2. Motivation for the Study

2.1. Need for the Study

Previous studies have focused on ‘what’ comprises teaching (or teacher) effectiveness and its measurement (e.g. Good, 1979; Mcber, 2000). However, studies which examine the ‘how’ aspect of increasing teaching effectiveness are scant. One factor that has been consistently linked to teaching effectiveness in several studies (e.g. Armor et al., 1976) is ‘Teacher Self-efficacy’. Bandura’s ‘Self-efficacy’ theory (1977) suggests that for any person to convert his/her potential into performance, a belief in his/her ability to do so is essential, which in the context of teachers is termed as ‘teacher’s efficacy’ (also referred to as ‘teacher self-efficacy’ or ‘teacher self-efficacy belief’ in this study). RAND corporation did one of the first studies to prove that ‘teacher-efficacy’ impacted student learning (Armor et. al., 1976), which is an important component of teaching effectiveness, as the ultimate aim of an effective teacher is to enhance student learning (Campbell, Kyariakides, Muijs, & Robinson, 2003). Moreover, previous empirical studies which have attempted to identify the relationship of teacher effectiveness with related variables (like teacher self-efficacy), have been mostly done for only one variable e.g. only for work experience or certification status of the teacher (e.g. Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2008), and for only for a specific set of subjects like reading or math achievement (for e.g. Muijs & Reynolds, 2000; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Also, in such studies, individual level differences of personality have been ignored. This restricts the scope of application of results of these studies to a limited context. In order to overcome this limitation, the present study tries to analyze the role of multiple influencing factors, like collaboration and principal leadership (taking age, work experience and qualification as control variables), on teacher self-efficacy, and subsequently teacher effectiveness, along with moderating role of personality as a part of single study for most
of the classroom taught subjects at secondary and senior secondary school level (classes sixth to twelfth) in privately owned schools, to ensure generalizability of the results across subjects and classes. Through the identification of some of the contributing factors to teaching effectiveness, this study aims to contribute towards achieving a better performance management for teachers at the secondary and senior secondary school level (classes sixth to twelfth) through more focused recruitment, selection, training and reward management for teachers.

2.2. Uniqueness of the Indian Education Context

In order to understand the setting in which this research work was done, it is important to familiarize oneself with a brief background of the Indian education system. At present, India has the following levels of education: pre-primary level, primary level, elementary education, secondary education, undergraduate level and postgraduate level. Till the secondary school level, National Council of Educational Research and training look into curriculum related matters, while ‘Central Board of Secondary Education’ and ‘Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations’ are the two primary bodies handling the examination systems in the country. Apart from that, there are also open schools, autonomous schools, international schools (affiliated to International Baccalaureate Programme or Cambridge International Examinations), Islamic Madrasahs and other state boards. Although India is a land of great ancient universities like Nalanda and Takshila, the current state of education in India is not very impressive, with current dropout rate from classes 1st to 10th being as high as 49.3 %. “For the students in India, the learning environment is pretty abysmal” (Cheney, Ruzzi and Muralidharan, 2005, p.10).

There are a total of 1396331 educational institutions in India, including primary, upper primary, secondary and senior secondary levels, with a corresponding pupil-teacher ratio of 43, 33, 30 and 34, which is very high when compared to developed countries of the world (For e.g. at primary level, pupil teacher ratio is 14 for USA, and 17 for UK in 2012, Source: World Bank)\(^4\).

Not only is India lacking in terms of infrastructure in schools, the teachers themselves are lacking proper training to teach. The Justice Verma Commission on Teacher Education (August 2012, Volume 1) states that the approach to preparation of school teachers in India has not progressed with time, but remained stagnant due to “intellectual isolation of the school teacher”, and the treatment of “pedagogy as mere technique” (p.11)\(^5\). Kingdon (2007), in her study states that although Indian education system has made progress since independence, the current system leaves much to be desired. There are multiple challenges, some of them being low attendance rate at the primary level, low and unequally distributed secondary school participation, supply of schools being constrained, and parents not being able to spare their children for studying, but asking them to work due to credit constraints, conservatism, gender disparity, high teacher absenteeism, teacher unionism, severe teacher shortage and many more. The level of student learning is slightly better in private schools owing to the intake of students based on their background (economic, social, family), and more funds being available to them as compared to government owned schools. But, these schools are located majorly in urban areas. All these challenges make Indian education system very unique.

\(^4\) http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.ENRL.TC.ZS
2.3. Personal Motivation

Apart from the uniqueness of the Indian education context, my family background has also motivated me to pick up a topic of research related to teacher effectiveness. My father is a teacher and since both my parents are working professionals, with my mother having long duty hours at her office, I used to spend the entire day with my father at his school, which also was the place where I studied till class twelfth. From morning to evening, I would spend my time with teachers, first during my own school hours studying with them, and post that, interacting with them during stay-back time.

I have always been amused by the kind of impact a teacher has on the life of students. During my school days, I observed that fondness for any subject was directly proportional to the kind of teacher one had. And many a times, these early influences decided the entire career path of students. My own decision to pursue a career in academics is a result of the massive impact that teachers have made to my own life.

Hence, when I was looking for a topic of interest for my thesis work, I went back to my teachers. It was during the discussion sessions with my school principal and headmistress, that it struck me how worried they were regarding the decreasing quality of teaching output. They told me about the serious teacher shortage that Indian schools are plagued with, and how sourcing good teachers poses a serious challenge for the Indian education system. Students with good academic background shy away from a career in teaching due to lower compensation and less growth opportunities associated with school teaching. According to them, there is serious dearth of talent in the teaching profession and they find it difficult to keep the teachers motivated. They felt that there is lack of systematic research in the area of identifying good talent for school
teaching, and developing them further to make them effective teachers, so that student learning can be maximized, especially in the Indian education scenario.

When I discussed these aspects with the teachers, they had their own list of problems and challenges. They were of the opinion, that the Indian school scenario is very different from the research published in the West. One of the challenges mentioned by them was huge batch sizes, and hence their inability to give individualized attention to each child.

Many of these challenges were not in direct control of the school or the teacher, and required government level interventions. However, I felt that there were many things which could be managed at the individual and at the school level itself. It was just a matter of making an attempt to do a systematic study in this area. While problems were many, and not all could be solved in a matter of months or even years, we still needed to begin from somewhere.

That’s when I decided to make ‘Teacher Effectiveness’, which was one of the areas of concern mentioned by them, the topic for my research work. When I wrote comprehensive examination papers in this area in my institute, all faculty members appreciated my chosen topic of research, and encouraged me to take it further up to the thesis level. My thesis proposal attracted huge participation from all members of the academic community from my institute, and their interest and feedback in this area motivated me further to delve deeper into this topic.

This study is a modest attempt to throw light on a miniscule, yet important part of the huge education system improvement challenge that our country faces. It aims to look at what factors influence the self-efficacy of a teacher so that his/her effectiveness can be impacted in a positive way.
Through this study, I aim to explore the role of collaboration and principal leadership in enhancing teacher self-efficacy, and the moderating role of personality traits of teachers in these relationships.  

6. ‘Teacher Efficacy’, ‘Teacher Self-Efficacy’ and ‘Teacher Self-Efficacy Belief’ have been used interchangeably in this study.