

Teaching Competency of Secondary Teachers in Relation to Their Thinking Styles and Vital Soft Skills

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Abstract

This study investigates the interplay of teaching competency, thinking styles, and vital soft skills among secondary teachers in Kancheepuram, Chennai, and Tiruvallur districts of Tamil Nadu, India. The research utilizes survey data from 1000 teachers, employing statistical techniques to analyze the relationships. The findings reveal that there are significant differences in teaching competency, thinking styles, and soft skills among teachers in different districts. It also identifies variations based on gender, age, and teaching experience. The study suggests implications for teacher training and curriculum development to enhance these crucial aspects of education. Future research can expand these insights to other regions and educational levels.

Keywords: Teaching Competency, Thinking Styles, Vital Soft skills.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of secondary education, the role of teachers is pivotal, extending beyond subject matter expertise. This study delves into the intricate interplay between teaching competency, thinking styles, and vital soft skills among secondary educators. As the educational paradigm evolves, understanding how teachers' cognitive approaches and essential interpersonal skills shape their effectiveness becomes paramount. By exploring this nexus, we aim to unravel the nuanced connections that contribute to a teacher's overall instructional prowess. This investigation not only sheds light on the intricate fabric of pedagogical proficiency but also serves as a compass for refining educational strategies in the ever-evolving realm of secondary schooling.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Teaching competency is crucial for creating an effective learning environment, impacting both teachers and students. Teachers, as highlighted by Saxena (2006), play a pivotal role in navigating diverse situations requiring varied approaches. Differences in thinking styles among teachers contribute to variations in student responses and achievement. A teacher's innovative thinking pattern is vital for fostering constructive learning and preventing student passivity. Understanding and reforming thinking styles are essential to enhance teaching competency. Moreover, teachers must possess vital soft skills for success in their careers, shaping societal values, and promoting positive cultures. The integration of personality,

thinking style, soft skills, and professional preparation defines a secondary teacher. Assessing thinking styles and soft skills aims to raise teachers' awareness, motivating active participation in personal growth. This study explores the intricate relationship between teaching competency, thinking styles, and vital soft skills among secondary teachers, providing insights for educational refinement.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the realm of secondary education, the effectiveness of teachers plays a pivotal role in shaping the academic and personal development of students. As the demands on teachers continue to evolve, there is a growing need to understand how their teaching competency, which extends beyond subject matter expertise, relates to thinking styles and vital soft skills. In a rapidly changing world, teachers need to adapt their methods, engage diverse student populations, and create inclusive and dynamic learning environments. Their thinking styles, encompassing creative thinking, critical thinking, logical reasoning, decision-making, lateral thinking, and problem-solving, are key drivers of pedagogical innovation. Additionally, vital soft skills like communication skills, leadership skills, and interpersonal skills are essential for fostering positive teacher-student relationships and addressing the varied needs of students. The misalignment between these competencies and the requirements of contemporary education can result in educational disparities, reduced student engagement, and ultimately impact the quality of secondary education. Hence, this study aims to elucidate this critical issue, offering insights that can inform teacher training, policy development, and curriculum design to bridge this gap and promote effective teaching practices tailored to the needs of today's students. Importantly, only a limited number of studies have been conducted in India and abroad on thinking styles and vital soft skills in secondary teachers. Accordingly, it is the need of the hour to conduct more studies to understand the teaching competency of secondary teachers in modern educational settings. With the views expressed above, the investigator felt strongly motivated to study "**Teaching Competency of Secondary Teachers in relation to their Thinking Styles and Vital Soft Skills**".

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the level of Teaching Competency and its dimensions of Secondary teachers.
2. To find out whether there is any significant relationship between Vital Soft Skills and Teaching Competency of Secondary Teachers.
3. To find out whether there is any significant relationship between Thinking Styles and Vital Soft Skills of Secondary Teachers.
4. To find out whether there is any significant influence of Thinking Styles and Vital Soft Skills on Teaching Competency of Secondary teachers.

5. METHODOLOGY

The investigator has chosen the survey approach for their investigation, which aims to evaluating teaching competency of secondary school teachers in relation their thinking styles and vital soft skills

5.1. VARIABLES USED IN THE PRESENT STUDY

A) Independent Variables: Thinking Styles, Vital Soft Skills

B) Dependent Variable: Teaching Competency

C) Background Variables: i) Gender ii) Age iii) Types of Family iv) Educational Qualification v) Subject

Handling vi) Teaching Experience vii) Class handling viii) Type of School ix) Location of the School x) Name of the District.

5.2. POPULATION FOR THE STUDY

The population for the present study consists of secondary teachers working in high schools or higher secondary schools located in Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur Districts.

5.3. SAMPLE FOR THE STUDY

The investigator used a stratified random sampling technique to select the sample from the population. Stratification was performed based on Gender, Age, Type of family, Educational Qualification, Subject handling, Teaching Experience, Class handling, Locality of the School, Type of school and Name of the District. The sample for the present study consists of 1000 secondary teachers working in various high or higher secondary schools in Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur districts, selected using the stratified random sampling method.

5.4. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

Following are the statistical techniques that are used in the present research for the purpose of analysis of data: a) Arithmetic Mean b) Standard Deviation c) t – Test d) ANOVA e) Carl Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation f) Regression.

5.5. TOOLS USED

1. The “Teaching Competency Scale” was constructed and validated by the **Investigator in collaboration with Research Supervisor (2016)**.
2. The “Vital Soft Skills Scale” was also constructed and validated by the **Investigator** in partnership with the **Research Supervisor (2016)**.
3. The “Thinking Styles Assessment Scale” developed and standardized by **S. Jesu Christopher (2015)** was adopted by the researcher for this study.

6. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

HYPOTHESIS: 1

There is no significant difference between male and female secondary teachers in their Teaching competency and its dimensions.

Table 1 *Difference between male and female secondary teachers in their teaching competency and its dimensions*

Dimension	Male		Female		Calculated t-value	Remark
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Planning	20.9	3.0	22.0	2.8	5.77	S
Motivation	21.2	2.9	21.6	3.1	1.76	NS
Subject competency	28.6	4.4	29.3	4.2	2.46	S
Presentation	28.6	4.3	29.4	3.9	2.71	S
Organization	24.1	3.9	24.9	3.6	2.76	S
Use of teaching- learning materials	45.6	6.6	47.0	6.1	3.23	S
Classroom management	38.6	6.3	40.4	4.8	4.56	S
Communication	38.7	6.5	41.3	5.6	6.04	S
Personality	33.5	4.8	34.8	4.2	4.04	S
Teaching competency in total	280.1	32.4	291.2	28.1	5.15	S

It is inferred from the above table that there is significant difference between male and female secondary teachers in their teaching competency in total and its dimensions planning, subject competency, presentation, organization, use of teaching- learning materials, classroom management, communication and personality.

HYPOTHESIS 2

There is no significant relationship between thinking styles and its dimensions critical thinking, creative thinking, logical reasoning, problem solving, decision making and lateral thinking and teaching competency of secondary teachers.

Table 2 Relationship between thinking styles and its dimensions and teaching competency of secondary teachers

Dimension	Calculated 'r' value	Remark
Critical Thinking	0.49	S
Creative Thinking	0.49	S
Logical Reasoning	0.44	S
Problem Solving	0.35	S
Decision Making	0.47	S
Lateral Thinking	0.29	S
Thinking Styles in Total	0.55	S

From the table it is inferred that there is significant relationship between thinking styles and its dimensions critical thinking, creative thinking, logical reasoning, problem solving, decision making, lateral thinking and teaching competency of secondary teachers as the calculated 'r' values 0.551, 0.495, 0.497, 0.442, 0.359, 0.475 and 0.296 are greater than the table value 0.062 at 5% level of significance.

HYPOTHESIS 3

There is no significant influence of vital soft skills and thinking styles on teaching competency of secondary teachers.

Table 3 *Inter-correlation among vital soft skills, thinking styles and teaching competency of secondary teachers*

Variable	Vital Soft Skills	Thinking Styles	Teaching Competency
Vital Soft Skills	1.00	0.65	0.56
Thinking Styles	0.65	1.00	0.54
Teaching Competency	0.56	0.54	1.00

6. MAJOR FINDINGS

1. There is significant difference between male and female secondary teachers in their teaching competency and its dimensions.
2. There is significant relationship between teaching competency and thinking styles and its dimensions critical thinking, creative thinking, logical reasoning, problem solving, decision making and lateral thinking of secondary teachers.
3. There is significant relationship between teaching competency and vital soft skills and its dimensions oral communication skill, written communication skill, computer skill, stress management skill, organising skill, time management skill, leadership skill, interpersonal skill and team building skill of secondary teachers.
4. There is significant relationship between vital soft skills and thinking styles and its dimensions critical thinking, creative thinking, logical reasoning, problem solving, decision making and lateral thinking of secondary teachers.
5. There is significant influence of vital soft skills and thinking styles on teaching competency of secondary teachers.

7. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- The teacher training programs should focus on improving teaching competency, soft skills, and thinking styles.
- ICT training should be given to the secondary teachers for improving their teaching competency.
- Innovative in-service training should be incorporated to develop teaching competency.
- Strategies for inculcating thinking styles skills should be included in the school curriculum.
- Soft skills training should be given to the secondary teachers to improve their stress management skill
- Adopt strategies for developing thinking styles and teaching competency of secondary teachers.
- Provision for team work should be given.

8. SUGGESTION FOR THE FURTHER STUDY

- The present study is conducted in Kancheepuram, Chennai and Tiruvallur districts of Tamilnadu, and it can be further extended to other districts by future researchers.
- This study may also be extended to college and university faculties.
- The present problem of the study may be conducted as an experimental study.
- Examine the relationship between thinking styles and teaching competency of primary school teachers.
- Study the relationship between ICT awareness and thinking styles among secondary school teachers.

9. CONCLUSION

The investigator assumed that, teaching competency is not a single skill to be acquired and nurtured. It is an embodiment of many skills. It needs a systematic practice. It is the knowledge to use the right thing at the right time and in a right place. Vital soft skills play a significant role in one's success in life particularly in one's teaching competency. If one acquires and practices soft skills one can excel in teaching competency. Vital soft skills cannot be taught. However, it can be developed through proper training by the use of thinking. Naturally inherently one can have soft skills but it depends upon the thinking styles. Everyone thinks about which vital soft skills have use in their day-to-day life. Effective thinking increase the confident level of one's presentation then one can excel in teaching competency. Depending upon the ability in vital soft skills and thinking styles one's teaching competency differs.

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