Chapter 3

Methodology

As social scientists endeavouring in our quests to make sense of the processes that underlie human realities and functioning, we set out to achieve meaning through engaging in research. Cohen and Manion (1994) regard research as the combination of experience and reasoning and describe it as an approach to the discovery of truth. Among the various definitions that exist for research, the exact nature of its definition is influenced by our explicit and implicit assumptions underpinning our conceptions of the social worlds we inhabit. These lie at the heart of any research influencing our intent, motivation, expectations of what will be studied, the manner in which it will be addressed and how information or insights obtained will be interpreted. This chapter provides a detailing of these assumptions, how they have come to influence and create research frameworks for this specific study, their translation into research design, methods used and the ways in which data obtained will be analysed.

3.1 Research Assumptions

Burrell and Morgan (1979) identified four sets of assumptions regarding how we conceptualize our social realities. The first of these are of an ontological kind, this center’s on the nature or essence of the social phenomena being studied. Ontology is a philosophical belief system about the nature of social reality what can be known and how. It questions whether social reality is external to individuals or whether it is the product of individual consciousness. It asks if the social world is patterned and predictable or whether it is continually being constructed through human interactions and rituals (Hesse and Leary 2011).

The second set of assumptions are epistemological in nature. These refer to the ‘very bases of knowledge-its nature and forms, how it can be acquired and communicated” (Cohen and Manion 1994). Epistemology then is a philosophical belief system about who can be a knower. If the view of knowledge is of being hard, objective and tangible- a view upheld by positivists, it places specific demands on the researcher of using methods of natural science. If however knowledge is regarded as personal, subjective and unique, a researcher subscribes to an anti-positivist philosophy.

The third set of assumptions revolves around human nature and the relationship between human beings and their environment. The deterministic view contends that humans are conditioned by their external
circumstances and respond in mechanistic ways to situations in their environment. Advocates of voluntarism on the other hand regard human beings as creative with the capacity to use free will. Human beings are not passively controlled by their environments but exert choices instead. The fourth set of assumptions pertains to methodological issues. The nomothetic approach is characterized by procedures and methods designed to discover general or universal laws that 'govern the reality which is being observed' (Burrell and Morgan 1979). The idiographic approach in contrast concerns itself with how the individual creates, interprets and modifies the world in which he/she operates. The emphasis is on determining the subjective experience of the individual. The choice of methodology influences methods used by a researcher in the process of inquiry.

These 4 assumptions can be summarized as existing along a subjective-objective dimension (Burrell and Morgan 1979), as visually represented in the table 3.1:

Table 3.1

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<tr>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Subjectivist Approach</th>
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<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Anti-positivism</td>
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<td>Human nature</td>
<td>Voluntarism</td>
<td>Determinism</td>
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<td>Methodology</td>
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In cautioning us about the deceptive simplicity implied in the mutual exclusiveness of these approaches, Burrell and Morgan (1979) conclude that while there are 'social theories which adhere to each of these extremes, the assumptions of many social scientists are pitched somewhere in the range between.'
The assumptions of social realities we operate with and the approaches they align with form the philosophical basis of a research project and the researcher comes to be ‘bound within a net of epistemological and ontological premises which regardless of ultimate truth or falsity-become partially self validating’ (Bateson 1972, cited in Denzin and Lincoln 2000). A researcher’s ontological and epistemological positions determine research strategy; this refers to a general orientation to the conduct of social research.

Quantitative and qualitative research can be taken to form two distinctive clusters of research strategy. Qualitative as opposed to quantitative research can be construed as a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. Qualitative researchers, opine Hesse and Leary (2011) are after meaning, the social meaning people ‘attribute to their experiences, circumstances and situations as well as the meanings people embed into texts and other objects.’ Predominant in a qualitative approach is an emphasis on the ways in which individuals interpret their social world. An inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research places stress on the generation of theories that emerge directly out of the data.

A major epistemological consideration in qualitative research is the interpretive paradigm. Interpretive approaches are associated with the Hermeneutic tradition, which is about seeking *Verstehen* or deep understanding not through establishing explanations of causal factors but by focusing instead on interpreting the meaning that interactions, actions and objects have for people. The interpretive position assumes the social world is constantly being constructed through people interacting with one another hence social reality can be understood by examining the perspectives of social actors who participate in these interactions. Experience and perspective are valued as important sources of knowledge.

Aligning with this epistemological consideration is Constructivism- an ontological position that asserts that ‘social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors’ (Bryman 2008). Guba and Lincoln (1989) note the similarity between interpretive, constructivist, naturalistic and hermeneutical approaches but prefer to use the term constructivist paradigm as a replacement for what they refer to as the positivist paradigm of inquiry. Constructivists view what is referred to as objective knowledge and truth to be the result of perspective. Realities are then characterized as pluralistic and plastic -pluralistic in the sense that ‘reality is expressible in a variety of language and symbol systems; plastic in the sense that reality is stretched and shaped to fit purposeful acts of intentional human agents’ (Schwandt 1994).
Humans as social actors engage in actively constructing knowledge through processes of social interaction. These constructions which are extensively shared help them make sense of and/or interpret experiences of the world of lived reality. In terms of the influence of constructivism on the researcher’s interpretation of data it implies that research accounts of the social world are constructions- the researcher’s version cannot be considered definitive, it is rather his/her or a specific version of social reality.

The present study sought to examine elementary teacher’s perspectives regarding students who displayed ADHD type behaviours in the classroom. Relevant research reviewed indicated that teachers in elementary classrooms are in vantage positions of being able to recognize children who display a range of difficult behaviours and initiate suitable classroom based interventions. This study recognizes that while teachers can be powerful change agents, precious little is known about what guides their thought processes and classroom practices. Teacher beliefs and perspectives are at the core of this study as research indicates that they act as filters for interpreting information and experience. They are integral to making sense and connections between existing information and values and influence actual teaching practice behaviours in the classroom.

The focus of teacher belief research is on understanding the complex nuances and social realities of teachers lived experiences. This can be understood by examining the perspectives of social actors who participate in these interactions. Munby (1982, 1984) opined that qualitative research methodology was appropriate to the study of teacher beliefs, Pajares (1992) in his comprehensive coverage of teacher beliefs, echoed this recommendation but added that the choice of research methodology ultimately depended on ‘what researchers wished to know and how they wished to know it.’

3.2 The Researcher Self

The qualitative research strategy chosen for this study was determined by personal ontological and epistemological belief systems and experiences, professional experiences and training and a careful study of the literature available that provided support for that choice. Reflecting on process issues in qualitative inquiry, Hesse and Leary (2011) remark that the research process itself- or the knowledge building process, takes centre stage in qualitative research. This is interpreted as researchers being attentive to the research process as a whole including the conceptualization of the project, the interconnections between each phase of the research process and the mutually interactive effects that operate between the researcher and the research process. The need to explicate these dimensions is hence integral to the research itself.
My formal training at the postgraduate and at M.Phil. level was immersed in a rational, logical and positivist approach of understanding knowledge and translating that into practice across a range of settings. Driven by the overarching need to consider psychology as a science, the training paid scant attention to anti-positivist paradigms. Armed suitably with definite positivist assumptions I entered the complex world of schools.

As Head of the Counseling Services Unit in a school, I was required to interact with teachers, parents and children providing diagnostic, remedial and therapeutic interventions. Over the years based on a variety of professional experiences across various settings, I began to ponder issues such as the effectiveness of mass teacher sensitization workshops, the sustaining of a classroom intervention, teacher ‘resistance’ to change, the state of child mental health in our classrooms and the role of beliefs on practice. I sensed a growing dissonance with my positivist training and need for certainties. While I continued to respect neat statistics in research that I was exposed to, it didn’t offer insights into the questions that were being raised or reassurance about what constituted effective practice, resulting in minimal impact on my practice. The human stories behind the numbers began to appeal instead. A diagnosis of ADHD in the family drew my attention and energies into understanding the condition in all its baffling complexity. In addition to what I knew about the condition through my professional training, I now had a personal perspective that influenced my interactions and discussions with teachers and parents on ADHD type behaviours.

At an International conference (CHADD, Washington 2007) while presenting a paper on ADHD in India, I was asked by an American delegate about how ‘behind’ India was in terms of ADHD research? That query and a strong sense of discomfort in responding to it proved to be a catalyst in marshalling my thoughts about the need for research in this area. The lack of data specific to Indian contexts concerning teachers and how they negotiate ADHD behaviours in the classroom suggested the need to contextualize data from a local and culturally relevant position. Recognizing that teaching practice is driven by a complex network of values, beliefs and personal experiences meant that in order to understand how these were constructed it was crucial to focus on teacher perspectives. The questions I was raising were seeking a deeper understanding of these interactional dynamic processes in the classroom. There was a need to attend to personally and socially constructed meanings, to be able to perceive plural realities and amplify teacher voices.

At the conceptualisation stage of research the transformative and participatory research paradigms appealed to my practitioner side, this was tempered however by the recognition that adopting those paradigms in the time available would be pole vaulting over a critical step. I would in essence be applying my perspective and professional learning of ADHD to a classroom context without having an actual
understanding of how teachers constructed this complex condition. This was a step in the ladder that could not be bypassed if I valued the need to establish a sense of ecological validity; engaging in research that would be applicable in actual classroom settings was crucial I believed to reducing the gap between research and practice. If I perceived teachers as collaborators in a change process, I had to develop a better understanding of the nested social worlds she functioned within.

The qualitative research backdrop adopted for the present study influenced the chiseling and defining of the research methodology. The ontological assumption was one of viewing social reality as constructed by the actors themselves. Through processes of social interaction, shared language and symbols, teachers were seen to be constructing and interpreting their classroom realities. The epistemological assumption emphasised subjective ways of knowing. Understanding how teachers responded to ADHD type behaviours in the classroom involved the need to value the plural complexities of perspectives and classroom practices. These formed the framework for interpreting and responding to behaviours typically considered problematic to classroom functioning. The primary research methods employed to explore these perspectives were in-depth interviews with teachers and principals and classroom observations. Pajares (1992) categorically mentions the need to use open ended interviews and observations as research methods in the study of teacher beliefs as they enable richer and more accurate inferences to be made. In combination, the use of qualitative research methods such as interviews and observations contribute to the validity and value of the study (Munby 1982, 1984; Schommer 1990; Wilson 1990; Brookhart and Freeman1992).

Vignettes presented to teachers were used to locate commonly observed diagnostic behaviours of ADHD in a narrative or story-like context, providing a more natural context of otherwise clinical features. A teacher reported brief questionnaire was also used. The intention of using a questionnaire was not to merely quantify or objectify a set of child- specific behaviours as understood by the teacher but was specifically chosen to provide additional data that would enhance caseness of ADHD as a diagnostic construct. This supplements data obtained from the vignettes and can be viewed as triangulating data obtained about the child through the use of multiple methods.
3.3 Research Process and Rationale

The starting point of this research began with a gathering together of scattered thoughts and professional experiences concerning ADHD and teachers that had been incubating for a decade prior to the actual formalization of the proposal. A visual representation of this has been presented in figure 3.1 and emphasizes the nested and nonlinear aspects of conducting a qualitative study.

![Figure 3.1: Research Process](image)

Alongside the emergent framework of general boundaries and themes that would define the research, was a parallel process of engaging with ontological and epistemological considerations. Being able to give these assumptions a formal space through reviewing literature and discussions clarified the research design process greatly.
The research proposal architected the questions, objectives, conceptual framework, methods of data collection and analysis. Following the approval of the research proposal, schools were approached for permission. The process of data collection began on obtaining permissions. Heads of school chose teachers who in their view fitted the study requirements. Teachers were initially presented vignettes, if the teacher was able to identify a similar student in her class; she was given the Strength’s and Difficulties Questionnaire to complete for that student. If student’s scores on the questionnaire met inclusion criteria requirements, that teacher and identified student formed part of the sample. In-depth interviews and classroom observations were conducted with the final sample. Data obtained was transcribed. Reviewing information obtained from observations and field notes and establishing themes were processes that ran concurrent to the data collection, culminating in the written format required of a doctoral research.

Rationale

This section establishes the rationale for the present study and its methodology on the basis of the issues under consideration and trends highlighted in extant literature findings. The aim of this research was to study teacher perspectives in relation to ADHD type behaviours in the elementary classroom. Research indicates that children displaying ADHD behaviours have difficulties in classroom functioning, academic achievement and peer interaction. Children with ADHD often have difficulties developing and maintaining positive relationships with peers, teachers, and other school personnel. Classroom contexts with their rigid academic and behavioural demands are a challenge for children with ADHD and their teachers. A majority of children with ADHD in the absence of effective early intervention continue to experience its limitations in areas of academic, personal and social functioning well into adolescence and adulthood.

ADHD in India is essentially located in the school context with most clinic referrals being linked to academic concerns (Wilcox et al. 2005; Karande et al. 2007). Studies suggesting parent preferences for educational interventions over psychiatric interventions for ADHD coupled with stigma associated in accessing psychiatric services strongly indicate that there is a need for research that would help mental health professionals restructure information and early intervention paradigms about ADHD within a school context. In the two decades (1982-2000) of mental health research funded by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), there has been a singular lack of projects carried out by task force groups and Centers for Advanced Research that have addressed the issue of preventive mental health models in school settings.
The studies have been largely epidemiological or clinic based in nature and do not tap into in-depth information on mental health perspectives for children held in the community (ICMR 2005). Arguing for school ecologies to be the central focus of prevention and intervention, Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger (2001), opine that a narrow focus only on the child’s behaviours are not as effective as those that simultaneously focus on the teacher's and family’s behaviour, the relationship between the home and school, and the needs of schools and neighborhoods to support healthy norms and competent behaviour. Schools are increasingly being recognized as crucial sites for prevention and intervention for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (Ringeisen, Henderson and Hongwood 2003). Schools in general and teachers in particular are nested in structures that constitute an integral part of the child’s environment and have significant roles in recognizing and initiating interventions.

While teachers are referred to as major change agents in the classroom, they are marginalized in processes that involve change. With specific reference to the current study, research indicates that there exists a chasm between children displaying ADHD type behaviours in the classroom and how teachers interpret those behaviours in ways that translate into practice. This needs to be addressed with a view to designing and implementing future effective class room intervention programmes. The rationale for choosing a qualitative research methodology to explore issues of mental health and teacher perspectives, in addition to what has been described earlier from a research philosophy standpoint, is supported by findings of the Sixth Survey of Educational Research (1993-2000). The Survey recognizes the gap in elementary educational research and the crucial need to undertake research that is ‘relevant to Indian systems so that more relevant theories and practices are developed.’ Observing the lack of qualitative studies it recommends that ‘reflection, apriori thinking, theory building and ethnographic approaches should be adopted in researches with teachers, teaching and teaching education.’ Batting for relevant research methodology in educational and mental health settings, Robson (1993) attributes in large part the lack of influence research has in these settings to the inappropriateness of traditional experimental research methodology and recommends the use of case study designs instead.

This study sees teachers as stakeholders in crucial positions of being able to recognize classroom based academic and behavioural difficulties and initiate early intervention pathways. It is an attempt to give voice to classroom realities in pragmatic terms of understanding teacher perspectives about ADHD type behaviours. It seeks to involve teachers as future collaborators in a change process. In exploring the needs of children with ADHD type behaviours in a dynamic classroom context as opposed to a psychiatric clinic setting; this study is also an attempt to contribute to the body of research on child mental health in India from a culturally sensitive and relevant position.
3.4 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework as defined by Jabareen (2009) is a network or a plane of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena. More than a collection of concepts it is viewed as a construct in which each concept plays an integral role. The concepts that ‘constitute a conceptual framework support one another, articulate their respective phenomena and establish a framework-specific philosophy’ (ibid 2009). Implicit in conceptual frameworks are ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a conceptual framework ‘lays out the key factors, constructs or variables and presumes relationships among them.’ The framework does not provide a causal/analytical setting but rather an interpretative approach to social reality.

The conceptual framework represents in a graphical form (figure 3.2) the main lines of enquiry for this study and the possible relationships that occur among the variables. The framework is theory driven and is based on the assumptions that the child develops among dynamic and interactive nested systems. The teacher according to Barkley (1995) is the single most important ingredient in an ADHD child’s success in school and is visually represented at the centre or the heart of the conceptual framework indicating the significance this study attributes literally and metaphorically to teacher perspectives and responses.

The child with ADHD type behaviours displays difficulties in the areas of behavioural, academic and interpersonal functioning. These social-cognitive or child related factors including the presence of social supports and gender of the child not only contribute to the development and severity levels of problem behavior, but are also a consequence of it. Children who are disruptive have more difficulty establishing positive relationships with teachers and have interactions with them that are often hostile in nature. Difficulties in initiating and maintaining normative peer interactions mean that over time, a continuation of such behaviours result in them gaining reputations as ‘difficult’ or ‘aggressive’ leading to experiences of rejection. Often, the need to experience social acceptance drives the child with ADHD behaviours to take on roles of ‘class clown’ or ‘bully’; engaging in behaviours that elicit peer attention, which gets mistakenly interpreted as acceptance. Difficulties managing impulses, maintaining attention, and developing positive relationships with peers and adults appear to contribute to difficulties in learning and achieving in the early years of schooling (Greenberg et al. 2001) triggering negative developmental trajectories.
Acknowledging the complexities inherent in ADHD, this study subscribes to the more holistic, Biopsychosocial framework (BPS 2000). This conceptualization highlights the role and importance of developmental contextual factors and the social environment in determining levels of coping and dysfunction. Anchored in context of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model of embedded systems and the Developmental Contextualist model (Pellegrini and Horvat 1995), this framework at its core credits relations between individual organisms and their environments as being transactional in nature and not unidirectional. The lines connecting the different sections of the conceptual framework are without exception bidirectional indicating the transactional nature inherent in classroom interactions.

The implications for interventions as suggested by the framework suggest that efforts be directed towards both teacher and child. Attempting to focus interventions exclusively specific either to teacher or child factors would be limited in terms of their effectiveness and efficiency. The teacher is part of the child’s complex microsystem and does have an influence in maximizing potential or in mediating the effects of a stressor. The educational implications of this perspective suggest that children’s functioning in school is the result of within-individual factors interacting with embedded school systems. These systems can facilitate growth and mediate the effect of a possible stressor.

The nature and process by which a teacher responds and copes with these behaviours is shaped heavily by her beliefs and perspectives about pedagogy and children. Perspectives constitute interpretive frameworks through which the teacher understands and orders new information or translates existing information into behaviour responses. Teacher beliefs as described by Speer (2005), are essential factors in shaping teachers’ ‘decisions about what knowledge is relevant, what teaching routines are appropriate, what goals should be accomplished, and what the important features are of the social context of the classroom are.’ While many definitions abound on the exact definition of teacher beliefs, most concur that they guide thinking, meaning-making, decision-making, and behaviour in the classroom. Perspectives are constructed through processes of social interaction, shared symbols of language, culture and lived experience. Teacher belief systems can be resistant to change and by virtue of their powerful effects in informing behaviour can determine sustainability of a programme and the fidelity with which it is implemented.

Though research regards teacher beliefs as critical to understanding teachers and how they construct their social realities, minimal efforts are made to address them in teacher training courses either at pre-service or in-service levels. Teacher research in India largely uses self reported questionnaires that tap into rather simplistic categories of knowledge and attitudes. The lack of published data on teacher perspectives specific to the Indian teacher in the classroom has also meant that the numerous Education Commission
reports and their prescriptive recommendations pay token attention to it. Factors intrinsic to the teacher such as belief systems, lived experiences, individual stress levels, knowledge and experience in dealing with problem behaviours in the classroom, professional goals and reflective practice impact on classroom practice, responses and efficacy beliefs. These factors in turn influence and are influenced by systemic factors such as educational philosophy the school subscribes to, access to resources, presence of support structures at management levels, parent income and education levels, degree of participation in home-school communication efforts, grade level taught and training received at pre-service and in-service levels.

The conceptual framework (figure 3.2) attempts to recognize that teacher and child interactions in the classroom are embedded in nested structures. This has significant implications for designing preventive interventions. It suggests that interventions should be aimed at multiple domains and that these are perhaps best directed at risk and protective factors rather than at categorical problem behaviors. Impact and effectiveness of intervention programmes are likely to be influenced by the degree of coordination and collaboration that can occur among community care systems.
Figure 3.2: Conceptual Framework
3.5 Research Questions and Objectives

The research methodology and the outcomes of a research are critically linked to the research questions that are raised at the start of any research. The research questions for this study have been shaped by a series of professional experiences and interactions with children, teachers and parents in a variety of school settings over a decade, personal experiences, reflections and a study of the research literature available. These questions in essence were seed structures that were also able to broadly define the boundaries of research processes and outcomes. The objectives of the study were based on these research questions:

1. What awareness do elementary teachers have about ADHD?
2. What factors influence levels of awareness?
3. What do they attribute ADHD behaviours to?
4. What are the typical ADHD behaviours that teachers are challenged by in elementary classroom contexts?
5. What are child specific factors that impact on severity levels of the behaviours?
6. How do teachers interpret ADHD behaviours with respect to their understanding of child development?
7. How do teachers respond to ADHD type behaviours in the classroom?
8. How do students respond to teacher initiated intervention measures?
9. How do teachers make differentiations between problematic and pathological behaviour?
10. How do conditions external to the teacher, yet intrinsic to teaching such as curriculum and school philosophy impact on how ADHD behaviour is perceived?
11. How do factors intrinsic to the teacher such as training, years of experience, personal experiences, professional goals, stress levels impact on how ADHD behaviour is perceived?
12. How can children with such difficulties be helped in the elementary classroom?
13. What factors in the school would support the teacher in initiating intervention for children with ADHD behaviours?
14. What are the implications for designing preventive early intervention programmes located in schools?
Research Objectives

The aim of this research is to study elementary teacher perspectives in relation to ADHD type behaviours in the classroom. Perspectives are a complex constellation of knowledge, ideas, feelings and actions. In an attempt to conceptually define perspectives for purposes of this study, Tabachnick’s (1982) definition for teacher perspectives will be used. As elaborated by him, this refers to ‘ways in which teachers think about their work (purposes, goals, conception of curriculum and children) and the ways in which they give meaning to these beliefs by their actions in classrooms.’ Teacher perspectives will be inferred through belief statements, observation of behaviour related to the belief in question and teacher responses to hypothetical situations presented in vignettes.

This study will recognize students who display a cluster of ADHD type behaviours. The emphasis in this study is not on establishing a clinical diagnosis of ADHD in children or actively seeking out children who may have received a formal diagnosis prior to the onset of the study, rather it is the presence of these behaviours and their presentation in a classroom context that is sought. These may well exist at sub-clinical levels, they do nevertheless pose challenges in terms of classroom functioning. The use of the term ADHD type behaviour for a child is indicative that he/she is exhibiting behaviours that fulfill a degree of ADHD severity as specified in the inclusion criteria. While this in itself is not indicative of a definite diagnosis, it is a fairly robust indicator that behaviours exhibited by the child are at a level that would qualify for a comprehensive formal assessment and a possible future diagnosis of ADHD.

1. To explore teacher awareness, attributions of causes/moderators of ADHD type behaviours
2. To understand teacher perspectives in relation to ADHD type behaviours
3. To explore the implications of these perspectives on teacher responses to ADHD type behaviours
4. To understand the influence of school systemic factors on teacher responses to ADHD behaviours
5. To elicit teacher suggestions on how needs of these students can be met in the classroom
6. To design a classroom based programme that would facilitate awareness, identification and early intervention for ADHD
3.6 Data Sources and Methods

Bryman (2008), in referring to the connections between epistemology and ontology and research methods remarks that they are not deterministic. Research methods he elaborates are more ‘autonomous in relation to epistemological commitments than is often appreciated.’ A discussion of data methods would be incomplete without reference to the research design adopted for this study. A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. This study is qualitative in its approach and employs a case study design. Stake (2000), defines case study as ‘not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied.’ This study subscribes to the ontological view that the social reality of participants is socially constructed. The decision for adopting this design with an exploratory purpose was based on the rationale that if descriptions of phenomena have to steer away from being merely speculative to bearing a good relation to the complex social worlds of education, there is a need then to ‘probe deeply and to analyse intensively’ (Cohen and Manion 1981).

The case study design provides a focus on individual actors or groups of actors and seeks to understand their perceptions of events. It offers a ‘unique example of real people in real situations and can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis’ (Nisbet and Watt 1984). Issues that are suitable for case study research are typically complex and situated. The case study design allows for the in-depth investigation of interactions, events and their effects in real contexts. A case study has conceptual structure. It is bounded in temporal, geographical organizational, institutional and other contexts. This characteristic has allowed for multiple cases to be chosen for the present study. The 5 schools chosen for this study epitomize a broader category of cases that provided a suitable context for specific research questions to be answered (Yin, 2003).

Details pertaining to the choice of these schools have been discussed under the section on sampling strategy. Teachers in elementary school were the primary respondents in this study. Information from them has been obtained through in-depth interviews, responses to vignettes, a child-behaviour specific questionnaire and classroom observations. Heads of school were also interviewed to supplement data on teacher perspectives being obtained. The methods for data collection were in-depth interviews, responses to vignettes, questionnaires and classroom observations. Field notes of my visits to the schools were also maintained. The use of multiple methods in qualitative research is desired and accepted practice as it contributes to triangulation. It allows the researcher to compare data obtained from one method with another and in doing so there is greater sense of depth and rigour that is added to the research process and its outcomes.
**In depth Interviews**

Also referred to as intensive interviews, are a commonly used method of data collection employed by qualitative researchers (Hesse and Leary 2011). Interviews are more in the nature of a particular kind of conversation between the researcher and the interviewee that require active asking and listening. While valuing individual perspectives, experience and knowledge, in depth interviews also assume that these personal experiences that individuals have can be shared through verbal communication. They are hence designed to get to deep information or knowledge through the process of looking for patterns that emerge from the thick descriptions of social life recounted by their participants (Ibid 2011).

A semi-structured interview schedule was used as a guide while conducting the interview. While the order of questions was not uniformly adhered to, the frame it provided allowed for eliciting individual responses keeping to the conversational style in addition to providing me a similar framework within which questions were framed hence introducing an element of consistency in areas explored across cases. The interview guide was created by creating a frame of specific issues that needed to be explored. Within this frame, questions were then designed that I felt would help tap into information about a particular issue (see appendix). Heads of school were also interviewed to get a sense of the overall ethos and philosophies of the school.

**Vignettes**

The use of vignettes provides a real life narrative context of describing a hypothetical situation or fleshing out a set of symptoms in contexts that are easily understood by the research participants. The concept of using vignettes in the present study arose from my experience with using them in teacher training workshops that focus on creating sensitization about Specific Learning and Attention Disabilities. As opposed to simply listing out typical behaviours associated with the condition, teachers appear to connect better with content when these have been woven into brief descriptions or situations that are specific to school or classroom contexts. The story feel of the vignettes imbibes a sense of familiar warmth to what may otherwise be perceived as distant clinical symptoms devoid of context. Vignettes by contextualizing information allow for teachers to identify with similar situations that occur in their individual classrooms. Studies concerning teachers and ADHD behaviours have demonstrated that using vignettes containing descriptions of typical ADHD behaviour have been effective in eliciting teacher responses (Brophy and McCaslin 1992; Tejera, Gonzalez, Ramirez and Rivera 2009).
Vignette construction: Initially a tentative list of behaviours that were considered essential to the vignette core were identified. This was accomplished by drawing upon ADHD symptoms as listed out in the DSM-IV and from my clinical experiences of typically reported behaviours in teacher and parent diagnostic interview sessions. Two vignettes were constructed that described the symptoms of attention difficulties with and without the presence of hyperactivity. Research in India and across the world on ADHD indicates that rates of ADHD are higher in boys than girls. Hence it was decided that both the vignettes would describe boys.

No reference was made to the child’s age, grade and religion as this was being presented to a range of elementary school teachers who served diverse religious communities. A brief parent observation was also included stemming from my clinical experience of teachers reporting that in their meetings with parents of children who displayed ADHD type behaviours, mothers would often report having a difficult time in managing the child’s behaviours at home. The parent observation also established for the teacher that for the behaviour to be considered significantly problematic it should be manifested across school and home settings. An effort was made to include simple contextual details that would create a sense of familiarity and identity for the teacher respondents.

Expert validity was established for the vignettes by submitting it to an invited panel consisting of 5 experts- two clinical psychologists, a child neuropsychologist and two school psychologists. Clinical experience for each of these experts ranged from a minimum of 10 years of clinical experience to a maximum of 20 years. Experts were asked whether in their opinion the vignettes had a good fit with ADHD behaviours as described in the DSM-IV and their clinical experience of diagnosing ADHD. Inputs provided by the expert panel were used to further tweak the descriptions. Revised versions of the vignettes were submitted to the panel again.

On obtaining their approval, these were piloted in a school that I was associated with. The class teachers of Grade 03 were presented with the vignettes and asked to identify two students in their class who would best fit the description provided. The teachers identified students who had earlier obtained a formal diagnosis for ADHD. This indicated that the vignettes were successful in portraying typical behaviours associated with ADHD in classroom contexts. The purpose of using vignettes in the study was to aid in the quick recognition of a child displaying ADHD type behaviours. Teachers were asked to carefully read the two vignettes and indicate whether they had students in their class who would fit either of the descriptions best. Upon a child being identified, the teacher was presented with the Strength’s and Difficulties Questionnaire and was required to rate the child on this. The vignettes were time and effort efficient in that by identifying one or two students, the teacher was required to only rate a limited number
rather than providing rating for the entire class. In working in classroom contexts with teachers one has to seriously consider the fact that, teachers are not appreciative of paper work extrinsic to their regular teaching as it does place demands on their limited resources of time and effort. The reading of the vignette and their immediate responses that followed often served as a conversational launching pad about students with ADHD type behaviours. Children specifically identified through teacher responses on the vignettes were rated on a teacher questionnaire. The rationale for using a teacher rated questionnaire in addition to teacher responses on the vignettes, was to triangulate information obtained about the child’s behavioural difficulties. The combined information gathered from vignette responses and ratings obtained on the questionnaire provided a fairly robust picture of ADHD caseness.

**Teacher rated Questionnaire**

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ Goodman 1997) given to teacher respondents to rate is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire used for children in the age range 4-16 years. The questionnaire has 25 simply worded items pertaining to psychological difficulties. These are divided between 5 scales that cover emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity and inattention, peer relationship problems and prosocial behaviours. The SDQ provides a total difficulties and a scale specific score. Scale specific scores in the range of 7-10 on the Hyperactivity scale are considered abnormal. Though all items were scored, for the purpose of this study focus has been greater for the hyperactivity and inattention scale score. This questionnaire also has a supplement that measures impact of behaviour problems.

These extended versions of the SDQ ask whether the respondent thinks the young person has a problem, and if so, enquire further about chronicity, distress, social impairment and burden to others. The scale has been used effectively to screen children for ADHD and it has been recognized to have good sensitivity for psychiatric caseness. Studies based on epidemiological samples for purposes of establishing reliability and validity indicates that the SDQ identified individuals with a psychiatric diagnosis with a specificity of 94.6 percent and a sensitivity of 63.3 percent. Internal consistency (mean Cronbach's alpha: 0.73), cross-informant correlation (mean: 0.34), and retest stability after 4-6 months (mean: 0.62) (Goodman, Ford, Simmons, Gatward, and Meltzer 2000; Goodman 2001) indicate that these figures are solid and hence suggest that reliability and validity of the SDQ make it a useful brief measure of the adjustment and psychopathology of children and youth.

In further studies proving the usefulness of the SDQ, it was judged against a semi-structured commonly used interview- the Child Behaviour Check List (CBCL). The SDQ was significantly better than the
CBCL at detecting inattention and hyperactivity, and at least as good at detecting internalising and externalising problems (Goodman and Scott 1999). A ‘probable’ SDQ prediction for any given disorder correctly identified 81-91 percent of the children who definitely had that clinical diagnosis (Goodman, Renfrew and Mullick 2000). Of relevance to the present study in terms of addressing the issue of cultural sensitivity of the SDQ, is research conducted in Dhaka, Bangladesh using the SDQ. SDQs were administered to the parents and teachers of 261 Bangladeshi 4-16 year olds: 99 drawn from a psychiatric clinic and 162 drawn from the community. Children from the clinic sample were assigned psychiatric diagnoses blind to their SDQ scores. Results indicated that SDQ scores distinguished well between community and clinic samples, and also between children with different psychiatric diagnoses in the clinic sample. The study concluded that predictions based on SDQs potentially provide a cheap and easy method for detecting children in the developing world with significant mental health problems (Mullick and Goodman 2001).

Observations

Integral to the term teacher perspectives as understood by Tabachnick (1982) is the inclusion of an action component or actual teacher behaviours. Teacher behaviours are then viewed as constructs that give meaning to belief systems. Actual observations of teacher classroom practices offer opportunities to gather ‘live’ data thus contributing to the ecological validity of the data given its sensitivity to context. Observations provide a ‘reality check’ on data that has been gathered through other research methods since it allows the researcher to recognise first hand, possible discrepancies that may occur between what the respondents have disclosed in an interview and how they actually translate that into practice. The use of observations as another research method in the present study contributes to triangulation of data obtained through interviews, teacher response to questionnaires and vignette responses.

My role of an observer in the school and in the classroom was that of passively observing the goings-on as they unfolded. Each of the teacher respondents had two classroom observations. These were scheduled on different days at different periods. Most teachers expressed that they were used to either their heads of department or the section dropping in on their classes to observe what was happening, hence my presence in their class was not seen as an unusual occurrence. Observation of the classroom was semi structured in that there was an agenda of issues but there was no predetermined schedule of how this information was to be obtained. Observations were recorded in a narrative manner in a chronological sequence.
Of value to the study were observations of the structural characteristics of the classroom, specific activities, teacher-student interactions which included observing non-verbal behaviours, linguistic behaviours such as content of talking, and extra-linguistic behaviours which covered aspects of communication other than the words themselves such as rate of talking and loudness. Times spent waiting for teachers to arrive for their scheduled sessions were also times when more unstructured observations of the school in general occurred. Though I would be offered a chair and on rare occasion an added bonus of a hot cup of tea in a quieter location; I would prefer to wait near ‘high-traffic’ areas such as common passages or spaces overlooking common areas such as the school hall or assembly area or games area and jot down what I was witnessing. I was conscious during all school and classroom visits of observer effects and in the need to be as unobtrusive as possible and even chose clothes similar to colours and styles that I had observed the teachers wearing specific to the school I was visiting.

3.7 Sampling Strategy

The nature of enquiry as specified by the study involved in-depth investigation; this is usually possible with small samples. The goal in this study was not to make generalizations or establish normative findings of reliability and validity but rather to explore processes, the meanings teachers attributed to their given social situation and allow for teacher voices and stories to be heard. An important consideration in qualitative research according to Hesse and Leary (2011) is for the researcher to engage with issues of pragmatic validity. This addresses the extent to which research findings impact those studied as well as changes that occur in the wider context within which the study was conducted.

An indicator of pragmatic validity is the possibility that study outcomes lead to the commencement of another research project, one that contains a participatory action research component. As aptly described by Thyer (2001) sample specificity and determining the important characteristics of informants and locating people who match them assumes greater importance than sample size. Stake (2000) explains that a project begins with selecting cases after ‘recognizing what concept or idea binds the cases together’. The rule of thumb recommendation is to select 4 to 10 cases; however there may be reasons to use fewer or more cases.
The main selection criteria for cases according to Stake (2000) are:

Is the case relevant to the quintain- the larger group of cases?

Do the cases provide diversity across contexts?

Do the cases provide good opportunities to learn about complexity and contexts?

While Hesse and Leary (2011) refer to the need for multiple cases selected out of a larger population of possible cases to share a commonality, the focus is not only on establishing similarities across cases but seeking out differences between cases and emphasising each case’s uniqueness in relation to the quintain or the larger group of cases under study. With these considerations a purposive sampling method was adopted for this study and involved the selection of schools and teachers as specified by the inclusion criteria. Purposive or judgment sample is based on the particular research question as well as consideration of resources available to the researcher. It uses the judgment of an expert in selecting cases or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind. Often used in exploratory research, the rationale for using a purposive sampling strategy is more to gain a deeper understanding of types and less to generalize to larger populations (Neuman 2000).

This study was located in Bangalore Urban District. To ensure a fair geographical representation, 9 schools spread across Bangalore Urban District- North, Central and South areas meeting the inclusion criteria were approached. Schools can be closed structures in assuming that an outsider’s primary role on their premises is one of scrutiny. The absence of a research discourse or research ethic in our educational contexts ensures that the role of a researcher is shrouded in mystery and suspicion. It follows logically then that schools tend to not be very encouraging of research based activities that occur on their premises. The perceived threat to order- a highly valued concept, is based on the assumption is that it will disrupt the sacrosanct timetable or interfere in some way with classroom teaching processes.

5 schools out of the 9 approached provided written consent and were hence included in the study. Of the schools that refused, 2 had principals who were not prepared to meet me and hear what the study was about and 2 who met with me but felt that their teacher timetables and academic schedules were already crammed and would hence not be able to accommodate my study. Principals of the 5 schools chosen were asked to identify 3 teachers from their elementary classes who would possibly fit the teacher inclusion criteria for the study. I had to reassure the principals of these schools that interviews would be scheduled only during the teachers’ free time and observations would require me to be a passive observer in the class. Principals either directed elementary school coordinators or the Vice-principal to select the teachers whom I could interview.
The only exception to this was DS school where the Principal involved the school counsellor and directed her to select teachers whom she felt were suitable for the study. The reasoning that governed the coordinator’s or Vice-principal’s choice of teachers was not made explicit. The counsellor at DS school selected teachers on the basis of having provided inputs for students in their class who were displaying ADHD type behaviours. A total of 15 teachers, 15 students and 5 heads of school formed the sample of the study.

School Inclusion Criteria

An inclusion criterion for schools was designed to allow for possible areas of divergence that ensured maximum variation and a sound basic level of commonality to enable comparisons in the sample across cases. The purposive sample consisted of:

- Private or aided schools that were managed by individuals, a management board, family concerns, religious or secular trusts.
- Urban schools are usually differentiated on the basis of the curriculum board they are affiliated to. These boards define curriculum, assessment, teacher resources and teacher training requirements. Schools in Bangalore are granted a recognition status in response to affiliation to any one of the two national curriculum boards (ICSE and CBSE) or to the State Board (SSLC). The sample included schools representing each of these boards. This meant that classes in these schools ranged from Grade 1-10/12 and schools had received affiliation status.
- Schools that catered to children from a range of middle socio economic families– Lower middle (Annual fees 7,000- 10,000 Rupees), Mid middle income(Annual fees 12,000- 24,000 Rupees) and Upper middle income(Annual fees 25,000-40,000 Rupees). The ordering of these categories, stem from my interactions with a cross section of schools in Bangalore as a professional and as a parent. They are estimates at best, not based on formal or official categorisation but represent an extensively shared and popular understanding of the range of schools in Bangalore and their classification on the basis of their annual fee structures.
- Schools that have a minimum class size of 25. Classes less than 25 approximate ideal numbers while typical classes vary in number from 35-70.
- Schools that use Kannada or English as a medium of instruction.
- Schools that are co-educational- admit boys and girls.
Teacher Inclusion Criteria

- Teachers who teach grades 1-5 as the focus of the study is the child in elementary school and the need for data that would aid in early intervention.
- Teachers with a minimum of 5 years teaching experience. My professional experience with teachers backed by research findings indicates that teachers with experience have a suitable bank of interactions that enables them to recognise and differentiate a child’s behavioural issues as stemming from a difficulty as opposed to children who may be displaying age and grade appropriate concerns.
- Teachers with at least 1 student in their class who has ADHD type behaviours as identified by the teacher responses indicating a good fit between a child’s behaviours observed in class and the vignettes. In addition the child thus identified should receive a score of 7 or above on the hyperactivity and inattention scale of the SDQ.

3.8 Data Collection and Analysis

Having worked in school settings for close to 14 years, entering a classroom or setting up an interview with a teacher was strongly anchored in feelings of familiarity and comfort. The challenge was being able to see beyond the everyday-ness of school routines through the lens of a researcher. I had to balance the mundaneness and familiarity of the insider perspective with the need to re-examine and attend to details from an outsider perspective. Being engaged in a reflective mode with data I was gathering, discussing insights with colleagues who were far removed from educational contexts and staying immersed in relevant literature helped in exploring biases and new perspectives.

Data for the present study was gathered through in-depth interviews, vignette responses, teacher rated questionnaires and classroom observations. Data collection extended over a period of 7 months from September 2010 to March 2011. Juggling 5 school calendars each with a different set of unit test dates, parent teacher meetings, staff meetings, sports days and annual days alongside my regular working schedule was a logistical challenge. The schools were geographically spread out and covered Bangalore North, Central and South areas which also meant a fair amount of travel. The teacher respondents were initially briefed by their respective Coordinators in my presence. The statements made by the Coordinators/Vice-Principal in these briefings appeared to be more directive in nature rather than
eliciting teachers opinions about being part of the study. I met with teachers in a group following this, explained the nature of the study and obtained their informed consent for it.

This group session also involved examining teacher timetables and scheduling my visit to the school on the basis of when they had their planning or free periods. After a suitable day and time was fixed for the interview, I would convey the same to the coordinator, and get her approval of the schedule. The pervasive hierarchical structure in schools required that the chain of command though unsaid was adhered to at all times. Keeping the Coordinator in the schedule loop ensured that she was aware of when I was likely to be in school and she would hence try to ensure that the teacher scheduled to meet with me was not given any substitution duties during that period.

Schools are hives of activity, finding a relatively quiet spot to conduct the interview away from the constant background buzz of student voices, wooden dusters being banged on desks, shrill bells and annual day practice songs was a challenge. An empty classroom, a vacant hall, a waiting cubicle and even a furniture storage room were designated spaces where I was allowed to conduct the interview. Establishing rapport prior to switching on the recorder was essential in helping them feel comfortable as none of the teacher respondents had been in a similar interview situation prior to this. The skills an interviewer has to be able to demonstrate while conducting an interview are those of establishing rapport, active listening and the ability to convey a genuine sense of regard and acceptance of what is being said. As a therapist these are precisely the skills that are required to build an effective working alliance with a client, hence my formal training and experience helped me to establish a level of comfort with the teachers fairly easily. Often after the session was over, teachers would linger on and share bits of their family lives with me. I was very aware in these situations that my role was limited to listening to what they had to say and to not enter a therapist-client space.

An interview guide was used to ensure that areas of research interest were being addressed in the sessions. In order to maintain the conversational nature of the in-depth interview, the sequence of questions or prompts depended on what information was being provided by the teacher. On an average there were 3 interview sessions (45-60 minutes each) with each teacher. Interview sessions were also conducted with Principals or with the elementary coordinator if the principal was not available or had expressed that their coordinators would be better placed to respond to research questions. Due to their busy schedules all of them agreed to a single interview session lasting 60 minutes.
A voice recorder was the only technical piece of equipment used during the course of the interviews. To enhance the clarity of the teacher’s voice I had to use a lapel mike which the teacher had to clip on for the course of the session. Despite knowing in advance that the session would be recorded, upon seeing the recording device however most teachers expressed an initial hesitation about having to audio record the session. When explained the reason for recording the session and its role in accurately transcribing, reassuring them of confidentiality and anonymity for the recorded sessions, none of the teachers persisted with their objections. As the session progressed it became evident from the initial formal tone to a more relaxed natural tone that they were oblivious to the presence of the recorder. One teacher said she felt important, like she was on a television panel and requested me to play a few lines of her interview to hear what she sounded like.

In the first session the teacher was presented with the vignettes and asked if there were students in her class who fit the description. If the teacher indicated clearly that there were such students, she was given the SDQ to complete for that particular student. Scores obtained on the SDQ further determined whether that student met inclusion criteria. A match between the teacher identifying a student and required SDQ scores indicated that the teacher met required inclusion criteria. This allowed for the interview sessions to continue. Following initial teacher interview sessions, classroom observation sessions were scheduled depending on slots available that were mutually suitable. Two classroom observations were conducted for each of the 15 teacher respondents.

Each of these observations lasted for the length of a usual period- 40- 45 minutes. For the observation sessions I would arrive a little earlier and map out the class in terms of where I could place myself at a vantage of being able to observe both the teacher and the identified student yet not distract the class in any way by my physical presence. Observations were continuously jotted down in a notebook. Prior to the observation session I would brief the teacher about my role of being a passive observer and that she had to be aware of not including me in any class discussions or making eye contact with me while the class was in progress. The teacher was also reminded that my observation of a specific student was not to be disclosed to the student or to any other member of the class.

This firm insistence on teachers ignoring my presence in the classroom and respecting the student’s identity stemmed from my early career disastrous observation experiences where the teacher would announce to the class that my role was to check on whether they were being ‘good’ students since I was also somehow vested with the power of complaining about them to the principal and their parents if I spotted them misbehaving. Teachers would also call out the student’s name make the child stand and loudly announce to me that this was the ‘difficult’ student I was required to observe.
These experiences ensured that time spent on briefing a teacher about the role of the observer was crucial to the validity of what was being observed. Some of the teacher respondents asked for feedback of their classes on conclusion of both the sessions. I located the feedback in terms of how their teaching activities or behaviours impacted on the child with ADHD type behaviours. For e.g. ‘I observed that when you made eye contact with student X when giving instructions he appeared to pay better attention.’ ‘Student Y really seemed to appreciate his work being referred to as neat.’ ‘Student Z appeared to be preoccupied and stopped writing when you were at the back of the class’.

**Data Analysis**

Interview sessions were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. Interview data was analysed using open coding to establish themes and main concepts (Miles and Huberman 1994). Qualitative analysis requires the researcher to interpretively comb data repeatedly to identify similarities and differences, repetitions, categories, metaphors, analogies, missing data and links to theory related material. The focus of the analysis has been on the variation and commonality of patterns, themes and processes.

Tesch (1990) described the mechanics of interpretive analysis as ‘decontextualization and recontextualization’. Through coding and sorting, data are separated into units of meaning; they are decontextualized because they are separated from the individual cases in which they originated. When they are reintegrated into themes that combine units of like meaning taken from the accounts of multiple research respondents, data is considered to be recontextualized. Recontextualized data create a reduced data and can be used further to explore theoretical or process relationships among these clusters of meaning.

According to Bryman (2008), thematic analysis as an approach to analysis does not appear to have an identifiable heritage and neither has it been outlined in terms of a distinctive cluster of techniques. A theme has sometimes been described as bearing likeness to a code and sometimes as transcending any one code, built up instead out of groups of codes. The Framework strategy was designed in the 60’s by the National Centre for Social Research, UK; it provides a strategy for conducting a thematic analysis of qualitative data and has been used for the present study. This strategy offers a matrix based method for ordering and synthesizing data. Essentially recurring motifs in the text are recognized as themes and sub-themes. An index of central themes and sub-themes are constructed which are then represented in a matrix.
This conceptually ordered matrix aimed to categorize and contextualize data which has allowed for cross case analysis and a deeper understanding and explanation of issues that were being studied. Data obtained from the observations was also subject to similar analysis and triangulated with data obtained in the interviews with teachers, their responses to the vignettes and to the SDQ items. The findings of the qualitative analysis have been laid out in the results and discussion chapter. They have also fed into designing a classroom based programme that would facilitate awareness, identification and early intervention for ADHD.

3.9 Research Ethics

This study subscribes to the ethical principles for conducting research with human participants as proposed by the British Psychological Society (1991). The essential principle is that the investigation should be considered from the standpoint of all participants; foreseeable threats to their psychological well being, health, values or dignity should be eliminated. In the course of research I have been diligent in ensuring that all participants are informed of the objectives of the investigation. Schools and teacher participants have provided their signed informed consent which categorically states that as participants they have the right to withdraw from the research at any time and that information obtained will be used solely for research purposes, treated as confidential and not identifiable as theirs. A sample copy of the informed consent document has been included in the Appendix.

Intentional deception of the participants over the purpose and general nature of the investigation has been avoided. I have been conscious of protecting participants from any mental harm during the investigation in the questions posed and in my responses to them. One of the teacher participants who appeared tearful through a session confided that she was experiencing significant marital difficulties and was having a very stressful year. She was given a suitable marital therapist’s contact details and encouraged to start sessions. Heads of school were also given the opportunity to have a workshop on ADHD conducted for their elementary school teachers, free of cost, following my data collection period.

Of particular interest to examining the ethics of research is the following experience I had in the course of this study. One school head abruptly announced the day I was to start observations that she was not comfortable with her teachers being observed. On being gently reminded that observations were an intrinsic part of the study and she had in fact given consent to it, replied that she was not paying attention to the details of the study. Instead, she suggested, I could list out the broad areas of what I was going to observe and the teacher concerned would fill in the details or since I had already observed a few other
schools I could simply use that data to represent their school as well. It took some explaining that this would violate the ethics of my research and at the end of our discussion she agreed with some degree of reservation to the observations.

Ironically, at the end of my research period with the school, she was also the only head of school who personally requested me to conduct a few teacher observations for teachers whom she felt were struggling in their teaching practice in the hope that they would benefit from my personal feedback session. The entire incident ended on a positive turn around note but etched out so clearly the rigidity of our educational systems in needing to protect or preserve established ways of functioning in the classroom regardless of how they impacted on student learning. It also brought home the fact that perhaps educators in India even at the levels of heads of institutions are divorced from educational research discourse and do not perceive its relevance to teaching practice.

Ethical dilemmas

Observation of teachers’ classes and times spent waiting for a teacher participant to arrive for the slotted interview session were often spaces where I encountered ethical dilemmas in my dual role of researcher-practitioner. All these dilemmas inevitably revolved around witnessing children being actively verbally threatened or physically hit. Examples of these excerpted from my field notes include:

PI School- October 14th, 2011, 10.30 a.m.

Anuradha is inevitably late for her session, hurriedly setting up teacher substitutions before coming in for her appointed interview. I know the drill now- wait in unobtrusive silence in the adjoining Montessori activity room till she appears. The entrance to the room is through another passage that doubles up as staff room space for teachers of the kindergarten class and a cramped makeshift windowless classroom if the situation demands. The door is partially closed and I hear a subdued hum of voices coming from behind it. I open the door tentatively and see about 20 children seated in a huddle on a mat. They don’t have any books on them or look like they were engaged in an activity.

I simply point to the adjoining room indicating to Sarita- (Kindergarten teacher) that I’m headed there, she nods in understanding and I quietly exit her class. Particle board walls separate our spaces. I’m seated on a colorful but dusty mat surrounded by Montessori equipment some of which do not appear to be touched by any little hand.
As I set up my voice recorder, check my previous session notes, I hear from the adjoining room Sarita’s loud voice ‘Who’s making noise? Any noise from this class and I’ll cut out your tongues. Does anyone want their tongues cut? Then sit quietly, finger on your mouth, pin drop silence till the bell goes, NO NOISE’ – The hum freezes. I can now hear Sarita in animated conversation with another teacher complaining about the water shortage problem she’s experiencing at home. I look around at all the learning material around me lying untouched while a foot away sit 20 children in silence...

DS School- August 10th, 2011, 11.15 a.m.

Shalini the school counsellor suggests that I use a spare remedial room on the first floor to have my interviews for the day since the room adjoining the activity hall where I usually sit has a demonstration class in progress. I decide to wait on a wooden bench in the passage outside this room. A class diagonally opposite this room appears to be fairly noisy, I can see children running around, some clustered around the black board scribbling on it, excited loud voices, a few have their lunch boxes open and sense clearly that their teacher has not yet arrived. Devika the teacher in the adjoining class steps out to check on what the commotion is all about. She enters their class and in a raised voice admonishes the students reminding them that there are classrooms around them and that they have to maintain silence. Students troop back to their respective places under her unblinking gaze.

As she exits the class she instructs a support staff member engaged in cleaning the passage with a strong phenyl solution to watch the class till the substitute teacher arrives. Devika goes back to her class and shuts the door. The volume of voices in the class begin to rise again, the support staff lady who the children address as ‘aunty’, enters the class, tells the children to stay quiet, then steps out, bolts the classroom door from the outside and resumes her cleaning activities in the passage.

A few children start banging on the door, ‘Aunty open the door, we have to go to the toilet’ She reluctantly opens the door allows one child to step out and then immediately shuts the door again unmindful of the knocks and pleas of ‘aunty me too’ Kanika my teacher respondent for the day arrives, greets me in the passage, glances at the closed door drama unfolding, nods her head in disapproval and suggests another place for the interview. As she accompanies me to the room she mentions how difficult it is to do substitution duties because of the already ‘heavy teacher load’.
PI School- December 2nd, 2011, 2.30 p.m.

Mrs. Girija, the school Principal requested that I have a counseling session with a 10th grade student who had failed most of his papers at the pre-final level and ascertain what needed to be done to help him. The Principal’s office was separated from the Physical education store room by a partial glass and aluminum separator. I was asked to have my counseling session here and chairs were placed. From where I was sitting I could see clearly into the Principal’s office.

My session with the 10th grade student began but I couldn’t seem to focus entirely on him- distracted as I was by what was happening in the Principal’s room. Three students of 4th grade were in her room standing facing her. The muffled quality of sound didn’t allow me to hear why they had been summoned to her office, but I could see they were wiping tears. The boys then had their right hands outstretched and proceeded to receive three canings each with a sturdy looking long wooden cane. I forced myself to focus instead on the student sitting in front of me who was telling me that he hated math because the teacher would ridicule him for asking doubts.

Incidents such as these left me feeling like a voyeur who had seen more than what had been bargained for. In its aftermath these incidents spawned a trail of questions, forcing an evaluation of my role as a non-participant observer. If I had chosen to interfere from a practitioner perspective, how would it impact on my role as a neutral objective researcher? Did the fact that I was ‘allowed’ to witness these incidents that were contrary to what teacher respondents had expressed in the interviews suggest that I was perceived as a member of the group? Would conveying my personal opinion of not using corporal punishment be viewed as judgmental of their practice? Would it impact on the trust I had established with the institution? Did I have a role at all to ‘protect’ children from these skewed ‘corrective’ punishments? Had I not experienced a sense of outrage at my child being meted out an unfair punishment- how then could I morally validate my policy of ‘non-action’?

Evident from the questions raised, is the recognition that ethical dilemmas intersect at deep levels of personal, professional and research ethics and values. They pose dilemmas by virtue of the fact that they are knotty, intertwined, value laden and do not offer simplistic unidimensional answers. The expectation that I have from these dilemmas then is not one of resolution but of translating them into ongoing reflective processes that inform effective practice and research.
The detailing of the research methodology in this chapter highlighted Hesse and Leary’s (2011) sentiments about qualitative research being more than a concept or a series of techniques that can be employed, it is an ‘intellectual, creative and rigorous craft that the practitioner not only learns but also develops through practice’.