This chapter gives a snapshot of the research. It delineates the main findings, the conclusions and the implications of the study.
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 Research concern

The research was concerned with understanding the belief systems and practices of early childhood teachers working in private early childhood centers in the city of Mumbai.

5.1.2 Methodology

The study followed a qualitative methodology with a constructivist ontology and a subjective interpretive epistemology. The ethnographic design of the study depended on participant observations and in depth interviews for gathering data. An inductive logic of reasoning was used for analyzing and interpreting the data.

5.1.3 Objectives

- To understand the belief systems of early childhood teachers
- To understand the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices
- To enable the teacher to understand the relationship between her beliefs and practices through reflection
- To formulate teacher training inputs that may lead to reflective practices.

5.1.4 Process of data collection and analysis

Participant observations of 10 teachers in Mumbai teaching the nursery class in different private schools/early childhood centers was conducted including video recording of practices. The teachers were interviewed later. Video clips were used to initiate reflective dialogues. All transcribed interviews were analyzed by coding them into themes to present belief systems and practices of the teachers.
5.1.5 Summary of findings

The themes which emerged were ‘teaching is being’, schools as learning-training grounds, ‘lessons for life’ and reflecting on reflection.

‘Teaching is being’

Early childhood teachers extended who they were into their role of teachers. There seemed to be an integration of the mother and teacher persona, with teachers extending their beliefs about bringing up children into handling children in the classrooms. The choice of profession and their private pursuits also reflect this assimilation of ‘teaching is being’.

Belief systems regarding the teaching profession and about children:

- Teachers believed that teaching was an indelible part of their lives, as a way to be.
- They believed that teaching was a profession which reconciled their aspirations on the one hand and their responsibilities on the other.
- Teachers believed that their life experiences had an impact on their teaching and vice versa.
- Teachers believed that there was an overlap in the roles of mother and teacher with each ‘feeding’ from the other.
- Teachers loved to teach even during their leisure time and were involved in ‘teaching’ activities beyond their work place.

Propositions:

- Choosing to become a teacher was influenced by social as well as individual factors. The alignment of an internal drive (to do meaningful work) and external endorsement (in the form of support from family) were necessary to step into the field of teaching. The cultural connotations attached to teaching worked in subtle ways towards taking the decision to teach.
- Past experiences played a part in teacher socialization. Significant others, especially teachers, influenced teacher action in the classroom.
• Maternal roles could be stronger in shaping beliefs about children than their role as teachers.

• Teaching as an indelible part of teachers’ identity signaled a passion for teaching, which could be a probable cause for their deep commitment.

**Schools as learning-training grounds**

Teachers adapted to school cultures (where they felt comfortable) and imbibed the way to work from the school. There seemed to be an easy adaptability to ideas and strategies; rarely to philosophies or ideologies for direction. Teachers believed that formal training had minimal effect on their work unless training was rigorous or intensive.

Belief systems regarding their work places:

• Teachers believed that they learnt about their work from their workplaces.

• They believed that they should ‘move on’ to a new job if they were not comfortable (if there was a contradiction between what they deeply believed and what the school ethos demanded).

• Teachers believed that if they feel comfortable in a job, then they should fulfill the school’s expectations.

• They strongly believed that they learn on the job from different sources like their peers, mentors, though observations, professional workshops and meetings.

• Teachers valued the feedback, evaluation and approval not only from their peers but also the supervisors/principals and management; which in turn made them feel more confident about their teaching.

• Teachers placed less value on their teacher training experiences and believed that the experience didn’t help in handling the realities of teaching. Practice teaching in intensive training programs was assessed as the most worthy part of the training.
Propositions

- Teachers seemed to adapt themselves to their workplace. Only if there was a remarkable difference perceived between what the school expects and their thinking, they chose to discontinue that job and move to another school. More often than not, they adapted to their workplaces, without much questioning, as long as they were ‘comfortable’.

- Teachers internalized the expectations of the school where they work. They seemed to exhibit a deep sense of debt for a supportive environment, almost to the extent of excluding their own contribution to the school system. Power dynamics within school systems may be an additional complexity.

- Teachers were open and willing to learn from the school. Peers, mentors and other opportunities for professional development became the sources for learning. They mostly seemed to imbibe ideas or strategies, rather than the ideology or philosophy of the school (which is rarely articulated by the school system).

- Teachers seek approval and reinforcement of ways to work from others in the school, which in turn made them feel confident of the way they work.

- Teachers rarely valued their teacher education / training experiences except for the practice teaching during university affiliated intensive pre-service teacher training.

“Lessons for life”

Early childhood teachers considered the latent curriculum as more important than manifest curriculum. In other words, “lessons for life” or transmitting values to children is considered far more important than the academic goals of the school. Their beliefs about the socio-emotional goals for children permeate the transaction of curriculum.
Belief systems (and practices) of early childhood teachers regarding goals for children, learning and teaching:

- Teachers believed the overarching goal for children were the ‘lessons for life’ or tacit values necessary to become an ideal adult. They believed that the early years were critical for children to imbibe these values and attitudes. Teachers believed that they were responsible for transmitting these values. Role modeling and ‘telling’ were adopted widely to further this goal. Teachers considered it far more important than the academic program.

- Teachers viewed discipline as a value which children need to learn gradually to differentiate between acceptable and non-acceptable behaviors.

- Teachers’ pedagogical practices were directly connected to this belief system or in other words, teachers’ beliefs about goals for children permeate their practices.

- Teachers believed that relationships and interactions are vital to communicate tacit lessons.

- Teachers believed that each activity had to be conducted in a particular way. They moved from teacher-directed to student-initiated activities seamlessly without any conflict.

- The socio-cultural influences were visible in the transaction of curriculum and pedagogical practices adopted by the teachers.

Propositions

- The latent curriculum seemed to be driven by the goals that teachers had about children. These goals were related to lessons for life that teachers want children to imbibe in order to become ideal adults. These goals were considered more significant as compared to the stated ‘academic learning’ in nursery classrooms. The pedagogical practices matched this belief system.
• Teachers viewed their role as modeling behavior, imparting knowledge and facilitating child’s learning.

• Teachers used a combination of pedagogy in the classroom which reflected an inclusiveness of educational philosophies. They viewed the child to be worthy of respect and considered him both as an active as well as a passive learner.

• The curriculum model used by early childhood teachers had strong socio-cultural and developmental influences.

• Interactions and relationships were valued as learning encounters, probably echoing the cultural ethos.

Reflecting on reflection

Teachers found it difficult to make connections between their beliefs and practices probably due to methodological constraints. Initiating reflection in early childhood teachers was found to be a difficult process. The reasons could be critical effect of researcher, use of video, choice of language as the form of representation and lack of time. Teachers who were trained in University affiliated courses were able to reflect on their practices more deeply as compared to teachers who had no or less intensive training experiences. The reflection process may need ‘training’, courage to confront oneself and collaborative learning spaces.

Propositions

• Reflection may need a courageous stance to confront self so teachers need to be willing and ready for reflection

• Reflection could be difficult due to methodological issues; yet, teacher education enabled teachers to become reflective

• Social and collaborative reflective spaces may be a better way of encouraging reflection
5.2 Conclusions

The belief systems of early childhood teachers are shaped by the socio-cultural context as well as the schools where they work. Their belief systems have a direct impact on their pedagogical practices in nursery classrooms.

1. The socio cultural context plays an important role in the socialization of the teacher
   a. Before the job – believing that having an affinity for children is enough to handle the job of teaching, choice of profession largely based on social connotations and support from family, image about teacher influences by societal perception
   b. After joining the job – considering that transmission of values is their primary responsibility, and notion of adaptability to work environments

2. Early childhood teachers’ work needs to be looked at as a journey of evolution
   a. From the time she joins a job or a training program till she becomes confident about her teaching and mentors fresh teachers
   b. Teaching as a ‘calling’ therefore inspiration and invocation into the profession essential to get future teachers
   c. Scaffolding of learning necessary at each stage to support, develop and facilitate reflective teachers

3. Early childhood teachers have certain strengths and vulnerabilities.
   a. Amongst their strengths
      i. An amazing passion for their work
      ii. A caring attitude towards all especially the children they teach
      iii. The willingness to learn and absorb from others
      iv. The capacity to adapt to and learn from workplaces with specified curriculum and pedagogy
      v. The importance they give to the transmission of cultural values, especially through interactions.
   b. Amongst their vulnerabilities
i. A lack of ideological / epistemological stands on what / how they practice

ii. Undue dependence on school systems rather than formal training for transaction of curriculum

iii. Isolation from other practitioners and professionals

5.3 Implications

The study found that women who looked at the mothering role positively, gave significance to nurturance and had high regard for children were the ones who were drawn to the profession of teaching. A workforce which already has its heart in the right place creates a strong framework within which our children can blossom. We need to build on the commitment of our teachers and support them through their journey by offering them what they seek i.e. good quality teacher education. As a profession, it bodes well that teachers find meaning in day to day interactions with children and have a caring orientation. We must cherish and value the individuals who treat teaching as a ‘calling’ rather than a vocation.

A clear finding was that teachers believed that they learnt to teach from their workplaces. Although learning from the school is useful for day to day functioning, limited skills may be learnt based on the opportunities and experiences offered within the confines of the schools systems. Ultimately, a theoretical grounding helps to know the meaning of many of our practices. Depending solely on what we learn through experience may be a long drawn and inadequate process. A teacher education program working synergistically with school systems could probably resolve the perceived gap between theory and practice.

The study suggested indirectly that as a field, we need to resolve what we really want from our children and the educational experiences that we are offering them. Do we want our children to become good decision makers, smart problem solvers or human beings with strong values? Do we want them to become independent, strong-willed individuals? Do we want them to become well adjusted members of the society? Although teachers were sure that children should learn values, yet many of the typical goals of academic learning were not home-grown. What they value the
most as individuals, and dare I say, as Indians, was what they were most comfortable teaching. It is time to define our expectations from children and work together to design programs which promote a home-grown philosophy of what we want from our children and their future.

The study surfaced the need to strengthen teacher reflection. In the field of education, we may be at the nascent stage to understand and implement reflection as a process. The significant role of reflection is underscored by the need for our teachers to initiate discussions on what works or doesn’t work in reality. This will help in four ways:

- reflection will help teachers to become mindful of their practices
- to ‘own’ the knowledge that comes from deep understanding and conviction through reflection
- to contribute in documenting practices which work and which don’t work
- to facilitate the evolution of an Indian philosophy and much-needed culturally appropriate curriculum and pedagogy in the field of early childhood education.

There is a need for school systems to recognize and support reflective practices, too. Teacher education, without doubt, contributes to creating reflective practitioners. This needs to be nurtured within teacher education through the use of a well-thought intensive process to initiate and practice reflection.

What about the significance of teacher education? During the study, the variable of teacher education did not seem to be strong enough in the eyes of the practitioners. Whether a teacher was trained or otherwise, did not seem to matter. The patterns were confusing except for one clear finding. Teachers from university affiliated teacher education courses, who had undergone a full time intensive program mandated by the university were able to reflect on their practices, were able to connect their practices to a theoretical stance and were somehow better at managing the curriculum in a seamless manner. What does it imply? There are two implications:

- norms mandated by the University could denote and ensure a certain standard in quality of the teacher education program
Summary, Conclusions and Implications

- if the teacher education program was not a ‘good’ quality program, there was no value of the program, irrespective of the duration of the course.

The question remains – what can be done?

We know that our teachers need learning spaces where they can be nurtured to evolve in their profession. They need to

- be offered basic and ongoing professional development based on their needs
- discuss ideologies and direct implications on practice
- make connections, insights and build a common shared goal
- become aware of their own thoughts and belief systems
- be supported and feel that they belong to a community who cares about them
- be sustained through their journey in a professionally robust manner.

When I started my research, I was under the impression that I could augment specific ‘inputs’ in the teacher education course. By the end of my research, I feel the imperative for many fundamental changes in the teacher education model prevalent in our country. I have deliberately kept the Government and regulatory mechanisms out of the discussions. There is no doubt if regulation is addressed urgently and systematically, the field will reinvent and re-energise itself (Datta, 2001; Swaminathan, 1998). Setting up accreditation, regulation, licensure for both teacher education and early childhood centers should become a common priority for professional organizations, networks and institutions like FORCES, IAPE, NCTE, NCERT, SCERTs, NIPPCD etc.

Till date teacher education in the early childhood sector has been looked at either as a pre-service or an in-service course. After the completion of the course, the teacher is meant to become a ‘qualified’ teacher with better prospects of getting a job. The training institute does not have any ‘responsibility’ in the professional development of the teacher after the teacher completes her course. I present an alternative model which has emerged from my understanding and interpretation of the results of the study.
Teacher education systems - I have deliberately used the word systems to connote learning organizations (Senge, 1990; Fullan, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 2004a, 2004b) and networks - should work in collaboration with the school systems to scaffold the journey of a teacher from induction to becoming a veteran (Feiman-Nemsar, 1983; Flores, 2006; Ayers, 2001; Edwards, Gilroy & Hartley, 2002). I envision some possibilities and challenges in re-inventing the teacher education system presented in Table 5. I also present specific go-forward task-oriented ideas from the perspective of my learning and literature from multi-disciplinary fields. My contention is that it would require commitment from many stakeholders to re-invent teacher education but as Moss (2001) said, ‘People must make choices between many possibilities and take responsibility for those choices’ (p. 80). The two axioms are ownership and partnership. Each stakeholder - the practitioner, the teacher educator, the researcher, the policy maker, the parents, the school authorities - needs to commit towards a genuine contribution to the legacy of our world through our children’s education. A shared vision (Srinivas, 2004a; 2004b) can be used to elevate expectations, see problems as possibilities, and as Greene (2000) says, re-envision the possible.

5.4 Limitations

The investigation was limited to ten early childhood centers within the urban landscape of a cosmopolitan city. The schools and participants involved in this study were selected based on the ease of access for the research. Participants were included on a voluntary basis. Schools were idiosyncratic and generalizations between schools were difficult. The findings may not be representative of all teachers in each educational setting participating in this study.

The primarily qualitative design included the researcher as a participant observer; hence, the design of the research demanded the researcher’s interpretations of the events. For these reasons, the findings were unique to a particular set of schools and individuals during a particular period of time which could be taken as a limitation for generalization to other educational settings.
However, I have included as much ideographic information and intensive description as possible so that transferability to similar contexts could be achieved by the ‘applier’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.298); and to make evident what we already know but may have overlooked.

The difficulty of finding relevant literature from India was considered to be a limitation for the study. I have relied heavily on extensive use of literature published outside the country. Since the socio-cultural milieu was considered to be of such importance in the way one works, Indian literature would have certainly enriched my thinking.

5.5 Future recommendations for research

As mentioned earlier, we need substantial research in the field of early childhood education in India. Practitioners need to get involved in documenting classroom practices, school cultures and action research. Quality indicators for the diverse array of early childhood programs and workforce training need to be studied, tested and evolved. Rigorous studies to build database of programs contributing to the healthy development of our children need to be undertaken. The emphasis could be to support teachers as valid researchers. This would empower them in their evolution towards becoming a practitioner in the field of early childhood education.
Table 5: Possibilities and challenges for teacher education

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<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Go-forward Idea</th>
<th>Research and Documentation</th>
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| Content of teacher education programs needs to reflect a deeper pride in our cultural ethos and ideologies based on rigorous research and documentation of ‘what works’ | - How do we get a body of research together to make sense of the diverse views?  
- How do we get practitioners on board as partners? | - Collate researches in the field on an ongoing basis  
- Offer platform to inspire teachers to share their stories | - Dana, 1993  
- Datta et al., 2007  
- Fleer, 2006  
- Tobin, 2005  
- Yaden & Tam, 2000  
- Srinivas, 1999 |
| Diverse models of teacher education programs need to be offered with enough options for teachers to create their own teaching paths | - How do we know what are the ground demands?  
- How can we balance rigour of program as well as individual needs for professional development?  
- How can we empower teachers to create professional development opportunities unique to their teaching contexts? | - Creating an overall model offering short, medium and long term courses with a multi-level approach which leads to a systematic professional development (work has been initiated by a professional organization which needs to be tried out and tested)  
- Provide counseling support (similar to career counseling) to facilitate meaningful professional development of individuals | - IAPE, Mumbai, 2003  
- Dilworth & Imig, 1995  
- Srinivas, 2004a |
| Synergistic partnerships with school systems should be created and sustained (a stronger role and responsibility of schools in the education of teachers) | How can we get all stakeholders interested and sustain discussions? | Difficult but maybe look at other disciplines like management where industry and academe have a symbiotic relationship and share a noticeable stake in creating and employing the workforce | - Marshall, 1999  
- Morrow & Casey, 2003  
- Lam, Yim & Lam, 2002  
- OECD, 2001 |
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| Position statements and a clear, easy-to-share, common vision co-designed by all stakeholders should be documented; frameworks, goals, curriculum guidelines and best practices should be shared | How can a larger shared vision evolve notwithstanding hidden intentions, power dynamics and individual egos? | Create representative professional body to lay down clear roles, responsibilities and accountability in both systems | – Tobin, 2005  
– Weikhart, 2000  
– Mockler & Normanhurst, 2004  
– Daneilson, 1996  
– UNESCO Policy Brief, 2004 |
| Create practice teaching contexts as apprenticeship and a rigorous facilitation towards deep reflection | – How can mentoring become a part of apprenticeship?  
– How can teacher educators and mentors facilitate reflection? | Set up processes within teacher education institutes towards mentoring and facilitating reflection. | Ayers, 2001  
Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991  
Edwards, Gilroy & Hartley, 2002  
Jelly, 2006  
Gelfer, Xu & Perkins, 2004 |
| Create the need for safe and collaborative learning spaces for teachers to evolve | – Why would teachers want to move out of their comfort zones?  
– How can teachers be supported in terms of time and space for learning and sharing?  
– How can teachers learn successfully through sharing regardless of work cultures? | Set up teacher learning communities across schools, across sectors, across borders (either online or face-to-face) to help teachers to value and validate their identities as practitioners | Wesley & Buysse, 2001  
Merritt, 2003  
Wenger, 1993  
Gimbert, 2000 |
### Summary, Conclusions and Implications

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| Accreditation / regulatory mechanisms to ensure quality of teacher education programs and of early childhood education centers | - How can standards be maintained in teacher education?  
- How can culturally appropriate measures be adopted and advocated?  
- Will governmental bodies (e.g. NCTE) take the responsibility? Without government involvement, can we ensure credibility, accountability and implementation? | Set up platforms to standardize measurement of quality in early childhood program and teacher education. Create collaborative networks to advocate and set up regulatory mechanisms (a step has already been taken to set up the Maharashtra Board for Early Childhood Development, 2002 | - Swaminathan, 2001  
- Datta, 2006  
- Maharashtra Board for Early Childhood Development, 2002  
- NCERT, Minimum Standards for Preschools, 2000  
- National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, 1998 |