

## IBEI Graduation Talk (Barcelona July 3, 2017)

*Pablo Astorga*

It wonderful to be here today sharing with you this moment. And it is a great pleasure to have the opportunity to address this year's cohort of IBEI graduates on behalf of your teachers. First, of all, CONGRATULATIONS! You made it, and you deserve to celebrate and be celebrated tonight!

Also, CONGRATULATIONS and special thanks to the parents and friends and relatives that have supported you during your studies at IBEI.

You are the 13th cohort to complete the Master's in International Relations;

the 5th cohort of the Master's in International Security;

the 4th cohort of the Master's in Public Policy (Erasmus Mundus).

And the first cohort of the new Master in International Development.

A total of 126 potential graduates today who all are very special to us. I say potential as you still need to write your dissertation...

The question of where are you going to be five years down the road has probably been on your mind already.

I can offer you two answers from different sources:

I can see in my "crystal ball" a brilliant future of success and fulfilment for all of you... But you'll have to excuse my bias here.

I also have survey results carried out in the Summer of 2015 on IBEI graduates for the years 2010-2014. Here are some key findings:

First, some good news for you and your parents:

- "the time between job search and finding a job is less than a year"
- "about 75% of graduates are in a full-time job"
- and "the majority are working in global institutions, mostly private ones"

Now the good news for the airlines:

- "2 out of 5 graduates (40%) are working in a country that is not their place of birth!"

And on the question: How much will I be earning? - *my crystal ball fails me...*

Money aside, let me share some advice for the future:

You need to develop two qualities which will help you through life: one is ambition; the other is resilience.

In my experience, these are crucial for success and fulfilment.

Ambition: not in the negative sense, as in "ruthless ambition"; but, rather, positively, in terms of a sense of purpose. You need to set goals and pursue them. Of course, as

you will change, so they are bound to change too over time. But focusing on goals and ambitions is vital.

Resilience: I define as the capacity to recover from setbacks. There will be clouds in your way. But if you fail, keep trying; if you fail again, try again... Think of Tomas Edison's tribulations with the development of the electric light bulb.

And remember also Maya Angelou's words: "we may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated"

And the thing that will keep you going through hard times is focusing on your goals and ambitions.

Let's talk about Success: it is usually said that the only place success comes before work is in the dictionary. But things seem to be different nowadays with so many examples of young people that have made it without, apparently, putting in too much effort: Silicon Valley billionaires (Zukerman), celebrities (Kardashians), singers without much talent (?).

But keep things in perspective and still give some credit to the old wisdom in the dictionary. And keep in mind that "success" is always relative to your goals – whatever they may be. You need to define success in your terms.

Regarding Fulfilment: your career path is unlikely to be a straight line. You may try many roads until you discover your real vocation or where you want to make your contribution.

Remember Henri Rousseau, the French post-impressionist painter, who only started painting at age 50 after spending many years as a tax collector.

"Life's a long song" so don't give up on yourself.  
It's never too late to change direction

Let me also share some practical advice. Here's three tips for your work life:

1. "Be a good team player". Support your colleagues and recognise their value.
2. "Keep learning". Life is a constant process of developing new skills.
3. And, most importantly, whatever your job description, avoid at all costs "pissing off your boss" – focus on what he/she needs you to deliver.

To finish off, I'll tell you a little story:

A couple of years ago, on a sunny morning around this time of the year, I was in the train coming from home to the IBEI. At some point in the journey a gypsy started to sing and talk – more the second than the first – hoping to benefit from the generosity of the passengers.

I was concentrating on reading the newspaper and was not paying much attention to him...until he said the following:

*"No canta el pájaro porque es feliz; el pájaro es feliz porque canta"*

Meaning:

“The bird does not sing because he is happy; the bird is happy because he sings”

I thought that was worth a euro.

Later on, like a good academic, I did a bit of research and found out that he was paraphrasing a quote from the American Philosopher William James.

This is a thought I would like you to treasure.

Happiness is a journey, not a destination

Please stay in touch with us and with each other. Stop by when you are in Barcelona; we will be very pleased to see you. And, most importantly, enjoy your celebrations tonight and in the coming days. You deserve it! THANK YOU.

Pablo Astorga

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