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Round Table

Trumping Trophy Syndrome



Trophies in competitions and A grades in academic subjects do not define a child's success or competence as much as their skills and emotional intelligence.

The 122nd Rajagiri Round Table Conference was held online on November 12, 2025 on the topic, "Trumping Trophy Syndrome: Parenting in an Entrepreneurial Age." The Expert Panel consisted of Prof (Dr) ORS Rao, Chancellor of ICFAI University, Sikkim; Dr TP Sasikumar, Scientist, Author, Founder of Shiksha, Hyderabad, Dr Vipin V Roldant, Corporate Psychologist, Founder of Roldant Rejuvenation and Dr MD NI Bharbayan, Asst Professor of Rabindranath Tagore University, Assam. The event was anchored by Sreekumar Raghavan, Editor of Pallikkutam.

Conclusions & Recommendations

1. The new definition of competitiveness is to compete with yourself, not others. Keep pace with development in Artificial Intelligence (AI.)
2. Parents must not impose personal preferences on children to participate in competitions. Understand their interests and aptitude.
3. Parents must foster curiosity, creativity, resilience and critical thinking in children.
4. Certificates and trophies don't define knowledge and success.
5. Families and schools must prioritise emotional, spiritual, social and intellectual growth of the child rather than emphasising success in competitions.
6. Social media can turn ordinary individuals into influencers, overshadowing experienced mentors.
7. Unrealistic Expectations & Children: Stress, Low Self-Esteem, Fear of Failure, and Loss of Motivation.
8. Perfectionism & Parents: Frustration, Guilt, Burnout, and Emotional Dysregulation.
9. Parental self-care improves emotional well-being and reduces anxiety.
10. Schools' focus is on grades (A1, A+) rather than character, empathy, leadership, or values.
11. Unrealistic expectations lead to unhealthy practices like malpractice and extreme pressure for high percentages.

Theme Document:

It is natural for parents to want their children to be successful in life. To achieve this, many parents push their children to participate in competitions, coach them, and take pride in their victories—or feel disappointed by their failures, as if those outcomes were their own. In doing so, they often attach their children too closely to their own egos, losing the ability to show genuine, disinterested interest in their children's growth and development.

This dynamic often adds pressure and stress to children's lives, diminishing their growth potential. For instance, when parents become excessively demanding, they may unintentionally create anxiety, stress, and feelings of inadequacy in children who struggle to meet expectations.

Schools, too, tend to nurture a competitive mindset, as success in competitions enhances their reputation and brand value in an increasingly competitive educational market. This phenomenon is known in psychology as the “trophy syndrome.”

Today's world is often described as an entrepreneurial age—a time when both life and career are evolving into entrepreneurial spaces. This new reality offers students the opportunity to adopt a growth mindset, where they compete not against others but against their past selves, continually striving to become better versions of themselves. Such self-directed growth enables them to serve others creatively, according to their unique talents and gifts, and to develop their own entrepreneurial identities. Parenting in the modern era must therefore be reimagined to nurture and support this transformation.

In this context, the 122nd Rajagiri Round Table Conference, held on Wednesday, 12 November 2025, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM (online via Microsoft Teams), deliberated on the theme:

“Trumping Trophy Syndrome: Parenting in an Entrepreneurial Age.”

The following subthemes were discussed:

1. How can parents help children become aspirational based on their unique talents and skills?
2. How can students be guided to do without constantly seeking public attention?
3. What is the true meaning and importance of competition in today's world?
4. What guidelines can help parents nurture entrepreneurial identities in their children?