

Essay on Do You Think Prizes Give Pupils The Incentive To Improve?

By prizes, I will take it to mean the book prizes or book token given out by some schools at their annual speech and prize-giving day.

Not every school have an annual prize-giving day, but there are some long-established schools that carry on this tradition, being handed down from the colonial days. As far as I am concerned 'this promise of prizes once a year does not inspire the pupils, in general, to perform better. My reasons are as below.

Normally only one prize is given for each subject in a form. The students know very well beforehand who would win a particular prize. In any case, they can pick out a handful of students, maybe three or four, who might stand a chance in receiving a prize. So, the desire to improve is present only in those few students. The rest of the class could not be bothered because they know they have no chance. This lack of interest is shown in the best class. As for the poorer classes in the form, the students would not even attend the prize-giving day, much less compete for a prize.

This state of affair has two possible unpleasant consequences. The prize recipients often become swollen-headed and become cut out from the rest of the students. The other possibility is that some poorer students actually become resentful. They feel left out and unwanted. On one hand, I have seen classmates walking with their noses in the air while on the other hand, I have seen some "vandals" wrecking a classroom while the prize-giving ceremony was going on in the school hall. These "vandals" were later caned and suspended from school. can hardly blame them. I personally have been chased out of the school hall because I was not a prize recipient and the seats were reserved for the guests. The moment of being told to leave was hardest to

bear, I hope that the teacher who did that to me does not repeat his act. He did not know how hurtful and degrading it was. I can understand that he was all worked up for the grand occasion but it was no excuse for forgetting the poorer students. The teachers could have easily organized other activities so that every student was involved. This would have prevented' unwanted incidents from happening and the subsequent "bad-blood" arising between some students and the teachers.

The few days immediately before and after the prize-giving day are days where the "elite" members of the student population strut around. More often than not these "brainboxes" and "muggers" are given the honor of wearing the coveted blue shirt – the mark of a perfect. I have to admit that some of them are very humble people who are simply overawed by the positions they are in but some are undoubtedly cocky. it is with a mixed feeling of sadness and satisfaction when I see a perfect being challenged by some less obedient student; satisfaction when I see their arrogance being shot to pieces and sadness when I see them being humiliated.

The school authorities never seem to notice this basic flaw in the school system, that is, the obsessive drive to produce a handful of "top" students while neglecting the rest. VWhat is the point of giving prizes to a few high-scoring students while the majority of the student cries out for recognition? AS if examinations are not enough to weed out the poor students, they must indulge in this perverted form of back-patting; and that is what it basically is, the teachers at the top students on the back and the teachers get 'patted in return for a job well done, or so it seems.

Far from being an incentive for students to improve, prizes actually breed a lot of unnecessary discontent in the students. I believe it would be a much healthier school that does not indulge in this form

of reward-giving practice. Instead, the students should be guided along with the minimum of competition. I say this because each person progresses at a different rate and competitions always result in winners and losers, and nobody likes to be a loser. It is better to do away with the competition. I liken the learning process to that of a flower blooming. The flowers do not try to bloom faster than others. They simply bloom, at their own time. See how lovely they are in full bloom. To try to force a flower to bloom faster is to destroy it. It is the same for human beings. To force is to destroy. We should remember this. I hope that the school system will gradually cater to the needs of the pupils, and not create vast gulfs between fast and slow learners. Prizes are eventually cast away, resentment stays.