many private research and development (R&D) labs offer exciting opportunities in biotechnology research. Explore companies focusing on biofuels, bioremediation, or other relevant areas. Work on your CV and highlight your GATE score, relevant projects, internships, and any coding skills that you may have. Connect with professionals on LinkedIn and attend industry events to expand your network.

I want to do an MBA either in Dubai or in London. Is the one-year full-time MBA

recognised in India? Srikrishna

Dear Srikrishna,
Yes, but the final acceptance will depend on the institution and the employer's internal policies. So, check the university's credentials, and recognition in India before you seek admission. Colleges such as London Business School, Cass Business School, and Hult International Business School are recognised in India. Ensure that the university is accredited by bodies like AACSB, EQUIS, or AMBA. Research specific companies and industries to understand their acceptance criteria for foreign degrees and do not be in a rush to sign up. Build relationships with alumni and professionals in India across industries that interest you and leverage their support in such matters.

After UG in English Literature, I am pursuing a PG. My goal is to work as an English teacher abroad. I'm considering courses like TEFL, TESOL, or CELTA. Which of these would be better to teach abroad? Supraja

Dear Supraja,
Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) is a broad certification that covers teaching English to non-native speakers in various contexts. Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is a more specialised certification that focuses on teaching English to non-native speakers in academic or professional settings. Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) is a highly respected certification that focuses on practical

(diplomacy). In the short term, focus on building employability skills by enhancing your technical and soft skills. Leverage your love for reading, communication, and debates to hone your overall communication, presentation, writing, and critical thinking skills.

Explore diverse job opportunities across the IT sector (software development, data analytics, cybersecurity), content writing or editing (remote work opportunities), and R&D across IT or government organisations.

Upskill using online platforms like Coursera, edX, or Udemy and develop additional skills in international relations, political science, or economics (relevant for UPSC). Use free UPSC resources available online (Mrunal Patel's website, Khan Academy) to get a head start on the exam preparation. Consider doing an M.A. in International Relations or Political Science through online or distance learning programmes or taking the UPSC exam.

Preparing for the UPSC while working is difficult but, with dedication and consistent preparation, you can make it happen! Set achievable goals related to skill development and job search. Connect with UPSC aspirants online or in forums for support and guidance. Remember, every job provides valuable experience, so focus on learning and growing in your initial roles. Reach out to current diplomats or mentors for guidance. If you still feel confused or overwhelmed, please meet a career counsellor.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

Dear Rachana,
You have a very diverse skill set and a clear vision of your ultimate goal

When he was pursuing engineering, Naveen Alex was a victim of severe ragging by his seniors. The traumatic experience left him physically injured, emotionally scarred, and led to him dropping out of college.

Today, Alex is on a mission

to empower teenagers to

discover the best version of

themselves through his NGO called TeensMAD.

The mission is to channel teenage energy into meaningful community service. He typically works with teens in the 14-19 age group, helping them become confident, productive, and caring. Since its inception in 2011, TeensMAD has trained over 6,000 students and conducted 54 workshops.

Looking back

Alex suffered from a partial tear in his eardrum and a bruised back as a direct result of ragging. After taking time off for medical recovery, he could not get back to engineering, opting for a different course and institution altogether. "I could never stay in hostels after that incident. I made sure to choose colleges wherever my parents stayed. That explains why I don't have a pedigree today," he says. What's more, owing to being locked in a cupboard overnight by his seniors, he can no longer deal with closed spaces.

When he was on the road to recovery, he reflected upon what drove his seniors to do what they did. He understood that teenagers are driven by a desperate need to fit in. "That's when I started thinking about how we can create a community where they can be good, where they can be themselves, and still be respected, valued, loved, and cared." That's how TeensMAD was born – with the purpose of

Turning pain into purpose

Naveen Alex on how he overcame trauma to start TeensMAD, an initiative to empower teenagers and support vulnerable communities



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four stages. The first is to use workshops to make youngsters confident and self-aware, helping them find out what they are good at, and what their 'why' in life is. Next, they undertake community service projects, encouraging youngsters to apply their skills for the benefit of society.

The third step is to take up immersion programmes to spend time with local communities. The fourth and final stage is to motivate teens to be creative, translating their novel ideas into reality. "This is an initiative where we encourage youngsters to be who they are, discover themselves, and at the same time, make an impact," says Alex. Over the years,

TeensMAD has conducted life-orientation sessions, personality development, and leadership training in New Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru, and Pune. Additionally, they have also reached students in West Asia. Post-COVID, the organisation has transitioned to digital engagement.

A Senior Manager-HR at Tredence, a data science and AI solutions company, Alex balances his full-time job with his work at TeensMAD. He believes that working with the generation that's yet to come into the workforce and discovering what motivates them helps him chart out his HR strategies at work. "Today, the industry is looking at Gen Z, while I actually work with Gen Alpha," he explains. "I don't see the two roles as separate; they are an extension of each other."

Looking ahead

Alex's future plans for TeensMAD involve focusing on teen entrepreneurship. In a world where students sometimes even go through college without discovering what they are truly passionate about, he envisions helping them find their calling from Class 8 onwards, through a TeensMAD entrepreneurship programme. Also on his vision board is a retreat centre where families can stay, learn about each other, discover themselves, and truly thrive as parents and teenagers.

While the ragging episode unexpectedly set Alex on a non-traditional career path, he believes the experiences that he went through have given him a story to tell about his life. He also urges the corporate community to be empathetic towards those who might be struggling with tough situations. Looking back on his life, Alex says that he would advise his younger version to "be yourself, listen to your inner voice, and stand up for yourself."



A CH-CHE

