CHAPTER THREE
Methodology of the Research

Methodology is one of the most important parts of any research. Here, I am presenting the entire process through which I managed to complete my research work. This chapter is presenting how I inducted myself in the field of Human Rights and, then, to a Human Rights Perspective (HRP). How the field of research emerged has also been discussed. It explains the nature of the research, tool for data collection and methods of analysis with the rationale. I have also shared my reflections while doing this research towards the end of the chapter and, finally, the delimitations of the research are presented.

How I Reached From Where I Began

It is a tough task for me to write my experiences in a few lines, whether they are academics or personal. I have gone through a long experience to reach this research. My struggle started during my M.Phil. research, when I was researching on the pedagogy of political science and situated cognition. There, I developed a programme which evaluated the effectiveness of a situated cognition approach in the teaching – learning process of political science. That was the time when I started thinking about this (present) work. To develop the programme, I read all the political science text books prepared by NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) based on NCF 2005. Learner space, contextual teaching, child centered classroom, importance to local knowledge, authentic practices, every day cognition, example based teaching, are highly supported by the NCF 2005 and by the text books. But, certain biases and incompleteness always puzzled me. Such as, why are certain things given in a particular way? Why did the book mostly talk about gender perspective and perspective of marginalized groups? Why are lots of ambiguous statements given? Why is struggle shown as a means to achieve anything in democracy? What does a political science text book mean? Why is the sociological perspective more dominant in political science text books? Is election the only way to ensure democracy? How are notions like equality and liberty being perceived in the text books? What are the
implications of the given content in text books? How did political science text books talk about rights and responsibilities? How have the responsibilities of states been presented? Are all these concerns based on humane understanding? For sure, many other questions like these go beyond context and child centeredness. What is the concern of the epistemological basis of a subject and what is the need of the time and the discipline?

In the same way, while executing my developed programme in classes, most of the time I was quite disturbed when the context of the learner, itself, became a problem. Likewise, I clearly remember that while discussing social equality, a student said that his servant (‘kaam wali bai’) does all the house hold work, but she is not allowed to clean the temple and the student was convinced with this practice, as he believed that they are not clean. I thought, if this kind of social context present, then how much can a text book, by just saying we all are equal, be able to achieve? If books are able to do something, then how? Books talk about equality, justice, democracy, rights, responsibilities, but why are things different in practice, even in a school student’s life. It means that the content of text books are not reaching the learner and maybe pedagogy is not going hand in hand with the content. Only telling will not solve the purpose to develop an egalitarian understanding. Is it not important to make the teaching- learning process more humane or based on a human rights perspective, where not only is content based on a human rights perspective, but the pedagogy, too?

During my M.Phil. research, I participated in some activities held in schools. But, I could not understand the way they chose their activities. The programmes always started with ‘Sarswati Vandana.’ But, I knew there were some Muslim students who were quite uncomfortable with it, because, may be, they were not able to relate themselves with it? But the school did not bother about it. They were hardly bothered and considered the fact that a school is a secular place, by an established rule of law, in India.

Though, I decided to do my Ph.D. on the same lines as my M.Phil, yet subconsciously. I wanted to do something which I felt strongly absent. From this point of time, I decided to do research in the field of human rights and school education. With this personal and academic feeling, I started to explore the field of
human rights, the theoretical and conceptual framework which is presented in the second chapter of the thesis. From here I began......

A Journey from the Beginning

I have discussed, in the first segment of this chapter, how I started focusing on human rights. Initially, my focus was on the class room processes, hereafter, I started reading extensively about classroom processes, with reference to a human rights perspective. I observed some classes, just to see the possibility of the work in the classroom. But, soon, I realized that only class room processes would not help me to, basically, understand school education on a human rights perspective. I realized that what a teacher does in the class is majorly decided or governed by the text books. Studying only the classroom will not give the entire perspective. Consequently, I decided to understand the social science text book from a human rights perspective and started understanding text books. Very soon, I realized that there are several good things available in the text books that can be highlighted from a human rights perspective. This addition to my Ph.D. work was qualitative and very enriching. But, a question constantly came to mind was on what basis was the knowledge given in text books decided? Obviously, this question was directed to understand the national curriculum frameworks, from a human rights perspective. Thus, I gave in-depth quality time to the National curriculum frameworks. While exploring the curriculum frameworks, many a time, reference to different commissions and polices were given and I engaged myself with these. That is how my journey began and the commissions, policies, curriculums, text books, and the classroom process became the area of my research.

While I discussed on these areas and read different material to develop a conceptual framework for the research, I also read in-depth on co-curricular activities that promoted human rights. This motivated me to include one more dimension to my research to understand and develop a comprehensive understanding of school education, with reference to a human rights perspective.

After all this work was done, a meeting was conducted with the members of my Ph.D. advisory board to discuss the work done so far and further actions, to be taken such
as, the concrete field of the research, tools and so on. The framework of the research was also discussed. A more detailed, academic rational has been given in the first chapter and this chapter presents the conceptual framework for the research.

Finally, my research comprised different dimensions of school education from policy to practice. The diagram below easily explains the field of my research work:

**Human Rights Education to a Human Rights Perspective**

As I have discussed above, initially I thought more about human rights and human rights Education. But my understanding, which developed after reading lots of books and researches, was that my orientation of doing this research work was not to develop a framework for human rights education, such as an elective or optional paper in school, nor was I thinking of developing any program for Human Rights awareness. Moreover, the idea was to understand the human rights perspective in policies, text books and classroom practices and so on. The work was to analyze a Human Rights Perspective in policies, curriculums, text books, class room practices and co-curricular activities. That is how I shifted the perspective of my research from human rights education to a human rights perspective, where a human rights perspective becomes the core of this research.

**The Nature of the Present Research**

The nature of the research is qualitative and analytical. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin 2000). Qualitative research is intended to penetrate to the deeper significance that the subject of the
research ascribes to the topic being researched. It involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter and gives priority to what the data contributes to important research questions or existing information. This understanding has been used in the present research and a human rights perspective has been understood and analyzed with reference to policies, curriculums, text books, classroom practices and co-curricular activities.

Qualitative research encompasses a range of philosophies, research designs and specific techniques, including in-depth qualitative interviews, participant and non-participant observation; focus groups, document analyses, and a number of other methods of data collection (Pope 2006). Theory and the researchers’ perspective also play a key role in qualitative data analysis and on the basis of which generalizations to other contexts may be made.

In the same light, as per the need and requirement of the present study, both theoretical and field analysis has been done. Interpretation and findings are presented in the context, in which the study is conducted. The rationale of the ways of data gathering is discussed later in this chapter.

The regulationist approach has also been used because of the nature of the study, where a kind of relationship between policies and practices has been the motivational factor for the researcher as has been described under the heading ‘journey from the beginning’ in this chapter. The regulationist approach provides an interesting and critical way to analyze the interconnections between various aspects such as institutions and the relevance of their functions in association with different fields of practice. The present work also tried out a journey from policy to practice with reference to a Human Rights perspective in a regulationist mode.

As this research is a mixed method research, so, the hermeneutics approach has also been used. The researcher chose a mixed method for the research because of the limitations of using only one approach to fully address all aspects of the research questions. Hermeneutics proved to be a credible and flexible strategy for combining methods to create a deep understanding of the acculturation of issues and related concerns.
Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation (Crotty, 1998) and is situated in the interpretive paradigm. Schleiermacher founded modern hermeneutics early in the 19th century, by recognizing the potential for its use to understand human sciences. Later, in the same century, Max Van Manen expanded the use of hermeneutics for cultural systems and organizations (Max, Van, Manen, 1990). The philosopher, Heidegger, understood hermeneutics to be more than a methodology for interpretation. For Heidegger, hermeneutical phenomenology represented how Dasien (the meaning of being) is understood (Heidegger, 1962).

As a branch of the human sciences, human rights seek to understand human beings from a holistic perspective, viewing them as complex, multifaceted beings, embedded in a multi-layered network of relations. Because they can be more holistic in their focus, qualitative research methods have, recently, played an increasingly important role in human rights research, complementing knowledge generated by qualitative research studies. However, hermeneutic, a type of qualitative research, has not been widely used as a research method in human rights. But, according to its nature, it highly suit qualitative researches. Therefore, I chose it as it suited the nature of the present research study.

The present research, thus, is basically descriptive, qualitative and analytical and represents the qualities of a Hermeneutics and regulationist approach.

**Approaching the Field and Gathering of the Data**

After developing a workable understanding of the conceptual framework, I moved to the field for field exploration. For data collection, I and my supervisor sat together for hours and finalized how the observations would be used to understand the classroom practices and co-curricular activities, which would, also, be strengthened through interviews. In this regard, we held a meeting with the member, of the advisory board for my Ph.D.( mentioned above) and finalized that, the observation for class room practices would be restricted to a single Government school and, over all, 20 classes would be observed i.e. four observations for each class ( four observations for class VI and the same for classes VII, VIII, IX and X). Observations for co-curricular activities were to be done in one Government school. Interviews to strengthen the observation would be taken with the teachers whose classes were being observed and
5 other teachers. These additional 5 teachers were taken to gauge the parity of the responses given by those teachers whose classes were being observed. The same 10 teachers would be interviewed in depth, regarding their understanding of text books of social science class room practices and Co-curricular Activities, with reference to a human rights perspective. That is how the tools to collect the data, in the present research, were finalized i.e. observations and in-depth interviews. The table given next explains the above, along with the discourse of polices, curriculum and text book analysis:

**Theoretical**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy analysis</th>
<th>Conceptual framework based policy level analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kothari Commission 1964</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Policy on Education 1986</td>
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<td>Plan of Action of NPE 1992</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Curriculum analysis</th>
<th>Conceptual framework based curriculum analysis</th>
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<tr>
<td>National Curriculum Framework 1988</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Curriculum Framework 2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Curriculum Framework 2005</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Science Text Books</th>
<th>Conceptual framework based text books analysis (content analysis)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social and Political Life- I- Class VI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Political Life- II- Class VII</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Political Life- III- Class VIII</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Democratic Politics- I – Class IX</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Democratic Politics- II – Class X</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Practice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>In- depth Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class room practices</td>
<td>20 class (VI –X, four observations of each class)</td>
<td>10 teachers (Same 5 of those classes were observed and 5 other.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-curricular activities</td>
<td>Activities conducted throughout the year including CCA periods ( classes)</td>
<td>10 teachers (Same 5 of those classes were observed and 5 other.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text books</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10 teachers (5 same of those classes were observed and 5 other than those.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is a very tough task for a researcher to access the field for data collection. But, I was quite lucky in this regard. I wrote a request letter to the directorate of education to allot me schools for data collection. The Directorate permitted me to collect the data in a school. For the observation of Co-curricular activities, I could not take permission
from the Directorate of Education, but the principal allowed me to observe the curricular activities programmes and classes.

The actual struggle started when the researcher entered the school. Everyone looked at me, as if I was going to inspect their classes and judge their knowledge. For three continuous days, I just went to the school and came back. No one wanted to co-operate with me. They were showing a strange attitude. The Principal introduced me only to the time table in-charge, so that I could get the schedule to observe the classes. But, the teachers were so uncomfortable with me that they were not even ready to talk to me. In this unpleasant situation, I started my observations. Though I assured them that their name and the schools’ name will not be discussed and disclosed, yet they were quite uncomfortable with my presence in their classes. I clearly remember that one teacher said to me, “aur kuch bacha ho to vo bhi observe kar lo” (do observe if something is left). Sometimes, they were so cosmetic (artificial) in class, that I could easily observe this. However, the same teachers were quite comfortable when I interviewed them for various purposes. I was very surprised to see this contrasting behaviour, which, also, proved that these still exists have a huge difference between theory and practice. The analysis will present the details about this in further chapters.

Observing Co-curricular Activities was no better than observing classroom practices. When I asked the time table in-charge about observing Co-curricular Activity classes, he replied that when I wanted to observe, they would do it for me. He just said that nothing like this happened in the classes, but they would organize some special classes for me for data collection. But, when I said that I just wanted to observe what ever happened in those periods, without any cosmetic changes, then, after a lot of struggle, he told me that every week every class had two Co-curricular Activity periods and he gave me the time table for that. Actually, I was stunned to see those classes where nothing was happening and, in most of the classes, the teachers taught their own subject to cover the course. I did not lose hope and, one after another, I observed 16 classes, but nothing materialized. I observed certain cultural programmes held in the school, but they were, also, not very different from the Co-curricular Activity classes (A brief reporting about this experience has been presented further in chapters six).
The given diagram presents the complete overview of the research:

This diagram shows the brief outline of the present research. It shows how the understanding of a human rights perspective emerged for the wider discourse of human rights. The conceptual framework of the research has been developed from four different but associated fields, where, concept, development and concerns in human rights and a human rights perspective in the curriculum helped the analysis of different polices, commissions, National Curriculum Frameworks and textbooks. A human rights perspective in pedagogy facilitated the observation and analysis of classroom practice and a human rights perspective in Co-curricular Activities provided support to the observation and analysis of Co-curricular Activities. The teachers’ interviews strengthened the analysis, particularly of classroom practices,
Co-curricular Activities and textbooks. Further, it is important to mention that the entire conceptual framework, collectively, provided strength to the research.

**Methods and the Process of Analysis**

According to the nature of this research, multiple methods for analysis have been used to analyze the data. This segment of the chapter will help to understand which methods for different aspects of the research have been used to analyze policies, curriculum frameworks, text books, classroom practices and curricular activities. It is, also, important to mention here that an overall, eclectic approach has been used for the analysis.

**Content Analysis:** content analysis is one of the strong parts of my research. In this regard, I have analyzed the content of social science text books (political science) with reference to a human rights perspective. In this process, conceptual framework developed in the second chapter particularly ‘issues and concerns of human rights’ and ‘curriculum analysis’ has been used for analysis. Beside these frameworks, analysis of policies and National Curriculum Frameworks also facilitated the content analysis of the social science text books.

This process started by first reading in-depth, the text books of Social Sciences from classes VI to X (VI to VIII – Social and Political Life and, IX and X–Democratic Politics) to develop a comprehensive understanding about the books. Next, chapter wise, detailed analysis for all the books was done. The focus was to see how far a human right perspective existed in the content of each chapter of the books. How was the content being presented? What was the appropriateness of the examples used in the text book? Which were the instances where a human rights perspective was being supported, presented and favoured? Where was the content biased? How did the text books perceive the very crucial issues that exist in society such equality, liberty, social justice, democracy, constitution, election and their relationships with each other with respect to a human rights perspective?

After this, a summarization of the analysis of each book has been done. The idea here was to see and understand how a human rights perspective exists and was presented
throughout the book. Finally, how do the Social Science text books deal with a human rights perspective is presented in themes, which emerged from the text books themselves and supported by a theoretical framework. Basically, the understanding of theory, was supported by a developed theoretical framework for the research.

**Hermeneutical Analysis:** The word 'hermeneutical' literally means not going for the meaning of the text, but interpreting the text for the people involved in the situation. This is done by never overemphasizing self in an analysis, but, instead, reiterating the people's views and responses. The meaning of any content resides in the author’s intent, context, and the reader. Finding themes and relating these themes is involved in this method. This method of analysis gives due importance to the context in guiding a researcher’s thoughts and actions in developing an understanding towards the central argument of the research (Crotty, 1998).

The Hermeneutic way of analysis has, also, been used, because data has been collected from more than one method, such as interviews and observations, both used to understand the text books, classroom practices and curricular activities. This method also provides space to understand “how what is understood, forms the basis for grasping that which still remains to be understood” (Bontekoe, 1996, p. 2).

**Researching Policy:** Policy study is a highly contested field in terms of how policy should be understood. Policy is more than ‘official’ texts produced by and on the authority of governmental and executive powers. Policy has multiple dimensions within any field of activity, whether education, health or welfare. Policy could be considered to be a text, a process, a discourse, a political decision, a programme, even an outcome. Policy is a ‘form of social action both intended and actual’, and it is ‘inevitably incomplete in terms of how it maps into practice (Ball, 1997). Policy makers seek to change behaviours, through the distribution of scarce resources and in so doing, change values (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, and Henry, (1997). The issues for policy researchers are about how and why certain policies come to be developed in a particular context, by who, for whom, based on what assumptions and with what effect? On whose authority is policy produced and disseminated? What are the principles or allocations? Whose values are being promoted, who wins and who loses?
With this understanding, I chose this form of analysis because I was also looking into the policies from a human rights perspective. This method of analysis suited my work best, because I also looked into how the policies were developed the way they have been. What are the assumptions on which these polices are being made? What are the internal ambiguities within the policy and where do they need to be implemented? Why is there a huge gap between and the practical aspect of polices? Understanding these and many more concerns, through a human rights perspective, is the agenda of this particular part of the research.

The way I analyzed policies is different from the ‘rational model of policy analysis’ which was dominant until the 1970s, and was based upon statistical techniques, a large population and linear hierarchical processes. My method of analysis is based on ‘new policy sociology’, where the notion of policy is seen as ‘discourse’, than merely ‘text’. As a ‘discourse’, I see policies as part of a wider system, of social relations, framing what is said and thought. Policy texts, simultaneously, emerge out of, but also produce, particular policy discourses. Groups and individuals position themselves, and are positioned by, these texts and discourses, and their acceptance, rejection or modification is shaped, in part, by them. In this discourse analysis of policy, therefore, as a researcher, I tried to uncover the normative nature of decisions and suggestions that appear to be obvious, inevitable or natural, to test judgments about truth claims, and to consider, alternatively, more socially just ways of developing policies and practice.

Here, with this method of analysis, my idea is to inform policy makers about the problems, assist them in reframing policy concerns, and suggest more rationale issues and concerns, rationally.

More than a Theme Based Analysis: Too often, qualitative researchers rely on the presentation of key themes, supported by quotes from participants’ text, as the primary form of analysis and reporting of their data. This way is, generally, considered very easy. But, here, I argue that qualitative data requires and supports a much deeper analysis. Taking out the theme from the data, which represent the actual concerns, is not an easy task. During my data analysis of interviews and observations, many a time, I put the data in different categories, so that the actual representative analysis could be done and presented.
Thematic analysis is one of the most commonly used methods of qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis is not as dependent on specialized theory, as some other qualitative techniques, such as discourse analysis or conversation analysis. As a consequence, in-depth thematic analysis is more accessible with the relevant theory. In thematic analysis, the task of the researcher is to identify a limited number of themes, which adequately reflect their textual data. It is not easy to identify the representative themes. This is actually a tough task.

I used this method of analysis to analyze interviews, observations and Social Science textbooks. As this is a qualitative analysis, I gave vital time to myself to get extremely familiar with my data for an expeditious and insightful analysis. Data familiarization is a key to thematic analysis, as it is for other qualitative methods. For this reason, I collected my entire data myself, such as observations for classroom practices and co-curricular activities and interviews, to understand the teachers’ perspective about text books, classroom practices and curricular Activities, with reference to a human rights perspective. If the researcher is not collecting data himself/herself may lose the rigor of the analysis which happened most of the time with survey researches.

Following the data familiarization, coding of the data was done, that is, I applied brief verbal descriptions to small chunks of data and put them in different categories. The details of this process helped me to understand the data in an organized manner and, also, helped me to analyze the data thematically. At every stage of my data analysis, I altered and modified the analysis in the light of experience and as ideas developed.

On the basis of this coding, I tried to identify themes which integrated substantial sets of these codings. Again, this was something of a trial-and-error process, in which change and adjustment was a regular feature. Then, I tried to define each theme sufficiently, so that it would be clear to others what exactly the theme was. I also identified examples of each theme to illustrate what the analysis had achieved.

As part of my report writing, I re-thought and re did parts of my analysis in the course of the write-up, where ever I had used thematic analysis. Analysis of the present research, also, entails the results of the analysis, so, re-thinking and re-doing of the analysis was a regular feature of the present research.
Ethical Considerations

Strydom (1998; 24) defines ethics as a set of moral principles which are suggested by an individual or group, subsequently widely accepted, and which offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents. The study did not expose respondents to any harm, be it physical, emotional or psychological. The researcher explained to the respondents what the research was all about, and how it would benefit them and other people. These points were seriously kept in mind during the entire research work, while collecting data and otherwise.

The present study required that participants share issues about themselves and about the system that they may consider extremely private. Recognizing that such revelations may have far reaching implications for the participants, the principles of voluntary participation and informed consent was implemented during the identification of the interviewees, as well as their observation and their recruitment to the study.

Participants taken in this research study for data collection, were asked for their consent to take part in the research. I, also, provided them space to refuse to answer individual questions or to withdraw from the research process at any point, for whatever reason. Potential participants should not, in any, way feel pressurized to take part in the research and I took special care of this perspective. I gave sufficient information to enable them to make an informed decision.

I asked them for additional consent, which I may have needed after the completion of research fieldwork if, for example, presentation of raw data was necessary and warranted at a conference, or if additional research needed to be conducted that went beyond the use, for which the informed consent was given.

Social Science research, such as this research, involves participants directly (interviews and observations) as the source of primary data, or indirectly via access to secondary data already secured (policies, commissions, curriculums and text books). Therefore, I tried to attend to the all ethical issues and principles related to the potential risks of the research involved. I also ensured that my research facilitated the
general acceptance and understanding of research processes and so would enable, rather than hinder future researches.

I protected the identity of, and data belonging to, participants (including information based on interviews and observations) throughout the research process – including respondent recruitment, data collection, data analysis and reporting. Although some of the participants were not concerned about data disclosure, yet I upheld the principles of confidentiality and data protection and maintained the security of personal data and participants’ anonymity (e.g. by ensuring that participants were not identified or identifiable in the outputs of research). I, also, ensured that the participants’ names and addresses should be kept secure and separate from their responses, to help reduce the likelihood of breach of security and anonymity.

I guarded against any possible harmful consequences of participation in the research. This included ensuring that the interview would be used only for the purpose of research and it would not harm the respondent. I, also, ensured that my research work should not harm any part of society, including the sentiments of any teacher and their responses.

As long as the theoretical part of the research was concerned, I ensured that I would not be biased and did not wrongly interpret policies, commissions and other theoretical discourse that I had used in my research, to the best of my knowledge.

Over all, I tried to keep the following ethical issues in mind, while doing my research:

- Sound application and conduct of research methods
- Avoidance of wrong interpretation of used theoretical framework
- Participation based on valid informed consent
- Avoidance of personal and social harm
- Non-disclosure of identity and personal information.
- Appropriate dissemination and utilization of the findings
Acknowledging the Hawthorne Effect in the Study

The central idea behind the Hawthorne effect, a term used as early as 1950 by Elton Mayo and Fritz Roethlisberger, is that changes in participants' behavior, during the course of a study, may be "related only to the special social situation and social treatment they received.” In other words, the Hawthorne effect is the effect in research, which exists because of non-acknowledged factors and the reasons of behaviour or responses. This effect, also, worked in my research throughout, during observations (may be for some reason the teachers behaved the way they behaved), and interviews (with reference to their responses). There is a possibility that, sometimes I might have been governed with some situations and context which may not be directly presented in my research, but influenced the work I did.

The Hawthorne effect gets created by the situation where work is done. For example, while observing classes, as per their availability according to the time table, I did observe classes in the first period and, sometimes, in the last period and some times, before the lunch break. Thus, these situations, for sure, influenced the students and teachers present in the class. May be the students and teachers were quite attentive in the first period and not that much in the last period. This may be only a myth. But, it plays a role in developing a class room ethos and environment. The time of the period is not a determining factor in my data collection but does influence research. Thus, I felt that acknowledging such situations was necessary because they create the Hawthorne effect. As a researcher, I have included such things in my research, but acknowledged all such effects as fair.

My Experiences and Reflections

I am adding this segment in my research methodology chapter for two basic reasons: first, to share my experiences during the research, to reflect upon them and learn from those reflections and second to help other researchers to be aware of the situations and circumstances they may face during their research work. I am presenting this segment in three broad categories—developing a conceptual framework for the research, theoretical analysis and field experiences.
Developing a Conceptual Framework for the Research

All researchers have to develop a good understanding about the field they are working in. This understanding may comprise theoretical, practical and other kinds of perspectives. Developing a theoretical frame work for the research, based on the discourse available in a particular field, was a major task, before I entered the field to collect data. I struggled with some reading which criticized the way of research, which is, based on theoretical frameworks. The argument given in favour was that the kind of reading we did, would enculturate us in the perspective we carried and we would try to prove the pre-existed perspectives thorough our research. Many examples have been quoted by different authors in this regard. I was a little confused and tried to understand the entire perspective and, to some extent, was convinced with the ideas.

But, then, I decided to go through certain readings which believed that a theoretical framework is, essentially important for research work. The fundamental argument I found in favour of this was, that, one should know what work has already been done in this field.

This dualism in my mind remained for a long time. I decided that there were, surely, some negative points to having a frame work, but the positive points were far more. I decided to write my framework slightly differently and developed a critical framework for human rights, which suited to my work. In this process, I developed a framework that included human rights development, issues and concerns, a human rights perspective and classroom practices, a human rights perspective and curriculum, a human rights perspective and co-curricular activities. I consciously tried not to be biased, while developing the theoretical framework for my research.

Theoretical Analysis

Here, I am presenting the reflections and challenges faced, while doing the theoretical analysis which included the policies, curriculum frameworks and text book analysis.

Policy analysis is one of the most important parts of this research, and covers a major segment of my research, as far as theoretical analysis is concerned. When I started reading, I had to see how relevant these policies were, with reference to a human
rights perspective. But, what to do after that and how to do it, was a big challenge before me. I wrote several drafts of ways to understand policies. I think all researchers face this challenge. After a lot of struggle to convince myself, I considered a framework (which is not given) but was developed, while reading and understanding the policies--such as polices are made to address the problem, but sometimes, they create problems and why and how? I tried to keep certain important points in mind, such as a systematic analysis, vision of the policy, assumptions and values carried with in the policy, the goals and objectives of the policy, context sensitivity, reliable evidence base, fairness of the policy, opportunities expected by the polices, nor other can make sense out of it, to be unbiased, use of alternative policies as resources, examine the potential impact of the policy on the public, grounded in practical experience, equity, adequacy, efficiency, access, effects and so on. Other than these, there are many other important considerations that I had kept in mind, while understanding policies. Even after that, there were many challenges that I faced, while analyzing the polices, which are as follows:

**Solubility:**

The first and, perhaps, the most important challenge I faced while doing the analysis, was whether the problems being raised by my analysis could be solved or not. What I am referring to here, is whether a problem or issue can be argued to have a finite or definable solution or whether it is likely to appear again and again. Therefore, the struggle here was how and what to analyze, so that the analysis made some realistic sense.

**Complexity:**

The second challenge I faced, while analyzing the policies, was complexity. A policy carries many kinds of complexities: political, social, economic and programmatic. To grasp the understanding of what kind of political, social and economic interest a policy carries, is a tough task. Very often, policies have a hidden agenda, which is tough to analyze. Many a times, political interests seem to reject social interest and, sometimes, it is the other way round. Challenges of the policy include its technical content, which really needed time to understand. But a normal citizen really cannot make sense out of it. Policies, at many places, have lots of ambiguities where one
segment says something and the next segment refutes the earlier one. Thus, these and many other complexities that I faced, while analyzing the policies.

**Question of scale:**

The question of the scale of the problem here meant what were the most crucial and important issues that had to be dealt with first. But, I soon realized that my list was completely different from the policy list. The problem, then, arose that where should the focus be? Many important points were given very little weightage in the policies (according to my research perspective) then how was I, to handle all this? Consequently, what needed to be considered to be a large scale, was a big challenge.

**Divisibility:**

Divisibility, here, means how have the issues been perceived in the policy. This became a problem for me, while analyzing the policy. This term is intended to capture the question of whether the problems could be considered as segregated or united. For example, where were certain things appropriately seen in association and where not? It was clear that some divisible problems i.e. danger of poverty after retirement and other health issues in the poor family could be simply addressed by using money. But, other problems such as civil rights, gender equality, human rights and so on may not be so amenable to being addressed simply by spending money. These problems may require other actions by the government, perhaps awareness and broad societal changes. Thus, how could such divisibility be presented in the policy, was a challenge while doing the analysis.

While doing the curriculum and text books analysis, there were different issues that were challenging. The first challenge was what and how much should be taught at a specific standard. There is no clear understanding about this. There are materials available, which talked about what could be taught, at what level. My challenge was how to deal with different perspectives, while analyzing the text book. The second challenge was to be fair to the content. It meant which content was appropriate or inappropriate to explain a specific concept. Sometimes, my overenthusiasm created a problem in this regard and I started expecting too much of a particular class student. The third challenge I faced was when my understanding of being a political science student was being challenged by the book, regarding some important aspects, such as
democracy. How I perceived democracy and its essentials, sometimes, proved dominant while analyzing the text book, although, this helped me to present a good analysis of the text books.

**In the Field**

Most of the researchers face problems in the field due to several reasons, such as access to the field or participants, taking permission from the authorities, experiencing personal interaction with the participant (expected or unexpected). In the field, the most difficult part for me was to convince the teachers to allow me to observe their classes. Some of the teachers clearly refused. The principal had introduced me with some teachers, but they were not comfortable with my observations. I approached other teachers, one by one, and discussed the purpose of my observations. Some teachers got ready and I started observing classes. I took their consent and gave them a letter which stated the purpose of the work and why and where I would be using the observations (as also discussed earlier while discussing about ethical considerations). 5 teachers were convinced with my work and I started the observation from classes 6th to 10th. One teacher withdrew after some observations and, then, I talked to another teacher in the school. The reason given by the teacher was that she was not teaching naturally, when I was observing. I was quite upset that I had to start over again but, soon, I convinced another teacher to allow the observation. I knew that, at any time, at any stage of my observation, the teacher might withdraw. But, after that, all went well.

The problem I faced, while taking interviews was not the availability of the participants, but time constraints. As I have mentioned earlier, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 teachers. 5 teachers were the same as those whose classes were being observed and 5 teachers were different. The teachers easily agreed to be interviewed. I was quite happy that it was so easy. But, my happiness disappeared when I started asking for time for the interview. I made calls to take time to meet and talk to them. Most of the time they said they were busy. I met each teacher various times. The teachers whose classes were being observed, I met thrice, to understand their perspective on different aspects of my research and the others, I met twice. The reason was that the first set of teachers had a lot to say, because I had observed their
classes and they had become familiar with me. Here, I learned that it can really affect one’s study, if you make your participant comfortable. Though I did the same with the second set of teachers the interaction with the first set of teachers was, obviously, more. I took more time for discussion, than for the observation of the classes.

Observations of Co-curricular Activities are another aspect of this research. I could not find anything worthwhile from my observation. I observed cultural programmes and classes given to Co-curricular Activities. As far as the cultural programmes were concerned, firstly, I observed the 15th August celebration and the event was quite approachable and I did not face any problem in this regard. In the same school I was observing Co-curricular Activities classes, where nothing happen and the teachers taught their own subjects in Co-curricular Activities classes. The time table in-charge said, “tell me sir what you want to observe. We would do it for you.” I wondered if these classes would be deliberately conducted only for my observations. From then on I felt that observation would not serve my purpose and I had to focus more on my other tools, which was in-depth interviews.

**Delimitation of the Study**

Like all researches, this research also has delimitations. The study has delimitations at two levels: first, the theoretical delimitations and, second, field delimitations.

**At the theoretical level:** The theoretical delimitation, here, means the theoretical analysis that I did in the research. This theoretical analysis is delimited at three levels:

- Text books: NCERT social science text books were taken for analysis. Social and Political Life parts-I, II and III for classes VI, VII and VIII, respectively and Democratic Politics Part I and II for classes IX and X, respectively.

**At the Field level:** The delimitation at the field level comprises data that has been collected and tools used for data collection. In the present study, two Government
schools were involved from only Delhi and the observation and in-depth interviews were used for data collection

In the next three chapters, I will be presenting the analysis of different, but associated aspects of school education. The very next chapter has a detailed analysis of the educational policies and the national curriculum frameworks.