



# THE TOXICITY IN COACHING CULTURE

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*When I first told my mother that I wanted to try and study my A Level subjects independently with the help of lectures I get from school, she was quick to dismiss the idea and tell me that I wouldn't be able to. While I eventually persuaded her to let me do as I wished, her reluctance got me thinking.*

Why should my parents have to spend extra money for me to learn things that I'm already being taught at school? This culture of deeming children unable to study on their own is not only one that is flawed, but also very demotivating. Parents have come to a point where they view coaching as a necessity, when in reality it isn't even a requisite.

The growing number of mushroom coaching centres in Dhaka only adds to parents' anxieties in believing that if their kids aren't spending at least six hours a day cramped inside an already overcrowded class (in addition to roughly eight hours of school), their child is going to fall behind in academics. But the fact is, children shouldn't even be spending a minute outside school attending extra classes just because their friends are doing it too. Don't get me wrong, I fundamentally believe that if you think you need extra help, you should seek it. But the idea that you should indulge in something because your friends are doing it too is merely wrong. As kids, we are supposed to learn from our mistakes. It's how we can grow. The sheer distress of falling behind many prompts only to tire out, sitting in class after class, when they should be spending this time engrossing themselves in extracurricular

activities, widening their interests outside the classroom, and seeing if they're passionate about things that cannot or will not be taught in class. Adolescence is the period for rapid fire thoughts and rebellion. If kids spend their time trapped inside classrooms and the four walls of their bedroom, how will they learn to grow?

Another growing problem that Dhaka is witnessing is children choosing to be home-schooled rather than going to an educational institute. While there is nothing admittedly wrong with it, a feeling of loneliness tends to accompany home-schooling as children are faced with very limited interactions with people outside of their family, which may trigger depressive episodes. Zainab Tanzim, who left International Bangladesh Hope School earlier this year, talks about how she barely speaks to anyone after leaving school. She says that while the hour-long commute generally tired her out, she would do it all over again if it meant that she could have senior year back.

Furthermore, universities abroad require students to submit their transcripts when applying, and this becomes increasingly hard when students are home-schooled. I cannot stress how simple the application process is for me because of the help I get

from my school. Teachers' recommendations and counsellor recommendations take up a significant portion of the application process, and many of these are very hard to get for kids pursuing education in private.

Another example comes from someone who chose to remain anonymous. He recalls the days when the classroom of his coaching centre extended up to the stairs because of the large volume of students coaching centres take in. He remarks that he found his school teachers attended to his needs and spent hours on end explaining concepts to him, unlike his coaching teachers. "When I was in the tenth grade, I would text my school teacher with my problems as late as 4 AM, and he never hesitated to explain the concepts of further mathematics to me, and neither did he get frustrated when I didn't understand. If there is anyone I owe my O Level grades to, it would be my school teachers."

The fact is that, there is so much schools can teach you that coaching centres cannot. The value of following instructions clearly, the value of friendship, discipline, regularity, responsibility, punctuality – I can go on forever. Dependency is unhealthy. With students growing used to getting the same lessons in school as well

as during coaching classes, they are inevitably preparing themselves for disaster when they go to pursue higher education.

I'm not saying coaching should be cancelled. There are so many coaching teachers that do wonders for their students, but there are also those that leave children worse off. There are so many students who owe their good grades to coaching centres, but there are also those that do not gain anything from additional classes. People tend to often overlook the fact that before going to a coaching centre, children are supposed to learn on their own. Today, going to coaching is more of a trend than about learning.

To the kids that are scared and confused: whether you go to coaching or not is not something that defines your grades, or you for that matter. If you're willing to put in the hours and the hard work required to get good results, you can do it all on your own. It is very important for your personal growth that you only pursue coaching if you feel that you cannot study on your own and excel. Do not let anyone else tell you otherwise.

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