

# Myths and the way they influence undergraduate education essay sample

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Myths are ideas that are believed by people but may not be true accounts. In education, there are numerous myths that exist within the student community concerning the quality of schools that they choose for their studies. How students determine the quality of a school is shaped by myths. Not only do students use these myths to label schools but also some faculty members and school administrators do cling onto them to define the school. Some view that the quality of a school is based on the amount of money that the students pay as fees. Others see the quality of a school in terms of the number of the faculty members and faculty salaries.

Even others label a school based on the size of the library and other facilities. In addition, some other people see quality of a school in terms of its prestige ranking. All these parameters may truly define the quality of a school but it is not always the case. There is more to it before a school is of enough quality to produce better equipped students. The purpose of any institution is to produce qualified students to the field. The study carried out by Pascarella and Terenzini (1994) shows that myths held by undergraduate students are not true because they do not always lead to qualified students. In this essay, some key myths identified by Pascarella and Terenzini (1994) regarding the undergraduate education in America will be analyzed.

The first myth that students hold is that the institution prestige and reputation reflects educational quality. This myth is held by very many American undergraduate students. In fact, higher learning institutions that are ranked highly attract a lot of attention from the public. However, it is not true that high ranking in terms of prestige will produce better students in terms of the quality of education that they receive. It is just a convention

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believe that attending prestigious schools leads to better learning. There is enough evidence to suggest otherwise. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (1994), better learning is a function of the learning environment that the institution offers to its students. Its prestige has little to do with how students perform if the learning climate is unfavorable. It is important to note that institutions that are not prestigious end up producing better graduates than the prestigious institutions if a good learning atmosphere is offered. Therefore, school prestigious position does not necessarily make the institution better in terms of the quality of education it offers.

The second myth that is held by many people is that Historically Black Colleges do not provide as effective education for the black students as do the predominantly white institutions. This myth is not true. Black students in the Black colleges have been found to have competent education. They do not get any stress that is associated with racial discrimination. Notably, they don't suffer isolation that is prevalent in the white colleges. They therefore persist with their education and often, they are able to complete their university education with ease. Black students in white schools get frustrated out of racial discrimination. Most likely, some of them do not complete their university education as a result. Therefore, by comparison, black students in black schools are at an advantage over black students in white schools. This myth is therefore refuted and holds no water. There is no added advantage to a black student in a white school over a black student in a black school.

The third myth worth discussing with regard to how students label schools is that to be a good teacher, one has to be a good researcher. In most

prestigious institutions, faculty members are encouraged to do a lot of research. Most of them end up using more of their time researching rather than teaching. If this is the case, can it then be said that such a teacher who spends most the time researching is a good teacher? No. if enough time is not created for teaching, students don't perform well. This is reflected in those institutions that encourage a lot of research by going an extra mile to reward members of the faculty who do research. Students lack attention of the lecturers who spend most of their time researching. Their performance is greatly affected. The only time that a good research can become a good teacher, is if he or she is bringing back the research knowledge to the students in the classroom. That is to mean that unless the research is used to be part of learning, it does not help the students. In other words, it is not true that institutions that encourage research are the best institutions to learn from.

The fourth myth worth mentioning is that faculty members influence students learning only in the classroom. It is not true that faculty members influence their students only in the classroom. Their contact with the students outside the class also impacts the students learning experience. This is because the student has a perception that the faculty member is the same person both within the classroom and outside as well. Therefore, whatever he or she does will influence the student. In this regard, instructions given by the faculty members to the student must take into consideration the fact that teaching is not limited to the walls of the classroom alone. It extends outside the classroom. Therefore, this myth is not true. Those who hold it to be the truth must think otherwise.

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The fifth myth that students use to most often and that which has a great bearing in their academic performance is that student's academic performance and non-academic experiences are separate and unrelated areas of influence on student learning. Research has revealed that the student's academic performance is influenced by the student's general engagement with the campus life. These include participation in the non-academic activities such as actively participating in games and associations. These non-academic activities have an impact on the self-esteem of the student. Therefore, they influence how the student approaches his or her academic work. It even becomes more important if the non-academic activity that the student engages in has a direct link to the academic work that he or she partakes. For instance, participating in public debates boosts the academic performance of a person who is doing journalism courses. These observations make this myth irrelevant and false.

The last myth that requires attention is that a two-year college attendance does not give a student a good education experience. Most people think that short duration courses make students academically incompetent. This myth makes many institutions lengthen the duration of the courses they offer so that they appear as if they are of long duration. Most courses in the universities are four-year courses. However, research has established that two-year study gives a student enough competence as that of the student who takes four years doing the same course as long as the teaching was done well. In this regard, the students who do two-years course are as competent as those who do four-year course. Therefore, the myth is not true.

In my school, these myths are held. Many students confirm that they came to this school because of its prestigious ranking. Others came because they thought that the teaching staff was very qualified judging from the research work that had been published from them. Others chose this school because of the numerous facilities that it has. These include the library that is big enough, the number of lecture rooms in the school and the number of the faculty members. However, just like I have come to realize, many of them have come to notice that it is not what they thought about the school that determines their performance. They have realized that there is more to it. Most importantly, they have realized that unless the lecturer devotes enough time to teaching, his or her credentials in the research field add up to nothing in the learning of students. Only those lecturers that integrate their experience in the research to teaching that make a big impact in the learning of their students.

In conclusion, myths do not help much when it comes to reality. Students and faculty must put myths aside and embrace the reality in order to realize effectiveness in education. The most important things that must be considered in the labeling of an institution is not based on the financial power of the institution or educational resources. Rather, it should be based on the learning climate fostered by the institution. Factors such as how students coexist are important. In addition, it is important to consider the amount of time that the teacher spends with his or her students. Besides, outside classroom interactions between the students and the faculty members should be a factor. Moreover, the level of student's participation in the non-academic activities should be considered. If the myths held by the

students before they arrive at the school are kept aside, then quality education can be realized. This is what should be the hallmark of the quality of an institution.

## References

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