

Examinations – good or bad ?

Profession, Teacher



Examinations – good or bad ? " Examinations" - This is a word that causes sleepless nights, a word can change a cheerful person into a nervous wreck. So, what are examinations, and how can they be any good? An examination can be defined as a detailed inspection or analysis of an object or person. For example, an engineer will examine a structure, like a bridge, to see if it is safe. A doctor may conduct a medical examination to gauge whether a patient is healthy. In the school context, it is the students who take the examinations. These are usually a series of comprehensive tests held at the end of each term, year or, in the case of public examinations, after a few years. One of the main purposes of school examinations is to improve the quality of education. From the results of the examinations, the teachers and planners of the curriculum will be able to gauge the extent to which the students have acquired the knowledge and skills of the course material. This would, first of all, provide an evaluation of their teaching methods, so they can improve them, if necessary. Examinations are also used as a yardstick for measuring the capability of the candidate, for further education or employment. For example, examination results are the main criteria when selecting students for entrance into universities. It is assumed that the examination results would indicate whether or not the student will be able to handle the course. In the case of employment, it is felt that the examination results will indicate whether or not the job seeker has the skills or intelligence to handle the job. However, does the school examination system provide an accurate yardstick of the candidate's ability? Albert Einstein, at the age of 16, took the entrance exam to the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, but failed and so was rejected by this elite school. Yet, Einstein

went on to develop the theory of relativity and quantum theory, winning the Nobel Prize in Physics at the age of 42. Other examples of famous achievers who failed in school examinations would include Winston Churchill, Thomas Edison and Bill Gates. One may also question whether the present examination system results in better teaching in schools. In fact, some teachers are so pressured to produce good examination results that they are forced to practise poor teaching methods. They may race through the syllabus, ignoring the fact that the weaker students have not grasped some of the concepts. Some other teachers may concentrate on popular examination topics, ignoring the topics which are rarely tested in the examinations. Pressure to succeed in examinations may also be detrimental to the students. They may be so filled with anxiety and stress that they do not enjoy their school years. They may be studying only to get good examination results, rather than a rounded education. Some of the weaker students, who cannot seem to achieve good examination results, may lose interest in their studies. In extreme cases, students may be so frustrated or disappointed in their results that they may consider ending their lives. In conclusion, I realise that examinations are necessary and useful in many areas of our lives. However, within the school system, they should be given less emphasis or conducted in a different way. Furthermore, educationists, employers and students themselves should be reminded that examination results may not provide the best assessment of an individual's talents and capabilities.