CHAPTER - 3

Methodology
3.1 Problem Statement

In today’s competitive world it becomes essential to achieve excellence in varied spheres of activities. Schools, like other organizations are called upon to offer high quality education. Schools are bedrock of nation building. The excellence in school education has a multiplier effect on the nation’s progress. The long-term holistic development of nation is critically dependent on excellence in this sector of the country. Keeping in view the need and importance of excellence in schools in India, a concern arises for developing ‘a model of excellence’ for existing and prospective schools. The present study is aimed at studying the management component of some excellent schools and thereby developing a unique model that exemplifies such schools. It is presumed that this model would help crystallize parameters that create and sustain excellence in schools.

3.2 Research Objectives

This study aims at studying the dimensions of excellence in selected schools and extracting the attributes of excellence present in them. Some attributes of excellence are common in all these schools. Still some attributes are unique to each of them. The research aims at evolving and crystallizing a model of excellence based on identification of attributes through this study. Specifically, the present study aims at:

3.2.1 Identifying dimensions of excellence in general organizational context, as also in the context of schools, in particular.
3.2.2 Identifying the attributes of excellence in selected schools.
3.2.3 Developing a Model of Excellence that may be adopted by existing and prospective schools.
3.3 **Propositions of the Study**

Keeping in view the above-mentioned objectives of the study, the following propositions were framed:

3.3.1 Vision, Mission and Core Values have a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.

3.3.2 Entrepreneurship and Inspiring Leadership have a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.

3.3.3 Organizational Culture has a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.

3.3.4 Innovation and Organizational Creativity have a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.

3.3.5 Social Orientation has a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.

3.3.6 Motivation and Reinforcement have a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.

3.3.7 Communication Network has a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.

3.3.8 Simultaneous Loose- Tight Properties have a determining role in creating and sustaining excellence in schools.
3.4 Rationale of the Study

Researches have been conducted in this field of excellence in organizational context. These researches were perused and presented in the previous chapter. However, the researcher noted dearth of studies in the context of schools in particular. The researcher could not lay its hands on studies addressing the issue of excellence, from management's perspective, in the context of schools. This study aims at identification of attributes of excellence for creating and sustaining excellence in schools. This study intends to develop a 'Model of Excellence' that will help the management of existing and prospective schools to develop excellence in their organizations. In the present scenario, a large number of schools have been established but there is dearth of 'quality' in them. There is need to give special attention to certain managerial aspects of these schools. The study intends to help managers and administrators of these schools in creating excellence in their respective organizations and sustaining the same.

3.5 Research Design

'Exploratory' research design has been used in this study. Case study method has been employed to obtain information. Through this research design, the researcher has been able to probe new ideas and insights. Different aspects of the problem, like information with respect to academic inputs, social orientation of schools, etc., have been studied and examined carefully. Further, unstructured instruments like personal interactions with stakeholders, have been used for collection of data.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

This study primarily uses case study method of data collection. It is a widely used form of qualitative analysis and involves a careful and complete observation of a unit or institution. The credit for introducing this method to the field of social investigation goes to Frederic Le Play who used it as a handmaiden to statistics in his studies of family budgets (Kothari,
1990). Anthropologists, historians, novelists and dramatists have used this method concerning problems pertaining to their areas of interests.

The case study method has been adopted for this study as it enables intensive investigation of each school. Details regarding background, academic inputs, social orientation and structural features of the schools have been collected and studied in a fairly exhaustive manner through this method. Relevant data related to presence of the eight attributes of creating and sustaining excellence in schools, has been collected by the researcher with the help of checklist (Annexure-I). The level of presence of the attributes/sub-attributes in each school is marked on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (lowest level) to 5 (highest level) on a continuum.

1 represents very low presence
2 represents low presence
3 represents average presence
4 represents high presence
5 represents very high presence

The researcher conducted personal interactions with different stakeholders, like CEOs, principals, teachers, students and parents to gather information regarding schools. From this case data, inferences have been drawn. The approach is primarily qualitative. Through case study, the researcher is able to obtain a real feel of the working of the school. Personal experiences, revealing the inner strivings, tensions and motivations of various constituents of the school have been recorded by the researcher. Different research methods like printed documents, study reports of individuals and institutions, etc. have also been used for data collection.
3.7 The Sample

The study comprised of 5 units (schools), the names of which are given below.

Table 3.1 List of Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Name of the School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Eklavya School, Ahmedabad</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>City Montessori School, Lucknow</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Mayo College, Ajmer</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Amity International School, Noida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Labour India Gurukulam Public School, Kottayam, Kerala</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.8 Rationale for Selecting the Sample

The sample had been selected after considering the requirements of the research project. The schools chosen for this research have demonstrated sustained high performance and competitive edge over a reasonably long period. The researcher, herself running a CBSE affiliated senior secondary school and being a member of the Independent Schools’ Federation of India, Delhi (an all India federation of unaided CBSE and CISCE schools), had prepared a list of reputed schools which were being managed in a professional manner and had a special standing in the world of schools. Elaborate discussions with eminent academicians and office bearers of CBSE, CISCE, NIOS, NCERT and State Education Boards contributed in selecting a list of well-managed schools.

The researcher found certain distinguishing and surpassing features in these schools, which led to their selection for study. The contents and outlook of Eklavya Samachar, weekly
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The newsletter of Eklavya School, Ahmedabad, attracted the researcher, who further accessed its website. A number of innovative ideas like home visits, mother’s workshop, block room, etc., being practiced at Eklavya School attracted the researcher to choose the school as a sample unit. This school represents the western part of India. City Montessori School, Lucknow claims to be the world’s largest school (CMS Bulletin, March 2003). It also holds a number of firsts, like first school in the world in initiating the Quality Control movement in education, first school in the world to be honored with UNESCO Prize for Peace Education 2002, first school in India to receive first ever Derozio Award and so on. Its reputation attracted the researcher to study its managerial aspects and so, the school was chosen as sample for study. The school’s location towards the central-eastern India suited the requirements of the study. Mayo College, Ajmer is marked as a prestigious school for a long time. While perusing the book ‘Guide to Good Schools of India’ (Dutt, 2001) and an article in ‘Outlook’ magazine (Palety, 2001), the researcher found its distinguishing features, like its grandeur, its residential arrangement, unique sports facilities, Exchange Program, etc. The location of Mayo College in north-western India, too, guided the researcher to select Mayo College as a sample unit for this study.

The fourth school, Amity International School, Noida, located in Northern India, has a young history, but it is a fast growing group. Its innovative activities like activity-oriented teaching and emphasis on exposure with the world community, have been highly acclaimed. The researcher found the school suitable as a sample unit for study of excellence. First hand information about the school was accessed from its website. Finally, Labour India Gurukulam Public School, Kottayam, Kerala was chosen as a sample unit. The school’s record of becoming overall champions at the National CBSE Athletics Meet consecutively for three years, its Gurukulam (residential facility), etc. attracted the researcher to peruse its site. Certain innovative ideas introduced by the school showed their excellence. Further, the school represented the southern part of India. Thus, almost whole of India was covered in the five sample units.

Originally, following units (schools) were chosen for study- Eklavya School, Ahmedabad; Mayo College, Ajmer; Doon School, Dehradun; Mother’s International, N.Delhi and
Labour India Gurukulam Public School, Kerala. But, the researcher had to make minor amendments in the original list of schools as some schools did not respond favourably and did not show interest in the research work. Ease of conducting survey and response received from the schools also guided the decision behind selection of the sample. So, purposive sampling was adopted to draw the sample. Though random sampling is an accepted form of sample selection, but since the present study is a qualitative one and units of the population are widely dispersed and heterogeneous (Annexure-II), the sample was selected on the basis of the judgment of the researcher, after ensuring that no bias was involved in the selection of sample units.

3.9 Data Sources

For the purpose of this study both primary as well as secondary sources of data collection has been used. The primary data has been collected from the five selected schools, namely Eklavya School, Ahmedabad, City Montessori School, Lucknow, Mayo College, Ajmer, Amity International School, Noida and Labour India Gurukulam Public School, Kerala. Primarily, in-depth interview and field observation were used for collecting primary data. For secondary data sources, magazines and newspapers had been used. Also, for this purpose, printed reports of educational regulatory bodies and research institutions like CBSE, CISCE, NCERT, NIOS, IGNOU, etc. had been of significant help to the researcher. Besides, NASSDOC-ICSSR library and reports and articles prepared by research scholars, universities, etc. were very helpful for collecting secondary data.

3.10 Pattern of Analysis

The study used case study method in which the sample units were studied in detail along with observation and interview methods. The researcher identified several dimensions of excellence that emerge as common features in outstanding schools. The researcher scanned various books, articles and other printed material on organizational excellence to evolve a holistic understanding of various dimensions of excellence. The eight attributes of excellence of organizations developed by Peters and Waterman (1982) viz., A Bias for
Action, Close to the Customer, Autonomy and Entrepreneurship, Productivity through People, Hands-on, Value-driven, Stick to the Knitting, Simple Form, Lean Staff and Simultaneous Loose-Tight Properties guided the researcher in developing the attributes of excellence. Also, the five fold distinguishing characteristics of high performance organizations as identified by Ahmad and Chopra (2004) viz., Inspiring Leadership, Innovative Strategy, Distinct Identity, Process-driven Execution and Win-Win Relationships helped the researcher in generating the eight attributes of organizational excellence. Finally, the eight attributes for creating and sustaining excellence in schools were derived. The researcher studied the five selected schools to find out the depth of presence of these excellence attributes in these schools. Thus, content analysis was carried out which consists of analyzing the contents of documentary materials like books, magazines and contents of all other verbal materials. This type of analysis is mostly qualitative. Thus, this research study primarily uses a qualitative approach in analyzing and presenting the findings.

3.11 Benefits of the Study

The researcher intends to develop a ‘Model of Excellence’ by incorporating the attributes needed to create and sustain excellence in schools. It is expected that this study will prove beneficial in a number of ways.

- The study uses case study method to assess dimensions of excellence in schools. Research shall rely on generating primary data through elaborate field visits and observations. This qualitative approach shall be deployed, perhaps for the first time, in undertaking such a study. The approach, so evolved can later be developed and perfected further to undertake even more intense assessment.

- This study will contribute in providing a benchmark for assessing level of excellence, across relevant dimensions, all through a large number of schools in India and abroad. The management of schools can adopt this model for creating and sustaining excellence in their institutions.
It is hoped that researchers, academicians and other scholars will be benefited by this research work. They can use the information generated from the study in their respective arenas. They can deploy this approach to conduct similar studies in their area of operation.

3.12 Limitations

Every research study has some limitations and shortcomings of its own despite the best efforts of the researcher. Some constraints like time and cost inhibit the research process. Every possible effort was made by the researcher to minimize, if not eliminate the limitations. Still, like other researches, this study too suffers from certain shortcomings. Despite these limitations, it is hoped that this research study will contribute immensely in raising the research standards related to the topic. Also, it is believed that this study will contribute to raising the levels of excellence in management of a large number of schools in India and abroad. The understanding and proposition developed through this work will help in managing and developing excellent schools in the increasingly difficult and turbulent times. The attributes of excellence crystallized through this study will act as a Model of Excellence that can be adopted by school managements.

The main limitations of this study may be summed up as following:

1. The present study could have been made quite extensive. More schools could have been included in the sample covering more regions of India, especially eastern India.

2. The researcher personally visited the five schools spread all over India (Annexure-II, showing location of schools) and collected data in accordance with the checklist (Annexure-I). The all-India nature of study and non-involvement of field staff in conducting interviews led to minimizing interviewer's bias.
3. Sample selection is not based on random sampling. As a result, some shortcomings might have crept in the sample selection, though the researcher has tried to overcome personal bias.

4. The researcher visited the five schools, spread out all over India. The study has been conducted over a period of three years. Many changes may have occurred during this long span of time.

5. The basic tool used for collection of data was “Case Study Method”. Case studies lack statistical reliability and validity. Generalizations cannot be made on the basis of case studies. Other methods like descriptive survey method using questionnaire and schedules could have been used.

6. Case research is a time consuming job and it is generally not possible to carry out a large number of in-depth case studies in a research project. So, the researcher has studied five sample units.

7. The study was restricted to private unaided schools of CBSE and CISCE. The schools of state education boards and government owned schools were not taken up for this study for obvious reasons. So, it is not possible to generalize the results for all the schools.

8. Extent of cooperation extended varied from one school to other. So, depth of data collected differed and this was a limitation during the course of this study.

9. Observation method of data collection is adopted in this study. Sometimes, unforeseen factors may interfere with the observational task, though observation is made with the use of checklist.

10. Qualitative researches are difficult to compare. Since the researcher has adopted qualitative approach, this drawback has to be taken in consideration.

The next chapter comprises of case studies of the five schools, which the researcher studied for the purpose of this research project.

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1 Private- run by individuals or private trusts/societies. Unaided- no financial aid given by government. CBSE, CISCE- All-India education boards controlling recognition and exam rules of schools.