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Grooming talent for the next decade: Mindtree's Approach

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An alarmingly large number of engineers joining the IT industry do not come with the expected skills to work in customer projects. Often their weakness in fundamentals is severe. This is pronounced in *understanding systems, solving problems and the ability to articulate* [2], which a standard engineering curriculum would usually cover. There are many reasons that can be debated as causes. Industry hires engineers from various disciplines when there is a demand and trains them in house. Thousands of colleges mushroomed in the last decade to feed this demand. What these colleges produced was not questioned as long as every student got a placement, which they did. The first job is expected to provide opportunities to close any learning deficit. In a way the skills required in the industry is known and dealt by the industry alone. *Collaboration between industry and academia* [5] is practically nonexistent. *Peer and parental pressures to always succeed and never fail* [6] during the sixteen years of proctored examinations have left students immune to the *excitement of learning* [1]. The *quality of courseware, faculty* [3] and the exposure deserved by *students, coming from diverse economic and social background* [4], is not addressed adequately. Amidst this debate the fact remains that our Gen-Y workforce is not ready as individuals, professionals and global citizens as they step into the industry.

Mindtree's approach

Solving the issues highlighted above require us to take a very different approach towards learning and a long term view of the future. With this intention, Mindtree is creating a 20 acre fully residential campus in Bhubaneswar to groom 4000 new college graduates every year. This is Mindtree's Global Learning Centre (GLC).

Mission

Revive curiosity, ignite courage and foster responsibility to become an expert and a global citizen

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Curiosity

A manifestation of Mindtree's value Unrelenting Dedication is to try and to keep trying until the work is done. This quest becomes meaningful when it is driven by our inherent curiosity to discover ourselves through the work we do. Formal education, social and peer pressures often suppress this curiosity of simply exploring and discovering the world around and within us. Rote learning and mastery in clearing assessments is most rewarded, while curiosity takes a back seat. We believe that we should simply bring 'curiosity' back. Let us discover the world of 'how things work' through the eyes of an engineer and the curiosity of a child.

Courage

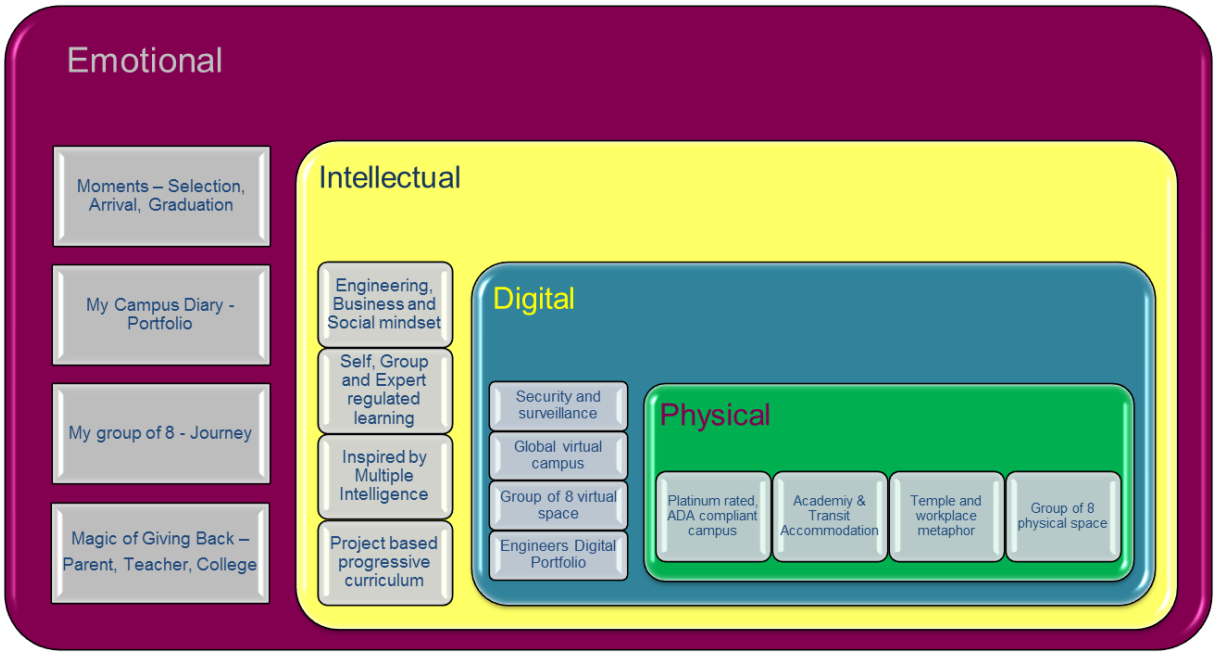
To dive into the world of unknown we need courage. While curiosity can be the driver in our everyday pursuit, courage is essential to challenge existing belief systems, go beyond the usual boundaries, stand for a cause and have a point of view. Courage to fail, courage to face the consequences of a decision, courage to speak up and courage to change are essential ingredients of an expert. Learning at GLC, Mindtree Kalinga, will sow the seeds of a future expert. But, at every step each of us will need the courage to stand up and ask that one critical question that demonstrates Expert Thinking. We ignite courage. We dare to be experts.

Responsibility

Expertise is deeply ingrained in our values with a strong desire to be the best and leave our mark behind. But, it is the sense of responsibility that awakens us as the citizens of the world. It is responsibility that brings experts together to solve problems, gives us a sense of ownership, makes us think of the future of our planet, makes us accept our failures, makes us treasure our health and above all keeps alive the Collaborative Spirit in our heart to serve a larger purpose beyond our own selves. We make responsible global citizens.

Physical, Digital, Emotional and Intellectual Infrastructure

The residential learning facility for the future requires a right balance between Physical, digital, emotional and intellectual infrastructure. This combined with a right pedagogy suitable for Gen-Y will ensure that we create successful global professionals. The curriculum will focus beyond technical and soft skills – on health and sustainability as well, which we believe are critical missing components in creating future global professionals. The following depicts some of the aspects of the infrastructure being created.



The residential learning program is also being designed to address some of the *core issues highlighted above*

1. "Excitement of learning"

   Expose them to technology and meaning of business to help them navigate and explore their new world

   - First 15 days is based on playing with a real application – like a child breaks and build the Lego blocks to discover how things work
   - Understand the meaning of Business
   - Develop new features for an application as a team and present with pride
   - Solve in-class assignments with the help of mentors

2. "Understanding systems, solving problems and ability to articulate"

   Build an Engineering Mindset as the foundation to become an expert in the future

   - Learn fundamentals but apply in an engineering environment simultaneously
   - Think and visualize systems to integrate components into solutions
   - As one team - analyze, solve and present solutions
   - Help sustain engineering systems in the campus – waste, water and energy management

3. "Quality of courseware, faculty"

   Create a project environment where learning comes with the work assigned

- Adaptive learning content and tool (being explored)
- Project centered course where teams are led by expert tech leads cum mentors
- 30:60:10 model – 30% lecture, 60% in-class group work, 10% group presentations
- Standard operating procedure for all faculties and technical leads
- Project stand up meetings to monitor daily learning and course correction

4. "Diverse background and deficits"
    - Use group formation logic to create learning opportunity within groups of 8 (G8)
    - Physical space – living areas – designed to home a G8 together for work and play
    - G8 health and well-being programs to create health awareness and a 'few good habits'

5. "Collaboration between industry and academia"
    - Publish point of views in public forums
    - Share learning and expertize with academia – workshops
    - Campus Minds give back meaningful applications to their college

6. "Peer and parental pressures to always succeed and never fail"
    - No proctored exam, only continuous feedback
    - Ask questions and figure it out yourself until you get the answer
    - "My best mistakes" – published in the Engineer's Portfolio

This can be a start in bridging the gaps and help young professionals begin their career with confidence. We believe that GLC Minds will demonstrate curiosity, courage and responsibility wherever they are. Our endeavor will be rewarded if it inspires institutions and organizations to adopt this model and change the way we learn. Welcome to Mindtree Kalinga.

Welcome to possible.