

The Frustrated Graduate

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Some of our graduates are well prepared for college and or the world of work, but sadly they are in the minority. The majority of young people see the future as simply a world full of question marks. A report released by The Conference Board (a business research organization) shows an alarming trend that both high school and 4-year degreed college graduates lack critical skills needed to succeed on the job.

Many high school graduates have a diploma, which they now realize did not prepare them with any “practical skills” they can apply in a job. Also their diploma did not prepare over 50% of them to successfully enter college without having to take bonehead math, English and science classes at additional expense and time. According to a recent Gallup Poll only 29% of American’s express confidence in the public school system, which produced our latest crop of high school graduates.

Many high school graduates realize for the first time, they are neither prepared for college or the real world of work. Yes there are exceptions, but they are for the most part the few who had extra help and guidance outside the education system from parents, friends, tutors and others or they are exceptional self-starters.

College graduates are for the most part highly frustrated, and rightfully so. Their piece of sheepskin has for many not led to the success touted by the education system they have been a part of. A high number of college graduates find themselves in debt and in possession of a degree for which little potential of employment is available, except at a fast-food chain. The graduates were sold a dream, get your degree and the world is yours, but they now experience a nightmare or at the very least a very bad dream.

The time has passed when simply having a high school diploma or college degree is the ticket to success and a family wage job and stable career. The graduate of yesteryear could actually demonstrate to a potential employer that they were capable of learning and being able to apply sound basic knowledge, skills and abilities. In other words, they had what the potential employers needed, because they were able to apply and or learn what was required on the job. But that was the past.

We now pay much more for college degrees that are arguably worth much less than they were 25 years ago. To a large degree the education system now provides an average education to many below average students. College graduates experience difficulty expressing themselves in business related reports and in critical thinking and analysis. High school students can text but cannot read or write well or find 11 and 1/4th inches on a ruler. This is not my take on the situation, but rather extensive hours and many years of surveys conducted with business owners in several different business sectors and

locations.

In addition to not being well prepared for the world of work, job prospects are not good for the class of 2013. In a very recent survey, 66 percent of hiring managers believe that college graduates are not prepared for the workplace and 58 percent said they are not hiring entry-level college graduates this year. Poor interviewing skills combined with the student's inability to clearly answer questions and articulate skills and making eye contact during interviews are common problems among young people.

To a great degree both high school and college students take easy courses to keep their grade point high, bypassing the courses that will prove most worthwhile in the real world. Schools, parents and students are more concerned about social interaction than they are about interacting with the great minds of the teachers who actually shape students with the difficult subjects that will make a difference in the student's future.

Additionally, both parents and students do not look into the potential return on their investment in time and money with regard to the type of degree the student will attain. They don't question the viability of certain degrees. They simply still think that a degree – any degree – will be the ticket to financial security. The colleges and universities also share some of the blame as they continue to offer several useless degrees so they can keep enrollment up and the dollars flowing in. They don't have to worry about getting their money, because most college loans are backed by the US Government not the individual or the institutions of higher education.

So what does the future look like for education and the student? A bright future will be realized only when parents and the student realize it's not the degree that counts but the knowledge gained. It will change when we collectively demand work and life skills are embedded in our education system, which truly prepares students for a productive life. Those students concerned about their future, both high school and college students, must start taking responsibility for their potential success by taking subjects which are in demand in the workplace.

Computers, smartphones and other mobile devices allow access to the material needed for learning "relevant" material. Using every means available, students need to gain useful knowledge and help chart their own course of action based on their strengths and passion. This will lead to a blended education driven by concerned parents and the student. The present formal learning environments will change and evolve only as the learner finds their own best path to knowledge and demands support from the education community. In other words, learners need to drive a bottom-up change in education, because top down driven education has been a disaster.

One final thought. We can all look in the mirror and share in the blame for having developed so many frustrated graduates. It's time we all get serious about truly educating the future generations of our country.