IJCRT.ORG ISSN : 2320-2882

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

A STUDY ON TEACHING COMPETENCY OF SECONDARY TEACHERS IN RELATION TO THEIR THINKING STYLES AND VITAL SOFT SKILLS

M.AMALA JANSI

Ph.D. Research scholar, Department of Education, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.

Dr. M. GOVINDA RAJU

Principal, Sri Muthukumaran College of Education, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract

This study investigates the interplay of teaching competency, thinking styles, and vital soft skills among secondary teachers in Kancheepuram, Chennai, and Tiruvallur districts of Tamil Nadu, India. The research utilizes survey data from 1000 teachers, employing statistical techniques to analyze the relationships. The findings reveal that there are significant differences in teaching competency, thinking styles, and soft skills among teachers in different districts. It also identifies variations based on gender, age, and teaching experience. The study suggests implications for teacher training and curriculum development to enhance these crucial aspects of education. Future research can expand these insights to other regions and educational levels.

Keywords: Teaching Competency, Thinking Styles, Vital Soft skills.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers occupy a crucial position in the realm of education, wielding significant influence over students' development. Their role extends beyond the classroom, contributing to the shaping of future generations and, by extension, the broader world. Teaching competency is a fundamental element of a teacher's effectiveness, as it directly affects the quality of education they provide. Importantly, teaching competency does not function in isolation; it is intricately connected with a teacher's thinking styles and the presence of vital soft skills.

The nexus between teaching competency, thinking styles, and vital soft skills is of paramount importance. This relationship serves as the foundation for a teacher's ability to nurture students' academic, social, and emotional growth. Recognizing and comprehending how these elements intersect is instrumental in enhancing the educational experience for both teachers and students. This understanding is a crucial step towards achieving educational excellence and preparing the next generation for the challenges and opportunities that await them.

2.SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Teaching competency encompasses the skills, abilities, and capabilities that a teacher possesses to create an effective and productive learning environment. It is essential for realizing the full potential of both the teacher and the students, ultimately leading to the achievement of educational goals. In our educational system, teachers play a pivotal role, as noted by Saxena (2006). They regularly encounter diverse situations that demand different approaches. For instance, despite persistent efforts, a teacher may struggle to elicit the desired responses from some students, while unexpectedly, another student, previously considered average, may excel. These variations can often be attributed to differences in individuals' thinking styles.

The diverse thinking styles employed by teachers in their teaching methods should undergo reform to enhance their teaching competency, which, in turn, can significantly impact student achievement. A teacher's thinking style plays a pivotal role in determining their ability to stimulate student's learning. When a teacher lacks innovative ideas and creativity in their teaching, students may become passive learners, essentially treated as passive recipients of information. A teacher with an effective thinking pattern can create an ideal environment for fostering constructive learning. If the teacher cares about the needs of the students, involves themselves in various school activities, helps them generate ideas, enables them to learn about group dynamics, and be effective in social commitments, only then can it be said that the teacher has fulfilled their accountability. This depends on the kind of thinking the teacher possesses. Thus, the thinking styles among teachers are of utmost importance, as they determine how students will develop their thinking. Students' thinking styles make a difference in their perceptions of effective teachers. Secondary teachers must be well aware of these facts and strive to be positive thinkers, Understanding the thinking styles of secondary teachers can help prevent potentially embarrassing situations.

Vital Soft skills are essential for achieving success in one's career, and they enable individuals to excel in the workplace. Teachers play a significant role in shaping society by instilling values and promoting a positive culture, making them the bearers of cultural transmission. To effectively pass on these values, teachers must possess and apply soft skills at various levels. The teachers who are able to acquire these skills not only find work in the career of their choice but also experience stronger and happier relationships in their personal lives.

A secondary teacher is defined as one who possesses an integrated personality, thinking style, soft skill management, teaching competency and professional preparation. Initially, the goal of assessing teachers' thinking styles and vital soft skills was to make teachers more aware of their role in the teaching and learning process and to motivate them to actively participate and take charge of their personal growth. Hence the investigator wants to study about teaching competency of secondary teachers in relation to their thinking styles and vital soft skills.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the level of Teaching Competency and its dimensions of Secondary teachers.
2. To find out the level of Thinking Styles and its dimensions of Secondary teachers.
3. To find out the level of Vital Soft Skills and its dimensions of Secondaryteachers.

4. METHODOLOGY

The investigator has chosen the survey approach for their investigation, which aims to evaluating teaching competency of secondary school teachers in relation their thinking styles and vital soft skills.

4.1. VARIABLES USED IN THE PRESENT STUDY

A) Independent Variables: Thinking Styles, Vital Soft Skills
B) Dependent Variable: Teaching Competency
C)Background Variables: i) Gender ii) Age iii) Types of Family iv) Educational Qualification v) Subject Handling vi) Teaching Experience vii) Class handling viii) Type of School ix) Location of the School x) Name of the District.

4.2. POPULATION FOR THE STUDY

The population for the present study consists of secondary teachers working in high schools or higher secondary schools located in Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur Districts.

4.3. SAMPLE FOR THE STUDY

The investigator used a stratified random sampling technique to select the sample from the population. Stratification was performed based on Gender, Age, Type of family, Educational Qualification, Subject handling, Teaching Experience, Class handling, Locality of the School, Type of school and Name of the District. The sample for the present study consists of 1000 secondary teachers working in various high or higher secondary schools in Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur districts, selected using the stratified random sampling method.

4.4. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

Following are the statistical techniques that are used in the present research for the purpose of analysis of data: a) Arithmetic Mean b) Standard Deviation c) t – Test d) ANOVA e) Carl Pearson's Product Moment Correlation f) Regression.

4.5. TOOLS USED

1.The "Teaching Competency Scale" was constructed and validated by the **Investigator in collaboration** with **Research Supervisor (2016).**
2.The "Vital Soft Skills Scale" was also constructed and validated by the **Investigator** in partnership with the **Research Supervisor (2016).**
3. The "Thinking Styles Assessment Scale" developed and standardized by **S. Jesu Christopher (2015)** was adopted by the researcher for this study.

5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

HYPOTHESIS: 1

There is no significant difference among Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur districts secondary teachers in their teaching competency and its dimensions.

Table 1

Difference among Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur districts secondary teachers in their teaching competency and its dimensions

Dimension	Source of variation	df = 2,997 Sum of squares	Mean squares	Calculated 'F' value	Remark
Planning	Between	193.48	96.74	11.15	S
	Within	8643.44	8.66		
Motivation	Between	932.30	466.15	12.89	S
	Within	36050.24	36.15		
Subject competency	Between	386.98	193.49	10.52	S
	Within	18321.45	18.37		
Presentation	Between	627.55	313.77	23.29	S
	Within	13429.68	13.47		
Organization	Between	224.21	112.10	6.67	S
	Within	16738.74	16.78		
Use of teaching- learning materials	Between	183.31	91.66	2.29	NS
	Within	39782.04	39.90		
Classroom management	Between	2429.98	1214.99	44.26	S
	Within	27368.73	27.45		
Communication	Between	135.85	67.92	7.26	S
	Within	9323.41	9.35		
Personality	Between	864.26	432.13	22.31	S
	Within	19305.68	19.36		
Teaching competency in total	**Between**	**36672.33**	**18336.16**	**21.27**	**S**
	Within	**859098.55**	**861.68**		

(At 5% level of significance the table value of 'F' for df 2,997 is 3.00)

It is inferred from the above table that there is significant difference among secondary teachers from Chennai, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur Districts in teaching competency in total and its dimensions planning, motivation, subject competency, presentation, organization, class room management, communication and personality. But, there is no significant difference among secondary teachers from Chennai, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur in the dimension use of teaching-learning materials.

HYPOTHESIS: 2

There is no significant difference among Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur district secondary teachers in their thinking styles and its dimensions.

Table 2

Difference among Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur districts secondary teachers in their thinking styles and its dimensions

Dimension	Source of variation	df = 2,997		Calculated 'F' value	Remark
		Sum of squares	Mean squares		
Critical thinking	Between	681.06	340.53	6.99	S
	Within	48535.56	48.68		
Creative thinking	Between	253.82	126.91	3.37	S
	Within	37505.53	37.61		
Logical Reasoning	Between	644.19	322.09	6.01	S
	Within	53379.71	53.54		
Problem solving	Between	184.06	92.03	1.08	NS
	Within	84814.48	85.07		
Decision making	Between	682.85	341.42	11.87	S
	Within	28670.74	28.75		
Lateral thinking	Between	96.32	48.16	2.94	NS
	Within	16305.82	16.35		
Thinking styles in total	**Between**	**10412.21**	**5206.10**	**5.61**	**S**
	Within	**924958.53**	**927.74**		

(At 5% level of significance the table value of 'F' for df 2,997 is 3.00)

It is inferred from the above table that there is significant difference among Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur Districts secondary teachers in their thinking styles in total and its dimensions critical thinking, creative thinking, logical reasoning and decision making. But there is no significant difference among Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur district secondary teachers in the dimensions problem solving and lateral thinking.

NULL HYPOTHESIS: 3

There is no significant difference among Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur districts secondary teachers in their vital soft skills and its dimensions.

Table 3

Difference among Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur districts secondary teachers in their vital soft skills and its dimensions

Dimension	Source of variation	df = 2,997 Sum of squares	Mean squares	Calculated 'F' value	Remark
Oral communication skill	Between	25.82	12.91	1.01	NS
	Within	12717.00	12.75		
Written communication skill	Between	63.67	31.84	4.07	S
	Within	7784.22	7.80		
Computer skill	Between	3743.10	1871.55	17.03	S
	Within	109564.53	109.89		
Stress management skill	Between	8.41	4.20	0.12	NS
	Within	33803.98	33.90		
Organising skill	Between	650.63	325.31	6.37	S
	Within	50847.51	51.00		
Time Management skill	Between	102.34	51.17	7.43	S
	Within	6861.29	6.88		
Leadership skill	Between	268.65	134.32	7.89	S
	Within	16969.88	17.02		
Interpersonal skill	Between	100.84	50.42	9.27	S
	Within	5421.41	5.43		
Team Building skill	Between	13.95	6.97	0.30	NS
	Within	22999.83	23.06		
Vital Soft skills in total	**Between**	**632.48**	**316.24**	**0.38**	**NS**
	Within	**811363.41**	**813.80**		

(At 5% level of significance the table value of ' F' for df 2,997 is 3.00)

It is inferred from the above table that there is significant difference among secondary teachers from Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur districts in written communication skill, computer skill, organising skill, time management skill, leadership skill and interpersonal skill. But, there is no significant difference among secondary teachers from Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur districts in vital soft skill in total and its dimensions oral communication skill, stress management skill and team building skill.

6. MAJOR FINDINGS

1. The level of teaching competency and its dimensions of secondary teachers are moderate.
2. There is significant difference between male and female secondary teachers in their teaching competency and its dimensions.
3. The level of Thinking Styles and its dimensions of secondary teachers are moderate.
4. There is significant difference between rural and urban secondary teachers in thinking styles and its dimensions.
5. The level of vital soft skills and its dimensions of secondary teachers are moderate.
6. There is significant difference among below 35, 35-50 and above 50 years of age secondary teachers in vital soft skills and its dimensions.
7. There is significant difference among up to 10 years, 11-20 years and above 20 years of teaching experience of secondary teachers in vital soft skills and its dimensions.

7. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- The teacher training programs should focus on improving teaching competency, soft skills, and thinking styles.
- ICT training should be given to the secondary teachers for improving their teaching competency.
- Innovative in-service training should be incorporated to develop teaching competency.
- Strategies for inculcating thinking styles skills should be included in the school curriculum.
- Soft skills training should be given to the secondary teachers to improve their stress management skill
- Adopt strategies for developing thinking styles and teaching competency of secondary teachers.
- Provision for team work should be given.

8. SUGGESTION FOR THE FURTHER STUDY

- The present study is conducted in Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur districts of Tamilnadu, and it can be further extended to other districts by future researchers.
- This study may also be extended to college and university faculties.
- The present problem of the study may be conducted as an experimental study.
- Examine the relationship between thinking styles and teaching competency of primary school teachers.
- Study the relationship between ICT awareness and thinking styles among secondary school teachers.

9. CONCLUSION

The investigator assumed that, teaching competency is not a single skill to be acquired and nurtured. It is an embodiment of many skills. It needs a systematic practice. It is the knowledge to use the right thing at the right time and in a right place. Vital soft skills play a significant role in one's success in life particularly in one's teaching competency. If one acquires and practices soft skills one can excel in teaching competency. Vital soft skills cannot be taught. However, it can be developed through proper training by the use of thinking. Naturally inherently one can have soft skills but it depends upon the thinking styles. Everyone thinks about which vital soft skills have use in their day-to-day life. Effective thinking increase the confident level of one's presentation then one can excel in teaching competency. Depending upon the ability in vital soft skills and thinking styles one's teaching competency differs.

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