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Peace Corps or Harvard?

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Finding a good job out of college now requires a lot more than a 4.0 grade point average. Google recently announced that GPA doesn't even correlate to the success of their hires. On top of studying on campus, more college students are also studying abroad, interning, and volunteering. They find all this necessary to not only land a job at graduation, but to obtain the education and self-awareness they desire.

I spoke with Meg Garlinghouse, Head of LinkedIn for Good, who attended the Harvard Kennedy School and was also a Peace Corps volunteer. She shared that if forced choose between the graduate program at Harvard and her experience as a volunteer, knowing what she knows now, Meg would take the Peace Corps.

"Some of these new trends on what are predictors of success in life [there is a] measurement of grit and resilience -- the classic Peace Corps experience is going to teach you to be incredibly resourceful and have resilience and determination and grit." Successful professionals driven by purpose seek an opportunity for self-expression and personal growth, which comes through attempting new challenges.

Meg attended one of the top graduate programs in the country and acknowledges the value of her network and connection with people doing remarkable work. But she also recognizes the importance of learning through experience, leaning into fears instead of doing the safe thing.

The truth is education, which accounts for \$1.3 trillion of our GDP, is just not the safe bet it used to be. As Meg notes, "30 years ago if your dad went to Princeton, and you did pretty well, you were going to Princeton. I don't think that's true anymore." Young professionals graduate saddled with debt and often struggle to find a job.

The systemic issues around modern education arose with its commodification based on a manufacturing model. With the No Child Left Behind Act and then Race to the Top, the pressures from the system on teachers to conform education have compounded. Kids are getting lost in the factory. In fact, homeschooling is growing seven times faster than enrollment in traditional K-12 schools. While homeschooling isn't necessarily the solution, it is a harbinger of what is happening in the field and where America is headed.

I was very fortunate to attend Community High School in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The school embraced experiential learning and apprenticeship. For example, for every hour a student worked at a learning-based job, they could receive a half hour of classroom credit. I received high school credit for the first business that I started at 16, a baseball card dealership. Students could also recruit their own teachers from the community to learn subjects unavailable in school and receive credit for them. The school had developed a process to make learning part of the community and not isolated to the classroom.

This isn't really an innovative model; until recently, people learned primarily through apprenticeships and experience. However, those practices began to fade as schools became scaled for efficiency, as schools couldn't make them efficient. But this too is changing, driven in part by a greater appreciation for this style of learning.

Kristy Timms, an intern who supported me in writing *The Purpose Economy*, is a great example of this change. She chose her college almost entirely based on the school's ability to enable learning outside the classroom. She attends CUNY's Macaulay Honors College because it is committed to supporting students learning outside the classroom, and it's situated in New York City, where opportunities are abundant.

Kristy loves classroom learning, but although it can lay a theoretical foundation, she has found it lacks in helping people understand how to apply their learning to the real world. By combining the classroom learning with internships, she is able to get a

complete education, and Macaulay encourages and supports this approach. The other colleges Kristy researched, especially those that are campus-focused, just couldn't compete. She has now completed internships in different sectors and is able to narrow her interests and focus her academic plan. Through internships, she was exposed to topics that, while not on her radar, captivated her and influenced the courses she took the following semester.

By working in different sectors, roles, and sizes of organizations, Kristy is incredibly self-aware for someone her age. When she graduates, she will not only have an impressive resumé, but her maturity and confidence will place her at the top of the pack. Perhaps most importantly, she has come to appreciate that life is a journey, and that she can work in many places and environments in her life and find deep purpose in them.

As we shift towards a more purpose driven future, we will see like Meg and Kristy the benefits of crafting our education around experience.