APPENDICES

Appendix A: ‘Interview Guide’

Appendix B: ‘Consent Letters’

Appendix C: ‘I of the Research’
APPENDIX A

Interview guide
(Adapted from Ayers, 1989)

1. Describe any chance factors that led to your becoming a teacher. Are you sometimes surprised to see what you have become?

2. When did you decide to become a teacher? What was it about teaching that interested or attracted you?

3. What role did your family play in your decision to teach? Do you remember any early experiences that affected your decision to teach?

4. Do you remember any outstanding teachers from your years as a student? What do you remember?

5. What was your formal teacher education like? Did it prepare you for the realities of teaching? When you first taught were there any colleagues or mentors who influenced you? How?

6. Can you remember when you felt comfortable as a teacher, confident with your own philosophy and practical knowledge?

7. Can you think of early experiences that continue to influence what and how you teach now? Can you describe the central teaching ideas that guide your work, and how you came to adopt them?

8. Have you changed as a teacher over the years? How?

9. What do you like most about teaching? What are the rewards for you? When do you feel best as a teacher? What are your favorite moments?

10. What is most difficult about teaching? Do you ever feel like leaving the profession? If you could, what things would you change in your work?

11. Which children appeal to you? Why? Which ones make your work problematic?
12. What is the role of parents in your work? What should it be?

13. Why do you teach as you do? What criteria do you have in mind? What do you take to be valuable in your teaching? What other teachers do you admire? Why?

14. What is your role in the lives of children and families? What are your goals for children? How do you meet these goals?

15. What is your role in preparing children for the future? Are there any conflicts between your goals and the school’s goals? Society’s goals?

16. What is of value to you beyond teaching? Are you involved in any social or political groups?

17. What concerns you most about children and families today?

18. Are you involved in any other projects or interests outside of teaching? What? How are they important to you?

19. What do you imagine you’ll be doing in five years? In ten years?
To
The Principal

Sub: Request for permission to collect data for Doctoral Research.

Dear,

Ms. Joyeeta Sengupta is a Research Scholar pursuing her Ph.D from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai under my guidance. Her topic of research is ‘Understanding Belief Systems of Early Childhood Teachers’. The participants of her research are Nursery teachers from various schools in the city of Mumbai.

We would like to approach your esteemed school for providing participants for the study. Benefits to the school include participation in research towards better understanding of teachers. More importantly, the teacher will get opportunities for reflection towards self awareness and to meet other research participants. This will have an impact on her teaching and in turn, on the students. The process involves 3 steps:

1. Identifying a Nursery class teacher as a participant for the study
2. Observations of her classroom interactions for 3 days including video recording
3. Subsequent interviews with the teacher (after school hours).

The researcher shall take utmost care to keep any disturbance to the daily routine to a minimum. The common findings of the research will be shared with the school though the participants’ data will not be shared without permission.

We look forward to your cooperation.

Thanking you.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Vrinda Datta
Reader, Tata Institute of Social Sciences
To:

Sub: Request for your permission to be a participant for my research study.

Dear

I am a Research Scholar pursuing my Doctorate from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences under the guidance of Dr. Vrinda Datta, Reader, TISS. My topic of research is ‘Understanding Belief Systems of Early Childhood Teachers’. The participants of my research are Nursery teachers from various schools in the city of Mumbai.

I would like to approach you for being a participant for the study. I sincerely feel that observing and interviewing you would help me to understand teachers better and you would be an enriching source of data. As a part of the study you would get to meet other research participants and through discussion and reflection be able to give me an insight into your belief systems. Being a participant in the study involves 2 steps:

1. Observations of your classroom interactions for 3 days including video recording.
2. Subsequent interviews with you (after school hours) – 3-4 sessions approximately.

You will be shown all the material pertaining to your case before it is included in the thesis. Moreover, your permission will be sought for inclusion in any kind of publication.

I look forward to working with you to deepen our understanding of early childhood education.

Thanking you.

Yours sincerely,

Ms. Joyeeta Sengupta
Research Scholar
Tata Institute of Social Sciences
The ‘I’ of the Research

I grew up in a tiny hill station nestled in the mountain ranges of north India. My father, a doctor by profession and my mother, a teacher by chance, and my elder brother comprised of the family. I was the baby, protected by my brother and pampered by my parents. Growing up was easy as our needs were simple; I loved school and can recollect the strong sense of community in the town. I have memories of my mother teaching me in second grade (there was only one English-medium school in the town where she happened to be a teacher) and many other young, inspiring teachers. One particular teacher, Mrs Mandloi was a personal favourite as she made me believe that I was capable of doing everything (my athletic abilities were rather questionable but I credit her for making me finish all my races – till today closing the loop is a value I practice).

I had two distinct passions – to play with friends and to read all the books I could lay my hands on. The entire town area was our playground and games would continue for months – we would start from where we left the previous evening. But at home, my world revolved around the books that I would get from the library, borrow from friends or neighbours or buy from the only bookshop of the town. I remember devouring books, mostly by non-Indian authors. I was so immersed in them that I rarely recognised the fact that I could describe scones better than samosas and called biscuits ‘cookies’. School work was just something that I wanted to finish as the next book was waiting for me. My family let me be, though I was cautioned that academic failure would never be tolerated and higher studies were non-negotiable.

At age 16, I moved to a hostel for further studies. Suddenly, my world changed. I had to manage my own life independently. It was a learning experience which was not just necessary but crucial to my ‘growing’ up. I discovered the delight of ‘studying’ and ‘practising’ – a theme that has followed me for many years – while doing my graduation and post graduation in Child Development (till date I can’t recall how I happened to choose but I only remember a fascination for children). I thrived in the hostel with an extraordinary group of friends. Though I excelled in the
typically evaluative exams what stayed with me was the priceless learning from the field experiences.

Just out of college, my first thought was to work and I gravitated towards a neighbourhood Nursery school in a new city (my brother was working and so it was easy to relocate there). I found the experience an eye opener. The school catered to children of the consulates and other expatriates. For the children, English was not a language they understood and there was no common language with which to communicate. Having ‘experience’ in the University –run preschools during the M.Sc course had made me feel that I could teach easily. Again, I negotiated the reality in the best possible way – reading up, trying out but always doing the ‘right’ thing (which was the ‘academic’ way of thinking indoctrinated in me over the years).

I worked for a few months and decided that I enjoy ‘studying’ more so enrolled myself for an M.Phil (Human Development & Family Studies) in another city. During that course, I got married (a smooth transition not in least due to the fact that the caring, progressive family which welcomed me was similar in their values and beliefs). By the time I finished the course, we were expecting a baby. Two years passed happily watching my daughter grow with fascination (again, being a parent so different from knowing about parenthood) till my ‘new’ family insisted that I take up a career. The first place I applied was a teachers training college and my journey as a professional commenced. Along the way, I studied counselling (I recognise the pattern of building credibility through academic degrees).

I worked as the Head of a Teachers’ Training Institute (which offered a university affiliated Diploma in ECCEd.). During that time period, I also discovered that I could facilitate groups well. I started to design and conduct workshops, initially limited to trainee teachers in colleges and teachers in schools but soon was exposed to the world of training in corporate, voluntary organisations, government institutions and private groups. I moved on to take up the facilitator role, enjoying the challenge of dealing with varied groups. By then, I was also taking sessions for parents. Wanting to reach out to the underprivileged, with a colleague who was a Special Educator, we started a Family Resource Centre at the YMCA, a voluntary organisation. We organised outreach programs for the community, and offered counselling services. I continued with this work in the evenings for many years.
I continue to be engaged with a national voluntary organization of professionals in ECE, having been inducted during my college years. I have had the privilege of meeting and working with a number of stalwarts in the field courtesy this association. Due to the tag of a ‘freelancer’, I have done a number of remarkable projects. I would like to share one which helped me to be reflective. I was the participant evaluator of a Change Lab which experimented with a social technology to build multi-sectoral commitment and solutions to the issue of malnutrition in the State. The experiential aspect of the project (with phases of deep immersion in a slum in Mumbai and deep reflection in the Himalayan mountains) was helpful for many incidental learnings.

Twelve years since then, I recognize that I have come a long way. A varied work experience as a teacher educator, counsellor, workshop facilitator enriched me. During those years, I recollect the ecstasy and agony of teaching trainee teachers; the affirmation and the irritation of observing teachers teaching in different classrooms; struggles with specific counselling cases which forced me to practice non-judgment; the discipline of writing reports for a professional organization; facilitating workshops with people extremely resistant to change; creating advocacy materials for the field; and through all of that managing my role as a wife, a parent and a daughter-in-law. My family was like an emotional bulwark throughout. I continue to treasure the close relationships with family, relatives, friends, colleagues, (ex-)students and co-workers.

One of the turning points in my life was a Knowledge Lab I joined more than two years back. The thinking so refreshing, the knowledge so beyond typical disciplines, the discussions with an eclectic team so one-of-a-kind – my ‘mind’ extended beyond the mental models built over the years and crumbled in front of inspiring logic. Reflecting deeply into the inner recesses of my mind, I felt free to think. This ‘intervention’ is probably the most impactful in my life but it happened slowly, over a period of time. Continuing on this journey, I write the thesis as another milestone in my life to close ‘the gap between learning and doing’ (Srinivas, personal conversation, 2006).

I humbly hope that this work echoes some of this evolution…