

Twelve Myths of Teaching

Source: Eble, K.E. (1988) *The Craft of Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



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Myth 1:
Teaching is not “doing.”

“Those who can, do. Those who cannot, teach.”

-G. B. Shaw

Of course teaching is its own kind of doing, and we need to acknowledge the importance and value of doing teaching.



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Myth 2:
Teaching is not a performing art

The fact that teaching is not *only* a performing art doesn't mean that it is not *in part* a performing art.



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Myth 3:
Teaching should exclude the teacher's personality.

Excesses are clearly possible, but I believe that students' experiences in a course should depend in important ways on *who* the teacher is.



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Myth 4:
Worst teachers will later be seen as best.

Empirically invalid, logically questionable.



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Myth 5:
The popular teacher is a bad teacher.

Assumption: it is impossible to be popular without pandering to students' lowest instincts.



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Myth 6:
Teachers are born, not made.

Is there any adult role that is *not* the product of both nature and nurture?



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Myth 7:
Good and bad teaching cannot be identified.

How could it be more difficult to identify the quality of teaching than the quality of:

- Scholarship
- Art
- ... *learning*?



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Myth 8:
Teaching and Research are Complementary Activities

I think this one takes on a whole different character if we substitute "scholarship" and think about it broadly.



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Digression

- Scholarship of discovery
- Scholarship of integration
- Scholarship of teaching and learning
- Scholarship of application



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Myth 9: Teaching a subject only requires knowing the subject well.

Well, if so, this class was ill-conceived, wasn't it?



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Myth 10:
Teaching is not a profession.

Contrast:

- "I am an historian."
- "I am a teacher"



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Myth 11:
Teaching is better at higher
levels than at lower.

Probably no empirical way to
assess, but remember that the
success of higher education
depends a lot on the success of k-
12 education.



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Myth 12:
Teaching is both more and less
mysterious than it is.

- More: There exist elaborate
theories and models of teaching
and learning.
- Less: Character, relationship.



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