

EDUCATIONPLUS

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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

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 guidance 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/CWITR1

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: buddyd4study.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? Thivyaa

Dear Thivyaa,
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

teaching skills and classroom management. TESOL and CELTA are generally considered the most widely recognised to teach English abroad. They are valued by employers in the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand. To teach overseas you will need to first choose a reputable institution and obtain your certification. Then research job opportunities online on job boards and websites dedicated to teaching English abroad. Some popular destinations are South Korea, China, Japan, Thailand, and West Asia. Check the visa requirements, salary, and living conditions in different countries. Then prepare your application, backed by a strong resume and certifications highlighting your qualifications, experience, and language skills. Prepare for interviews. Once shortlisted, the employers will get the paperwork done.

I am a fourth-year B.E. CSE student. I love reading, communicating and researching. I participate in debates and speeches and have learnt classical music. With our hiring process hit by recession, I am sceptical about the future. I don't have the resources to study abroad but can do an MBA or M.Tech. in India. My dream is to be a diplomat but I will need a job to be able gain resources to prepare. I am uncertain about the path I should follow. Rachana

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

(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. The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge

Bhavya Venkatesh
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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

channelising teenage energy that goes into a destructive 'mad' into a constructive 'mad' of 'Making a Difference'.

How it works
TeensMAD's approach has

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."



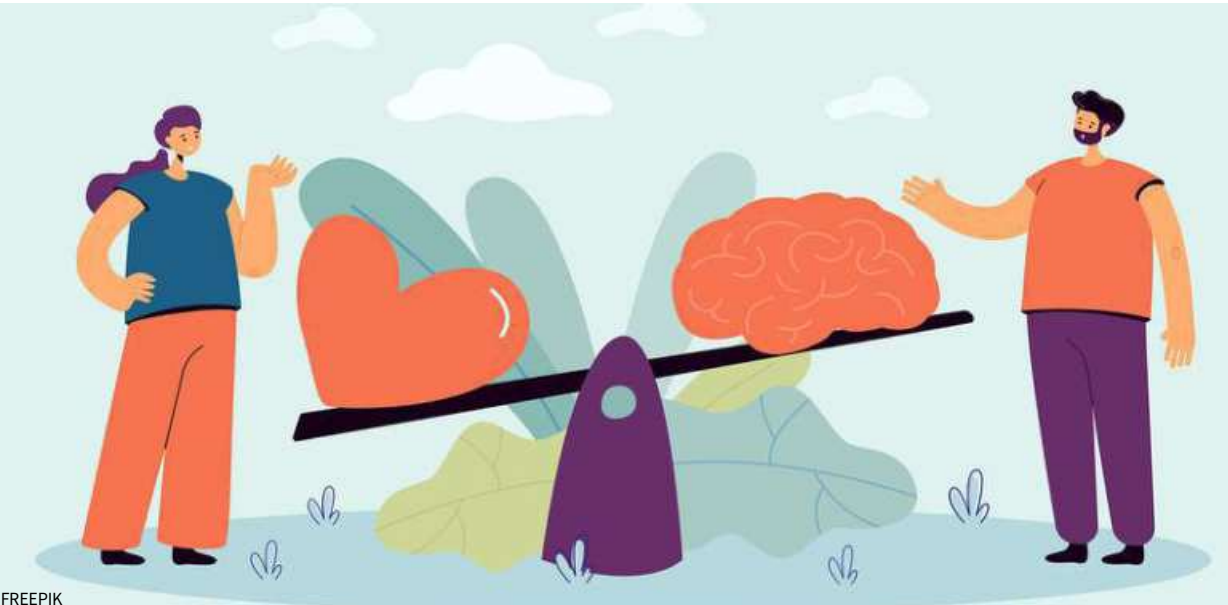
THINK
Aruna Sankaranarayanan

A list of intelligent people who have done foolish things is fairly long. Former American President Bill Clinton having an affair with an intern, former McKinsey MD Rajat Gupta for engaging in insider trading, Co-founder of Apple Steve Jobs refusing treatment for pancreatic cancer are a few canonical examples. Of course, smart people doing stupid things is not limited to the rich and famous. Most people encounter these folks in daily life as well. The Physics professor who loses their life savings on the stock market due to bad investments or the lawyer who falls for an online scam.

On the other hand, we tend to call certain people ‘wise’. Wisdom is a revered trait in all cultures. But what constitutes wisdom

and how is it different from intelligence? Most life decisions involve a complex web of factors that cannot always be solved solely by pure logic. Should you follow your passion and pursue a career in Music or should you opt for a more pragmatic corporate job that doesn’t necessarily resonate with your strengths? Should you go abroad for your MBA after getting admission to a top business school or stay back in India as your father has been diagnosed with a serious but not terminal illness?

Experiment
In an article in *Psyche*, Maksim Rudney and Igor Grossman describe a study they undertook with various colleagues that had over 2,500 people from 16 different “cultural groups” that included Peruvians, Moroccans, Japanese, Canadians and Indians among others. The participants were presented with 10 vignettes of individuals that included “a scientist, a politician and a teacher” and asked to compare and



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Worldly wise

What constitutes wisdom? How is it different from intelligence?

contrast them with one another and with their own selves using a rubric of “19 ways of dealing with a complex situation” that did not evoke simple or clear-cut answers. Participants had to decide wheth-

er the scientist or the teacher, based on the given descriptions, was more likely to exhibit logical thinking or impulsive behaviour, for example. They also had to rate the wisdom of each of the ficti-

tious individuals and themselves in the given scenarios.

Two dimensions
The authors found that people make judgments about wisdom using two

main dimensions. The first, reflective orientation, refers to a person’s ability to be logical, rational and learn from past experiences while exhibiting self-regulation. A History professor who has both vast and

deep knowledge of their subject and who is able to make reasoned arguments while being calm personifies this dimension.

The second dimension, socio-emotional awareness, entails “caring for others, active listening, and the ability to navigate complex and uncertain social situations”. A counsellor who listens to each client patiently and responds in ways that suit their unique needs epitomises this facet. Though the two are “closely related”, a person is considered “most wise” only if they rate high on both aspects.

The researchers also looked for cross-cultural differences in perceptions of wisdom. They hypothesised that collectivist cultures, like Asian countries, would prize the socio-emotional dimension more highly whereas individualist cultures, like Western nations, would value the reflective orientation more.

However, their findings did not bear this out. People, the world over, seem

to recognise both the “need to get ahead” and the “need to get along”.

Likewise, when participants were asked to rate their own wisdom, they tended to rate themselves lower on the cognitive aspect but saw themselves as being socio-emotionally intelligent. This pattern was observed across cultural groups.

The authors feel this is due to the kinds of feedback we typically receive. Academic grades and performance reviews point out the lacunae in our thinking. However, we don’t necessarily get explicit critiques of how others perceive us.

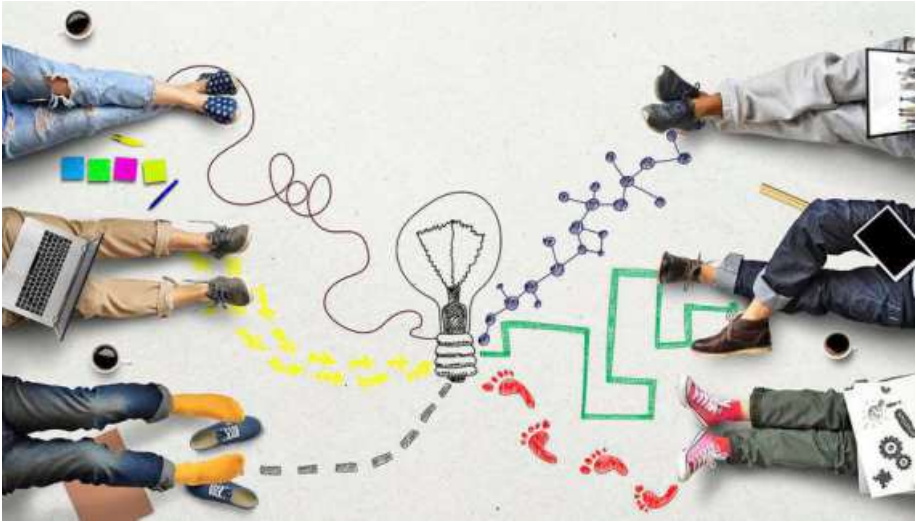
How can we apply the findings of this study to our lives? Most crucial decisions involve both the head and the heart.

Even as we reason through problems with a rational bent, we need to maintain rapport with people and regulate ourselves accordingly.

The writer is the author of *Zero Limits: Things Every 20-Something Should Know* & blogs at www.arunasankaranarayanan.com

Start early, solve big

Early design education provides an essential foundation for students to develop analytical and problem-solving skills



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Sanjay Gupta

Design is not just a discipline but a way of thinking that enhances all disciplines, including technology, engineering, healthcare and urban planning. Early design education provides an essential foundation for students to develop analytical and problem-solving skills and empowers them to tackle complex real-world problems innovatively and ethically, making it a critical part of education.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), most jobs will require soft skills like creativity and problem-solving by 2030. Design education prepares students to approach challenges from multiple perspectives, analyse problems and iterate solutions. For example, Stanford’s Design Thinking Model, used in early education, teaches students to empathise, define, ideate, prototype, and test, thereby helping them develop a positive attitude and see obstacles as opportunities for innovation.

India’s National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aligns with this approach by advocating for art and design integration across core subjects like Maths, Science and History. Early design education helps students develop spatial awareness, visualisation skills and multidisciplinary approaches; all of which are essential for careers in Architecture, Technology and Engineering. In countries like Finland, where design is embedded into early education, students outperform their peers globally, excelling in both critical thinking and creativity.

Benefits

When students learn to design a product, they go beyond studying aesthetics to analyse user needs, environmental impact, functionality and market dynamics. Take, for example, Building Information Modelling (BIM), a tool used in sustainable architecture. When introduced to students at an early stage, it enables them to visualise and optimise energy-efficient solutions, fostering skills in energy-efficient design and environmental impact assessment.

Design education also enhances empathy and emotional intelligence, crucial skills in a world that increasingly values inclusivity and user-centered solutions. Collaborative projects encourage students to communicate effectively, negotiate differing viewpoints, and integrate multiple user needs into cohesive solutions. This human-centred approach has wide applications ranging from healthcare, where empathic design can improve patient care, to technology, where inclusive design enhances accessibility. Notably, empathy in design aligns with a 2020 McKinsey report, which found that companies focusing on user-centred inclusive design achieved 1.5 times more growth than their competitors.

The socio-economic impact of early design education is profound. In India, design is becoming increasingly central to economic development. We can produce a generation of people prepared to tackle urgent societal issues like urbanisation, healthcare accessibility, and environmental sustainability by teaching students to think like designers from an early age and instilling

in them a set of “horizontal” skills like visualisation and spatial reasoning. Through exercises like designing models and prototypes, students learn to analyse spatial relationships, material constraints, and environmental factors, which develops in them both analytical and abstract thinking.

Early design education also encourages sustainability-conscious thinking, which helps in addressing global environmental challenges. Students working on sustainability-focused projects learn to apply concepts like the circular economy, waste-reducing designs, enhanced product longevity, and end-of-life disposal. This aligns with the World Economic Forum’s recommendation that design thinking should be a part of environmental education to promote systems thinking and a long-term outlook; key skills to tackle climate change and resource scarcity.

Design education also fosters an entrepreneurial spirit, teaching students not only to innovate but also to understand market dynamics, user behaviour, and business strategy. In line with the evolving market demands, some universities are stepping up as launch-pads for budding entrepreneurs in design.

Early design education therefore is not merely an introduction to a potential career in design; it is a crucial part of developing skills essential in today’s dynamic world.

By fostering analytical thinking, empathy, creativity, and adaptability, early design education produces well-rounded individuals prepared for the rapidly changing global economy.

The writer is the Vice-Chancellor, World University of Design.

P.K. Agarwal

With technological advances increasing the demand for specialised skills, short-term programmes are proving to be one of the most effective ways to stay ahead.

In fact, in the post-pandemic world, students are also prioritising courses that provide immediate value reflecting a shift in their approach to education.

A recent Udemy report – *Gen Z in the Workplace: Welcoming the Next Generation* – reveals that Gen Z is dedicating at least one hour a week to upskilling. Dynamic industries such as technology, data science, and business management demand skills that are often not covered in traditional academic programmes.

As the need for skilled workers continues to rise, skill-focused programmes increasingly become a good alternative to enhance employability.

Possible programmes
Here is a list of short-term programmes for students looking to fast-track their careers:

Data Science and Data Analytics: Data Science, along with AI and Machine Learning, has emerged as the top



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Fast-track your career

A look at short-term international programmes that can help increase one’s employability

domain for upskilling today. Programmes in Data Science focus on statistical analysis, data visualisation, and tools like Python and R, which are critical for industries such as finance, healthcare, and e-commerce, where data-driven decision-making drives success.

Deep Learning and

AI: AI is rapidly redefining the industry. Analysts from Gartner predict that, by 2027, 80% of software engineers will need to upskill to remain relevant. AI courses cover machine learning, neural networks, and robotics, preparing students to contribute to cutting-edge innovations in automation, natural language

processing, and predictive analytics.

Project and Programme Management: These emphasise methodologies like Agile and Scrum and equip students with skills in project planning, execution, risk management, and leadership, which are highly valued in industries ranging from IT to construction.

Marketing Management: Programmes in digital marketing, AI industry tools, content strategy, and consumer analytics prepare students to excel in branding, social media management, and targeted advertising campaigns.

Business Administration: Leadership and strategic planning courses focus on business skills such as finance, accounting, decision-making, resource management, and operational efficiency, offering a solid foundation for career advancement in various sectors.

Going abroad

The decision to study abroad, even for a short period, is a big investment and should be carefully planned. Being aware of immigration policies, cultural aspects, and professional opportunities available at the chosen destination is essential. Here are some tips for students looking

to explore short-term international programmes.

Research industry trends: Understand the job market’s current and emerging demands. Look for programmes aligned with skills that are in high demand.

Consider location: The location of your programme can significantly impact your professional growth in terms of access to networking opportunities, internships, and collaborations

Prioritise practical learning: Choose programmes that emphasise hands-on experiences, such as projects, internships, or real-world case studies, as this will help you build a strong portfolio.

Leverage networks: Collaborate with peers, connect with instructors, and engage with industry professionals to expand your professional network. These relationships can open doors to opportunities and insights.

Use short-term international programmes to get a competitive edge in building a robust professional future. Always remember to research and make strong connections wherever you go to capitalise on the opportunities effectively.

The writer is Dean, UC Santa Cruz Silicon Valley Professional Education.

Build a security blanket

What is the difference between an MBA in Cybersecurity Management and an M.Sc. in Cybersecurity? Which degree should a student opt for?



ness fundamentals, cybersecurity strategy and leadership concepts, risk and compliance, and data privacy and governance. After graduating, it leads to roles such as Cybersecurity Consultant, Information Security Analyst, Project Manager, and Network Administrator.

Conversely, an MSc in Cybersecurity focuses on

core technical skills relevant to protecting people and organisations against cyber threats.

Some key skills involve network security, ethical hacking and penetration testing, threat analysis and various other advanced topics.

This leads to job roles such as Security Engineer, Penetration Tester, Cyber-

security Analyst and Administrator.

Factors to consider

In addition, the MBA helps one apply to a broader set of jobs or management positions whereas the M.Sc, being a highly specialised degree, opens avenues for multiple technical roles.

While choosing between the two, one must al-

so consider the time and financial investment involved. An MBA in Cybersecurity Management from prestigious institutions is expensive, not to mention the additional costs of living, books, and other fees. However, it opens the doors to high-paying jobs and is widely recognised across industries and countries. Typically, this requires a student to spend two years.

On the other hand, an MSc in Cybersecurity is of a shorter duration with many institutions offering a one-year programme. It is also more affordable and is suitable for those who want to become part of the workforce soon. While it may not include business management, it equips one with technical know-how and promises a quicker return on investment.

In sum, cybersecurity is a lucrative career pathway that requires talented and skilled professionals. Given its surge, students should pick a degree that best aligns with their skills, interests, and long-term goals, as this will enable them step up the corporate ladder.

The writer is the CEO of Intellipat.