

In job search, ed tech startups find role as placement coaches

Companies Help Students Prepare Resumes, Give Lessons On HR Questions, Puzzles

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Gurgaon: Ed tech startups confronting the ‘what now’ question since their supercharged pandemic run ended seem to be finding some answers for their future in a pressing need for young graduates — how to ace interviews when recruiters visit campuses.

With classes having moved back offline, drying up in turn their funding, ed tech startups have been trying to reinvent themselves and specialised placement training has popped up as a promising business model. For one, there are ample takers. Other than elite ma-

TIMES Special

nagement and tech campuses, only a handful of frontline colleges have effective placement cells, leaving hundreds of thousands of students looking for that edge in their presentation before a recruiter. Colleges too are happy to see their placement rates go up.

PrepInsta, a Noida-based company that took shape in the dorm rooms of VIT Vellore in 2016, started by offering courses for “upskilling”. It continues to offer that, but also special-



ised placement coaching.

Its co-founder and CEO Atulya Kaushik says the company has 1.5 lakh students enrolled with it, which it can connect with a network of tech companies that the startup in turn connected with. “Demand for placement coaching is increasing because many colleges are limited to orthodox training methods and theoretical knowledge,” he says.

According to a Nasscom survey in 2019, India adds 15 lakh engineering graduates every year, but only 2.5 lakh of them — or 16% — succeed in getting jobs. It is this “employability gap” where startups sense their opportunity.

The company charges Rs 6,000 from every student for an

annual subscription. The programme includes lessons on the hiring process, technical knowledge about the industry that a student is opting for, HR questions and most-asked puzzles. It also helps candidates prepare their resumes.

Sweta Rani from Gurgaon, who got into Accenture with the help of PrepInsta, says her course covered C++ (programming language for coders) training as well. “There was a dashboard that gave me a ranking on mock written tests too,” she adds.

Founded in 2015, Delhi-based Mindler is helping its clients work on their careers. It charges up to Rs 44,000 for its 6-month programme for a candidate. “We have psychology stu-

dents and trained them to get placed as career coaches in colleges and schools,” says Prateek Bhargava, the CEO.

Not just students, professionals who believe they are underpaid have also been enrolling. “Candidates who come from non-tech backgrounds too have landed jobs as development operations engineers, analysts, data engineers or analytics managers in MNCs,” says Bhartendra Dhoreliya, affiliate and partnership manager of Intellipaat.

Priyanshu Gupta, a computer science graduate who is now an associate manager (cloud) at Accenture in Gurgaon, said training sessions with a startup gave him insights into the industry that helped him land a job. “I chose to take lessons from Intellipaat because they knew the needs of the industry. I got this job in November 2021 with a 50% hike in salary,” says Gupta.

Among campuses that have tied up with PrepInsta is Gandhi Institute of Technology and Management in Andhra Pradesh. “We have a placement cell, but newer platforms like these are resourceful when it comes to the industry and its requirements... It is ul-

timately the university that is helping students prepare, just that we have hired an external source for a minor fee,” says Vikas B, university’s deputy director of technology, tools and platforms.

Ed tech has been one of the sectors that has caught the chill in the long funding winter of 2022 — going from raised \$1.4 billion in 2020 to \$4.73 billion in 2021 and then dropped to \$2.64 billion in 2022, as per Inc42’s startup tracker report.

New, and sustainable, business models have, therefore, become an imperative. Mayank Jain, marketing head of FinBox — a B2B that facilitates digital infrastructure to fintech firms — sees promise in placement training. “It is a win-win situation for everyone. Companies can find candidates in one place and students can get the required training for placements,” he says.

Kirti Sharma, who heads graduate programme placements at the Management Development Institute in Gurgaon, says there are challenges. “One has to survive the funding crunch. Another is the job scenario. The biggest tech companies have all laid off thousands of people,” she says.