

How has the ASEM-DUO opportunity influenced someone's life? - Tapping into global opportunities and let's be a doer

Somebody's turning point

Everyone has turning point or unforgettable moments in their life in their way. Having it or not yet. It could be good or terrible either way. Fortunately for me, I had a lucky chance and it has influenced me a lot. I often tell my mom and close friends how grateful I am to be able to have this opportunity.

In short, before traveling to Sweden via an exchange student program, I was a person who barely threaded the water due to invisible and endless competition in society. Somehow I thought I was already behind the game since I entered university 2 years later than others. But, on the other hand, I wanted to be an adventurer and explorer deep inside. It was the desire to be who I am and not be the person the world expects of me. I was overwhelmed by the tons of tasks I had to complete continuously. Once one task is done, another task follows immediately. I was hustle and bustle to find my place among others.

To be a 'Doer'

Well, my stay in Sweden was simple. 'Go for it'. It was my first official experience abroad and everything was a new challenge for me. Due to financial difficulties, I thought that might not happen in my life. So I knew how precious the opportunity was and didn't want to waste even a few seconds. I was willing to jump into the 'new world'. For example, corridor parties held every weekend were one of them. Once I hear there is a party, wherever it is I always attend there.

Was it always fun? Nej (No in Swedish). Sometimes, it was awkward and I was stiff. I also felt like a misfit. Nevertheless, I thought that was part of the way we live. From time to time, you feel not welcomed. But, in some cases, it takes time and I wanted to face head to it. The reason why I behaved actively because I really have a deep desire to taste the world as much as possible. I wanted to be a 'Doer'. After one month, I was introduced to a group of German girls. We did hiking, cooking, and several other activities together. That was mostly my first experience doing it and we still keep in touch until now.

In those days, I used to cook 'Hoddeok' for my friends and it was incredibly popular. While staying in Sweden I tried to meet many people from different countries. It was literally an eye-opening chance to broaden my horizons. Diverse people, diverse personality. Nothing could go

wrong and there was no correct answer. It doesn't matter whether you are on track or not in your life. On one day, I brought my homemade sandwich to the park and started eating it on a bench while looking at the scenery. It wasn't that special an experience, but I hadn't done it in my life. Probably, there was no room for composure and breath. Now, I do it sometimes to enjoy the great weather to the fullest.

During that period, I walked a lot. I think I believed at that time like 'The more I walk, the bigger world I will have'. Moreover, I gained a deeper understanding of the beauty of diversity. In Sweden, I could be a friend with someone who is 10 years older than me. I think diversity is one of the many factors that brought me to current work place.

A year later, after an exchange program via ASEM-DUO, I visited Sweden again to do an internship as part of a government program. It is clear that it was another opportunity which influenced my mindset and determination and made it solid. I mean 'Pay it forward'.

Pay it forward

During the last 3 years, I have been captivated by the key word called 'The meritocracy trap,' in which a person's abilities are valued above everything else, such as money, social life, etc. It seems fair at first glance, but there are complicated dark sides behind it. In short, we tend to regard an individual's ability as an individual's effort and responsibility. However, nobody really has time to consider the fact that we might have a 'head start' that we've probably gotten from their birth. Inequality of opportunities has become a hot topic and has been discussed several times recently for those reasons. Definitely, we need to think thoughtfully about this key word.

What about me? I would say there have been two turning points in my life which triggered me to figure out about my luck. First time, it was 2012 when I got the opportunity to participate in ASEM-DUO for the first time. As for the second time, I had a health issue personally in 2020. After all those experiences, I have decided to do something about helping marginalized people in society. Since then, I have done it in my own way when I am available.

Any plans?!

I've told you how it has affected me so far. Now I'm about to tell you my future plan set by those opportunities & experiences. It's been several years since I worked as an office worker. However, I have a big dream. Shoot for the moon! Someday I will be a philanthropist in the end. There is no doubt that ASEM-DUO has had a significant impact on it. So how would I reach that

goal? Let's see. I am doing my best to be the best version of myself. Even though it might not happen for this lifetime, we should live our lives to the fullest.

Once again, the key thing that I learned through the period in Sweden is that I should be grateful for everything that I have experienced. We all need to pay it forward someday in some way and this doesn't necessarily have to be a significant help. The more you share, the more you have in return.

Thank you.



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The party must go on



UMEA Mariehem Park (Where I used to go often)