

Question #1: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

It is better to have broad knowledge of many academic subjects than to specialize in one specific subject.

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Response #1:

I think that the question to either have a broad knowledge of a variety of subjects or to have a good and specialised understanding in one subject is a difficult one. I agree with both of the points to some extent. First of all, it is important for a younger student to have a broad knowledge of many subjects. Schools, in particular primary and secondary schools should try and give their students a broader overview of many subjects. This is also important in the younger years of a students life, because most of the students have not decided what they will do in their future life. They are not really sure what they are really interested in and in what area they want to specialize. When it comes to secondary schools, students should be given their first choices, based on the knowledge they have already obtained. They should be able to limit their subject choice and cut down on the number of areas where they have to study in. Of course, this would also result in deepening the knowledge in the subjects chosen. When it comes to the last two to three years of school for students, they should be given lessons in only the six to seven areas they are really interested in. Whereas, I think that certain subjects do not even have to be taken. Currently, Mathematics, German, a second language, History or Politics and Biology, Chemistry or Physics have to be studied. I think this is not needed, as different students of course have different strength, not only in life, but also in their academics. I have attended a German "Gymnasium" until Year 10, where we were not able to make any choices whatsoever. Studying 16 to 18 subjects was not an exception. I have also attended an Australian school, only studying 5 subjects. The choice was widely open and no Mathematics or languages or any subjects were required to be able to do your exams at the end and gain university entrance. However, for certain university courses, students also had to take certain school courses. One such example would be Medicine, where students had to have Biology and Chemistry, as well as taking the UMAT test, to see if they are suitable for such a course and also later on such a job. I think this is a successful approach for students, which not only gives them the motivation they need in school, but also the requirements to successful results at the end of their school time. On the side, we also have university students who have to be taken under consideration. Of course they are a different matter altogether. I hold the opinion that the less subjects they take and the deeper they go into details in their study, the better it is. At the beginning of a three to four year study period for their first degree in that area, university students should get a bit of a broader overview of the area for one to two semesters. In that period of time, they get the time needed to see what specifically they want to do and with what exactly they want to continue. The rest of the remaining study period, university students should be prepared for exactly the field they are interested in and want to get a working place later on. This is necessary to make sure that every one of the students is really good at what they are doing and can prepare well for their choice of job. This would give the university students not only more choices from which they can choose their courses, but it would also prepare them better for what they will do later in their life. It would also be a positive criteria for employers when they take people, because then they can be sure that they know what the person is doing and that the person

knows as much as possible about what he or she is doing and also the background information that is needed. Time and money is saved as well, as people come into the workforce and do not have to get an introduction how everything works over a long period of time. Therefore, I would say that there is not a totally clear answer to the question, but the tendency in the later years of education for me is towards a specialization in one, maybe two subjects.

Question #2: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Young people enjoy life more than older people do.

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Response #2:

When I was young, I used to think that "older" people who told me that "age is mental state", that "you are so young or so old as you feel yourself", or similar commonplaces, were either lying or at least looking for emotional justifications or excuses for the fact that, well, they were "older" and were not going to be any younger in the future. As I approach the symbolic "frontier" of 30 years, however, and even though I still do not believe that age is only mental, I must accept that I find more respect and understanding for those "older" people in my soul. Moreover, I find myself not only respecting those people but also their opinions, which imply that life does not end when youth ends and, maybe even more clearly, that you can enjoy life as long as your health allows you to and as long as you want to do it.

Right, young people discover everything for the first time, young people live intensively and have the strength to try out more. There are no nights like the nights when you discover nightlife, and there certainly is no love like the very first love. The first travels are especially exciting, and the same could be said about the first serious intellectual enterprises, the first jobs, the first experiences as a financially independent being.

Still, older people who grant this but insist on the advantages of aging definitely have a point. For, in fact, young people do enjoy life, but they also suffer a lot (that is why the concept "teenage Angst" exists, as well as one of the possible explanation for the popularity of, say, punk music). While the very first love has -for better or worse- an extreme impact, life shows you after a while that suffering related to love only seldom kills people, and that one uses to find other persons to love after a breakup - which is a thing no younger person dealing with an unhappy love story, for example, would even begin to understand.

Besides, the levels of love you begin to feel and to perceive after some years on this Earth are simply incomprehensible to younger people who are still in the process of discovering love - and here I mean not only love between two persons as in a partnership or sexual relationship, but also fraternal love, family-love, friendship, and even love for certain aesthetic artifacts or for certain ideas. Experience brings a certain detachment with it, it usually involves distance and a decrease -however pronounced- in passion, but it also implies deeper feelings - you only need to be old enough to notice that they are deeper.

It would seem, thus, that both younger and older people enjoy life, or suffer it, more or less equally - only differently. The experiences in life are, indeed, so different and so potentially variety, that it simply would not make sense to try to locate "joy" in any given age or life-period. Young people use to enjoy passionately and as if they were the only persons on Earth, while older people tend to be a little more mature about their own feelings and about their own position in the world. And this applies to suffering, as well.

So maybe it would be best to forget categorizations based on "objective" facts like age and really try to make the best of one's life regardless of how old one is. Maybe it would be better to try to enjoy life and to try to make as much other people as possible to enjoy it without caring about people's age. Does this mean I am an "older" person who is looking for "justifications" or "excuses"? I certainly think this is not the case, but I would let any given younger person to judge, and in the end, I do not seriously care - which could also mean that I have already arrived at this distant maturity... Which is OK with me! As long as it lasts...

Question #3: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Young people nowadays do not give enough time to helping their communities.

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Response #3:

Young people do contribute to the communities in some or the other way though not all do. But most of them get involved in social activities helping the communities and the society as well. Youngsters always have a special feeling for their country and the society they live in which makes them to contribute for the communities. But not all are with that spark, reasons being many like the atmosphere there are brought up, the personal experiences they had and etc. Many help their nations by offering social service and that's how they take time to help their communities.

Youngsters due to many reasons feel a lot for their nation. They have a very good spirit of helping the society. One reason could be the heartwarming delivery of civic lecture from an well versed professor. It could also be the different TV shows broadcasted on the theme of patriotism. Young people are engaged in their colleges with variety of tasks. Most of them point to their responsibility towards their nations. The classroom lectures and the general conversation among the peers makes them to think about how well they can do for the betterment of the society. Once the thought occurs, the very first answer would be to get involved in social activities by joining a community if not many. I can cite few examples from my personal life. There was this conversation among my peer group with our lecturer guiding us. Suddenly, the technical aspects of my country were related with the political issues. On further discussion, it came to my notice that the infants too were the victims for the country's citizen's carelessness towards the society. We started by browsing for communities doing good social service. We all joined it and helped it in encouraging children to opt education over work. We helped a charity home from being devastated by filing a petition in the high court and giving a consistent strong support. In my experience of getting involved in such activities I realised that there are many students and youngsters trying to do something for the nation by joining and forming communities. I think things have improved when compared to past regarding the young people. Their interests are quite of a matured kind and contribute to the society one or the other way. A living and popular example of youngsters taking enough time to help the society is "LOK PARITRAN", a party formed by five Indian ex-students of IIT's. It is lucid that they take out more than enough time to help for the nation's betterment. But I admit that not all youngsters take out time for the nation or communities. There are few who don't take time at all and wander here and there ticking their moments away. Be it any community, not all show up active participation. Few of them keep themselves away from such things intentionally and few are not aware of such activities. Few of the youngsters are too busy with their academics to even think of extra curricular activities. Few stand right considering their situations and circumstances and few don't as they don't come forward though they have a chance to. But most of the youth has focussed and is focussing on improving situations around. They join communities and aim for accomplishments that serve better to the society.

Though not all young people take out time for social activities, majority of them do. Few take out a little time and few quite a good time. There are people from the youth who dedicate themselves to communities. Coming to a stand would be very difficult because of the variety of people living and acting according to their circumstances. On and on the, youngsters do contribute to the communities by taking out enough time, but not all.

Question #4: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Most advertisements make products seem much better than they really are.

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Response #4:

Advertisement is now regarded as one of the greatest industries in the twenty first century. The fundamental philosophies of advertisements are obvious-to create a better impression of the product the advertisement is describing in the minds of potential customers. As communication technologies and psychology theories advanced considerably over the last century, the effects and power of the advertisements outfitted with high sophisticated computer generated amazing visual scenes and sound effects, grew more and more powerful in convincing the customers that "this" product is wonderful, impeccable, to a extent often exceeds the reality!

Even about ten years ago, this unbelievable strength of advertisement had emerged for a long time. I remember that when I was a child in elementary school (probably the second grade), I was fascinated with the afternoon advertisement of the Little Sun beverage. The TV advertisement created a false image that the bottle of the soda, which, of course delicately decorated with wings, could really fly, and a lot of children could follow it and find a mysterious land in which they could enjoy playing there with cartoon stars. However, when I got this bottle as my birthday gift, I was disillusioned that it is JUST a toy, not a creature of any kind. Therefore, I hereby denounce the tricks employed in the advertisements that beautify products improperly.

Moreover, we can see the capacity of advertisement to exaggerate the merits of the products by discussing the process of the advertisement creation. First, a market survey is conducted, in which the subconscious desires of people are analysed and taken advantage of. For example, the common illnesses are severe impediment for people who travel around all the time, so the advertisers know that if they could trigger the travelers subconscious fear of getting sick during their trips by citing a example in which a officer is assigned an extremely crucial job oversea, and any delay can cause a dreadful lose of his firm's profit. In this case, a illness can be a so terrible happening that the person want to avoid desperately, and now, a tricky advertiser can manipulate the story. He can say that by taking a kind of medicine, the traveler avoided a disease which would bother him if he hadn't eat the pills. Thereby, by constructing this plot, it seemed that the pill worth a lot, because "without this pill, the company would lose a hundred million because the man taking responsibility would be impeded by severely illness", However, this impression is false and a pill is just a pill not comparable to a million dollars, but learned advertisers can link a pill with a hundred million dollars in the mind of the consumers subconsciously. As a result, the advertisement created a image that the pill which in fact worth only a cent can be as valuable as a million dollars, which is horribly better than the pill itself! Second, the visual image produced by highly developed computer technologies entitle the advertisements to penetrate the watchers' defenses. When we watch a advertisement, we conduct a analysis of how valuable this product is by using our past experiences and knowledges. However, those grandiose images can easily confuse our mind and hinder our ability to reason effectively. Therefore, by obstruct of own capacity of define how good a

product is for ourselves, the advertisement actually confuses us and gives us a false image about the products, and the advertisers have no motivation to create the false image inferior than the reality.

Question #5: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

In twenty years, there will be fewer cars in use than there are today.

Use reasons and examples to support your answer.

Response #5:

Man's pursuit of technology has brought him in today's world where everything designed and made by him gives an affirmation to the dreams he had sought for, the dream to live happily and comfortably. In the light of that dream, and various cogent reasons, I disapprove of the statement mentioned in the topic. We are certainly going to have more cars in use in twenty years from now, as we have now.

The question put up in the topic may be valid on two counts. Firstly, because of the depletion of oil in earth's reserves, fuel's shortage could be a driving force of reduction in number of cars. Secondly, the alarming rate at which the pollution is increasing may amount to a strict ban on the cars that emit harmful gases. But both these reasons fail to assess the parameters completely they seek to build their case on. The argument against these points is alternatives.

Neo-Malthusian economists believed that increased use of natural resources will tend to increase their costs with time. However, the famous Simon-Elrich wager in 1980 toppled that theory. While Elrich said that prices of five natural resources (which they selected) is bound to decrease in ten years, Simon placed a bet that it would reduce. The prices actually suffered a decline! The simple reason is alternatives. As society's needs grow and resources fall short, various alternatives come up and keep the momentum alive. In the similar vein, we can expect the cars running on alternative fuels rather than petroleum. Billions of dollars, today, are spent on research on alternative sources of energy. We even have countless cities where use of CNG (compressed natural gas) has replaced petrol as the fuel. The advancements in technology are sure to pave way for the solar cars in future. All this will experience a rise in the number of cars.

The same alternative fuels act as harmless substances to the atmosphere, and amount to a reduction in the pollution. It is imperative to mention here, that appportioned study of the air sample has suggested that most of the cities, the air pollution is caused more by the factories than by automobiles. With the Kyoto Protocol in place, the countries have now decided and taken firm steps to curb pollution, not necessarily by removing vehicles plying on the roads, but by ensuring that they conform to the Euro III, Euro IV standards, and also checking the constituents of exhausts from factories. With possibilities of more ore countries joining the Protocol, cars remain invulnerable.

The past also corroborates the fact that cars will increase. The question of reduction in their number is not new, and even earlier, skeptics shared this viewpoint. But data suggests that countries, especially after the globalisation and liberalisation, have suffered a dramatic rise in the number of cars in past few years, and researchers have predicted that because the purchasing power abilities of people in most countries is steadily increasing, production of cars is not going to cease.

The space is also not a problem. With the advent of newer mechanisms of building high rise buildings with parking at the basements and also the construction of various flyovers on top of the other, assures that man is ever thinking and persevering individual, who works hard and keeps his inventions alive.

The rise in the love for automobiles, whether in the form of Formula 1 racing or automobile engineering, constantly over the years, is going to ensure that new cars with newer designs and comfort levels continue plying in the streets. When we live in the information superhighway, transportation remains crucial point of improvisation. In this view, if we need to pace ourselves with the fast moving world, we need to save time and act modern. Giving arguments against the technological developments that are impending is belittling our own selves. We must look at the bright side of the picture. The cars today, have impregnated into the very social fabric of people, and it has become inalienable part of their lives. Separation of cars from humanity is very difficult, given the fact that it has become a necessity rather than just an accessory. Coming time will witness a surge in the number of cars, whose concept, design and power will outweigh the ones that we have today.

Question #6: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

The best way to travel is in a group led by a tour guide.

Use reasons and examples to support your answer.

Response #6:

I agree that the best way to travel is in a group with a tour guide if the destination is one that's new to you.

If one is visiting a country for the first time, and especially if one doesn't know how to speak the native language, and is completely unfamiliar with the visiting location, it is best to go with a tour guide. Tour guides are very qualified and have a lot of knowledge about the country's history, customs, food, traditions, culture and must-see monuments. They also provide useful help regarding hotels and good eating and entertainment locations. This is very beneficial because not only one sees and experiments a new country, but also one gets to know about it, to grow as a person and as a citizen, expanding one's horizons getting to see more than meets the eye, experiencing the history of the place, the way people behave and live in that specific place, one gets to feel embraced by the country and its culture in a way that engages you to it, in a way you'll never forget and hardly will experience again.

The first time I visited Italy and learned about its artists, its culture, music and history I fell in love with it, the first time I got to interact with its people I was certain I would come back one day and live the rest of my life there, in Italy, in Rome... I learned that there's more to Italy than a Coliseum, there's more than the language and there's more than the famous 'gondolas' to it, it's what's behind all those creations, the thoughts, the magic, the inspiration and the passionate drive what makes that country so beautiful, passionate and perfect in my eyes. That's why I believe it is better to travel with a tour guide, it takes you farther, you get to travel not only with your body, but with your heart and mind.

However, if the destination is a place one's already familiar with, and specially if one's traveling with a partner, or in a honeymoon, it would be much more comfortable to go as a couple, without any tour guides, rediscovering the country by one's own means and visiting the places one wants to visit, not necessarily the most visited and popular places, but for instance, one's favorite restaurant, one that probably not much people know about, but that it's excellent and brings back beautiful memories. Also if one's traveling with the whole family, especially with small kids, it would be very difficult to pay attention to the tour guide without being interrupted by a tantrum and fights between brothers and sisters, so it would not be the best idea to go with a tour guide.

For instance, I am from Venezuela even though I'm living in the US, and I think I know pretty much everything about my country, so visiting my country with a tour guide wouldn't make much sense to me, since I already know it and the places I like to visit and that are so special to me, and it would only take time from me visiting my best friends and my family, all of whom live there, and since my point of visiting would be to see my friends and family again, having a tour guide would only be an obstacle in the way of enjoying my trip, therefore it wouldn't be beneficial for me in any sense.

To conclude, I think its a great idea to visit a country with a tour guide if that place is new to you and you would like to know and learn about it, nurturing your mind. However if its a place that's already familiar to you, it would be much more enjoyable to go with a partner and enjoy the country as you know it.

Question #7: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

It is more important for students to understand ideas and concepts than it is for them to learn facts.

Use reasons and examples to support your answer.

Response #7:

In any kind of educative, teaching, or learning institution, there are many ways in which classes (specifically academic) are imparted. Many teachers like their students to understand the ideas and concepts they are learning, and other teachers like them to learn about the same things by teaching facts about it. According to both of these ideas of learning, is it better to understand ideas and concepts of a certain topic? Or is it better to learn the facts about the same topic?

I think that it is very important to learn facts about any topic you want to learn about. Learning facts is something that will help you in the future because they are very useful. For example, learning the facts about a certain Roman leader who lost the empire will help you in the future, if you are a leader of any kind of institution, to avoid committing the same mistakes as he did. Another important thing about facts is that they can never be changed and that most of them are important to know about in order to understand people who are "experts" in the career you are applying to. In that way, you would understand what they're talking about if they mention any of these facts. Finally, facts are important because they fill your general knowledge on many aspects (as they say: knowledge is power).

In my opinion, understanding ideas and concepts about any topic is something very important in life. Understanding ideas and concepts about anything will help you to apply these same ideas and topics in the future and make things right, thus becoming a practical person. When you understand a concept or an idea, you don't need to learn anymore about it because then you can use it or apply in any way you want, especially in a job or a career. When you understand a concept, you can even explain it in many ways or in your own words (it's better than memorizing things). If you understand an idea, then you can apply the knowledge you have about it and turn it into something practical. For example, if you study to be a mechanical engineer, and you understand the whole concept of car motors, then you can be able to use this concept to fix motors, or to explain or teach others about motors in a simpler way than how you learned it, so that they can apply the concept in a practical way. In this example, if you keep doing this or applying your concepts on motors, you can even become the owner of an important car company or an important workshop.

After these explanations and showing my reasoning, I think I agree with the statement that says "It is more important for students to understand ideas and concepts than it is for them to learn facts". This probably sounds too rude, but I really think it is better to be a practical person than just being a "smartass", and you can achieve this by understanding ideas and concepts as a student to apply them afterwards in real life. And who knows, maybe if you do this, in the future these ideas or concepts may help in your career or in any day life event. This is why I completely agree with the statement expressed before.

Question #8: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Successful people try new things and take risks rather than only doing what they already know how to do well.

Use reasons and examples to support your answer.

Response #8:

I do agree with the previous statement, for I am convinced that people who try new things are able to innovate and discover new trains of thought that would otherwise not be discovered. If these people only did what they already know how to do well, they would always experience the same results, feeling that they do not bring much added value to the society they live in.

Moreover, by taking risks and daring to go where no other individuals have gone, successful people are not only driving forces of their communities, but also leaders that motivate other people to achieve their own goals.

I will further support my view with the following approaches:

- Psychological considerations.
- My own experience.

As an Industrial Engineer from the Mexican Institute of Technology, I acquired a thorough quantitative and analytical grounding. Fortunately, my coursework also included studying behavioural finance, subject that enabled me to find an interest in psychology, social science I found complemented my understanding of efficiency and the human factor particularly well.

Through reading extensively on the subject, I began feeling a particular appeal for the works of T.J. Walker, an outstanding social researcher who has focused on the practical aspects of psycho-sociology particularly well. In one of his books, "Riddles of the Human Mind", he explicitly entails the topic of innovation and risk taking.

He mentions that people who are able to innovate and take risks in order to achieve their goals are usually much more self-fulfilled individuals. They are also much more goal oriented and able to motivate people more effectively.

In my country there is an old saying that says that "what one has eaten, travelled and danced is one's to keep and can never be taken away." This is indeed a wise saying that I myself have witnessed with my own experience.

I have travelled many countries, and in every case I have been exposed to new experiences that have tempered my criterion and made me more open to people's views, ideas and approaches. Since I try to befriend people from the places I visit, this insight turns even more vivid for me as I am able to share a much more personal experience by doing so.

During one of my trips I faced the problem of having to deal with individuals who were always afraid of taking risks and doing things differently. However, after talking to them, I finally convinced them of approaching life with a different view, so they realized that they were able to experience much more personal satisfaction by doing things differently and by deciding freely how to deal with a particular topic.

In closing this presentation, I ponder upon the fact that many of us who work in Banking tend to present our ideas in an overwrought manner, and that in clarifying our views we end up complicating them even further.

However, in analyzing the complex issue of trying new things and taking risks, I also do not want to appear simplistic, but instead try to maintain my presentation candid and simple, convinced of Martin Fisher's quote that "knowledge is a process of piling up facts, wisdom lies in their simplification."