

What is the role college plays in success?

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Research Question: What is the role that college plays in success?

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to better understand how college impacts our lives and in what ways does it contribute to the success we see after graduation. The design of my study was from reviewing scholarly articles and conducting literature reviews through grounded theory. My plan was to find the economic benefits of higher education, the effects of the continuing higher costs of education, and alternate roads after high school aside from college. From my research, I uncover what role college plays in success and if it is the best choice or not for a specific individual.

Experience

I came to college in pursuit of an education now all people have available to them. Many of us go to college because that is the thing everyone is told they should do, but why do we all enter this stage of life without learning the advantages and disadvantages before signing away four-plus years of our lives? At Purchase College, I chose the major of communications. Communications is a very broad field which encompasses many ideas and strategies which you can take with you after college. With the ability to better understand and adapt to critical situations not only in business but also in general life, I will have the highest potential of climbing the ladder in the real world upon graduation. I was a film and media major at my previous school but felt that there was more opportunity if I switched to a communications major when I transferred to Purchase College.

My personal experience to this topic is from being enrolled in college and wanting to uncover the benefits of going to college and potentially getting a masters or doctorate compared

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to what options could have been if I chose a different route after high school. We must ask ourselves before embarking on this journey, is this worth it for us?

Career Goals

I wasn't planning on going to college after graduating high school. It wasn't until the final day to choose what college you were going to that I decided where I was going. The reason for this being because my father was a college dropout and managed to become the President of a leading telecommunications company, Corbel Communications, who has contracts with Google, Verizon, AT&T, Lightpath, etc.,. I was planning to work with him after graduating high school but he told me that just because he didn't get a degree does not mean that I do not need one. He further encouraged me to go to school in the way that he would hire me after I graduate and give me all the necessary tools to excel in the field. To have this opportunity to not only have a job lined up after college but to also work with my dad and two uncles is something I am very grateful for. I am currently in my final year of college and I am very happy that I went to college because I have enjoyed my time here and believe that being college educated makes one more well rounded.

With my degree, I hope it will further my career path working for my father and give me all of the necessary tools to be as productive as humanly possible. There are definitely skills I have learned in college that I can take with me to the workforce. Aside from what you learn in class, being a college student teaches you discipline, mannerisms, and how to follow a task from start to finish. These tools are not only helpful in a classroom setting.

Research Question

My research question is trying to uncover what role does American society play in making the idea of a college education a necessity to those who may not want to take that path? This is something that personally impacts me because I almost did not take college as a stage in my life, but also affects others who also may be struggling on what to do next after they graduate college. I want to better understand the benefits and disadvantages of choosing college as the next step and any other alternatives to college that may be suitable for people to take.

One article I plan on using to uncover some information to better answer my research question is the article by USNews, How Higher Education Affects Lifetime Salary,(Link listed below.) This article explains the advantages of pursuing higher education in the form of monetary values of average lifetime salaries of people who graduate college, and even go on to getting a masters or doctorate.

I want to better understand how the different classes evaluate their decision of pursuing higher education. I would think that there is definitely a difference in perspective during the decision making of higher education between the upper, middle, and lower class. The way to find out more information on this subject is to do further research on the topic and identify the alternate views.

In my opinion, class and a degree is a myth that society wants us to conform to. It is definitely beneficial to have a college degree and more when it comes to “moving up the ladder” in the workforce, but society makes us think it is necessary in all aspects. The ladder is not perfectly straight and there are other factors that will lead to a hiring or promotion. The mindset we are put in from childhood is that we need a degree or other forms of extended education to be

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successful, and my paper will find out if that is in fact the truth, or if there are other forms of success, and what are they.

Literature Review: What is the role that college plays in success?

How do we value College? College is something that most of us don't really think about, we just go because it has become a societal norm for people to attend. I almost did not go to college, but I was encouraged by my parents to go, and want to find out the true value of college besides what one pays in tuition. In this paper, I will examine the alternate roads after high school, how one values education, and how the increasing price of education through the years is making it harder for people to afford going.

Alternate Roads After High School

There are alternate methods after high school besides going to college. The author went to college and finished his degree in physics, but he was not able to find a job. Even after graduating, it was not easy for him to find a job in the field of his major (Crawford, 1994). Trade jobs are something that is in high demand and there are not enough people that know these trades for the production to be completed at the demand it is desired. success is not determined by a college degree (Free, 2012). There are programs for people who do not take the path of getting a degree that teach them useful skills in life to help them progress in the workforce (Steiner 1977). The author outlines another career path aside from getting a job after college. He advocates working a trade job even though he did graduate college (Crawford, 1994).

How One Values Education

Each person puts a different total value on their education. Education does not only benefit the people of our country, it also grants us improved technological advances and productivity which leads to an overall growth in our economy (Moore 2009). Higher education is

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something we should value because there are so many positives that come with the education we learn from college (Morton 2018). We as a country have started to not value education as highly as other countries, as well as how highly we once valued it ourselves (Moore 2009). A general college degree is not great in terms of salary compared to going to graduate school (Altonji, Speer, 2014).

How The Increasing Price Of Education Through The Years Is Making It Harder For People To Afford Going

With the price of upper-education increasing, it is harder for people to attend, putting a higher monetary value on going to college. The increase in financial aid offered to lower-income students has increased the enrollment of those students to pursue higher education (Williams, 1993). The cost of college has been increasing at levels where it is becoming unaffordable for many and there needs to be a higher impact of financial aid to lower the final costs (Phillips, Olson, 2015). There is a decrease in people going to college from lower-income families when the cost of living increases (Williams 1993). Americans are concerned that there is more that can be done to decrease the cost of college and it is not being done (Phillips, Olson, 2015).

The literature used in this review is meant to describe the value of education and the different paths after high school. The strengths are that the information in the articles directly support the themes of the paper. The weaknesses are that some of the information is outdated. I am missing in depth information on the themes. The limitations are that I cannot conduct a study asking questions to people on their earnings to conduct my own research and placing them into groups based on their career path. To contribute to this conversation, the focus of the study will be the benefits of upper education and alternative methods because what I found was evidence

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that there are multiple viable options. More research needs to be conducted on why one should pursue college or not as it relates to a major decision that will impact their future. In my upcoming statistical analysis, I hope to add and contribute to the conversation of which decision makes the most sense with the focus on monetary values of earnings from the different choices. In conducting these interviews, I am hoping that I will find evidence to display a visual representation of the benefits of either going to college or going to a trade school, or neither.

Methods

Materials

The materials I used for my methods section come from the Purchase College Library. My method used for this section was to continue my library research to further support my research question with new themes and sources. Going on the Purchase College Library website, I was able to find scholarly articles that relate to the themes I chose to support my research question of what role college plays in success and how it is valued in our society. The themes I chose for my methods section is how scholarships help people attend college, earnings from education, and the return on investment of higher education.

Design and Procedure:

To find my articles, I went on the Purchase College Library website and looked up articles that are related to my themes. Once I found those articles, I organized them to the theme they related to, identified the author and title, and paraphrased two different quotes that I chose from each article. Once that was finished, I related the articles to each other, looking back on the common theme that both fit in and how that theme relates to my research question.

The method I chose was to continue library research using grounded theory. Grounded theory is collecting data, analyze the data by coding and constant comparative analysis, and finally arriving at a theoretical conception. Themes are derived from certain articles by what they have in common, then comparing and contrasting the articles and how they relate to the research question.

Results:

How Scholarships Help People Attend College

The offering of scholarships make it much easier for many to attend college considering the increasing costs of college have made it more difficult for people that want to attend to do so. The increasing of scholarships offered by various organizations show that there is an increase in interest towards the pursuit of upper education since those who can are choosing to make college more affordable to those who qualify. The two articles I chose to further uncover the role of scholarships is Peggy Hazelwood's "College Scholarships" and Jilleah G. Welch's "HOPE for Community College Students: The Impact of Merit Aid on Persistence, Graduation, and Earnings."

The Hope Scholarship began in 2004 and offered students \$3,000 a year if they were going to a four-year college and \$1,500 if they were going to a two-year community college. With the rising costs of education, the scholarship now offers students \$6,000 if they are going to a four-year college and \$3,000 if they are going to a two-year community college, which doubles their initial scholarship offering (Welch, 2014).

The popularity of scholarship offerings and the increasing amounts of the scholarships has led to more people being able to attend college. The more others value children's education, the higher the amount of people that can't afford college will be able to go (Hazelwood, 1999). The Hope scholarship has specific gpa and act requirements that you have to meet in order to qualify. This encourages students to perform well in school and work hard to obtain the monetary assistance they may require in order to go to college (Welch, 2014). The availability of

scholarships and grants directly geared towards lower-income minority students allows the primarily potential first-gen college students to attend college without the stress of student debt, allowing them to obtain a degree and go into a higher skilled field compared to going to work right after college (Hazelwood, 1999). These two articles relate with each other since both articles outline the rising popularity of scholarship offerings and the increase of college students taking advantage of those scholarships allowing them to attend college with a decreased stress on financials.

Earnings From Education

When valuing higher education, it is important to take into account the monetary advantages of going to college compared to not going to college. The articles I chose to support the economic advantages of college were Kim ChangHwan's , Christopher R. Tamborini's , and Arthur Sakamoto's "Field of Study in College and Lifetime Earnings in the United States" and Joseph G Altonji's ; Lisa B Kahn's ; and Jamin D Speer's "Trends in earnings differentials across college majors and the changing task composition of jobs."

The earnings of a specific major is correlated with the current supply and demand of that skill. If there is a high demand for a specific skill and not a high supply of people that can do that skill, the pay for that job will increase (Altonji, Kahn, Speer, 2014). College degrees vary with lifetime earnings because there are many different models that depict lifetime earnings depending on the major that person chose, the gender of the student, and the university that student attended (Kim, Tamborini, Sakamoto, 2015).

The author outlines that earnings for full-time labor show to be higher for someone out of highschool when compared to someone working part-time in college, but over the course of a

lifetime, a college graduate will have more opportunity for growth in salary and moving up the ladder of a company when compared to someone without a college degree, or more (Kim, Tamborini, Sakamoto, 2015). Wage is found by the difficulty level of the required skill and the labor that goes into the task (Altonji, Kahn, Speer, 2014). Both of these articles relate to each other by their evaluation of lifetime earnings from the different levels of education.

Return on Investment of Higher Education

Education is not cheap and it is important to understand what type of return on your investment you can expect to see from your desired major and career path. To better understand the return on investment of higher education, I chose to analyze the article “Does the Return on Investment Justify High College costs?(Engineering Matters: Focus on the Future of Engineering)” by Geoffrey C. Orsak and the article “Affordability and the Return on Investment of College Completion: Unique Challenges and Opportunities for Adult Learners” by Amanda Bowers and Matt Bergman.

College degree has its benefits. Getting a bachelor's degree will make someone over a million dollars in lifetime earnings when compared to a high school graduate. Someone with an associates degree will earn on average over \$325,000 more than a high school graduate (Bowers, Bergman, 2016). The average lifetime earnings of someone with a college education is \$2.27 million and the average lifetime earnings of someone without a college degree is \$1.3 million. This is a substantial difference of nearly 75% increase in earnings when going to college compared to not (Orsak, 2012).

When compared to a high school graduate, a college graduate is twice as likely to get on the job training, which will boost their wage by on average 3-11% (Bowers, Bergman, 2016).

The degree chosen alters lifetime earnings. Stated in the article, the average lifetime earnings of an electrical engineer major with a bachelor's degree is 20% higher than someone with a bachelor's degree in PR (Orsak, 2012). Both of these articles relate to each other since they outline what returns someone can see when choosing college as a path for them and the benefits they can expect from attending university.

Discussion:

My research question is what role college plays in success. To understand this, I broke up my articles into six total themes. These themes included alternate roads after high school, how we value education, the increasing cost of college, earnings from education, the importance of scholarships, and the expected return on investment for going to college. The 13 articles used in these themes all posed critical on the importance of going to college or not and how we should value education.

My first finding from my research was that there is an economic benefit to getting a college degree. This finding attempts to answer my research question because it shows that there is an economic lifetime benefit correlated with going to college. The average lifetime earnings of someone with a college education is \$2.27 million and the average lifetime earnings of someone without a college degree is \$1.3 million. This is a substantial difference of nearly 75% increase in earnings when going to college compared to not (Orsak, 2012). This information relates to the information stated in the lit review where it is stated that education does not only benefit the people of our country, it also grants us improved technological advances and productivity which leads to an overall growth in our economy (Moore 2009). This information supports previous

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information stated in the literature review considering that both outline an economic benefit from obtaining a college degree.

My second finding is that there are other ways to success rather than going to college. In the literature review section I state that trade jobs are something that is in high demand and there are not enough people that know these trades for the production to be completed at the demand it is desired (Free, 2012). In my methods section I state that if there is a high demand for a specific skill and not a high supply of people that can do that skill, the pay for that job will increase (Altonji, Kahn, Speer, 2014). Both of these discoveries support each other because they describe that there is a demand for the trade jobs which do not require a college degree and will pay well due to the fact that it takes skill to do these jobs and there is a high demand for that labor.

My third and final finding from my research is that there has been an increasing amount of importance towards going to college. In the results section of my methods I state that the popularity of scholarship offerings and the increasing amounts of the scholarships has led to more people being able to attend college. The more others value children's education, the higher the amount of people that can't afford college will be able to go (Hazelwood, 1999). In my literature review I outlined that the increase in financial aid offered to lower-income students has increased the enrollment of those students to pursue higher education (Williams, 1993). The importance of going to college has grown and this is evident from the increasing support from scholarships, grants, and financial aid. These articles both connected to my research question because there wouldn't be an increase of support systems on sending students to college if research did not prove that there was a higher success rate to going when compared to not going. There is a stress on college because it raises your chances of success.

One limitation I had when writing this paper was that it was difficult to pair the articles with each other under the themes I had chosen. I thought of the themes before I had gotten the articles but I feel that finding articles first and then coming up with themes for them would have been easier with pairing them together to a theme that is discussed in the articles. Another limitation was that I have never written a literature review and had some difficulty when starting it because it is something I have never done before and was unsure if what I was doing was correct or not. After help from the professor and my peers, I was able to confidently perform all tasks associated with the literature review.

With the aid of the scholarly articles I have found and the themes I have given them, I was better able to understand my research question to what role college plays in success. Without these articles, I would not have been able to come up with findings related to my research question. Although I feel confident in my research being able to adequately identify credible information related to my research question, there can always be further research done in order to obtain a better understanding of other aspects related to my research question. It would have been easier for me to get more research if I would have chosen the themes for my literature review before finding the articles so I would have had a better understanding of what I was looking for, instead of finding scholarly articles that are related to my research question and then trying to pair them together.

Conclusion:

Using multiple sources that went into different themes allowed me to get different perspectives on explaining my research question. I was better able to understand the values of college and all that goes into pursuing higher education. The personal connection to the topic, background of the research question, literature review, and methods section all allowed me to interpret the values of college and why we should or should not go.

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I believe that college is something that should be valued and is continually becoming more valued in our society, but it is not for everyone. There are occupations that some are interested in which do not require a college education and those individuals do not have to put a high value on education. The higher the skill one is trying to learn, the higher the value on education they should have to perform their task at the highest level possible.

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