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CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 Context of the Problem for the Study

The secondary school education is considered as the most important stage in all over the world since it is the stage at which students’ intellectual skills are developed into formal thinking. The schools for secondary education, in the present form, were designed in the industrial age (Bayliss, 1998). They are still continuing in the stable form with minor changes which are also superficial. Consequently a fall in standard of the students' learning is seen in the third world countries, especially in India.

Indian education system has come under severe criticism from almost all sections of people in the society starting from common man to professional educationist. Professional educators often point out the poor quality of education; politicians and bureaucrats try to picture it as unproductive and a liability to the society; the common man brands it as irrelevant and impractical as it is not sufficiently job-oriented and befitting to their aspirations of life; and the sociologists and philosophers turn sceptical about the very value of education for the individuals as well as for the society.

Anticipating various changes of all aspects of human society in the 21st century due to rapid development of science and technology; Government of India formed a National Policy on Education, in the year 1986, to face the challenges to be thrown by the problem expected in the 21st century and we are at the threshold of the
development of new technology likely to revolutionise teaching in the classroom (National Policy of Education, 1986).

The next generation will depend upon what we do to our students today in the classrooms. In this context, effective teacher education attains a crucial role. In the absence of competent and effective teachers, all good curricula and equipment are of no practical use (Kemp and Hall, 1992). In other words, effective school education anticipates effective teacher education. While teachers may have control over their own teaching procedures, these are also determined by external agencies. Figure 1.1 illustrates the influences of external agencies. When these are taken into account the teacher has little choice for teaching strategy.

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**Figure 1.1 Influences on Secondary School Learning**

Source: Hallam and Ireson (1999)
School education is provided in present times to practically all members of the society, and therefore, its quality and efficiency attain a special significance within the larger framework of personal, social and national-development. Clearly many changes occurring in quick succession in school and society coupled with new challenges to be faced in the initial decade of the twenty-first century which also marks the dawn of a third millennium have profound implications for the renewal of curriculum, content and processes of education. In any educational system, it is the quality of the teacher which is of paramount importance. It is the quality of teacher which creates excellent students. Improved modern facilities in the classroom, teaching techniques, no doubt, supplement a teacher’s efficiency, but there cannot be a substitute for an effective teacher. So the importance of an effective teacher is indispensable. It is therefore quite accurate to say that a school’s effectiveness depends directly on the effectiveness of teachers (Sanders and Rivers, 1996; Greenwald, Hedges, and Laine, 1996).

Teacher education is nothing but a programme of education, research or training of persons for equipping them to teach at pre-primary, secondary, senior secondary stage in schools and nonformal education, adult education and correspondence education through distance mode. This is designed to equip the prospective teachers with insight, knowledge, attitude and skills. It enables teachers to grasp the underlying principles and critical methods of teaching, develop a mental culture to appreciate fundamental concepts and alternatives and develop their own free judgement and a sense of intellectual independence (Adaval, 1979). A teacher cannot be expected to perform his professional roles effectively and efficiently
without being educated and re-educated (Denton and Lacina, 1984; Denton and Peters, 1988; Monk, 1994; Andrew and Schwab, 1995; Ottaviano, 1999; Boggs, 1999; Passi, 2000; Ellis and Phelps, 2000).

Until recently, the assumption has been that state certification requirements, as implemented by colleges of education, were sufficient to ensure an adequate level of teacher competency. Teacher competency is conceived as a matter of repertoire of the knowledge, skills and beliefs which are referred to as “competencies” that the teacher possesses. The more competencies a teacher has, the more competent the teacher is. The Education Commission of India (1964-66) has emphatically stated, “A sound programme of professional education of teachers is essential for the qualitative improvement of education. Investment in teacher education can yield very rich dividends because the financial resources required are small when measured against the resulting improvements in the education of millions”.

1.2 **Significance of the Study**

Owing to various favourable historical, political and socio-economic factors, Kerala has achieved the premier position among all the states in India in the field of school education. It has already attained the enviable position of becoming the first state in India to attain universal literacy. It has also managed to bring down the dropout rates and also the failure rates at the examinations at all levels of the school education. Parents vie with one another to make their children high achievers. Attainments of top marks, grades and ranks have become the single focus of all “educational” efforts. However these credentials are not very well reflected in the
current standards of education being imparted in the educational institutions of Kerala.

The common people are of the view that the standards are declining rapidly. The poor performance of the students who have graduated from the educational institutions of our State in national level competitive tests has often been pointed out as a fact to substantiate the argument for the declining standards. The trend in our country is to decry the standards of all professions today and to think of old days as something of a 'golden age'. Jangira (1994) found that Kerala ranked very low among the Indian States in terms of learning achievement of primary school children. The urge for improving the quality of education has been on the increase as revealed from the writings of progressive educational thinkers like Manuel (1978), Sivadasan (1992), Banerjee (1994), Rajput (1994, 1999), Gnanam and Stella (1999), and Prakash (2000).

Unlike other professionals, teachers are increasingly expected to be a sort of omnibus persons while other professionals have distinct and limited roles to play; much more is expected from teachers as professionals. To be a good teacher, one should have a lot of qualities of the heart and the head. The Secondary Education Commission (1953, p.126) remarked, "Every teacher and educationist of experience know that even the best curriculum and the most perfect syllabus remain dead unless quickened into life by the right method of teaching and the right kind of the teacher". In Kerala, most of the secondary school teachers are overqualified with regard to their profession. This causes underemployment. Some of the teachers are forced to continue as secondary school teachers and some are compelled to select the teaching
profession. Thus, there is lack of suitable environment for channelising their potentialities. The investigator assumes that the existing condition in Kerala leads the secondary school teachers to the phenomenon of nonutilisation of their competency. Some other factors hindering teacher competency are lack of facilities, student unrest, low level of aspiration of students, teacher burnouts etc. A few representative studies that the investigator could come across in this context are those of Borg and Falzen (1990); Long and Cassaroti (1990); Caryl (1997); Watts (1997); Hartley (1997); Draime (1999); and Sabandar (1999). A systematic comprehensive study of this area has not yet been made. Thus the absence of conclusive research on nonutilisation of teacher competency and the remedies for the complete utilisation necessitate the need for this study.

Even though the teacher education programme in our country is not free from criticism, it is not that much worse when compared to the programmes of other countries. It is true that the programme now offered in the institutes of teacher education helps to a large extent to turnout student teachers into competent teachers. But many young intelligent persons who have proven record of academic achievement and scholastic ability often fail in the actual classroom situation because of the reasons hitherto unexplored. Thus in actual practice, many teachers are generally found incompetent, if not, ineffective. The teachers are selected by tests and interviews. But their teaching appears to be ineffective. In other words, a teacher who is certified competent is unable to remain competent, once he or she is in the profession. The nonutilisation of teacher competency is thus a problem confronted by
our country. This state of lethargy and inertia may be due to many factors that yet to be identified.

During the past few decades the widespread belief was that lack of attention on the part of pupils was the main cause for their poor performance in examinations. But now the public opinion has undergone a complete reversal. Low achievement is blamed directly on the schools, their teachers and the instructional programmes or the methods of teaching being employed. The teachers, besides their teaching assignments, are deployed in the burden of nonteaching duties and this is often cited as a major reason why teachers are unable to concentrate on teaching. The teacher deployment in such nonacademic activities hamper instructional work of schools (Gonsalves, 1989). These have serious repercussions on teaching-learning processes in the classrooms. Certain other causes commonly seen are teacher’s irregularity and absenteeism, challenge of maintaining discipline in the class and so on (Nicholas, 1996; Cimino, 1997; and Wilkinson, 1999).

The main drawback of our present educational system is that it operates at the lowest level of efficiency. The institutions are facing the charge that they have failed to discharge their responsibilities and the mandate of accountability. Not only has this allegation come from outside the institutions, but also the demand for greater accountability has been heard within the institutions themselves. This loss of accountability also causes qualitative deterioration of education imparted. The continuous repetition of the same assignments and discussions will make the teaching job a boring one, instead of challenging one. If these conditions were not improved, these evils would gradually dampen the entire system. Any attempt made to study
those factors leading to nonutilisation of teacher competency would be rewarding in the sense that the results would throw more light on the better, successful comprehensive utilisation of teacher competency. The present study is an attempt in this direction and it specifically aims at identifying and determining the extent of the effect of factors causing nonutilisation of teacher competency in secondary schools of Kerala. This study cannot be considered as a new step towards the new era of educational research. It is only a continuation of the studies that have been going on for more than a century in the field of educational research which have not yet succeeded to produce the needed outcome. Hence the need and significance of the study.

The investigator in an earlier study (Mini, 1989), explored the problems of Navodaya Vidyalayas and convinced that teachers of these schools were highly qualified and competent, but certain other factors hindered them from the complete utilisation of their efficiency. This motivated her to take up a detailed study to unravel the supposedly hidden causes of nonutilisation of teacher competency at the secondary schools of Kerala. Moreover, the investigator has had the occasion to teach at a training college and hence is fully aware of the curriculum of the teacher training programme at the secondary level (B.Ed course) in our State. She found that through this pre-service training, the teachers prepare themselves and become competent enough for the teaching role that they have to play. Moreover, the investigator's present role as a secondary school teacher has given her opportunity to interact with several personnel in the field of secondary education and also to explore in depth the causes of the nonutilisation of teacher competency. The present study is
the result of the investigator's genuine interest and concern in identifying the factors leading to nonutilisation of the teacher competency at the secondary level and to preventing these factors by suggesting some remedial measures.

1.3 **Statement of the Problem**

Are the teachers really incompetent? They have brilliant academic career. The teachers selected are first class degree holders. Their skill in teaching has been developed satisfactorily during their training course. The problem in this context is why the teachers appear to be incompetent in their profession. This is a problem not in Kerala alone, but in India throughout. The investigator assumes that there might be some factors which prevent the teachers from teaching efficiently. The problem for the study is therefore stated as "**IDENTIFICATION AND PREVENTION OF CERTAIN FACTORS CAUSING NONUTILISATION OF TEACHER COMPETENCY IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF KERALA**".

1.4 **Explanation of the Key Terms**

Operational definitions of the key terms used in the statement of the problem are given for clarity and precision.

*Identification*

In the study 'Identification' stands for the detection or searching out of certain factors that bar the utilisation of the professional efficiency of teachers.

*Prevention*

Remedial measures intended to forestall or prevent the factors that impede the teachers from utilising their efficiency in teaching.
Factors

The factors are certain assumptions related to knowledge, skills and beliefs a teacher possesses and brings to the teaching situation. Certain variables such as students’ indiscipline, bad service conditions, teachers’ reluctance to update knowledge and skills, overcrowded classrooms, monotony of work, etc. have adverse effect on competent and effective teaching. In this study, the factors are grouped under.

(I) Personal Dimension,

(II) Institutional Dimension,

(III) Psychological Dimension, and

(IV) Sociological Dimension

Nonutilisation

The institutions of teacher education in the state prepare efficient teachers by imbibing in them the necessary qualities and skills required for good teaching, but in schools, teachers seem to be reluctant to utilise their competency. The term ‘nonutilisation’ in this context means ‘not making use of’.

Teacher Competency

Teacher competency is one or more abilities of a teacher to produce agreed upon educational effects. It represents a set of knowledge, abilities and beliefs a teacher possesses and brings to the teaching situation (Medley, 1982).

Secondary Schools

According to the existing system of education in Kerala, students who have attained the age of 12 + or 13+ years continue their education in schools for three
more years in standards VIII, IX and X and at the end of standard X, there is an examination conducted by Board of Public Examinations. In this study, the schools with standards VIII, IX and X are called ‘secondary schools’.

**Kerala**

The present Kerala State was formed in November 1956, consequent on the reorganisation of states on linguistic basis. It is situated in the South West of India. Malayalam is the mother tongue of about 95% of the inhabitants. Kerala has the highest rate of literacy among all the states of India. In this study, all the 14 districts of Kerala state have been included.

**1.5. Assumptions and Hypotheses**

From the review of literature and also from the direct personal experience, it is found that the role of the classroom teacher in education is great and his responsibility is tremendous. When an individual gets a degree in education, he becomes competent in his profession. But there are certain factors which prevent him from actively and efficiently performing his job. The multiplicity of factors made this study a difficult task. For the sake of practicability and simplicity these factors could be grouped as follows:

(i) Personal Dimension

(ii) Institutional Dimension

(iii) Psychological Dimension and

(iv) Sociological Dimension.
These factors may have some adverse effect on the performance of teachers and may indicate why they are unable to display their skills in teaching. It is on the basis of this assumption that the following hypotheses were formulated:

**Hypothesis I**

The factors that cause nonutilisation of teacher competency can be located and identified.

**Hypothesis II**

Extraneous variables have no effect on the factors identified as causative of nonutilisation of secondary school teachers' competency.

**Hypothesis III**

The factor structures emerged from the factor analysis help to prevent the factors that cause nonutilisation of teacher competency.

1.6 **Objectives of the Study**

The hypotheses formed have been taken up as the base for the formulation of the following objectives:

1. To prepare all possible factors causing nonutilisation of teacher competency.
2. To categorise various factors that would hinder teachers from the maximum utilisation of their professional competency.
3. To find out the extent at which the factors cause nonutilisation of the competency of secondary school teachers.
4. To find out the differential effect of extraneous variables on the factors that cause nonutilisation of teachers' professional competency.
5. To analyse the factor structures of various dimensions.
6. To suggest preventive measures for the maximum utilisation of teacher competency.

1.7 **Methodology in Brief**

The present study is descriptive in nature. It is intended to identify the factors causing nonutilisation of teacher competency among the secondary school teachers. The investigator adopted normative survey method for the study. The population of the present study is the secondary school teachers of Kerala. A representative sample of teachers (N=331) is used for collecting the data for the study.

The tools to be used for collecting the relevant data are:

(i) Questionnaire on factors causing nonutilisation of teacher competency in the secondary school teachers.

(ii) General data sheet for information about secondary schools and teachers.

The investigator will distribute questionnaire to the teachers from all the 14 districts of Kerala. Over and above the questionnaire, the information will be collected through a personal talk with headmasters and some other senior and junior teachers. Further, the investigator, with the permission from the heads of the respective schools, will visit science laboratories, computer laboratories, libraries etc., with a view to assessing the infrastructure facilities.

The data obtained form the sample will be scrutinised and only those found complete, correct and reliable in respect of all the necessary information required will be chosen for analysis. The data thus obtained will be tabulated and subjected to analysis using appropriate statistical techniques such as Computation of Percentages, Multiple Regression Analysis and Factor Analysis.
1.8 **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The study aims at identifying certain factors causing nonutilisation of teachers' skills and abilities. The responses of secondary school teachers under study would be helpful in finding out the factors leading to non-performance of teachers. It is hoped that the result of the present study would help to plan and work out the maximum utilisation of teacher competency.

The major limitation of the present study is that the investigator selected only some of the factors under four dimensions. Even though a large number of factors may hinder teachers from the complete utilisation of their efficacy, only those which are considered to be of utmost importance could be included in the questionnaire.

Since identification alone will not help to improve the present system, the investigator has determined to find out the ways and means to prevent the factors that cause nonutilisation of their competency. The effect of these remedial measures should have been best determined experimentally, but for want of adequate facilities, this method is not adopted in the study. Instead, the methods and techniques already indicated will be made use of.

The population of the study is secondary school teachers of Kerala and the sample is limited to 331. If teachers from primary schools, Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodaya Vidyalayas and colleges had also been included, more generalisable results could have been obtained. But the study would be too extensive. Hence it is not attempted.
The questionnaire used in a survey may not provide truly valid data as expected in an experimental study. Still, the present questionnaire was prepared with utmost care, in order that it might incorporate authentic data. The results are based upon the responses of the teachers to the questionnaire.

Again, the investigator has to point out that, the study being an explorative one, the researcher had her own limitations in arriving at a suitable design for the study and could not think of a better way of carrying it out. However, she would like to assert that all possible steps would be taken to make the study as objective and reliable as possible.

It is hoped that the result of the study would project the expected outcomes and pave the way for further research in the area to perhaps yield more generalisable results.

1.9 **Organisation of the Report**

The report has been presented in six chapters. The details are as follows:

*Chapter 1:* Presents all the relevant sections of an introductory chapter.

*Chapter 2:* Offers a detailed description of the theoretical postulates regarding the factors hindering teacher competency.

*Chapter 3:* Summarises the survey of related literature pertaining to the area under investigation.

*Chapter 4:* Deals with the description of the method of the study, the sample selected, the tools and techniques with which the data were collected,
the procedure employed for collecting data and the statistical techniques used for the analysis of the data.

Chapter 5: Presents the details of the data analysis followed by a discussion of the results and the tenability of the hypotheses. The details of analysis are presented in order to satisfy the objectives of the study.

Chapter 6: Summarises the study in retrospect. It offers a brief summary of the procedure, major findings, the conclusions and recommendations followed by a few suggestions for further research in this area.

The report in supported by a fairly exhaustive Bibliography. The APA format is followed to the maximum extent possible, leaving room for 'justifiable' modification, keeping in mind that 'a number of variations described in Publication Manual are not permissible but also desirable in the preparation of the final manuscripts' (Publication Manual of the APA, 1997).

The Bibliography is followed by a series of Appendixes pertaining to the study.
References


