Making of an outstanding teacher

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BRITAIN, a country historically known for excellent education system has been struggling to ensure quality education, especially at the high school level for quite some time. Amongst other things that have contributed to ever sliding quality of education is the availability of quality teachers. The Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR), a left-leaning think-tank recently conducted a research through Centre for Market and Public Organization, an independent research organization to find out the causes of faltering quality of education in UK. The study included 6,000 pupils, 300 teachers and 40 schools. The study concluded that one of the major causes of the present dismal condition of education was the presence of too many incompetent teachers in the system. The study commented that 'pupils taught by incompetent teachers drop more than a grade in any subject in their GCSEs than those taught by excellent teachers.'

In 2005 the Confederation of British Industries (CBI), the Association of major British employers released their own study and said 'the education system is failing to ensure enough school leavers master reading, writing and numeric skills.' Half of those surveyed thought school leavers lacked communication and team-working skills. 46% lack basic knowledge in maths and 40% cannot write correct English. Again the primary reason for such a disappointing scenario was ascribed to unavailability of competent teachers.

The problem of unavailability of competent and qualified teachers is a major problem throughout the world, more so in developing countries. In countries like Bangladesh the problem is more acute and it spreads from primary school to university level. In last thirty years Bangladesh has witnessed often mushroom growth of educational institutions-from primary to university level. Today there are thousands of primary and secondary schools both in the primary and secondary level. There are 3150 intermediate and degree colleges and 70 universities in the public and private sector. The number of Madrassas is in thousands as well. In one square kilometer of Dhanmondi area there are 22 English medium schools, I was told. Such an unplanned establishment of schools in places like Uttara, Banani, Gulshan, Mohammadpur and other residential areas has become somewhat a necessary public nuisance for the locality. However that is a different issue. Often the founder owners of these schools or even the universities in the private sector face the problem of finding suitable teachers to teach in their institutions. The situations is not better in public sector. The problem is endemic and as time goes by it continues to multiply and there is no respite in sight. As the institutions have to keep going it can not just shut its doors because they are unable to recruit competent teachers. So most of them settle for incompetent and inferior teachers. In countries like UK and USA one cannot enter the teaching profession especially in the school level if one is not in the possession of some sort of certificate from a competent and recognized authority. To get a license there are certain training and tests that one has to take. Such is not the case of Bangladesh. Often the situation is if you are waiting for a good job and if that takes time you can always try teaching in a school, not realizing good teaching needs extraordinary amount of skills.

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What makes a competent or outstanding teacher? Opinions differ. The base line of course is one must be knowledgeable enough in the subject he is expected to teach. He or she must continuously update his or her branch of knowledge by monitoring what is going on around. Many teachers fails miserable to do this. Some say one must have a good communication skills to become a good teacher. You can not differ with that. Teaching is getting across to the students. If you cannot communicate you cannot get across. To do this you must not only be good in the language you are using to teach but you must also be capable enough to use the appropriate words when you are delivering your lecture.