



Youth
Economic
Forum

Bridging the Gap Between
Youth and Policy Makers

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PRESS RELEASE

11th September, 2020: Youth Economic Forum (YEF) “Live Session Series” in collaboration with DBTV discussed the ‘Myths and Realities of master’s degree’ after a 4 years bachelors in the same program. Here a discussion was held to talk about the importance of a Master’s Program taking different scenarios into account.

The session was moderated by Jamal Nasir (PR Associate at YEF) and included a discussion between Shahroo Malik (University of Manchester, UK Fulbright PhD scholar, USA), Amna Sabahat (Columbia University, USA) and Talal Ahmad (Brandeis University/MIT Sloan, USA).

Amna started off by explaining her initial preferences and difficulties faced when applying for a Master’s program. Where she emphasized that her passion was the main tool that helped her in making a decision. She then said that “the GPA and the GRE scores matter” for getting an admission in Masters, at the same time she contradicted saying a place for Masters can also be secured with a weak GPA by working on personal statements and GRE scores.

Next Talal added that when he graduated from Lums the trend was usually to go for masters immediately; however he did follow the trend but first worked with a German company for about “8 to 9 months” and prepared for GRE during this time as well. Moreover, the instructors at Lums also helped by giving their reference to Brandeis University that offers top 10 programs in international development and nonprofit management subjects for a Master’s program on 100% scholarship, as his good GRE and references covered the weak GPA. But now when he reflects back on his decisions he thinks that it would have been better to first gain more work experience in field of nonprofit management. “It’s not worth it if it involves a lot of finances or resources” said Talal. However, for engineering or STEM related subjects Masters is the obvious option as it requires advance level training.

Shahroo talked about her experience after graduating from NUST and immediately taking a gap year. She said she “wanted to do Masters slightly different from economics” as economics was her major in bachelors. She opted for masters in international development from the UK. She chose University of Manchester as they provided decent scholarships. A good GPA really helps with scholarships but it isn’t impossible to get masters with a low GPA either. The Master’s Degree is worth it as it gives you “exposure and helps you make a network” she added. However, now that she looks back she thinks that Masters in the same program (economics) would have been a better option as she is more passionate about it now which is why she is currently pursuing her PhD In economics.

Jamal then asked Talal whether the Master’s degree lead to a better job and helped in growing his career, where Talal said “It’s good to gain an international exposure...whether it’s academic or career related things”. However, it comes down to what your field of study is, in his case the experience was worth it as his career demanded the Masters. For social science and nonprofit management subjects, years of work experience counts before going for Master’s Degree. But for engineering related subjects work experience before Master’s Degree isn’t a good option.

Amna stressed on this question further saying that job experience is needed before heading off for Master’s Degree to understand the job market and how businesses work in the real world. She then shared her experience where she

worked for a few years before going for Masters directly after bachelors. "Masters Helps you grow intellectually...so you become the asset of the market" said Amna.

Shahroo talked about her experience, saying that Master's Degree helped her as it more than doubled the salary she was getting with only a bachelor's degree before. Hence, Masters widens opportunities for example, for getting government jobs. Moreover, nowadays there's a lot of competition in the job market, with many candidates applying with a Master's Degree, so yes Master's Degree does make it highly likely to secure a job. Skills are also important along with degrees as some jobs require skill based work which is not necessarily dependent on whether a person has a degree or not.

For Talal heading off for Masters was the right decision as he got Fulbright scholarship and "I would not have chosen anything different 6 years ago and would have still gone for Master's Program" he added. Amna also agreed with Talal here, studying at Colombia was the most intellectual experience of her life as it had 60% international students she explained. The diverse atmosphere was beneficial for her degree in International Relations specifically.

To get Masters in USA, the application process involves personal statement, GRE scores, references and GPA. A high GPA isn't necessarily required to get an admission or a scholarship. Hence the other components need to be effective if GPA isn't high enough. However, GRE scores are the most important for securing an admission to compensate for a low GPA Talal explained. Amna also agreed with Talal here, where she shared how she got in for Masters with a relatively low GPA but a good GRE score.

In UK, GRE isn't required and admissions can be easily taken on self-finance basis with good personal statements and references. But, a lot of competition is faced with students all over the world to get an admission with a scholarship in the UK. Therefore for UK, good GPA, references, extracurricular activities and internships is needed to get financial aid for Master's Program. Shahroo added that she "wouldn't recommend the loan option for Master's Program", it isn't wise to spend a lot in social science subjects as it may take a long time to recover the money invested in education. Amna then talked about her experience where she mentioned the importance of her scholarship for Master's Program, without which she wouldn't have afforded to go.

In conclusion, the session discussed the right timing and importance of pursuing a Master's Program, whether it's in social science subjects or engineering subjects. The experience coming from the 3 speakers showed that scholarships can be attained for a Master's Program with an average GPA in the US, however, for UK universities a good GPA is necessary.