CHAPTER 3
Methodology

The previous chapter reviewed the documented literature and presented a consolidated picture in the area of teacher beliefs and practices. The present chapter describes the rationale for the study, based on which the research was designed. The intention here was also to present assumptions and biases of the researcher. It was difficult to sequence the chapter as many of the ideas and logic presented was iterative. Each section seemed to be tied up with another and therefore, I request the reader’s patience in going through the entire chapter to get a consolidated picture.
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3.1 Rationale for the research

From the previous two chapters, it became distinctly clear that I situated the study in the field of early childhood education, and my concern was the teacher. How easy to put across this so matter-of-factly! As a teacher educator and researcher in the field of early childhood education, it was but natural for me to gravitate towards trying to fathom reasons for what teachers say and do. This theme was certainly not new (Levine, personal communication, 2004) and had been of concern to the teacher education community for a long while. So what was the rationale for understanding the teacher community? What led me to this growing desire to ‘know more’? What was it that I wanted to know more about? Obviously, my personal and professional experiences had coalesced to urge me to unravel to go deeper into understanding the field.

I believed that my experience in teacher training, counseling and child development laid the foundation for the research. For the past 12 years, I was involved in the field of early childhood education – teaching, training (both pre service and in service teachers), consultancy, advocacy and field experiences. Some of the ‘lessons’ from my work experience became the roots for the present research, which actually reflected not just my stance but also specific beliefs that I nurtured. I recognized that the act of presenting them laid bare my own biases:

- I believed that the field of early childhood education was the prime and critical period to improve our highest goals of building a safe, peaceful world for our children. It would be possible only if teachers’ voices were heard and given serious attention. The kind of impact that they have on children is widely accepted. That they are an integral part of the profession, and have a powerful and indispensable role to play, demanded focus on them.

- I was increasingly beginning to believe that the mental models of teaching and learning which I had built over the years needed to be re examined. I had started to question my academic legacy of believing in the Western developmental perspective as the one and only ‘truth’; notwithstanding the ‘disconnect’ that was staring at me from my practice.
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- I believed that generalizing about teachers and teaching was difficult. No two teachers were the same. To understand teachers, it was necessary to at least attempt to understand the context and reality of teaching and ground it in real people.

- It seemed to be the teacher who finally decided what went on in her classroom. Though there were facilitating and/or constraining factors in the environment, it was the individual teacher who either ‘gave in’ or ‘stood up’, who resisted or accepted change, who invented or remained content – undoubtedly, the choice was based on her intentions, desires, goals, motives, feelings, beliefs, attitudes etc.

- I believed that good quality professional development was crucial to the future of education. I felt that the gap between training and the realities of classroom teaching need to be addressed on a war footing. I strongly valued self awareness of the teacher through reflection, without which no change was possible.

These above assumptions became the driver for me to do my research. In hindsight, I seemed to have a rather simplistic view and wanted logical answers backed with empirical evidence to clear my head! I take the liberty of sharing the rationale of my research as I saw it before the start of my research. I share it as is because I realized that the unadulterated passion to know more led me on a journey whence I no longer ‘see’ solutions as uni-dimensional or easy to fathom.

So, what is the rationale of the present study? The study is an attempt to discover the ‘real’ teacher. It will seek to understand the factors which lead to her choices, to discover nuances and to make sense of the complex reality in which she practices. It will extend the sense of value of early childhood teachers and their role as active and powerful change agents. The study will seek to ascertain the reasons regarding the gap between theory and practice. The study hopes to broaden perspectives and support teachers in understanding their inner selves. In short, this research will be a small step to ‘study’ teachers to help them to grow (2004).

My personal experiences also added to the need to study and understand teachers, concepts of teaching and learning, teacher education and classroom practices (refer to Appendix C).
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At the back of my mind, there was the whole issue of how I too (as a teacher educator) was responsible in passing on the dominant approach in ECE to future teachers. It was a concern shared by other fellow professionals but rarely put on paper. In a way, doing this research also demanded that I document the thinking and validate it for the benefit of the field.

Another concern that I rarely articulated but which bothered me was the divide between the ‘educators’ and the ‘practitioners’. Teacher educators and teachers seemed to belong to different communities and yet, the relationship demanded a synergy. When I was amongst teacher educators, I heard a sense of dismay about what was happening in early childhood programs with the common refrain about teachers not ‘performing’. With teachers, talk about training induced indifference and detachment. I considered myself as an integral part of both the communities, and hence, sharing the voices of teachers seemed to be a legitimate way of surfacing specific issues in the relationship.

Another reason that prompted me towards research (and specifically qualitative research) was an exposure to a multidisciplinary ethos in two institutions, where human development and early childhood education were but tiny cogs in the wheels of knowledge research lab. One was the academic institution I enrolled for my doctoral studies and the other a research oriented Lab, which I joined two years ago. Discussions with colleagues suddenly opened up new vistas of thinking. I realized how complacent I had become as a professional - it was easy to continue to perpetuate ‘typical’ ideas without questioning basic assumptions which accrue from the discipline one is grounded in. This research in a way also was meant to help me review the core assumptions of the discipline with the hope of surfacing other valid points of view.

From these concerns stemmed the hope that the study would help to reveal essential aspects of a professional ethos which would be significant when explored in the light of historical and socio-cultural contexts. Ways in which teachers interpret educational theory would influence the ways in which they work in the classroom, as there were natural connections between teachers’ basic values and beliefs and their teaching practice (Malm, 2004).
The methodology that seemed the most suitable for my purpose was the ethnographic design within a constructivist paradigm, explained in the next section.

3.2 Designing the study

3.2.1 Constructivist paradigm

The “starting point(s)” (Guba, 1990, p.18) that underpins the theoretical and methodological approaches towards any inquiry is the paradigm selected (Bogden & Bilken, 1992; Guba, 1990). A paradigm is the “basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigation, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.105). The constructivist paradigm was selected to underpin this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A constructivist framework recognizes the importance of seeing participants as knowers and creators of their own knowledge and that social reality exists in the minds of those who create it (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Tacit knowledge of participants form the data which is interpreted as it emerges without imposing any pre-determined concepts. Since the current research study seeks participants understanding of the world in which they live and work, the constructivist worldview is particularly suitable.

Creswell (2003) has situated qualitative research in the “philosophical, paradigmatic and interpretive frameworks that investigators bring to their practice”. (p.30). In the choice of a qualitative research, certain philosophical assumptions were made by the researcher. Articulating these clarifies the stance of the researcher. The philosophical assumptions relate to the ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetoric and methodology that led to the choice of qualitative research. Table 1 presents the philosophical assumptions.
Table 1: Philosophical Assumptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ontology</th>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>Axiology</th>
<th>Rhetoric</th>
<th>Logic of Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals construct their own reality. *</td>
<td>Context of natural setting.</td>
<td>Research is value laden.</td>
<td>Personal form of writing</td>
<td>Inductive logic of reasoning and analysis used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*There may be multiple realities based on meanings given by participants.</td>
<td>Researcher position articulated.</td>
<td>Researcher interpretation alongside participants interpretation</td>
<td>Use of qualitative ‘terms’ and labels</td>
<td>Use of emergent design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attempt to lessen distance between researcher and researched</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Topic studied within context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research perspective in this study was qualitative. Qualitative inquiry is best suited when the study endeavors to develop a better understanding of complex phenomena such as culture and individual’s perceptions and experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that qualitative research methodology is appropriate when the study’s goals are to discover regularity in complex phenomena through identification and categorization of its elements and exploring their connections. This qualitative inquiry was suitable to study the participants’ beliefs and practices and to analyze inductively in the natural settings. Patton (2002) noted that naturalistic inquiry is useful in understanding real world situations, which is what the study seeks to accomplish.

3.2.2 Ethnographic design

Ethnography is a qualitative research approach, which originally comes from the discipline of social and cultural anthropology (Spradley, 1980; Erikson, 2001) but is deemed valuable, because it can offer holistic insights based on naturalistic data. Ethnography literally means a picture of the ‘way of life’ of some identifiable group of people (Wolcott, 1988).

The study’s focus on individual teacher’s beliefs and actions was particularly conducive to the ethnographic design. The intent of the study was to understand belief systems of teachers – what are the thoughts, attitudes, values and beliefs about their teaching and how they interpret and operate
within that context. The ethnographic design is favorable to the study of this complex phenomenon as it allows a vantage point to the researcher “a degree of penetration into the inner workings of an occupation or a work setting that is not easily attained by other approaches” (Smith, 2001, p. 223).

It is clear that one of the aims of qualitative research is to elucidate phenomena in their natural settings. Creswell (1998) suggested that the tradition of qualitative inquiry selected by a researcher can shape the design of the study. The intention is to understand those phenomena and the meaning people make of them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The qualitative orientation of the study attempted to write about the people (Johnson & Christensen, 2000) by capture descriptive account of teachers telling their own stories and reflecting upon their own actions. The idea was to discover the individuals as well as the routines of their lives in the classrooms. Since teachers’ work within the context of the classroom and classrooms are complex settings (Ayers, 1989) within schools, an ethnographic inquiry can be helpful in “making sense” of the complexity (ibid, 1989). It is of relevance to get a dekko into this culture as the socio-cultural changes that are taking place around us multiply the complexity that the field of early childhood education is going through.

Fetterman (1989) describes the ethnographic process as contextualization where the researcher links micro-behaviors to the larger contextual conditions that influence these behaviors thereby bridging the gap between the different understandings of the same situation. Since the study endeavored to look at the ‘micro behaviors’ (teaching), the ethnographic process was clearly the best way to ‘be there’. Wiersma (2000) describes the ethnographic research process as “the process of providing holistic and scientific description of educational systems, processes, and phenomena within their specific context” (p. 232). The use of a qualitative method brings the researcher closer to the reality of the fabric of the role of the teacher (Makhanya, 2001).
Researchers studying teachers’ thinking and practices in the West (loosely referring to the domination in the field by researches in USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand and other European countries – Gupta (2006) uses the term Euro-American) have used a variety of research designs within the ethnographic and interpretative traditions (Clark & Peterson, 1986). The qualitative method of ethnography has been used to study teacher thinking and development in the Indian context by researchers like Clarke (2001); Viruru (2001); Verma (2006), Gupta (2006) and Sarangapani (2001). The goal of ethnography is to understand the richness of reality, and seeking a holistic perspective emerging from “thick description” (Geertz, 1983) with inductive analysis (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996) which acknowledges that multiple realities exist (ibid, 1996). The present research seeks to do the same.

Researchers like Schunk (1991); Brookhart & Freeman (1992); and Munby (1982, 1984) have suggested that qualitative research methodology is especially appropriate to the study of beliefs. Pajares (1992) recommends measures like open-ended interviews and observation of behavior to make richer and more accurate inferences about teacher beliefs. The ethnographic design is especially helpful to reveal intangible complexities.

3.2.3 Assumptions of the research

The study is based on certain assumptions which emerge from the constructivist framework and the qualitative approach.

- Teachers are a rich source of knowledge about themselves and about teaching.
- Teachers are the main instruments of their own practice who make judgments and carry out decisions in a complex environment.
- Teachers work is embedded in the macro context of socio-cultural, political, economic, historical perspectives.
- The researcher interprets what is seen, heard or understood in the setting based on her background, prior understanding and context.
3.2.4 ‘Insider – outsider’ perspective of researcher

Ethnography has been viewed as interactive research, that is, it includes considerable interaction between the researched and the researcher. The emic (insider) perspective is the central feature of the research as it highlights the acceptance of multiple realities. Ethnographic research designs allow the researcher to describe and explain the insider’s views of a phenomenon so that those on the outside can better understand the reasons contributing to the individual’s actions (Jorgensen, 1989).

To address my research concerns, the qualitative orientation and the ethnographic design was relevant. Another reason for choosing an ethnographic design was the unique ‘insider-outsider’ perspective that I assumed I brought to the study. This ‘insider-outsider perspective’ is elucidated by Gupta (2006) in her ‘dual positioning’ of two cultures and the ‘constant negotiation’ (p. 232) between the two. Her analogous viewpoint helped me to articulate and be conscious of these two perspectives while doing my research.

I considered myself to be in a unique position due to my past experiences and current work. An ethnographic research allowed me to study teachers in a setting of which I have been a member. During my Post Graduation (Child Development), Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) was an integral part of the course curriculum. We were expected to observe, participate, plan, supervise and evaluate university-associated early childhood centers. My first job was as a preschool teacher, which I continued till I decided to continue with higher studies (see Appendix D). After my M.Phil (Human Development and Family Studies), I became a teacher educator, an educational administrator, workshop facilitator and an educational consultant. In the course of a decade, I had the privilege of being an ‘insider’ in many preschools all over the city of Mumbai. Simultaneously, as a counsellor, I was constantly interacting with my students (teacher trainees), teachers, parents and children. The familiarity of an early childhood setting probably drew me to this approach.
However, in the past 2-3 years, I have moved ‘away’ from direct teaching into working in a Knowledge Research Lab which architects scalable and sustainable solutions for human systems. This researcher-designer role in areas as diverse as organizational transformation, education, careers, community development etc. has helped me to ‘practice’ ethnography and given me the opportunity to step back and approach the setting with a fresh ‘outsider’ perspective.

The present study, aimed to understand the belief systems and practices of early childhood teachers, was a qualitative study using the ethnographic design. Being a qualitative study, it used an emerging approach to inquiry, gathered data in a natural setting, used multiple data sources and analyzed the data inductively.

The study aimed to enable indepth and detailed probing of teachers’ beliefs using emergent contextual variables and patterns; and to include as much ideographic information and intensive description as possible so that transferability to similar contexts can be achieved by the “applier” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.298).

### 3.3 Objectives of the study

The broad objective of the study was to understand the lives and work of early childhood teachers practicing in ECE programs across the city of Mumbai. Some specific objectives were:

- To understand the belief systems of early childhood teachers
  
  Processes involved in becoming and practicing as a teacher would help to locate professional practice of teachers in relation to the social-cultural-historical influences.

- To understand the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices
  
  An analysis of what the teachers say (articulated beliefs) and what they do (beliefs in action) would help to see patterns between beliefs and practices.
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• To enable the teacher to understand the relationship between her beliefs and practices through reflection.

The connections between individual teachers’ belief systems and practices would help to see the role of reflection in the professional life of practitioners.

• To formulate teacher training inputs that may lead to reflective practices.

An analysis of belief systems that affect classroom practices which could be dealt with during professional training (both pre service and in service) so as to ensure reflective practitioners.

The objectives were kept in mind during the process of data collection and analysis detailed out in the next section.

3.4 Collection and analysis of data

3.4.1 Selection of schools

The study covered the universe of early childhood teachers in Mumbai. Teachers of urban private preschool programs in the city of Mumbai were selected. The present study implemented a purposeful sampling strategy to identify preschool programs. The evolving method of identifying and harvesting fertile data sources is termed purposeful (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996).

Initially, I made a deliberate attempt to choose schools which were unfamiliar. In the past decade, as mentioned earlier, I had the opportunity of being in close contact with a considerable number of schools. I consciously avoided schools I had contact with previously. As time progressed I realized that getting consent from schools was far from easy. I had to depend on getting permissions based on some ‘connect’ with the school; not necessarily as a research scholar.

Some reflections: One of the methodological concerns was about getting access to schools to conduct the research study. Over a period of a year, I approached 25 schools and only 11 schools were willing to open their doors to a researcher. Also, a cause for concern was that permissions were granted due to some personal connections. I had to include schools where either I was
known as a professional or a professional colleague had some personal or professional connections.

My experience of approaching schools as an ‘outsider’ in the role of a researcher was a daunting experience. Approaching any school was a task in itself. Getting an appointment with a Principal was an assignment which was not just time consuming but required determination and persistence. Getting an appointment did not guarantee getting a go-ahead. In many cases I heard Principals say that they will get back to me after they put forth the proposal to their Management. Most times, the video recording seemed to be a deterrent for getting the consent. Some Principals / schools did not respond even after repeated efforts to contact them.

The term ‘research’ seemed to be widely misunderstood by school administrators. On learning that I was doing my Doctorate, most were in awe but rarely understood the rigorous requirements of the degree. I heard the common refrain that research is so ‘far away’ from what is real. At first I would try to explain the ‘realness’ of my research but I soon found that it was unnecessary as these statements or questions were rhetorical in nature.

Another incident which caused unease was of a Principal, who herself had done her Doctorate, refuse me consent as she felt that the research would ‘completely disrupt the classroom’. I admit that there is a disturbance when an outsider walks into a classroom. I was clear that I would do whatever was necessary to reduce the disturbance. As a fellow researcher, I presumed that she would understand the significance of field work in research. This incident was indicative of the gap between research and practice.

Finally, there were 10 schools which gave consent (by the time the 11th school had given the permission, theoretical sampling was saturated). Three of the schools selected were schools where I had supervised lessons for trainee teachers. Those sessions had given me a ‘feel’ of the schools but there was a gap of 5 years or so before I entered them as a researcher. The time lapse made it relatively easy to ‘see’ them in an ‘objective’ light without past notions.
3.4.2 Selection of participants

The teachers were randomly selected from early childhood programs. Theoretical sampling to get diverse and rich sources of data was followed till saturation was seen. The criteria for selection of the teachers were:

- Teachers teaching 2½ - 3½ year old children or the nursery class.

  The teacher teaching this age group was expected to have more choice in deciding what goes on in her classroom. Moreover, this age group demands high involvement of teacher with the students.

- Minimum 3 years of experience as an early childhood teacher.

  Exposure and experience in the field for a few years was expected to make the teacher comfortable and willing to articulate her thoughts.

- From two types of programs – Individual private nursery schools and larger school system.

  The private, fee charging nursery schools provide education till kindergarten. Another type is the pre school programs which are part of larger school system (often referred to as the pre primary section) and the child can go on to higher classes in the same school. The larger school system may be tied to the state determined curricula or central or international boards which dictate the curricula. Although these boards lay down stringent standards for secondary schools, there are no standardized curricula for the preschool. The type of program was considered to be a variable worth taking into account as it might have a relationship with teachers’ practice.

- With diverse training exposure.

  Data from diversely trained teachers was expected to help in understanding strengths and challenges in the teacher training programs.

Four out of the ten participants were known to me prior to them becoming the research participants for this study. One of them, I have known for the past 12 years, having met her first when (as the head of a teacher training college) I had approached the school for allowing the student teachers to do
their internship. Since then, we have shared a warm professional relationship. Another participant and I have been volunteers for the same National voluntary organization. I was pleasantly surprised when she offered that I could do my research in her school. I had initially planned to take some other teacher but my observations clearly showed her being the main teacher and hence, the selection was made. I met two of the other teachers in workshops that I conducted for their schools and continued to meet them at common professional meets like conferences, seminars etc. The remaining participants were not familiar to me till they volunteered to be a part of the study.

6 schools were privately – managed, individual schools (referred to as private nursery schools and not attached to higher classes).

The rest four were part of larger set –ups, mostly schools till the 10th Std (so these were the pre-primary section of the High Schools).

3.4.3 Methods of Data Collection

Qualitative research above all is a process which involves human interactions, especially between the researched and the researcher. Ayers (1989) referred to the researcher as the explicit instrument whose position, ground and context impacts the final product. In my role as an ethnographer, I entered the research process as an ‘outsider’ making mental notes, writing down observations and field notes.

Data was gathered using participant observation and indepth interviews to achieve a better understanding of the social and cultural factors.

Participant Observation

Participant observation refers to the informal data collection techniques, which form the mainstay of most ethnographic approaches (Adler and Adler, 1998; Eriksen, 2001). As a researcher who is also a participant in the activities being studied, I aimed to enter deeply into the workplace and observe the complicated reality. As Patton (1990) expresses it, ‘this makes possible description and understanding of both externally observable behaviours and
internal states (worldviews, opinions, values, attitudes, symbolic constructs)’ (p.47). Thus, the investigator becomes as a part of the social world of factors being studied.

As a participant observer, I observed the teachers in their classrooms for 3 days on the various aspects of their teaching practice. Spradley (1980) suggested that part of the ethnographic experience is to be both an insider and an outsider and sometimes both at the same time in the same situation. Therefore, I recorded experiences (in a detached manner) as well as introspected trying to be both objective and subjective as an observer. The last day of observations included video recording of the teacher in the classroom to substantiate discussions with the teacher by sifting out certain examples to help the teacher to reflect. The video was used as a reflective tool to facilitate teachers’ articulation of personal and professional beliefs (Cassidy & Lawrence, 2000; Wilcox-Herzog, 2002) and to trigger discussions with participants on ‘why they do what they do in the classroom’. Penn-Edwards (2004) qualified the use of the video recording as subject viewing where participants are engaged in ‘viewing a video recording of them selves’ (p.208). In this research mode, video recording has been used in the area of teacher reflection since the 1960s.

Video evidence of practitioners’ roles was meant to give clear insights into their understanding and ability to:

- interrogate their principles underpinning practice;
- reflect and articulate upon their own understanding of their beliefs, attitudes and thinking and how these impact their classroom practice.

**In depth interviews**

Unstructured interviews with the teachers yielded the heart of the data. In the first phase, the in-depth interviews enabled the researcher to get information on thoughts, ideas, beliefs and understanding of the teacher by helping her to talk and reflect about current life events, family, early experiences, value of education, value of training, about children, about learning and about teaching (See Appendix A for interview guide). The
second part of the interview included discussion of specific episodes based on observations and video recording – video-stimulated reflective dialogues – which were intended to help the teacher to reflect on her practices and also put the onus of identifying professional development needs on self rather than on others. All interviews were tape recorded with permission from participants. The reason for tape recording the interview sessions was to capture the direct words of the interviewees and avoid falling into the trap of paraphrasing them.

Video stimulated reflective dialogues and interviews were transcribed verbatim and categorized. All interviews were analysed after they are conducted so that subsequent interviews were built upon the insights of earlier ones.

3.4.4 Validity and reliability

The exact nature of validity is the subject of debate with no clear cut definition of the term amongst social scientists (Winter, 2000). Validity depends on the degree of consistency between observed realities and the concept in question. In other words, whether the data really reflects what is ‘out there’ (David & Sutton, 2004). Johnson (1997) has suggested that researchers need to be reflexive, allowing them to be self aware, and attempt to control their biases. I have consciously tried to keep an open mind and actively engaged in self reflection.

Validity in qualitative research is concerned with trustworthiness and credibility of results. One way was Member validation (Neuman, 2001) which was followed for the study.

Reliability refers to the extent that the research results could be replicated if the study was repeated (Merriam, 1998). The objective of reliability is to ‘minimize the errors and biases in a study’ (Yin, 2003). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that in qualitative research reliability should be thought about in terms of dependability and consistency.
As I started to analyze the data, I wanted to make sure that I was not ‘reading’ less or more. I wanted to address whether there were any latent biases in whatever I observed or heard from the participants. I asked a colleague, who has a background of Human Development and Early Childhood Education (but who did not have any experience of qualitative research) to code 2 of the transcripts and video data. The inter-coder reliability was 90%. This matching made me sure of my coding and I went ahead with the rest of the cases on my own.

3.4.5 Process of Data Collection

Pilot study: Before going to the field, I completed observations and interview of one teacher in a preschool (run by the Department in a University), with the two-fold aim of what to observe and what to ask. It helped me to refine the questions to ask in the semi-structured interview as well as clarified what I should be ‘looking at’ when I observe the teacher. This ‘pilot’ work made me rearticulate the objectives of my study. I had planned to look at the interactions of the teachers in the classroom; nevertheless, it emerged that the completeness of what a teacher does in the classroom was far richer to observe. Focusing only on the interactions would have taken away from that completeness.

Recording the day’s events as the teacher goes about her routine was more difficult than I had imagined. Initially, I assumed that it would be easy to move around as I recorded but during the pilot study I had to reconsider certain issues related to use of videography. One of the issues was the need to ‘prepare the teachers and the children’ prior to the day of recording. This helped them to get used to the video and my movements in the classroom as I recorded. The second issue related to what I should record. Even though it seemed obvious that whatever the teacher was doing, I ought to record that; but a nursery teacher is highly mobile; the classroom itself is not where she spends the full day; she sometimes moves along with the whole class; other times, just with a child (e.g. when a child got hurt, she picked up the child and ran into the room which had the medical supplies; moreover at that point of time, it just so happened that all other adults - co-teacher, non teaching
staff and trainee - were not around for different reasons; I anticipated my running after the teacher could create panic amongst the children. Hence, I inadvertently reassured the children that all was fine after switching off the video).

I ‘practised’ with my video camera for a few days before I was confident of using it for the data collection. In my review I came across similar issues faced by qualitative researchers who used the video as a research tool. Penn-Edwards (2004) clarified the need for the researcher to list the factors that may have an influence on the way video recording was used or analyzed. My intention was to capture episodes that would be the grist for reflective discussion with the teacher. I was clear that I would use those parts of the video for discussion, which I wanted my participants to discuss (keeping the objectives of my study at the back of the mind). In other words, my hope was that the video recordings would be able to capture day to day practice of the participant which would otherwise remain invisible.

After the recording, I went through the videos and was hopelessly stuck. There seemed to be ‘too much’ and I did not know where to begin. I went back to my observation notes and the transcripts of the interview, picked out some recurring ideas, then went back to the recordings, marked certain parts in the recording for understanding why the teacher was practicing it. For example, from my observation, I realized that the teacher tended to have side conversations with the trainee teachers. In her interview, the teacher mentioned the need for trainee teachers to get the right message. In the video, there was a recording of the same behavior. So I marked the video (the exact time on the tape) as one of the points to discuss with the teacher. So, the biases of what I, as a researcher, considered important is clearly indicated. As I continued this analysis for the participants, it became a more refined process. I continued to depend on my observations and the interviews to make the list for discussion. Sometimes, the list consisted of specific episodes or incidents; sometimes it was about the way they dealt with children; sometimes it was the content that was used for reflective dialogues.
In the pilot study, when I showed the video recording to the teacher, I was concerned by the lack of focus. A recording ‘throws up’ myriad stimuli and for the teacher to focus on what I thought was obvious, did not seem to work. This clearly indicated that I need to be more refined in the questions that I asked; rather than relying solely on what could be seen by both of us on the screen. This process helped me to refine the ‘probes’ for the reflective dialogues. For example, talking about an issue and then showing her the video proved to be more effective than showing the video first and then bringing up the point for discussion.

The significance of ‘being around’ for a few days in the school was delineated during the pilot study. Even though the school was not new to me (as a teacher educator, I had supervised the trainees in that school), I realized the importance of melting into the crowd; which seemed to be possible when people around start becoming comfortable with your presence. This was different than building rapport with my participant; this had more to do with the other adults (other teachers, non-teaching staff, parents etc.) and their comfort level. Surprisingly, I found children were not distracted but included me easily and unhesitatingly as a part of the ‘landscape’. Being a Lab school, where children are observed daily; where children see new ‘didis’ coming in practically every day; probably made it easy for them to get used to me.

So from what I learnt from the pilot study, I adopted the following method to collect data in each of the schools:

- I went to the school for getting all necessary permissions and to identify the research participant (nursery teacher) in that school (invitation letter to Principal and potential participant in Appendix B).

- I observed the research participant (teacher) in her workplace for a couple of days (my observation and field notes were made during that time). Apart from the mandatory 2 days of observation, I spent an average of a 5-7 days in the school so that I became familiar to the school culture; build a rapport with the teacher; and other adults and children became familiar to my presence.
During the first few days of observation, I made it a point not to take down notes in front of people. I would use opportunities like the tea break or waiting to talk to a supervisor to quickly jot down the ideas that had arisen in my mind. Sometimes, after the children went home, I would sit in one of the vacant classrooms to put down all that I had observed or conversations that I had had with different people in the school. I made it a point to be present in the classroom designated for my observations so that the children and more importantly, the teacher, would get used to seeing me around.

On the day of the actual observations, I chose a place mostly at the back of the classroom. I would settle down with my notebook and would write whatever I observed. Since the class moved out of that room sometimes to another room (e.g. to the free play area, to the audiovisual room, outdoors etc.), I would follow the teacher. All observations were jotted down immediately. At the end of the day, I would record my impressions about the day in my field note diary.

- On the last day of the observations, I video recorded the participant in the classroom (the video data). I tried to authentically capture the participant in action with as much of variance as possible e.g. I tried to capture her out of the classroom (e.g when children were playing outdoors) as well as indoors; when she took planned lessons or when she was spontaneous (e.g. when she took the children to see the rain); when she was dealing with the whole group or with individual children; when she was actively involved with the children or when she was just supervising (e.g. another co-teacher teaching or during snack time). My main aim was to capture what the teacher did in the classroom during a routine day, which would later help towards picking and choosing parts of the recording for further discussion.

- Depending on the convenience of the participants, I interviewed the participant in 1-3 sessions. In the first phase, initial questions were related to eliciting a detailed background of the participants followed by questions from the interview guide. I used the tape recorder to record whatever the participants spoke so in a way, I was free to concentrate on
what she said and how to smoothly progress from one question to the other. Each session lasted from 1 to 1½ hours at a stretch. These interviews were taken mostly in the schools after the children had left for the day. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. If I was unable to get all the responses then I requested for another session, which in every case, was fixed easily. Most of the second sessions of the first phase of the interview happened in the participants’ own residences. The one and only time, one of the participants suggested that we meet in a restaurant proved to be disastrous. I had to resort to writing down what she said as the noise levels did not allow for clarity in audio recording.

- This step was followed by the second phase of interview – the reflective discussions. I analyzed the observations and interviews in order to mark the videos. Initially, I had planned to get them edited for showing to the participants but decided against it when I realized that it required a higher level of competence to edit. I had to either learn the art of editing or I had to depend on some expert – both the options did not sound feasible at that point in time. Another reason was that if just the episodes were shown, it took away from the totality, the sequence and the context of what the teacher did. So, I worked out a way of marking the videos, talking to the participant about the issue and then showed the video from that point onwards to get a reflective understanding of what happened on screen. These reflective discussions were also recorded and transcribed verbatim.

**Some reflections:**

My field experience lasted for more than a year (since data could not be collected in the schools during vacations so it spilled over to more than one academic year). The long drawn fieldwork led to my missing out the second interview session (reflective dialogues) of one of the participants. The reason was that she left the school job and relocated to another city. As this happened during one of the school breaks, there was no way to contact her. For that particular participant, I did not have a fully complete set of data but decided to include my observations, video recording and first phase of
Methodology

In the course of the data collection and analysis, as a researcher my focus was on the methodological issues. Initially one of my greatest concerns was to minimize the ‘researcher effect’. On reflecting back on all the times that I was doing my field work, what jumps out surreptitiously was how all the teachers seemed so comfortable and relaxed. Even on the days that video recording was used, the participants did not seem conscious and looked unperturbed. It is naïve of me to think that I was unobtrusive. But it could be that as teachers, we become so used to being ‘seen’ by others that we are not disturbed by anyone observing us. I do wonder whether I have ‘captured’ the ‘best’ or in what way has my presence affected my observations.

During the interviews, all the participants responded spontaneously, were articulate and constantly engaged. Except for one occasion, I never had to reschedule a meet with the teachers for their interviews. I felt that all of them were willing to talk about their life and their work. Margaret told me that she felt special to have been selected for an important research project. All of them, some time or the other during fieldwork shared that no one really bothered about teachers and that this study made them feel important. All the participants were eager to share their stories and to get ‘feedback’ from the research. I informed them that I was not there to ‘evaluate’ them but to understand them. All this, according to me, has a serious connotation – that we have not been able to convey a sense of value to our teachers. It is worthwhile to question the need to seek ‘validity’ of the work and the obvious gap between the researcher and practitioner community.

Another point of concern was regarding the use of the video recording for reflective purposes. As I continued to show the videos, I realized that it seemed to ‘distract’ more than actually lead to reflection. I struggled to find the right balance between how much to talk and how much to show. Since the expectation from my side was that the participant would be involved in some kind of reflection of her practices, I became concerned as I heard more justification than reflection. For one case, I took the liberty of not using the
video in the process of reflection. I visualized the whole scene for the participant and started a conversation. The transcribed data did not show much of a difference between the ones who had seen the video recording and ones who didn’t. As there were only three cases after that, I did continue to show the video recording but only in short bursts with more discussions. I am unclear about the value of the video as a tool for eliciting reflective discussions. This point is discussed in details in the results chapter.

The data sets were delineated according to each case. The data for the current research comprised of:

a. Transcripts of recorded interviews (of 10 teachers); reflective interviews (of 9 teachers)

b. Field notes and observation notes (of 10 cases)

c. Video recording of teacher in the classroom (of 10 teachers in 10 different schools).

3.4.6 Process of data analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing and continuous process, as is customary in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Donovan, 2000; Henning et al., 2004).

To actually understand and make meaning from the large amounts of data that I collected, I kept the objectives of my study at the centre.

The method of data analysis that I followed:

a. Listing and preliminary grouping of every relevant experience from interviews and videos: For this, verbatim transcriptions were carefully read and reread in an effort to understand each informant’s meaning. Videos were coded to identify episodes. Data was tagged (constituents) to get a sense of the preliminary themes.

b. Thematic categories were developed: The tagged data was grouped and labeled to develop and refine categories.
c. Categories were systematically reduced to core themes: The themes were identified inductively using both informants’ words and ideas from review of literature and other studies in the field.

d. Core themes were identified and clustered (with details of the tagged data) to convey a description of the overall experience from each participant.

e. Each theme was verified against the complete record of the research participant to ensure explicit relevancy and compatibility (as well as to the objectives of the study).

f. Individual descriptions were created for each participant using relevant and valid constituents (tagged and labeled data) to explain the themes.

g. The field notes were categorized to develop themes in a similar systematic way for comparison and analysis with the transcripts.

h. The last step was to make connections between the data of individual descriptions to find patterns keeping the objectives of the study at the centre.

Some reflections:

I spend long tedious hours doing data analysis. As I was working during the daytime, the only time available would be sitting with the data late into the night. There was frustration, anxiety, despair at some stages. The ‘rich’ data would look like heaps of data, unrelated to what my research concern was. I ploughed on steadily and after a long period of time, the seemingly unrelated pieces started falling into place. But at the end, it all seemed worthwhile. I think one of the things that kept me going was faith in what I was doing and hope that it would turn out right.

Another concern was to decide what to include and what to omit. I followed a route that Muchmore (2002) explains in writing a life history study of a teacher. He used the following four questions: (i) Is it relevant? (ii) Is it accurate? (iii) Is it necessary? and (iv) Is it ethical? I too asked these questions throughout which helped me to remain focused.
In the process of data analysis, I noted a considerable overlap between analysis and interpretation. The process of interpretation involved giving in-depth meaning and significance to the organized data. There was reliance on my ‘knowledge’ about the field of early childhood education and the literature that I had imbibed over the years which were helpful in revealing themes, patterns and linkages from the raw data. Henning et al. (2004) posited that the researcher is the main analytical instrument because her knowledge, understanding and expertise will determine what happens to the data. The human factor is the greatest strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis as rightly said by Patton (1990).

Thick-description was used to balance analysis and interpretation. I tried to keep the richness and explanatory potential of the results. I also attempted to formulate relationships between themes to give insight and deep understanding of what emerged from the analysis. The core idea was to present as holistic a picture as possible of the concern of my study. To understand the role of the teacher and reveal all the significant aspects of its meanings, and to understand the situational constraints impinging on the role of the teacher in a typical teaching situation in which he/she interacts, it was necessary to see the “world” (i.e., social reality) through the eyes of the teachers.

3.4.7 Ethical considerations

Certain code of ethics (Christians, 2000) was followed for this study:

Gaining access to the site: In my research, it was necessary to obtain permission to do the research in the research settings. This included explaining my role as a researcher. Therefore, it was important to meet the Management /Trustee/Principal of the schools. I realized that negotiating access was an ongoing process, and not something that happened only at the beginning of the research process.

Informed Consent: The research participants were informed about the objectives and nature of the study in which they were involved. Participation was voluntary for each participant.
Power relations: I was well known to some of the teachers in my past role (and the rest were aware of my earlier designation as Head of a teacher training college). I consciously avoided any evaluative comment or discussion. Moreover, I reinforced my current role as a researcher through my actions and my conversations. I also tried to safeguard against giving my opinions; rather the focus was on being a listener. For me the participants were not merely the means to an end.

Non-Deception: There was no deliberate misrepresentation of the data. The data remained genuine. The data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose until participants give consent to do so. The data will not be used against the interest of any individual or institution.

Project worthiness: Miles and Huberman (1994) described worthiness of the project as a specific ethical issue that needs attention before, during and after qualitative studies. The study stemmed from the need to contribute meaningfully to the field of early childhood education and training. I hope that the worthiness lies in the rigor and documentation of the complex realities of teachers’ personal and professional lives which was followed for the study. Moreover, the potential of sharing the ‘voices’ of the teachers is valuable for all stakeholders.

Credibility: I have shared and documented the experiences that I encountered at each step of my journey under the heading of ‘some reflections’ to ensure credibility (Buckley, 2007). When writing the brief profiles of the participants (4.2), again I have chosen to represent the individuals through the essence of what they said and did. As it is a selection, I have taken care to keep the rigor of presenting detailed profiles so as to provide soundness.

Privacy: Teachers were willing to have their own names used. However, I decided to use fictitious names to enable consistency throughout and to protect the identity of the research locations and researched. I continued to retain professional etiquette to see that no one will be harmed or embarrassed due to the study.
To sum up, the data generated was a large amount; it was a challenge to analyze, interpret and ‘make sense of’. There were four specific points that I paid heed to while writing the results chapter (i) situating the study in context (ii) profiles of the participants (iii) logical coherence to underscore relevant themes and (iv) an essay style of rendering to make thick descriptions ‘scientifically eloquent’ (Geertz, 1973). The following chapter aims to present the results effectively; since the effectiveness of interpretive research rests largely in the nature and quality of its presentation (Muchmore, 2002). The next chapter has been divided into three parts. The first part sets the context and background information about the participants. The second part presents brief profiles of the ten participants. The third part showcases the themes that have emerged from the analysis of the data.