

## Work experience and polytechnic students' expectations of working life

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of work experience on polytechnic students' expectations of working life, and the extent to which these expectations resemble known characteristics of Generation Y. The survey involved 147 polytechnic students (62.6% with and 37.4% without work experience). The results showed that their salary expectations were unrealistic. Most of the polytechnic students believed that they would find their first job through job advertisements or personal contacts but those with work experience were more likely to work for someone they knew. Both groups believed that qualification, English proficiency and personality are important in securing their first job but they considered family background to be irrelevant. The students with work experience were more correct in their assessment of the importance of work experience to their would-be employers. The results showed that the polytechnic students exhibited the characteristics of Generation Y, and there are no significant differences between the two groups. They expect their employers to guide them in their new job and to provide affirmative feedback. They also expect to engage in more group work than individual work. However, they have not given much thought to whether they would make sacrifices to meet project deadlines or whether they would be leaders or followers in their new workplace. The findings suggest that Generation X employers may have to accommodate to the expectations of their Generation Y employees, rather than expect them to fit into the old ways of working.

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