Parent Involvement in School Based Activities under Mongar and Yadi Cluster Primary Schools of Bhutan

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to examine how primary schools involve parents in school based activities in urban, semi urban and rural primary schools under the Yadi and Mongar Cluster of Mongar District. It also aimed to find some of the challenges faced by the primary schools on parent involvement [PI] in school based activities. Three principals and twenty teachers of three different settings were selected based on purposive sampling in this qualitative case study employing semi-structured interview, observation and document analysis tools. The findings of this study revealed that the primary schools under study involved more parents in non-academic school based activities than in academic school based activities due to lack of policy on PI in school, level of parents' education, time constraint, work load, and attitudes of parents, principals and teachers. This study could benefit the stakeholders to enhance PI in meaningful ways and contribute to the success of children and school development.

Keywords: Parents; parent involvement [PI]; school based activities; school.

1. INTRODUCTION

Numerous researches have ascertained that PI in schools enhances academic achievement of students [1, 2]. Despite these known benefits, schools still fail to tap this underutilized resource. A prejudiced view of schools and parents on roles of educating children still prevails as the

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most untapped resource. Different schools have different levels of PI due to differences in nature and challenges faced by schools. The studies carried out by Centre of Educational Research Division [CERD] [3] [PI in context of Thimphu Schools] and Susan and Kinley [4] [PI in the context of Tashigang Dristict] do not specifically reveal much information on the level of PI in different levels of schools in Bhutan. In this regard, Mongar and Yadi cluster primary schools may have the propensity to manifest limited attention to these facts due to some pressing challenges and different nature of PI. A separate study is felt on the nature of PI in school based activities specifically at primary school levels. Thus, this research explores the current practices of PI in primary school based activities to firstly assess whether parents are still underutilized in school based activities or not, and secondly to analyze some of the predominant challenges of PI in three primary schools under Mongar and Yadi clusters.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to study on current practices of PI in school based activities from the schools' perspective only. This study has the following objectives:

i.   To understand the opinion of principals and teachers on PI in school based activities
ii. To analyze the nature and challenges of PI in primary school based activities

2. LITERATURE

To root the study within the context and to ascertain more germane to the proposed study, literature on PI in school based activities from varied sources like educational journals, dissertations and books were reviewed and are presented in this section.

2.1 Importance of PI

Parent involvement in school based activities for the 21st century leaders is pivotal [5, 6, 7, 8], (Schechter & Sherri, 2009). While parents know about children's home situation, family history and health, teachers on the other hand are acquainted with the needs and development of children, learning, curriculum activities and peer relationships, thus, the combined knowledge of teacher-parent partnership should be harnessed

[3]. Such a partnership would improve students' academic achievement, self-esteem, school attendance and social behaviour [9]. PI in the early stages of primary schools assumes a critical significance than in secondary schools [10, 11]. Irrespective of school level, to improve children's performance in school both parents and schools must work in partnership and be involved at every stage of a child's school experience. In this regard, school leaders should play a critical role to build trust and mutual understanding between schools and parents through good relationships and through sharing of information and knowledge [12].

However, the practicalities of PI often pose challenges to school leaders. It requires school leaders not only to think differently about how to involve parents in the educational life of their child, but also to consider areas where parents may have the potential to take the leading role. Addi- Raccah and Ainhoren [6] recommend school staff to be responsive to all the parents as they are one of the important components within the school system. Parents need to be encouraged as active partners to influence school decision-making and participate in school activities. Sharing such responsibilities with parents would improve student learning [13]. Simultaneously, PI in schools helps to improve teacher morale, increase support from families for school programs, and improve collaboration across the school communities [14]. To have more productive and responsible members of the society through effective PI [15], both school and parents will have to encounter numerous challenges during the course of PI. And these challenges can vary from school to school.

2.2 Some of the Challenges of PI in Schools from Parents' Perspective

One of the prominent factors that affects PI in school based activities is the socio-economic status of parents [16, & 17]. The socio-economic status, most commonly measured by parental education and income, is a powerful predictor of school achievement [18]. However, the study conducted by Gyeltshen [19] revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in the student academic performance based on the parent's education level.

The medium of instruction (English) followed in Bhutanese schools is one major barrier for parents who wish to get involved in their children's education [20]. Thus, English as a

foreign language acts as an obstacle to developing educational partnerships with parents [21,22,23]. Parents' participation in schools lacks not due to ignorance but mainly due to their capacities to deal with the academic aspects of the children. As a result, teachers from rural schools were not satisfied with the performance of parents in children's education [4].

Parents having to do multiple responsibilities often report lack of time or schedule conflicts that had impede them from participating in school activities [24]. Scheduling school events at a variety of times could help parents to attend [25]. A PI policy of school also would play a vital role to enhance the level of PI than family background variables such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic level or marital status in determining the extent of PI in children's education [26].

Parents often feel anxious, unwelcomed and misinformed when they enter their child's school (Bright, 1996). PI in schools is directly influenced by a school culture that values a strong, respectful and trustful relationship with parents [27, 20].

Strong culture of parents of simply "trusting the school" and finding it disrespectful to question the decisions of the school may discourage them from fully participating in the school experience and in decision making [28]. And the parents living far away from school and with access to safe, reliable public transportation may not have access to childcare for their young children and to attend school functions [29].

2.3 Some of the Challenges of PI in Schools from Principals and Teachers' Prospective

School (teachers and principals) is the one that connects the link between the parents and the educational process. The successful implementation of PI in schools depends greatly on teacher perceptions and practices on PI [24, 3, 30, 4].

Level of PI in school depends on parenting skills of schools [24]. More PI in schools raises various concerns about time availability and heavy work load for the teachers [3]. Some work load of schools could be given to parents [31]. But to do so, a policy on PI at school level is required [26]. Otherwise, increased parent involvement would also mean risking teachers' professional

autonomy and school leaders' undivided authority as well as testing out the administrators' capacity of managing conflicts [32]. A well-defined policy in PI would empower parents and schools within the defined parameters to make meaningful contributions to the schools in educating their children. Thus, Marschal and Shah [33] suggest a policy to make a difference in PI outcomes and reduce the PI gap in schools.

Warm, caring, inviting, and receptive school environments enhance PI in school [34]. Such an environment could be developed through effective communication between the school and the parents [35]. Scribner et al. [34] recommends that PI activities of a school have to be planned and scheduled as per the interest of parents to have their maximum participation.

3. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design, based on open-ended interview [36] to access the 'real world experiences' [37, p.21] of principals and teachers, observation to authenticate data (Creswell, 2009) and document to ground the investigation [38] were employed to analyze the nature and challenges of PI in school based activities under Yadi and Mongar Cluster primary schools. The research sites and participants through purposive sampling [39] to get the right and informative participants having in-depth knowledge about PI in school activities by virtue of their professional role, administrative power, and access to networks, expertise or experience upon fulfilling the given below criteria:

- A school each from remote, semi urban and urban settings of Mongar District.
- All principals and teachers who had served in the identified research setting for at least three years.
- All the teachers who had served in the School Management Board [SMB] as members.

Upon receiving prior approval from the Department of School Education, MoE and District Education Office, Mongar and the identified principals, the researcher collected the data physically visiting the identified schools through principals and teachers considering all the ethical issues. Three extensive semi structured interviews were carried out with three principals and three focus group interviews with teachers. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, observations were annotated in

forms and documents related to PI were scanned. The interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis [40]. The observations and documents annotations were used for triangulation to improve the validity of the data analysis.

3.1 The Contexts of this Study

Three different categories of primary schools were used for this study based on level of school and variation in locations [each from urban, semi urban and remote setting], seniority and resourcefulness of principals, equal strength of students and teachers and facilities of the schools.

First, the studied urban school located around the Mongar town under Mongar cluster is a school that caters to the children of eight villages, employees and the business community of Mongar town. The principal had been in the same school for more than 12 years. Most of the teacher participants (3 males and 3 females) had represented the PTA, SMB, academic head and class teacher of class pre-primary for more than 2 years and in service for more than 10 years. This enriched the scope of the interview.

Second, the semi urban school is located around 3 km away from Yadi satellite town started in 1995. It had students coming from more than eight villages. It is also a day school. The principal had 10 years' experience in leadership and management roles and a focus group of teachers (3 males- SMB members, academic head & celebration coordinator, 4 females-coordinator of PTA and class teacher of PP). Most of the parents of this school were farmers.

Third, the remote school located 30 km away from Yadi satellite town started in 1991caters education to the children of more than eight villages. It is a boarding school. The principal had 10 years of experience as a principal. Most of the teachers' interviews (4 males and 3 females) were represented by the staff secretary, SMB member, Disciplinary committee members, PTA members, academic head and class teachers. More than half of the students were staying in the hostel.

4. FINDINGS

In this section, the findings of the manual thematic coding are presented under three main themes: opinion of schools on PI in school based activities, nature of parent involvement in primary schools and challenges of PI in the school based activities.

4.1 Principals' and Teachers' Opinions on PI in School Based Activities

All the three principals and three focused group teachers reported that PI in school based activities have advantages both to students as well as to the school. However, one principal pointed out that "one hand cannot make sound, two hands are required" (P-C, p.1, 2021), Therefore, it is the moral duty of the school as well as the parents to work collaboratively to provide quality education to children. The participants also revealed that primary schools require more PI in school based activities than in other levels of schools [lower, middle and higher secondary schools]. It is because the majority of the primary schools' children are smaller and need frequent support due to lack of ability to do or work independently. In addition, the study also found that most of the primary schools prefer to have more PI in schools due to acute budget constraint. No separate budget is allocated as such for primary schools unlike the secondary schools. And not much financial support to schools was evident from the Local Government [LG] which had handicapped the studied schools in carrying out even minor maintenance work without parents' support. But the schools also shared that they feel reluctant to involve parents in school academic related activities as the School Performance Management System [SPMS] only assesses on how school involves parents in school activities biannually.

4.2 Nature of Parent Involvement in Primary Schools

4.2.1 Procedure followed by schools for PI in school

The study confirmed that most of the semi urban and rural primary schools seek approval from the Gup (Head of Local Government) who serves as a Chairman of SMB [School Management Board] to involve parents in any PI school based activities. Whereas urban primary schools do not seek prior approval from the Gup as they have parents from villages, business communities, civil servants, corporations and private companies. According to the urban school principal (P-A, 2021), the school did not rely much on the Local

Government but the school dealt with the parents for any required support. But all the schools also informed that they do inform about their PI to the District education Office timely.

The data also showed a common trend that every year, a school had PI in schools to discuss, propose and endorse plans and issues of schools in the beginning, review the plans that they have drawn collaboratively in the midterm and evaluate the final output of their plans at the end. Most of the primary schools had a policy on SMB where the Gup is the chairperson. However, none of the schools had an active functioning SMB. Most of their PI plans were collaboratively endorsed during first parent-teacher meetings [PTM].

4.2.2 Common parent involvement activities of the schools

Based on the interviews, observations and documents analysis data, the most common activities planned and initiated for PI by schools were mostly in non-academic related activities such as construction and maintenance works, grass cutting, plantation, fencing, development of children parks, conduct of school annual rimdo [ritual], school variety show, sports day, parent-teacher meeting, result declaration day, and on national events [celebration of national day, birth anniversary of 5th king) and repairing furniture for students.

However, the study also found that few parents of pre-primary students in the beginning of the academic session once or twice were allowed to sit near their children in class, some were asked to help teachers with the distribution of books, cleaning and management of the classroom. Few educated parents of urban primary schools were invited as a guest speaker during literary events and during assemblies. However there was no evidence of engagement of parents in the classroom teaching.

All the three schools had the culture of organizing various celebrations and social events inviting parents to strengthen strong bonding between the students' parents and the school. The semi urban and rural schools had also organized two-three friendly archery matches with parents.

In these currently studied schools, PTM is identified as one of the most effective ways of communication with parents for most of the

schools. The schools had three PTMs a year. First PTM was usually conducted in the beginning, second PTM in the middle and third PTM at the end of the academic sessions. In the PTMs, most parents were involved and had formal decision making processes. One of the focus group teachers described what they do during the PTMs:

> In the first PTM, we inform parents about our plans and things to be done in a year. In the midterm, we inform them how much we have fulfilled, what we have done and give students' results. In December, we give annual results of students and acknowledge the parents for their contributions (FGT-A, 2021, p.11).

Regarding the schedules, the remote and semi urban schools had mostly conducted PTMs on auspicious days only as school parents were mostly farmers. Usually, farmers in Bhutan do not work in the field on auspicious days. Whereas in the case of the urban school, thay had organized mostly either on Saturday or on Sunday or on government holidays so that all parents from villages, business community, government and private employees could attend it. This practice has maximized parents' participation in PTMs and schools were able to disseminate their goals, plans, and issues and seek parents' suggestions, feedback and support. Use of local dialect [Tshangla] and Dzongkha were used as medium of communication in all the PTMs. Most of the documents analysed did not show any sign of SMB and PTA meetings held in studied schools.

4.3 Parent Involvement in Decision Making

Most of the parents were involved in the mass decision making process in the PTMs. The PTM was reported to be the most common, appropriate and desired platform for most principals and teachers in seeking parents' suggestions and constructive feedback to fulfil shared goals of the school. However, as indicated that there was always some reservation whether schools would be able to get every parent's opinions or not because some parents can and some cannot express their views in the crowd. Final and binding decisions were usually taken based on majority. All the schools had only a male parent representative each called "School Tshogpa" who acted as a middleman between the school and the parents for collaboration and

coordination, at times of disciplinary issues, dissemination of information and relying on opinions and suggestions of parents to school.

4.4 In Parents' Volunteerism

More parents' volunteerism in non-school academic based activities found in the studied schools despite the frequent attempts tried by schools. As per the focus group teachers A and B, some parents donated a grass cutting machine [for school B] and filters for individual class [in school A] which the schools could not afford to buy. To meet the immediate needs of the school, usually the remote and the semi urban schools had always opted for compulsory labour and financial contributions from parents' side because rural school parents never come forward voluntarily. With regard to volunteerism in urban schools as reported by the principals and the teachers, most of the urban parents wished to provide more financial support than labour contribution to the school.

Another similar example of parent volunteerism as reported by school A and B was in preparing and organizing school annual rimdo and annual school concerts. In these events, parents were invited to help in pitching tents, making temporary kitchens, ovens, chopping of woods, cooking meals during school and to help their children in dressing up during concerts. These volunteerism were mostly rendered either under compulsion or on request. For example, one of the focus group teachers said:

> "From their side [parents], they do not come forward with any plan to help or support the school but they do help us when we ask them" (FGT-B, 2021, p.10).

Parent volunteerism in academic related activities in schools was very minimal and had reservations to school because of the fear of parents' challenging their practices. In this regard, one of the principals described:

> Till now, we have involved them more in the physical development works. And we are planning to get more parental support in academic related issues. We still have fear of being challenged by them. (PA, 2021, p.12)

However, in one focus group interview, the teachers strongly expressed the need of PI in academic related matters as described:

There are some concepts which we have less practical knowledge like management of a community forest. So if we can invite forest people here as they would explain better than us to our students. Even in EVS, there are topics which talk about the songs that are sung by farmers during harvesting seasons. We have no ideas on that. So if we call them and let them sing to our students (FGT-B, 2021, p.9).

4.5 Challenges for Schools [Principals and Teachers] on Parent Involvement in the School Based Activities

As per the data, the most common and pertinent challenges encountered by the schools under study for involving parents in school based activities are presented below.

4.5.1 Loss of instructional hours

The data revealed that the visits of parents in class could lead to loss of teaching time impeding the coverage of syllabus on time. One of the focus group teachers believes that teachers may have to attend to parents by not going to the class otherwise next time the parent may not feel like visiting the school again (FGT-A, 2021). Other focus group teachers reported that when parents come to school, their children do not concentrate much in their class. At the same time, other students would feel bad as if they were neglected by their parents when they see their friend's parents coming frequently to meet them (FGT-C, 2021).

As per the data, most principals expressed that when the school initiates many activities and programs to involve parents, this demands more time adjustment and hampers the instructional hours. This shows that the schools did not want parents' visits in schools especially during class hours.

4.5.2 Heavy workload

The periodical rosters of the three schools confirmed that the teachers were overburdened with more than 25 teaching periods due to shortage of teachers. The teachers had limited off periods for planning and refreshing themselves. All three schools had many co-curricular and extra co-curricular activities as per the school calendar to be conducted within their limited instructional days. That is why most of the studied schools had even planned and

conducted the PTMs during weekends and holidays. Most teachers and principals expressed that involving parents in school with limited time, resources and skills was challenging.

4.5.3 Attitude of principals and teachers

Most of the teachers and principals responded that they were reluctant to involve parents in school academic activities because of probable fear of criticism from the parents, disturbance to the students and waste of instructional hours of teachers. One of the principals expressed his concern:

> We seek other help from parents except the academic ones. To get this help from the parents is quite difficult because we do not have any directive or a policy in our school. And I think we are a bit hesitant because they may disturb us more and may criticize us, so we have fear of involving them in the classroom situations. (P-C, 2021, p.15)

However, one principal had really supported the idea of involving educated parents in academic related activities as stated "everything has changed in the world, only the attitude of teachers has not" (P-A, 2021, p.9).

4.5.4 Lack of policy

This study did not find any clear cut standing policy on PI of the school and MoE. And there was no clear direction on PI being spelt drawn out in the school level policy documents of the school. This shows that the schools had vague information on how to involve parents in school based activities. It was also reported by one of the veteran principals who have been serving for more than twenty four years in service that:

> From the ministry of education, the policy vaguely states PI is very important. But I think there is no specific guideline. So it is left to the school. And when it is left to the school and different schools have different ways to implement it. But I think we have many miles to go… (P-A, 2021, p.4).

In absence of a strong standing policy on PI, most of the teachers and school administrations found themselves reluctant to involve parents especially in classroom instructions.

This study also found that few parents were ready to support in classroom too as reported by the principal of school A:

> "Some parents are ready to participate during the instructional hours but teachers are not ready to welcome them because of no proper guidelines regarding parents coming into the classroom" (P-A, 2021, p.3).

4.5.5 Low education level of parents

One of the obstacles that most schools had identified in academic related activities was due to the low level of parents' education as stated by one of the focused group teachers:

> "Not only do parents with a lower level of education have difficulty in assisting with home learning, they tend to feel intimidated when communicating with teachers and school administrations and thus avoid getting involved with the school" (FGT-A, 2021, p.18).

Low level of education of most parents had really impeded their involvement especially in academic related activities of the school.

4.5.6 Time and work nature of parents

Low levels of PI in school were also due to lack of time and work nature of most parents as informed. Most of the principals and teachers responded that it is very difficult for school as well as for parents to find an appropriate time for PI in different school based activities.

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of PI in primary school based activities under Mongar and Yadi Cluster. In summary, more parents were involved in school non-academic related activities than in academic related activities. The presence of smaller children and budget constraints in primary schools had made the schools more dependent on parents [10, 11] than secondary grade schools.

5.1 Nature of Parent Involvement in Schools

The finding reveals that none of the schools had conducted even a single meeting with SMB members due to the absence of a functioning SMB. However, the studied schools had involved the SMB members in the PTMs. This indicated that the schools had not followed the mandate of the MoE [31] and the EMSSD [41] which state

that SMB members shall meet on bi-annual bases to provide directions, monitor and review the progress of the school.

Another finding is that the urban school mostly did not rely much on the Gup and Tshogpas like the remote and the semi urban schools for liaising between the school and the community. Most of the urban school parents were villagers (farmers), business community, government servants, corporate staff and private companies where these parents are not under the jurisdiction of Gup.

On the contrary, the remote and semi urban schools seek approval from the Gup (as the Chairman of SMB) to involve parents residing under his Gewog. These schools preferred to inform their pressing issues and proposals to the Gup [Chairperson of the Local Government] and other SMB members for necessary support.

5.2 Parent Involvement in Ceremonies and School Events

All the three schools had the culture of organizing various celebrations and social events by inviting parents. The conduct of these events and celebrations had provided a platform to the schools to interact with parents informally. However, they also expressed that it was not an appropriate time for them to discuss or consult with parents on any issues at the times of festive hours. This finding was more aligned to Lightfoot (1978) where " the real contact, negotiation, or criticism between parents and teachers do not happen; rather, they establish boundaries between insiders (teachers) and interloper (parents) and have polite conversation and show mature cooperation" (as cited in Khan, 1996, p.58). Most of the teachers and principals also supported the idea of parents' involvement in the school's events and celebrations because a strong bonding between the students' parents and the school can be strengthened further.

5.3 Parent Involvement in Meetings

The data showed that the schools had involved parents mostly in PTMs and individual meetings. Adoption of PTM has become the most effective strategy to communicate with parents. The PTM was the only platform for the schools and the parents to have meaningful discussions on any issues [34]. This finding matched with the views of Bojuwoye [5], who expressed that "when parents and schools interact closely together

they share information among themselves and this information-sharing helps families to better understand the schools and schools to understand the families" (p.463).

The scheduling of the PTMs as per the feasibility of both parents and school enabled maximum parents' participation. The finding confirmed that the remote and semi urban schools under study had scheduled the PTMs mostly on auspicious days whereas the urban school had either on Saturdays or Sunday. As per the findings of Patrikakou [24], parents often report lack of time or schedule conflicts as the two most important barriers of parent involvement and feel that frequent parent activities at school are at inconvenient times. In addition, during the PTM, use of the most common local dialect-Tshangla and Dzongkha were found to be comprehensive and constructive for discussion with parents. This finding confirmed the findings of Delgado-Gaitan [35] and Chavkin and Gonzalez's [42] study, where use of local dialect in meetings helps to develop a conducive environment. Further, proper arrangement of hall, chairs and other necessary arrangements for PTMs which also fostered a climate of mutual respect and trust [3].

The study reported that numerous individual meetings with parents in schools were held to discuss only the disciplinary issues of the children. None of the schools had conducted a separate meeting with individual parents to discuss the performance of the children. None of the parents ever approached the school to inquire about his or her child's performance. This finding confirmed the findings of CERD [3] where individual parents are normally called to schools only when their children have discipline problems in the schools but not when they excel or fail in some activities. In this regard, the schools are recommended to have constant communication with parents about students' progress in learning [43] and the parents to visit their children's schools to monitor the performances of both the students and teachers constantly [3].

5.4 Involvement of Parents in Decision-making

PTM is the most common platform used by the schools for decision making with parents. During the PTMs, pertaining issues and plans of schools were discussed and endorsed proposals for execution. This finding contradicted with the findings of Susan and Kinley's [4] where the schools under Tashigang District, which stated that "PI in school's decision making is found to

be a rare incident" (p. 11). Inclusion of parents in PTMs enabled parents to voice out their views and increase their feeling of partnership with the school. While involving parents in the PTMs, they become more familiar with the school policies and in return they can help in reviewing the school's policies and programmes [26, 3] (Almazeedi, 2009) [5, 44].

However, it was also reported that getting all parents' opinions during the PTM was found to be unrealistic. As a result, the final and binding decisions were taken based on majority. Further, uneducated parents were participating less in school decision making though they had many issues to be raised. In this regard, each school had a representative of the parents called 'School Tshogpa' but most of them were not able and proactive in bridging school and parents. In this regard, Scribner et al. [34] recommends that a parent-coordinator should be nominated from the predominant group of children's parents so as to have representation of all the parents. The finding also confirmed that there was no mention of School Tshogpa's roles in any school documents. And no evidence of meetings were being conducted with the School Tshogpa and the SMB members separately. This finding confirmed the findings of Susan and Kinley [4] where the SMB seems not to be effectively functioning in most of the schools under Tashigang District. As per the MoE [31] and Education Monitoring and Support Service Division [EMSSD] [41], SMB members were supposed to be meeting bi-annually to provide directions, monitor and review the progress of the schools.

Similarly, the finding did not show any evidence of PI in decision making roles regarding curriculum planning, development and children's assessment. Similar to what Floyd [21] had pointed out, the parents of Mongar and Yadi cluster primary schools had also no say in decisions regarding monitoring and evaluating teachers, in the matters of curriculum or instructional programmes, discipline policies and procedures, or the design of special programs.

5.5 Parents' Volunteerism in Schools

The school reported that the parent's volunteerism, especially in the school based academic activities was minimal. The study also confirmed the finding of Susan and Kinley [4] in schools of Tashigang District on parents' voluntarism, where parents' act of volunteerism was low and was normally presented in the form

of labour contributions. As a result, most schools had always gone for compulsory labour and financial contributions from the parents. In such a situation, Sander and Sheldon [45] and Epstein [26] recommend schools to recruit the parents' volunteers who are able and willing to support school. Parents' volunteerism is in fact one way of increasing parent involvement (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

In this study, the urban parents were more socio-economically advantaged, provided more financial support than labour contribution. Whereas, the semi urban and remote schools' parents had more labour contributions to school. This finding matched with the views of Borgonovi and Montt [46] who ascertained that parents with higher socio-economic status are more likely to participate in school based activities.

5.6 Challenges for Schools to have Effective PI in Schools

Some of the predominant challenges faced by the schools with regard to PI in schools are discussed as follows:

5.6.1 Loss of instructional hours [time factor]

Most participants expressed that when parents visit to school formally or informally teachers' limited instructional hours get hampered and impede to cover the syllabus on time which ultimately impacts the performance of the students. At the same time, initiation of many activities and programs to involve parents by schools demanded more school time adjustment [3].

5.6.2 Workload of teachers

The finding informed that schools were overburdened with more teaching periods due to shortage of teachers. Less periods were left for planning lessons. Few off periods were spent on the planning of lessons. To involve parents in school with fewer teachers and limited time made it very difficult.

5.6.3 Attitude of teachers

The data confirmed that involvement of parents in instructions was flatly discouraged by most schools. This finding was more aligned to Al-Houli's [47] study which showed that most of the teachers and the school administrations of Kuwait did not want parents' interference in their teaching affairs. PI in schools can be strengthened only if the school has positive

views towards the parents and willingness to collaborate with parents in educating the children (Bauch & Goldring, 2000; Griffith, 1998 as cited in [30].

5.6.4 Policy on parent involvement

Most schools reported that they did not have written school policies on PI. This finding is consistent with earlier studies carried out by Susan and Kinley [4] in Tashigang where the involvement of parents in school governance was not spelt out in the school policy. In absence of such policy guidelines on PI, schools had some reservation on involving parents in the classroom instruction. It is suggested in the literature that all schools should develop written policies for PI [26, 3]. Although there was no standing school policy on PI, the PMS had actually acted as the guiding policy on PI. A well-defined PI policy of school should empower the parents within defined parameters to make meaningful contribution on the one hand and guard against unnecessary intrusion and chaos on the other hand [26,3, 32].

5.6.5 Parents' level of education

The study confirmed that parents with a lower level of education had difficulty not only in assisting with home learning but they also tend to feel intimidated when communicating with teachers and school administrations [48]. According to Susan and Kinley [4], parents' participation in schools is not due to ignorance but it is mainly their capacities to deal with the academic aspects of the children. Most of the subjects are taught in English. This language barrier was reported as one of the major challenges for schools to involve parents especially in school academic related activities [20].

5.6.6 Time and work nature of parents

Parents were not able to compromise their work for the school's events and activities. The multiple responsibilities of parents to deal with often did not allow their daytime participation in school's activities. According Floyd [21], the parents' lack of time and time conflicts with school schedules is one of the major challenges for parent involvement.

6. LIMITATION

Although the findings in this study help broaden the scope of research on PI in school based activities, several limitations to the research exist. First, this study did not cover multiple sites and large samples. Second, the participants of this study did not represent all the principals and teachers of the Mongar and Yadi cluster primary schools. The only studied principals and teachers' views may or may not cover their views or form their perspectives in this study. Thereby the generalizability of the findings was limited to the entire primary schools of Bhutan.

7. CONCLUSION

This study ascertained that most of the primary schools under Mongar and Yadi Cluster had involving more parents in non-academic school based activities than in academic school based activities due to lack of policy on parent involvement in schools, level of parents' education, time constraint, work load, and attitudes of principals and teachers have created some limitations to the PI in academic school based activities.

The following recommendations are provided to different stakeholders as follows;

   I.   The schools need to encourage more PI in school based activities and work closely with the Local Government (LG) to get unwavering support in decision making and budget matters for development of school.
  II.   The LG needs to be involved in school development programs constantly.
 III.   The District Education Office needs to monitor schools on the involvement of parents during PMS evaluation visits and provide a sufficient current budget like secondary schools to all the primary schools.
 IV.   The MoE needs to come up with well-defined and structured policy and programs on effective parent involvement in schools as well as in curriculum frameworks.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the authors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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