

Gen Y in higher education institutions and at work

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Gen Y or Millennials



**Born between 1980 and 2000. Aged 16-36.
They are secondary school students, university
students and employees (have been working up
to 10 years)**

Different definitions of their age group:

1982-2002 (Howe & Strauss, 2000)

1977-1998 (Thielfoldt & Scheef, 2004)

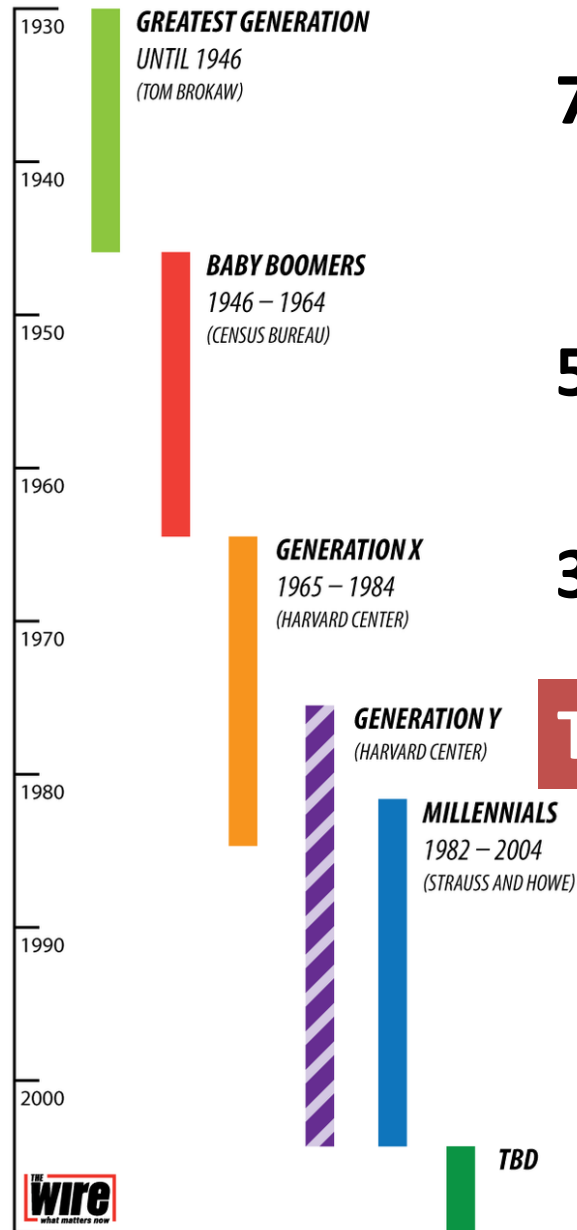
Generational Clash

One generation always thinks they are better than the other but Gen Y knows that they are the most hated generation. In the workplace, Gen X and Gen Y work alongside each other, and their work habits differ. In higher education institutions, the Gen Y students are taught by both Gen X and Gen Y lecturers.

Generation	Age range
Baby Boomers	Above 50
Generation X	37-50
Generation Y	16-36



GENERATION, BY BIRTH YEAR



70s & 80s

50s & 60s

30s & 40s

Teens to 30s: Gen Y

<http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/03/here-is-when-each-generation-begins-and-ends-according-to-facts/359589/>

Generational Clash in values and work habits



Gen X	Gen Y
Independent, resilient, adaptable, loyal to work but not to organisation	Independent, optimistic, over-confident of abilities. Self-centred, unmotivated, disrespectful
Reject rules, dislike authority and rigidity, dislike being micro-managed	Rewrite rules, find institutions irrelevant, want close guidance
Latchkey kids	Parents = Friends. Helicopter parents who shelter them and structure their lives.
Accept diversity	Celebrate diversity
Used to individual work	Individualistic yet team-oriented
Merit and flexibility	Rapid career advancement, opportunities to develop new skills, good people to report to
Sacrifice work-life balance occasionally	Seek satisfaction in life outside work

(Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Scheef, 2004)

Research on Gen Y

440 Gen Y in Sarawak and Penang

	Students	Employees	TOTAL
Polytechnic	147	40	187
University	230	23	253
TOTAL	377	63	440

37% have not worked.
63% have worked.
But the results are
similar. So they are
treated as one group.

Questionnaire for Gen Y

For students – study habits and work expectations (24 items)

For employees – work habits (12 items)

- **Responsibility**
- **Deadlines**
- **Others to accommodate?**
- **Feedback**
- **Guidance**
- **Group versus individual work**

Questionnaire is reliable. Cronbach Alpha: 0.8

Paired items. “I ...” and “My lecturer/employer ...”

University life

1. I expect my lecturers to provide me the reading materials for the course.
2. I expect my lecturers to give me more time if I cannot finish an assignment on time.
3. I expect my lecturers to help me to understand the lectures.
4. I expect my lecturers to give me another chance to do the assignment if I do badly.
5. I expect my lecturers to give me feedback or respond to my email within 24 hours.
6. I expect my lecturers to make lectures interesting for me.
7. I usually attend all lectures, even when they are boring.
8. I usually expect my lecturers to be too busy to see me immediately.
9. When I get low marks in assignments, I usually work harder to improve my scores.
10. I usually try to understand difficult parts of lectures on my own (e.g., ask my friends).
11. I usually do my assignments late at night and weekends to meet the deadline.
12. I usually look for extra reading materials for the course.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree

University Graduates' Work Experiences

Your feedback will help us to prepare university students for the workplace.

A. Background

Please mark with an "X"

1. Race:	<input type="checkbox"/> Malay	<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous	<input type="checkbox"/> Indian
2. Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male		
3. Year of birth:				
4. Current job:				
5. How did you get the job?	<input type="checkbox"/> Job advertisement <input type="checkbox"/> Personal contact Other ways, please write down:			
6. How many years have you been working?				

B. Experiences of Working Life

Please write down “3” for all the time, “2” for frequent, “1” for sometimes and “0” for never.



1. My employer guides me to do my job.	
2. My employer gives me more time if I cannot finish a project on time.	
3. My employer asks me to work in groups.	
4. My employer asks me to lead my colleagues.	
5. My employer gives me feedback on my work in progress.	
6. My employer gives positive comments on my work.	
7. I am scolded by my employer for badly done work.	
8. I finish my work before asking my employer for feedback.	
9. I am a team member in my job.	
10. I work on my own in my job.	
11. I work at night and weekends to meet work deadlines.	
12. I used what I learnt at the university to do my job.	



RESULTS

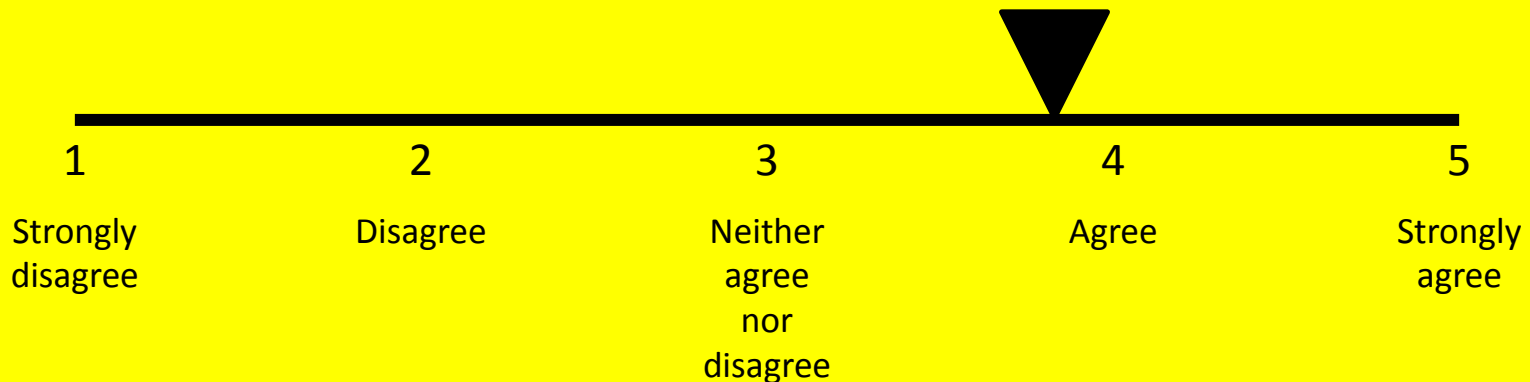
1. Gen Y's study practices
2. Gen Y's work practices

A. Gen Y's study habits

1. Reading materials for course

(N=230, Scale: 1-5)	Uni
My lecturers to provide	3.9
I look for them	3.7

Gen Y views learning as joint responsibility
Gen X doesn't expect lecturers to provide

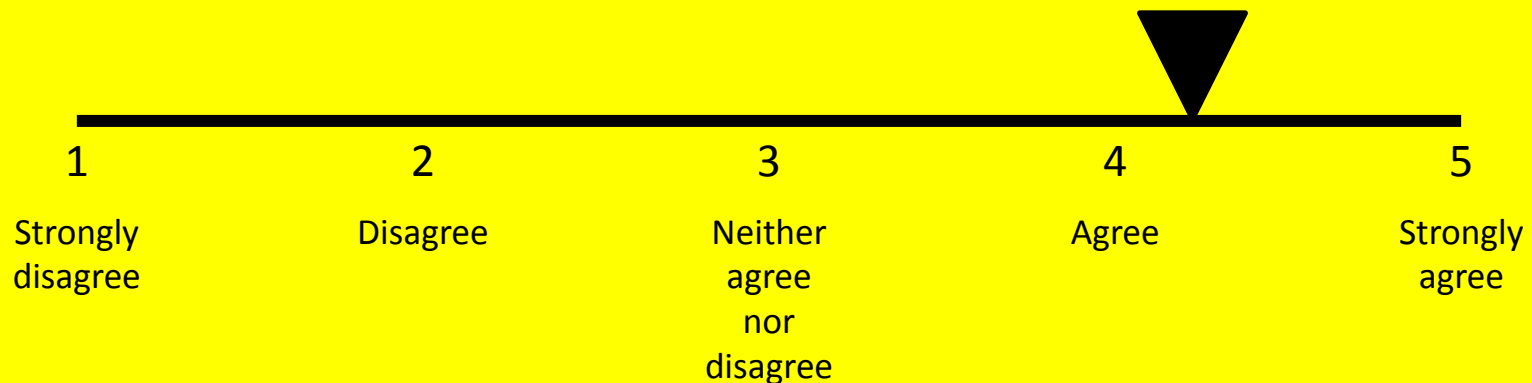


A. Gen Y's study habits

2. Understand difficult lectures

(N=230, Scale: 1-5)	Uni
My lecturers to help	4.3
I try (e.g., ask friends for help)	4.1

For Gen Y, learning is joint responsibility.
Gen X hardly see their lecturers.



A. Gen Y's study habits

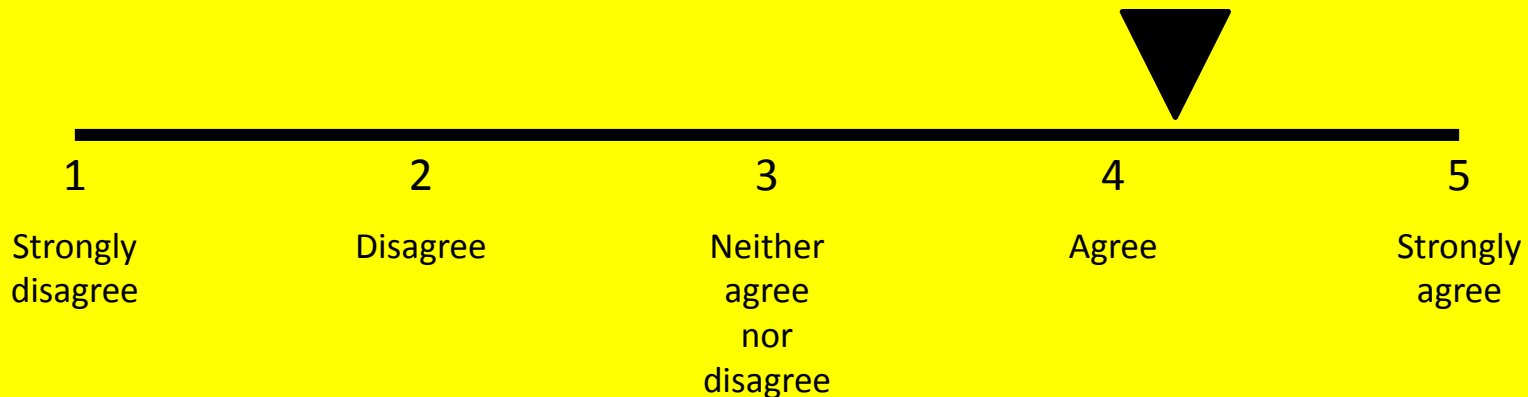
3. Interesting lectures

(N=230, Scale: 1-5)	Uni
My lecturers to make them interesting	4.3
I attend all lectures, even if they are boring	4.0

Entertaining vs informative lectures.

Even with 80% attendance rules, up to 10% still miss classes.

The majority still work within the rules.

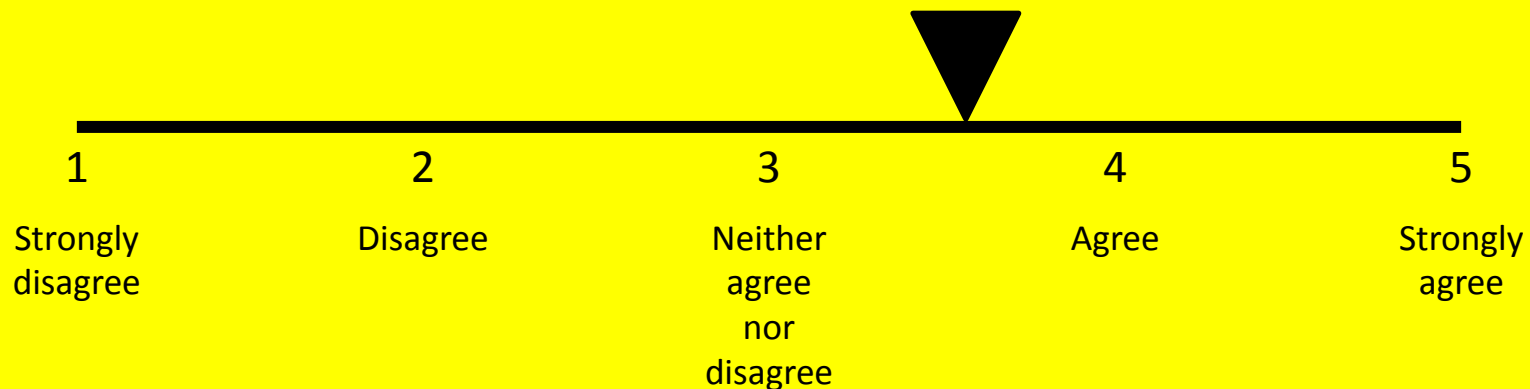


A. Gen Y's study habits

4. Assignment deadlines

(N=230, Scale: 1-5)	Uni
My lecturers to extend deadline	3.6
I work late at night and on weekends	3.7

Gen Y expects leeway, and lecturers to accommodate.
Gen Y is not keen to sacrifice personal time (Meister & Willerd, 2010).



A. Gen Y's study habits

5. Poor performance in assignments

(N=230, Scale: 1-5)	Uni
My lecturers to give second chance	4.3
I work harder	4.4

Gen Y wants to score but they expect leeway – chance to redo or submit a different kind of assignment, sometimes request is made at the end of the semester. Rewriting rules.



A. Gen Y's study habits

6. Feedback

(N=230, Scale: 1-5)	Uni
My lecturers to give feedback or respond to email within 24 hours	3.9
I cannot get to see lecturers immediately	3.3

Expect instant feedback like ATM receipts (Wilson & Gerber, 2008).
Round-the-clock feedback (Meister & Willyerd, 2010).
Used to bite-sized info in social media communication.



Gen Y's study practices: Summary

Gen Y university students view learning as a joint responsibility. They do their part to attend lectures even if they are boring but they expect their lecturers to make them interesting and easy to understand, and also to supply them with reading materials.

Gen Y are highly feedback-oriented. They expect constant and instant feedback on their work in progress. They often overrate their own performance and think they are doing well.

Gen Y expect flexibility. They want to score in assignments, and if they do not, a majority would work harder but they also expect their lecturers to give them a second chance and to extend deadlines. Life is not all about studies.

Addressing Gen Y's study practices: Suggestions of researchers

- Learning activities – group-oriented and project-based.
Learning through reading?
- Tendency to overrate - Teach peer evaluation for them to learn how to evaluate themselves and to do it realistically.
- Flexibility – Give options within pre-determined conditions such as for assignments.
- Feedback-oriented – Are lecturers prepared to be in seamless communication with their students through social media?

RESULTS

1. Gen Y's study practices
2. Gen Y's work practices

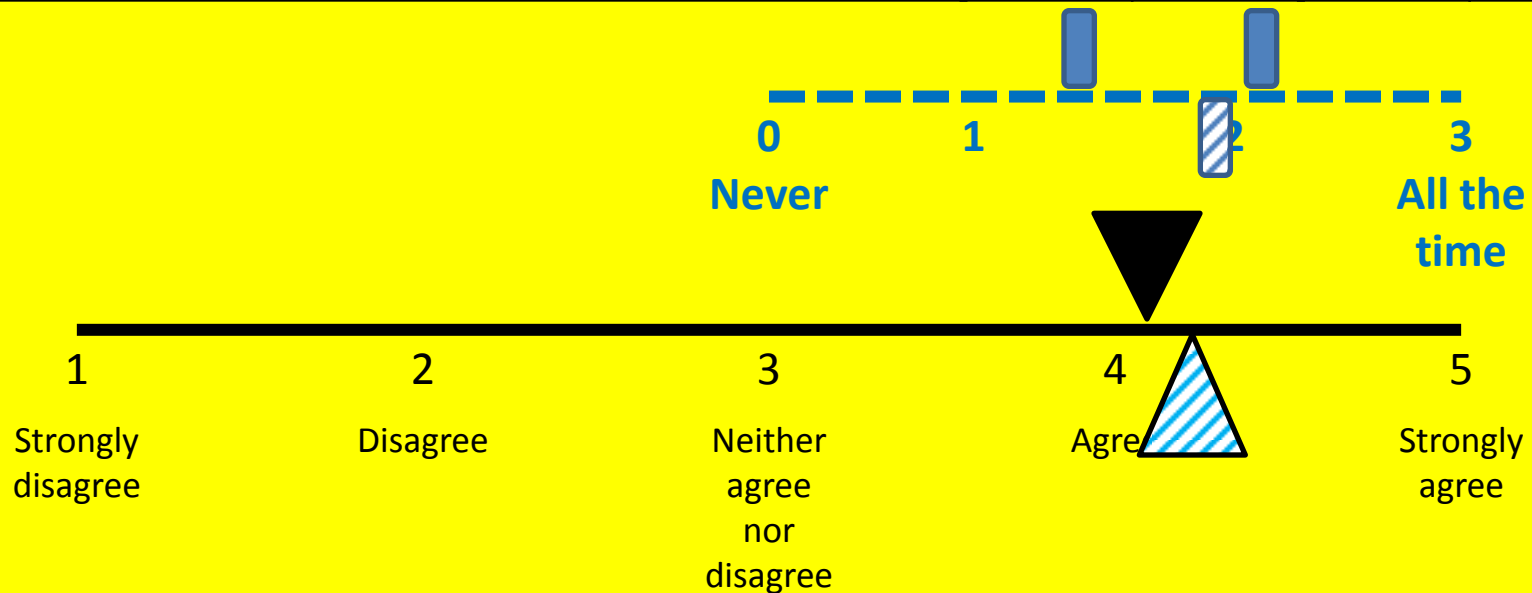


	Students' expectation	Employees' experience	TOTAL
Polytechnic	147	40	187
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B. Gen Y's work habits

1. Guidance in new job

	Expectations		Actual experience	
	Uni	Poly	Uni	Poly
My employer guides me	4.1	4.2	1.4	1.9
I use what I've learnt	4.1	4.2	2.1	2.0



B. Gen Y's work habits

1. Guidance in new job

The university and polytechnic students were **similar** in their expectations on being guided in their new job after graduation. They also thought the knowledge and skills learnt in university and polytechnic could be used in their job.

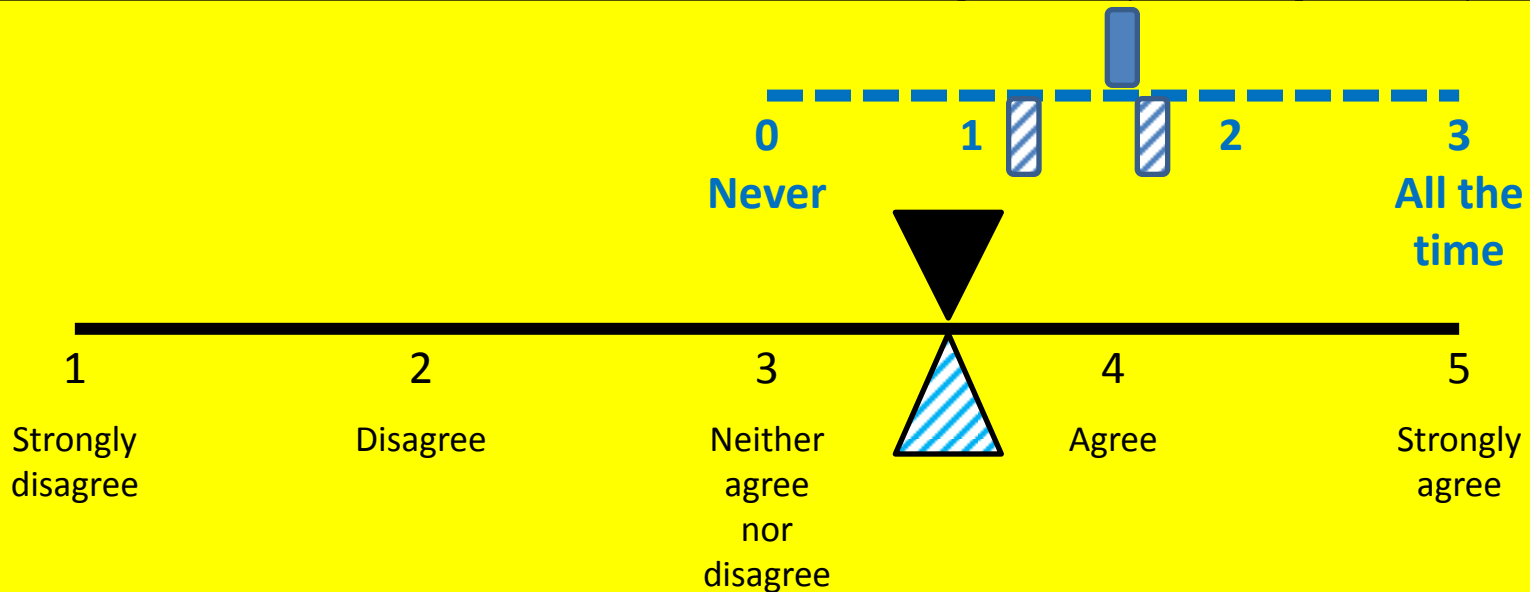
The two groups of students were correct in that they were frequently able to **use what they had learnt** in university and polytechnic in their work. **The polytechnic graduates received frequent guidance in their work but the employers of the university graduates guided them sometimes only.**

The university graduates were expected to be more independent in doing their work.

B. Gen Y's work habits

2. Work deadlines

	Expectations		Actual experience	
	Uni	Poly	Uni	Poly
My employer extends deadlines	3.6	3.7	1.6	1.7
I work late at night and on weekend	3.4	3.3	1.7	1.2



B. Gen Y's work habits

2. Work deadlines

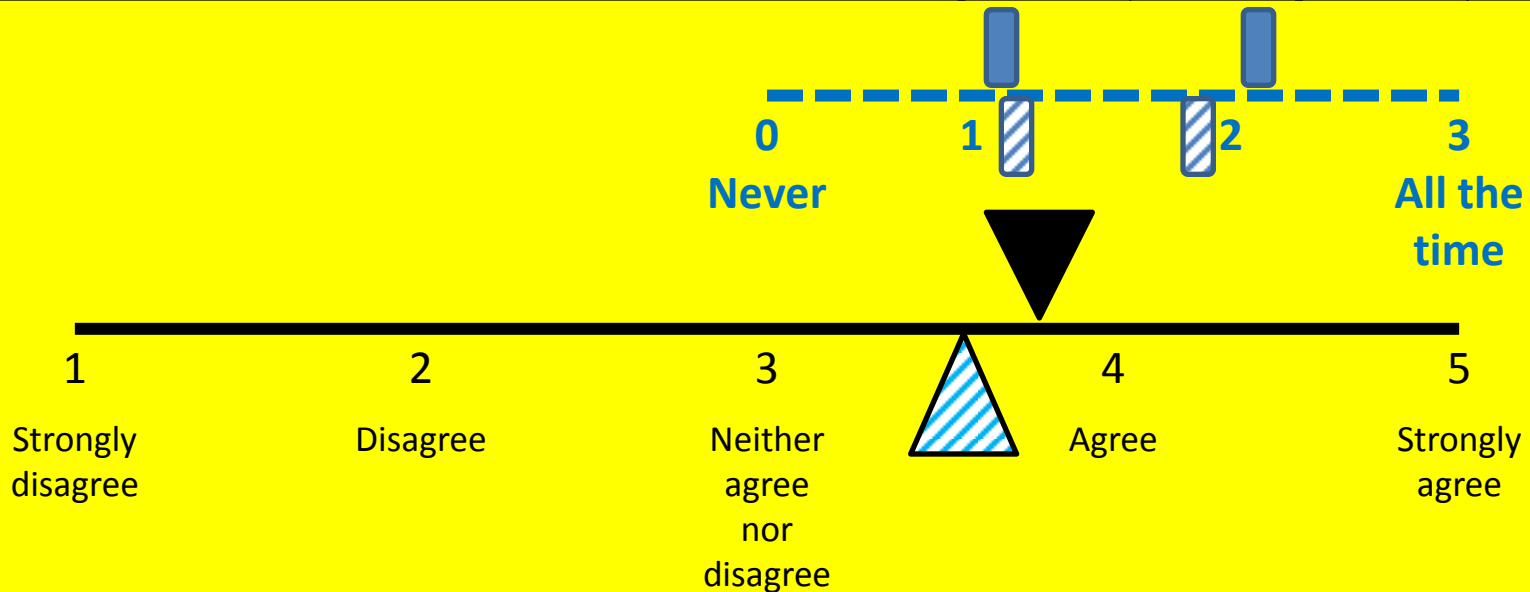
The university and polytechnic students were **similar** in their expectations on work deadlines. They agreed that employers should extend deadlines but fewer (slightly over half) were willing to work late at night or on weekends to meet deadlines.

When they graduated and entered the workplace, the university and polytechnic graduates found that their employers **extended deadlines only some of the time**. More of the **university graduates reported working beyond** their office hours to complete their work than polytechnic graduates, who only did it some of the time – perhaps due to the nature of their work.

B. Gen Y's work habits

3. Leaders vs team members

	Expectations		Actual experience	
	Uni	Poly	Uni	Poly
I lead my colleagues	3.9	3.5	1.1	1.2
I follow instructions	3.7	3.7	2.1	1.9



B. Gen Y's work habits

3. Leaders vs team members

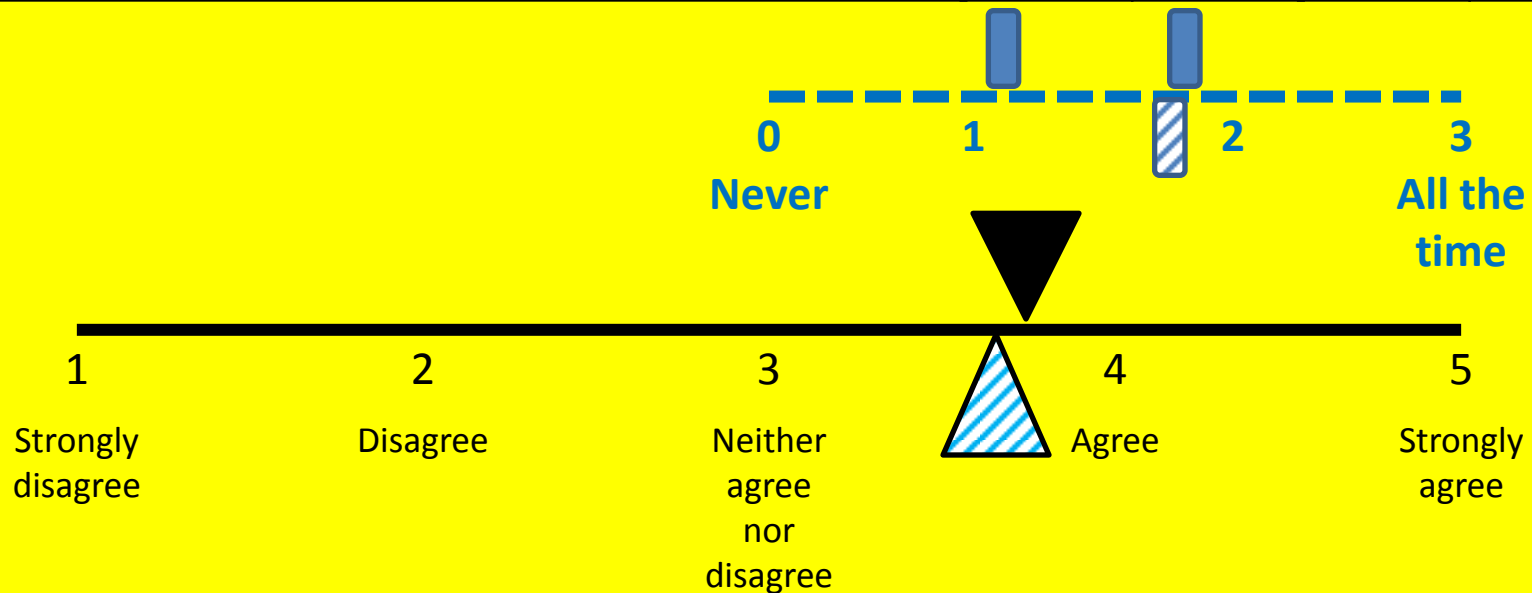
Having been bombarded with so many calls to develop leadership skills and so many leadership courses, the university students felt that they would be leading others in their workplace but the university graduates holding their first job found that this only occurred sometimes. Instead they **frequently had to take instructions**. This is the reality since they are in entry-level positions.

Polytechnic students expected to take instructions more than lead when they work, and this was a **realistic** expectation, judging from the reports of the polytechnic graduates in this study.

B. Gen Y's work habits

4. Group work vs Individual work

	Expectations		Actual experience	
	Uni	Poly	Uni	Poly
I work in groups	3.9	3.9	1.1	1.8
I work on my own	3.6	3.5	1.8	1.6



B. Gen Y's work habits

4. Group work vs Individual work

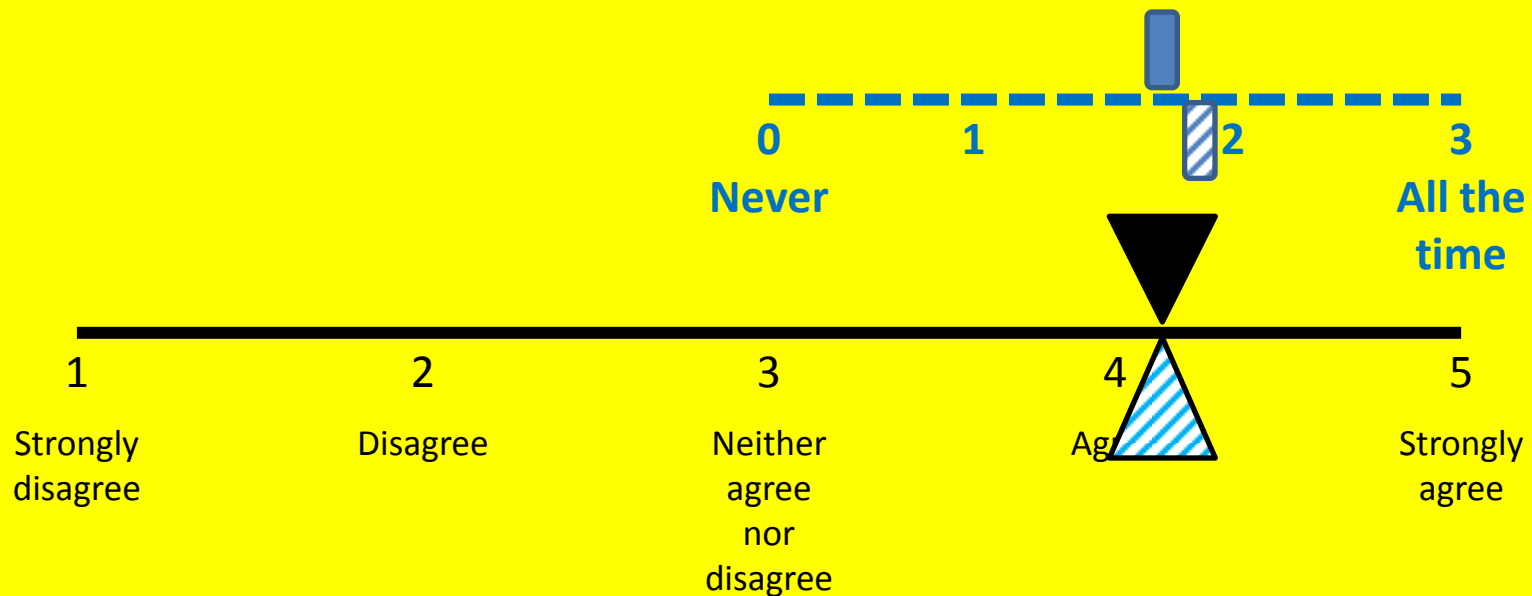
The university and polytechnic students were **similar** in their expectations of doing more group work than individual work at their workplace. They have been conditioned in their studies to do group work.

However, the **university graduates found that they frequently worked on their own** and sometimes worked in groups.

Teamwork was more common for the polytechnic graduates who also did a fair amount of individual work on their own.

5. Feedback

	Expectations		Actual experience	
	Uni	Poly	Uni	Poly
My employer gives feedback on work in progress	4.3	4.2	1.8	2.0
I finish work before asking for feedback	4.2	4.0	1.6	1.9



B. Gen Y's work habits

5. Feedback

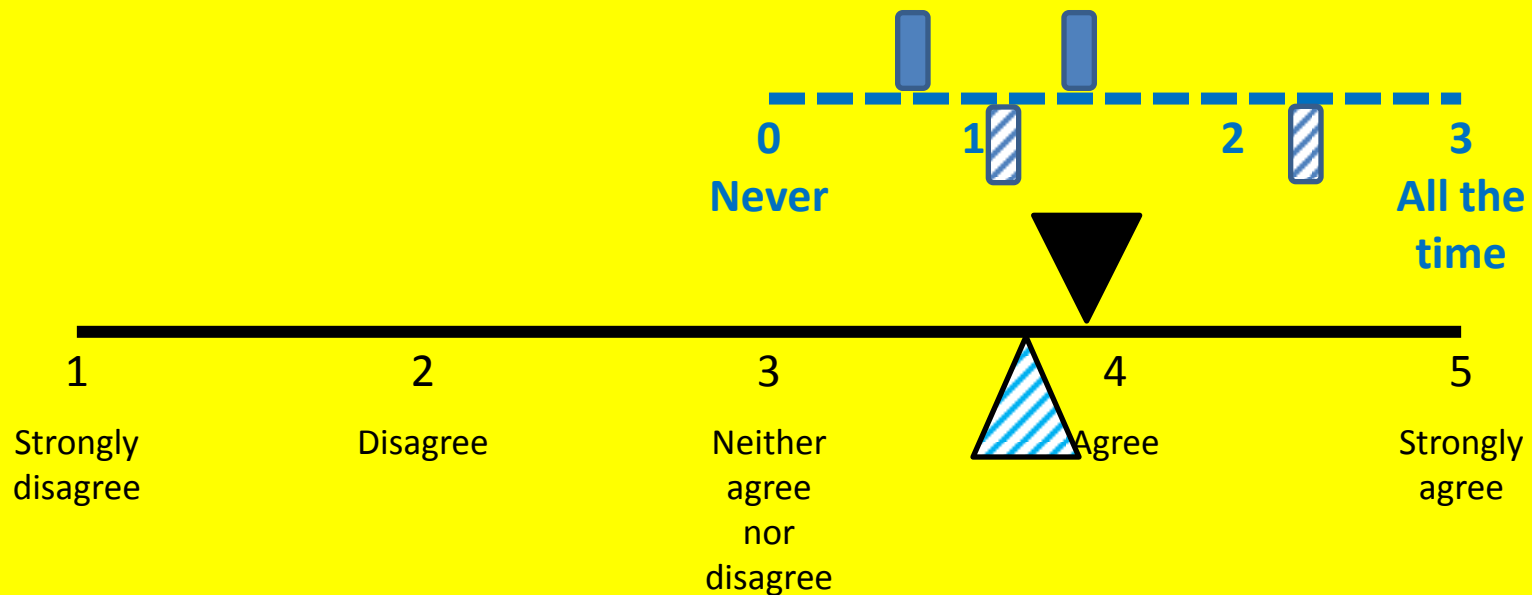
Both groups of students were **similar** in agreeing that their employers should give **feedback on work in progress**, and more liked continuous feedback rather than having their work evaluated when it is already completed.

On this, the expectations of the two groups of students were **realistic** because their **employers gave feedback on work in progress more frequently than for completed work**.

Polytechnic graduates received more of both types of feedback. This shows that the employers accommodate to the needs of their young employees for mentoring and close guidance.

6. Positive and negative feedback

	Expectations		Actual experience	
	Uni	Poly	Uni	Poly
My employer gives positive comments	4.1	4.0	1.4	2.3
I am scolded sometimes for unsatisfactory work	3.7	3.5	0.7	1.1



B. Gen Y's work habits

6. Positive and negative feedback

The university and polytechnic students were **similar** in expecting positive comments from their employers but fewer were prepared to be scolded for unsatisfactory work.

Their expectations were **realistic** because the employers generally gave more positive than negative comments. The **polytechnic graduates received more feedback** (of either type) from their employers than the university graduates. This shows that the polytechnic graduates received closer guidance than the university graduates who were expected to function more independently in the workplace.

Gen Y's work habits: Summary

Both the polytechnic and university graduates reported that they were able to use what they had learnt in their studies in the workplace. However, they found that their employers did not extend deadlines as much as they had expected. But the employers responded to the Gen Y's need for continuous feedback and were supportive.

Polytechnic students were more realistic in their work expectations: to follow rather than to lead; to work in teams; to work mostly within office hours; and to get continuous and positive feedback.

The **university students** were in for a surprise: their employers expected them to be independent rather than being closely guided, they had to sacrifice some personal time to complete work beyond office hours; they did more individual work than group work; and they did not lead as much as they expected.

What's the most important thing you expect from your employer? Gen Y says: (N=207)

- Gentle and on-going guidance (allow them to make mistakes while learning)
- Considerate, parental, friendly, fair and flexible employer
- Self: Respected, trusted and taken seriously by employer
- Recognition for their skills and ideas
- Career advancement: \$, promotion and training
- Happy and fun working environment
- High expectations vs Don't set high expectations on them

Addressing Gen Y's work habits: Recommendations

Mentoring Do's for Gen X	Mentoring Do's for Gen Y
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Casual, friendly work environment• Involvement• Flexibility and freedom• A place to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structured, supportive work environment• Personalized work• Interactive relationship• Be prepared for demands, high expectations

Source: The Learning Café and American Demographics Enterprising Museum 2003.

Gen Y ...

**Passive when alone, a force when together.
Together they can impact the world.**