

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

Education is recognized as a basic human fundamental right for wholesome development of an individual. The home and the school are the learning center of the children where they are molded into a capable and potential individual. The world education forum at Dakar adopted the Education for All Goal (EFA) goals for every citizen and every society by 2015. The particular emphasis was also given to areas of concern identified such as early childhood education, education of girls and women, adult literacy and education in situations of crisis and emergency. The EFA 2000 assessment demonstrated that there has been significant progress in many countries. However, the assessment report highlighted that in the year 2000, there was more than 113 million children who have no access to primary education, 880 million adults are illiterate, gender discrimination continues to permeate education systems, and the quality of learning and the acquisition of human values and skills fall far short of the aspirations and needs of an individuals and societies. The participants in the meeting further committed that ensuring access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality, achieving gender equality in education and improving all aspects of the quality of education by 2015 [1].

UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report [2], stated that progress towards many of the targets were slowing down, and that most EFA goals are unlikely to be met. According to the report, there was a high dropout rate and many children do not complete primary school in many countries. The report further stated that to improve universal primary enrolment, government must renew efforts to prevent dropout. The EFA report found that of 100 children out of school, 47 are never expected to enter school at all. The EFA report further revealed that whether the child live in low income or middle income countries, children from marginalized households are more likely to enter late and to drop out early. Despite the abolition of school fees in many countries, costs associated with schooling still prevent many children from attending

school. The gender disparities taking in a variety of forms still in many countries was also highlighted in EFA report. Despite progress in reducing severe disparity in access to primary school, there are still seventeen countries with fewer than nine girls for every ten boys in primary school. Regional and international assessments of learning outcomes show that across the world there is a large and increasing gender gap in reading, with boys, especially from poorer backgrounds, falling behind [2].

The UNICEF report of the global thematic consultation on education in the Post-2015 development agenda [3] data showed that there are still about 57 million children of primary school age, including 31 million girls, who are not in school due to financial, social or physical challenges. In addition, wide disparities among regions and within countries remain to be addressed in the education agenda. In many countries children leave school without having developed literacy and numeracy or other relevant skills. As a result, millions of children and youth are unable to advance to higher levels of education or to move on to gainful employment. Education and training are not meeting the needs and demands of all young people to thrive and participate fully in society [3].

It was clear from the EFA report that there are many strong challenges to overcome in giving free access to education to all the children's. The report further argued that different stakeholders to work collaboratively to overcome those challenges. Thus, the strong relationships between different stakeholders have been viewed as important step towards positive child's learning in the school. Gordon [4] stated that "Parents and schools share equally valued roles in education of children". Many researchers argued that the 21st century schools must see themselves as an open system inviting and engaging families, parents and communities in the learning of the children. Many academic studies have shown that family and parent involvement are linked to children's academic, social and emotional development of children, although, Parent and family involvement in school are seen as a difficult and complex task. Gestwicki [5] stated that "the family is the most adaptable of human institution able to modify its characteristics to meet those of the society in which it lives". However, family system in 21st century has become very complicated. The way children's were brought up has also changed drastically with change in family system. The changing family system has a greater impact on the child's home life. In a special

edition titled “The Twenty-First Century Family” [5], stated, “The American family does not exist. Rather, we are creating many American families, of diverse styles and shapes. In unprecedented numbers, our families are unlike: We have fathers working while mothers keep house; fathers and mothers working away from home; single parents; second marriages, bringing children together from unrelated backgrounds; childless couples; unmarried couples, with and without children; gay and lesbian parents. We are living through period of historic change in American family life”. Thus considering the complexities and nature of family system, growing of young children in the family has been drastically altered. Gestwicki [5] further stated that “Modern families are beset by difficulties related to new social patterns that have evolved from without, and by the psychological pressure from within that arise when individuals’ life experiences differ from the models they have learned or the ideals for which they strive. He argues that parenting is already a complex task, and within the context of modern American culture, the challenging of parenting is heightened”.

This clearly indicated that the relationship between the families, parents, and school for the 21st century learners should be very different than traditional ideas of parent or family involvement in educating the young learners. Drake [6] explained that “modern society has become too complex and under gone significant changes which makes families difficult in educating their children” There is no doubt that schools that recognizes the interdependence nature of relationship between families and school will realize the value the parent and family involvement towards children’s educational success. He further stated that “the challenges that students in America’s public schools face cannot be solved by educators alone; nor can be solved by parents or families alone. Students in schools across this nation are confronted by critical social, emotional, and environmental problems. More collaboration between the school and home will need to be focused on dealing with these problems”.

Like American education and family system, the Bhutanese society is witnessing a shift in values, attitudes and expectations and many challenges are faced by the educators and families in educating children in the school. Changes and progress in education are taking place along with other social, cultural, and economic development in the country. Although huge progress has been made during last few years, the education system in the country still faces several challenges like; relatively

lower basic education completion rates, regional disparities in enrollment, quality and availability of textbook for students, problem of class size, teacher-student ratio, student under achievement, low adult literacy rates, marginal improvement in examination, and teachers status in the Bhutanese society. Data indicated that the realization of educational goals is constrained by this challenges which have a greater impact on the delivery of quality of education [7].

Education has played a central role in the transformation of Bhutan from a tradition-bound society to a dynamic, confident participant in regional and global affairs [8]. Thus providing the quality of education to the young Bhutanese children in the school are considered as an important paramount as they constitute a unique group within our society who represents a positive work force with enormous potential to contribute to socio-economic development of the country. One research shows that problem of dropouts, non-enrollment, Poor Performance in exams and lacks of interest in studying by the students are mainly due to the parent's educational background and family socio-economic conditions" [9].

The importance of Education is laid down in country's national goal and vision of education. Building a strong foundation for education is one of the very important national goals of Bhutan. As stated in NEF (2012) "The role of education is to equip the young generation with the appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are required to formulate and implement new ways of achieving the goals of GNH, in the context of the dynamics of local, national and global realities and developments". The country's vision for Education is to have "A system that fosters excellence and empowers the Bhutanese to be responsible citizens who are caring and successful lifelong learners, driven by a spirit of innovation, creativity and enterprise, to uphold the happiness of the living world and protect the organic ecosystem and the non living environment". This vision directs the educational settings to create a pathway to have an enlightened and productive Bhutanese society. Special emphasis has been given to equal opportunities and access to education at all levels, achieving universal basic education, improving educational quality and standards, enhancing value education, raising literacy levels among the adult population, and making education more relevant to the workplace [7].

Bhutan's MDG needs assessment and costing (2006-2015) highlights that major challenge for the country is in meeting its commitment to ensure Education For All by 2015. The report further points out that in order to accelerate progress towards attaining the MDG goal of universal primary education and long term national goal of realizing a knowledge-based society, there should be an major intervention in education sector. The report further highlighted that the major constraints and challenges to be the low levels of adult literacy, particularly among women and in rural areas; the quality and relevance of education, problem of enrolment rate, and quality of education at primary level. The report highlights that overcrowding of class rooms, shortage of teachers and inadequate learning materials are thus hampering the learning environment and the quality of education that students receive [10].

Another concern of Bhutanese education was the repetition rate, on an average; the repetition rate stands at 8.5 per cent per grade annually, indicating the proportion of students who cannot master the curriculum. A high level of grade repetition is a sign of a dysfunctional school system, exacerbating the dropout rate and resulting in overcrowded classrooms. This situation could be explained by a low level of learning gain in the primary years. High dropout rates in Classes IV and VII indicate that primary students may have difficulties in coping with the increased learning demands placed on them by the expanded/changed curriculum, further compounded by a change in schools. The main challenge facing the education sector as a whole is how to enhance the proportion of pupils achieving the expected learning outcomes specified for different stages of school education. Available information suggests that the learning achievement of a significant proportion of pupils enrolled in schools does not measure up to expected levels, especially in rural and remote areas schools [7].

The World Bank's Bhutan Learning Quality Survey stated that the average learning ability in Class IV is higher than the expected learning competency in Class II by only half a standard deviation and that it will take the average student in Class II another year to reach the competency for that grade. This results in a cumulative learning deficit as children move to the higher grades. It can be summarized that a high proportion of children are completing the primary cycle without acquiring basic skills in literacy and numeracy, and that "one additional year per grade is required to

reach the average competency for that grade”. Learners’ achievement is typically low in Mathematics and English. Bhutan’s status and quality of primary education have been assessed through the key determinants of retention, grade repetition and learners’ academic achievements. The urban students outperformed semi-urban, rural and remote students in all cases. Alarming, mean test scores in literacy and numeracy are very low, and the “learning rate” is so slow that an extra year in each grade is required to reach the average competency for that grade [8].

The rising trends in these areas reported every year and have become a concern for families, parents, educators and society as a whole. Therefore, Education Ministry have placed a policy which states that concern stakeholders, law makers, public, parents and educators to take a united stand and make concrete efforts in working collaboratively with schools to overcome the youth indiscipline, quality of learning and other related issues [11]. The involvements of parent and families in child’s learning have always seen as challenging task. Research indicated that there are many factors affecting student academic performance in the school. It has been assumed in my research that academic performance of the student not only depends on the quality of school and teachers but also on the parents and families’ role in children’s daily learning activities. There are many models of parent and family involvement in school which can be used as model. The researcher have picked up the model of Epstein’s six factors of parent and family involvement in school mainly to see how much each factors related and affects students’ academic performance. Therefore, the researcher have focused on the factors of parent and family involvement in urban primary schools of Bhutan as the level of literacy rate of parents in urban areas are higher than the rural areas and to see how much the urban parents contribute towards the academic performance of their child in school. The role of parents in children’s education has become a general debate and discussion in education system and research field. Mostly, concerning with how to improve student academic performance and reduce educational inequities.

Research Questions

1. What are the factors of parent and family involvement and student academic performance in urban primary schools of Bhutan?
2. Is there any significant multiple relationships between the factors of parent and family involvement in school and student academic performance in urban primary schools of Bhutan?
3. What are the best predictive factors of parent and family involvement in school to predict student academic performance in urban primary schools of Bhutan?

Purpose of the Study

1. To identify the factors of parent and family involvement and student academic performance in urban primary schools of Bhutan.
2. To study the multiple relationship between the six factors of parent and family involvement in school and student academic performance in urban primary schools of Bhutan.
3. To construct the best predictive equation to predict student academic performance by using the six factors of parent and family involvement in urban primary schools of Bhutan

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will help to develop policy for Ministry of Education on parent and family involvement in school to improve student academic performance in schools of Bhutan. It will further help to understand and build awareness among schools, parent and family on the relationship between parent and family involvement in school and student academic performance in school. It will also encourage families and schools to take initiatives to develop parent and family involvement programs in school.

Scope of the Study

1. Population and Sample:

The population of this research study was 32,180 students of 68 urban primary schools of Bhutan. The samples of 408 parents whose children were studying in 34 selected urban primary schools of Bhutan were selected as sample size of the study.

2. Variables:

Two variables of interest were brought up for research: parent and family involvement used as the predictive variable, and student academic performance as the criterion variable.

2.1 Parent and Family Involvement in School consisting of Six Factors used as predictive variables (X)

2.1.1 Parenting (X_1)

2.1.2 Communication (X_2)

2.1.3 Volunteering (X_3)

2.1.4 Learning at home (X_4)

2.1.5 Decision Making (X_5)

2.1.6 Community Collaboration (X_6)

2.2 Student Academic Performance (Y) consisting of student academic achievement used as criterion variable

Definition of terms

1. Parent and Family Involvement in School (X) refers to the parent and family participation in their children's education following Epstein model of parent and family involvement factors of parenting; communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaboration-with-community.

1.1 Parenting (X_1) refers to parent and family helping their child to improve his or her learning through regular monitoring of learning. Parent and family monitor child's television viewing habits, providing nutritious meals at home, ensuring child to have adequate time for sleeping, positive values and attitudes through counseling and positive disciplining and discussing on importance of good education.

1.2 Communication (X₂) refers to two way communication from school to home and home to school. Parent and family visit child's school and teachers to share their goal for their child's learning, communicate with school teachers to ensure their child's excellent attendance at school, discuss with child about his or her academic weaknesses and strengths. Parent and family members visiting school to know about their child's performance in school or class, stay contact with child's school teachers through various means of communication (e.g. phone calls, letters, and emails), and communicate with school and teachers on their child's problem in learning and behavioral issues.

1.3 Volunteering (X₃) refers to parent and family helping child's school and teachers in their child's academic teaching and learning (e.g. making and donating of teaching learning aids, class decoration, and helping child to learn in class), helping child's school in non-academic activities when school and teachers ask them (e.g. donating money, cleaning of classroom, providing free transportation during school or class picnic, games and sports events, etc), and Parents voluntarily aid in safe operation of child's school (e.g. Traffic control during school hours)

1.4 Learning at home (X₄) refers to parent and family helping their child to making regular schedule at home to do homework, monitor child's work at home to improve child's learning in subject, helping child to set up their academic goals, guiding child to do their homework and school assignment on time, and encouraging child to read at home.

1.5 Decision making (X₅) refers to parent and family attending in parent school meeting and parent teacher conferences to know and discuss about child's school policy and issues, and support and reinforce the school discipline policy by attending in school parent meetings.

1.6 Collaboration-with-Community (X₆) refers to parent and family getting involved in child's school in school community services that helps community and families (e.g. school support poor family, health and youth awareness program, environmental program, etc)

2. Student Academic Performance (Y) refers to student academic achievement at national and school level exam measured in average percentage (2013)

3. Urban Primary School refers to public and private primary schools located under urban areas as per National Education Statistics of Bhutan 2013.

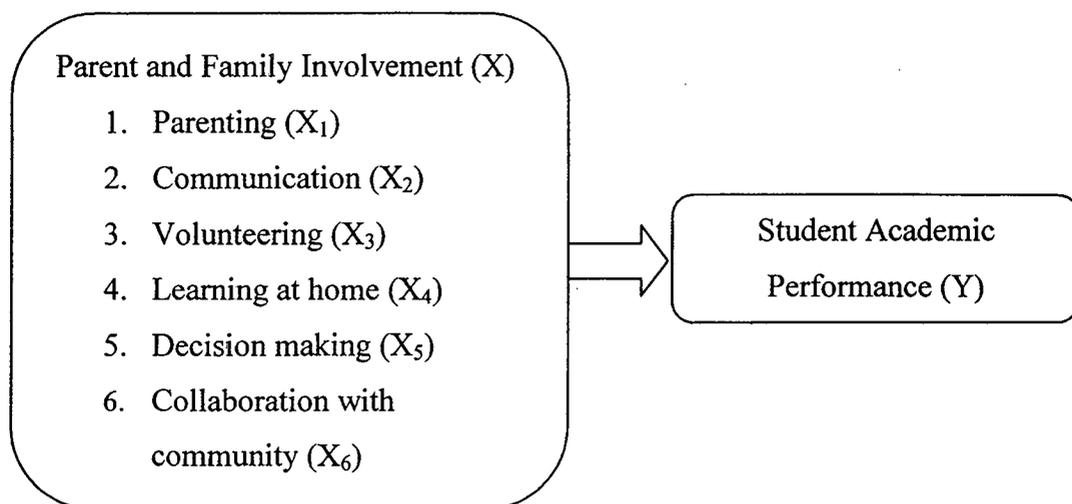


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework on the Factors of Parent and Family Involvement in School and Student Academic Performance

Hypothesis of the Study

1. There are a multiple relationships between six factors (parenting-X₁, communication-X₂, Volunteering-X₃, Learning at home-X₄, decision making-X₅ and collaboration-with-community-X₆) of parent and family involvement in school and student academic performance in the urban primary schools.

2. There is an affect of six factors (parenting-X₁, communication-X₂, Volunteering-X₃, Learning at home-X₄, decision making-X₅ and collaboration-with-community-X₆) of parent and family involvement in school on student academic performance in urban primary schools of Bhutan.