
Research Article

Practices and Challenges of Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education; A Comparative Study between Rural and Urban Schools in Bhutan.

Puran Gurung¹, Yeshe Dorji²

¹Associate Lecturer, Department of Political Science & Sociology, Norbuling Rigter College, Royal University of Bhutan

²Assistant Economic Development & Marketing Officer, District Administration Punakha, Royal Government of Bhutan

Abstract : This research examined the practices and challenges of parental involvement in their children's education. For the purpose of the study, a descriptive approach was employed. A total of 220 parents were selected from both rural and urban schools through a stratified random sampling method. An online survey questionnaire was administered as an instrument for data collection and the quantitative data gathered were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Mean). The results of the study indicated that parents in urban schools involve more in their children's education than the parents in rural schools. Specifically, they involve comparatively more in the aspects of parenting, learning at home and volunteering. On the other hand, the number of challenges faced by the parent in remote schools are comparatively more than the parents living in the urban areas. While career schedule is the only challenge for the latter, the former faces challenges such as low level of educational qualification and long distance between the school and home. Moreover, lack of means of communication between them and teachers, and improper information dissemination strategies of the schools are other challenges for them in engaging in their children's educational activities.

Keywords : parental involvement, children's education, practices, challenges, parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, collaborating with community, urban school, remote school.

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1. Introduction

Education plays an important role in the life of people and society. The ways through which government, community, schools and families educate the children determines the quality of person they will become in future. The values, knowledge and competencies one educates to them will have major impacts to the way they will contribute to the development of society and country. Evidently, modern education has played an indispensable role in the developmental journey of Bhutan specifically in developing human resources, since its commencement by the first king, Gongsu Ugyen Wangchuck in 1914 (Gurung & Dorji, 2021). However, it was not until the reign of third king, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk that modern education was taken to every corner of the country making it accessible and affordable to every citizen (Gyeltshen & Zangmo, 2020). In the succeeding decades of educational journey of the country, various initiatives and changes such as new technologies, pedagogies, teacher development programmes, and

localized but global-suited curriculum have been undertaken by the Royal Government of Bhutan to keep it abreast with the needs of 21st century (Gurung & Dorji, 2021). In a way, the central component of the education in the 21st century is to bring holistic upbringing through social, spiritual, moral, emotional and intellectual development to realize the needs of society, country and the world at large (Bunujevac&Durisic, 2017). Therefore, educational process is not just an isolated responsibility of the schools and teachers but a collaborated role of parents and community as well.

With the changing times, parent's role has become prominent and increasingly started to get involved in most aspects of their children's education (Erdem & Kaya, 2020). Hence, the traditional way of overseeing and undertaking paramount roles of educating the pupils by only the schools and teachers is fading away and the practices of parental involvement in their children's education in collaboration with the teachers has become a common approach (Yeshe, 2017).

Epstein (as cited in Lara & Saracostti, 2019) defines parental involvement as an activity that focuses on how schools assist all families by helping them create home environments that will allow them to support children as students. In this line, Researchers such as Comer (2005), Desimone (1999), Epstein (2001), Garrett (2008), and Zellman & Waterman (1998) (as cited in Newman et al., 2019) confirm that support from parents and community in collaboration with the teachers have a vital influence on the student's level of educational attainment. This is because researches suggest that parental involvement fosters a positive attitude towards school, improves homework habits, reduces absenteeism, decreases students' risk of dropping out of school, and enhances academic achievement (Newman et al., 2019).

However, many parents are facing conflicts due to personal and official schedules such as professional, social, and other responsibilities, which allow minimal time for their children (Mcneal, 2014). Moreover, the school's policies and means of communication between the parents and teachers also determine the level of parental involvement in their children's education. In addition, the proximity of their children's school and home also is a challenge for the parents who are especially living in the rural places. This is further exacerbated by the lack of transportation between the school and home (Badrasawi et al., 2020). Moreover, as mentioned by Yeshe, parent's level of educational qualification also determines the level of parental engagement in their children's education. Parents who lack required educational qualifications and skills feel difficult to help and guide their children in home-works and educational decision makings especially for those who are living in rural places (2017).

Therefore, strategic ways for a successful and sustainable parent-teacher partnership need to be explored and practiced. The widely accepted model among the researchers and commonly practiced ways of parental involvement are depicted by the six typologies of parental involvement put forward by Epstein. According to Epstein's model, parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community are the six common ways through which parent can get involved in their children's education (Newman et al., 2019).

Problem statement

Literatures on the effects of family involvement in the school have established a firm base of knowledge that family involvement in children's education can positively impact their children's performance (Grover et al., 2016; Bunujevac&Durisic, 2017; Newman et al., 2019; Yeshe, 2017). In this line, the educational context in Bhutan also calls for the parent-teacher partnership in children's education and many ways of parental involvement were implemented across the schools.

However, there are numerous barriers that impede the successful engagement in their children's education. On top of that, there are widerange of differences in practices of

parental involvement and challenges they face (Grover et al., 2016), especially between the remote and urban schools in Bhutan resulting to wide gap in social, psychological and intellectual development of the children (Gyeltshen & Sawangmek, n.d.). However, the educational policies in Bhutan seemed to apply “one fits all” approach. Moreover, there is minimum body of knowledge established that did comparative study on the practices of parental involvement and barriers faced by the parents in the context of both rural and remote schools to implement adequate ways of parental involvement and address different issues in both the settings.

Research objectives.

- Explore means of parental involvement in children’s education in both rural and urban schools in Bhutan, through comparative study.
- Describe the barriers that restrict parental involvement in children’s education in Bhutan.

Research questions

- How are parents involved in children’s education after they are admitted to the schools, especially in primary schools?
- What are the barriers that restrict successful parental involvement in children’s education in Bhutan?

Literature Review

History of education in Bhutan

In the belt of the Himalayan region is Bhutan, situated between China and India, geographically, politically and economically, Bhutan is trying to endeavor her own path, not only of sovereign identity and cultural vibrancy but also of educational opportunities with the goal of retaining traditional values while providing modern quality education for all the citizen (Gordon, 2013). While conventional education was heavily influenced by stringent and rigorous Buddhist schooling in the monasteries, existed since long time, modern secular education is relatively new, which started in the mid of twentieth century only (Hirayama, 2011). However, the dawn of modern education commenced after Bhutan embarked on the path of the monarchy by unanimous enthronement of Gongsu Ugyen Wangchuk as the first king (Hirayama, 2011; Wangchuk, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2018).

Although it started in 1914, the full-fledged systematic development of modern school education started only in 1961 with the introduction of the first Five Year Plan (FYP) under the reign of the third Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk (Gyeltshen & Zangmo, 2020; Hirayama, 2011; Gordon, 2013; Wangchuk, 2016). Subsequently, educational developments helped in both expanding and upgrading the number of schools across Bhutan in addition to easing access to all the citizens (Hirayama, 2011). With the primary mission to achieve 100% literacy rate, the successive monarch established schools across the regions, taking primary education further to the nooks and corners of the country (CERD, 2009; Hirayama, 2011; Gordon, 2013; Gyeltshen & Zangmo, 2020; Selden et al., 2020).

Despite the late start, school education in Bhutan has witnessed unprecedented growth and progress within a period of over six decades (Gyeltshen & Zangmo, 2020). Evidently, according to the Ministry of Education (2019), the modern education system has expanded from about 11 schools prior to 1961 to 1007 schools and other educational institutes in 2019, spanning from early childhood care education to tertiary, technical, and vocational education (Gyeltshen & Zangmo, 2020). Today, the education system in Bhutan has expanded since the first Five Year Plan in 1961 to address basic educational needs and develop human resources required for the socio-economic development of the country (Gyeltshen & Zangmo, 2020; Sherab, 2013).

Besides these, numerous initiatives, developmental plans and investments have been undertaken by the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) in the education sector (Sherab, 2013;Thinley, 2016). Adapting the educational system to modern challenges and opportunities, the government in 2007 established a separate and autonomous Royal Education Council (REC). The REC had the duty of developing and implementing an innovative curricular reform, in accordance with the local context while simultaneously providing the skills and predispositions for teachers and students to face a dynamic and uncertain future, against the backdrop of potential disconnection between a country attempting to retain its distinctive culture while moving its youth forward into the next century (Gordon, 2013).

Parental involvement and student's academic achievement

Gurung & Dorji (2021) and Jigyel et al., (2019) stated that parental involvement is a significant variable that positively influences children's education and particularly attains a higher level of quality in academic success. For instance, Hartas (2008) mentions that when parents read to their children at home, children can grasp the alphabet quicker than the children of parents who do not read to them. The usage of difficult sentences by the parents in their everyday conversations has a positive impact on children as they get to score high in literacy-related tasks in kindergarten.

Shapiro (2009) states that regardless of the parent's education level, when parents are involved with their children, their academic performance gets higher. This helps them to perform better in school and life. Some studies show that when the parents who have lower levels of education are more involved, the effect is greater and more positive than when parents who have higher levels of education are involved. Similarly, Yeshi (2017) states that when parents involve and monitor homework, encourage participation in extracurricular activities, and help children develop plans for their future; children are more likely to respond and do well in school.

Khajepour & Ghazvini (2011) also shares that parental involvement improves aspects of children's education such as daily attendance, student achievement, behavior and motivation. On the other hand, Bunujevac & Durisic (2017) states that the impacts of parental involvement extends beyond the academic achievements. The approach helps in developing the child psychologically, socially, emotionally and intellectually. In essence, stronger the parental involvement in their children's education, higher will be the academic achievement of the children (Yeshi, 2017; Gyeltshen & Sawangmek, n.d.)

Practices of parental involvement in children's education

The parent- teacher partnerships encompasses parents and school staff working together to foster similar goals, behavioral norms, and expectations for children. (Topor et al., 2010; Shen, 2016; CERD, 2007). Although it has been proven beyond any doubt that these practices help children's educational development, the practices of parental engagement in children education is an area of debate (Newman et al., 2019). There are contesting and countless practices of parental involvement according to the context of the settings (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011).

However, an inclusive view of involvement is presented by Epstein's model. Epstein (1997) (as cited in Yeshi, 2017) shares that children get to learn and develop through three overlapping spheres of influence: family, school, and community. It is very essential for these three spheres to form associations so that the children get the best of it. He defined six types of involvement based on the relationships between the family, school, and community: parenting (skills), communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community (Newman et al., 2019; Topor et al., 2010; Rogers et al., 2009)

Similarly, Goodall and Vorhaus, (2011) have found out that practices of parental engagement encompasses the general components of learning at home, communication,

decision making and collaborating with the community. Out of which, the greatest impact to the children is brought about by parents' expectations and their efforts in learning at home, not in the classroom (O'Hehir & Savelsberg, 2014). On the other hand, Brown (1989) asserts that school-based parent-teacher conferences and functions, and receiving and responding to written communications between parents and teachers are also an effective ways of parental involvement.

Similarly, volunteering and initiating community based programmes, and organizing informal get-togethers among the parents and teachers are another gateway to maintaining vibrant relationships them leading to sustainable parental involvement (Naite, 2021). Furthermore, meeting in person, converse by phone and social media, or sending notices home requesting parents to review and sign homework, were most frequently methods used to involve parents (Brown, 1989)

Barriers to Parental Involvement in Children's education

Growing national concern over failing schools has generated strong interest in parental educational involvement among researchers and school reformists. As a result, schools are finding and creating more ways to support home-school partnerships (Newman et al., 2019).

Educational institutions use several methods to support parental engagement although not all these strategies are met with success (Brown, 1989). According to research that has looked at parental involvement in education there are many possible barriers suggested for involvement (O'Hehir & Savelsberg, 2014; Badrasawi et al., 2020). Parents' perceptions of contextual factors shape their belief about their role in their child's schooling. Cognitions such as these may, in turn, influence the number of forms of behaviors or practices ultimately chosen by parents to engage in (Savacool, 2011). Included in these are limited skill sets or knowledge base to assist their child or contribute to their learning, access to certain activities, lack of time, and perceptions of the invitations they receive that are designed to encourage their involvement (Brown, 1989; Epstein, 2005; Gurung & Dorji, 2021; Newman et al., 2019).

Parents who represent lower socioeconomic classes may view schools as institutions that "fix" their children, creating a safe place for children to learn behavioral expectations and appropriate academic expectations that will mold them into a productive member of society (Bernard, 2008). Moreover, researchers argue that parents from low-income households have limited engagement in schools. Parents from low-income communities are often viewed from a deficit perspective regarding parental engagement and middle-class values (Newman et al., 2019). However, not all problems with parental involvement stem from parents only.

Some barriers arise as a result of obstacles or school-related factors (Savacool, 2011). While schools might provide plenty of opportunities to volunteer in the early years, as students reach upper elementary and middle school, those types of opportunities often dissipate (Loop, 2018). According to a study done by Hornby (2011), nearly one-third of students say their parents have no idea how they are doing in school (as cited in Newman et al., 2019). These situation arise due to the lack of proper dissemination of information, consultation and awareness initiatives from the schools' part (O'Hehir & Savelsberg, 2014; Newman et al., 2019). Moreover, according to Brown, the educational policies and societal norms also act as a barrier to effective parental involvement and therefore needs to be reviewed accordingly (1989).

Theoretical framework

In 1995, Epstein established the National Network for Partnership Schools to support in linking research, policy, and practices in education. In doing so, he theorized a framework of six typologies of parental involvement, which outline the partnership

among the family, the school and the community considering the importance of child or student at the center (Newman et al., 2019; Bunujevac&Durisic, 2017). According to Newman et al., 2019; and Mcneal, 2014; Bunujevac&Durisic, 2017, the six typologies of parental involvement are;

1. Parenting- offering possessions that set the home environments like that of school to enhance their learning.
2. Communicating-effective conversation about school events and children's academic or personal development, and/or insight within the home environment between the teachers and parents.
3. Volunteering-organizing and participating in activities initiated by school personnel like parent-teacher meetings, community associations or generated by the community or school members aimed at supporting students' programs, such as service-learning projects, seminars, functions and meetings.
4. Learning at home wherein it is providing information to parents and families about school procedures like homework opportunities, grading rubrics in order to help them supplement their children's academic activities. In a way, learning at home is an extension of children's learning beyond the four walls of the classroom at school.
5. Decision-making in which includes the parents and family members from all backgrounds as representatives and leaders on school committees agreed upon the educational events. The parents' aspirations of their children's schooling match those of school's decision about their students.
6. Collaborating with the community; identifying and integrating funds, services, and other assets from the community to lend a hand and meet the needs of school personnel, students, and their families. The community takes responsibility for the school's activities and students' well-being while the school remains transparent and accountable for its decisions.

Figure 1

Epstein's six typologies of parental involvement



Note. Adapted from Ihmeideh (2020)

Adapted from Ihmeideh (2020)

In general, the six types of parental involvement and interactions take action as a theoretical framework for classifying behaviours, responsibilities, and actions performed by school teachers, family and community members, working cooperatively and collaboratively to enhance involvement and student achievement that activate within the theory of overlapping spheres (Newman et al., 2019). The theory put forward have been supported, and reaffirmed, by numerous studies that have shown that good co-operation between schools, homes and the communities can lead to achievement for students, as well as to reforms in education (Bunujevac&Durisic, 2017)

Research Design and Methodologies

Philosophy and paradigm choice

The research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge (Saunders et al., 2015) while Babbie defines paradigm as a framework for observation and understanding, which shapes both what we see and how we understand it (2014). In this research, positivist philosophy and functionalist paradigm is used.

When it comes to educational research, it is evident that, as mentioned by Shen (2016) and Sherab (2013), the perspective from which it is studied is dominated by the positivist's point of view of research philosophy. In this token, influenced by the positivist's way of acquiring the data and functionalist way of objective interpretation of the numerical data, this research also empirically explored and described the barriers that restrict the involvement of parents in their children's education. Epstein's six typologies of parental involvement and the survey questionnaire adapted from Badrasawi et al., (2020) were developed to be analyzed through statistical measurements since it is not content-specific.

Moreover, neglecting the positivist perspective, particularly for this study, would have been inappropriate as this study intended to explore the educational context at the national level. Research in the positivist tradition is very much structured and the process usually relies on gathering large scale numerical data aiming to generalize the findings to a population through statistical tests and analysis (Sherab, 2013). Since this research also studies challenges of parental involvement in children's education among schools in Bhutan, it has collected overview perspectives from a large number of samples in order to generalize it to the population. This was made feasible because of the employment of positivist philosophy and functionalist paradigm.

Research approach

According to Saunders et al., (2015), inductive, deductive and adductive are the three types of research approaches. In the context of the current research, the deductive approach was used in line with the research philosophy and paradigm. Moreover, since this research aimed to explore and describe the means and barriers to parental involvement in primary schools in Bhutan strictly within the scope of the existing Epstein's Model of six typologies of parental involvement, the deductive approach seemed fit for this research.

Research strategy and time horizon.

The cross-sectional survey strategy, which is commonly used in educational research (Badrasawi et al., 2020), is also used for this study as well. The primary objectives of this research are to explore the ways of parental engagement in the context of urban and rural schools in Bhutan and also to find common barriers that hinder successful parental engagement. Therefore, the single structured survey questionnaire to collect quantitative

data from a wide range of samples from both rural and urban schools over a time frame of two weeks was employed.

Methodological choices

In reference to the research onion illustrated by Saunders et al., (2015), the methodological choice is another dimension in building the research process. This research employed a quantitative approach with, as mentioned above, a survey questionnaire as an important tool for collecting the quantitative data. In line with the acquired quantitative data and corroborated by existing literature on this matter, the researcher described the findings objectively. Therefore, this research is an exploratory and descriptive type of research.

Sample and Sampling Design

This research employed a stratified random sampling design. Stratified random sampling is the technique of breaking the population of interest into groups (called strata) and selecting a random sample from within each of these groups. Breaking the population up into strata helps ensure a representative mix of units is selected from the population and enough samples are allocated to groups you wish to form estimates about (citation needed). Since the objective of this research is to find out the ways and barriers of parental involvement in children's education in the context of both rural and urban settings, the population of this research is stratified into rural and urban schools. From the population, the samples size was determined based on the number of students in those schools by using RaosoftInc. Online sampling size calculator.

Initially, 152 samples (n=152) were identified from the population of 670 students' parents (N=670) from Jungshina Primary School, one of the urban schools in Thimphu, at a 95% confidence interval with a 7% of marginal error. However, only 123 samples (n=123) responded to the questionnaire successfully. Similarly, only 97 samples responded to the questionnaire completely bringing down the marginal error to 8.5% against the initially determined samples of 114 (n=114) with 7% of marginal error at a 95% confidence interval from the population of 270 student's parents (N=270) of two remote schools. The two remote schools are Dechenpelri Primary School in Gelephu, Sarpang and Dechenling Lower Secondary School in Nganglam, PemaGatshel. In total, this research has selected 220 samples (n=220) from the population of 940 students' parents (N=940).

Data collection and procedures

As mentioned above, the population of the research was stratified into two categories that are urban and rural schools. Then, the schools for the respective strata were identified. Then, I contacted the principal of the schools and requested the list of the students.

The data collection was done over a period of 1 week in two phases. The first phase was done in one of the primary schools in Thimphu city. After getting the list of students from the school, I randomly selected a required number of students as samples. I contacted the class teachers of those randomly selected students using Excel and requested them to get one of their parent's either E-mail addresses or social media accounts through which I could send the survey questionnaire. Few of the samples already refused to be a part of the research by refusing to give their contact link. After getting the contact link, the survey questionnaire was deployed individually.

The second phase of data collection was done in two remote primary schools. Similar to the first phase, the samples were randomly selected from the list of students using Microsoft Excel. However, it was inconvenient for me to visit those schools to personally collect the data from the student's parents. Doing a survey through Google Form wasn't

possible either since most of the student's parents are uneducated. Therefore, I identified two educated people as translators. Then, I made a thorough explanation of every item and nomenclature of the questionnaire to them. After making everything clear, I sent the survey link to them and they filled the survey form through consultation to those selected samples.

Reliability test of the questions

Before the actual data collection was done, the survey questionnaire was deployed for pilot testing in Nganglam Central School where 51 parents responded to the questionnaire. The question's internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's reliability test in SPSS. The Cronbach's Alpha obtained was 0.758 indicating an acceptable level of reliability

Figure 2

Reliability test of the questions

<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>N of Items</i>
<i>.758</i>	<i>17</i>

Data analysis

The data collected were analyzed to answer the research question of this study such as what are ways through which parents are involved in children's education and what are the barriers that restrict successful parental involvement in children's education in Bhutan?The analysis is done in three parts.

The first part shows the descriptive analysis of the demographic components of the respondents. The second part contains the descriptive analysis (central tendency, Mean and standard deviation) of the common ways through which parents get involved in their children's education both at home and school while the last part contains the descriptive analysis of the common barriers encountered by the parents that restricts them from engaging in their children's educational processes. These empirical statistical tests/analyses were done with the usage of SPSS (IBM SPSS Statistics 25) and MS Excel.

Ethical considerations

The research was monitored and supervised to maintain proper research ethics. This study obtained the respondents approval and promised to maintain strict confidentiality or anonymity and privacy of the response provided by the respondents. The research was conducted in a manner that respects the decision of the respondents and serves the interest of the individuals or society as a whole.

Result and Analyses

General analyses

Demographic description

The overall demographic description and distributions of the samples are shown by the following tables namely Table 1, 2 and 3. At an outset, as shown in table 1, there were 113 (51.4%) females and 107 (48.6%) males that totals to 220 samples, out of which 97 (44.1%) of them were living in a rural area while 123 (55.9%) of them do so in an urban area. The number of samples from respective areas was determined by RaosoftInc. online sampling calculator and they are selected using a stratified random sampling method.

Table 1
Gender of parents and location of school

<i>Characteristics</i>		<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Female</i>	113	51.4
	<i>Male</i>	107	48.6
	<i>Total</i>	220	100
<i>Location of the school</i>	<i>Rural</i>	97	44.1
	<i>Urban</i>	123	55.9
	<i>Total</i>	220	100

Regarding the occupation of the respondents as shown in Table 2, the majority of the respondents from the rural school were farmer (45.4%) while some of them were business persons (14.4%), civil servants (22.7%) and private employees (17.5%). In the urban school, 19% of them were business person, 26% of them are private employees, more than half of the total samples (56.1%) were civil servants and only 2.4% of them were farmer.

Table 2
Occupation of the parents

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Rural school</i>		<i>Urban school</i>	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
<i>Business person</i>	14	14.4	19	15.4
<i>Civil servant</i>	22	22.7	69	56.1
<i>farmer</i>	44	45.4	3	2.4
<i>Private employee</i>	17	17.5	32	26
<i>Total</i>	97	100	123	100

Table 3 presents the highest level of education of the parents. Proportionately, 35.1% of the parents whose child/children are studying in rural schools were uneducated, 15.5% of them have studied until class VI, 19% of them have finished degree, 10% of them have masters certificate while there was no one who have done PhD. On the other hand, only 2.2% of the parents whose children are studying in urban school, were uneducated, 22% of them studied until class VI, 56.1% of them holds degree level certificate, and 9.8% of them did masters. In essence, this wide gap in the educational background of the parents

is worrisome for the children studying in rural schools as various researches confirm that the former has lots of influence on the latter's academic performances (Naite, 2021; Selden et al., 2020; Yeshe, 2017).

Table3

Parent's level of qualification

<i>Qualification level</i>	<i>Rural school</i>		<i>Urban school</i>	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
<i>PhD.</i>	0	0	1	0.8
<i>Masters</i>	10	10.3	12	9.8
<i>Degree</i>	19	19.6	69	56.1
<i>High school</i>	11	11.3	10	8.1
<i>Secondary school</i>	8	8.2	1	0.8
<i>Primary school</i>	15	15.5	27	22
<i>Uneducated</i>	34	35.1	3	2.4
<i>Total</i>	97	100	123	100

Practices of parental involvement

The practices of parental involvement is one of the variables in this study. In order to measure this variable, there are 6 indicators (A1-A6) adapted in line to Epstein's six typologies of the parental involvement, as shown in Table 4. For the purpose of interpretation, greater the mean score (M) than the average mean score of 3 ($M > 3$), lower the level of agreement will be. On the other hand, lower the mean score (M) than the average mean score of 3 ($M < 3$) will indicate higher the level of agreement. This applies to all the interpretation of the tables herein.

Table4

Practices of parental involvement

<i>Practices</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>A1. Buys supplementary learning materials at home.</i>	220	1	5	2.36	.953
<i>A2. Receives feedback and progression report frequently.</i>	220	1	5	2.52	1.058
<i>A3. Have sense of belonging and responsibility towards school</i>	220	1	5	2.14	1.091

<i>A4. Helps in doing home works.</i>	220	1	5	2.22	1.130
<i>A5. Attends school functions, parent-teacher meetings, and other programmes.</i>	220	1	5	2.57	.965
<i>A6. Interacts and provides mutual support to teachers and other parents</i>	220	1	5	2.11	.728

The first indicator A1 aims to measure the level of agreement among the parents when it comes to buying learning materials such as stationaries, librariesand digital materials, making home an another classroom. This mainly validates the parenting aspects of the Epstein's six typologies of parental involvement. The Mean of the Q1 ($M_1 = 2.36$, $SD_1 = 0.953$) which is lower than 3 ($M < 3$) indicated that the parents buy supplementary learning materials for their children at home. The second indicator A2, with mean score of 2.52 ($M_2 = 2.52$, $SD_2 = 1.058$) also confirms that there is prevalent of frequent communication between the parents and teacher in receiving feedbacks and progression reports on the matters of children's performances. In doing so, it ascertains that there is a practices of communicating aspects in the schools of Bhutan.

Furthermore, indicators such as A3, A4, and A6 with corresponding mean scores ($M_3 = 2.14$, $SD_3 = 1.091$), ($M_4 = 2.22$, $SD_4 = 1.130$), ($M_6 = 2.11$, $SD_6 = 0.728$) showed that parents have greater sense of belonging and responsibility towards their children, helps their children in doing home works and also, interact and provide mutual supports to the teachers and other parents, respectively. However, among the six indicators, A5 which measures the likeliness of parents to attend school functions, parent-teacher meetings, and other programmes, scored the least mean score ($M_5 = 2.57$, $SD_5 = .965$). While it still ascertains that most of the parents attend functions, programmes and meetings conducted by the schools, fair number of parents do not prefer to attend the same.

Challenges of parental involvement in children's education

There are numerous challenges that restricts both parents and teachers to conduct effective parental involvement in children's education. However, the nature and extend of challenges they face depend upon the background of the parents and teachers, and context of the school and society as a whole.

From Table 5 below, it was found that the parents face difficulties in providing time for their children's academic activities due to their own career schedule ($M_1 = 2.20$, $SD_1 = 1.092$) that is relatively lower than 3. It indicates that time poverty is a serious issue among the parents, that restrict them from providing a fair share of time to their children's school activities.

Table 5
Types of challenges

<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>B1. Career schedule</i>	1	5	2.20	1.092
<i>B2. Qualification level of education</i>	1	5	3.18	1.511

B3. Distance from the school	1	5	3.20	1.424
B4. Means of communication	1	5	3.36	1.319
B5. School's policies	1	5	3.45	1.247
B6. Consultation and information dissemination	1	5	3.28	1.322

However, the statistics has shown that qualification level of the parents ($M_2=3.18$, $SD_2=1.511$) is not a barrier for them to get involve in their children's daily educational activities. Moreover, many parents do not feel troubled to get involve in their children's educational activities at school due to distance from the school. It implies that the transportation facilities are available even though their home is far from the school. It is evidently shown by the mean score of B3 ($M_3=3.20$, $SD_3=1.424$). Furthermore, mean score of B4 ($M_4=3.36$, $SD_4=1.319$) also confirms that parents do not face difficulties in contacting teachers of their children as means of communication is readily available and accessible to both the parties. Observing the mean score of B5 ($C_5=3.45$, $SD_5=1.247$), it concludes that schools have policies and norms that are encouraging and supportive of parental involvement. Lastly, the school teachers also conduct adequate consultation to the parents and the dissemination of information is effective and timely as shown by the mean score of B6 ($C_6=3.28$, $SD_5=1.322$).

Parent's preferable means of communication with teachers

In order to have effective parental involvement in their children's educational activities, a parent-teacher partnership is necessary. For that matter, effective communication needs to be ensured. Therefore, to explore their preferences when it comes to communicational processes, five types of most common means of communication were provided to rate their preferences from 1 to 5 (1 being the most preferable and 5 being the least preferable).

Table 6
Means of communication

Means of communication	N	Most preferable	Least preferable	Mean	Std. Deviation
C1. Sending letters to teachers	220	1	5	2.90	1.457
C2. Face to face conversation	220	1	5	2.36	1.269
C3. Through parent teacher meetings	220	1	5	2.68	1.205
C4 Getting in contact through the school board committee members	220	1	5	2.71	1.281
C5. Social media and phone calls	220	1	5	2.23	1.309

The overall result indicated that the most preferred means of communication is social media and phone calls ($M_5=2.23$, $SD_5=1.309$) while the least preferred is the conventional way of sending letters ($M_1=2.90$, $SD_1=1.457$). Meeting in person and doing face to face conversation is second most preferred means of communication ($M_2=2.36$, $SD_2=1.269$), and communicating through parent-teacher meetings is the third preferred ($M_3=2.68$, $SD_3=1.205$) means of communication.

Urban schools

For the purpose of this research, 123 samples were randomly selected out of 670 total population from Jungshina Primary School in ThipmhuThromde. The statistical findings from the analysis of data from the school are as follows;

Practices of parental involvement in urban school

Table 7

Practices of parental involvement in urban school

<i>Practices</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>D1. Buys supplementary learning materials at home.</i>	123	1	5	2.20	.905
<i>D2. Receives feedback and progression report frequently.</i>	123	1	5	2.39	.989
<i>D3. Have a sense of belonging and responsibility towards school</i>	123	1	5	1.99	1.012
<i>D4. Helps in doing home works.</i>	123	1	5	1.93	.956
<i>D5. Attends school functions, parent-teacher meetings, and other programmes.</i>	123	1	5	2.49	.944
<i>D6. Interacts and provides mutual support to teachers and other parents</i>	123	1	5	2.12	.795

The first indicator D1 aims to measure the level of agreement among the parents when it comes to buying learning materials such as stationaries, libraries and digital materials, making home another classroom. The findings have shown that the mean score of this indicator is ($M_1 = 2.20$, $SD_2 = 0.905$) which indicates that parents of urban school buy supplementary learning materials for their children at home. The second indicator D2, with mean score of 2.39 ($M_2=2.39$, $SD_2=0.989$) also confirms that there is prevalent of frequent communication between the parents and teacher in receiving feedbacks and progression reports on the matters of children's performances. In doing so, it ascertains that there is a practice of communicating aspects in the urban schools of Bhutan.

One of the notable findings is that, parents in the urban schools have strong sense of belongingness and responsibilities towards their children's school. It is corroborated by the mean score of the indicator D3 ($M_3=1.99$, $SD_3=1.012$) which is relatively lower than mean score 3. In addition, the mean score of D4 ($M_4=1.93$, $SD_4=0.956$) also strongly indicates that children in urban schools receive assistance and support from their parents in doing extended learning at home

including the home works, in addition to buying of supplementary learning materials.

Furthermore, as shown by the mean score of indicators D6 ($M_6=2.12$, $SD_6=0.795$), there is frequent interaction among the parents in the community and sense of mutual supports towards each other. However, from the six indicators, D5 which measures the likeliness of parents to attend school functions, parent-teacher meetings, and other programmes, comparatively scored the least mean ($M_5= 2.49$, $SD_5=.944$). Although it still confirms that most of the parents attend functions, programmes and meetings conducted by the schools, fair number of parents do not prefer to attend the same.

Challenges of parental involvement in urban school

Table 8

Challenges of parental involvement in urban school

<i>Challenges</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>E1. Career schedule</i>	123	1	5	2.17	1.006
<i>E2. Qualitification level of education</i>	123	1	5	3.81	1.237
<i>E3. Distance from the school</i>	123	1	5	3.83	1.199
<i>E4. Means of communication</i>	123	1	5	3.71	1.220
<i>E5. School's policies</i>	123	1	5	3.53	1.276
<i>E6. Consultation and information dissemination</i>	123	1	5	3.53	1.230

Similar to overall findings presented in Table 5, it was found that the parents in urban area face difficulties in providing time for their children's academic activities due to their own career schedule ($M_1=2.17$, $SD_1=1.006$). It vehemently confirms that parents are too busy to engage their time separately for their children's educational activities.

However, it was found that qualification level of the parents ($M_2=3.81$, $SD_2=1.237$) is not a barrier for them to get involve in their children's daily educational activities. Moreover, many parents do not feel that distance between their home and school as a challenge. It implies that the transportation facilities are available even though their home is far from the school. It is evidently shown by the mean score of E3 ($M_3=3.83$, $SD_3=1.199$).

Furthermore, mean score of E4 ($M_4=3.71$, $SD_4=1.220$) confirmed that parents do not face difficulties in contacting teachers. This may be because of availability and accessibility of technologies and proximity of school in urban centers. Moreover, the mean score of E5 ($M_5=3.53$, $SD_5=1.276$), concludes that schools have policies and norms that are encouraging and supportive of parental involvement. Lastly, the school teachers also conduct adequate consultation to the parents and the dissemination of information is effective and timely, as shown by the mean score of E6 ($C_6=3.53$, $SD_6=1.230$).

Rural schools

Dechenpelri Primary School in Gelephu, Sarpang district and Dechheling Lower Secondary School in Nganglam, PemaGatshel were the two rural schools selected for this research. Both the schools fall under the category of rural school. The former has 114 students (class PP-VI) and the latter has 156 students (Class PP-VI). In general, 97 samples were randomly selected from combined total 270 students. The statistical findings from the analysis of data from these two rural schools are as follows;

Practices of parental involvement in rural schools

Table 9

Practices of parental involvement in rural schools

<i>Practices</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>F1. Buys supplementary learning materials at home.</i>	97	2.57	0.978
<i>F2. Receives feedback and progression report frequently.</i>	97	2.68	1.123
<i>F3. Have sense of belonging and responsibility towards school</i>	97	2.33	1.161
<i>F4. Helps in doing home works</i>	97	2.58	1.232
<i>F5. Attends school functions, parent-teacher meetings, and other programmes.</i>	97	2.67	0.987
<i>F6. Interacts and provides mutual support to teachers and other parents</i>	97	2.1	0.637

As presented in the table 9, parents in rural areas do not buy supplementary learning materials for their children as frequent as that of parents in urban areas do. This is inferred from the mean score of F1 ($M_1 = 2.57$, $SD_2 = 0.978$), which is comparatively lower than the mean scored by the parents in urban school ($M_1 = 2.20$, $SD_2 = 0.905$), presented in Table 7.

Nevertheless, parents in rural school also have sense of belongingness and responsibilities towards their children's school as shown by the mean score of F3 ($M_3=2.33$, $SD_3=1.161$). In addition, the mean score of F4 ($M_4=2.58$, $SD_4=1.232$) indicates that parents in rural school also aids and support to their children in doing home works. In contrast, this particular practice of parental involvement is more pertinent among parents in urban school as indicated by the mean score of D4 ($M_4=1.93$, $SD_4=0.956$), shown in Table 7.

Furthermore, as shown by the mean score of indicators F5 ($M_5=2.67$, $SD_5=0.987$), and F6($M_6=2.1$, $SD_6=0.637$), the corresponding findings are that, parents in rural school also make sure to attend school functions, parent-teacher meetings and

other programmes, and have high sense of mutual understanding among themselves and provide supports to other parents and teachers as well.

Challenges of parental involvement in rural schools

Table 10

Challenges of parental involvement in rural school

<i>Challenges</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>G1. Career schedule</i>	97	1	5	2.24	1.197
<i>G2. Qualification level of education</i>	97	1	5	2.37	1.446
<i>G3. Proximity between home and school</i>	97	1	5	2.41	1.289
<i>G4. Means of communication</i>	97	1	5	2.93	1.317
<i>G5. School's policies</i>	97	1	5	3.34	1.207
<i>G6. Consultation and information dissemination</i>	97	1	5	2.97	1.373

Parents in urban school agreed that career schedule is the only critical barrier they face while engaging in their children's education as shown in Table 8. In contrast, figures in Table 10 has shown that, in addition to career schedule (G1) (M=2.24, SD=1.197), their qualification level of education (G2) (M=2.37, SD=1.446), and distance between their home and school (G3) (M=2.41, SD=1.289) are the most pressing barriers they face.

Furthermore, means of communication (G4) with the mean score of (M=2.93, SD=1.317) and level of consultation and difficulty in getting information with the mean score of (M=2.97, SD=1.207) are the next common barriers they face. However, it was widely accepted among them that the school's policies and frameworks (G5) (M=3.34, SD=1.207) do not pose any challenges to them in engaging them in the educational activities of their children.

Discussion

The ways of parental involvement and barriers against it depend upon the context of the study area. However, in the context of Bhutan, most of the studies are based on ascertaining the influences of parental involvement in children's education and are conducted in urban schools only (Yeshe, 2017). Provided the fact that there is limited comparative research conducted on ways and barriers of parental involvement across both the section of urban and rural schools, this research was done with the objectives to do a comparative study of the common practices of parental involvement and barriers to parental involvement in children's education between rural and urban schools in Bhutan.

The study was conducted based on Epstein's six typologies of parental involvement in children's education. The practices of parental involvement and

barriers to parental involvement were considered as two variables that would determine the nature of parental involvement. The indicators to measure the first variables were developed based on the six typologies of parental involvement. To make indicators statistically measurable, a question on a five-point Likert scale was developed for each indicator. For an instance, the definition of “parenting” suggests that it is an act of “offering possessions that set the home environments like that of school” (Keyes, 2000; Newman et al., 2019; and Mcneal, 2014; Bunujevac&Durisic, 2017). Therefore, buying supplementary learning materials at home as a question was adopted to measure the parenting indicator. The rest of the questions were also developed based on the corresponding types of parental involvement.

The general findings of the study demonstrated that all the six ways of parental involvement are practiced in the schools. However, among the six types of practices, the level of agreement among them is more when it comes to a sense of belonging and responsibility towards their children’s school and frequently, interacts and provide mutual support to other parents and teachers as well. In contrast, most of the parents do not intend to attend the parent-teacher meetings, school functions and other programmes in the school. This may mean that parents might have other means of decision making for their children or prefer other means of attending functions, meetings and programmes as Badrasawi et al., (2020) found out in their study that parents prefer to attend virtual meetings and programmes rather than physically attending it.

Furthermore, the comparative findings between the rural and urban schools demonstrated a wide gap in parental involvement as shown in Table 11. In all the six practices, parents in urban schools have more level of involvement in children’s education. Specifically, parents in urban schools are comparatively involved more in helping their children while doing homework and buying supplementary learning materials than the parents in rural schools. This result conforms to the findings of a study done by Badrasawi et al., (2020) in one of the rural areas in southern China.

Therefore, learning at home is minimum in the homes of parents who are living in urban schools in Bhutan. One of the reasons for having low involvement of parents in helping their children while doing homework is because of the low educational qualification level of the parents living in rural areas as the study found out that not less than 35% of the parents are uneducated. Gurung & Dorji (2021) also confirms that the minimal literacy rate of parents in rural areas leads to a lower level of parental involvement.

Table 11

Comparative findings on practices of parental involvement

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Over-all</i>	<i>Urban school</i>	<i>Rural schools</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>
<i>Buys supplementary learning materials at home.</i>	2.36	2.2	2.57

<i>Receives feedback and progression report frequently.</i>	2.52	2.39	2.68
<i>Have a sense of belonging and responsibility towards school</i>	2.14	1.99	2.33
<i>Helps in doing home works.</i>	2.22	1.93	2.58
<i>Attends school functions, parent-teacher meetings, and other programmes.</i>	2.57	2.49	2.67
<i>Interacts and provides mutual support to teachers and other parents</i>	2.11	2.12	2.1

Although parents were found that they involve in attending school functions, parent-teacher meetings and other programmes but the level of preferences compared to other practices of parental involvement are low in both urban and rural schools. This may be because of the paradigm shift among people due to the Covid-19 pandemic where physical meetings are to be avoided. Moreover, as technological accessibility and social media gain popularity among people, they prefer online meetings. This can be substantiated by the finding of this study, as shown in Table 6, that the most preferred means of communication among the parents to communicate with their children's teacher is through social media and phone calls while attending parent-teacher meetings is the second least preferred means of communication.

This leads to a discussion on the barrier's parents in both urban and rural schools face in the process of engaging in their children's education. The preference of social media and digital platforms over other means of communication by the parents conforms with the challenges of career schedule as mentioned in a study done by Shen (2016) to evaluate the impacts of using iPad in education that digital technologies and social media platforms are commonly used ways of easing the challenges of busy career schedule as it fast and accessible. Therefore, rather than attending meetings and functions physically, which would add a burden to their busy career schedule, parents demonstrated that they prefer social media platforms and digital technologies to engage in their children's education.

Table 12

Comparative findings on challenges parental involvement

<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Over-all</i>	<i>Urban school</i>	<i>Rural school</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>
<i>Career schedule</i>	2.20	2.17	2.24
<i>Qualification level of education</i>	3.18	3.81	2.37
<i>Proximity between home and school</i>	3.20	3.83	2.41
<i>Means of communication</i>	3.36	3.71	2.93
<i>School's policies</i>	3.45	3.53	3.34
<i>Consultation and information dissemination</i>	3.28	3.53	2.97

However, as shown in Table 12, there is a wide range of differences between the barriers that parents in rural and urban schools encounter. While the overall and urban school findings demonstrated that career schedule is the only challenge they face, policies of the school is the only enabling factors for the parents in rural schools. This indicates that parental involvement in their children's educational activities for the parents in rural schools is comparatively more challenging than the parents in urban schools.

Besides challenges of career schedule, their educational qualification level, far distance from the school, lack of means of communication, lack of consultation and improper information dissemination strategies from the school administration are some of the challenges for them. This is corroborated by Yeshe (2017) who also found out that parents' level of educational qualification is one of the factors that determine parental involvement in children's education in Bhutan. Parents with a high level of education feel motivated to help their children in decision making and helping in homework (Sherab, 2013). However, according to Gurung & Dorji (2021), parents in rural Bhutan are mostly illiterate and stay very far from their children's school, barring them from involving in their children's education actively. Moreover, parents in rural Bhutan enroll their children in boarding schools and rarely visit the school. In order to visit their children in the school or to attend the school functions, they need to travel for hours to reach school. This is exacerbated by the lack of means of transportation (Gyeltshen & Zangmo, 2020).

However, under the benevolent leadership of the compassionate monarchs, Bhutan's educational system has leap-frogged over the last decades with the primary goals to provide free, accessible and equitable educations for all the citizens (Selden et al., 2020). For that matter, our educational policies and initiatives should address the challenges and gaps in the educational systems as discussed earlier and also, strategizes sustainable and equitable means of parental involvement in their children's education.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is sampling biases. The strata involved in this research are only rural and urban schools while there are schools that were located in semi-urban areas in Bhutan. The data collection was limited to lower and primary schools only. Moreover, this research considered only the parents as samples, leading to a single and one-sided perspective on this research field. On the other hand, the Epstein six typologies of parental involvement include the equal role of children and teachers as well.

The next is, this research did not do an in-depth qualitative study on the factors of parental involvement and barriers along with it. The survey items were structured and confined within the frameworks of Epstein's six typologies of parental involvement only. In doing so, many other aspects of ways of parental involvement and barriers they face were missed out

Recommendations

Education has played a central role in developing Bhutan's human resources capacities which is one of the indispensable factors for the development of the

country. The first school for modern education was established in 1914 and hundreds of schools have been constructed since then, catering free education to thousands of citizens. Now, every child has accessibility to modern education. However, the Bhutanese educational system has been under constant changes to keep it abreast with the phenomenon of the 21st century and beyond but there are wide areas to find bright spots for improvement. Therefore, according to the findings of this study, the following are the recommendations to enhance parental involvement in children's education.

1. Schools to adopt digital platforms for parental engagement; As discussed above, one of the highly preferred means of communication by the parents is social media and phone calls and one of the least preferred practices of parental involvement is physically attending parent-teacher meetings. On the other hand, the top barrier they face is their busy career schedule. Therefore, in order to find the way out of the busy career schedule of the parents, teachers and school administration should adopt digital platforms to conduct meetings and other programmes, especially for parents in urban areas.
2. School committee and local government partnership; every school needs a school committee with equal representation of parents from every background. However, there are parents who encounter difficulties in attending the meetings due to proximity and transportation issues exacerbated by language barriers and technological divide, leading to a lack of timely information. In this case, schools in partnership with the local leaders such as Gups and Tsogpas should act as a messenger to the children's parents living in far-flung villages.

Conclusion

Researchers have come to a consensus that parental involvement in children's education is one of the bright spots to enhance the holistic development of children. There are numerous researches done on this subject in the Bhutanese education context as well and the results confirm the same. However, there are contesting debates on the common practices and challenges of parental involvement. In Bhutan, there is a minimum study done on this matter. Therefore, this research conducted an exploratory descriptive study on the ways of parental involvement and the challenges associated with it, based on Epstein's model.

The findings of the study suggested that there are both similarities and differences in the ways the parents in rural and urban schools get engaged in their children's educational activities. The most common practice is that they share a greater sense of belongingness towards their school and, interact and provide mutual support to other parents and teachers. On the other hand, parents in rural schools encounter more barriers than the parents living in urban areas. While the latter faces an acute challenge of time management due to their career schedule, the challenges that bar the former from involving in their children's education are their low level of educational qualification, long distance between their home and school, lack of means of communication for

consultation and dissemination of information between them and the school administration.

However, this study is not exhaustive but sets a foundation for other aspiring researchers to undertake similar study. Moreover, it will be a little addition to large body of knowledge that can be accessed by academicians and policy makers in making our educational system a top platform to our children for holistic and equitable development

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