3. Theoretical Foundations

The theory that has influenced this study the most is Bandura’s ‘Self-efficacy theory’ (1977), which later gave rise to Bandura’s ‘Social Cognitive theory’ (1986; 1989;1997). Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (1986; 1989; 1997) is based on the ‘model of emergent interactive agency’, which suggests that a triadic reciprocal causation of three factors viz. environmental influences, modes of behavior and interpersonal factors influences the intentions, and subsequently the course of action that a person takes.

In ‘Social Cognitive Theory’(Bandura, 1986; 1989; 1997), self-efficacy beliefs influence behaviors and environments, and are also in turn affected by them (Wentzel and Wigfield, 2009). ‘Self influences’ affect the selection and creation of environment and give ‘meaning’ and ‘valence’ to external events (Bandura, 1993, p.118). There are four processes which give shape to this personal belief about the self: cognitive, affective, motivational and selection (Bandura, 1992). Cognitive processes influence a person through the level of goals set by individuals about themselves; their conception of ability (inherent vs. acquirable) skill; social comparison influences; framing of feedback and perceived controllability (Bandura, 1993). A person who has belief in his/her capabilities will set higher goals for himself/herself, and also visualize achieving success in them. On the other hand, a person who is low on self-efficacy will visualize failure, and will try to focus more on reasons which may come in the way of achieving his/her goal. Hence, it is important not only to possess the best skills and knowledge of the field, but to persevere and to believe in one’s capabilities, even during difficult situations. ‘Conception of ability’ refers to our belief that whether abilities are a gift from god, or whether they can be acquired through effort (Bandura, 1993). If one believes that abilities are inherent, that person will not make efforts to develop them, and will only focus on minimizing errors, rather than
seeking higher levels of challenges. People who do not believe in their capabilities will always keep their social comparison standards low; negative feedback will further diminish their self-esteem, which may be further plagued by their beliefs that they can do nothing to change the environment around them. Motivational processes may take the form of “causal attributions, outcome expectancies and cognized goals” explained by attribution theory, expectancy value theory and goal theory, respectively (Bandura, 1993, p. 123). ‘Causal attribution’ means to what extent a person feels that his/her success or failure is because of his/her own self, or reasons beyond his/her own control. ‘Outcome expectancies’ refer to what extent a person believes that an outcome is possible, and the value of that outcome. ‘Cognized goals’ is about setting realistic goals and achieving self satisfaction through achievement of those goals (Bandura, 1993).

‘Self reactive influences’ and ‘Proactive control of motivation’ are other two processes that govern motivation through readjustment of goals in accordance with one’s achievement, and not getting disturbed with failures, but trying consistently to overcome them (Bandura, 1993). ‘Affective processes’ refers to a person’s coping capabilities in stressful situations. Persons low on coping capabilities are unable to control their anxiety and disturbing thoughts, and try to avoid difficulties, subsequently ending up in depression (Bandura, 1993). A person’s selection of the activities he/she chooses to do, and the environment he/she selects for himself/herself also affects his/her self-efficacy belief (Bandura, 1993). Thus, ‘Self-efficacy theory’ (Bandura, 1977;1993; 1997) suggests that a person’s behavior towards any job will be influenced not only by the expectation of the desired outcome, but also by a belief in his/her own capability to achieve that outcome. He states that “psychological procedures, whatever their form, alter the level and strength of self-efficacy” (Bandura, 1977, p.1). This ‘Self- efficacy’ belief acts as a moderating factor between a person’s potential and his/her performance (Bandura, 1997, p.37).
“People's self-efficacy beliefs determine their level of motivation, as reflected in how much effort they will exert in an endeavor, and how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles” (Bandura, 1989, p.1176).

In the teaching context, this belief takes shape of ‘teacher-efficacy’ or ‘teacher self-efficacy’ belief. It refers to a teacher’s expectation about being able to bring about student learning (Ross & Gray, 2006). ‘Teacher efficacy’ was first studied in RAND corporation studies (Berman et. al, 1977) taking Rotter’s work (1966) on ‘generalized expectancies on internal versus external control of reinforcement’ as the theoretical base. Bandura (1977; 1997) came up with four sources which influence self-efficacy expectations. These are mastery experiences, physiological and emotional states, vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion. Mastery experiences occur when people are given the opportunity to try a particular task themselves (Pool & Sewell, 2007). Negative physiological and emotional arousals or states refer to physical conditions such as fatigue, pain, aches; and emotional conditions such as fear and stress which consistently affect a person’s self-efficacy beliefs. These can be dealt with through consistent symbolic exposure, relaxation, symbolic desensitization and other stress coping techniques (Bandura, 1994). ‘Vicarious Experiences’ occur through social models when a person sees the achievement of others and, ‘Verbal Persuasion’ is when people are persuaded by others that they possess the capabilities to perform a certain activity (Pool & Sewell, 2007). Bandura (1994) also suggests that self-efficacy beliefs change over life span of an individual and hence, it is possible to alter them over time.

‘Cognitive Evaluation Theory’ suggests that feelings of competence influence a person’s intrinsic motivation (Gagne & Deci, 2005). This makes ‘teacher self-efficacy’ belief an important construct which can potentially influence a teacher’s intrinsic motivation as well.
Simmons (2011), through her ‘Performance Management Theory of Action’, suggests that ‘Effective teaching’ is a variable that can be impacted from individual endeavor. Hay Mcber (2000), in his study of effective teaching, states that there are three factors which impact student progress viz. teaching skills, professional characteristics and classroom climate. Butler (2003) describes ‘teaching’ to be a ‘self-regulated’ profession. Thus, there is a lot of scope to enhance teacher effectiveness not only through external forces and changes in the environment, but also by the efforts of the teacher himself/herself.

‘Theory of Teacher Change’ proposed by Ross and Bruce (2006), suggests that teacher self assessment processes are influenced by external agents like peers, which in turn influence teacher efficacy, subsequently impacting goal setting and effort expenditure, contributing to changes in instructional practice and student achievement. Both Vyogotsky and Piaget argued that cognitive development of an individual is influenced by social processes and interactions with other individuals (as cited in Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993) and therefore, a teacher’s interactions with his/her peers and school leader or principal can possibly play an important role in influencing a teacher’s cognition.

Through an analysis of the above theories and studies, we draw that a teacher is very much capable of influencing his/her effectiveness in terms of teaching, and can manage his/her performance to a large extent by his/her own efforts. However, there are several environmental factors which also influence a teacher’s effectiveness.

We also understand that the self-efficacy belief of a teacher plays a major role in converting his/her potential into performance. The four sources of influence on self-efficacy mentioned above viz. mastery experiences, physiological and emotional states, vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion; guide us towards the possible factors that influence teacher-
efficacy and subsequently, teacher effectiveness. If schools and teachers can understand which factors can help in building teacher-efficacy beliefs, and in turn boost teacher effectiveness, focused efforts could yield more effective results towards the improvement of teacher effectiveness.