

Bernard C. Vincavage
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Essay #2 Toulmin Paper

Teaching Toulmin for a Grade

Arguments are constantly around; from lawyers arguing on his or her party's behalf to middle-aged children bickering over whom already had a turn to play. No matter what age, arguments are always noticeable simply because each person views a situation differently and feels different. Since arguments are evident in society there will always be a differing opinion that tries and refutes an argument that illustrates an alternate route of understanding. People do this in order to discredit opposing viewpoints so that he or she obtains a sense of authority in logic.

One way to limit the opposition in discrediting arguments is to follow the Toulmin Model, which is a well-structured layout of how an argument is organized. Distinctively when supported, an argument constructed to follow this model is harder to discredit. The Toulmin Model has seven parts that an argument should have: claim and stated reasons, which are found in the beginning of an argument so that people know what the subject or thesis of an argument is, and why the arguer feels the need to argue about a certain topic. Next, warrants are the underlying beliefs that are perceived by the claim and the stated reasons.

Following, the evidence or support for the argument, which is known as grounds and backing. Grounds support the stated reasons, but backing, if there is an audience against the proposed argument, is used to support the warrants. After that, Conditions of Rebuttal contain objections against the proposed argument. When various objections are acknowledged, the arguer is then able to discredit or disprove such objections against his or her argument. The final portion of the Toulmin Model is the use of qualifiers. Qualifiers are certain words that reflect the

scope of an argument. Such words like most or some help the arguer in balancing unknown information.

In an extract from Paul Goodman's *Compulsory Miseducation and the Community of Scholars*, Goodman proposes to abolish grading and uses the Toulmin Model to structure his argument. Goodman illustrates his claim by saying "...abolish grading, and use testing only and entirely for pedagogic purposes as teachers see fit" (791). This is Goodman's claim for his argument and then he follows up with stated reasons as to why he feels this way by declaring "For most of the students, the competitive grade has come to be the essence... the shrewd student asks if he is responsible for that on the final exam" (791). Instead of caring for the subject, grades are more important to a student and Goodman is arguing that grading should be abolished because of this emphasis to score well on tests only. Goodman illustrates the point of his argument with his claim and then gives the reason why he believes grading should be abolished.

Warrants in arguments may not always be boldly stated in text or by word, but warrants are underlying concepts that are automatically understood by reading or hearing an argument. In Goodman's argument, a specific warrant that sticks out is the concept that only "...prestigious Universities- Chicago, Stanford, the Ivy League..." should abolish grading and test in an educational way that "...as teachers see fit" (Goodman 791). This warrant is reflecting that Goodman only is proposing that well-known universities should abolish grading and that they are the only kind of schools that do grade. Regarding warrants, sometimes warrants that people may not even consider can be reflected in their argument and this can ultimately be used to discredit the argument.

Besides the more abstract portion, warrants, of the Toulmin Model, the grounds of an argument is very important because it supports the stated reasons with facts that make the argument harder to disprove. In Goodman's proposal, grounds for his argument can be examined in his statement about grades being inevitable. Goodman asserts, "I have before me the collection of essays, *Examining in Harvard College...*grading is inevitable...how else will the graduate schools, the foundations, the corporations know whom to accept, reward, hire" (791). This quote supports Goodman's stated reason of grades are the essence because Goodman has a credible source that points to grades being inevitable. Therefore, using credible sources helps validate the arguer's perspective.

Nevertheless, at a certain point of an argument, if the audience does not agree with what has been presented then backing is needed to show the importance of the topic or show support for the warrants. Goodman shows the concept of backing by stating:

Dean Whitla, of the Harvard office of Tests, points out that the scholastic-aptitude and achievement tests used for admission to Harvard are a super-excellent index for all-around Harvard performance, better than high-school grades or particular Harvard course-grades. (792)

This statement clarifies that the admission into Harvard is so well formulated that grading should be abolished in such Ivy League schools because being admitted is an achievement in itself. This piece of evidence illustrates the importance in abolishing grades at Ivy League schools because the admission into such a school is arduous than some courses after being enrolled into the school.

After stating the claim and the reasons as well as the evidence to support both the claim and the reasons, people will still have counter-arguments. It is best if possible, counter-

arguments are acknowledged and referring to the Toulmin model this portion is called the Conditions of Rebuttal. Goodman professes his own counter-arguments for abolishing grades by targeting two specific groups, “Perhaps the chief objectors to abolishing grading would be the students and their parents” (792). Goodman rebuttals this idea by expressing that “The parents should be simply disregarded; their anxiety has done enough damage already” (792).

Consequently, it is acknowledged that Goodman believes that parents already played a role in grades and are no longer needed centered from how much parents push their children to receive good grades. As far as students objecting to abolishing grades, Goodman suggests that “For the students, it seems to me that a primary duty of the university is to...force them to confront the difficult enterprise itself and finally lose themselves in it” (792). Here, Goodman is suggesting that students are left with a difficult task and have already been engrossed with the need to reach a good grade.

The last piece to the Toulmin model is the qualifiers of the argument. Qualifiers used by Goodman in his argument are “...half a dozen...most of...great majority ... always ... several ...many... and most important of all” (791-3). These words help the argument walk a fine line when actual evidence or facts are unknown. For example, Goodman exclaims, “The grades have most of their weight with graduate schools...” (792). The reader can assume that not all the weight to be admitted into graduate school relies on grades, so Goodman used the word “most” instead of stating that only the weight of grades grant admittance to graduate schools to show that grades are important, but not entirely.

Overall, Paul Goodman argues that grades should be abolished because there is a focus on getting a grade instead of the value placed in learning a subject. His argument easily demonstrates the Toulmin model and all of its elements by having a claim, reasons, warrants,

grounds, backing, condition of rebuttal, and qualifiers that all justify an argument effectively.

Without hesitation, I should now be using the Toulmin Model for my own arguments.

Works Cited

Goodman, Paul. "A Proposal to Abolish Grading." *Current Issues and Enduring Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking and Argument, with Readings*. Ed. Sylvan Barnet and Hugo Bedau. 8th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008. 791-93. Print.