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## Abstract

This research is all about the perception of Indian students as well as employers regarding GAP YEAR. What do they think about taking a year out for some purpose i.e. taking a year or so off from their regular schedule, to gain some life enhancing experience? Though this can be seen that taking a gap year is beneficial but still this is not considered to be good in the Indian context. The reader, after going through all that has been mentioned in this proposal can analyze the real facts and points that help the researcher to conclude his decision i.e. to come up with a hypothesis. The research will be carried on with a qualitative approach and will use certain research tools like questionnaire and personal interview. Respondents will be asked to fill the questionnaire and answer the interview questions with relevant answers and information.

Based on the literature available a hypothesis has been formed. This hypothesis mentions that 'Taking a gap year is helpful for the Indian students and will certainly give them an extra edge over others'.

## Introduction and Overview

The concept of gap year started in UK and now has started spreading all over the world. Slowly and steadily this concept will enter or rather we should say has entered the Indian subcontinent. Studies/researches conducted by leading universities like Harvard shows that students who take a detour from their formal studies are more focused and motivated than those who don't take this detour. This research is based on what effects will taking of a gap year have on Indian students. Will this give them an extra edge over others? Hence I thought of doing a research on the topic "WILL TAKING A GAP YEAR GIVE AN EXTRA EDGE TO INDIAN STUDENTS?" Having studied in different places and being a student myself, there have been instances where I came across many people who have planned to take a year or two off from their studies, so that they can travel around the world or work for some time.

Also referred as deferred year, year out etc, a GAP YEAR is a break from formal education taken by students to travel, study, intern or work. This gap can last for several weeks, a semester, a year or even more. Generally, a gap year is a break sandwiched between the high school graduations to university progression.

The concept of gap year originated from the UK and slowly has started spreading its wings all over. The admission department at Harvard's is so much convinced about the benefits of gap year that every admitted fresher in the university is given an option for this in the admission form.

This review's/research's original key aims were:

To provide a framework of the pros and cons of taking a gap year by Indian students.

To identify the barriers in taking a gap year among those who don't take up the opportunity and to bring into light those points that motivates the students to take a gap year.

To identify existing approaches and standards of Indian students.

To identify the concept's feasibility in Indian context.

## Literature Review

A literature review is an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers. Its main purpose is to inform readers about certain ideas and knowledge that has been established on the topic, along with their strengths and weakness. It should consist of the research objective, the issue/problem that you are discussing and/or your argumentative thesis. It is not only the list of available sources and/or a set of memories.

During the course of research, one main thing that has to be done is reviewing the available literature. Though there are books and journals on gap year available in abundance, none of these are of much relevance for academic research. These literatures include many sources like: scholarly articles, books, journals, guides, websites etc.

Those reading that were found to be of some relevance have been discussed below:

The term 'gap year' does not define a proper phenomenon, hence is problematic. The idea of a year out is the longer standing term and the literature suggests that some young people in the UK have been taking a year out since the 1960s (Butcher 1993; Simpson 2003; Griffiths 2003). The term gap year is a recent term and it corresponds with the growing trend for greater numbers of young people to take a year out in the last 15 years. The term gap year has also coincided with the dramatic growth of commercial and charitable organizations providing organizing and facilitating support for young people in recent years. They find this to be of great help in shaping future.

No proper and identifiable attempt in the academic literature has been made to categorize gap years. However, in last few years' websites like [www.gapyear.com](http://www.gapyear.com), [www.gapyearresearch.com](http://www.gapyearresearch.com) etc along with certain books like 'Gap Year Adventures', 'Practical Experience', 'Lonely Planet- The Gap Year Book' etc have come up with some amount of literature, that informs one about gap year, its dos and don'ts, experiences one can have during the year out etc (PlanetGapYear, 2007).

In a research, it is said that, big universities like Harvard also consider gap year to be very beneficial and hence they give an option to all new entrants for gap year right at the time of filling the admission form (Jones, 2004).

Taking a gap year is also considered the first step towards the experience of a lifetime (York, 2006). Now, taking a gap year does not necessarily mean that one goes for job, intern or anything that is related to academics. In the book, 'Gap Year Adventures', the writer Lucy York, mentions certain adventurous activities that can be done in the gap year duration. This book brings into light that Gap year is not only for academic/work related experience, there are also other fields where gap year can give a lifetime's experience.

Just after completing the graduation taking a gap year means taking a time to go for new experience or to search or to do something different before moving over to the next level of study of one's academic career. Advantages and disadvantages of taking a Gap year (posted on sep 18, 2008) <http://www.articlesbase.com/vacation-rentals-articles/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-taking-the-gap-year-567292.html>. Caroline Gosney writes that during her last year of her school she missed her grads for a first choice university so she dropped a year out and retake the necessary modules to get the best grades and to reapply to finally head off to the desired university in the year 2006. An unplanned gap year by Caroline Gosney 2006 ([http://www.gapyear.com/clearing/unplanned\\_gap\\_year.html](http://www.gapyear.com/clearing/unplanned_gap_year.html)).

The university in Mumbai is slowly shifting its base from the US universities to the Australian universities for the Indian students who want to study abroad. Newly released statistics by Australian Universities that the enrolment of Indian students in their universities has increased by 38.9% from last 2 years as on March 2009, WYSTC Blogs (<http://www.wystc.org/docs/blog/?cat=7&paged=4>)

The gap year is now becoming more of a path that many western educational institutes favor and is also being looked upon as favorable by many employers (Amodeo, 2002). An academic gap was previously considered to be a 'drop out' and was expected to have a negative impact over the employers. But now a year out is viewed as a life and CV enhancing experience.

Maximum of the reviewed literature has highlighted the point that, taking a gap year is beneficial and does give an extra edge to those who take it. After going through the available literature, a hypothesis can be formed that "Taking a gap year is beneficial for Indian students."

#### Research Design and Methodology

During the course of research, every researcher has access to limited resources. Research design is a tool that helps the researcher in proper allocation of these resources by setting priorities in the process of carrying out the research. This design should be such that it brings into light the structure of the research problem as well as the plan of action used to carry out the research (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). It has been seen that there are various categories of research designs. For this research purpose a combination of various designs has to be considered. This includes:

A formal study to test the hypothesis formed.

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A communication study to collect the data by personal or impersonal means. (Cooper & Schindler, 2006)

Data/information collected can be categorized as primary and secondary. Research tools like questionnaire and interview will be fetching the primary data for research. Apart from these, sources like personal interaction, professor's guidance, observation etc can also be sources of collecting primary data. But only this much is not enough. Therefore, certain sources for collecting secondary data will also have to be considered. Since there was not enough literature available to review, certain other sources like websites, magazines, journals, articles etc will also considered as sources of secondary data.

The data collected may be qualitative or quantitative. It depends on the researcher to choose depending on the outcome requirement. Here, as a researcher I seek the insight mainly through verbal data rather than scaled. The analysis done will be interpretative and subjective. Hence, i will require qualitative data more than quantitative data. Depending on the result expected, various methods can be followed to carry on the research. There are various pros and cons of research methods that can be followed. But the method that will be followed should be feasible, doable and most important, should give an answer to the research topic.

These samples will have some semi-structured interviews, which will start from certain fixed questions and later go on the base of answers from the interviewee (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The interview will be conducted face to face, keeping in mind that the sample unit feels comfortable. The semi-structured interview will not be rigid i.e. as the interview goes on; certain questions may change (depending on the answers received). The questions will be asked in a proper flow so as to keep the interviewee calm, comfortable and not feel offended. These individuals will also be answering a questionnaire that has been designed in a way that it would gather as much information about the topic as possible (Jones, 2004). Both the tools have been designed after reading some literature about the topic i.e. gap year. These questionnaire and interview have been designed keeping in mind that the questions will be asked politely, there will be no personal offences/comments and the data/information acquired will be kept confidential (Statpac, 2007).

A few questions from the questionnaire can be seen here:

Are you clear what gap year is all about?

(To know if Indian students are aware about the concept of gap year or not)

What is your perception about gap year? Should it be taken or not?

(To find out from the people who know about gap year, what they think about taking a gap year)

To get the questionnaire properly filled certain motivating actions can also be taken, like: if the topic is of interest to the respondent or if he/she develops interest in the topic after filling the questionnaire, he/she can be offered a free copy of summary of the report. This would act as an excellent motivator. Other actions can also be taken but keeping in mind the financial constraint only non-motivating factors can be considered (StatPac, 2007). During the course of research, all ethics of research will be followed (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). All people related to research will be treated fairly and in a just manner. Though this will be expected from them that the answers provided will be genuine and no wrong information will be provided (Jones, 2004).

#### TIMESCALE/PLAN

The time scale that I will follow in the completion of the dissertation would be:

Serial No.

Work concerned

Deadline of the completion

1.

Collection of the data.

25th Feb, 2010

2.

Surveys of select sample banks.

22nd July, 2010

3.

Analyzing the data collected.

10th August, 2010

4.

Signifying the appropriate measures.

27th August, 2010

5.

Completing the dissertation.

05th September, 2010

Correct these details above.....

LIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH

References:

How to Write an Abstract by Philip Koopman, Carnegie Mellon University in the year 1997.

<http://www.ece.cmu.edu/~koopman/essays/abstract.html>.

The possible value of a gap year: a case study, the possible enquiries [suzanne.bester@up.ac.za](mailto:suzanne.bester@up.ac.za) the authors Coetzee, Melinde Bester, Suzanne Elizabeth, the LC subjects: gap years date of issue 2009, published by Unisa Press. <http://www.up.ac.za/dspace/handle/2263/11909>.

Review of Gap Year Provision Dr Andrew Jones School of Geography, Birkbeck College, University of London. <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR555.pdf>.

Lattitude responsible exciting different . A gap year with Lattitude? <http://www.lattitude.org.uk/>.

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