
History Of A Gap Year Concept

The history of the gap year is an extensive and rich one. The history of the gap year has its roots in post-war Britain. Leaders at the time believed that by giving the new generation the freedom to explore and get involved with new cultures, there would be a stronger chance at achieving tranquility in the world. Macca Sherifi states “The '60s was a time of freedom of speech and independence, a time of cultural and social revolution, and the decade that gap years first became popularized” (Sherifi). During the 1960s, many went on what is now known as a 'hippy trail', traveling to destinations such as India, Bangladesh, and Serbia. During these years the new generation was starting to get rid of that after-war atmosphere and grew the confidence to take a gap year. The purpose of a gap year is about overcoming new challenges and envisioning new ideas. It's about living the best life an individual can live and grasp the world of opportunity. The 70s saw as much rise in popularity of taking a gap year as the 60s did. Gap years continued to flourish throughout the 80s and early 90s and culturally at the time, Backpacking was the popular thing to do (Sherifi). Independent travel and backpacking were getting easier, safer, and most importantly, cheaper. The evolution of the gap year was substantially influenced by the backpacking culture of the mid-80s to early 90s. Today, going on a gap year is as popular as ever. Backpacking and traveling are available to all who choose to do so.

Currently, more and more people from all over the world are taking gap years, especially from the United States. According to Winterline, Gap Years came to the United States in the early 1980s through the work of Cornelius H. Bull, the founder of the Center for Interim Programs. Since its assimilation to the United States, Gap Years have become very well known, embodying every beneficial aspect including increasing self-awareness, learning about different cultural perspectives, and experimenting with possible future careers, both in the United States and internationally. Since its general acceptance into America's social circle, gap years have served the added benefit of relieving that sense of academic burnout. In fact, Academic burnout remains one of the biggest reasons why students take a gap year in the first place (Winterline).

Although the gap year is a fairly new concept in the United States, it has been an important milestone in European culture for years now. According to the Gap Year Association, gap years date back to the seventeenth-century belief that traveling to the cultural hubs of Europe was a vital part of the education of any sophisticated young person. Since then gap years have changed considerably, but the nature of it has remained the same; it is a time to develop new skills, learn independence and find one's identity. (qt. in EF Gap Year) One of the best examples of taking a gap year is none other than President Barack Obama's daughter, Malia. Malia decided to take a gap year right after completing high school and before attending Harvard. Some people support this decision while others belittle it. In the words of the gap year association, maybe Malia Obama's decision will give a boost to the Gap Year concept in the USA making it as accepted a part of the educational trajectory as elsewhere (Gap Year Association).

Today, hundreds of thousands of people are taking gap years all over the world. Many travel to places such as Australia, Malaysia, and Peru for months to years on end. A gap year can be anywhere, for any length of time, doing anything. Almost all of the people taking a gap year are

looking for a reinforcing experience, and there are lots of different ways to achieve it. The only thing stopping an individual is his or her imagination (Sherifi).

A senior finally graduate high school after completing 12 years of schooling and plans to attend college, but the senior is left with the feeling of burnout and doubt. Each year, a growing number of graduates are choosing to take a year off before continuing with post-secondary education. Taking a gap year has many benefits that include but not limited to: a way to recover from burnout; providing the opportunity to individualized experience; providing an opportunity to earn money; and an opportunity for an individual to boost their chances academically and on their work resume by developing new skills. Deciding to take a gap year or not in it itself is a stressful decision for those thinking about it. Critics argue that taking a gap year would negatively affect graduates as they have trouble getting back into the academic flow. With careful planning and consideration, an individual would be able to take advantage of the benefits of a gap year. Altogether, taking a gap year would provide a positive effect to a recent typical graduate to be successful.

One of the benefits of taking a gap year is the opportunity of recovering from burnout. According to the research done by Nina Hoe, over 82 percent of students took a gap year due to academic exhaustion. Completing 12 years of schooling is a great accomplishment and should not be viewed as meaningless. High school could be rigorous as students have to deal with classes, sports, clubs, and college applications. Not to mention that schooling gives out standardized testing continuously; which barely allows time for an individual to explore potential interests. As well as recovering from stress, a gap year can be used to deal with mental issues among students. According to the student conservation association, "over 30% of students seeking mental health services report having seriously considered committing suicide at some point in their lives, often finding themselves unable to cope with the issues" (Student Conservation Association). This is where gap years can work as a productive, brief intermission from stress, helping students develop the right mindset and equipping them with greater knowledge to deal with emotional and academic stress. A gap year could relieve the feeling of baggage that graduates had to endure and allow them to figure things out. A graduate would be able to use a gap year to rejuvenate their commitment to post-secondary education to be successful.

Another benefit from taking a gap year is allowing the opportunity for an individual to find their own identity and creating new experiences for themselves. According to the research done by Nina Hoe, over 92 percent of students took a gap year to gain life experiences and grow personally. No matter what an individual uses their time during a gap year, they will inevitably know themselves better. As a person grows and sees the challenges of the world like poverty and energy use, they will begin to obtain a new perspective of the world itself. With an extra year to use, an individual could try something they have always wanted to experience. A graduate could also use their time to find out if they want to commit to a career or not. If the career a person seeks requires many years of education and is costly, it would best to check if the career is the right match by doing internships and volunteer work. Gap years come in different shapes and sizes, but one thing they all have in common is that they all give an individual a chance to find their role in the world. That flourishing of the individual would in turn make them more productive and lead them to more success.

Post-secondary education continues to rise in cost every year. Many graduates are left with a serious amount of student debt after completing college. According to Rebecca Safier, "the average Class of 2016 grad is leaving college with \$37,172 in debt" (Safier). Even though some

students who take a gap year spend money to travel for a once-lifetime experience, most spend time to save up money for tuition and other needs. A gap year could provide an individual with the opportunity to earn money if that time is spent working. That individual can take up a part-time job, whether it's in the field they want to pursue or not, to save up for the future. A person could also use that time to look and apply for scholarships, grants, and any other financial aid to make college more affordable. To ensure the best experience, doing research is the optimal thing to do.

One of the biggest benefits of taking a gap year is providing an individual with the opportunity to build their experience to help their work resume and college application. For example, A person could spend their gap year exploring different aspects of mechanical engineering; subsequently, that person would put that experience on their college application to stress how that experience has influenced them. The experiences gained through a gap year would increase an individual's chances of getting into the perfect college for them. The skills acquired from those experiences would also positively contribute to the major that the individual's in. That extra work experience would also make that person more qualified in that field of work when looking for a job or internship. "In a survey for gapyear.com in 2011, 63% of UK HR professionals said that a constructive gap year spent volunteering or gaining work experience overseas made their job application stand out"(qtd. In Sherifi)In general, the experience obtained does nothing but the benefit that individual.

Some detractors believe that taking a gap year would make students unable to back into the academic curriculum. Many worries that once a high school graduate gets a taste of freedom experienced during a gap year, they may not want to continue post-secondary education. Critics also worry that once individuals begin to have responsibilities with jobs and working on their experience, they will become overwhelmed with their duties to go back to post-secondary education. Those against taking a gap year also states that students have already developed study habits and skills; if they take a break from that, they would have trouble relearning those study and time-management skills. Jessica Dickler research proves that the effect is actually the opposite of what critics worry "AGA research found that 90 percent of students who take a structured gap year return to school within a year, and are more likely to graduate on time and with a higher grade-point average"(Dickler). Most colleges are becoming increasingly lenient with students taking a gap year and schools like Princeton are actually encouraging it. But some schools are strict on the fact of taking a gap year: "Other colleges, however, are less supportive or disallow gap years altogether"(Dickler). Students taking a gap year have more benefits than cons, so a proper solution for the future generation would be to eliminate the strictness of the colleges that discourage gap years.

Graduates that plan to take a gap year would be able to enjoy all its benefits to become successful in post-secondary education. The opportunity to recover from burnout after going through 12 years of schooling is advantageous; subsequently rejuvenating a student's commitment to education. It also gives students time to work on mental issues so they will be in the right mindset by the time they continue post-secondary education. Gap years also allow an individual to flourish and have a new perspective on the world around them. Graduates would also be able to recognize if they want to proceed in a certain career path or not. And, potentially the most intriguing benefit is using a gap year to save up money and be more competitive in the job market and college application. Although some critics argue that most students wouldn't even return to education after a gap year, research shows that 90 percent of students do return. To make students more successful in post-secondary education, taking a gap year may lead to

more productivity and effectiveness in future generations.

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