Study Abroad And Employability

Many students pursue higher education abroad with the aim of achieving “specialization” which translates as narrowly defined choices in terms of what courses they pick and ultimately leaves the range of jobs they can pitch their profiles to, narrowed down instead of the opposite.

The decision to study abroad should be based on a wider set of considerations than just securing employment. Time spent abroad should be formative academically, professionally and personally.

That said, enhancing one’s career prospects is a perfectly reasonable motivation to pursue higher studies abroad. To achieve this objective efficiently involves determining the length of time spent studying overseas, the choice of destination and steps to...
take to ensure the most productive experience.

Where one chooses to go can also play a significant role in future professional prospects. It is vital to consider how rapidly the world of work and the opportunity landscape in higher education are changing. The first notable shift is the decline in willingness of conventionally preferred foreign markets such as the US and the UK to offer post-study employment. With anti-immigrant sentiment becoming a key force driving political debate and policies in these countries and across Europe, it is time to seriously factor in the magnitude of impact this will have. The second game-changing consideration is the anticipated displacement of jobs across several sectors in the wake of developments in robotics and artificial intelligence. This strengthens the case for investing in educational programmes that help you build life-long skills that will be relevant and sought-after regardless of what your job-description is – self-awareness, curiosity, confidence, flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity, communication, problem solving and interpersonal skills. The good news is that there are opportunities galore in emerging markets.

Internationalisation of their curriculum and student body is today a priority for universities in almost all parts of the world. These institutions are trying to achieve this above all by making their offerings more attractive to international students. Also, those who make the decision to study in an environment markedly different from their home culture, report significantly higher gains in terms of skill development and career utility.

What should one focus on from an employability perspective? Learning the local language should receive high priority. Foreign language abilities alone have been known to open many doors for job aspirants as this can be a vital skill that cannot be learned on the job. Forming enduring connections with local peers is the next crucial outcome to focus on when studying abroad. Today’s classmates are tomorrow’s collaborators. Few things can have a greater payoff in professional and personal terms than time spent making a diverse group of friends while one is a student and then staying in contact with them.

Many students pursue higher education abroad with the aim of achieving “specialization” which translates as narrowly defined choices in terms of what courses they pick and ultimately leaves the range of jobs they can pitch their profiles to, narrowed down instead of the opposite. Study abroad is the space to shed those blinkers restricting your view of what is and isn’t a realistic ambition to pursue once and for all. Even STEM majors report a more beneficial experience studying abroad when they opt for a more inter-disciplinary programme. Specialisation need not come at the cost of broadening your understanding of your discipline and the professional avenues it opens up down the line.

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