



An Exploration of Teaching Aptitude: A Must for Nation Building

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ABSTRACT

A teacher must have the required knowledge of his or her specific subject domain but should also possess the right abilities and aptitude to inspire critical thinking, problem-solving and inclusive educational spirit in students so that they can grow up as ethical and good citizens who can pave the path for a sustainable development of a nation. With incessant technological advancements and fast-growing academic and lifestyle changes, teachers need to constantly upgrade themselves in their competence and aptitude to match the norms of the day. The paper "An Exploration of Teaching Aptitude: A Must for Nation Building" explores the need for the requisite abilities and aptitude of individuals in teaching profession. Teachers show the right path to students and inspire them towards a more equitable, inclusive and sustainably developmental world.

Keywords: Abilities, aptitude, education, nation-building, teachers' role

Introduction

"A teacher can never truly teach, unless he is still learning himself." (Tagore, 12).

Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian litterateur, a massive cultural icon and an educationist who established the Viswa Bharati University, states with clarity how to be an effective teacher, one constantly needs to upgrade oneself and take the pains of going through a lifelong learning path. The upgradation of a teacher's abilities needs to happen both in terms of new research in one's chosen field of study or discipline and also in terms of pedagogical and technological innovations that are happening all around all the time. The instant the desire for learning stops in any individual, s/he ceases to be a student, and resultantly, ceases to be a teacher. A teacher needs to continuously learn, unlearn and relearn to keep himself/herself not just updated about his/her subject domain but also about the pedagogical innovations necessary for connecting with the pupil in the most effective way not just to pave the path for a better future for the students, but also channelise the energy of the future generation towards nation building, character building and ethical and sustainable living. Education is not merely providing students with the information and knowledge of a particular subject/discipline, but also building their character in such a manner that they can evolve as citizens who can take the mantle of the nation forward.

Requirements for Being a Good Teacher

In the age of information technology and artificial intelligence, when students are hooked to the internet to find new information and knowledge, a teacher's role becomes much more challenging, not just in showcasing within and outside the classroom the significance of new research in any chosen field of study, but also in making the base of the subject domain stronger with the aid of new information available. Upgradation of knowledge base is therefore vital for a teacher to connect with his or her students so that they are connected with the world and the new research (Verloop et al. 2001). Only when a teacher is updated with his or her knowledge, that s/he can disseminate the same in his or her students, which is true for all levels of teaching whether elementary or secondary or undergraduate or research.

Technological advancements and innovations over the last few decades, especially during the COVID-19, have led to new challenges and opportunities in the teaching-learning process which also needs to be addressed effectively and innovatively by teachers to work towards a better and effective teaching-learning environment. Adaptability of the teachers is a key here as only when teachers are able to adapt to the new methodologies,

that they can direct the future generations to a right path (Ruzgar, 2021). Today's students are neither taught the same way as a decade ago, and nor should they be as circumstances of teaching-learning environment has changed a lot. Once popular the lecture method cannot be taken as the only means to teaching in today's time, there has been a mix of many pedagogical approaches as project-based, participatory learning is what makes today's generation feel at ease, then just one-way lecture. Thus, new methodologies are to be adopted in teaching-learning process and teachers need to work on the upgradation of pedagogical skills. Two kinds of competencies are to be thought about in these contexts – the abilities and aptitude of teachers to the teaching-learning process.

In this context it is important to realise that the abilities and aptitudes are two different facets, where abilities are skills and knowledge that can be gained through prolonged engagement with a subject or through training, but aptitude is an innate capacity or an inherent disposition that a person has to do a thing in a much better way. Teaching abilities and teaching aptitude too are two different facets where a person can gain certain abilities over a period of time, provided that the person has the aptitude for the same. Hahn and MacLean (1955) state that aptitudes “are correctly referred to as latent potentialities, undeveloped capacities to acquire abilities and skills and to demonstrate achievements.” The latent possibilities that a person is born with needs to be honed to make one achieve better prospects in life and it can also help in nation-building process and it also applies to the profession of teaching.

Abilities of a Good Teacher

Obviously, academic excellence is the primary determining facet but apart from that the other abilities needed are (a) Competence to teach a discipline (b) Ability to engage students fruitfully (c) time management skills (d) management of course(s) (e) certain administrative responsibilities (f) balancing all the above. Apart from these the other essential qualities that a teacher should possess are (a) effective and eloquent communication skills (b) emotional intelligence to handle one's own self and also understand and handle students' emotional outpouring when required, (c) empathy (d) positive motivation (e) effective and appropriate command over body language (f) accepting feedbacks and working on them (g) patience (h) good sense of humour (i) technical and technological skills and knowhow, etc.

Usually, it is thought that a good teacher must have academic excellence; but apart from academic distinction there are a host of other abilities and aptitudes that can only lead to a teacher achieve certain success in teaching-learning process (Verloop et al. 2001). Furthermore, it has to be kept in mind that in a host of cases, the teachers are role models for their students and often they should also live a private life which is worth emulating for the students (Murray, 2021). Even though a teacher's job ends formally when s/he comes out of the classroom, but teachers are often cultural icons for their students and therefore the burden of performance of the teacher's self does not end in the classroom but manifests itself in every act that a teacher performs even outside the classroom or even outside the educational institution.

Teaching Aptitude

Apart from the above said abilities that a teacher should possess, aptitude also plays a great role in the making of a teacher. Aptitude is an individual's inherent disposition, an innate capability, and a necessary drive which can motivate a person to become good at what one is doing. Abilities can be acquired, but not aptitude, and therefore, individuals who have the aptitude for teaching should be the ones who should gain the abilities for teaching. In this context, it is important to understand that similar to a person having the aptitude for being a sportsperson, in the same way, some are born with an aptitude for being a teacher. Some people born with an aptitude for research and higher education are always good teachers. When a research-oriented person also has a teaching aptitude, that is the best scenario possible, though it may not always happen.

Bingham (1942) is of the opinion that aptitude is “a condition symptomatic of a person's relative fitness, of which one essential aspect is his readiness to acquire proficiency, his potential ability, and another is his readiness to develop an interest in exercising that ability” (18). Bingham further adds that “tests of aptitude, according to this mistaken view, should be undertaken to disclose the natural bent, the strength of different dispositions, tendencies and capacities inherent in the individual's original construction, without regard to modifications in these capacities which have occurred in the course of experience ... When appraising aptitudes, we are on the alert for symptoms of ‘ability to acquire,’ a genuine absorption in work, as well as a satisfactory level of competence. Indeed, a person who cannot develop a liking for an occupation along with proficiency in it cannot properly be said to have an aptitude for it because he lacks the necessary drive” (17).

Therefore, while evaluating the criteria of people fit for teaching, it is also important to judge whether the person has the aptitude for the same. Bingham (1942) believes, “They ascertain what an individual does in certain standardized situations, and from these measurements, the estimate of capacity for future accomplishment is an inference- a statistical probability, not a certainty. Moreover, tests cannot sample all the important aspects of behaviour or plumb the depths of vocational purpose. Even with full data at hand, an inquirer's questions regarding his aptitudes can rarely be answered precisely and with positive assurance” (11). Thus, a standardized test of aptitude tells us the probability of a person succeeding in the profession for

which the test is undertaken. An individual's behaviour and responses are measured to understand what they can accomplish in that particular vocation or profession when they take the aptitude test. Thus, in various professions in the world, more than the test of abilities, aptitude tests have become the norm. Through training, a person can be taught how the work can be done, but if a person does not have the knack for the same, then the abilities will never be acquired. Therefore, it is essential that such aptitude tests are also evolved so that one can figure out one's aptitude for teaching before joining the profession.

Conclusion

In nations, where there is a huge young population gaining elementary education and then with certain higher education and skills development training, it is necessary that individuals joining the teaching profession have both the teaching abilities and aptitude so that the nation can develop its human resource in the most effective manner and the nation can progress. National human resource development is directly linked to the teachers and mentoring function that they perform. Academic credentials are necessary to become good teachers as Tagore pointed out in "Ideals of Education" in 1929 but they also need to become the role models to provide that motivation to the students to shine bright and work towards the national development. Only when a dedicated band of teachers take the mantle of enlightening the future generations, it is possible to create a better future. UNESCO (2021) regards teachers as "... one of the most influential and powerful forces for equity, access and quality in education and key to sustainable global development."

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