



THIS JUST AND CRUEL WORLD

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The ideology that characterizes meritocracy is, as defined by Wikipedia, "...a system of government or other administration wherein business appointments and responsibilities are objectively assigned to individuals based upon their merits, namely intelligence, credentials and education, as determined through evaluations or examinations." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meritocracy>)

To put it more plainly, one is given a position based on his abilities, career and educational background. This principle is what we have always been exposed to at school, in which our grades are determined by our performance in our tests, quizzes, practical work, and overall class standing. Institutions of learning may have differences in syllabi, curricula, enrichment programs, key objectives, and many other aspects including their grading systems, but a school grade is something students have to work hard for.

Interestingly, educational institutions use a variety of grading systems: letters, such as A, A+ and A-; ranges, such as 1.25 – 1.5; numbers garnered out of a specific total, such as 6/10; descriptors such as Average, Above Average and Below Average; percentages; and the ubiquitous Grade Point Average or GPA system commonly in use at tertiary levels of education in some nations. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grade_\(education\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grade_(education))). This writer loves how some teachers give an E for "Effort". Interestingly, some institutions assign 5.0 as the highest grade, whereas that same grade would guarantee taking either a summer class or taking that particular subject all over again. Prerequisite subjects where a failing grade is obtained means the student does not move on to the more advanced subject until the failure is transformed, no, worked on, to become a passing grade.

In the Philippines, licensure examinations for certain professions are required before one is able to practice. There are, however, "instant" careers that can start immediately after graduation, with appropriate experience and training, of course. For certain professions with practitioners who want to work in foreign countries, the specified "local" or "state" boards in the chosen country of practice still need to be hurdled over. It seems like tests are never-ending for many.

If you consider the merits of meritocracy (pun intended), they are genuinely beneficial in that employers, higher-ups, and authority figures are assured of getting the best talents from among their pool of job candidates. The system inspires people to demonstrate true determination and expertise in order to move up the ranks. The company, organization, or group is then assured of greater productivity and a much better perspective for the future.

Unfortunately, some organizations directly bypass genuine talent and hard work, with accompanying expertise, in favor of those candidates who are popular, personally known by the hiring officer, endorsed by an influential figure, or worse, more personable and attractive than others. Sadly, I have heard of such stories -the personable part, especially- from many of my own students.

Questions for Discussion:

1. In your country, how are candidates screened for job openings?
2. Do you think the system of hiring employees is just in your country? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever experienced discrimination in the workplace? How?
4. Which do you think is a much better qualification: beauty and personality, or intelligence and skills? Why do you think so?
5. What specific jobs do you think truly require beauty and personality as qualifications? What about those that require intelligence and skills? Elaborate on your answer/s.