IMPROVING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES BY EASING SUSPENSION POLICIES

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Children dropping out from high school and elementary school has always been a major problem for third world countries, even for first world countries. Several studies have noted what can be done to increase high school graduation rates particularly on easing suspension policies.

In the US, 12 million students are expected to drop out from high school in the next decade. Notably, high school dropouts have a lower average annual income compared to high school graduates. In additional, the unemployment rate is also higher for individuals without a high school diploma (Siegel et al., 2016).

Siegel et al. (2016) analyzed several high schools in the US that recorded an increase in high school graduation rates in a span of five years. The schools were asked to report any dropout prevention practices and programs that were implemented and had direct impact on dropout rates. Programs that changed suspension policies were particularly helpful in improving student retention rates.

It was usually assumed that a zero tolerance policy for delinquency by removing problem students from the school will yield the most satisfactory result. According to the American Psychological Association (2008), schools that record higher rates of suspensions and expulsions do not have good school climate which actually resulted poorer student retention rates. These schools also tend to have unsatisfactory school governance structures.
Adolescents are not very receptive to harsh punishments such as suspensions and expulsions. Studies in development neuroscience indicate that adolescents are less mature than most people think. Adolescents have less developed brain structures (Nelson, 2003 as cited in APA, 2008).

A zero tolerance policy for misbehavior is usually done to deter future misbehavior. However, instead of reducing the incidence of misbehavior, students who have been suspended show higher rates of misbehavior after the suspension (Raffaele-Mendez, 2003 as cited in APA, 2008).

We recommend modifying disciplinary systems that are in place in school to reduce its negative effect on the school climate. We also recommend modifying disciplinary systems so that it not impede on a student’s opportunity to learn.

From these studies mentioned it was evident that students do not behave better after being suspended, instead they keep on repeating the all their misbehaviors. They are not as mature as we expect. They do not learn from their mistakes. Just like the elementary schoolers, these adolescents are attention seekers. The more often they get suspended the more misbehavior they commit. Disciplinary measures in the school must be modified to reduce its negative effects. Most of these youth had been been misunderstood. Disciplinary measures must conform to every misbehaving student. One student’s reason for misbehaving might be different from someone else’s. The problem must be traced from the root cause before coming up to a solution. Guidance counselors must be diligent and careful in studying each pupil’s case. An adolescent’s future depends on the disciplinary action his school will recommend for him.
References:
