
The Importance Of Higher Education In Our Life

Every May thousands of families, friends, and faculty are gathered together to celebrate the commencement ceremony of college graduates. It is one of the most memorable days in some people's lives and one of their biggest achievements. Eagerness and excitement are written on the faces of the students as they shake the hands of teachers and mentors. Each handshake is one closer to what they have worked towards for the past four years: a piece of paper that acts as an entry ticket to a career. Higher education only provides students with rudimentary skills which must be built upon in order to excel. Receiving a degree is not enough to become successful because success itself is depends on the individual's innate abilities, their level of motivation, the amount of time invested, and their mentality.

In recent years, higher education has become the norm and is considered the backbone of success. When one thinks of successful careers the terms engineer, doctor, lawyer, and CEO come to mind. All of which are high paying jobs and require a college degree. This is because people believe success, money, and college all go hand in hand. This is partially correct because when one becomes the best at their job, they normally climb a promotion ladder until they can no longer advance. Once someone reaches the zenith of their career, that is most likely when they are making the most amount of money. The journey that someone takes to get to the highest point in their career is what makes someone successful, not how much money they are making. For example, a person who never pushes themselves and has a "I do not care" mentality wins the lottery one day. They may have a lot of money but that does not make them successful; it would only make them lucky. This means success is more than just living a lavish lifestyle; it is about wisdom and living to one's fullest potential.

A common misconception with success is that grades play a major role. In my opinion, grades do not have the capability of measuring or predicting one's future accomplishments and innate abilities. According to Afzaal's Grading and Its Discontents, "Given the nature of the grading process and the limited purposes for which it is designed, the grades they receive are in no way a reflection of who they are as people or even what they are capable of achieving in the long run" (Afzaal par. 26). Afzaal and I both agree with the idea that people can accomplish great things regardless of what their grade point averages manifest. For example, a student may barely pass all their classes. This does not entail that the student will have a mediocre future and struggle to make ends meet. They may have an innate talent which makes them exceptionally gifted in terms of theater. The individual has the potential to become the next Grammy or Academy Award winner, but that will depend on how motivated and interested they are in perfecting their talent, not whether or not they receive good grades and a degree.

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A determining factor in how successful someone may be is their wisdom. This is acquired from experience and the countless hours one has invested. According to the book *Outliers*, by Malcolm Gladwell, “The idea that excellence at performing a complex task requires a certain minimum level of practice surfaces again and again in studies of expertise. In fact, researchers have settled on what they believe is the magic number for true expertise: ten thousand hours” (Gladwell 63). This ten thousand hour rule that Gladwell is referring to is the amount of time one should put forth in order to become a phenom or an expert in a specific area. If someone is going to master a subject, then there needs to be a commitment of time. Higher education cannot provide students with all of the time and experience that is needed to be the best in a career. It can however bestow a foundation of knowledge, but it is the student’s responsibility to take what they have learned and devote more time into expanding that knowledge. Higher education does not provide students with a guaranteed career. A lot of students go to college and choose a major that they enjoy. However, there is a common misconception pertaining to the relationship between passion and choosing a career. People always say, “Follow your heart,” and “Find your niche.” This might sound like good advice but when it comes down to statistics, receiving a degree might seem like a disillusionment.

According to Brad Plumer from *The Washington Post*, “Second, the authors estimated that just 27 percent of college grads had a job that was closely related to their major” (Plumer par. 3). This statistic was taken only a few years ago and it is staggeringly low. After students receive a degree in their specific area of interest, there is no certainty that they will find a job that pertains to their major. This can seem like a pothole in someone’s road to success because they are sometimes forced to pursue a career in a field they are not as interested in. But if someone truly aspires to be successful, this pothole can easily be filled and overlooked because that person will adapt and persevere.

Knowledge and brainstorming are vital components to becoming successful. As Bell Hooks states in *Teaching Critical Thinking*, “By the time most students enter college classrooms, they have come to dread thinking. Those students who do not dread thinking often come to classes assuming that thinking will not be necessary, that all they will need to do is consume information and regurgitate it at the appropriate moments” (Hooks 8). Hooks is conveying that college students are more concerned with memorizing information for tests rather than grasping and actually learning a concept. I wholeheartedly agree with hooks’ statement because it seems as though students do not want to think critically or beneath the surface anymore. Students only want to get good grades on all of their exams and then leave that class with nothing more than a few facts that they memorized and a good grade on their transcript. With a mentality like that, people and students do the bare minimum to get by. This is not the mindset of someone who is successful. If someone wants to live up to their fullest potential and specialize in something, then they must learn the ins and outs because memorizing is simply not enough.

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Higher education does not lead to success because success is dependent on the individual's aptitude, aspirations, devoted time, and their mindset. Innate talents and skills are an important factor in one's success. As long as someone possesses enough passion and ambition to perfect their talent, then any obstacle they encounter can be overcome. Every hour that someone sets aside to practice and learn is one closer to ten thousand. Devoting that amount of time to a specific career or area of interest demonstrates that the individual is motivated and has a growth mindset. Someone who manifests a growth mindset is more likely to push forward, continue learning, and live up to their fullest potential compared to someone who only puts forth the bare minimum and lacks motivation to better themselves. Getting a degree from a higher education institution shows that an individual has been taught the fundamentals of a certain discipline. All of the knowledge from one's core classes must be applied and further expanded upon in order to excel and be successful.

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