CHAPTER III
DESCRIPTION OF DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF SELF CONCEPT USED IN THIS STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The present research study is set to find out the self concept profile of secondary school teachers of Karnataka.

As already defined in the first chapter, self-concept in this study is the integrated perception of teachers with respect to their physical, social, temperamental educational, intellectual and moral spheres.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to describe each of the aforesaid six dimensions of self concept.

3.2 PHYSICAL SELF

There are many traditional beliefs about the impact of facial features, body build, and body functioning on personality, Aristotle claimed that different facial characteristics such as the colour and texture of the skin and hair; the quality of the voice; and the build of the body were related to certain personality characteristics. Facial features, he claimed, were the most accurate physical indicators of personality – A person with a small delicate body build, or one with a heavy set, and with little muscular development is handicapped in many sports which, in childhood and adolescence have high prestige value. When he compares what he can do, with what can his agemates can do, he is likely to develop feelings of inadequacy and inferiority which are reflected in unfavourable self-concepts.
The body build of the person affects his self-concept favourably if it permits him to do things that are as prestigious or better than others. It affects his self-concept unfavourably if what he can do has little prestige in the eyes of his social group. If he consumes his energy on useful, prestigious activities, the effect on his self concept will be more favourable than if he utilizes it in useless and meaningless activities that are annoying to others.

A person’s adjustment to life is influenced by the way he perceives his body in relation to physique of others, his ideal as well as culturally approved standards, and by the evaluation of his physical abilities and disabilities by others. These perceptions shape his adjustive experiences. Shaffer and Shoben (1956) explained.

“A puny boy is likely to develop different preferred mechanisms than a strong, healthy child, because he has different experiences. Anxiety provoked by threatening diseases or disabling symptoms may lead to defensive or non-adjustive behaviour. In such cases, a person’s structure or physiology frustrates his motives, creatives conflicts, and shapes the experiences through which he learns his adjustments. The precipitating events are physiological but the adjustive process is psychological”.

Awareness of his physical superiority, inferiority or equality thus influences the way a person evaluates himself He know as to how others evaluate him. Thomson (1954) has pointed out that children may suffer emotionally from being a “Shrimp”, ‘Tubby’ ‘Red head’ or ‘Buck tooth’. The taunt, ‘Brown eyes turn around and tell a lie’ can leave permanent psychological scars. How a person reacts to others is greatly
influenced by his body build compared with others. Staffieri (1967) points out that the role of an individual’s body configuration in social interactions and the effects of these interactions on self-concept is an important part of the total process of personality development. Jourard (1955) points out that the degree of satisfaction a person feels about himself is related to some important aspects of his body. A person who is satisfied with his body, his positive attitudes are expressed in self-confidence, self-assurance, and a generally wholesome self-concept. Sion (1965) reports that the security one has in one’s body is related to the security with which one faces one’s self and the world.

Fisher (1964) Fuller (1965), Jourard (1963) Schneiderman (1956) and Second (1953) point out that girls tend to have more unrealistic concepts of what they want to look like when they grow up than boys. The gap between their real and ideal self-concepts is wider. Their self-concepts tend to be more definite and stable than those of boys, with the result that they are less likely to narrow the gap between their real and ideal body images.

Appearance plays an important role in social judgements and affects the self-concept. A person’s feeling that his appearance is such that he will be judged positively, will have a favourable effect on his personality. The more a person varies from the norms in physical attractiveness, the more he will vary in satisfaction and thus, in the favourableness of his self-concept. Studies illustrate how severely one unattractive feature can affect the self-concept. Lucas (1963) found that the college students with acne score significantly higher on the neuroticism scale than those who are free from this skin blemish. Hellersberg (1957) and Faust (1960) have pointed out
that irregularities in the growth and functioning of different parts of the body also affect the self-concept and life adjustment. Unwelcome deviations are not only a handicap to a healthy self-concept, but are especially damaging at the time of rapid growth. It is more so when attention is focused on the body changes that are taking place. Thus, deviant maturers are likely to make poorer personal and social adjustments than their normally maturing peers.

3.3 SOCIAL SELF

The social group judges a person in terms of his conformity to group expectations regarding proper performance, behaviour and role playing. Social judgements serve as the basis for self-evaluation. In this way the social group influences the self-concept of the individual.

The effect of the social self-concept on the behaviour of the individual will depend largely on how, important the opinions of others are to him at that time, and person or persons who are most influential in his life at that time.

According to Jersild (1952), Bell (1960), Videbeck (1960) and Kinch (1968), the social self-concept is based on the way the individual believes, others perceive him. It is usually referred to as a ‘mirror image’. If a child is constantly told that he is “naughty” he soon develops a concept of himself as a naughty child. The child whose parents are always telling him how bright he is, develops a self-concept that contains some elements of false pride.

Social self-concept is derived from social inter-actions. Therefore, whether the concept will be favourable or not depends on how the social group treats the individual. A person who as a child or adolescent is discriminated against because of
his race, colour, religion, or social class will usually have a far less favourable concept of himself than the person who is not.

As the child comes into contact with more and more people outside the home, how the others treat him, what they say about him and what status he achieves in the group may strengthen the social self-concept developed in the home or may modify it in him in some other way. The attitude of outsiders as the child interprets them, exerts a greater influence on his self-concept, than the experiences he shares, with them. Unfavourable social attitudes leading to discrimination and rejection will damage the child’s self-concept build up his resentment, and give rise to feelings of inadequacy.

By adolescence, the social self-concept is essentially completed, though it may change some what later on, if the person’s social experiences are markedly different from those of previously encountered. Wylie (1962) emphasized that by the time a child has reached adolescence he has found a more or less precise image of what he and his culture expect of him as an adult. One of the principal problems for an adolescent then is to conduct his life, so that he has the feeling he is achieving this ideal image of himself.

3.4 TEMPERAMENTAL SELF

The predominance of a particular kind of emotional reaction – the person’s “prevailing emotional state” determines his temperament. Hilgard (1962) explains that temperament is that aspect of personality which is revealed in the tendency to experience moods or mood changes in characteristic way. The outstanding quality of temperament is that it tends to be persistent and, as such, discloses the emotions which playa dominant role in the person’s life.
Emotions, whether fleeting or persisting, colour the individual’s perception of himself and his environment and affect his behaviour. By determining what his characteristic pattern of adjustment to life will be, they affect his personality.

Not only do emotionally toned experiences affect the person’s self-concept at the time they occur but memories of experiences continue to leave their mark. The greater the discrepancy between the real and ideal self-concepts, the more likely the person is to try to repress memories of unpleasant experiences. This he does in the hope of eliminating the damage they do to his concept of self.

Dominant emotions are revealed in facial expression as well as in overt behaviour. Often the facial expression tells the story of the person’s feelings about himself and his environment more eloquently than his actions. It affects the judgements others make of him and their reactions to him. How they treat him influences his concept of self and intensifies the predominant emotional pattern that has been fostered by his other life experiences.

3.5 EDUCATIONAL SELF

Educational institutions are the chief determinants of what a person thinks of himself and of what his habitual patterns of behaviour will be. Solomon (1960) stressed this point and said that the school room must be looked upon as a force secondary in importance only to the home in the development of human personality.

There are number of reasons why educational institutions play such a significant role in the personality development. Some of the important reasons are that the school’s influence comes early in life when the self-concept is being formed. Children spend more time in school than in any other place outside the home.
Adolescents spend more of their waking time in schools, than in the homes. School provides real opportunity to children for getting ahead in life and, if this matters to them and their family, the school will influence personality by offering them a chance to become a “success” which is ego-inflating.

School provides, the person’s first real opportunity to appraise himself and his abilities realistically, free from parental help or bias. In school he is judged on his merits, he learns how he stands in relation to this agemates and how people feel about him and judge his acts as compared with those of his peers. Just as the young child’s self-concept is a mirror image of what get believes, his parents think of him, so is the older child’s self-concepts a mirror image of what he believes his teachers and classmates think of him.

A person’s reaction to any situation, whether it be at work, at school, or in social activities affects his adjustment to the situation, and his adjustment influences his concept of himself as a person. There is a circular reaction between the adolescent’s personality and his school; his personality determines his adjustment to school and this influences his self-concept.

The adolescent’s attitude towards his school affects both his academic and non-academic adjustments. His academic achievement and his adjustment to the extra-curricular activities of school or college influence the judgements his teachers, classmates, and parents make of him. These judgements affect their treatment of him, and the way he is treats shapes his judgement of himself.

Students who have favourable attitudes towards education usually work upto their capacities and make good adjustment to school. Those who have unfavourable
attitudes, tend to become underachievers. Breckenridge (1965) pointed out that once formed, attitudes towards schools are difficult to change. If a child thinks of himself as a “poor reader” he cannot be motivated to improve his reading until he can be persuaded to change his self concept.

A person’s attitudes towards education affect the kind of adjustment he makes to school. His adjustment is expressed in behaviour patterns which both he and others use in evaluating him. The relationship that exists between teacher and student and the way the student perceives that relationship have a direct effect on the student’s self-concept. A student who does his work conscientiously, works upto capacity, causes no classroom disturbance, and does not demand too much of the teacher’s time and attention, is perceived favourable by the teacher and is able to establish a satisfying teacher-student relationship. If he sees himself as a “good” person, as he believes his teacher sees him, that will have an ego - inflating effect on his self-concept.

Grades influence the student’s self-concept by telling him how others judge him and how he rates in relation to others. The influence of grades on the self-concept is apparent in the way students react to poor grades. Some react by being ashamed and refusing to tell others what grades they received. Others try to shift the blame for their poor grades to their teachers, parents, or siblings, still others try to minimize the value of grade. Symonds (1960) indicates many ways in which grades affect the self-concept.
“Marks make a tremendous difference to a pupil. They influence his estimate of himself, they serve as a sign to him that he is liked or disliked; they determine whether he is to remain with classmates or instead to become (what he considers) an outcaste and forced to join a group of strange pupils in another class. They indicate success or failure; they determine promotion; they indicate the probability of future success, they influence his parents’ attitudes towards him. Marks help to determine whether a pupil thinks of himself as successful, a smart or a failure, and outcaste, a stupid or a nitwit”.

Students who do relatively poor academic work but achieve success in sports, music, dramatics and other prestigious extra curricular activities develop a liking for school and work hard on their studies so that they will be able to participate in these activities. If they win distinction and acclaim for their achievements in extra curricular activities; it goes a long way toward eliminating any unfavourable effect, poor academic work would otherwise have on their self-concepts.

3.6 INTELLECTUAL SELF

Intelligence provides the person with the capacity to meet and solve the problems that adjustment to life requires. How he uses his intellectual capacity will determine how successful his adjustment will be. The quality of his adjustment is, in turn, a major factor in his personality development. Intellectual capacities influence the kind of adjustment the person makes to his environment, to people and to himself. The person constantly alters his awareness of the world and his perceptions of people, of situations and of himself as his perceptions of people, of situations and of himself
as his intellectual capacities develop. Secondly, intellectual capacities influence the judgements other people make of the person. Their judgement affects his self-judgement because they determine what role the social group will permit him to play and how it will treat him. The brighter a person is, the more the group will expect from him not only for the immediate present but also for the future. As Landreth (1967) has explained the statement, “That boy will go far”, suggests that “brightness at one period represents behaviour potential, and this is predictive of future performance. How well the individual’s like come upto social expectations, will have a marked effect on his self-concept.

The person’s awareness of his adjustive ability is also likely to influence his self-concept. If a child recognizes that he is superior in school work, he will have a favourable self-attitude unless he discovers that his superiority has little prestige value or is actually regarded with contempt by his age-mates. Similarly, if an elderly person recognizes that he is “slipping” mentally, he will develop an unfavourable self-attitude.

Bayley (1968), Butcher (1968) and Dye (1968) while reporting separately wrote that for adolescence, the pattern of intellectual growth is fairly consistent. Fluctuations in rate of growth are less marked than in the earlier years and predictions of what the mature level will be are more accurate. If the social group expects the person to learn some developmental task, such as reading or controlling his aggressiveness, before he has developed the intellectual capacities essential for the task, his self concept will be unfavourably affected because (i) he will think of
himself as a “failure” and (ii) the social group will judge him negatively. Bayley (1968) writes:

“How a person uses his inherited intellectual capacities determines the quality of his adjustments. The quality of his adjustment effects his self-concept, the attitudes of others towards him, and thus his personality Maturation provides for the development of all inherent traits, including intellectual traits, but making use of them is the person’s own responsibility”.

Adolescents are generally motivated to use their intellectual capacities by going to college – which may be regarded as a status symbol or as a way of having fun or of furthering vocational and social goals. They use their intellectual capacities most effectively in school subjects that they think will help them to achieve their goals. Some of the many conditions that influence the development of intellectual capacities, are due to such factors as the physical condition of the person, the use he makes of his intellectual capacities, his education, early home experiences, motivation, emotional states and personality pattern.

The attitude of significant people, especially family members, have more influence on self-concept of the person of deviant intelligence than do the attitudes of members of the social group as a whole. The closer the social relationship between the person and others, the more their attitude towards him will affect his self-concept.

Very young children do not know whether they are bright, dull, or average. It is only after they enter school and have opportunities to compare their intellectual achievements with those of other children of their own age that they recognize
variations in intelligence. Competitive grades based on school achievement makes children more aware of their intellectual capacities sooner than if the school judges progress in terms of individual capacities. In schools most boys and girls are apprised of how they compare with others intellectually.

Most dull children have such poor social insight that they fail to recognize how dull they actually are and how unfavourable the social attitudes towards them are. Therefore, their self-concepts are not as seriously damaged, as they would be if the extent of the unfavourable social evaluations were fully realized.

The failure of very bright people to reach their full potential may be due to lack of motivation caused by insufficient emotional satisfaction from achievement. An unstimulating home and school environment, unfavourable social attitudes towards achievement encourage bright people to work below their capacity. In the hope of gaining acceptance, encouragement by parents and teachers to concentrate on intellectual activities at the expense of social and emotional development, develops an unfavourable self-concept which result in lack of self confidence, perseverance, and integration toward goals. Some set unrealistically high levels of aspiration for themselves and if they fail to reach the goals, they think themselves inadequate and inferior.

3.7 MORAL SELF

Every cultural group has its own more or standards of approved behaviour. Certain acts are “right” because they are for the welfare of the members of the group, and others are “wrong” because they are detrimental to the welfare of the group. The most important more are incorporate into laws with specific penalties for breaking
them. Others persist as customs, which are almost a binding similar to that of a law, but without specific penalties.

The individual’s intellectual capacities affect his response to the group’s moral standards. The moral behaviour of the individual, in turn, is closely related to his adjustment to life, to the judgements other make of him, and to his judgement of himself. In general, the more closely his behaviour conforms to the moral standards of the group with which he is identified, the more favourable will be the effects on his personal and social adjustments.

If the child violates the mores of the group, he is excused on the ground that he is too young to understand or to know the mores. However, by the time he reaches adolescence, he is considered capable of understanding and abiding by the mores, and if he fails to do so, he will earn an unfavourable reputation among the group members, make himself vulnerable to punishment or threats of punishment and develop feelings of guilt. Conformity to the group’s mores, on the other hand, will lead to group approval and personal satisfaction.

The person learns, from his personal experiences, that it is to his advantage to conform to standards of behaviour set by the group, even though he may not always agree with the standards, Wiggam (1941) explains:

“Intelligent individuals know that right conduct is simply intelligent conduct the conduct that gets the best results. They tend to choose the right conduct simply because they see it as the course of action that produces the best consequences. An intelligent child or adult discovers he can get what he wants in life more easily and surely by honesty than by deception”.
No one is born with the knowledge of what the cultural group considers right or wrong. This he must learn. Even more important, if he wishes to win group approval, he must be motivated to choose from different potentials for action, that which will satisfy his own needs and at the same time conform to group standards.

Learning what the group approves, is a long and difficult process, a process that depends on the maturation of intellectual capacities, especially the capacities for remembering, associating what one learns with previously learned facts, and weighing the merits against the demerits of the different choices. Hemming (1957) writes:

“Moral development is the process by which the child acquires the values esteemed by his community, how he acquires a sense of right and wrong in terms of those values, and how he learns to regulate his personal desires and compulsions so that, when a situational conflict arises, he does what he ought to do rather than what he wants to do. In brief to look at if the other way round, moral development is the process by which a community seeks to transfer the egocentricity of the baby into the social behaviour of the mature adult.”

A moral code is based on moral concepts which have been learned gradually over a long period. The fundamental concepts are learned in the home by direct teaching and imitation, motivated by threats of punishment and promises of reward.

Later, these home grown concepts are broadened and reinforced by learning from teachers, from adults in authority and from peers.

Because of his intellectual immaturity the young child cannot understand why certain things are right and others wrong. He learns to act, as he is expected to,
without knowing why. Gradually, with increasing mental ability, he can see common features in apparently dissimilar situations. Then he can apply what he has learned in one situation to another situation. Specific moral concepts gradually become more general, more abstract, and more extensive.

As the individual grows older and his social contacts broaden, he learns new moral concepts and generalizes old moral concepts to apply to new situations. By adulthood, he can apply moral concepts to an increasing range of conflicting life situations. In addition, he can ascribe different degrees of rightness or wrongness to acts, judging some as less wrong and some as more wrong. By this time, the person’s moral code, based on concepts learned in childhood and adolescence, is well formed. Any change in it is likely to be merely a shift in emphasis rather than the development of new concepts. When a shift occurs, it is largely in the direction of more conventional morality. This is especially true in the areas of morality that relate to sex behaviour.

Moral or immoral behaviour has no effect on personality until the person is intellectually mature enough to understand the attitude of the social group toward his behaviour. A baby does not realize that an act is wrong unless he is punished for it. Even then, he may fail to understand why he was punished. Furthermore, he has no feeling of guilt from wrong doing because he has not yet learned a moral code by which to judge his behaviour. As time passes, the person gradually learns what society expects and how it judges him when his behaviour falls short of expectations. At the same time, he is learning to judge his own behaviour in terms of a moral code, he has developed through experience and moral teaching. If he feels that his
behaviour falls short of this code, he will have feelings of guilt. If his behaviour comes up to expectations of his own and his group he will be satisfied with himself.

The influence of moral expectations on the self-concept will depend on a number of conditions; whether the person is forced, by fear of punishment, to conform or whether he wants to conform because of the personal benefit he will derive from doing so; the attitude of the person who requires him to conform and the method used to enforce conformity and whether he feels secure in his moral beliefs and in his ability to translate these beliefs into actions.

If a person feels unsure of his ability to make moral judgements that will win group approval or if he is uncertain of his ability to carry out decisions in ways that will be approved by the group, he will bolster himself up by rigid and authoritarian moral standards or he will lean on external standards of right and wrong rather than on his own convictions. In any situation in which a moral decision must be made, such a person is likely to be plagued by uncertainty and doubt. By contrast, the person who learns a socially acceptable code of moral values and accepts this code as a guide to his behaviour is more secure more confident of his ability to live up to the code, and more likely to be a ‘comfortable’ and well-adjusted person.

If the person realizes that his behaviour falls short of group expectations or personal standards, he will have feelings of guilt and his reaction to these feelings will affect his self-concept.

Feeling of guilt may lead the person to change his attitude about the “wrongness” of certain behaviour. If the person decides not to cheat when tempted to do so, he usually becomes more rigid in his attitude that cheating is wrong. If he
decides that he will cheat, he is likely to become more tolerant toward cheating. This is a method he uses, unconsciously, to reduce the feelings of guilt which would otherwise follow his cheating.

Occasional feeling of mild guilt are not likely to have a permanent effect on the self-concept. They may make the person ashamed of himself and more realistic about the standards he should set for his behaviour. Frequent feelings of guilt, however, resulting from recurring failure to live up to one’s standards, are damaging to the self-concept. They make the person lose confidence in his ability to achieve what he sets out to do, even though no one but himself may know of his failure.

A person’s intolerance of others’ shortcomings affects his personality by creating feelings of self-superiority. These feelings are reflected in the quality of his personality by creating feelings of self-superiority. These feelings are reflected in the quality of his behaviour and thus influence the attitudes of others.

The older child, example, is contemptuous of those who do anything his group considers wrong, such as cheating or smoking. His moral standards are rigid and unalterable and his attitude toward those who do not conform, is characterized by extreme intolerance. This self-righteousness makes the child smug and self-satisfied. It compensates for some of the feelings of inadequacy he experiences when his own conduct falls below the lofty standards he has set. The more often he falls below these standards the more intolerant he is toward the transgressions of others and the more satisfaction he derives from their punishment. These are ego-building experiences for him.
Intolerance toward moral shortcomings usually reaches its peak in adolescence. At this age, intolerance of others’ shortcomings and intolerance of personal shortcomings make the adolescent, for the time at least, cynical about all people. Since no one seems to conform to his ideals, he has a poor opinion of everyone, including himself. Normally, the adolescent becomes more liberal and more tolerant as his social experiences broaden. If this does not happen, his tolerance will eventually contribute to the development of the authoritarian personality syndrome.