The word ‘exam’ might be a reminiscent of different things to different individuals; to some, it might be the reminder of many sleepless nights cramming before an exam. To others, it might be the bitter recollection of studying very hard but never being able to “get the grade”. There is no doubt that getting top-notch grades are of prime importance to students- especially with the current cut-throat competition present in all levels of education; However, critics state that such emphasis on grades will take away from the learning experience by only focusing on test-taking abilities instead of the student’s actual knowledge. In accordance with the writer, I predominantly agree that competition for high grades decreases the quality of learning by limiting student’s creativity, increasing anxiety and giving rise to short-term knowledge retention instead of thorough understanding of subject.

In many cases, achieving high grades is only attainable through revision of the taught material and it rarely focuses on creative solutions. Since good grades are the only indication of aptitude amongst students, they cater the way they study in order to insure a good grade. This issue coerces students to only learn what may appear on their exam paper, instead of learning in a creative way applying their knowledge to create new solutions.

In addition, the pressure put on students by their peers and educators to obtain a good grade could cause a lot of anxiety. It is commonly understood that high levels of anxiety correlate with decreed performance which is at conflict with their best interest. Moreover, constant competition can be detrimental to the students’ self-worth and give rise to a sense of helplessness.

Furthermore, cramming- which is studying an immense amount just before an exam- has been proven to be effective for getting good grades; However, the information retention of this method is often short-lived. The grade attained through cramming might be commendable, despite the crude method utilized; However, it is not a true indicator of the test-taker’s knowledge. It just indicates an impressive mental capacity in memorizing information in a brief amount of time.

Despite the impedimentary aspects of competition for high grades, it is conspicuous that any form of competition could bring out the best in individuals. Healthy competition could act as a stimulus to encourage students to do better and achieve more. Valedictorians that stand out in these situations could be merited on not only their test-taking skills, but on their resilience and adeptness in adapting to any given situation.

In sum, there are major issues regarding the cut-throat competition in achieving good grades. A major shortcoming is the fact that high grades aren’t necessarily a proper indicator of a student’s knowledge; not to mention the amount of stress students must endure. I believe that grades should be the result of long-term evaluation of different aspect of a student’s aptitude.