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# HSC Results 2017: The fallout

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As the sales at sweetshops return back to normal, the dancing students in schoolyards go back home to prepare for admission tests, and the dust settles on HSC results 2017, a few questions deserve to be asked. Every result in the history of public exams in this country has always been lauded “a success”, and speaking from a political point of view, this year's was too. But what about the point of view of the students – the people whose courses in life will considerably, if not definitively, be influenced by these results?

There has been talk in recent years about the standard of education plummeting as the number of GPA 5's rose, and that has been taken care of this year. The number of GPA 5 scorers dropped by a massive 25,000 countrywide, taking with it a big chunk of the pass percentage as well. Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid has attributed these decreases to an “improved” method of evaluation, which includes standardisation of answer scripts [1]. How using standardised answer scripts might work in a system that was supposed to be “creative” is a mystery to be pondered, especially in subjects like Bangla and English where questions have multiple answers, each derived from different routes of reasoning, unique to every person. Implementing a new evaluation system when the problem with leaked questions

remains to be solved is questionable policy altogether.

Let's, for the sake of argument, agree that standardisation of answer scripts was the right way forward to elevating standards of evaluation. Even then, it's impossible to ignore a glaring inconsistency in the varying rates of success in different education boards across the country. Comilla came in last this year with a 49.5 percent (down from 65 percent last year) pass rate, and only 678 GPA 5s, which is way lower than even a couple of colleges in Dhaka by themselves. The glaring inconsistency here is how much of a hit Comilla has taken in contrast to other boards, compared to results from last year. GPA 5's in all other boards (except Barisal, where it has increased) have decreased in the range of 25-45 percent from last year, but in Comilla they lost almost two thirds (65 percent) of their GPA 5's from 2016. We are talking about more than 100,000 students here, and it's impossible that the collective academic prowess of an entire region could take such a drastic dip in just 12 months [2]. The more plausible explanation is that the “standardisation” memo did not read the same to officials in all the education boards, and that has caused these inconsistencies in the results, the consequences of which will be massive for the students.

Now let's see if it is indeed logical to ask for fair evaluation in our public exams by looking at the people who do

the evaluating: the teachers. HSC results in the last three years have always been published within 60-70 days after the end of the exams, leaving teachers no more than 15-20 days to examine, evaluate, and do paperwork for anywhere between 300-1000 answer scripts. This number depends on how many answer scripts the teachers are willing to take, and they are encouraged to take as many as possible. These are answer scripts that will be around 30 pages on average, consisting of 20-28 written answers, half of which are broad. Some might argue that 20 days are not enough to go over thousands of pages of handwritten answers for teachers who have to work at least 6-7 hour days at their colleges anyhow. But the teachers' hands are tied in this case and the results are prepared within 70 days, leaving a looming question over the quality of the evaluation.

This year, however, there was a new method in use, and it'd make sense to give examiners a bit more time to make the adjustment, if only they had the time to spare. And in a typical yet dramatic turn of events, it turns out they did! HSC results came out on August 13 [3], 9 [4], and 18 [5] in 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively. This year, the exams ended on May 13 (theory), which is earlier than usual, and with remarkable adherence to the 70 day rule, the results came out on July 23. There could have been a decision to take the extra 20 days and use at least 10 of them to give the teachers more time

to make better judgment on the answer scripts, but sadly that wasn't the case.

Despite the incessant complaining in the paragraphs above, it needs no telling that the results haven't been all bad. Many people have got the grades they deserved; they and many others will go on to do great things for our nation. Yet, social media has been rife these past days with the stories of those few for whom their results were a shock. Unexpected results and inconsistent evaluation have led to tragic instances where young hopeful individuals have succumbed to this shock. These are the people for whom the system needs to be fixed. It needs to be understood that the kids in Comilla have the same dreams as the kids in Dhaka, and with the loss of those dreams, their world comes crashing down just as fast as it soars for others.

*References:*

- [1] <http://www.thedailystar.net/perspective/what-it-says-about-the-state-our-education-1439146>
- [2] <http://eboardresults.com/app/stud/>
- [3] <http://www.thedailystar.net/hsc-results-on-aug-13-35252>
- [4] <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/08/09/results-of-hsc-equivalent-exams-of-2015-published-with-a-success-rate-of-69.60-percent>
- [5] <http://www.thedailystar.net/country/pm-receives-hsc-results-1271692>

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