HIT OR MISS: LOOKING AT THE
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES
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As reports and researches had shown, senior high school (SHS) graduates, specifically from the first batch, were deemed lacking in terms of the requirements, qualifications and competencies needed in the workplace and higher education institutions (HEIs). However, it is also noteworthy to mention the findings of the study conducted by the Philippine Business for Education (PBED). The result showed that the first batch of SHS graduates possess “theoretically” 93 percent of the competencies suitable to the needs of the nation’s industries, such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Another study of the same advocacy group found out that 20 percent of 70 of the country’s leading companies across all sectors companies hesitate on hiring SHS graduates. This is rooted from the companies’ inclination to hiring job applicants with at least two years of college education which automatically excludes SHS graduates. This only goes to show that the first product of K-12 curriculum was not given a chance to showcase their learnings in the first place. If only companies had given these freshly graduates a chance to demonstrate their competencies then the ugly image of the new curriculum could have been blurred out, if not erased. Jobs must be based on competencies, not on qualifications.

Nevertheless, it is also an indisputable fact that the 80 hours the SHS students spent in their work immersion does not guarantee acquisition of the sufficient, necessary work competencies. On top of this is the saddening fact that there were some schools which had endorsed students in workplaces that are not relevant competency-wise to their track and strand. One concrete example is our school. Say for instance, our Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students spent their work immersion in the municipal hall particularly in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) office doing clerical works specifically encoding census data for the whole 80 hours. This is one of the dilemmas the school has to face. There are very limited options to choose from. If there are, the locations are far that the students will have to prepare their transportation allowance. Let us face the fact that our parents in public schools are incapable of providing allowance for this
let alone doing the budgeting for the added 2 years in the basic education of their children. I only hope this problem will be heard out by the department if they are persistent in their goals of producing graduates who are ready for the four exits namely higher education, entrepreneurship, employment or middle-level skills development. As it is put forth in John Dewey’s Learning by Doing dictum and constructivism, learning is an active process, contextual and a social activity. Meaning to say, learners be actively engaged in their own learning so as to achieve optimum progress.

Some higher education institutions (HEIs) have also made their comment on the poor competencies of the graduates noting the passing rate in admission test as an evidence. Opposing to this, I can say the first batch of SHS graduates are brilliant in their own ways as I had the experience of teaching them. As of the moment, I do attest that they are the most intelligent group of learners I have handled so far. I believe that what happened is that they, along with the teachers, were victimized by the new curriculum that is only yet developing and far from perfection. The first year of SHS was a struggle for the first batch as there are a lot of things lacking such as the classrooms, chair, instructional materials, textbooks and many more. There are non-education graduates who were posted to teach without teaching experience at all.

As a whole, SHS graduates are not half-baked. In fact, they are excellent and resilient learners who braved their way through the difficult transition from junior to senior high school. All we have to do, the elders, is to give them an opportunity to prove themselves.

Reference: