EMBRACING SELF-PACED LEARNING

by:
Shiela S. Murciano
Teacher II, Pagalanggang National High School

Given how fast technology changes and the impact it has on the curriculum, it may be time to consider trying different approaches when it comes to learning. Learners, no matter how we try hard to standardize teaching, lessons and methods, will always have different learning curves. Instead of punishing fast learners by making the entire class wait for others to catch-up, why not implement self-paced learning on technical/vocational courses? On this manner, a learner who have already shown understanding of the subject can, at his or her own pace, move on to the next lesson. An evaluation such as a short quiz or exercise can be used to confirm understanding before one can move to the next module. This would easily entice, if not motivate, learners to take each lessons seriously with the goal of being rewarded for finishing courses earlier. A more concrete plan can be determined on what to do once a learner finishes the entire course. Do we reward them with free time doing self-learning projects and activities? Or should we recognize them during school festivities? In any way, rewarding learners, if not obvious, is far more effective than punishing them for being slow and lazy.

How about the slower learners? This is where teachers come more effective. Because learners would have different pacing, teachers can now be specific or dynamic rather than having a universal approach to all learners. Thus, a teacher would know who to teach more or if the need to change his or her teaching style is required (e.g. “Do I need to use a more technical term?” “Should I use examples?”). What’s even more encouraging is the fact that in the corporate world (where learners aim to work for in the future), they are actually practicing self-paced learning. One such popular practice is called “Reverse Engineering”, where a developer or a systems analyst studies and analyzes how an
existing or legacy system works given little to no documentation and/or source codes. Self-learning promotes critical thinking and analysis rather than the usual classroom setup where everyone is just forced to listen to what the teacher has to say. It is in this manner that learners themselves would be able to assess their own level of their competency, an arguably better way than teachers grading them via enumeration and essays.

References: