A Liberal Arts Degree Is Not Only Meant For One Job – It Is Meant For Any Job

Liberal Arts can also be the future as it prepares them for any job as it gives them the required foundation skills that they will need across sectors.

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It is often considered that the Students who enroll in a Liberal Arts Bachelor degrees are those who cannot make up their mind or those who “prefer to keep their options open”. This is at least what I hear most when I interact with prospective students as part of the selection process in the OP Jindal Global University. The reason behind this general perception is obvious — a course in Liberal Arts is about everything and about anything. A student of Liberal Arts mostly spends his/her time studying multiple disciplines without going really deep into any of them and then chooses one stream he wants to pursue.
But what most people fail to notice, or conveniently ignore, is that Liberal Arts actually introduce students to a diversity of streams and by doing so prepares them better for their future life. They develop a more holistic understanding of life around them and avoid the myopic view that most specialized streams would force upon them. By crossing disciplines and studying the society through different subjects - they develop the ability to look at problems from multiple perspectives. This very skill is at the root of one’s capacity to lead a life of happiness and success.

The second misconception about a degree in Liberal Arts is that it would not prepare students for the professional life. That it is a degree which is meant as a stepping stone for a Master’s program – only then would the students be skilled enough to become employable. When we look at the kind of skills associated with professional success - we get a different picture. Based on in-depth interviews of large UK and Irish corporations, Lowden and his colleagues from the University of Glasgow (2011) identified 9 particularly relevant skills across a variety of job roles (these are in addition to the role specific skills)

1. Team working
2. Problem-solving
3. Self-management
4. Knowledge of the business
5. Literacy and numeracy relevant to the post
6. Information and Communication Technology knowledge
7. Good interpersonal and communication skills
8. Ability to use own initiative but also to follow instructions
9. Leadership skills where necessary

In India as well, organizations like NASSCOM (Agrawal et al., 2016) have conducted surveys on graduates’ employability. Their conclusions highlight a lack of ‘soft skills’ or ‘transferable skills’ among Indian graduates, rendering most of them unemployed. Unlike the specialized IT/engineering degrees, those ‘soft skills’ happen to correspond for the most part with the educational objectives of a BA in Liberal Arts program such as critical thinking, argument construction, problem-solving. Thus, by the virtue of their course requirements, students following this path get to develop the key skills that most specialized graduates of the Indian Higher Education system lack by the time of their passing.

In that sense, we can state with confidence that a BA in Liberal Arts actually does not only prepare students for a job – it prepares them for any job as it gives them the required foundation skills that they will need across sectors.

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