

The Public Display of Grades

An Odious Practice

ALIZA RAHMAN

This might be hard to believe, but there are schools which openly display the grades of students. The practice has harmful consequences. However, there are those who defend it.

One line of argument goes that good students get motivated when everyone else gets to see their grades and students who perform poorly also get motivated because they see that others did better than them. This thinking is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, it makes learning take a backseat and pushes students to focus instead on getting marks; secondly, it assumes that all students have the same abilities and opportunities, and so to improve, all students need to do is try harder.

Grades often do not reflect much about students themselves – yes, the student probably worked hard and could be adept at learning, but the reasons for getting good grades could also hinge on having parents and/or tutors who can provide extra help to the student (having tutors in turn depends on whether the family has the ability to pay for it), a stable and safe situation at home, and also the student having a learning style the teacher can address among many other things.



Additionally, grades homogenise students. It doesn't take into account their unique strengths and weaknesses nor does it consider the different aspirations and interests they may have.

Our childhood and adolescence is a period where there is massive change and development. Students should have the chance to explore their interests and learn by engaging in different activities during this time. However, students often

sacrifice their hobbies and extracurricular activities for good grades. They lose the chance to learn different things. Moreover, grades often miss out on the many different qualities and abilities a child has, and doesn't show all that a child has learned. Publicly displaying grades creates the pressure to attain better scores, often at the cost of everything else.

Furthermore, this practice causes students to feel ashamed. There are instances

of students falling ill from the stress, lying to friends and family, and using unethical means to get better grades. In short, unnecessary pain and stress is caused.

If you tell someone that the grades they got on a 1st grade math test determines what that their future will be, they might find that absurd, and rightly so, because grades at such a young age are nothing more than numbers on a paper. However, when everyone knows a child's grade, they judge that child based on that, often becoming blind to some of their other talents. This not only results in some parents and teachers attributing negative qualities like laziness and lack of desire to learn to a child if they perform poorly, it stops them from helping the child develop themselves in the field or subject they are interested in. They start acting as if nothing besides grades matter even though that is not true.

The paths our careers and lives take are not always linear, nor does it always proceed as planned. Therefore, it is better to let students explore and make mistakes without penalising them through humiliating practices such as publicly displaying grades.

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FOR THOSE WHO LIVE FOOTBALL

TALAT AHMED

As someone who's never quite had the skill and talent to play actual football, my own love for the game is a tad different from those who's fondest memories take place on the pitch. Rather than being one of the players, I (and I suspect those who also lack the physical prowess) dream of being the manager instead of the player. *Football Manager (FM)* lets me do just that.

Simulation games such as *Sims* or *Civilization* offer players the chance to vicariously live out many realities, and I would argue that *Football Manager* leaves those games in the dust when it comes to excruciating detail and is one of the most realistic games one could play. You can't control your players and spam rabonas with Lingard game in, game out like in *FIFA*. In *FM*, the players play the match and how they play depends entirely on you as manager.

You also have the option to attend press conferences, interact with the board when you want to hire one more goalkeeping coach, personally praise or chastise players for their performance. All novelties, that for the large part, you can sort of do in *FIFA* as well. But the best parts of the game, for me, are far more niche. As manager of a club,



you are in charge of devising training routines for the entire squad and individuals (both senior and various youth levels). Every single decision you or the CPU managers make affects the entire world of your game. A wrong response in a press conference can lead to a player brimming with confidence

or sulking, which in turn, can make or break the result of your next game. Any misstep you take will contribute to your club's overall performance, which makes actually winning trophies in *FM* far more like the real thing than *FIFA* or *PES*. The amount of satisfaction one gets when everything goes right is what

makes the game so great. It capitalises on the passion of football fans and it's safe to say no players are complaining. Believe me when I say that nothing quite compares to turning around a two-goal deficit at half-time to win 3-2 at full time because of tactical changes or an impassioned half-time team talk. The game relies entirely on data, and using this data, you will be tasked with forming the proper backroom staff, scouting network, and squad. I cannot even begin to explain how exciting it is when you unearth the next Batistuta, and how disappointing it is when they only end up playing for Derby County in the Championship.

The sheer scope of the game is another massive factor. You can manage any team from the heights of the English Premier League to a third division side in Indonesia. If the league database doesn't come pre-loaded, there's a very good chance that the mod community has you covered. While the Bangladesh football pyramid isn't pre-packaged as a playable league, the database for players and clubs such as Abahani, Brothers Union, Sheikh Jamal, etc. do exist and you can even manage the Bangladesh national side and maybe take them to the World Cup. But probably not, because the game is just that realistic.

A STUDY IN BANGLA

MRIITIKA ANAN RAHMAN

With the changing nature of the job market and brand new majors being introduced in universities every few years, choosing a field of study becomes complicated and disorienting. While many options may be new or tempting, one option that is very close to home remains open to us — Bangla.

Although we study Bangla from an early age at school, not many think about continuing its study at university. This February, we decided to talk to students who are studying Bangla as their major, and to faculty members teaching Bangla about their experiences, hopes and challenges.

WHY CHOOSE BANGLA?

Meghla Islam Urme, a third-year student in the Bangla Language and Literature program at Southeast University, says she gravitated towards Bangla because of her love for literature. She says, "Although my school background is in Science, writing is my passion and that's something I want to do in the future. I have hopes of becoming a journalist, and I know a degree in Bangla will help me do that."

When asked about her plans after graduation, Meghla says, "I want to go on to do my postgraduate and then work in the development sector or in journalism."

Mirza Mehjabin Hasan, currently studying for her master's degree at the University of Dhaka, says she studied Bangla because of her love for the language. "I take pride in our Bangla language. Bangla has a history to be proud of. Besides, I always wanted to be a poet."

"In the future, I want to go into teaching since it's a noble profession," she continues. "That would also give me the chance to do research on the language."

Third-year student at the University of Dhaka Sadat Nahid confesses, "I always wanted to study a pure subject like English or Bangla but my options were a little hindered by the entrance exam results as well."

When asked about his plans, Sadat says, "After graduation, I want to sit for the BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) exam since that'll bring in many opportunities. Teaching in colleges or universities is also an option."

WHAT TO EXPECT

Speaking about his experience studying Bangla at Jahangirnagar University, Rokibul Islam, a fourth-year student says, "My experience was different from my expectations. I chose Bangla because of my love for literature but I ended up getting to do a lot of research on language at university."

"I expected a lot of study on grammar," says Sadat, "But only about 10 percent of our study was on grammar. The rest was on Bangla literature. I definitely was unprepared to study ancient and medieval literature."

"I gained bookish knowledge well but I wish I gained more fundamental knowledge since a lot of reading was emphasised in our curriculum," says Mehjabin.

One of the few private universities that offer a degree in Bangla is Southeast University. Dr. Hamida Begum, Chairperson of the Department explains, "In addition to focusing on literature and language, we incorporate courses about English, IT and even foreign languages like French and Ger-



ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

man in our program to increase the value of our students' degrees."

CAREER PROSPECTS

"From my observation, employment is a major fear for the students during their Honours program. And this is true for all other humanities majors like Philosophy or History and even core science subjects like pure Physics, Chemistry or Mathematics," says Prof. Syed Azizul Huq of the Department of Bengali at the University of Dhaka. "The emergence of career-focused majors and the lack of specialised jobs in both private and public sectors has worsened this problem. Out of these majors, Bangla actually has an advantage due to the many teaching positions available."

When asked where previous students of the department went on to work, he says, "Most opted for the civil services. Teaching is the most popular career path as Bangla is included as a subject in almost every sphere of the national academia. Many also applied in the banking sector."

Speaking for Southeast University, Dr. Hamida Begum says her students went on to work in diverse fields, "Our students now

work in publications, in the news, buying houses, in business, event management and other artistic disciplines."

PERSPECTIVE OF FACULTY MEMBERS

Dr. Hamida Begum notes positive changes when asked how the scenario regarding Bangla learning has transformed over the years. "There are more students in our department now and they come for the love of the Bangla culture and language. These days, the youth has more cultural involvement in the many celebrations of our culture such as *Nobanno* and *Pohela Falgun*."

Prof. Huq observed that even for the certain group of students who aren't interested in their major, they usually come around. "The students familiarise themselves to the major by the first or second semester. By that time, around 10 to 15 percent of them grow a liking to the subject and become passionate about literature. The rest opt for a more career-oriented path, preparing for BCS and studying just enough to get a satisfactory grade in university. However, for getting a decent attendance score, they regularly attend the lectures, which, if attentive, exposes them to the many facets of literature and

actually helps them in moulding a better and more mature outlook and philosophy."

REACHING BEYOND

Learning Bangla is not just restricted to Bangladeshi students anymore. "We have an exchange program where students from Yunnan Minzu University in China come to Bangladesh for two semesters and learn Bangla here. We have found that they enjoy learning Bangla and they actively participate in our cultural programs alongside Bangladeshi students. They learn Bangla songs and poems too while they're here," says Dr. Hamida Begum.

Every International Mother Language Day when we are reminded of the history and significance of our language, we realise the importance of upholding Bangla in all its glory. "There are surprisingly few people around us who use the correct spelling and grammar when writing Bangla," says Sadat. "In my opinion linguistics and grammar should be focused more in our curriculum."

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