Chapter - III

Research Methodology: An Account of Narrative Enquiry

"If the artist does not perfect a new vision in his process of doing, he acts mechanically and repeats some old model fixed like a blueprint in his mind." - John Dewey

This chapter covers the methodology adopted for the research study. The investigation procedure is divided into three sections. (a) The first section gives the study's rationale, research topic, research questions, and objectives. It also describes the limitations of the study. (b) The second section describes the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the research process and their influence on the formulation of the research methodology. (c) The third section describes the methodology approach, research design, strategy for sample selection, data collection, data processing, data analysis, interpretation, and presentation.

3.1 Demarcating the Study

3.1.1 The rationale of the Study

1) Interpretation of components of practices of social workers and advancing the knowledge base of the profession

Theory versus practice has long been a subject of debate in social science. Although, social work discipline is characterised by the mutual co-existence of theory and practice. It means theory entails practice, and practice contributes to theory. Thus, social work scholars need to undertake research on knowledge-based social work practices, and various social work interventions carried out on the field.

Besides this, the contemporary era is marked by the speedy transformation of the socio-political-economic field. We live in a fast-paced world, where we can trace rapid changes in people's

problems and needs. Hence, situations faced by social work practitioners in the field are very dynamic and complex. Practitioner incorporates intervention based on his/her prior knowledge and experience and generates novel approaches and techniques. The knowledge generated by practitioners based on experiences can add-on to the more extensive theoretical knowledge base generated by various scholars and social scientists. This research studies the social work practices of trained and voluntary practitioners in the field.

In 2012 a report presented in NASW by Nadkarni and Desai criticised practitioners' inability to document the practices. This research will record the process and evidence of social work practices by practitioners. Its documentation will help social work academia in the indigenisation process of the social work discipline.

2) *Exploring and recognising the contribution of the voluntary sector in the welfare and development*

The voluntary social work sector is important to bring social change and develop a humane and just society. The community recognises voluntary social workers, but it has a tiny space in the world of academia. The practices of voluntary social workers and their contributions are rarely acknowledged in academic literature, especially in social work.

Social work literature considers activities by the voluntary sector as 'social services'. This label to the voluntary sector may not be relevant in the contemporary era because it covers a broader canvas of the field, ranging from social services to social justice. However, the 'social service' label for voluntary work resulted in an identity crisis for voluntary workers in the academic sector.

It is evident that the practices of voluntary workers and their contributions made an occasional appearance in social work research. In the absence of research in this sector, it remains a thrust area in this rapidly changing era. This research work recognised the voluntary sector's contribution to the developmental sector and aimed to mark out the transformation of practices of voluntary workers. It will provide a space for the narratives of voluntary workers in the

academic and theory-building process.

3) Exploring practices of professionally trained and voluntary social workers

In India, two streams of social workers exist together, as discussed in the first chapter. Professional social workers undergo academic training for two years in post-graduation (three years in case of graduation). After that, they begin to practice in the field like the other professions such as medicine, engineering, etcetera. However, voluntary workers do not possess any kind of academic training in social work, but they may have their training or have developed their practices through experiences. These categories of social workers possess their peculiarities and style of working. Therefore, this research explores social workers' practices in both categories.

3.1.2 Research focus

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of and provide an explanation for the professional practices of trained and voluntary social workers in the state of Gujarat. The components of the professional practice of social workers, such as knowledge, skills, values and ethics, motivation, and commitment, have been explored as part of this study.

3.1.3 Research Questions and Research Objectives

a) Research Questions

The key questions, which this study has addressed in the course of its enquiry, were:

1) What are the lived experiences of trained and voluntary social workers engaged in the development sector?

2) What do their stories reveal about the components (knowledge, skills, value-ethics, commitment and motivation) of professional practices amongst trained and voluntary social workers?

b) Research Objectives

Drawing from the research questions, the following objectives were outlined for the study.

1) To present a detailed descriptive record of Knowledge and Skills possessed by trained and voluntary social workers in Gujarat.

2) To examine Values and Ethics practiced by trained and voluntary social workers.

3) To explore the Motivation level and factors affecting the motivation of both the categories of social workers.

4) To explore the Commitment of trained and voluntary social workers.

5) Critically analyse and examine the influence of these components on practices of professional and voluntary social workers through narrative analysis.

3.1.4 Explanations of the Terms used in the Enquiry

In this research, a few terms need to be defined in the context of the study, which are as follows-

a) Professional Practices-

It is referred to as the conduct and work of a design in which services are rendered within recognized professional ethics, standards, and applicable legal requirements (Dictionary of construction). It is a guideline which is necessary for the efficient practices of any profession. In this study, the term 'professional practice' stands for those actions performed or ways or techniques frequently used by trained and voluntary social workers.

b) Professional social workers-

Professional social workers are considered those who get scientific training and skill set to do social work. A person with an academic degree (Post-graduate and Doctorate) in social work

from recognised institutes can be considered a professional social worker.

Operationally, professional social workers are those who have a post-graduate or doctorate degree (i.e., M.A in Social Work or MSW and PhD in Social Work) and working in the development sector only.

c) Voluntary social workers

Voluntary social workers are those whose action is carried out voluntarily, i.e., by an individual'sown will, not by any law or obligation. These two terms, 'voluntary social workers' and 'volunteer', are often used interchangeably. According to the United Nations (2011), the three criteria of free will, non-pecuniary motivation, and benefit to others can be applied to any action to assess whether it is volunteerism. The terms volunteering, volunteerism and voluntary activities refer to a wide range of activities, including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery and other forms of civic participation, undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where the monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor. Within this conceptual framework, at least four different types of volunteer activity can be identified: mutualaid or self-help; service to others; participation or civic engagement; and advocacy or campaigning (UNV 2011).

In this research study, 'voluntary' social workers are those who have no academic qualifications in social work and are working in the developmental field. In this research, there are certain matrixes for the voluntary social workers, which are as follows-

- Time- One who is working on a full-time basis. It means a person who does social work full time, without any other business.

- Remuneration – A person may or may not take remuneration for his/her work. Hence, remuneration is not a criterion to differentiate between professional and voluntary social workers in this research study.

- Training- A person with no academic qualification in social work discipline. It may be possible that he/she may have informal training. So, this study will solely differentiate professional and voluntary social workers based on their training.

- Nature of work – Person engaged in service to others; participation or civic engagement; and advocacy or campaigning for a particular cause. This study will not consider charity or 'alms giving' activities as social work.

3.1.5 Limitations of the Enquiry

1. This study will cover professionally trained social workers who are engaging in development sectors only.

2. Non-availability of respondents.

3. Lack of willingness of respondents to participate in research.

3.2 Philosophical Framework of the Research Study

3.2.1 Paradigm or the world views adopted for this research, i.e., the epistemological and ontological paradigms

According to Creswell (2007), the researcher should explicate their larger philosophical beliefs in a research proposal or plan. It will enable researchers to explain the reasons behind their chosen research strategy. Experts use diverse terminologies to describe philosophical beliefs. For example, Creswell (2007) uses the word 'worldview'; Guba (1990) defines it as 'a basic set of beliefs that guide actions', and Lincoln & Guba (2000) refer to them as paradigms.

The basic beliefs that define the research paradigm are ontology and epistemology. Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality, whereas epistemology focuses on the nature of knowledge. Accordingly, the ontological and epistemological beliefs and the choice of arriving at them are discussed as under in the following table-

	Basic Beliefs of Alternative Inquiry Paradigms			
	Positivism Realists "hard Science Researchers"	**Post-positivism** A modified form of positivism	**Constructivism**	**Participatory (+Postmodern) Transformation** based on democratic participation between researcher and subject
Ontology: The worldviews& assumptions in which researchers operate in their search for new knowledge (Schwandt, 2007)	Belief in a single identifiable reality. There is a single truth that can be measured and studied. (Guba and Lincoln, 2005)	Recognize that nature can never be fully understood though there is one single reality due to hidden variables (Guba and Lincoln 2005)	Relativism: Assumes that reality as weknow it is constructed inter-subjectively through the meanings and understandings	Participative Reality: Subjective Objective reality is co-created by the mind and the surrounding cosmos (Guba and Lincoln, 2005)
Epistemology: What is the relationship between the researcher and research? (Creswell, 2007)	Belief in total objectivity. No need to interact with who or what researchers study and only focus on scientific	Assumes we can only approximate nature. Research and statistics produce a way to make decisions with incomplete data. Interaction with research subjects to be kept at a minimum.	Subjectivist: Inquirer and inquired into are fused into a single entity. Findings are the creation of the process of interaction between the two (Guba,1990)	Holistic: Replaces traditional relations between "truth" and interpretation in which the idea of truth antedates the idea of "interpretation" (Heshusius, 1994)

Source: Strategies of Qualitative Research (Lincoln & Lynham, 2013)

(a) Ontological Belief of this research

Ontological belief is explained as a study of the nature of reality. The ontological belief of this

research is '**Reality is subjective as seen and experienced by participants in the study'.**

This research does not assume one absolute truth that needs to be discovered. The practices of social workers create different truths or different levels of truth in relation to intrinsic components of professional social work practices. To presume that we can find an absolute reality is just naivety. The reality will be created as participants interpret social work practices according to the need of the community.

(b) Epistemological Beliefs of this research

It is explained as the study of how knowledge is created and the relationship between the researcher and researched? Epistemological belief answers the question of what constitutes valid knowledge and how can we obtain it? Epistemology would help us explain how we came to know what we know and how we theorize (Crotty, 1998).

The Epistemological Belief in this research is **'Knowledge is primarily created during the interaction between the researcher and participants'**.

This research does not follow the deductive logic process of formulating hypotheses based on existing theories. Contemporary debates on research methodology show the limitations of the positivist approach and emphasise the researcher's reflexivity to select relevant principles on the basis of which the study technique can be determined. Hence, the aforementioned adapted worldview of this inquiry has derived two crucial principles of the present research: empiricism and subjectivity. It will further lead to the derivation of the methodology of the enquiry process.

a) Empiricism

Empiricism is a philosophical stance that describes the knowledge of diverse worldly phenomena as being based solely on sensory experiences. The fundamental principle of empiricism is that experience is the basis of knowledge. This research study adopted empiricism as a philosophical approach to select a method of the enquiry process.

b) Subjectivity

This study recognises that the researcher's subjective communication with participants contributes to the construction of knowledge rather than being a factor that introduces 'biases'. Consequently, the researcher's reflexivity and defining her own position in relation to the participants become crucial components of the research.

3.3 Methodology of the Research

This work identifies itself within the Social Work Practices and Social Work Education and Training genre of research. This genre attempts to understand the professional practices of two distinct categories of social workers - exploring the various components of professional practicesand studying the role of these components in the practices of social workers.

The chosen research design is exploratory as the goal of the study is more to explore the components of professional practices of social workers and seek clarifications regarding the dynamic influences of these components in their practices or institution-building process. This choice also led the researcher to a possibility of better formulation of some of the questions that can be pursued in further research explained in chapter five.

3.3.1 Research Strategy

A research strategy is necessary to plan the roadmap of the study. It reflects the researcher's capability in conducting the study and brings out the methods in terms of choice. It includes techniques of sampling and data collection process as well as data analysis and interpretation strategies.

There are three strategies, i.e., quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method research. **This research chose qualitative research as a strategy or design of the research** to understand the social phenomenon, intrinsic components of professional practices and nature of practices of

social workers.

3.3.2 Research Design

According to Creswell and Poth (2003), there are five major approaches of qualitative research, which are as follows-

    A. Narrative Research

    B. Phenomenological Research

    C. Grounded Theory Research

    D. Ethnographic Research

    E. Case Study Research

The methodological approach followed in this work is Narrative Research. 'Narrative' as a method can be used in a study in multiple ways, such as collecting the narrative of a phenomenon. It is also used as a procedure for analysing stories.

As a method, it begins with the experiences expressed in lived and told stories of individuals and relies on participants' spoken and written words. It reports an individual's experiences and discusses the meaning of those experiences for an individual. In addition, it emphasises the 'context' of the story. Clandinin (2013) makes a case for the need for attending to the context in which the narrative is embedded, advising, "the focus of the narrative inquiry is not only valorising individual's experience but is also an exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals experiences were, and are constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted" (Clandinin, 2013).

Within the methodology of narrative inquiry, particular methods are employed for data collection. Clandinin and Caine, in 2008, mentioned two starting points for narrative inquiry:

1) listening to individuals tell their stories and 2) living alongside participants as they live their stories (Clandinin and Caine, 2008). Thus, along with interviews as the primary method to substantiate the narrative, observation, pictures, discussions, and reports can be used for data collection in the narrative inquiry.

Narrative inquiry opens a gateway for probing and collecting experiences and choices made in an individual's personal, social and professional life. It seeks reasoning from the subject (research participant) to justify his/her choices. Sarbin (1986) stated that "... the narrative is an achievement that brings together mundane facts and fantastic creations; time and place are incorporated. The narrative allows for the inclusion of actor's reasons for their acts as well as the causes of the happenings." (Sarbin, 1986) It is considered that narrative inquiry unfolds a holistic account of human action regarding how he thinks, perceives and makes moral choices. These nuances of the narrative inquiry allowed the researcher to explore and develop insight into components of the professional practices of the social worker. Narratives of the participants revealed components of professional practices in participant's actions and choices they made in the various circumstances of their lives.

3.3.3 Data: Sources, Collection and Analysis

3.3.3.1   Sampling process

Qualitative research is characterised by a lack of pre-determined samples. It does not focus on counting and reaching a certain number, nor does it have a target to reach the probable representativeness of sample units. It goes on until the research data reaches the saturation stage, where researchers do not find newer data. Based on this understanding, the researcher derived the sampling process of the present research work as follows-

3.3.3.2 Universe or population

All voluntary social workers and trained social workers working in the developmental field in

the state of Gujarat constitute the universe of this study.

3.3.3.3 Sampling

As the researcher has not constructed a sample frame, hence, the researcher opted for non-probability sampling. It does not employ randomness in the selection of the sample. Under non-probability sampling, research participants are chosen by a **purposive criterion sampling method.**

3.3.3.3.1 Purposive Criterion sampling –

It is a type of non-probability sampling selected based on the objectives of the study and the characteristics of the population. In this method, the researcher selects the sample with a purpose in mind. Along with its purpose, it seeks samples that meet some predetermined criteria.

The researcher has identified certain criteria for selecting social work practitioners for the present research work. Fulfilment of the criteria by social work practitioners decided eligibility for their participation in this research study. The criteria of the selection are as follows-

Professional Social Workers	Voluntary Social Workers
S/he has an academic degree in social work, i.e., MSW, MA in Social Work or Doctorate in Social Work.	S/he does not possess an academic degree in social work but may or may not have an academic degree in other disciplines.

Working in the Developmental field includes community development, health, education, agriculture and livelihood generation or any issue or group-specific work.	Working in the Developmental field includes community development, health, education, agriculture and livelihood generation or any issue or group-specific work.
S/he should be the founder/director/Managing trustee in the organisation.	S/he should be the founder/director/Managing trustee in the organisation.
S/he should be engaged in full-time social work activities.	S/he should be engaged in full-time social work activities.
S/he should possess a minimum of three years of field experience.	S/he should possess a minimum of three years of field experience.

3.3.3.3.2 Exclusion Criteria

- A foreign not-for-profit organisation registered as a branch, liaison or project office.

- Foundations, Trusts established or supported by Industries.

- Large charitable institutions like schools, colleges and hospitals.

- Religious organisations.

Based on the above criteria, the researcher seeks research participants who are 'institutional builders'.

In this research, the focus is not on the number of participants per se but on the depth and breadth of life narratives of selected participants. In the narrative research, it was found safe to assume that one participant and one life narrative (if carefully sourced) can be sufficient for

highlighting and illuminating the differences between two sets of participants, i.e., professional and voluntary. The researcher has approached purposively selected individuals who can meet the criteria mentioned above to filter a particular number of participants.

Apparently, this methodology appeared very skewed and scant. Nevertheless, this calls for an explanation, which is as follows:

1) In the first step in this direction, the researcher decided to undertake purposive field visits of all the major regions of the state. She tried to explore and identify social work practitioners who meet the criteria mentioned earlier. For instance, the researcher visited Gujarat Vidyapith, Hemchandracharya North Gujarat University and others.

2) Parallel to this, the researcher engaged in the snowball or chain method. It means searching for suitable participants (to the research objectives and methods) through references of such earlier known or identified participants.

3) Through this process, the researcher got a list of 23 professionally trained practitioners. After initial telephonic conversations and meetings with them, the researcher found that four out of twenty-three were unable to fulfil one or more pre-determined eligibility criteria. Out of the remaining nineteen professionally trained practitioners, three practitioners denied to participate in this research, citing personal reasons.

4) The researcher selected seven trained social workers out of the remaining sixteen people based on a criterion of 'information-rich' sources regarding the research objectives, the participants' availability, and the researcher's convenience.

5) However, the researcher got more number of voluntary social workers who meet the eligibility criteria through this process. In order to maintain equal representational weightage of both categories, the researcher selected seven voluntary social workers based on the same criteria.

6) Thereby, a total of 14 participants from both categories are selected for this research to develop an in-depth insight into research parameters from the account of the lived experiences of the participants.

Numerically, this number seems less. However, each of these 14 life narratives accounts of the researcher run into an average of 70-75 pages. All these life narratives were subjected to critical and interpretative analysis according to the research objectives.

3.3.4 Source and Process of Data Collection

3.3.4.1 Geographical Mark-out

This study is delimited to the geographical region of the Gujarat state. Further, the footprints of social work practitioners have been found in the entire state. The researcher observed that the accumulation of social work activities varies in various regions of the state, based on the characteristics of local communities and local social problems. There are more social work activities and organisations in the south Gujarat pocket, which is marked as a tribal belt.

Based on this social work, practitioners in Gujarat are clustered into four pockets: South Gujarat, Central Gujarat, Saurashtra - Kutch and North Gujarat. The researcher chose research participants from all four pockets for the narrative collections. South Gujarat and North Gujarat are marked as tribal belts; hence there is a high accumulation of social organisations and social work practitioners. In comparison, Saurashtra and Kutch region has a smaller number of social organisations and activities. However, climatic conditions, cultural factors and conflict zones because of international borders are such issues which have invited significant social activities and intervention in the Kutch region. The fourth pocket is Central Gujarat, which has better socio-economic conditions as compared to other regions. This region is mainly urban community-based. Therefore, the researcher has found urban-based social work practitioners from this region. The following figure reflects the geographical locations of the research

participants of the present study-

3.3.4.2 Approaching Research Participants and Developing Familiarity

Research participants have been selected based on the above criteria. Initially, the researcher approached participants by telephone and email asking for an appointment for the meeting. In the meetings with each participant, the researcher explained the entire concept and process of data collection and took their consent to participate in this research. After 1-2 meetings, the researcher went to live with participants at the project site (where s/he is working).

During the staying period with each participant, the researcher often engaged herself with rapport building and getting familiar with the environment. This process was essential for her as well as participants in narrative research. The researcher started with conversations or 'conversation as an interview' to collect the information. In addition to this, the researcher employed formal interviews, observation and living alongside participants for the data collection. In this enquiry, the researcher made shadow practice with research participants to collect narratives of the participant's life. The shadow practice involves shadowing the movements of practitioners without the involvement in any action.

3.3.4.3 Researcher's Routine in Field

The researcher formally started fieldwork in January 2019. She started with developing familiarity with participants. During the stay with each participant, the field routine of the researcher is from morning till going to bed at night. The days with participants on the field were mostly used for informal talk, visits, walks in the community, and working with participants. It also includes conversations with family members and co-workers of the participants. The majority of formal interviews were conducted during participant breaks, meals, or late evening. In most cases, formal interviews with the participants spanned multiple sittings. However, on several occasions, they were conducted in a single sitting.

Besides this, memoing based on the researcher's continuous lived experiences formed a part of the routine. It was almost like living with a 'researcher- antenna' to look for details during shadow practice with participants. Tea table and dining table discussions, conversations with family members, co-workers and community members, sitting in the office, walking with participants and almost all the activities became research time for the researcher on-field. Narratives collected through living life with participants play a significant role in developing the researcher's reflexivity.

3.3.5 Tools for Data Collection: Real Life Methods

The primary data collection tool in this enquiry was an interview schedule. For the interaction, the researcher chose multiple methods according to the circumstances of the field and participants. Therefore, multiple methods were adopted for data collection in the study. These may be clubbed together into an umbrella term- Real Life Methods- such as interviews, observations, informal conversations, family interviews, individual interviews and living along with participants & working together.

3.3.6 Data Treatment and Analysis

Initially, collected data was transformed from audio to text through transcription in the original (Gujarati) language, followed by translating the data into the English language. Atlas.ti is the CAQDAS (computer-aided qualitative data analysis software) program used for qualitative data analysis by the researcher to assist in coding and derivation of themes from the interview data, followed by a thematic analysis of the data.

3.3.6.1 Recording

The narratives of the participants were collected using the aforementioned real-life methods. These narratives have been analysed to determine coherent patterns. It is followed by thematic analysis and interpretation. It formulated a comprehensive 'story' of social workers' practices, which 'painted' various components of professional practices through the accounts of the narratives of the life being communicated between the researcher, participants, spaces, and lived experiences of the researcher.

3.3.7 Chapterisation

The Chapterisation plan of the research work is as follows-

1. Introduction

2. Review of Literature

3. Methodology: An Account of Narrative Enquiry

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

5. Findings, Conclusions and Suggestions