

College: Life through thick and thin

SOFIA NOOR RAFA

'COLLEGE LIFE' – these are just two words with many things lying inside them. School Secondary Certificate (SSC) assessments end and students enter a new chapter of their academic life in Bangladesh, Higher Secondary. College-goers seek their dreams in this stage, expect things, learn new stuff, and undergo a discrepant experience. They shift from ten years of schooling to a phase that works like a bridge between mature university life and simple school life.

Anika Binte Altaf, a twelfth grader of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College (VNC) in Dhaka, had expectations from her college life. Online classes brought her to know classmates only by their names. Covid-19 made all undergo a sudden shift. She missed out on her campus since she had to do online classes for a year.

"I wanted to organise festivals," she added. Like many, she dreamt of taking part in the festivals that VNC holds traditionally. "Now, I am reading textbooks from different writers. Back in school, I did not need to study multiple textbooks from different writers," added Anika to her response about college studies.

The syllabus for the higher secondary period in Bangladesh is a colossal one. It becomes difficult for students to cover up all the topics from the syllabus and practice too. Besides, the books for eleventh grade and twelfth grade contain versatile, in-depth discussions. Colleges offering education for classes eleven and twelve suggest students follow books from multiple authors for each subject.

The biggest challenge college students face is to tackle their studies properly and simultaneously participate in extracurricular activities. Many students think of exploring olympiads, learning something new, or volunteering or leadership activities. However, the Covid scenario offered the world a whole different stage, and college students of Bangladesh were part of it.

"College period is short, so we do not get sufficient time to fulfil our expectations. We gain maturity and need to decide on our goals. But, there is barely enough time to engage with activities outside the classrooms. Nevertheless, study tactics are helpful," Anika added.

School studies should include more topic discussions to lighten the heavyweight syllabus in college life, so she thinks.

She engaged in leadership activities like becoming a class captain. "Offline exams are helping me prepare for HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate) exams. I am happy that I am undergoing this experience despite all the hardship to maintain studies and co-curriculum," said Anika.

Tabib Hassan, a fresher from Notre

Dame College, thinks of college life in a down-to-earth way. "It is like swimming in a pond, then suddenly starting swimming in a sea," added Tabib metaphorically to describe the immense workload, duties, and decisions about career one needs to carry out during college life.

The decisions that one makes during HSC/college studies reflect greatly on adulthood. Tough settlements need to be made, such as higher studies, career choice, earning a livelihood, fitting to particular work culture, and much more. The ones failing to come up with a settlement from the inception of college life end up missing the chance of getting into the desired place for higher studies.

According to Tabib, SSC and HSC periods are different since one needs to decide on higher studies and professional life during the higher secondary period. Tabib thinks acing admission exams to enter the desired college requires a strong understanding and knowledge of the studies done in

class 9-10. College life would be one with many responsibilities absent in school, so he thinks.

Online classes are easier to attend if someone has the necessary equipment and a laptop. However, the classroom situation widely differs from an abode room.

Specific class durations also do not allow students to talk to their instructors. There is a communication gap between learners attending a class and the instructors.

"Home is not an actual environment for studying seriously," said Tabib. Online assessments make way for cheating which sometimes hampers the performance of top-tier students, so is his opinion.

Covid made everything gloomy and took away the chances for students to attend on-campus classes. Tabib attended at-home lessons for the last two years. "We'll miss out on many more activities which we could've done if we were in the institution physically," expressed Tabib.

One of the many ways college students enjoy their college life is by doing club ventures. The clubs help them build perceptions and nurture their humane abilities. Tabib expects his college to take offline classes and is waiting to join clubs and interact with a talented lot of classmates/seniors in his college.

College life is short but a unique one. Covid made it a lot more discrepant than the conventional times. However, new students who are to join the classrooms of their colleges are yearning to go offline. And those who are already through twelfth grade are hoping to end their college life on good notes and get a good result in the Higher Secondary Certificate exams.

The writer studies computer science and engineering at East West University, Dhaka. sofiautilitarian@gmail.com



Anika Binte Altaf



Tabib Hassan