CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The Indian higher education system is facing an unprecedented transformation being driven by economic, technological and demographic changes. It has created widespread access to low-cost high-quality university education for students of all levels. With well-planned expansion and a student-centric learning-driven model of education, India has not only bettered its enrolment numbers but has dramatically enhanced its learning outcomes. India has also undertaken large-scale reforms to better faculty-student ratios by making teaching an attractive career path, expanding capacity for faculty at universities and delinking educational qualifications from teaching eligibility. Despite significant progress, Indian higher education is faced with several challenges in the area of teaching and learning. It is marked by poor quality teaching, outdated and rigid curricula and pedagogy, lack of accountability and quality assurance and separation of research and teaching (British Council, 2014).

In light of prevailing shortcomings in the current education system, transformational and innovative interventions in teaching and learning are vital. Those on the front lines, i.e. the teachers, play a critical role in this endeavor because the knowledge of modern teaching pedagogy and dynamic tools of instructional practices would be void if teachers are reluctant or not adequately prepared to adapt to such changes in the educational environment.

As teaching is multifaceted, the teachers are required to be research focused and properly engaged with mentoring, industry engagement, research and consulting. Teaching and learning is no longer confined to classrooms, rather it extends into the wider community. Owing to stupendous rise in demand for global skills, innovations and internationalization of higher education, the profile of a teacher is witnessing dynamic changes. A teacher’s role goes far beyond than merely being a custodian of knowledge or a manger of students. They are now expected to be a facilitator in transforming information into knowledge/ wisdom, a reflective practitioner, an avid learner and are expected to possess a professional orientation in their field. Such transformations pinpoint the need to delve deeper into the less tangible behavioral attributes, teachers’ personality traits, learning processes, life experiences, education beliefs and motivational aspects among teachers; broadly known as teaching competencies Thus, the need for a newer approach that emphasizes on qualitative facet of teaching is widely acknowledged (ACTEQ, 2003).
One of the popular and newer approaches of Human Resource Management which emphasizes on qualitative and intangible aspects of human performance is Competency-Based Management (CBM), i.e. the management of key human resource processes around a competency profile for the work to be performed. Competency based management (CBM) or competency management involves identifying the competencies that people need to perform a job well in all areas of organizational activity and constructing a framework and using it as a foundation for recruitment, selection, training and development, rewards and other aspects of people management (Horton, 2002).

Thus the focus of the present study is on the professional competencies required by teachers in higher education. Teaching competencies are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, the identification of which, leads to superior performance and individual development. While the “knowledge and skills” components of competency are easier to identify and could be developed by technical training and formal education whereas the “attitudinal“ components of the competency definition are difficult to identify and could be developed with informal learning methods, field experiences and professional training and development initiatives. Because of complexity in terms of identification and development and their growing importance, Attitudinal components of teaching competencies mentioned above are a subject of considerable attention and are increasingly being recognized as an indispensable part of teacher’s professional inventory of desirable characteristics suitable for the teaching profession.

Our research further posits that the effective delivery of multiple roles by the teachers requires them to enrich their professional competencies vital for bridging the gap between theoretical approaches and practical industry requirements. Once ensnared, the developed competencies of teachers facilitate in meeting the outcomes of enhanced student engagement, pedagogical innovations in learning environment and nurturing constructive partnerships in an educational institute.

Student Engagement echoes the importance of creating a supportive learning context and respecting their viewpoints (Cranton, 2006) and exhibiting empathy and concern for student’s learning (Williams, 2012.). The present study analyses the performance of teachers both inside and beyond classroom in terms of various teaching practices deployed by them towards fostering student engagement. For instance, the impact of formal learning through attainment of academic credentials and continuing professional development as well as Informal learning methods through dialogue with others, observation, reflection on current experiences, learning through reading and researching, have been deeply studied on the development of student engagement competencies of teachers. Furthermore, the
study analyzes the professional efficacy of teachers in the learning environment of an educational institute in terms of influencing pedagogical innovations. Teachers with developed competencies better respond to the transformations in information technology, internationalization, and changing industry requirements etc. (Mizoue & Inoue, 1993) and thus influence innovation in learning environment of HEIs through their experimentation skills, pedagogical and research competencies.

But the available literature in the field of competency echoes about dearth of proper education and awareness among teachers, with respect to objectives of competency based instructions, competency based assessment tools and evaluation techniques as well as poor implementation of competency based programs in the institutions, leading to resistance by faculty members who perceive it as only a drain upon their teaching time and efforts (M.McEvoy et al, 2005), (Okrasinki, 2010) and (Bonder, Bouchard, & Bellemare, 2011).

In order to nurture the professional competencies among teachers, it is imperative to make adequate arrangements for the successful implementation of personality development programs, capacity enhancement schemes, management development programs and other such joint initiatives by university management, teachers and corporate officials so as to bridge the gap between university’s theoretical curriculum and practical industrial requirements.

Such complex challenges cannot be achieved individually but call for collective actions by higher education institutes. These collective actions and interactions in form of productive collaborations, partnership projects between university and industry, joint communities in the educational environment are a direct manifestation of a relatively naïve phenomenon in social sciences’ literature, which has come to be coined as “social capital”. The current study discusses in depth, the contribution of social capital towards achieving constructive partnerships among various stakeholders of higher education.

Research on social capital is relatively recent. Only in the last 20 years has it captured the attention of practitioners and academicians from different backgrounds (Crootaert & Bastelaer, 2002). Social Capital encompasses cognitive or institutional assets that create propensities for mutually beneficial collective action which arise from roles, networks, and other social relationships that facilitate such cooperative behavior, or from norms, values, attitudes that represent a sense of solidarity and mutual trust and other cognitive commitments that predispose people to work together to mutual benefit (Krishna & Uphoff, 1999).

Thus, social capital, in the context of present topic, refers to interactions, relations, social cohesion resulting from joint partnerships and collaborative activities with different stakeholders in higher
education, i.e. University officials, faculty members, teachers, students and the corporate, taken in the direction of teacher’s professional development in higher education scenario. Thus the present study explores the dimensions of social capital in context of higher education and tries to understand how these dimensions of social capital contribute to professional development of teachers in higher education institutions in India. It also attempts to gauge the role of the management of an educational institution in facilitating professional development of teachers and enhancing the professional competencies of teachers in higher education.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

Today, Competency Based Education (CBE) is being increasingly recognized as a tool used by colleges and universities to develop knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors and attitudes which are essential to performing real life work roles and tasks (Koenigsfeld, J. P., 2008). When applied to educational setting, competency based curriculum reaps Performance based learning outcomes for teachers and result in enhanced student performance (student orientation, student development) as well as positive behavioral changes in both teachers and students. Rationale behind competency based education lies in the shortcomings of traditional education system where objectives are vaguely stated or not stated at all. Whereas in competency based instruction, learners are given precisely stated objectives regarding what competencies are required and what criteria would be used to assess their performance. While traditional education holds time constant implying that trainees who learn at different rate will demonstrate varying degrees of achievement at the end of the time period where as competency-based instruction holds achievement as constant meaning that a unit is ended when one can demonstrate the required competency. Also Traditional education strongly emphasizes program entrance requirement as opposed to competency-based instruction which places its heaviest emphasis on exit requirement. Thus the main premise behind the development of CBE curriculum is to bridge the gap between theoretical academic content and practical industry/job requirements (Berdrow, I., & Evers, F. T., 2011) (Waldmann-Williams, T. E., 2001).

In order to fill this void in present education curriculum, competency based instruction and tools are increasingly being applied in various educational settings. Since the greatest educational asset is the “teacher”, the critical ingredient of teaching now being recognized is the professional competence of a teacher, i.e. “the ability of human to deliver quality professional service designed to increase probability of intended learning” (Hunter, 2001).
As professionals, teachers should be well-equipped with subject and pedagogical knowledge, professional skills and supporting attitudes and values. Teachers have a responsibility to strive for continuous personal growth and professional excellence through lifelong learning.

Since the professional development needs of teachers vary from person to person and from institution to institution (ACTEQ, 2003), Competency Based Education serves to illustrate what competencies should teachers broadly embrace during the different stages of the teachers’ professional growth and development. As stated earlier, the competency approach of teacher preparation involves acquisition of knowledge and the ability to apply it, and development of the needed repertoire of attitudes and behaviors, collectively known as teaching competencies. The ultimate goal of the competency-based education is the synthesis of specific behaviors into the totality of the act of teaching (Novicki, 1982).

The present study serves to build these behavioral aspects of teacher’s performance and integrate them with teaching so as to produce improved learning and performance outcomes for teachers and students both.

Since the teachers under the competency based program strive to attain a wide range of professional competencies, it enables them to deliver on multiple imperatives of teaching which are not only limited to student performance achievement but extend to seek goals of student engagement, lifelong learning, positive behavioral orientation among teachers and students both and ultimately bringing innovation in the overall learning environment of an educational institution.

Further, any endeavor for competency based education calls for strong ties of collaboration among stakeholders (teachers, management, students and industry), organizational values and a learning climate for successful implementation of competency based practices in any educational institution. According to Francis, (1998), any such collaborative arrangements, educational partnerships and stakeholder engagement rest upon a base of trust, reciprocity, strong lines of communication, collective action and social cohesion among teacher communities. These subjective and intangible elements i.e., accepted attitudes and norms of behavior, shared values, reciprocity, and trust fall under the broader dimension of cognitive social capital (Crootaert & Bastelaer, 2002). In the setting of education, social capital signifies relations between teachers and management, students and teachers and among teacher communities and associations.

The present research delves deeper into the constructs of social capital in the higher education scenario of India. The study analyses the dimensions of competency based education through the lens of cognitive social capital. Since the social capital seeks to define institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions, the present research is intended to have long term social implications in the sphere of higher education.
1.3 Significance of the Study
The detailed research on competency based teacher education would help Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in planning and developing professional development programmes that match the professional growth and career needs of teachers in the long run. The in-depth study on teacher’s competencies and the associated learning environment would help teachers in strengthening their professional capacities as per the changing requirements of pedagogy and curriculum in higher education scenario.
Since the research study attempts to address the urgent need of improving teacher’s continuing education, the topic is a step taken in the direction of solving the multitude of imbalances between present educational pedagogy and that of industrial requirements.
Further the dimensions of social capital incorporated with the study of competency based education lead us to explore as to what conditions favor effective synergy among university management, teachers, administrators, students and the corporate in the direction of faculty development in India.
The present study is aimed to understand the magnitude of competencies and associated learning environment for teachers and other stakeholders in higher education.

1.4 Study description
1.4.1 Study Aim
The main aim of the study is to assess the level of competency of teachers and their contribution towards learning environment of an educational institute. The study attempts to develop an understanding towards the relationship between the variables and dimensions of teaching competencies with those of student engagement and innovation. Further, the dimensions of knowledge management and social capital have also been explored for studying their influence and contributory role in achieving constructive partnership among various stakeholders of higher education.

1.4.2 Study Purpose
To help the faculty members as well as management of higher educational institutions understand the significance of teaching competencies for long term engagement of students in the learning process and for enhancing innovation in the overall learning environment of an higher education institute.

1.5 Chapterization
The scheme of chapterization for the present study is as follows:
Chapter 1-Introduction discusses the need for undertaking the study, stressing upon the significance of competency based management in meeting the shortcomings in the current educational system. It talks about the changing role of teachers with greater focus on paradigm of teaching competency in
raising the levels of student engagement and bringing innovation in the overall learning environment of a higher educational institute.

**Chapter II - Review of Literature** has been divided into two sections, section A and section B. Section A makes a review of the pertinent literature on competency studies and provides a rationale for considering the particular variables in this study. Section B reviews the policy variables related to teaching competencies in the context of Indian higher education system. It discusses, at length, the scope of various policies in defining and developing professional competencies of teachers, followed by a comprehensive gap analysis of the two sections.

**Chapter III - Research Methodology** outlines the aim, objectives and hypothesis of the study. It provides detailed description of the research design, sampling procedure and methods for data collection and analysis adopted for this study. The limitations of the study are also discussed in this chapter.

**Chapter IV - Teaching Practices and Performance Management: Fostering Competencies towards Student Engagement** interprets the level of teaching competency and its relatedness towards student engagement. It establishes the association between variables of teaching competencies and those of student engagement to assess the individual contribution of competency variable to each variable of student engagement. A comparison between professional and technical courses regarding contribution of competencies to student engagement has also been presented alongside.

**Chapter V - Understanding Pedagogical Innovations: Professional efficacy and Learning Environment** illustrates the role efficacy of teachers in contributing to innovation and the overall learning environment of an educational institute. Differences in the learning environment of professional and technical courses have also been depicted alongside.

**Chapter VI - Constructive Partnerships towards Knowledge Management and Social Capital** assesses the contribution of knowledge management towards achieving constructive partnership in education system. The chapter explores the variables of social capital to understand and define the dynamics of constructive partnership among various stakeholders in the higher educational system.

**Chapter VII - Conclusion** reports the results of the study, followed by a summary of contribution of variables towards the objectives of the study. The contribution of variables has been discussed in the light of the existing knowledge in the area of competency research. Next, the factors that have emerged as a result of multidimensional analysis have been named and discussed at length, followed by presentation of transactional analysis for the development of the competency model. Further, the educational as well as managerial implications have also been presented in the chapter.