



Cover Story **Top Stories**

Are Indian Teachers Burning Out?

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Just about everyone talks about the pressure that students undergo. With the Teachers' Day round the corner, [Brainfeed magazine](#) dug deep to know the issues that teachers face. Though being the crucial pivot and the centre of all interventions in the school system, the teacher, for long has been the unsung hero.

The Brainfeed magazine survey 2018, a first of its kind in the country looks at the myriad issues. The survey throws up a number of facts, the most interesting. In spite of the average Indian teacher getting exhausted by the end of the day, she still has a spring in her feet and heads to school the following morning.

If you want to do a half-decent job in a 45-minute class, you need to spend at least 90-minutes preparing for it was the dictum that Noel Mall, a chemistry teacher, was often told while working in the Republic of Maldives. A teacher who worked in Ranchi for a major part of his life and presently working at the Beijing National Day School in China is a firm believer that a teacher can give his best when he or she is given three periods a day. Nothing more, nothing less.

"It is better to do one thing perfectly than ten indifferently. There is too much pressure on the teacher in India and this is the only reason why I left," quips Noel.

A large section of teachers feels the same way. Sudha Gorthi, a retired English Language teacher from Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Sainikpuri in Secunderabad shares, *"Education system is information heavy. Students are overburdened, so is the teacher. Everyone talks about activity based teaching but for that, the teacher needs to be given free time to prepare. In short, the average Indian teacher is over-burdened."*

Sample this: A teacher's day begins (Read: her day. Majority of the work force are women) anywhere between 7:30 to 8:40 depending on the city and region but most schools across the country start functioning between the said timing. From getting students ready for assembly, taking 4-6 classes, attending meetings, completing assessments, lesson plans, more meetings with respective club committees, preparing question papers, answering queries from parents, dealing with problem kids, going for substitutions and planning for annual, sports and other events takes a toll on the teacher, leaving no time either for herself or for what she is meant for- to prepare well for classes.

Anil Swarup, Secretary at Human Resources Development Ministry, Government of India, recently remarked,

"I know that if I am able to nail the teacher issue, 70 per cent of the problem is solved."

Meghna, a Physics teacher from Kota says,

"Non-teaching work eats a lot of time, as a result, teaching suffers. What we end up doing is finish the syllabus."

According to Brainfeed survey, 23% of the 891 teachers said they prefer three periods a day if they were to do justice to their jobs. 55% of the teachers take 4-6 classes a day.

Raashi K K, a teacher from Gurgaon, said,

“There is a misconception that teachers get a lot of free time as there are many holidays. On the contrary, teachers are working round the clock. A teacher’s job does not end once she leaves the school. There is marking answer scripts, preparing for the next day, writing the daily lesson plan, marking homework and preparing question papers.”

Do not take your work home, if you want to lead a stress-free life, so goes the saying. Teachers, if one were to go by the Brainfeed survey do not seem to have the luxury. 39% of the respondents said that they mark answer scripts at home. There is no way a teacher can complete all her work at school, with partaking in so many committees and involving in extra-curricular activities, she ends up taking work home.

Majority of the teachers are unable to spare time to prepare for the next day and almost 70% cannot design teaching aids due to the lack of time.

“How are we expecting innovation in teaching methodology? How can we expect them to adapt new generation temperament in their teaching styles when we don’t give them enough time to understand the minds of students and analyse the required alterations in their teaching style?”, retorts a teacher.

The curriculum in other countries, for instance, in Singapore is well structured and there is ample space and time for the student to understand concepts. In India, there is a lot of talk of using practical methods but is not reflected in the curriculum. The practical aspect is left to the educator to implement. Teachers with much energy and enthusiasm go the extra mile to include student-centric methods into teaching but not all can do that due to lack of time.

Too much on the plate

Is the teacher biting into too much than he or she can chew is the question that is on everyone’s mind?

The answer seems to be in the affirmative. To a question: ‘Do you have time to make teaching aids? 69% of the respondents gave a strong ‘no’ as the reply. Going through the rigorous daily routine is sapping the energy, leaving no time to prepare teaching aids to rue teachers across cities.

It came as no surprise that 39% of the respondents feel exhausted by the end of the day and have no inclination to enhance skills and prepare in a better way. They blame it on the toxic routine that they have to undergo, everyday.

The constant changes in the exam board (read CBSE) too are playing a part in the stress levels. By the time, teachers get accustomed to a set pattern, changes are initiated.

Mira Nambiar, a senior coordinator says,

“Even a minor change can turn the whole academic calendar topsy-turvy.” She adds, “The media is obsessed with the pressure exerted on students by way of exams, expectations and syllabus, few talks about the pressure that a teacher undergoes. I have seen so many teachers quitting or taking a year off unable to handle pressure.”

Bright spot: Teachers still an enthusiastic lot

It is not all negative. In what can be termed as one bright spot, the survey showed that in spite of all the problems that teachers face, they are as enthusiastic today as they were on their first day of the job. A good 54.3% teachers surveyed across India said that they still are enthusiastic to go to school and take classes.

Sociologist Amrita who has worked a lot on what motivates people in doing certain jobs says,

"It has got to do with the Indian mindset. We adapt to hardship and the older generation has an inbuilt strength to soak up any amount of pressure. This generation though is ambitious and wants quick results and is not ready for the long innings."

Can the younger lot, 26% of the respondents fall under the bracket who has been in the profession between 0-5 years take the crushing workload and endless paperwork?

Suhani Singh, a teacher with 20 years experience says,

"People without a passion for teaching should not enter the field. As far as I am concerned there is more of 'giving' than 'taking' in this profession, no doubt it is termed as noble."

Teachers' salary, a contentious issue

While salaries in the IT/ITES sector touch the roof, teachers' salaries have never become the talking point in business magazines. Of late, the comparison between the two sectors is growing and becoming a hot topic debated at different fora. Why should not teachers be paid the same salaries as IT employees?

The answer to the question has several answers. The system is so fragmented that no homogeneous action is possible and added to the problem is that education features on the concurrent list in the constitution, which means that each state has its own agenda.

While there are several teachers who are under paid, it is also a fact that many international schools in big cities and even in tier 11 cities have started offering good packages. An issue that is now a reality is the gap between the older gen teachers as compared to the younger lot. Experience versus exuberance, passion versus practicality, ambition versus contentment.

The new-gen teachers are tech-savvy. They are technologically armed but lack the tricks of the trade. On the other hand, senior teachers are not tech-savvy but are effective teachers. With each passing year, a sizeable number of teachers retire and in their place come freshers. How will the new India adapt? Can the new set of teachers take forward with them the passion that the older generation had? Given the fact that 26% of the teaching community is in the profession for less than five years shows that their percentage is bound to grow at a rapid pace in the next few years.

With multi-tasking, the new norm, the teachers' role has morphed and the modern teacher has to play different roles aided with technology. How smoothly will the baton pass on to the younger generation of teachers is something that the policy makers need to address.

Gone are the days when teachers were paid low salaries, times are changing; good teachers are paid handsome salaries. In countries like Singapore, the best graduates are attracted to teaching as there is high prestige and status associated with the

profession as is the case in Finland and several other countries. The notion that teaching is the last resort as was the case for a long time in India is now slowly but surely fading.

The way forward is improving the quality of teaching by improving the recruiting process and bettering the continuous professional development programmes. Indian students are reputed internationally and a lot of credit should go to the humble teacher who, in spite of several hardships goes about her job with elan.

BRAINFEEED SURVEY STATISTICS

How many years have you been in the field?

26.1% of the respondents have been in the profession between 0-5 years which is a sizeable percent and is a crucial component for the survey as this segment comprises the future.

“I don’t seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began this job.”

Though the survey threw up a number of facts about the education system, the question if they are still enthusiastic when they first entered the profession showed that 54.3% are still enthusiastic. The education system may be beset with several problems but the fact that the majority of work-force is still raring to go augurs well for the sector.

On an average how many classes do you take in a day?

54.8% of Indian teachers take 4-6 classes per day. Another 24.5% of teachers take 7-9 classes per day which is way above the desired norms and it is one of the major reasons for teachers feeling burned out.

Respondents said that the non-teaching work is also a reason for stress. While comparing both statistics, 68.9% think they should take around 4-6 classes in a day and 22.7% believe to schedule a maximum of 3 classes.

Do you mark answer scripts and homework at your house?

In India, about 38.8% of teachers mark answer scripts at home which essentially translates to taking work home daily. Many respondents felt that if they do not do this, they would be unable to complete their work as they do not have the time at school. This is also coming in the way in preparing for the next day and making teaching and learning aids. 43.4% teachers stated that they are given too many additional responsibilities such as heads of cultural, sports committees and as a result feel exhausted.

How many classes do you think you should be taking in a day?

22.7% of the teachers feel that they would be fine if they were given three classes a day and 69% are fine with the 4-6 classes per day schedule that seems to be prevalent today. By and large, the average teacher has no complaints taking a minimum of four classes per day.

Do you feel you should not carry work home?

51% of teachers said that they should not carry work home. Yet, they cannot do away. Teachers are caught in a catch-22 situation. Many say that the government should look into this aspect as workload is increasing with each passing day as more activities are included.

Do you feel teachers are given too many additional responsibilities such as heads of cultural, sports committees and as a result feel exhausted?

Additional responsibilities such as being included in cultural, sports, NSS, NCC, literary, heritage, science committees though imperative is taking a toll on teachers as they are unable to strike a balance between teaching and overseeing other activities.

Do you have enough time to prepare for the next day?

Almost half the teacher population does not have the time to prepare for the next day, leave alone for a long term. 44% said that they just do not have the time to make a plan for the next day and as a result they just go through the motions without innovating or coming up with new ideas and methods to disseminate information and facilitate learning.

To what extent does parental pressure add to stress?

Teachers are also stressed out due to pressure from parents. 26.9% said that the pressure is a lot and another 55.2% said that they feel pressurized to an extent. With the growing middle class and ever growing ambitions, parents pressure on teachers is also an aspect for their stress levels.

Do you have time to make teaching aids?

Do you feel lack of time is the reason for not making teaching aids?

Here is why Indian teachers do not prepare teaching aids. They just do not have the time. 69% teachers surveyed said that they are so saddled with other activities at school apart from taking classes that they're left with no time to make teaching aids.

"My job doesn't excite me anymore."

"I feel exhausted at the end of the day."

An excited lot- 54.4% of teachers are still excited at the thought of going to school. In spite of several issues, the average teacher is ready to head to school with a spring in her feet, which in spite of the fact that 39.1% feel exhausted at the end of the day.
