
S-Cubed's reaction to the article “Do Not Choose Science”

The Science Students' Society (S-Cubed) would like to express its disagreement with the issues raised in the article “Do Not Choose Science” by Dr. Ivan Debono, published in the Sunday Times of Malta of the 14th October 2012.

While the author has every right to express his frustration, S-Cubed feels the said article is misguided and short-sighted in its assertions. The article mistakenly claims that science no longer offers a reasonable career path and that a career in science is restricted to a lifetime in research. Contrary to this, students enrolling for a science degree certainly do not all do so with the intention of pursuing a career in academia – and the career opportunities available to all science graduates is definitely not limited to just that. In fact, although a science degree does not lead to a specific profession it does open doors to a multitude of career paths, be it in academia, industry, policy making, government, media, management and business.

The article also claims that Ph.D. and post-doctoral students get a real job much later in life than other professions. This is not necessarily true because it has now become common practice for individuals to start working after completing their bachelor or master degree and then pursue a doctoral and/or a post-doctoral degree later on, as a means of furthering their own career.

Additionally, one must not make the mistake of considering a doctoral degree merely as a means of enhancing one's job prospects but rather as recognition of a period of original research and the fruit of one's hard earned labour doing what s/he is passionate about. Obtaining a Ph.D. is a journey of fulfilment driven by the desire to improve one's education and critical thinking and problem-solving capabilities (which is an end in itself).

Although the author may be justified in saying that the financial benefits associated with a career in academia may be disproportionate to the amount of work and dedication such a career requires, S-Cubed feels that this should definitely not be considered a legitimate reason to discourage more individuals to take up science. Rather, there is general consensus that more investment is required to encourage more students to enrol for doctoral and post-doctoral degrees. While S-Cubed agrees with the author that locally, career opportunities for doctoral and post-doctoral graduates may be scarce, with increased job mobility within Europe and beyond, the

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opportunities have increased substantially. This is not to say that there are no challenges to overcome and the competition remains fierce, but at least the possibilities are there.

S-Cubed believes that the article may possibly have been written after a personal negative experience. It contains unsubstantiated claims which do not reflect the current situation with regards to the employment prospects of Ph.D. students. In our opinion, such a statement aimed at discouraging students from pursuing a career in science was totally uncalled for. However Dr. Debono's article has its merits in instigating a much needed discussion and S-Cubed would welcome any debate on this issue.

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The Science Students' Society (S-Cubed / S³) represents all students within the Faculty of Science and works to unite them through social and educational activities throughout the academic year. S-Cubed also publishes the magazine 'In Touch' twice yearly with science related articles. For more information visit www.scubed.org.mt



IOP Institute of Physics

16th October 2012

