Parental Involvement in Secondary Schools: Perspectives of Teachers and Parents

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Abstract

Parental involvement in the education of student is new in Bhutanese schools and no study has been conducted to examine the parental involvement in their children's education. This study aims to find out how secondary schools currently involve parents and barriers to such involvement. The study was carried out in one higher secondary schools in Thimphu Thromde, Bhutan. Data were collected through observation, interview and focus group discussion. The observation of parental involvement in the school was carried out for three years and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 teachers of the same school. A non-probability convenience sampling was used to select the school and teacher participants. To substantiate the findings, parents of seven students studying in the same school were randomly selected to participate in the focus group discussions. The observation, interview and focus group discussion were analysed using emerging themes. The study revealed that the school involves parents through Parent Teacher Meeting and the School Parents Education Awareness programmes. However, there was no written school guideline on parental involvement and effective communication between teachers and parents. Teachers were not confident to involve parents due to limited exposure and lack of training. The study recommends addressing the issue by developing formal guidelines on involving parents in their children's education process and ensuring consistent monitoring and follow-up of its implementation.

Keywords: Bhutan, Parental Involvement, Parent-Teacher Meeting, Parent, Teacher.

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Introduction

Bhutan aspires to become a 'knowledge-based Gross National Happiness society' (Gross National Happiness Commission [GNHC], 2018). While the vision is laudable, various studies point out a need to address problem of education quality in the view of great deal of discussion about the quality of education offered in schools across Bhutan (VanBalkom & Sherman, 2010).

The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2018-2023) calls for organizations to collaborate and cooperate to fulfil the noble aspiration and trust bestowed by His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo (GNHC, 2019). Effective school management and the teaching-learning process depend on the joint effort and mutual support of various organizations. However, the territorial, protective and defensive nature of different organizations hinder stakeholders from connecting, supporting and learning from each other (Tshewang Dorji, 2021). Mutual support and interaction between the schools and parents can improve the learning experience of students in the school as well as address teachers' and parents' concerns (iDiscoveri Education & Royal Education Council [REC], 2009).

Education is known as public and merit goods and thus student learning outcome is dependent on the combined efforts of multi-stakeholders. Being multi-dimensional, the quality of education has to be understood from the perspectives of multi-stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers, community, school management, education officials, curriculum developers and policymakers. The partnership of schools with diverse stakeholders is important to include, engage, collaborate, dialogue, reimagine, rethink and set with them the importance of educating students (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2015).

Bhutan's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness has been incorporated into school education through the Educating for Gross National Happiness initiative to promote holistic, eco-sensitive, contemplative, and culturally responsive educational approaches (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2012). Introduced in 2010, Educating for Gross National Happiness initiative shifted the academic-oriented

curriculum to a happiness-oriented curriculum (Deki Gyamtsho et al., 2017; MoE, 2011). All schools were required to deliberately transmit GNH principles and values through school leadership and management, curriculum delivery, pedagogy, curricular activities and school community involvement and relationship. Students' academic achievement is also influenced by parental learning support at home and their supporting activities in the school.

Parental involvement is emphasized in the school-community relationship through a GNH school (MoE, 2011) and Standard Seven of the Bhutan Professional Standard for Teachers which highlights quality education as a shared responsibility between the school and parents. Thus, strengthening the relationship between school management and teachers with parents to maximize engagement in the education process has assumed greater importance (MoE, 2021a; MoE, 2021b; MoE, 2020).

While it is important to note what goes well in school is all about what goes at home or community (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018), parental involvement in the educational process is an emerging issue globally. Lack of an established culture of parental involvement in the educational process of students, limited awareness among parents of the value of engaging in children's educational process and the ingrained belief among parents that educating children is the job of the schools and teachers come in the way of involving parents in the educational process.

No study has been carried out on how secondary schools currently involve parents in education and barriers to parental involvement in secondary schools. Less focus and attention are given to parental involvement in primary and secondary schools. A study carried out in one higher secondary school under Thimphu Thromde examines how secondary schools currently involve parents in education and barriers to parental involvement using a theoretical statement that focuses on four barriers: parental or family factor, student factor, parent-teacher factor, and societal factor (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). The study discusses how secondary schools currently involve parents, and issues and challenges forming a barrier to engaging parents in secondary school. Findings from the study have

the potential to create awareness among policy makers, teachers and parents on parental involvement in secondary school.

This paper asked two broad questions: How do secondary schools currently involve parents? What are the barriers to parental involvement in secondary schools?

Literature Review

Parent involvement in education or school is a strategy that enhances the socio-emotional and academic success of students (Hedenbro & Rydelius, 2019; Lee & Browen, 2006). Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) stresses the importance of school and parent partnership in-school programmes to address inequalities of lower socio-economic family status (Heckman, 2008; OECD, 2012).

There are different ways of involving parents in education. According to Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020), parental involvement consists of three basic aspects: (i) academic socialization, (ii) school-based involvement, and (iii) home-based involvement. Academic socialization includes parent expectations, beliefs and concerns about their children's education. The school-based involvements are parents taking part in attending class meetings and parent-teacher meetings (PTM), school activities, and meeting with teachers. Home-based involvement consists of a parent asking about school at home, helping and checking projects and assignments of their children. Epstein (2011) states that there are six types of parental involvement or partnership in school: (i) parenting, (ii) volunteering, (iii) communicating, (iv) decision making, (v) learning at home, and (vi) collaborating with the community.

Harris and Goodall (2008) outlined parental involvement through (i) listening to students read and talk (home-based parental involvement) and (ii) attending the parent-teacher meeting in school (school-based parental involvement). Parents can become a part of school boards. Whittaker, Salend and Elhoweris (2016) (as cited in MoE,2021a) suggested strategies such as inviting guest speakers, communicating with parents and the community and engaging parents in various professional development activities. Involving parents in the school

board would help the school to achieve its visions and goals, and enhance the teaching-learning of teachers (Pineda et al., 2018).

All schools across the world conduct PTM annually or half-yearly. PTM is a formal means to involve parents in school (Leenders et al., 2019). However, many studies show PTM is often dominated by the school. Academic progress and student behavior are the dominant issues discussed during PTM. Genuine discussion and constructive dialogue are absent between school and parents on how school and parents can collaborate and work together to support students' learning (Mutton et al., 2018). The school controls content, time and communication even though many schools facilitate communication during PTM (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2001; Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

Barriers to parental involvement in schools such as teacher hegemony, teacher feeling of superiority over parents, lack of awareness and exposure of benefits of parental involvement in education, teacher unwillingness, fear of criticism, comments and suggestions from parents affect parental involvement in the schools (Tuli & Tarekegne, 2019). Further, teaching workload, lack of teacher training on parental involvement, undermining teaching profession autonomy, deteriorating students-parents relationship, unfair teacher evaluation, large class size, school leadership vision, and parental attitudes are factors that discourage parental involvement in the school. Parents face difficulty in following the current revised school curriculum, lack of teacher professionalism, financial issues, indifferent parents, hesitation of parents to talk to teachers, and the distance between teacher and parent were significant barriers to parental involvement in public schools (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020).

The study focuses on how secondary schools currently involve parents in the educational process and the barriers to such involvement.

Methods

The study is intended as a non-judgmental situational analysis. It seeks to report the voices of teachers and parents on a daily basis.

Participant

One higher secondary school under Thimphu Thromde was selected through non-probability convenience sampling. Participants included 40 teachers out of 62 teachers taking classes from Pre-Primary (PP) to XII, and parents of seven students were selected randomly.

Procedure

Participant observations on parental involvement in school were carried out for three years to gain first-hand experience. The purpose of the observation was not revealed to hide the identity of participants from other group members. After observations, 40 teachers of the same school were randomly interviewed using a semi-structured open-ended questionnaire (Yuden Yuden et al., 2020) to get a wider perspective on parental involvement in the school. The interviews were informal and conversation-like (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) and took place in comfortable places during free time in the school.

1. Does the school have a written policy on parental involvement in the school?
2. Describe the current practice of parent involvement in school?
3. What are some things that happen during a PTM?
4. What activities were conducted in the school on parental involvement?
5. Why is there a weak connection between school and home?
6. Why are parent-teacher meetings not held regularly?
7. Why do teachers and parents have a lot of unmet expectations?
8. Has parental involvement policy in school changed over the past three years? If yes, how?
9. What is the school doing to overcome barriers to parent involvement?
10. What are the main barriers to parental involvement in education?

To verify the findings from the observation and teacher interview, parents of seven students studying in the school were randomly selected for a focus group discussion. The focus group discussion was conducted to get an in-depth understanding of how secondary schools

currently involve parents and the barriers to parental involvement in education.

Data Analysis

Data from observation, interview and focus group discussion was read, transcribed, and coded, and themes generated based on the similar responses made by the teacher and parent participants. Data were analysed using the content or thematic analysis. Based on the number of responses received from the teacher and parent participants, quantitative data via percentage was derived from qualitative data. The data analysis was guided by the four barriers of parental involvement in school; parental or family factor, student factor, parent-teacher factor and societal factor to the thematic analysis established by Hornby and Blackwell (2018) and Hornby and Lafaele (2011).

Findings

The findings were divided into three sections. The first section consists of the findings of the observation of parental involvement in school, the second and third sections consist of the findings from the interview with teachers and focus group discussion with parents.

Observation of Parental Involvement in School

During the last three years, the researchers observed an erratic and weak connection between teachers and parents. The school did not involve parents regularly to enhance the quality of education. The schools normally called parents when students had discipline issues and problems related to poor academic performance. The school involved parents to carry out school maintenance and other physical-related works in the school.

Annually, School Parents Education Awareness (SPEA) was conducted twice a year. Around 60 to 70 selected parents attended the SPEA. The parents were selected by the respective class teachers in consultation with the school counsellor based on students' disciplinary issues. The SPEA sessions were carried out by the SPEA coordinator and its members. Some of the suggested topics of SPEA were teenage

pregnancy, juvenile delinquency (substance abuse), media and gadgets, study habits, stages of child development, the role of parents/ guardians/community, and junk food.

Similarly, the two PTM were held in the school, one during term one and another in the middle of term two. Parents/ guardians were forced to attend PTM and in some cases, parents/ guardians were asked to pay fines for failing to attain the PTM. Around 70 percent of parents who attended the PTM were women and siblings of students. The PTM sessions were carried out by the school Management, SPEA coordinator and class teachers.

Teachers were not confident to involve parents in the school due to a lack of training, workshop and exposure. Teachers and parents played blame game for not being able to fulfil the mandate of school progress. Students shared that they were not able to get adequate parental support at home due to a lack of adequate communication between teachers and parents/ guardians.

Interview With Teachers

Findings of ten questions of the school are discussed below:

No written policy on parental involvement

To 'Does the school have a written policy on parental involvement in the school?' all teacher participants agreed having none. Reviewing the school policy revealed that the school has instituted the School Management Board (SMB) as per the Bhutanese School Management Guidelines and Instructions. The SMB is the immediate governing body of the school in which the principal is the member secretary while the chairperson and other three parent members were selected from the local community. There are no selection criteria to select the chairperson and three parent members of SMB. The parent members are committed to participating in the decision-making process, taking ownership of and supporting the school mission and improving educational outcomes. It is a significant contributing factor to effective school management (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). The interview revealed that the school did not have a legal contract agreement with parents to collaborate and work together for the benefit of the school

and community. All key discussions were made by the principal in the name of SMB.

The current practice of parent involvement in the school

Although the school did not have a separate formal written policy on parental involvement in the school programmes, SPEA and PTM were reflected in the annual school calendar with a dedicated date and time. The SPEA and PTM are some of the mandates and policies of MoE that all schools are expected to conduct PTM at least twice a year (MoE, 2012; MoE, n.d). This could be one reason why SPEA and PTM did not support parental engagement regularly since there was no defined expectation and procedure.

Around 30 percent of teacher participants shared that the school tried various means to fulfil the ten indicators of the school-community relationship under characteristics of a GNH school: Indicators and School Improvement Plan as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

School-Community Relationship

	Indicators
1	The school surveys and ensures full enrolment of children in the catchment area.
2	The school promotes local festivals through project work, research and interviews.
3	The school builds awareness of health and environmental issues in the community.
4	The school carries out viable and relevant projects in partnership with the community.
5	The school has a functioning parents' support group to take a lead role in the parenting education programmes.
6	The school promotes an alcohol-free and drug-free lifestyle in partnership with the community.
7	The school supports life skills-related activities for out of school youth in their community.
8	The community feels that their children are getting properly educated to face their future.
9	The community and their children have confidence in the school leadership and teachers to guide them.

10	Parents' contributions are acknowledged in school newspapers, magazines and during Parent-Teacher Meeting.

Source: MoE, 2011

However, during the interview, nearly 60 percent of teachers shared that schools filled up the paperwork with limited actual practices of the indicators outlined in Table 1.

Things that happen during the PTM

All teacher participants shared that the main objective of PTM was improving academic performances of students, raising bar for learning, collecting student progress reports, raising fund, and addressing student disciplinary issues. Teacher dominated the PTM discussions and parents mostly listened.

Nearly 60 percent of teacher participants reported that parents were either busy or illiterate or ignorant or complacent to raise issues during PTM. Around 50 percent of teacher participants shared that "I target parents in student attendance and homework". The researchers observed that there was little written evidence on active conversation, discussion and constructive dialogue held between teachers and parents.

Activities conducted in the school on parental involvement

Since the school did not have a formal written parental involvement policy, all teacher participants responded that the school sent letters or verbal messages through students for PTM. Social media such as WeChat, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram and Facebook were used to communicate about the PTM. The class teachers and subject teachers also called parents to discuss children's disruptive behaviour and take undertaking letters duly signed by parents and students. School management and counsellor give parenting education and manage children's behaviour at home to parents annually.

The school management, teachers and staff organize a concert-ticket system cultural and annual school concerts to involve parents. The proceeds from the sale of tickets go toward the annual School Development Fund. Similarly, during the annual sports day, World

Environment Day and a Marijuana plant uprooting programme held in school, parents were invited to participate in the events.

The weak connection between school and home

Since the PTM were all decided by SMT teachers and students have less say on it. Nearly 50 percent of teacher participants said that PMT has become a ritual in the school. The school's culture of command, control and compliance bred a poor connection between the school and home. There is a presence of top-down command from the school to initiate policies without proper dialogues, negotiation and communication with parents and students. The top-down approach from the school to initiate policies without proper dialogues, negotiation and communication breeds resistance due to disagreement among stakeholders (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009). Around 10 percent of the teacher participants said, "there is no proper stakeholder dialogue to understand ground realities". It fails to respect the stakeholder's concerns and inputs.

During the interview, all teacher participants said they had not studied a parental involvement module in teacher training colleges. The teacher participants shared that few teachers attended some kind of in-service programme, however, there is a gap between the in-service programme and classroom application.

Around 5 percent of the teacher participants shared that "there are concerns about teacher-parent relationships existing in the school. Parents do not feel free to raise questions as there could be lack of trust and motivation between teachers and parents". Nearly 20 percent of teacher participants also observed that "parents were bogged down with work and attending PTM was quite challenging".

Parent-teacher meetings not held regularly

Research shows school management and teachers play a critical role in providing quality education or delivering quality teaching-learning (MoE, 2021a). However, all teacher participants shared that their main role in the school was to teach students. They were heavily loaded with teaching and hardly got time to think about involving parents in the school. The curriculum and syllabus are the heart and soul of the education system.

Nearly 30 percent of teacher participants said, "Bhutanese curriculum and assessment are centralized and exam-oriented. The completion of the syllabus might get hampered in day school if we involved parents in decision-making. Teachers are pivotal in influencing the quality of education".

Around 35 percent of the teacher participants said the main objective of PTM was to address academic challenges in the school. About 80 percent of teacher participants shared that "many parents were illiterate and found it difficult to participate in the discussions to provide the necessary support at home".

Teachers have a lot of unmet expectations from parents

Teacher participants were of the view that many parents were illiterate and are least concerned about students' studies. However, the researchers heard another way during a focus group discussion that parents were concerned about the students' studies. There was no proper connection or communication or collaboration between teachers and parents.

One teacher participant said, "there is no proper policy on parent involvement in the teaching-learning process although there are ten indicators of school-community relationship indicators outlined in the characteristics of a GNH school: indicators and School Improvement Plan".

Teachers were not trained to engage parents in the educational process. Around 25 percent of teacher participants mentioned some parents expected too much from the schools. Parents expect all kinds of things from the school. As a result, there is less support from parents/guardians and the community on school activities.

The interview with teacher participants also revealed that parents were not made aware of education on the role of PTM. Without a written policy, school management, teachers and parents do not have a reference that outlines the expectations from the school, teachers and parents.

Parental involvement policy in school over the past three years

All teacher participants shared that policy or practices on parental involvement in the school remained the same and have not changed in the last three years. Around 10 percent of teacher participants agreed, "our policy has not been updated. It's time to update our school policy".

Barriers to overcoming parental involvement in school

Since there is no proper written policy on parental involvement in school, all teacher participants felt the need to have a written policy on parental involvement in school. Around 40 percent of teacher participants shared that school management needs to listen and sort out pertinent issues that matter in the PTM.

Main Barriers to Parental Involvement in Education

The final question sought to examine the main barrier to parental involvement in school guided by four barriers of parental involvement in school (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Parental or family factor

On further probing, around 50 percent of the teacher participants said 60 percent of the parents were illiterate and another 20 percent were literate although they didn't have formal education. Nearly 35 percent of teacher participants shared that some parents had communication issues due to limited exposure. Teacher participants also shared that the parents attending PTM raise fewer issues pretending everything was going well with their children. In Bhutan, parents view the teacher as a role model in educating students.

According to one teacher participant, "the school remains open from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm, as a result, parental involvement is a challenge as many families work for their livelihood". During the interview, around 10 percent of teacher participants shared that some parents fear being judged and worried that they may be criticized during and after PTM. The SPEA and PTM were dominated by the school in terms of time, content and discussion.

Student factor

All teacher participants mention that students and social media are the medium used for communication between parents and teachers. Some parents never participate in the discussions through social media. As a result, students sometimes failed to share parental involvement in the school because teachers involved parents in the discussion of student academic progress and disciplinary issues.

One teacher said that "some students are found reluctant when school involves their parents. They are afraid that their parents and friends might think that students have a disciplinary issue". Around 30 percent of teacher participants shared that since many parents were illiterate and they are not sure of how to approach and get involved in school programmes.

Around 65 percent of teacher participants shared that there were communication issues between teachers and parents. Many students go home after school and share certain stories or agendas. As a result, the parents feel it is not important to attend the school programmes. In addition, there is a lack of consistent follow up on SPEA and PTM as per the teacher participants.

Parent-teacher factor

During the interview, all teacher-participants shared teachers have less time to focus on parental involvement because of their heavy teaching workload and large classroom size. On further probing, around 50 percent of teacher participants mentioned "many parents still expected everything from the school although we are interconnected to each other".

One teacher participant said, "many students are first-generation learners from underprivileged families. Many parents expressed their woes and frustrations for not knowing to support their children at home". Around 10 percent of teacher participants said, "there would be minimal impact on the school by involving parents in the schools". The parents would not have a great influence on all education aspects.

Societal factor

The importance of education is determined by how society values education. All teacher participants observed that working parents find less time to attend school events, programmes and activities. The non-working parents were found working with the school to carry out maintenance and odd jobs in the school.

Around 70 percent of teacher participants remarked, "the relationship between parents and teachers is good except few". Although most teachers, parents and students share the same community for years. it was revealed that there is a lack of strong bond and partnership between teachers and parents.

All teacher participants remarked that so far parents failed to share the achievement of students with the teachers. The success of students was taken by parents and blame was put on the teachers. According to Musbing (2020) if education is the only responsibility of the school, then parents and the community would blame entirely on school if students fail in academic and non-academic performance.

Focus Group Discussion with Parents

Parental or family factor

During the focus group discussions, parents gave different views about parental involvement in the school. Nearly 50 percent of parent participants felt that "around 38 percent of parents were illiterate and 15 percent were literate. As a result, students do not get adequate parental support at home". One parent participant said, "illiterate parents cannot guide and coach children". The focus group discussion revealed that illiterate and non-working parents need frequent workshops, training and meetings so that parents become more aware and can guide their children in the academic and non-academic fields.

One parent participant said, "currently, we all work in silo and isolation although we are interdependent and interconnected to each other. We need to have collaboration and collaborative management in teaching-learning". Teachers would not understand students well if teachers involve parents irregularly in the education.

Around 5 percent of parent participants reminded that "it is important for teachers to use various social networks such as WeChat and Telegram for discussion on the holistic development of students. The class teacher or administrator needs to come up with ground rules in consultation with parents and students to lead the professional and common discussion in the social network".

Student factor

The focus group discussion also revealed that parents were concerned about teacher-student relations existing in the school. Nearly 60 percent of parent participants felt that there is a lack of trust and motivation between students and teachers. Students do not feel easy and free to raise questions in class. In such an environment, students cannot hear different views, ideas, and perspectives.

Out of seven parent participants, nearly 5 percent found that the school was not approachable and parents felt they would be blacklisted if they shared issues related to the school and teachers. The teacher usually targets students when parents confront teachers in the school. One parent participant said, "I want to raise this issue but I fear the backlash or the teacher might be outraged for voicing my opinion". As a result, parents were not willing to raise pertinent issues during PTM.

The focus group discussion confirms that there is a disconnect between the school and parents. Around 50 percent of parent participants want to get involved in school or education, but they don't know how to get involved in education.

Parent-teacher factor

Around 50 percent of parent participants shared that teacher attitude towards parental involvement in school would be influential. One parent participant remarked "teachers should be aware that some educated parents can share rich information in the teaching-learning process and management. Therefore, the teacher can come up with ways to involve parents in the decision making and teaching-learning process".

One parent participant said "so far, I found most of the guests in the school are parliamentarians, policymakers, bureaucrats, doctors,

engineers and lawyers. The artists, goldsmith, weavers, farmers, chefs and housewives are not seen as a guest in the school events although they are productive citizens of the nation". Therefore, the school needs to think inside the box to think out of the box for holistic development and wholesome education by inviting guest speakers from a different range of backgrounds.

Nearly 70 percent of parent participants mentioned that they felt unwelcome in the school, were not open, time constraints and lacked care shown by the school and poor teamwork were the main barriers to parental involvement in the schools.

There is also limited time for parents and teachers. An employed person hardly gets time to drop off and pick up their children in school. One parent remarked, "it is frustrating. I don't get time to attend school programmes due to the nature of my work."

Societal factor

The focus group discussions revealed that school does not train parents on parental involvement in school as a result most parents were not aware of the benefits of parental involvement in the school.

Surprisingly, all parent participants said teachers do not adequately encourage parents to share issues and concerns in the PTM. As a result, cultural barriers, family backgrounds and socio-economic issues are overlooked unconsciously.

Nearly 70 percent of parent participants regarded teachers as role models and they cannot challenge the school in general and the teacher in particular. However, 3 percent of parent participants said, "if the education system wants to realise the grand vision of having nationally rooted and globally competent graduates, it is important to review the practices in the school. The current education teaches students to be passive and uncritical and does not prepare them for the real world". Around 5 percent of parent participants expressed that the education organization needs to increase parental involvement for assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of teachers and school management.

One parent participant said, "I feel parents play a vital role in teaching and learning although teachers are the main pillars of a progressive society. To enhance the quality of education constructively, parents, students and teachers must recognize our responsibilities and create the right environment for children. There has been a paradigm shift in teaching and learning across the world from a teacher dominated approach to a student-centred approach. All this can happen only if school leaders have a greater impact on parental involvement in school development".

The researchers observed that nearly 20 percent of parent participants still expected everything from the school. Parents feel teachers have a significant role in improving the quality of education. Parents face difficulty in the current revised curriculum and prefer schools for educating students. Parents were also not sure how to approach the school. They are hesitant in talking to school management and teachers. Around 60 percent of parent participants were not feeling comfortable visiting the principal office and staffroom during working hours. They hesitate to talk to school management and teachers. Surprisingly all parent participants shared that there is no 'open door approach'. The school gates remain closed during instruction hours between 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM for safety reasons. There is a need for policy that acknowledges the role of parents in education and facilitates the participation and partnership between teachers and parents. Teachers cannot replace parents but they complement each other.

Discussion

Decision making in the Bhutanese school is substantially a hierarchical process. The school decisions were made by the school management in the pretext of the school meeting. Consultations with teachers, parents and stakeholders in the decision-making process of the school were seen to be minimal although it is known that it provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and creative solutions to problems while also promoting ownership of the school.

Teachers were aware of the benefits of parental involvement in school, but an absence of a feasible platform beyond the PTM formed a

barrier to parental involvement in education. There were little opportunities for professional growth to keep all teachers abreast of educational development in and outside the country. If teachers and parents fail to understand or believe in parental involvement in education, they will do the same old things under a new name reform (change will simply be old wine in the new bottle). Once groomed in one way, it would take prolonged understanding and interactions for any individual teacher and parent to reshape their beliefs and practices (Jagar Dorji, 2003). According to Fullan (1991) (as cited in Jagar Dorji, 2003) one thing stakeholders must know is that unless teachers are ready for the change, they would most likely return to the old practice once policy, project or reforms support is withdrawn.

As teachers in Bhutan are assigned to teach a minimum of 18 hours (22 periods) per week excluding other administrative and supervisory responsibilities, teachers feel they do not have time for collaborating with parents and the community. It is important for teachers to understand that, education reforms bring extra responsibilities to the schools and teachers are often overburdened with work besides trying hard to cope with the change. Thus, Smith and Sheridan (2019) recommended finding strategies to support parental involvement in education at school and home by considering the voices of teachers, parents and students for holistic education. Teachers and parents must take a step back and re-evaluate their words, thoughts and actions.

For the holistic development of students, concerted efforts from all stakeholders, notably parents and teachers are crucial. Teachers and parents need to work cohesively to create an effective education system for a versatile teaching-learning and holistic development of students. Hence it is important to address the issues and challenges to ease the barriers to parental involvement in the educational process. Research has revealed that parental involvement in school would encourage all parents to take part in PTM and other school activities.

Involving parents in the school programmes would bridge the gap between teachers and parents. Schools need to explore and tap the diverse skills that parents come with to enrich students' learning experience. For example, parents with managerial roles can be a part of the school management team while parents with special education

expertise can be partners of teachers teaching children with special needs. Parents can play a vital role in filling the gap where teachers cannot reach in terms of expertise, resource, value and skills (Liu et al., 2020).

Greater parental involvement in school would enhance collaboration between teachers and students. The collaboration between teachers and parents can bring positive outcomes in areas, such as innovative school practice, education financing, supply of teaching-learning resources, transport service, school feeding and professional development (MoE, 2014). In turn, parents can develop a good understanding of school practices, curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, teacher job, responsibilities and time.

The findings from this study complement and supplement the earlier findings of Hornby and Blackwell (2018); Hornby and Lafaele (2011) on barriers to parental involvement in education.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The study reveals that teachers and parents hold positive views on parental involvement. However, teachers were not confident to involve parents due to their limited exposure and lack of proper training. Working parents find less time to attend school events. The non-working parents were involved in school to carry out maintenance and odd work. There is a lack of partnership between teachers and parents to enhance the quality teaching-learning process.

The school needs to involve parents in decision making in management, planning, problem solving and revising or preparing school programmes. A guideline for parental involvement in education can support the process and purpose of parental involvement in the education process of the student. The guideline needs to state what, how, why, when and how often on instructional and non-instructional practices to achieve goals and objectives. The role of teachers and parents needs to be specified to support the implementation of the parental involvement guideline and ensure all stakeholders are aware of the existing guideline. The specific role of teachers and parents can avoid power imbalance and confusion (Lehman & Welch, 2020) during the implementation policy process.

The guideline needs to ensure that policy supports the existing procedures and policies.

The guideline alone does not guarantee a good outcome. There is a need for continuous professional development programmes, training, seminars and conferences to improve teacher attitude, competence and readiness in parental involvement in school. There is a need for constructive policy dialogue, meetings, discussion and consensus among teachers and parents to translate guidelines into practice. Having an impressive parental involvement guideline in school would be meaningless if it has no impact on enhancing the quality of education and society.

It is important to note that the top-down change does not work and neither does the bottom-up change. It is only when the top-down and the bottom-up work together that lasting and meaningful change occurs. Success or failure depends upon whether the change makes enough sense; whether stakeholders are fully prepared in their belief and practice for change (Fullan, 1993).

Limitation of the Study

Policymakers, bureaucrats, school management and students play a significant role in parental involvement in education. Owing to resource and time constraints, the study could not collect the views of policymakers, bureaucrats, school management, and students on how secondary schools currently involve parents and the barriers to parental involvement in secondary school. Nevertheless, the study can be generalized to some extent.

The study can be used as a baseline to carry out similar studies in the future. The future researcher can use qualitative or quantitative or mixed-methods consisting of policymakers, bureaucrats, education officials, school management, parents and students covering all districts of the country. It is very important to conduct an in-depth study shortly to examine deeper views, perspectives and understanding of parental involvement in education.

There is a need for study on parental involvement and barriers to parental involvement in higher education to support holistic learning.

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