

## **Short communication**

# **PARENT INVOLVEMENT TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' LEARNING IN LINGMETHANG CLUSTER SCHOOLS OF BHUTAN**

### **ABSTRACT**

Parental involvement and parent-school partnership strategies are critical factors to children's academic success. In this qualitative case study, parents', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of parental involvement and parent-school partnership strategies were examined in Lingmethang cluster schools under Mongar District, Bhutan. The study also focused on exploring the parents' understanding of their involvement in schooling processes based on the six typologies of Epstein.

This study adopted a qualitative case study employing interview, observation and document analysis tools. A purposeful sampling method was used in the study. Nine parents, nine teachers, and nine administrators participated in the study. Data was collected and analyzed. The findings revealed that most parents are more involved in non-academic activities than academic activities. Barriers that parents, teachers, and administrators encountered in relation to school involvement and support are also noted. It was perceived that parental, school, and community involvement were important for children's academic success and that parent-school partnerships and support were critically necessary. The implications of the research findings are also suggested for future research.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, student learning, communication, volunteering, decision making

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the realm of educational institutions, the engagement of parents in multifarious activities, spanning from administrative planning and management to the fostering of school development initiatives and the orchestration of fundraising endeavors, has long been considered an indispensable component. However, it is noteworthy that the issue of parental involvement in the context of academic achievement has persistently garnered attention, even during periods characterized by routine educational operations. The protracted and pervasive closures of educational facilities, precipitated by the unprecedented global

pandemic, namely COVID-19, have emerged as profoundly disruptive forces that encapsulated the academic year 2020-2021.

These closures, which abruptly disrupted the daily lives of students and their families, compelled educators to grapple with the formidable challenge of implementing remote learning strategies. It is in this crucible that the educational establishment has come to a heightened realization of the paramount importance of fostering parental engagement.

### **Research Question**

How do parent involvements enhance a child's learning?

### **Sub Questions**

1. How can schools involve parents in contributing towards improving the academic performance of the children?
2. How has parent's involvement in the school activities helped enhance a child's academic performance?
3. How has parent's involvement at home helped enhance the child's academic performance?
4. What are the challenges faced both by the school and parents for effective parent involvement?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of the study are to examine the current practice of parent involvement in school. It is also to find out the challenges and support required for effective parent involvement in the school. Further, the study intends to;

1. Identify ways schools involve parents in enhancing children's learning.
2. Find out parent involvement in the school to support learning.
3. Explore how parents are involved at home to support children.
4. Study the challenges faced both by the school and parents for effective parent involvement and
5. Work out a way forward for effective parent involvement

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Many researchers recognize the important role that strong positive bonds between homes and schools play in the development and education of children [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]. The collaboration between schools, homes, and communities can lead to academic achievement for students. Studies have also shown that successful students' have strong academic support from their involved parents [5]. Furthermore, research on effective schools, those where students are learning and achieving, has consistently shown that these schools, despite often working in low social and economic neighborhoods, have strong and positive school-home relationships [4][5]. More importantly, these effective schools with a positive school climate have made a real effort in reaching out to their students' families to bring about good cooperation. Sanders and Sheldon [4] maintain that schools become successful when a strong and positive relationship among students, parents, teachers, and the community has been established. All students are more likely to experience academic success if their home environment is supportive [2, 4].

Epstein [6, 7] claims that there are many reasons for developing and establishing a partnership between school, family, and community. The main reason for such a partnership is to aid students in succeeding at school. Other reasons include improving school climate and school programs, developing parental skills and leadership, assisting families in connecting with others in the school and the community, and assisting teachers with their work. All these reasons emphasize the importance of parents playing an active role in their children's education and keeping a strong and positive relationship with schools.

Parental involvement has always been an essential component in school events. Parents, who have been considered as one of the stakeholders of the school community, play tremendous roles in the child's educational and environmental transformation; thus, the intensity of participation that parents have in their child's education and school, more often, have to be realized [8].

A study by Henderson and Berla [2] found that students are not the only ones who benefit from family engagement; parents and teachers do, too. Teachers can prepare parents to help with homework. And engaged parents tend to think highly of teachers, which improves teacher morale. Knowing more about a student's family life can also help teachers prepare lessons that better fit student's needs or interact more efficiently with families (p 14-16). And because students receive more support, classrooms with engaged parents perform better as a whole. This informs that teachers are also benefited from parent involvement and it is the indication that the school should initiate parent involvement for the greater cause that is the students' learning and achievement.

As of now, no study on parent involvement to enhance students' learning has been taken in the Lingmethang cluster. It is therefore an opportunity for the researcher to undertake the study to find out the current practice of parent involvement in school and how effective parent involvement would bring about changes in the student's achievement.

Quality of education has always been a concern, so is the parent involvement. Educating children is not the sole responsibility of teachers. Parents are equal partners. Many researchers recognize the important role that strong positive bonds between homes and schools play in the development and education of children [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].

When it comes to academics, there are numerous ways for parents to be involved. Helping with homework, meeting with teachers, and attending school events are just a few of them. However, when parents do not take an active interest in these activities, their child's grades are more likely to suffer. That is where we can see the lack of parental involvement. One cause for low academic performance is due to lack of parental support [9].

In the school context, parents are mostly involved in non-academic related events. They contribute labour for the school development, provide services during the school events such as annual concerts, sports day, and fundraising. The studies by Mongar[10] found that parents are involved in schools only for labour contributions and fundraising activities.

In all schools, a decision-making and governing body commonly known as the school management board [SMB] exists. One or two members of the board should be the representative of the parents. It is where we can see the involvement of the parent in the school, but the mandates of the board are to look at the management aspects of the school. EMSSD [11] states "all schools to institute a body that promotes community participation in managing the school." (p23). But our management body monitors and reviews the academic aspects is the underlying belief of the study. Further, our school policy does not speak on the involvement of parents in academic-related activities. Else we would have parent volunteers in the class to aid teachers in lesson delivery, carrying out the assessment, supervise and control student's discipline.

The study was carried out in a few selected schools in Lingmethang cluster where parents, teachers, and principals were the participants. To examine the current practice of parent involvement in the school and at homes that will aid in the academic success of the child, this study has been initiated by the researcher in the quest to get the response to the below queries.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Approach and Design**

The researcher employed a qualitative approach for this case study, aligning with an interpretive, naturalistic stance. This approach prioritizes understanding the subject matter in depth and contributing to important research questions or existing knowledge (Creswell, 2007).

### **3.2 Data Collection Methods**

Data were gathered using a combination of methods, including interviews, observations, and document analysis. These methods were selected due to their suitability for capturing rich, context-specific information regarding the involvement of parents in the school environment.

#### **3.2.1 Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of participants, including parents, students, and teachers. The interview questions were carefully designed to elicit diverse opinions and insights related to parent-school involvement.

#### **3.2.2 Observations**

Direct observations of school interactions and activities were carried out to provide contextual data. Observational data complemented and enriched the interview findings.

#### **3.2.3 Document Analysis**

Relevant documents, such as school policies, communications, and reports, were analyzed to gain insights into the formal aspects of parent-school relationships.

### **3.3 Sampling Strategy**

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants. The selection criteria included the type of school location, such as urban, satellite town, and semi-remote, to ensure a wide representation of perspectives. This diverse sample was chosen to enhance the depth and breadth of data collection.

### **3.4 Data Validity and Reliability**

The validity and reliability of this study were rigorously addressed through several strategies:

**3.4.1 Pilot Testing:** Before full-scale data collection, pilot testing was conducted to refine the interview questions, observation protocols, and document analysis procedures. This helped ensure that the instruments were effective in capturing the intended data.

**3.4.2 Member Checking:** Participants were given the opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of their responses and the researcher's interpretations, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the data.

**3.4.3 Triangulation:** Data from multiple sources (interviews, observations, and document analysis) were triangulated to cross-verify findings. This methodological triangulation contributes to the robustness of the study by reducing the potential for bias and strengthening the validity of the results.

**3.4.4 Data Analysis:** A systematic and transparent approach to data analysis, such as thematic analysis or grounded theory, should be mentioned. This step is crucial for deriving patterns and themes from the collected data.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher has a moral and professional obligation to be ethical, even when the research subjects are unaware of or unconcerned about ethics [13]. Human research should never harm the people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteer for the study. This often concerns being careful not to reveal information that would humiliate or imperil any participants. Voluntary participation; no harm to the participants; anonymity and confidentiality and special attention to the participation of the learners who are regarded as minors in this study, were adhered to Babbie & Mouton [14].

It is of utmost importance to obtain approval from the Royal University of Bhutan and other concerned agencies before the collection of data. The ethical obligation should be considered at all stages. Data collected will be accessible only to the researcher, supervisors, and participants. Keep all data collected for future reference.

### **3.6 Limitations of the Study**

Limitations are likely even though the researcher takes utmost care during the course of the study. The validity and reliability of the study are ensured through reliable tools and triangulation of data. However, due to factors such as time, availability of transport, and demographic situations, the study has limitations on the number of samples and participants. The study is aimed at a particular school context and does not cover multiple sites and a large sample. As such, the findings cannot be generalized. The result of this study is exclusively for the said purpose only and thereby does not represent others.

### **3.7 The context setting**

This qualitative case study on parent involvement in school was carried out in three schools under the Lingmethang cluster. These schools were selected based on purposive sampling. All the research sites and the participants were selected considering the level of school and variation in locations [each from urban, semi-urban, and remote settings]. The school administrators, teachers, and parents were included in the focus group interviews. The purposive sampling was applied to get accurate and reliable information on parent involvement in their school contexts from different perspectives. This variation in the setting would provide a variety of participants' lived experiences, mixed attitudes, and abilities for this case study. Nine administrators who are principals and the members of the school management team, nine teachers, and nine parents participated in the extensive and informative interviews in three schools. In the field, three single face-to-face interviews with principals and school management team [SMT] members and three focus group teachers' interviews, and three parents' interviews comprising parents coming from different backgrounds were conducted.

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Perception of Parent Involvement by Parents, Teachers, and Management**

There were different perspectives about parents' involvement in schooling among the participants who were involved in this study.

#### **4.1.1 Parents' perception of parent involvement**

There were different perspectives on parents' involvement in school among the parents. The common perspective was that the school had more responsibility for the

learning progress of their children than the parents. Moreover, most of the parents were involved in the schooling process merely to appreciate the school's invitation or during the Parent Teacher Meeting [PTM]. Furthermore, parents from the villages lacked information about parent involvement. The findings showed that they did not understand parent involvement in the same way the school would like them to understand. There were several factors affecting parents' understanding of parent involvement in schooling processes. Firstly, the lack of information on parents was related to participating in schooling processes, contributing to the school committee, and collaborating with the community. Secondly, parents were afraid when they got a phone call from school or asked to visit their teachers. Thirdly, parents did not understand the importance of their involvement for their children in learning at home.

According to a parent [LPG- 02]:

"To me, parent involvement means giving time to my children, supporting them with the materials required to complete their assignment, talking about their academic performance, participating in the school activities whenever asked by the school, listening to their problems, and trying to solve it involving the teachers and encouraging children to do well. I have been constantly involved with my children in their education and they are doing very well. This is possible due to my involvement with my children".

While the parents from the villages viewed parent involvement as the involvement of parents in the school's developmental work, the perception of TPG-03 on the parent involvement is merely allowing them to participate in the school activities by the school management.

Most of the views gathered from the parents who were civil servants shared the common perception of parent involvement as the engagement of parents in bringing and educating their children by involving them in the children's homework, assignments, and projects to bring about academic success. The perception of parents from the villages was merely about engaging in the school's developmental works or attending meetings and conferences whenever called by the school.

#### **4.1.2 Teachers Perception of parent involvement**

The data showed that most of the teachers understood parent involvement as necessary to improve the academic achievement of students. When the parents get involved in the learning process, the children would be motivated to do better at school. Parents' involvement in their children's education at home included motivating their children to learn, creating a conducive environment at home, monitoring their learning, and assisting them in doing homework. In addition, parents were able to build a positive emotional connection when they had good communication with their children. On the other side, parent involvements at the school included their willingness to attend school events, the initiative to communicate with teachers, and their contribution in providing suggestions to support the school policy on the involvement of parents.

Parent involvement could help improve children's behavior and achievement in school. A teacher [LTG-01] described parent involvement as the relationship between parents and children that plays a pivotal role in children's academic success. Further, parent involvement was also viewed as an effective communication between school and home using various platforms such as Telegram, Messenger, WeChat, WhatsApp, Teacher - Child conferences and meetings. (LTG-02 & GTG-03)

According to GTG-02, parent involvement means:

"Parents demonstrate involvement in reading with their children, helping with their homework, and discussing the issues with the child's teachers, creating room for the growth of the children's minds as well as physical strength to have a better outcome. In addition to that, in the digital era, parents are more advanced in the field of

technology, and children are supported with digital gadgets to help them learn and succeed in academics”.

Most of the teachers expressed the view that parental involvement was important and advantageous both to children and the school. They agreed that parental involvement improved the performance of children at school and in addition the effectiveness and quality of the school. A GTG-02 teacher claimed that parent involvement not only increased academic achievement but also improved children's behaviour and attitudes positively towards school.

#### **4.1.3 Management Perception on parent involvement**

All Principals shared similar views on parent involvement. Parent involvement could be an essential factor in improving knowledge and supporting children's education. When the parents get involved in the learning process, the children would be motivated to do better at school. It improved children's behavior, attitude toward the study, and achievement in academics.

LAG-03 states:

“To bring up a child, it requires a whole community. Therefore, parents, teachers, and administrator's coordination are of paramount importance in the upbringing and development of the child. A child who is cared for and supported by their parents usually performs better in school and academics. If both the teacher and parent take equal responsibilities in grooming the child, the performance is always good.”

The Principal GAG -01 described that parents have the responsibility to support their children in school. This revealed that to provide good education to children, it is the moral duty of the school [principals & teachers] as well as of parents to work collaboratively.

The data also informed that parent involvement had improved academic performance and overall behavior of the child in the school. It has in a way helped fix accountability and take ownership of learning. It was crucial for the development of the school and the academic performance of the learners. Teachers alone cannot bring changes in students but the involvement of parents could.

#### **4.2 Roles of Parents, Teachers, and Management for Effective Parent Involvement**

Parents from the rural area felt that their important role was to enroll their children in school. They perceived that their obligation as parents is completed in terms of learning when their children were admitted, and it is the responsibility of the school to provide their children with knowledge. This showed that parents who do not have education lacked the knowledge of parent involvement. However, the data showed that all parents wanted their children to succeed in school. The expectations of parents for their children are all positive.

Most of the respondents expressed that creating a supportive home environment was the moral duty of parents. A parent LPG -01 reported, “I provide a nurturing and supportive environment for my child by offering love, care, and emotional guidance at home”. From the interview, it was learnt that parents prepared home based study, provided necessary resources, and encouraged regular homework completion.

When enquired about the communication, most parents informed that effective communication between parents and school was vital for children's academic success. The communication channels used by the school and parents showed that there was a collaborative partnership. Constant communication has helped resolve many classroom issues. Similarly, LTG -03 reported that she provided regular updates on the student's progress, shared information about classroom activities, and addressed any concerns or questions parents raised.

A positive school environment, and a welcoming atmosphere at the school perceived by parents (TPG-02) could improve parent involvement. Parents wished to be involved but school norms sometimes do not allow them to be openly involved.

Teachers play a crucial role in fostering effective parent involvement. Teachers shared various opinions on their roles and the support required from the parents on parent involvement. A teacher, GTG-02 informed; "If parents want their children to succeed, their role should be more active in fulfilling the basics of their children's needs". From the interview it was found that most teachers wanted parents to engage in assisting children with homework, attending school activities, and discussing with the school to inquire about the development of their children in school. In the same manner, a teacher LTG - 01 stated, "children who have received good care at home usually also have a good character and good manners in school".

Many parents informed that teachers should share effective learning strategies to support their child's academic progress. One parent (TPG-03) said, teachers could organize workshops or training sessions specifically designed for parents. From the study, it was found that parents would love to attend sessions on parenting skills, effective communication, understanding child development, or specific curriculum areas. The data also revealed that schools having full time counselors conducted one round of parenting workshops for the parents.

All administrators interviewed agreed that the management team in the school plays a vital role in fostering effective parent involvement. They set the tone for the entire school community by creating a supportive and inclusive culture that values and encourages parent involvement. However, data informed that parents in the school were only involved in parent-teacher meetings, school developmental tasks, decision-making processes, and school activities. In relation to this, TAG-01 reported that they have not involved parents in academic activities since most of them are uneducated. However, they supported that it is of great importance for the school to involve the parents in entire school affairs.

Teacher focused group discussion informed on the requirement of resources and training opportunities for staff and parents to enhance their understanding and skills related to parent involvement. It was found from the administrator that such training could be availed online since the school lacked finance, time, and expertise.

All schools were informed that they were connected with parents for important activities in the school which centered on students' learning. However, the parents' participation seemed minimal due to numerous reasons. LTG-3 reported that some parents are not concerned about their child and did not bother about their performance. Similar views were also shared by LAG-02, LAG-03, LTG-02, and GTG-03. This indicated that there is a strong need for the policy of parent participation in the school.

### **4.3 Current Status of Parent Involvement at Schools and Home**

This section of the study describes the current practice of parent involvement in school and at home.

#### **4.3.1 Involvement of Parents in School.**

All parents who were involved in the study remarked that numerous parental involvement opportunities were available when the school hosted activities such as PTM, awards programs, fundraising events, cultural programs, sports-related events, and school developmental activities. The school invited parents through letters, text messages via Messengers, Telegrams, and WeChat to attend school events. "I do my best to make sure one of us (parents) attends the program", LPG-03 remarked. Similarly, TPG-02 said "My child's mother attends meeting most of the time since I am held up with farm work". This indicated that parents encountered some challenges in attending the school functions.

The data revealed that PTM and social online groups such as Telegram was the most common forum for the involvement of the parents in the school be it for academic, decision-making, or volunteering. After the schools were hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic where mass gatherings were disallowed, social forums such as Telegram, Messenger, WhatsApp, and WeChat took the place of face-to-face meetings. It was known that online social forums are common, appropriate, and desired platforms for most principals and teachers for seeking parents' involvement.

While some kinds of parent involvement are noted in the school in this study, most of the involvement was for school development purposes, contributions, and decision-making. None of the parents informed that they were involved in the school for academic purposes except for the parent-teacher meeting during the terminal examination result declaration.

#### **4.3.2 Involvement of Parents at Home.**

When parents were asked about their involvement at home, most responded that they were involved in monitoring homework and assignments. They kept informed about their child's homework and checked their assignments regularly to ensure they were completed on time and to a satisfactory standard. The data showed that there was a strong correlation between those that received homework help at home and their academic progress. It was found from the teachers that students benefited from parents' homework involvement in achieving higher rates of homework completion and higher grades. Parent involvement in homework completion was commonly expected by schools, teachers, and parents, all of whom believed that parent homework involvement was vital for students' school performance.

Parents agreed that they play a crucial role in their children's academic success, and there are several ways they could be involved at home. Parent LPG -01 said,

"I establish a positive learning environment by creating a dedicated study space at home that is quiet, well-lit, and free from distractions. This helped my child focus on his studies and promote a positive attitude towards learning".

Another parent informed me that she often discussed academic expectations and goals with her child. She added, "I help my child set realistic and achievable targets for his studies. I regularly review his progress and provide guidance and support as required" (LPG-02).

The study found that most of the parents were involved in helping children with homework at home.

#### **4.3.3 Ways and Means of Communication**

Strong communication was found fundamental to a parent-teacher partnership and to foster a sense of community for the child between home and school. The study also showed that positive communication between parents and teachers helped improve a child's academic performance.

Perception of parent LPG-01 on communication included "actively helping our children at home and school; being concerned about their education; going to the PTM, parent-teacher conferences, and visiting the teachers when the time comes" demonstrates effective communication.

Parent GPG-02 stated, "Creating a two-way communication between us as parents, and the school is important." Parent LPG-03 shared that, "Regular schedule of useful notes, phone calls, and other communication".

The data confirmed that various channels of communication were used by the schools to communicate with parents such as through phone, letter, online social media such as Telegrams, Messenger, and Facebook, parent-teacher meetings, and events and celebrations.

The form of communication using the phone was used by the school and parents. Parent LPG -01 said that the school contacted them by phone, when something urgent needed to be discussed, especially issues related to discipline, absenteeism, and substance abuse. This communication was mostly used verbally and in informal settings since it was the fastest way to contact the parents.

GTG-02 indicated:

“We call parents if something critical has happened, for instance, if the child is not feeling well or if the child gets injured in an accident and there is an urgent need for the parent to come. Sometimes we contact the parents if the child is absent for more than three days, to check that there is no serious or urgent matter behind the child's absence.”

When teachers were asked if they contacted parents about issues other than problems with the children themselves, most indicated that they only contacted parents when children encountered problems at school.

When the communication between the school and parents was about the children's achievements such as terminal examination result declaration, PTM, and the invitation to attend celebrations and school events it was done through formal letters. LAG-01 said, “We write official letters to all the parents informing them to attend the result declaration, parent-teacher meeting, or the school events. The formal letter which also remained in the school file records serves as the means of verification [MoV] of communication with the parents”.

With the introduction of social media, most of the schools used Telegram, Messenger, WeChat, WhatsApp, and Facebook as the fastest means of communication. It was found that all schools used one or other kinds of social media to communicate with parents. The class teacher created a group where all the parents and students were invited or added so that all present in the group were informed of what was happening in the class or school. The most common forum used by the school was Telegram since it was secure. This forum was used by teachers to contact parents and to inform children regarding homework, extended learning activities, and assignments. It could be said that this was one of the school programs to involve parents in learning.

Three parent-teacher meetings were identified in the focus group discussion: year beginning PTM at the beginning of the academic year in February, the second parent-teacher meeting and term one result declaration in July, and the year-end PTM and annual result declaration in December.

All meetings were scheduled and reflected in the school calendar and year plans. Besides result declaration of mid-year and annual examinations, other agendas were commonly formulated by the school through their meetings. The agendas for result declarations included the result analysis of each class, subject, and gender. Through the meetings, top performers were recognized with awards and certificates. The general agenda depended on the need of the hour which was discussed and approved by the school through their in-house meeting.

Most of the teachers and administrators agreed that they organized various social events for parents to attend. These celebrations included honoring distinguished students (awards day), celebrating social events such as His Majesty's Birthday, National Day, Teacher's Day, Children's Day, Annual Sports Meet, Fete Day, and important global observance day. It was also noted that some parents came forward to organize events such as Teacher's Day. One teacher quotes: “We nearly celebrate all occasions in order to bring parents together and create awareness of the important events” (LPG-03).

#### **4.3.4 Challenges of Parent Involvement**

Several challenges of parent involvement had been identified through the study. Everyone involved in this study agreed that parent involvement in schools was of utmost importance. The data revealed that the schools had initiated numerous activities such as

PTM, annual concert, fundraising activity, awards, and celebrations to involve parents productively. However, challenges of parent involvement were also noted. The challenges encountered by school and parents are presented in the following sections.

#### **4.3.4.1 Work schedule and time conflict**

The reason reported by most teachers for parents not engaging in school activities was their work obligations. According to the teachers, time constraints and the work schedules of parents were main problems that hampered parental involvement in school, particularly if both parents were working. One teacher explained that: "Parents might have busy schedules due to work, personal commitments, or other responsibilities. This can make it challenging for them to find time to participate actively in school activities or attend meetings". (LTG-01)

Few teachers expressed that time constraint was the biggest challenge as most of the parents in their school were civil servants. They had to work within the limited leave period and attending school activities and leaving their work was difficult at times. (LAG-03, GAG-02, GTG-01, and GTG-02)

#### **4.3.4.2 Communication barriers**

The study found that language barriers or limited access to communication channels made it difficult for schools to effectively communicate with parents. This could impede the flow of information and hinder collaboration. It was also found that the school communicated either through letters or social media groups. Parents who were not educated found it difficult to understand and comprehend the content of the letter.

#### **4.3.4.3 Varying levels of engagement**

Most of the parents showed different levels of interest and motivation when it came to involvement in their child's education. Some parents were highly engaged and proactive, while others were less involved due to various reasons. One teacher pointed out that:

"Some parents are very welcoming when it comes to providing feedback on their children. They showed a lot of concern and when asked for support constant replies are made. But some parents do not bother to look at the message. They even do not like to visit the class when called for" (LTG-03).

#### **4.3.4.4 Limited resources**

Some administrators pointed out that schools had limited resources to support and facilitate parent involvement. This included financial resources, staff time, or physical infrastructure for conducting events and activities.

LAG-01 & LAG-02 informed:

"We do not have suitable space to conduct the meetings. "Whenever we call parents for the meeting, we have to ask for the geog's meeting hall and need to align the meeting dates with the availability of the hall. Arranging meetings out of the school campus is difficult since we need to arrange everything and it is time-consuming".

#### **4.3.4.5 Lack of knowledge or skills**

Some teachers expressed lack of knowledge and confidence in involving parents because they often did not know how to involve parents effectively or how to use them as resources. It was noted that teachers were reluctant to involve parents in school due to the lack of training on parenting.

#### **4.3.4.6 Parent diversity**

Principals informed that the school serves students from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and socio-economic statuses. Understanding and addressing the needs and expectations of a diverse parent population could be a complex task.

#### **4.3.4.7 Balancing roles and responsibilities**

Principals declared that most often schools need to strike a balance between involving parents and maintaining their professional responsibilities. It could be challenging for them to delegate appropriate roles and responsibilities to parents without overburdening them or undermining the authority of school staff.

#### **4.3.4.8 Lack of policy related to parent involvement**

All principals and teachers agreed that a strong and well-structured policy or guideline on parent involvement empowers both the school and parents to make a significant contribution in educating the children.

During the interviews, it was noted that the school did not have a parent involvement policy nor did they receive any guidelines from the ministry. The document analysis data also indicated that there was no clear direction on parent involvement in the policy documents.

#### **4.3.4.9 Transportation challenges**

Parents who lived far from the school claimed that transportation was a barrier for the involvement. It was noted that lack of access to transportation options could limit their involvement opportunities. A parent TPG-02 stated: "Transportation is the biggest challenge. It is difficult to get a ride to the school since hardly few vehicles ply our farm roads". A similar concern on the transportation issue was also shared by the parent LPG-03. "I completely depend on others for transportation. It is often not easy to get the lift to the school", the parent added.

#### **4.3.4.10 Personal limitations**

Few principals pointed out that some parents have physical or mental health challenges that make it difficult for them to actively participate in their child's education. These limitations could impact their ability to engage in school activities.

## **5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study focused on the perception of parental involvement in education, particularly among educated parents who held civil service positions. The findings of the research were consistent with previous studies conducted by Grossman et al[15] and highlighted several key points:

- Educated parents emphasized providing academic support at home, such as helping with homework, and encouraging non-academic activities, including supervision and disciplinary measures. They viewed parental involvement as a direct engagement in their children's education.
- Both teachers and principals acknowledged the importance of parental involvement for children's academic progress and school effectiveness. This aligns with the views of Epstein [16] and Vellymalay [17].
- Schools and teachers made continuous efforts to create a welcoming school climate to promote parental involvement. Research by Eccles and Harold [18] and Epstein and Dauber [19] supported the idea that parental involvement increased when teachers actively encouraged it.

- Principals played a fundamental role in supporting parental involvement practices. They encouraged parental participation and provided assistance to teachers in organizing parental involvement activities.
- Educated parents, teachers, and schools recognized that providing quality education to children was a shared responsibility. Collaboration between these stakeholders was seen as essential for students' success, supported by Hausman and Goldring [20] and Mongar [10]
- The study revealed that schools provided various opportunities for parental involvement, such as PTM, awards programs, fundraising events, and cultural shows. These events allowed parents to engage in school life and contribute to decision-making.
- The study suggested a need for a shift towards more parental involvement in academic-related activities, including curriculum and instructional planning, assessment, and budget decisions. Currently, schools primarily involve parents in non-academic activities[10].
- Scheduled Parent-Teacher Meetings were identified as a common event that fostered communication between parents and teachers, enabling discussions about the child's progress and educational needs[10].
- Parents were actively involved in supporting their child's academic progress at home. This included establishing routines for homework and study time, providing a suitable study environment, monitoring homework and assignments, and offering guidance and support when the child faced difficulties.

Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of collaboration between parents, teachers, and schools in promoting student success and call for a greater focus on involving parents in academic-related activities to enhance the educational experience for children.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Recommendations for Schools [Principals and Teachers]**

- Both principals and teachers should involve more parents in school-based academic-related activities by identifying and planning activities that encourage greater parental involvement. Schools can establish constructive communication and collaboration with parents and other immediate stakeholders.
- Schools can enhance parental involvement by developing robust programs, evaluating the current state of parental involvement through surveys involving teachers and parents, and regularly assessing outcomes and results.
- Innovative and time-efficient communication methods, such as technology, can bridge the gap between parents and teachers.
- Schools should support parents by organizing workshops or orientation programs tailored to their interests and needs.
- Establish a strong, documented policy of parent involvement at both the school and Ministry of Education (MoE) levels.
- Institute a system for regular reporting on student performance involving class teachers, subject teachers, and principals.

### **6.2 Recommendations for Parents**

- Parents should proactively seek updates on their child's performance from class teachers and subject-specific educators at regular intervals.
- Parents are encouraged to foster collaboration and cooperation with school administration and volunteer their time, financial support, and labor contributions.

- Parents should actively engage in academic-related activities within the school environment to nurture their children's academic development.
- Recommendations for District Education Office
- District Education Officers should recommend a significant augmentation of parental involvement in school-based academic activities, accompanied by a robust monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Propose the implementation of District-Based In-service Programmes (DBIP) designed to provide comprehensive training to all teachers and principals.
- Recommendations for MoE:
- Formulate policies and enact educational reforms that emphasize the vital role of parents as genuine partners in their children's learning and overall success.
- Collaborate with the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) to incorporate specialized modules into the pre-service teacher education curriculum to equip future educators with the essential skills for fostering meaningful partnerships with parents.
- Recommendations for future research studies:
- Conduct similar studies on parental involvement in different schools in various clusters or districts to determine if similar degrees of parental involvement practices exist elsewhere.
- Consider a quantitative research approach for larger datasets and a deeper understanding of reasons for low parental involvement in academic activities and volunteerism in schools.

### **6.3 Recommendations for District Education Office**

- District Education Officers should recommend a significant augmentation of parental involvement in school-based academic activities, accompanied by a robust monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Propose the implementation of District-Based In-service Programmes (DBIP) designed to provide comprehensive training to all teachers and principals.

### **6.4 Recommendations for MoE:**

- Formulate policies and enact educational reforms that emphasize the vital role of parents as genuine partners in their children's learning and overall success.
- Collaborate with the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) to incorporate specialized modules into the pre-service teacher education curriculum to equip future educators with the essential skills for fostering meaningful partnerships with parents.

### **6.5 Recommendations for future research studies:**

- Conduct similar studies on parental involvement in different schools in various clusters or districts to determine if similar degrees of parental involvement practices exist elsewhere.
- Consider a quantitative research approach for larger datasets and a deeper understanding of reasons for low parental involvement in academic activities and volunteerism in schools.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The study underscores the critical role of parental involvement in education and the need to bridge the gap between non-academic and academic parental engagement.

The study findings and recommendations provide insights that should be applied judiciously to enhance parental engagement in education while considering the specific context of different educational settings.

Recognizing diverse perspectives of parents, teachers, and administrators and addressing areas needing improvement can lead to more effective programs and initiatives that foster genuine parental engagement, resulting in greater student success and school effectiveness.

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