

# Taking up Teaching as a Profession: A Discussion

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**Abstract** Teaching is considered and appreciated as a noble and unique profession all over the world as it is associated with such great deeds as to teach pupils and determine the future of the society and the nation. Teaching has a number of extra-ordinary traits that have made the profession stand supreme among all professions. So teaching as a profession is loved in many developed countries and new job-seekers become very eager to join the teaching community. But in Bangladesh due to some socio-economic reasons, the fresh graduates do not feel much interest to take up teaching as a profession. In this paper the researchers have tried to explore the attitude of fresh Bangladeshi graduates towards teaching profession and throw lights on why a fresh graduate should choose teaching as a profession and what opportunities the profession actually offers. These points may help the willing job candidates to rethink and take decisions whether they should take up teaching as a future career.

**Keywords** Teaching, Opportunities, Responsibilities, Respect, Social status, Holistic man

## 1. Introduction

Teaching is not just a profession, it is actually a mission. Children, who are like clay are moulded and shaped by the hands of a teacher. Pandit J. L. Nehru said, “The destiny of a nation is shaped in her classroom”. No career, no work can be more rewarding than that of a teacher who sincerely acts for building the personality of a student in order equip him to face the challenges of competitive world in the throes of transition and change. The love and affection, the respect that the students shower on a teacher who is able to inspire them by example in all spheres far surpasses the joy that wealth can bestow. The guardians or the society also show honour and acceptance to the teachers. Again through teaching one can fulfill one’s soul’s craving to make a contribution in shaping the world of tomorrow. To a teacher, each day brings with it a set of new challenges and new situations to be tackled. Each day becomes a harbinger of a new dawn of hopes and expectations, of unanticipated possibilities, of untold experiences, of manifold dimensions. Teaching offers maximum scope for creativity to flourish. Innovation and experimentation, exploring uncharted territories by way of teaching methodologies give one a great sense of power which is almost intoxicating. But Bangladeshi fresh graduates who try desperately to manage a job elsewhere are not very much willing to take up teaching as a profession for some socio-economic reasons. Besides most of them possess hazy idea about what teaching actually does and offers for the betterment of an individual and the society. The upcoming

paragraphs are discussions on the attitude of Bangladeshi fresh graduates and reasons for which one should choose teaching as a future carrier.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were:

- i) To explore the fresh Bangladeshi graduate job-seeker attitude towards teaching profession; and
- ii) To show the rewards and advantages actually profession has to offer.

## 3. Methodology

The paper has been prepared on the basis of primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data on graduate’s opinions towards teaching profession have been collected through questionnaire and interviews. A total of 60 fresh graduates from 3 public universities of Bangladesh (20 from each university), namely Dhaka University, Chittagong University and Rajshahi University were supplied with questionnaires and interviewed for this purpose. Samples were selected purposively. Secondary data on the nature and rewards of teaching as a profession were collected from browsing, readings, articles from journals, documents, encyclopedia etc.

## 4. Major Findings of the Study

Various opinions have been found out about teaching profession from the fresh graduates tying for a job. These opinions are as follows:

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- i) 88% respondents mentioned that they do not like to take up teaching as a profession.
- ii) 76% respondents opined that teaching does not provide as much social prestige as is often said.
- iii) 90% respondents mentioned that teachers always have to live in want and poverty. Their income is too meager to live a decent life.
- iv) 78% responded that people do not love and respect teachers as they loved and adored them before.
- v) 79% responded that except love and acceptance of people teachers do not have any social power to demonstrate as the other professionals have. They added that social power and prestige come from adequate donations and participation in social affairs and activities. Teachers can not do that for want of money.
- vi) 60% respondents said that they consider teaching must as a profession and not more than that.
- vii) 50% responded that their parents do not want them to be teachers.
- viii) 98% responded opined that teaching is a great and noble profession, but they dare not embrace a life full of poverty and discomforts.
- ix) 20% respondents wanted to take up teaching as a future profession.

Side by side, consulting the secondary data it was found that teaching is generally a very noble, prestigious and important profession in the society and it has many advantages as well as responsibilities for an individual.

## 5. Discussion

The Bangladeshi fresh graduates who were interviewed expressed their opinions considering the socio-economic set up prevailed in Bangladesh. Though teachers are the driving force for building up a nation, it is true that teachers in our country receive very unsatisfactory salaries, allowances and other facilities. Again there remains noticeable difference between earnings of government-owned institutions and non government institution. Financial insolvency and social disregard are the main reasons that discourage the qualified job-seekers to take up teaching as a profession. Other discouraging factors actually result from this financial insolvency. Besides, most of the graduates do not hold high ideals about teaching and they do not possess a mentality selfless sacrifice to serve the nation. The graduates, however, can not be blamed for this. They have formed such sort of attitude from the much practiced norms of the society. It is high time we took proper steps to change the attitude and mentality of our young and fresh graduates towards teaching profession. Now we will see how teaching profession actually is and what opportunities and significance it holds for an individual or the society and what responsibilities are underlying in teaching profession.

Cicero said, "What greater or better gift can we offer the republic than to teach and instruct our youth?" This

statement is equally true today as it was more than two thousand years ago. Teachers have been serving the society always with their valuable and unique professional service and contributing much in building a nation. The role of teachers is very much praise worthy as they impart knowledge to the students, create high ideals and a sense of independence in them and make them good human beings of the society. It is true that the destiny of a nation greatly depends on the role of teachers who work ceaselessly to build up the future generations appropriately. Thus teachers can have satisfaction of rebuilding a "true human being" and a prosperous nation. Besides this, teaching offers some other opportunities that attract a candidate taking up teaching as a profession in life.

### **Opportunity to Gain the Respect of Youth and Share their Enthusiasm:**

Teachers have the opportunity to gain the respect and admiration of youth and share in their zest in life. Many renowned and established teachers opine that the greatest reward for teacher is the love and respect that they receive from their students throughout their life. An admirer said, "I should think you would never grow old in a world where everyone is young." Unfortunately teachers, like all mortals, grow old in years but while doing so they retain a remarkable opportunity to remain young in spirit. (Alcorn, et. al., 1969)

### **Earning Appreciation of Community:**

When community observes that its youth are achieving expected qualities and these qualities have a good impact on the community, it accepts and evaluates the teachers. They evaluate the teachers even more than other professions of same age, same education and same income. Contrary to a once popular opinion which maintained that teachers tend to be isolates, research published by the National Education Association in 1967 revealed that less than 5% of experienced teachers fail to develop a feeling of acceptance of the social life of the community in which they teach. Moreover, only 10% reported that the prestige of teachers was low in their community. In the final analysis, social acceptance is seldom automatic. It must be earned by each individual. Nevertheless, teaching clearly offers that opportunity. (Chester, 1960)

### **Earning Security and Independence:**

Teachers usually enjoy job security. If there is no grave objection or irregularities, a teacher's job is not hampered. As excellent and experienced teachers are of great demand everywhere, they are usually not much controlled and they perform their duties and decisions independently.

Research indicates that most teachers 80% intend to remain in the position they hold and, if given the chance to relive their lives, the majority again would choose to be teachers. In fact, fewer than 10% reported that they probably would choose another profession and less than 2% actually planned to make such a change. (Chester, 1960) Compared to other professional groups of the society, teachers enjoy more job security and more freedom in discharging their duties.

### **Earning a Regular Income:**

If not very handsome, teachers get a standard amount of salary at the end of the month. This income is timely and regular. Now a days teacher no more earn a “meagre” income, what they earn can be termed as “modest”. They also get regular increment after a certain period of time. Again they get various incentives, bonuses and pension facilities. They also have the opportunities to get engaged in various administrative posts like Head teacher, Superintendents, Supervisors etc and to work as paper-setters invigilators; evaluators etc. which may help them earn money. Thus the purchasing power of teacher is increasing day by day.

### **Living a Scholarly Life:**

Teachers have the opportunity to pursue, in depth, a favourite study and to interest people in its possibilities. In fact, many are first attracted to teaching because of their intense interest in a particular field of a study. Teaching not only offers them the opportunity to pursue their major intellectual interest to inspire others to share the same interest but provides long vacation periods in which teachers may conveniently engage in graduate study. (Alcorn, et.al., 1969)

### **Living in an atmosphere of Friendship and Culture:**

Teachers work with such colleagues who have stimulating minds and who possess high ideals. They share common intellectual interests, educational background, ethics and professionalism, all of which form the basis for a pleasant working atmosphere in the typical educational institution. Teaching provides scholarly association. Here good relation is maintained with the colleagues. No competition of going up by depriving others is seen here. Teachers naturally put importance on scholarship, service and moral character. They do not possess rivalry attitude like financially profitable professional groups. Teachers are but friendly working associates.

### **Enjoying Academic Freedom**

Teachers enjoy at least a fair measure of academic freedom. Many professions have to face close supervisory control, but teaching is not so. Teachers usually enjoy exceptional freedom in performing their daily work and taking decisions. Their work is done through cooperation, not by dictation. Again, the supervision of their work is cooperative and such supervision aims at uplifting the standard of education. Teachers thus feel that they are working “with” the supervisors and administrators, but not ‘for’ them. These distinctions are important contributors to the pleasant atmosphere in which teachers work.

### **Living a Full Life:**

Teachers have excellent opportunity to enjoy life with family, friends and relatives. They get much time to spend with people in the society and can participate in many social programs. They can spare much time for their near dear ones in the vacation days and take part in various recreational activities. Teachers lead a colorless life this conception is untrue nowadays. Research showed that more than half of

the teachers in American High Schools were men, 80% of whom were married. Likewise, more than half of the women teachers in high schools, 64%, were married. Furthermore, research also showed that marriages involving a teacher tended to be considerably more stable than the national average. Only 9% of teachers were divorced, separated, or widowed, whereas the comparable statistic for all workers in the United States exceeded 20% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1967). The research concluded saying that teachers lead a happy married life and want to remain in teaching profession till death. If someone is asked to reselect his profession, he wishes to be a teacher again.

## **6. The Roles of Teachers**

Teachers have to play very important and multifaceted roles in the area of effective teaching. The “roles” that teachers play, as developed by Kenny (Kenny, 1952), has since been used as a basis for extended study by Fishburn (Fishburn, 1962). The following six roles of the teachers have been identified:

- i) As a director of learning
- ii) As a counseling and guidance person
- iii) As a mediator of the culture
- iv) As a member of the school community
- v) As a Link between School Community
- vi) As a member of a profession

In order to understand what knowledge and skills are required by the profession, the teacher must know what ‘he must do’, what functions he must perform to fulfill the six roles expected of him.

### **As a Director of Learning:**

As developing competence as a director of learning the teacher plans interesting meaningful experiences for his students; develops satisfactory relationship with his students and effective classroom management and control, uses a variety of instructional materials and procedures effectively; provides for individual differences; and appraises, records and reports of student growth and achievements.

### **As a Counseling and Guidance Person:**

In discharging his services for counseling and guidance of students, the teacher seeks to know his students and their needs, uses various sources and procedures for studying his students; learns how to interpret and use data concerning his students effectively; works closely with the guidance office, referring special problems to appreciate specialists, and uses group guidance techniques in an effective manner.

### **As a Mediator of the Culture:**

A teacher represents the culture of the society. He is not only a conveyer of information but also a transmitter of cultural heritage. Through the use of many media, not books alone, the teacher help students gain knowledge of and respect for various social and democratic institutions their history, traditions and processes. By means of various

experiences- reading, travel, observation, work experience, participation in school and community groups- students learn to understand and appreciate the moral and spiritual values, the countless variety, and the problems of their culture.

#### **As a Member of the School Community:**

A teacher is an influential member of the school community. A new teacher needs to be accepted as a member of the professional family with which s/he works each day, both for personal and professional reasons. The establishment of healthy relationship with his co-workers contributes to his own happiness and to his effectiveness as a teacher. To gain acceptance as a member of his school community a new teacher has to possess some qualities. He needs to be a good listener and willing workers. A well-bred, truly professional teacher soon wins acceptance by his co-worker. A new teacher needs to become familiar with the correct procedures for securing the services the school has to offer. The beginner needs to be accepted and known by parents as well as by colleagues as a 'good teacher.'

#### **As a Link between School and Community:**

A teacher has to play a vital role to establish a closer bond between the school and the community. Closely related to the problem of identification of communities is the subject of public relations. Teachers are often criticized for being unaware of the importance of good relations with the public. So, a teacher must be careful and amiable while dealing with the public. Most importantly a teacher must know his community-its composition, values, impact on youth, and its resources for learning. This knowledge will help him create good relationship with the community and impart successful education to the students. So, the teacher needs to become an active and interested fellow of the community.

#### **As a Member of a Profession:**

In playing his role as a professional person, the first mark of the teacher is this: 'He takes pride in his profession'. He never feels obliged to apologize for his choice of a vocation. Again, as a member of a profession, the dedicated teacher exhibits a second quality: 'He is loyal to his profession'. Not for a moment does he consider teaching as a steppingstone to some other occupation. He is loyal to his professional colleagues, never stooping to petty gossip about them nor exhibiting a contemptuous attitude toward opinions which may differ from his own. The teacher of integrity works constantly to improve himself as a person and as a member of the profession by maintaining high standard of personal and professional conduct.

## **7. Characteristics and Qualities of Good Teachers**

What are the qualities of the effective teacher? For over half a century attempts have been made to find the answer for that question, but there are still no criteria upon which common agreements have been reached. Efforts to establish

such criteria have been based upon three factors: product, expressed in terms of student behavior; process, defined in such terms as the ability of the teacher to maintain effective discipline or rapport with his students; and presage criteria, based on such factors as intelligence, adjustment, and character of the teacher. All have their limitations. For example, when the product criterion is used, it is impossible to isolate the unique contribution of the school or anyone. Teacher from those of other agencies or to determine how the school effects ultimate behavior. (Harold, 1960)

A comprehensive study which seems to throw the most light on the qualities of a good teacher, shows the following characteristics appear to be associated with effective teaching: superior intelligence and school achievement; favourable attitudes toward pupils and enjoyment of relationships with them; generosity in appraising the motives and behavior of others; strong interests in reading and cultural matters; Participation in social and community affairs; early experience caring for children and teaching (such as reading to children and taking a class for a teacher); family support or identification with teaching ;and strong social service interests. (David, 1960)

Students' opinions about the teacher are also very important in determining qualities of good teachers. Most of the students opine that they like teachers who have a sense of humor and who have warmth, sympathy, understanding and the ability to teach well. (Weintraub, 1967)

## **8. Recommendations and Concluding Remarks**

To attract our fresh graduates to teaching, we have to undertake a number of initiatives, such as –

- i) Salaries and facilities of teachers should be increased.
- ii) Teachers should be provided with other facilities like loans with low interests, after service pensions etc. as are available for other government employees.
- iii) Fresh graduates should be made clearly understand the importance of teaching, so that they can think teaching to be much more than simply a profession.
- iv) In a word, steps should be taken to uplift the status of teachers and they should not be treated as poor, helpless and powerless people of the society. They have to be given due respect and treated as actual builders of an individual as well as a nation.

Teaching is a noble profession. A teacher has to earn this nobility and face many challenges. With his unique and praiseworthy qualities a teacher earns love, respect and appreciation from his pupils and the society. Unlike other professions, teaching is something special and effective teaching is needed to prepare students to serve the country as perfect man and enlightened citizens. So, by making a 'whole man' a teacher works for the building up of a nation. For this he has great duties and responsibilities upon his shoulder. To perform his duties properly, he has to do many

things. He teaches students based on national curriculum guidelines within his specialized subject areas. His duties include assigning homework, grading tests, documenting progress and keeping up with parents and community communication. So, a teacher has to have manifold qualities like knowledge, creativity, curiosity to learn, leadership, excellent communicative skill, problem-solving capability, capacity to organize, emotional intelligence, motivational power, empathy, passion, flexibility, behavioral excellence, adaptability, far-sightedness and so on. (Shishir, 2015). To achieve these qualities a teacher must love his profession and must be a constant learner. Rabindranath Tagore says, "A most important truth which we are apt to forget, is that a teacher can never truly teaches unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame (Tagore, 1961). Thus teaching is a very prestigious and challenging profession. Providing our fresh graduates with adequate financial benefits and opportunities for uplifting their social status and making them understand properly that teaching is much more than a general profession, they can be motivated to take up teaching as a profession. It is a possible, the present education scenario of Bangladesh, an educationally backward country, will be rapidly changed and the young, energetic and enthusiastic teachers can contribute much to the development of the society and the nation.

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