Chapter III

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This study highlights the similarities, and differences of social capital and QWL among teachers in two well-known countries i.e. India and Sweden. This study intends to open the complex web of relations at a workplace and motivates the school authorities to focus on the strategies to improve the social structure at schools because social capital and QWL go hand in hand. Fieldwork was undertaken in Delhi, India and Stockholm, Sweden aspires to find out the relation between social capital and QWL among teachers and to highlight the differences in both these countries. Thirty teachers were interviewed in semi-structured interviews raised around social capital and QWL of teachers to provide a valuable insight into the key issues to be discussed.

This study has looked upon multiple theoretical lenses of social capital and QWL, for example, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), Putnam (2000), Walton (1975), Lau & Bruce (1998), Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy (2013), etc. to understand the whole conceptual framework from a holistic point of view. As a major part of research, this chapter entails the research methodology, the rationale of the informants’ selection, population and sample, sampling technique, research methodology, to explain how data was collected and analyzed, describing the methods with reference to relevant literary methodologies, and data analysis, etc. Finally, it is followed by ethical issues, validity and reliability.

3.1 Research Method

In the present study Qualitative research was adopted because the cases were an attempt to open the similarities and differences of the social capital and QWL of teachers of secondary schools of Delhi, India and Stockholm, India. It is a procedure to inquire in natural settings to acquire the profound knowledge, information of reality and getting the understanding of social context clearly. It actually centers to find out the answer for ‘why’ instead of ‘what’. It entirely depends upon the human experiences, not on statistical procedures as it is in quantitative study. Human beings their societies, social interaction and their language are major areas of qualitative research. It provides the golden chance to the researcher to develop analytical insights and understanding
that communicates directly to practical situations and life experiences of the researched participants (Patton, 2002). A qualitative research draws on ontological, epistemological and methodological positioning, and interpretive approach could help the researcher in understanding the complex socio-structural realities.

3.1.1 Ontological, Epistemological and Methodological Positioning

Identification of ontology at the beginning of the research procedure is really necessary as it fixes the selection of the overall research design and methodology. Ontology has a great impact on the selection of research methods via epistemology. It needs a profound consideration regarding epistemological and theoretical perspectives and methodology which leads the investigation to further step. Jonathan Grix (2002) stated that examples of ontological positions are comprised within the perspective or opinion’s ‘objectivism’ and ‘constructivism’. Ontology means ‘what we may know’, and epistemology means ‘how we come to know what we know’ (Grix, 2002). Ontology is a philosophy which may have single reality or no single reality. When there is no single reality or multiple realities, then this positioning gets concerned with the social constructivism which refers to the belief reality, which is constructed by social human beings (Crotty, 1998). Bryman (2001) asserts that “social phenomenon and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. It implies that social phenomenon and categories are not only produced through social interaction, but they are in a constant state of revision.” (pp. 16-18)

To acquire the knowledge of this social context, the researcher adopted the subjectivist epistemological approach. It includes the psychological world of the respondents which is unknown to the investigator and his major role is to construct a contextual impression of what way his respondents see and perceive the world (Ratner, 2008). This study explicitly considers the reality and respondents connections to analyze their knowledge creation environment that would analyze the reality created by informants. It will explore and interpret the data from a participant’s perspective and would not create any obstruction in reality constructed by an informant Crotty (1998). Further, the conventional distinction between these two terms disappears in constructivist research.

Crotty (1998) remarked social relations and their communications generate knowledge, the way we perceive the world. This ontological positioning selected in
research concentrates on the social constructivism such as the nationality of teachers, social life, and profession, etc. plays an important role in the life of teachers. This research is concerned with social capital and their quality of work life has to rely on individuals and their view of reality. This research studied how teachers make sense of their social relations at work in natural scenario. It also highlights how these social realities actually deals in the different working environment with different experiences, information, and knowledge, etc. (Thomas, 2010).

In, social constructivism, language plays an important role in generating multiple pictures of reality when people interact in society. Interaction is a source to gather information about the individual. The interviews were carried out in English, an international language. Language is the most solid tool to convey and construct the realities of the participants. Being teachers in well-known schools, informants did not need any translator while interviewing. All the informants had good command over the English language maintained the essence and richness of the data. Researchers choose this research paradigm to get a complete interpretation to bring out the reality experienced by his subjects (Morgon & Smircich, 1980).

3.1.2 Interpretive Methodology

An interpretivist approach makes research centers on the understanding, occurring in a given context. It considers different interpretations, an investigator’s engagement, opinion and perspectives, analysis of the collected data (Carson et. al., 2001). It is a naturalistic approach in which data is collected through interviews and observations by the researcher in natural settings. In this approach data or the collected elements are interpreted by the investigator himself/herself.

The assumptions of epistemology and ontology put for than interpretive theoretical approach. This approach assumes that it is the individual who constructs a reality and to acquire the knowledge of the world in which participants live, also gives an intense understanding of their social context and networks. To make it more reliable, interviews were organized in the school in natural settings of the respondents. That makes the context more visible to the researcher as well. By getting into the real world lived by the respondents, it provides the investigator in-depth knowledge, information and understanding of their life and brings the social process into the light. These assumptions are adopted for the derivation of the suitable methodology for this study.
3.2 Sample

For the convenience of the researcher, a convenience sampling technique was used in the study. Patton (2002) said no rule has yet been made for the size of the sample. It entirely depends on the research requirements and goals which have the credibility and can be carried out in available time and resources. As per the convenient sampling, this study included the secondary school teachers who were conveniently available to become the part of research.

The population comprises teachers from the secondary schools of Sweden and India. The population is too large. It was not be feasible for the researcher to attempt the study on the whole population that’s why the study was based on data collected from Delhi (India) and Stockholm (Sweden). The study was conducted on 15 teachers from 5 international secondary schools in Stockholm (Sweden) and 15 teachers from 5 schools of Delhi (India), which was selected through convenience sampling. Thus, the sample comprises 3 teachers from each institution. Teachers who had teaching experience more than one year and aged above 25 years were selected for semi-structured interviews. During the semi-structured interview, participants were given the required information regarding the study again as it was told to them before that the interviews were recorded and notes were taken as well.

A verbal consent was already taken. It was informed to them that tape-recorded would only be turned on at the time of the interview. At the very scratch of an interview, the researcher tried to establish a comfortable environment and rapport with the participant. Researcher created a very convenient set up for the participant. Each interview lasted at least for 90 minutes. Participants were thanked for their participation and after that, the recorder was turned off. Researcher perceived participants’ curiosity regarding the process of interpretation and results as well. They were given some information about how the data would be transcribed and analyzed. Participants also asked the researcher to provide the copy of the thesis after its completion.

3.3 Triangulation

Triangulation began to be used extensively in the field of social science in the 1970s. It is a process of analyzing data through multiple approaches and involving various resources to research a specific social phenomenon which increases the validity and credibility of the research findings. In qualitative case studies, it typically includes
collecting data from interviews, observations and other resources, etc. Denzin (1978) stated triangulation approach examines the research problem from many perspectives including multiple theories, observers, methods and sources. Tracy (2010) further added that it’s an indicator of ‘quality’ in qualitative research (p. 843). Data collection method in qualitative study generally comprises interviews, field notes, observations. Triangulation validates and confirms the research findings implying qualitative studies. This approach gathers data from different informants and participants or uses different methods from the same participant which is called data triangulation, participant or source triangulation. It also involves previous studies, reviews of the related literature, survey data and published articles. It makes the research design more efficient. It gives a deeper understanding and insight. It removes the research inconsistencies. It is also used to reduce the chances of biasness. It compensates the flaws of other techniques, used in research. It also has applied semi structured interview and investigator keenly observed the participants while interviewing. Fifteen teachers were selected from five international schools. Teachers were observed by the researcher during the interviews to get the in-depth reality. It helped the researcher to notice many other important aspects for his study. Interviews were recorded and the field notes were taken. Thus, triangulation makes the research more valid and reliable. It maximizes the deeper insight and gives a clear picture of the social phenomenon.

3.4 Procedure of Tool Construction

- Interview guide
- Pilot study
- Reliability & validity
- Ethical considerations

3.4.1 Interview Guide

Making an interview guide is a very crucial and tricky task in qualitative research. An Interview guide contains the list of the questions which helps researchers to probe and elicit answers which are posed to each participant interviewed in the same way. As, a semi-structured interview has been considered the best way to conduct an interview. It does not only draw the required information, but it also helps to attain in-depth information which can be attained by probing question, may strike to the researcher’s mind spontaneously. As Kvale (1996) remarked that the interview is the
exchange of the opinions between two or more than two individuals on the same interested area which focuses on the communication to produce knowledge and pours more emphasis on the societal situatedness the research material. It supports the research in logical order to move from one topic to another and keep him on the right track to gather the necessary information. It maintains the time limit and removes the chances of confusion as well. Since the research has a focus on social capital and QWL of personnel of educational institutions of India and Sweden. The two interview guides were designed to cover the aspects of Social capital and QWL. Interview guides were reviewed by the research supervisor, co-supervisor to reduce redundancy. Additional changes were made after the pilot study and as per the received feedback.

In social capital interview guide, factors such as networking/socializing, trust, reciprocity, respect, shared vision, shared language, gender, are further categorized lies on its relation with the three dimensions of the proposed institutional SC model i.e. the structural, relational and the cognitive dimension. According to Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998), these dimensions can be separated analytically, but many features are closely interrelated. The interview guide, in the current study, was developed after an extensive review of related literature. A thorough study of the research conducted by Chiu et al. (2006), Simons and Peterson (2000), Tsai and Ghoshal (1998), Walton (1975), Lau & Bruce (1998), and Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy (2013) helped extensively in learning the constructing the research tool. QWL includes questions regarding work environment, training, and development, work-life balance, decision making/ autonomy at work, adequacy of resources, rewards and benefits, leadership competence.

3.4.2 Pilot Study

Pilot or preliminary study is referred to a pre-test or a small survey to find out the challenges which may occur during the field study. It can be conducted and has equal importance in all methods like qualitative, quantitative and mixed method. Janghorban, Roudsari, Taghipour (2014) summarized that a preliminary study helps to identify the problems during sample selection, assist in determination, of the epistemology and study’s methodology, also helps to assess the interview and observation criterion, makes the investigator to get involved as a qualitative researcher. Its main function is to rectify the criterion and exercise significant epistemological and methodological concerns to attain objectives and to solving the research questions. In this pilot study, the researcher conducted 10 face to face semi-structured interviews on
five teachers from Stockholm, Sweden and five teachers from Delhi, India. A major advantage of the pilot study was, it helped the researcher to do major adjustment regarding the selection of teachers such as it helped the researcher to do convenience sampling i.e. teachers teaching in secondary classes. It helped in the modification of a few questions in the interview guide and guided to decide the number of participants. It prepared the researcher who was new to this kind of study and worked as a self-evaluation of the researcher’s capabilities and trained the skill as well (Kilianowski, 2006).

- After the pilot study, the interviewed guide of social capital was finalized. The semi-structured interviews were scheduled to collect data of social capital of secondary school teachers of Delhi, India and Stockholm, Sweden.

- After the pilot study, the interview guide of the quality of work life (QWL) was finalized. The semi-structured interviews were scheduled to collect the data of the quality of work life (QWL) of teachers of Delhi, India and Stockholm, Sweden.

3.4.3 Validity and Reliability

Being a social animal, one cannot predict and stabilize human behavior. To bring the reliability and validity in research, established methods have been applied. These two terms are not treated separately in qualitative research as it is generally dealt with in quantitative researches. Few researchers use the terminology that comprises both, such as transferability, trustworthiness, and credibility. Reliability is a way to yield the research with firmness and trustworthiness in results. Joppe (2000) defines that when the result is sequential and adequately represent the whole population and the study also can be produced again by using the same research methodology than the research tool is perceived to be reliable.

Validity enhances transparency and reduces the chances of biases in research (Singh, 2014). A researcher should ensure the trustworthiness and neutrality in the study (Golafshani, N., 2003). Validity and reliability are not easy to measure in qualitative research as it has many other unfixed objective phenomena to be uncovered (Merriam, 1997). To make the study reliable and valid the study, the strategy of triangulation has been used which makes the study strong by including several methods (Patton, 2001). Reviews of the previous studies and of various journal, semi-structured
interviews and observation, etc. were used to collect the data. This triangulation has provided the strong foundation to the study.

Triangulation strategy brings the in-depth understanding of the multiple perspectives to clear out the picture of the social context and to enhance the validity. Another approach applied in this study is constructivism. According to this, knowledge is entirely based on social circumstances and may change as per situations. This approach also opines that reality constantly can change whether a researcher wants or not (Hipps, 1993). Further, Johnson (1997) continues that if the triangulation is logically ordered within constructivism paradigm then applied approaches of the construction of reality is suitable and appropriate. As triangulation does contain various approaches to collect data and interpretation and has no permanent method to analyze. In this research, the approach and methodology applied in triangulation to check the validity and reliability which entirely hinge on the criterion of study.

3.4.4 Ethical Considerations

Every research holds a great value for the participants, school, and society. It becomes the responsibility of the researcher to follow the ethical principles during research. Keeping in view the ethical considerations, Researcher has informed the interviewees about the aims and objectives of the study to get their consent. Their consent was taken before interviewing them. Respondents were free to participate voluntarily in research. Moreover, Participants were free to inquire about research. As semi-structured interviews were conducted, helped participants to have face to face interaction and made it comfortable for the participants. Participants were free to answer questions and were free to skip if they did not want to respond. The collected data was given utmost confidentiality and names are kept anonymous. The identity of the participants was kept anonymous. Data was stored carefully so that no unauthorized person can reach it. Data collection was only used for research purpose only and would help to carry out more in-depth studies in the future. It is a contribution in improving and finding out the reasons of low social capital among school teachers and to improve their QWL and to what extent social capital is important in an improvement of the school environment. They found it healthy and worth answering. It would hopefully directly benefit them. The ethical issues were kept in mind throughout the research work.
3.5 Procedure of Data Collection

In this descriptive research, Investigator has employed qualitative research approach that would best answer to examine social capital and QWL of the teachers in India and Sweden. Semi-structured Interviews were conducted which has refined and explain those results by exploring participants’ views in more depth. It helped to collect detailed first-person data and perspective assessment was easily possible as well. Semi-structured interviews with teachers explored their point of view and how they work in a multi-cultured environment. Minute observation during interviews helped the researcher to get a deeper insight and understand their meaning more precisely. Thirty secondary school teachers participated in this study who were approached in international schools of Stockholm (Sweden) and Delhi (India). Semi-structured interviews were conducted in English. Language interpreter was not required because the study was conducted in international schools, so teachers were fluent in English speaking. The interview was recorded, and notes were taken as well.

3.6 Data Analysis

Robert C. Bogdan and Sari Knopp Biklen (2007) states that, after finishing the field notes from the final observations of your research and have collected all the required material. Now the researcher ask ‘Now what do I do’ (pp. 172-173). There comes the turn to analyze the collected data. To get a proper understanding of the qualitative analysis, one should focus on learning to code as well. Coffey & Atkinson (1996) stated coding is an amalgamation of data different in analytical ways which raise further questions to the collected data (pp.29-31). The collected data was split into different categories and factors as well, which indicates research objectives and sort out the research questions profoundly (Merriam, 1997). It draws the readers’ attention towards the situations which reflect the issues and the complexities of the participant’s social life at school, his way of working at school, etc. Interpretation or analysis of the data is considered the most difficult, critical and time-consuming as well. At the same time, it has been very interesting to encapsulate the data from what has been collected during the field work. It gives the opportunity to the researcher to become a keen observer of the different life situations and how to deal with them too. In this study, Transcript was made and field notes were noted precisely to identify the elements. Participants were also observed during interviews. In this study, the collected data was separated into factors, elements, and categories as per purpose and research questions.
(Merriam, 1997). These categories were further clustered into the factors, for example, ‘work environment’, etc.

Along with the collected data, the investigator possesses experience, information and knowledge concerned with the case while being in field work. To interpret the collected data on sociological construct relies on the investigator’s scholarly information, personal knowledge and information of the substantive field under research. It will further add provisional suggestions in finding differences, similarities on theoretical grounds, helps to find out the similarities and differences in different responses too. It also facilitates the investigator to structure the ordered theory.