India:

What makes an effective teacher?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Katherine McKnight, PhD
Pearson

Lacy Graybeal, John Graybeal & Jessica Yarbro
George Mason University

Executive Summary

> ## " The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. "
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> BARBER & MOURSHED, 2007

Decades of research make it clear: teachers make a difference in student learning. In fact, Stanford University economist Eric Hanushek (1992) has noted that the difference between a good and a bad teacher can be a full level of achievement in a single school year. Given the strength of these findings, nations around the world recognize that in order to improve educational outcomes and equity they must focus on effectiveness of teachers. A critical step toward achieving that goal is for individual countries to identify the competencies required for effectiveness and use them to inform teaching standards, pre-service teacher preparation, professional development programs and performance evaluations. To make an impact, those systems and processes will need to be based on a common understanding, within each country, of what it means to be an effective teacher.

Oxfam's international study of teacher competences and standards concludes that in order to build that common understanding, it is "absolutely necessary that the question as to what is considered a quality educator is investigated among stakeholders" (Bourgonje & Tromp, 2011, p. 145). Giving stakeholders a voice not only allows us to understand how they think and feel about a topic; it provides an opportunity to help frame important policy decisions that directly impact their lives. Pearson is therefore surveying students, teachers, principals, education researchers, policymakers, and parents in 23 countries regarding their perceptions of what it takes to be an effective teacher. Pearson is comparing the views expressed by these stakeholders with both current government teaching standards and research on effective teaching.

This report, the second in the series, summarizes the results of the survey conducted in India, where the government has been working to provide a high quality education to all children, yet still faces significant struggles in developing and training teachers to deliver high quality instruction. In the global report, 23 participating countries are compared not only across stakeholder groups, but by country as well.

The Survey

To learn the top qualities education stakeholders in India seek in their teachers, we administered surveys across five cities—Bangalore, Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Chennai. The stakeholder groups include:

• Students ages 15-19
• Parents of K-12 students
• K-12 teachers
• K-12 administrators
• Education researchers and policymakers

Respondents were asked to list, in their own words, between 3 and 15 qualities that they feel are most important in making an "effective" teacher and to indicate what type of teacher, by subject(s) and grade level(s), they were thinking about while creating their list. The survey did not define "effective" for respondents, other than that it meant "good," allowing respondents to define what an effective teacher meant for themselves. We developed a coding system to categorize responses, based on prior research about competencies of effective teachers. This coding scheme was reviewed by teachers, principals, education policymakers, and researchers and revised iteratively as additional responses were coded, resulting in a final list of 32 categories.

The Most Important Qualities of Teachers in India

We found remarkable consistency in how the groups of surveyed stakeholders responded when they were asked to list between 3 and 15 of what they believed to be the most important qualities or competencies of effective teachers. The most common response across the full sample was that effective teachers need to build trusting, compassionate *Relationships* with their students. It was also the most common response when comparing government and private schools; primary, secondary, and senior secondary grade levels; and males and females.

The second and third most common responses across all stakeholder groups were *Knowledge of Learners,* and *Professionalism.* Knowledge of learners is a broad category that encompasses teachers' understanding of the learners who they are teaching and their use of that knowledge to guide how they teach. Popular responses included knowing child psychology, understanding students' backgrounds, and adapting instruction to meet the needs or interests of each student. Professionalism was expressed as being reliable, responsible and punctual.

Most Important Qualities of Teachers in India

1	**Ability to Develop Trusting, Productive Relationships**
2	**Knowledge of Learners**
3	**Professionalism**
4	**Ability to Make Ideas and Content Clear**
5	**Patient, Caring, Kind Personality**
6	**Emphasis on Developing Students' Non-Cognitive Skills**
7	**Subject Matter Knowledge**
8	**Teaching Skills/Pedagogical Practices**
9	**Ability to Engage Students in Learning**
10	**Classroom Management**

When the responses of all stakeholder groups are combined, the other seven categories in the Top 10 qualities or competencies mentioned were in descending order:

· The ability to *Make Content and Ideas Clear* for learners
· A *Patient, Caring and Kind* personality
· Emphasis on supporting student development of *Non-Cognitive Skills* (non-academic) (e.g., 21st Century Skills)
· *Subject Matter Knowledge*
· *Pedagogical Skills* and methods
· Ability to motivate and *Engage Learners* in their learning
· Ability to create a safe, productive learning environment (*Classroom Management*)

Eight of the Top 10 most frequent responses for each group of stakeholders were shared by all groups. Moreover, the responses of stakeholders associated with public and private schools were also remarkably similar: they shared the same Top 10 response categories. For grade levels, results were somewhat more variable but still, the Top 10 categories of responses were the same.

The categories of qualities mentioned most often across the entire sample reflect how strongly education stakeholders in India value dispositions of character (responsibility, trustworthiness) and care (relatedness, responsiveness) in their teachers. These dispositions are built into the teaching standards and expected roles of teachers in India, and there is research that supports the link between these dispositions, effectiveness, and learner outcomes. All but absent in the responses (less than 2%) were the importance of knowledge and use of assessment to evaluate and track student progress, and the ability to plan learning activities. This is particularly troublesome for educators, education researchers, and policymakers, given the central role of assessment in supporting student learning.

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Implications

The greater emphasis placed on teacher dispositions, such as caring, kindness, passion, effort, and professionalism, than on teaching skills may reflect the belief that without these critical dispositions, subject knowledge and pedagogical skills are insufficient to foster effective learning. While the majority of the qualities of effective teachers identified in this survey are reflected in the government's standards of effective teaching, this research identifies several qualities that are not mentioned: confidence and self-efficacy; intelligence and critical thinking; and challenging students and setting high expectations and believing that all children can learn. Ultimately, the survey results reaffirm the notion that, at its foundation, teaching is about trusting relationships between teachers and learners that foster learner success, as these communities define it.

Using These Results to Improve Teaching Practice in India

We recommend that the results of this survey be used to inform and guide the definition of what it means to be an effective teacher in the teaching and learning culture of India. Moreover, the results can inform discussions about teacher preparation, hiring, training, and evaluation in India, particularly in light of the problems in these areas documented by research.

Given the stakeholders' emphasis on the importance of teacher-student relationships, teacher training programs could place greater emphasis on dispositions that stakeholders believe are essential for effectiveness, such as patience, passion, and responsibility. The programs could assess these qualities in candidates, counsel candidates on career fit and provide training to improve teaching dispositions in future teachers. As other researchers have noted, focusing on improving the social relationship that is at the heart of student learning should lead to improvements in a wide range of student outcomes in schools.

Likewise, training programs may want to emphasize the knowledge and skills that were mentioned less frequently but have been shown to be critical to effective teaching and student learning, such as classroom management and organization, updated subject knowledge, assessment of learner progress, and reflective practice.

While this research identifies many different qualities and competencies of effective teachers, we caution against using the results to generate a checklist approach under the misguided belief that there is a single winning pattern of competencies to be an effective teacher. Finally, it cannot be overstated that to be effective teachers, the work conditions and environment, first and foremost, must be well managed; school context and community culture have a profound influence on the way different teacher roles and competencies are understood, prioritized, and practiced.

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