

Chapter: 3

METHODOLOGY

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3. INTRODUCTION

In order to achieve the objectives of the present study, case study was conducted as it excels at bringing to us an in-depth understanding of a complex issue or object and can expand our experience by adding strength to what is already known through previous researches. Robert K. Yin (1984) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.

The methodological details in respect to identification of sample cases, tools, procedure of conducting case study, construction of case history, and analysis of data pertaining to different cases are presented in this chapter.

3.1 IDENTIFICATION OF THE SAMPLE CASES

Case study research is not sampling research that is a fact asserted by all major researchers in the field as stated by Yin (1993), Stake (1995) & Feagin (1991) but a process of deriving in-depth understanding. Therefore, here selection of cases must be done to maximize our learning in the given period of time available for the study. In case study, a single case or multiple cases are studied in-depth. Using multiple cases, each case is treated as a single case.

In the present study, main objective is to get the deepest understanding of the top ranker students in Assam Board examination. Because of the in-depth nature of the study where profound understanding is sought, case study with a small sample was needed and selected. In the present study therefore, 20 top rankers were selected.

Cases for this study were selected from the last two years i.e. 2003 and 2004 batches of students appeared for their Secondary Board examination of Assam. Researcher collected the list of top rankers from the published result of Secondary Board examination of Assam, 2003 & 2004. From both years' list, she selected those students who have secured top position in Secondary Board Examination of Assam. The ten top-ranker students from 2003 and 2004 batch were selected for investigation.

For selecting the sample, priority was given to those students who were at the top ten ranks. If same position was shared by two or more children, then both were selected but in case that student was not accessible then he/she was excluded and next student was selected. The list of students included in the study is presented here in table- below.

TABLE NO. :- 3.1

LIST OF TOP-RANKERS SELECTED FOR THE CASE STUDY WHO WERE DERIVED FROM SEBA: 2003

RANK	STUDENTS' NAME	% of marks
1 st	BISWAJIT BORAH	91.3
2 nd	NIJAM HIQUEMAT	90.8
3 rd	ANKITA KALITA	90.6
4 th	SEUJEE DAS	90.5
5 th	NILIM CHANDRA SHARMA	90.1
6 th	PARASMITA GAGOI	90.0
8 th	BIPLAB DEKA	89.5
9 th	GARGI GAGOI	89.3
9 th	DARSANA DAS	89.3
10 th	KIRAN BORAH	89.3

TABLE NO. :- 3.2

LIST OF TOP-RANKERS SELECTED FOR THE CASE STUDY WHO WERE DERIVED FROM SEBA: 2004

RANK	STUDENTS' NAME	%of marks
1 st	DEBANG RAJ NEOG	93.3
2 nd	SABIHA SIDDIKA	91.0
2 nd	BANASMITA BARUAH	91.0
4 th	MUSTOFA SALIM AHMED	90.7
5 th	BEDANTA BARMAN	90.3
9 th	NAYAN JYOTI	89.0
9 th	BONNY SAKIA	89.0
10 th	AMRIT PRITOM CHETIA	88.9
10 th	NIPAL DEKA	88.9
11 th	PARTHA PRATIM MISHRA	88.8

Note: Marks of these students in secondary board Examination can be referred in appendix-2.

3.2 PROCEDURE OF CONDUCTING THE CASE STUDY

In case study, no outline or procedure has been standardized but the general consideration is that a comprehensive account of the past history of the child and their present status is studied in depth.

3.2.1 DATA NEEDED

The purpose of the research was to construct deepest understanding of the top-rankers. There were no fixed outlines and researcher was open to all the perspective information related to high achievers. Elaborated investigation of the top-rankers, focusing on their past till date about all dimensions related to their academic achievement were made. The

other dimensions kept in mind while indulging in data gathering were intelligence, motivational factors, study habits, home environment, school related aspects, personality, neatness, etc.

3.2.2 SOURCES OF DATA

For the present study, multiple sources of data were considered for data gathering. Different personnel were involved to congregate data they are the child him/herself, parents, relatives, neighbors, friends\peer, principal, teachers, non-academic staff, home tutors, etc.

All the available documents related to the cases were selected. These are the school records revealing their attendance, examination records to see prior academic performance, students' notebooks to see handwriting as well as regular correction of homework and various other certificates achieved for different literary activities, etc. If some personal dairy was maintained by the case, that was also selected. Moreover, the researcher had an open mind to tap data from any relevant source. These documents contained important data to enhance understanding about a case. Similarly for all the cases data were collected from all sources as mentioned. The most important use of these documents was to corroborate and augment evidence gathered from other sources.

3.2.3 TOOLS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

From the different sources viz., personnel and records, data were collected with the help of some of the tools as stated below.

a. **UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS:** - To get an in-depth, holistic and comprehensive description about the cases, unstructured interview was used as it helped in knowing myriad dimensions of the top rankers. The researcher had no presuppositions about what of importance may be learnt by talking to people whom she will meet. Therefore she wants to maintain maximum flexibility to be able to pursue information in whatever direction it appears to be appropriate depending on information that will emerge from conversing to one or more individuals.

There was no predetermined set of questions as investigator doesn't know beforehand as to what are the important questions to be asked. Most of the questions flowed from the immediate context. Some of the lead questions were made by the researcher as in case of the child it was asked that "which college do you study?", "What are your future plans?", for parents "How did you felt when your child secured position in Board Examination?", etc. The same person, if required was interviewed on a number of different occasions. Interview questions were changed over time, and each interview built upon the other, expanding understanding about the case.

Various personnel were interviewed in the process, they are: case themselves, parents of the case, other family members, close relatives, neighbors, friends, school teachers & principal, non academic staff, tuition teacher, etc.

b. **OBSERVATION:** - For this, no observation schedule was needed but it was done with an open mind. Observation made by making field visit to the selected students' home, school, neighborhood, tuition classes etc, the investigator had an opportunity for direct observation. Observation provided a breath and depth of information about the participants and settings. Condition of house and school buildings, mannerism and attitude of top rankers, parents, neighbors, etc. were keenly observed. Observation was made throughout the field visit, including those occasions while interviewing and collecting documents from school and home. Even the body language, gestures, facial expressions, temperament, etc. of the personnel were observed by the researcher.

3.3 PROCESS OF DATA COLLECTION

From the result published by the Assam Board, 2003 and 2004, the researcher accessed the name of the school and its location to which topper belongs. From school register, the contact address and phone number of the child was taken. And through child and family members other associated persons as neighbors, grandparents, friends, tuition teachers, etc. were contacted subsequently. The detail of the process of data collection is presented below.

3.3.1 GAINING ACCESS TO DIFFERENT PERSONNEL

There was no prior plan regarding how to meet different personnel i.e., the sources of data and also any specific plan as to who to meet in the context of these top-rankers was followed.

The researcher collected from the result booklet published by Assam Board, 2003 and 2004 the name of the students as well as name of the schools and the addresses where schools were situated. It did not contain the contact address of the children and any phone numbers. Therefore, the researcher directly visited the schools without any prior information to the school Principal and the case.

As investigator made a direct approach to the school, she had to ask for verbal appointment with the principal of the school. In most of the cases, she got an immediate permission to meet where as in few of the case; she had to call on some other day on a fixed time. From the school records, the contact number and address of the case was obtained easily.

In all the school, where the cases were studying, the principals introduced the researcher with the teachers and allowed to interview him\herself, the teachers and any other non-academic staff. Clerk of the schools provided the students' records (if any) and allowed to note down necessary information. For few primary class-teachers or retired principals, researcher had to visit them at their home after taking prior appointments. Such people also co-operated with the researcher satisfactorily and provided all the needed information.

Through telephone, researcher directly made contact with the cases or any of their family members and could fix the time and day for meeting. From cases and other family members, she came to know about other close relatives and friends of the cases under investigation. Even they themselves introduced the researcher with their neighbors and other related persons. The researcher also met few people incidentally who just visited

their houses or were boarding at the house of cases while investigator visited the houses of the sample cases.

3.3.2 RAPPORT BUILDING

Building rapport and trust with each participants before probing into the cases was essential. Therefore researcher gave a self-introduction and then narrated the purpose of her visit. She clarified it, as many got confused that the researcher is a press reporter and wants to interview them.

In the context of the case, parents, family members and relatives, approach was made in an informal manner. Where as in school set up a formal and methodical approach was adopted.

During formal meeting with principal, researcher illustrated her intention of conducting research study on top-rankers. Principal of different school enquired according to their quest and researcher provided all the details asked by them. With the teachers and other staff members of the schools, principals introduced the researcher.

In order to get familiar with the family members of the top-rankers, researcher began conversation with praising the performance of their child and discussing with the child their present college study and their future plans. Researcher tried to be frank with the case under study and other associated persons. In order to avoid monotony, the researcher many times had to get humorous and informal to elicit the needed information in a free and forthright manner.

3.3.3 LOCATION

Researcher used the natural and real life settings for interviewing. Priority was provided to the subject to decide the place of meeting where she/he felt comfortable. Sometime meeting was held at the home of case, while taking a walk outside their house, in their neighbors' house, at the school where she/he was studying or the present school or

college where they are studying, friends' place, at work place of parents, tuition classes, etc.

3.3.4 PROCESS OF DATA COLLECTION

Researcher didn't encounter any major problem in gaining access and building rapport with different personnel. Almost all the participants were very enthusiastic and cooperative towards the researcher.

Process of abstracting information started with a casual conversation related with the case and then gradually researcher directed the talk towards the past of the case. They were not interrupted anywhere in middle of the flow but if required investigator had tactfully brought in forth the main theme of discussion. Each conversation was time taking and required a lot of patience on the part of the researcher. Investigator behaved as a good listener and if necessary has also participated in the discussion.

3.3.5 RECORDING

Researcher had to prepare field notes of what she saw, heard, experienced and thought on the field. It contained descriptive and reflective aspects of the top rankers. These field notes are the data that were further analyzed to get the description and to understand the research setting and case. These transcripts were written while conversing with the participants and in short all the important points was noted down. Even while participants took a break for some reason, the researcher utilized that time to note down the information provided up to that time. Later on as soon as she left the field, remaining information were recalled, reflected and noted down.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Case study is a method of organizing data for the purpose of analyzing the life of social unit. Case analysis here, involved organizing of the data of all the twenty cases. It helped to gather all the pertinent data about the present status, past experiences and environmental forces that contribute to the individuality and behavior of each unit and

also accumulated all the facts together. Each case study will stand alone allowing the reader to understand the case as a unique and holistic entity.

The description of the cases which includes myriad dimensions, factors, and variables, were the raw data. For data analysis, the raw data gathered in a large amount were read thoroughly for a number of times. Later two major steps were followed for content analysis viz. data reduction and data display.

3.4.1 DATA REDUCTION

Data reduction is an important step while analyzing data. Researcher had large pool of data gathered about each case. The bulk of data collected from various sources were scrutinized through the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming raw data.

Once the raw data were accumulated, case record was written. The case record included all the major information's which can be included in the final case history. Information was edited, redundancies were sorted out, and parts were fitted together. Here information which seems to be relevant to the objective of the study was included.

3.4.2 DATA DISPLAY

The second major flow of analysis is data display. Here display means an organized assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing. The investigator had large pool of data at her disposal for each of the twenty cases. All the pertinent information was made available, organized and studied very carefully. It was logically sequenced and organized with the help of expert in order to understand the contribution of various sources to examine intelligible relation existing between them.

The data collected from the people dealing with the child at diverse areas were included to work together to construct case history. Case history for each child is prepared separately including details their life at home, school, community, etc. Whatever pertinent information about the case was derived is mentioned in details.

3.5 TRIANGULATION

Next important step was followed after data display was triangulation of available data about each case. Data was collected through different sources and personnel and then to gain a collective understanding it was merged together. Through triangulating information about each case a clear vignette was able to derive and conclusion was arrived from all the individual case histories which supplies relatively clear picture about the path ways followed and the support system received by them.

3.6 DERIVATION

After following the entire rigorous process basic feature about all the cases were derived with the help of expert and in fifth chapter both the general and specific features of the top ranker are specified.

In the next chapter (chapter- IV) data is displayed for each case followed by triangulation.