

## Should national curriculum teachers rethink how they guide college students?

AHMED NUZHA OISHEE

Every national curriculum student undergoes the ordeal of board exams, but college is a unique sense of agony since we are expected to simultaneously prepare for both HSC exams and university admission tests, in under two years. Teachers are supposed to play the most significant roles in helping us follow through on this exhausting dichotomous preparation, however, they often fail to do so.

HSC exams are a stepping stone to public university admission tests. Preparing for HSC exams covers the basics but preparing for admissions is an elaborate, tactical process. Students need to be committed from the very beginning.

At many colleges, teachers skip teaching topics that are unlikely to appear in board exams, even if they are very relevant for admission tests, because they think students are going to learn those during their admission phase anyway. In that phase, however, you're buried under loads of relatively newer topics to study and it becomes difficult to pay attention to skipped lessons that have been overdue for two years.

Some teachers in college emphasise elaborating answers, even when they are beside the point, to adhere to the board's biased marking system. From writing 15 pages of essays, overdone creative questions answers to purposefully describing mathematical processes that could've been solved in four lines, we have done it all. Encouraging this in class leaves students aiming to study in public institutions unprepared for what they can expect from admission tests.

Setting aside the fairness of it all, admission exams test a student's ability to solve problems in the time allotted and their ability to perform well under pressure, not their ability to elongate answers.

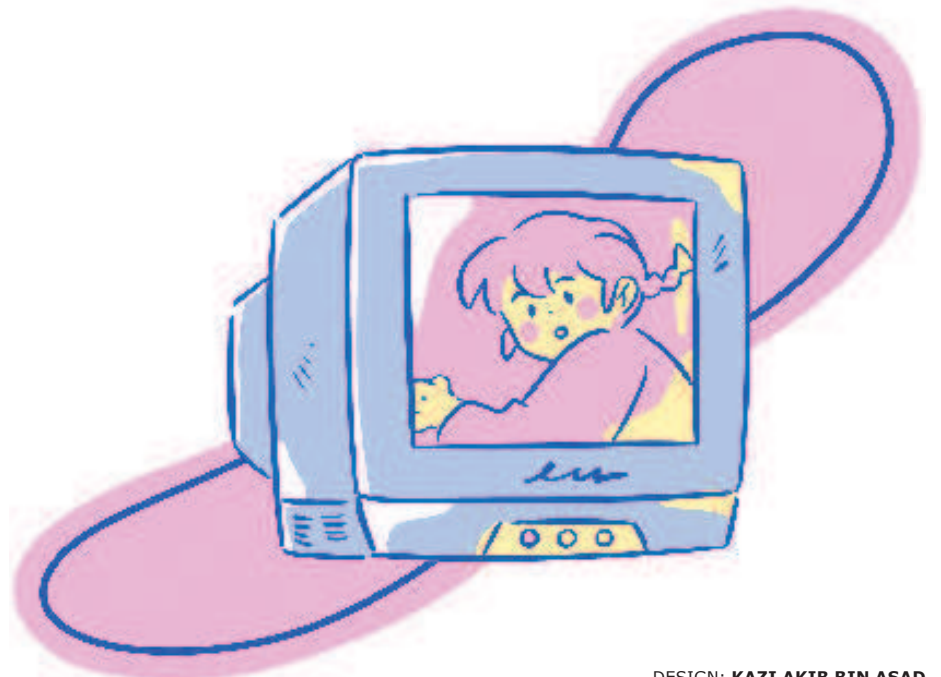
Truth be told, teachers often take little initiative in classrooms to point out strategies or good-to-know advice for admission tests. Students are forced to turn to private tuitions or coaching for guidance. Rather than solely fixating on board exam patterns, teachers, after having taught traditional methods, should teach time-saving, effective tactical approaches and shortcuts to answering questions. The board committee should also reassess their approved assessment criteria.

Teaching methods currently are often too reliant on test papers as teaching material. Test papers are supposed to give students an idea of how board questions work, but they are often unreliable because of the inaccuracies in the published answers. Teachers and students, thus, scramble to finish solving test papers in the final days leading up to HSC.

Once HSC exams are over with, admission test preparations force students to deconstruct the approach they have honed throughout the past two years, to create and adopt completely new ones within the span of only three to four months.

If teachers provide suggestions during class on balancing preparations and guide aspiring students from the very beginning of college, keeping this dichotomy in mind, it would alleviate unnecessary pressure and hardship on students.

*Nuzha forgives people for pronouncing her name wrong and wallows in books and anxiety. Remind her to take it easy at nuzhaoishee1256504@gmail.com*



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

## Menstrual commercials, please do better

SHANUM SARKAR

As someone who grew up in a culture where conversations surrounding periods were taboo, I believed TV advertisements for menstrual products to be an important source of information.

I later realised, they were misleading and ultimately, disappointing.

Firstly, the "blue liquid" shown in these ads in place of blood sends a confusing message to young people about what periods truly look like. It suggests that anything depicting period blood is too inappropriate to show on television, whereas blood is regularly shown in sports, films and medical dramas. Upon closer observation, we see why these commercials resort to such tropes.

In 2020, Australian period underwear brand Modibodi's "The New Way to Period" campaign intended to normalise the reality of menstruation by using red to represent blood more accurately. The brand found itself on the receiving end of an ad ban from Facebook, saying it violates its guidelines regarding "shocking, sensational, inflammatory or excessively violent content".

If you are young, what media you consume has a big impact on your beliefs. These commercials tend to be overly optimistic, demonstrating a rather tainted sense of reality.

Enter hustle culture, which can guilt individuals into being constantly productive, despite not feeling their best. The reality is that according to a recent article published by UNICEF, one-third of adolescent girls in Bangladesh skip school for a few days every month because of their period.

On the other hand, modern ads depict athletic people being uber-productive while menstruating. The intent might be to highlight the active movement people

can get from their products, but this is simply misleading.

For instance, a recent Bangladeshi advertisement portrayed menstruators effortlessly trekking, implying pads are all you need to perform such daunting tasks during your period. This moulds young people into thinking they have to be on the move all the time, or else they're underperforming.

Besides demotivating menstruators, ads that only represent hyperproductive women and athletes solidify the notion that period pain is simply an excuse to avoid working. This neglects most people who experience period pain entirely, particularly ones held back by menstrual illnesses such as dysmenorrhea.

The overwhelming pressure to be productive while menstruating is internalised to the point where many people feel compelled to lie about period symptoms when calling off work. Employees opt for calling with a flu or cold to avoid being accused of laziness, despite menstrual symptoms being much more severe.

If it isn't abundantly clear, you don't have to be your most productive while on your period. You don't have to feel guilty about period pain holding you back.

After years of being guilt tripped by hustle culture amplified by marketing schemes, I'm slowly coming to terms with being okay to take the time to rest and accept the realities of being human. Hopefully, you will too.

### Reference

UNICEF (June 09, 2022). *School girls in Bangladesh learn that periods are nothing to be ashamed of.*

*Shanum closely resembles a raccoon, send her reasons to cut down on caffeine at shanumsarkar18@gmail.com*



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA