CHAPTER-III

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3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the method or procedure adopted for conducting the study is presented. According to Koul (1997), the design or the method of study is that section of the research report which explains in detail the method adopted for conducting the study. It explains the rationale of sample selection, the type of data to be collected, the tools and the methods to be used for data collection and the method of treatment of the data.

3.2 THE PROCEDURE ADOPTED TO CONDUCT THE STUDY

The study undertaken involved the case study method. According to Good, Carter V. (1966), the aim of a case study is to deal with all the pertinent aspects of the unit(s) selected for the study. Such units may be individual(s) / social institution(s) / agency (ies).

Authors like Good, Carter.V , Barr,A.S. and Douglas,E.Scates (1941 ), Van Dalen (1973), Best and Kahn (1996) have expressed that the procedure of a case study consists of certain steps. These steps have been summarised below :

(1) Presentation or statement of the problem followed by the selection of appropriate tools for data collection.
(2) Intensive investigation into the present status of the unit(s) selected for the study. It is equivalent to data collection about the unit(s).

(3) Organisation of the data.

(4) Discussion of the data and diagnosis of the problems existing in the units. In the research taken up by the present investigator, apart from the shortcomings of the units (preschools), their praiseworthy points were also identified to judge the effectiveness of the units (which in the study taken up were educational organisations).

(5) Drawing conclusions from the discussions made about the data.

In accordance with the above guidelines, available for conducting a case study, this study was initiated with the selection of the topic. It was followed by the review of the related literature. This was done to obtain guidance from the work done by different authors in this field.

The next step involved the statement of the problem in an appropriate manner in the light of the objectives framed for the study. This in turn helped in determining the scope of the study and in framing an idea regarding the nature of the data required. Finally, from the direction provided by all these steps, the nature of the samples to be selected was decided. This also helped in selecting the tools and the process of data collection.
The final part of the study included the discussion of the data. Since the data was of purely qualitative nature hence it was not subjected to any statistical treatment. Generalisations were then made from the discussion of the data collected from the individual units of the sample. At the end conclusions were drawn for the study.

3.3 SAMPLE SELECTION

As the title of the study suggests, the approach to the study was that of case study. Hence in-depth study was carried out on only a few (5) nursery schools of Chandigarh. The selection of the sample, comprising of five units (nursery schools) was done after considering the following factors:

i) Willingness of the principal of the school to permit a case study of the concerned school:

The principal of a particular school was first approached. The nature and significance of the proposed work was explained to her. The school could be selected only on obtaining her consent. In some cases permission for an in-depth study was not granted by the school authorities, citing personal problems as the reason.

ii) Ownership and Administration:

In India the role of the State in the field of education starts mainly from the primary level. In the Union Territory of Chandigarh, the Government (administration) plays an active though limited role in the field of pre-primary education. The responsibility of
providing pre-primary education is therefore shouldered mainly by the numerous private nursery schools which far outnumber those run by the government.

Again among the privately run nursery schools, there exist differences in the nature of the ownership of the school. In some cases the owners and administrators of the schools are different groups of people, while in some they are the same people.

Therefore, pre-schools varying in the nature of ownership and administration were selected for the study. They were of the following types:

a) The school being owned by a group of individuals forming a Board, with one of them acting as the school administrator.

b) A trust owning the school and the school administrator (principal) being an appointee of the trust.

c) Individuals belonging to a family owning the school and one of them acting as the administrator of the school.

d) A school owned by a welfare association formed by the wives of the employees of Panjab University, Chandigarh and administered by an appointee of the same.

e) A school run by Chandigarh Administration and administered by the principal of the school.

iii) Student strength of the school:

The Preprimary Schools of Chandigarh vary greatly in terms of student strength. While some have as few as 25 students, some have
as many as hundreds of students. Hence schools with varying student strength were selected for the study.

iv) Grades (Classes) in the school:

Since the implementation of the recommendations made by the Indian Education Commission (1964-1966), regarding the 10 + 2 pattern of schooling, more or less all the states today have schools with grades conforming to this pattern. Such uniformity in the pattern of grading does not exist in the field of pre-school education. While some preprimary schools have a two years programme, there are others with a programme comprising of three years.

In view of the above mentioned factors, 5 nursery schools were selected as the sample of the study. It was ensured that the schools varied in the nature of ownership and administration, the student strength and grading pattern so as to obtain a comprehensive view of the scenario existing in the field of pre-primary school education in Chandigarh.

3.4 NATURE OF THE DATA SOUGHT

As the title of the study suggests, the present work deals with three main aspects of the pre-schools selected. These aspects pertain to the administration, infrastructure and curriculum of these schools. Information was hence sought on the major issues under these aspects.
A case study as we know involves an in-depth study of the present status of the selected units. Therefore, the data sought pertained only to the situation prevailing in the school at the time of data collection. This factor coupled with the scope of the study makes it clear that the data sought was mainly of qualitative nature.

3.5 TOOLS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

In this study, obtaining comprehensive data about the sample selected being the guiding point, every effort was made to ensure that all the relevant issues were being covered while collecting data. The tools used for data collection were:

(i) Questionnaire  (ii) Interview  (iii) Observation
(iv) Informal discussion  (v) Check list.

For any case study, the schedules of questionnaire, interviews and observations are to be exhaustive. This research work being a descriptive study, the tools for data collection had to be such as to generate maximum possible information. At the same time they had to be flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of responses from the respondents and be useful for collecting qualitative as well as quantitative information. Owing to these reasons, all the tools used for data collection were designed by the researcher herself under the supervision of her supervisor. Books on School Management, School Plant, Curriculum; Dissertation Abstracts International, international and national journals on review of Educational Research and books
on the functioning of preschools were consulted for preparing the schedules. The different tools used are described below.

(i) Questionnaire

According to Best and Kahn (1996), a questionnaire is an inquiry form through which respondents answer questions in writing and thereby provide factual information. It is a common type of data gathering instrument and has been described as the translation of the objectives of the study into specific questions.

The questionnaires were constructed with the objective of obtaining information on the administrative, infrastructural and curricular aspects of the preprimary schools selected. Therefore, a questionnaire was framed for each of the three above mentioned aspects. Questionnaires were also framed for collecting data from teachers and from the parents of the students studying in the pre-schools selected for the study.

After framing the questionnaires, they were submitted to a panel of ten experts. The panel included members from the Faculty of Education, Panjab University, Chandigarh and principals of some nursery schools. The vast repertoire of knowledge of the former and the rich experience in practically running nursery schools of the latter helped in overcoming the shortcomings and enriching the questionnaires.

The questionnaires were not mailed to the respondents. The researcher introduced herself to the respondents (parents & teachers).
and explained the purpose and significance of the study. They were assured that their responses would be treated as confidential. Finally their cooperation was solicited. A rapport was thus established with them to elicit frank and uninhibited responses from the respondents.

The questionnaires included items on a wide range of topics constituting the administrative, infrastructural and curricular aspects of the preschools and pertained to the situation existing in the schools at the time of data collection. Owing to the nature of the study coupled with the fact that observations and interviews could corroborate most of the responses made in the questionnaires, the need to standardise the questionnaires or conduct a pilot study was eliminated.

The questionnaires framed had a combination of open as well as closed types of questions. In the latter type of questions, the alternatives were supplied and the respondent had to tick the appropriate response(s). In the open type of questions, the respondents had to answer in their own words. Besides these two types of questions, space was provided to the respondents to provide any additional information if they wanted to do so. This was done to supplement the information received through the questionnaire.

It was ensured that the items under different topics were grouped separately and a definite sequence was maintained as against random assortment of items in the questionnaires.
(ii) Interview

An interview has been defined by Maccoby (1954) as a face to face verbal interchange in which the interviewer attempts to elicit information or expression of opinion or beliefs from the interviewee.

Interviews often have an edge over questionnaires because in-depth knowledge can be obtained through them. Moreover technical terms like cumulative records, curriculum, comprehensive evaluation, etc. could be explained to the interviewee. Above all, respondents were found to be less inhibited in expressing their views orally than putting them down in writing.

Schedules for interviews were prepared in accordance with the scope of the study. Schedules were made for interviewing the principal and the teachers. The interviewees were questioned on the elements comprising the administration and the curriculum of the school. Data on the infrastructure of the nursery schools was collected only through observations and questionnaires. The interviews were of open and non-directive type thus allowing the interviewees the freedom to express themselves. Such unstructured interview imparted the elements of freedom and flexibility and lessened the degree of formality and encouraged frank responses from the interviewees. However, owing to such non-directive nature of the interview, the interviewees at times drifted away from the focal point and had to be steered back tactfully to the main issue. The issues under infrastructural, administrative and curricular aspects were
grouped separately, maintaining a definite sequence and were presented in an interrogative form. Interviews were conducted only after taking an appointment from the interviewees so as to avoid any inconvenience to them.

(iii) Observation

Observation has been defined by Koul (1997) as a process in which the observer observes what is occurring in some real life situation and then classifies and records pertinent happenings according to some planned scheme.

This tool served two fold purposes during the course of data collection. It helped in gaining first hand information besides helping in corroborating the information received through the other tools. It was particularly useful for studying the infrastructural and curricular aspects of the schools.

Separate schedules were framed for observing the administrative, infrastructural and curricular aspects of a school. Such schedules contained the points mentioned under these aspects in the scope of the study. The points to be observed were noted down and the time for observing them was also noted. This corresponded to the time table framed by the school and minimised the chances of missing out any activity.

Observations were always of non-participatory and unstructured type. During classroom activities although the situation of the observation i.e. the environment within the classroom was a
controlled one with a definite sequence of activities, yet structured observation was not possible and teacher behaviour or teacher-student interaction could not be studied through categorisation of the different events into predetermined categories. Consequently any established 'Interaction Analysis system' could not be used to study teaching methods. The reason for this is that the situation being observed belonged to a pre-school with toddlers and their teachers comprising the human elements of the situation. Therefore, flexibility in the duration and nature of the activities being carried out was a constant feature. Almost every situation was characterised by numerous interruptions and diversions. The time limit of a particular activity was seldom adhered to in a rigid manner. The age of the students is the main cause that makes every situation in the pre-schools informal. Therefore, the teacher behaviour was observed and described without quantifying any element.

The study necessitated numerous and regular visits to the schools for carrying out observations. Written notes were supplemented with photographs.

(iv) Informal discussions

Informal discussions were made with the principals and the teachers on topics relevant to the study. No formal schedules were prepared for this. This tool proved to be especially useful to know about the grievances and problems faced by the school staff which they were reluctant to disclose through questionnaires or interviews.
This tool is characterised by the element of total informality which sets it apart from the other tools. It was mainly used towards the end of the data collection phase when rapport with the school personnel had been well established.

(v) Check list

A check list has been defined by Best and Kahn (1996) as a prepared list of behaviours or items, the presence or absence of which may be indicated by inserting the appropriate word or number. It was used to collect information on certain aspects of the infrastructure of the schools. It was included within the questionnaire on the infrastructure of the school, as an appendage.

This tool was used to determine the presence or absence of certain items and if present, their number. Thus this tool helped in obtaining quantitative data and comparing the infrastructural facilities of different schools.

The above mentioned tools were thus used by the researcher for the purpose of data collection for the study.

3.6 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

With the help of the above mentioned tools, data was collected in the following manner:

Data collection through questionnaires

The questionnaires were distributed among the principal and the staff of the pre-schools. The significance of the study was also verbally explained to the school personnel.
The questionnaires on the infrastructure, administration and curriculum were given to the principal of the school while the questionnaires meant for the teachers were distributed among them. The school authorities were requested to put the seal of the school on the questionnaires after they had been filled up. This was primarily to prove the authenticity of the data collected and to avoid the accidental mixing up of the data collected through the questionnaires distributed to the different preschools.

The number of parents included in the study was 200. Approaching each one of them at their residence or office would have been inconvenient. It is also a well known fact that when questionnaires are mailed then inspite of sending a covering letter, stamped envelope and reminders only a fraction of the respondents care to send them back. Hence to ensure that information was obtained from the requisite number of parents, the following methods were adopted:

(i) Meeting parents on the day of the parents-teachers meeting organised by the school.

(ii) Meeting parents who escorted their children to and from the school.

(iii) Meeting parents when they attended a function in the school.

(iv) Talking to parents over telephone. The telephone numbers were provided by the school authorities.
For collecting data from the parents, formats were specially designed. Serial number of each item in the questionnaire meant for the parents was noted down serially in the columns while the number assigned to each parent contacted was noted down serially in the rows. The name of the school was written at the top of the sheet.

The response of the parents were tabulated in the sheets by assigning the response, the alphabet associated with that particular response in the questionnaire. For e.g. if the third parent contacted, chose the fourth alternative (with serial number 'd') as his response for item number five of the questionnaire, then ‘3’ was written in the row while ‘d’ was written in the fifth column corresponding to the third row.

The researcher was introduced to the parents by the school staff or she introduced herself to the parents and explained the purpose of the study to them. Each item of the questionnaire was then read out to them and their responses were tabulated in the response sheet.

This method of collecting data from the parents had the following advantages:

(i) It proved to be very economical in terms of time, labour and money.

(ii) The principal and the teachers could introduce the researcher to the parents thereby making her task easier.
(iii) That the requisite number of parents could be included in the study was guaranteed as against the system of mailing the questionnaires and waiting for the response.

(iv) Immediate feedback could be given to the schools (as desired by some of them) regarding the general views of the parents about the school.

(v) Parents from all educational background could be involved in the study since the items in the questionnaire could be explained to them, whenever required.

(vi) Whenever necessary, the items in the questionnaire could be translated in Hindi to overcome linguistic problems.

**Data collection through interview**

Interviews were conducted only after the questionnaires had been filled up by the respondents and observations had begun. This was because repeated visits to the school by the researcher had established a rapport between her and the school staff, which is the pre-requisite for any successful interview. Interviews were taken after an appointment had been sought by the researcher from the interviewee. The interviews being non-directive, they progressed at a slow pace. The questions left unanswered in the questionnaire were clarified during the interviews.

The schedule for interviewing teachers had in addition to the questions on the infrastructural, administrative and curricular aspects, those on the personal aspects of the teachers viz. problems
faced by them, job satisfaction, etc. This was to comprehensively assess the human resource of the schools.

Data collection through observations

Separate schedules were prepared for observing the administrative, infrastructural and curricular aspects of the schools. The schedule for observing the curricular aspects included the activities to be observed in accordance with the time table. Therefore, observation of the curricular activities started with the morning assembly and continued till the dispersal of the children after the school hours.

The children of the school had become used to the researcher's presence amongst them and accepted her as their new teacher and hence their behaviour was natural.

Observations were made both inside and outside the classrooms. Inside the classroom seating arrangement, furniture, ventilation and light, teaching method, correction of written work, teaching aids, maintenance of discipline, activities performed, books, note books, art and craft materials, etc. were observed. Outside the classroom, outdoor activities like morning assembly, games, celebration of festivals and other co-curricular activities, arrival and dispersal of students, etc. were observed.

Infrastructure of the school was usually observed before the arrival of the students. Observations were noted down in brief at the
spot itself and on the same day the details were recorded. Photographs were also taken while making observations.

**Data collection through informal discussions**

With the passage of time and with progress in data collection through the other tools, a rapport had been established between the researcher and the school personnel. At this stage informal discussions on relevant issues often occurred between the researcher and the school personnel. The principals of the private schools were keen to know about the curriculum and teaching methods followed in the other nursery schools. The teachers often voiced their grievances during such discussions.

Thus the tools for data collection were used in the method mentioned above for obtaining data for the study from the pre-schools selected.

Thus in this chapter the procedure of the study has been outlined. The rationale of sample selection, the tools used for data collection and finally the method of data collection have been discussed.