

Post-graduate study or the job market?

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Post-graduate study -Pros

- There are often no jobs out there anyway.
- Primary degrees are sometimes of poor quality in the current tertiary education environment in Uganda so a Masters is of much more value.
- A Master's degree could give the edge when applying for a job.
- A Master's shows that the person has set the direction for their career.

Pros (contd)

- Post-graduate study in another country can be enriching and enjoyable.
- In Uganda, it can be carried out on a part time basis.
- Many degrees are available as distance learning
- A post-graduate degree is generally more benchmarked and of a higher calibre than local primary degrees.
- It widens one's horizons and exposure.
- It raises one's standards to compete at an international level.

Post-graduate degree - cons

- It is expensive.
- Time consuming.
- May limit your career choices at an early stage.
- Can be more theory that you still don't know how to apply and therefore of less value.
- Can actually lose you the opportunities for career development within your own organisation.
- If it is part-time or distance learning, it distracts you from your work.

So what is the right choice?

- That depends:
 - - on the maturity of the individual.
 - - on the primary degree which they have taken.
 - - on the experience the person already has.
 - - on what their company feels about this choice.
 - - on their possibilities for employment subsequent to the post graduate degree.

Factors to be taken into account in making the choice

- Finances available.
- Employment opportunities as a result.
- Experience you already have.
- Generally speaking, a post-graduate degree will be of more benefit if the person has some practical experience, which they can link their degree to.
- There is a great gap in Uganda between theory and practice.

From an employers point of view?

- Some employers select on the basis of pieces of paper – this is poor employment practice.
- Some look for the potential in the person (which is only partly demonstrated by the piece of paper).
- A good company will take on a person at entry level and show them the career pathway within the organisation.
- Sometimes employers view their staff going off to get more qualifications as a nuisance.
- If they view it as positive, they are likely to facilitate the further study.
- As generalisation – I am not impressed by a graduate who immediately goes off to do a masters.

What does impress me as an employer?

- Someone who is keen.
- A good knowledge of English.
- The ability to express themselves and be articulate.
- The ability to communicate well in writing.
- A person who is flexible and willing to try different tasks.
- Someone who is well mannered and well turned out.
- Someone who has taken the trouble to understand something about the company.
- A person who can demonstrate commitment.

Post-graduate degree or the job market

- As a generalisation:
- Get some experience in the real world first
- Then decide what further study is necessary in terms of your career development, make an informed decision.
- If you are in a good company, bring your employer into your decision and listen to what he has to say – you may be surprised by the results.

The trend in Uganda

- The opportunity comes up for 'further study'.
- The decision is made – sometimes not even by the person but by their family.
- The employer (if they have a job) is not informed until the person has left or is just about to leave.
- There is no consideration as to the lost opportunity value of the decision, it is all assumed to be good.
- The person comes back with a piece of paper and either works for an aid agency or the government.

Special Cases

- Professional qualifications
- Accountancy - ACCA
- Post-graduate medical qualifications
- But even in these career pathways the timing should be right.

Post-graduate qualifications

- At the right time
- In the right place