Impact of Parental Involvement in Homework on Children’s learning

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Authors’ contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Our service as the principal in a very remote school under Mongar District evoked our conscience in realizing the impact of parental involvement in homework on children’s learning. Being in the farm with many daily chores and activities, the parents’ concern for children’s learning was left as a secondary option.

The parents have vital roles to play in the life of a child. The involvement of parents determines the future of the child, and the parental involvement was seen as a means to bridge the gap between the school and home. Family is the primary cell of society where the child’s upbringing must begin since his birth.

The researcher used the qualitative approach and phenomenology as a research design. The study involved twelve interview participants, comprising of 3 principals, 3 teachers, 3 students and 3 parents from the participating schools in Yadi Cluster under Mongar District. The data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews. The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, and compared to previous research gleaned from the extensive literature review.

The findings of the study reveal that there are contextual factors that contribute to less parental involvement in their children’s homework. There is a lack of parental care, especially in terms of...
academic support from parents in their children’s learning in the remote setting of Bhutan. Basic education for parents is felt highly required to enable them to realize their support for their children in writing homework to perform better in the school. Non-formal Education (NFE) centers are recommended to be the platform to address the issues.

Keywords: Academic achievement; learning outcome; reinforcement; parental involvement; homework.

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been observed that repeated failure by students to do their homework affects both teaching and learning process and ultimately learner academic achievement.

Many times, the teachers raised the same issue with the school management. The school reviewed the homework policy in collaboration with all the stakeholders based on previous drawbacks and follow up done by reminding the parents. However, despite repeated reminders and consultations, the subject teachers still had encountered students with incomplete homework.

The two main educators of children in their lives are their parents and their teachers. As we all know, parents are the prime educators until the child attends an early year setting or starts school and they remain a major influence on their children’s learning throughout school and beyond. The school and parents both have crucial roles to play to enhance learning in the children. According to Hong et al. [1] homework performance is defined as the process that occurs when a learner begins, continues to work, and complete school assignment at home. Homework is defined as tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are intended to be carried out at home. The most common purpose of homework is to have students’ revised lessons which were already taught in the class to reinforce learning and facilitate mastery of specific skills. Such extended tasks and assignments are aimed to help students obtain the maximum benefit when the new material is covered in class.

According to Epstein [2] ample research evidence suggests that most parents want their children to succeed in school. For them to be a good partner in their children’s education, most students in all schools want their families to be familiar and acquainted with schooling. The positive effects parental involvement has on students’ academic achievement appear to be undeniable. Therefore, it should be a top priority for parents and schools to establish and maintain a strong partnership between schools and homes through homework too.

Susan and Kinley [3] point out that the lack of effective parental role in education has become a catchphrase in almost all the societies of the world. Even in a small developing country like Bhutan, the diverse youth issues due to poor parental roles in education has been raised in many educational forums. Therefore, the research was aimed at addressing some of those issues at the school level.

1.1 Significance of the Study

The study would create awareness among students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders such as Royal Education Council (REC), Bhutan Council for School Examination and Assessment (BCSEA), Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), etc., about the significance of parental involvement in student learning by such as parents supporting their children in doing homework. At the same time, it enable parents to give support and engaging themselves in school activities meaningfully. This would further enhance children’s learning.

The study is significant in bringing parents, family, and community closer to the school and the nation at large would be benefited. It would help the Ministry of Education (MoE) in understanding the current trends of parental involvement in school activities, and in devising programs to advocate and empower parents’ involvement in their children’s homework.

The research would help me understand how teachers and parents perceive parental involvement in their children’s homework. It would also help the principals, teachers, students and parents on how the involvement of parents in homework needs to be carried out to enhance children learning. In Bhutan, parental involvement is minimum owing to lack of parental awareness on positive parental influence on their children’s education and their busy schedule on their family livelihood respectively.
1.2 Research Questions

Main Question:
How does parental involvement in homework impact children’s learning?

Sub-questions:
1. Why is homework policy important for the children?
2. How are parents involved in their children’s homework?
3. What are the factors that affect parental involvement in homework?
4. How do parents create time for their children for doing homework?

1.3 Objectives

The objectives are most important when stated at the beginning of the research description and the following are the objectives of the current study.

1. To determine the importance of homework policy for the children.
2. To investigate parental involvement in their children’s homework.
3. To determine the factors that affect parental involvement in their children’s homework.
4. To investigate how parents create time for their children for doing homework.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review means locating and summarizing the studies about a topic [4] The intent of the research is about the impact of parental involvement in homework on children’s learning.

The importance of homework cannot be underestimated. Most of the students were not able to write homework at home. There is no simple solution to this growing problem. This chapter highlights the definitions of homework and importance of homework, then discusses the impact on parental involvement in the homework on children’s learning and ways to improve the student’s learning ability, homework policy and the factors affecting children not being able to write homework on time and coming to the school.

2.1 Meaning and Definitions of Homework

Homework is school work imparted at school to perform at home. It is usually given to students by the teachers. It is a practical study which helps students to revise and recall what they’ve learned. According to Patall, Cooper and Robinson [5] children are required to do homework, and parents are often required to get involved in supporting students’ homework performance.

Bailey, Silvern, Brabham and Ross [6] broadly realized that involving parents in their children’s homework can help improve children’s performance. The parents’ involvement in homework is essential for the students to enhance their scholarship. The students who do more homework are supposed to have better achievements. The homework is being proposed to the children as a means of developing personal attributes in children that can encourage positive behaviors throughout their life.

According to Protheroe [7], school policy regarding homework must have clear expectations for teachers as to what constitutes good homework, which can serve to strengthen the benefits of homework for student learning while decreasing potential problems. While the policy might limit the role of homework in reading at different levels, homework should help young children develop good study habits, promote positive attitudes toward school, and communicate to students that learning takes place outside and inside of the school.

2.2 Homework Policy

Homework policies define a standard of expectations for homework. The homework policies recommended clearly defining what sort of homework is most effective; how much homework is appropriate at each class level; who will be responsible for determining how much homework to assign; how the scheduling of homework will be coordinated among different teachers; and parents’ responsibilities regarding homework [8-10]

In connection to this, our schools have the homework policy and schedule for the students to follow in the school. It is already in place in the school but the teachers come with the complaints that children don’t write homework on time. In my school we reviewed the homework policy in collaboration with the School Management Board (SMB) and to avoid such inconveniences, it is important that students do their homework on time. In this case, strong parental support at
Children’s academic achievement is evaluated set as parents helping kids with homework. achievement, and parental involvement can be paternal Thus, there exist the relationship between paternal involvement in homework and academic achievement, and parental involvement can be set as parents helping kids with homework. Children’s academic achievement is evaluated based on homework grades, homework completion rate, student study habits, and skills, student attitudes and parent attitudes toward school, homework, or field, parent competency beliefs, or student conduct.

### 2.3 Parental Involvement in Children’s Learning

The parental involvement is very important in children’s learning as it has a great deal of positive impact in the lives of the children. The children with parental help have proved to be doing well in their learning. Parental involvement translates into improved student performance in the school. The research shows that such children are less likely to miss school, that they receive higher grades, and in general perform better on tests. Increased parental involvement means that we can look forward to higher graduation rates and increased enrolment in post-secondary institutions [12].

According to Lumpkin [12] “Parental involvement not just improves a child’s morale, attitudes and academic achievement across all the subject fields, but it also promotes better behavior and social adaptation. In all these ways, family involvement in education helps children to grow up to be productive, responsible members of the society”. The parents are the prime educators until the children attend the school and a major influence on their children’s learning through school and beyond. There is no clear line to show where the parents, input stops and teachers’ input begins. To be specific, a child benefits when parents show a great involvement in his or her education and when the parents have very confidence in helping their child to successful in the school [13]. But in Bhutan we do not have parental support as much as they do in the western countries and that is why children do not perform well in the remote schools as a result of the lack of parental support.

### 2.4 The Parental Involvement Influences on Student’s Learning Outcome

Parental involvement in children’s homework appears to influence student outcomes because it offers modeling, reinforcement, and instruction that supports the development of attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors associated with successful school performance [14]. Parental involvement in homework activities give children multiple opportunities to observe and learn from their parents’ modeling (of attitudes, knowledge,
and skills pertinent to learning), to receive reinforcement and feedback on personal performance and capability, and to engage in instructional interactions related to homework content and learning processes.

But in Bhutan, most of the parents in the villages are illiterate and they are not able to support their children in doing homework. The parental influences are very less and as a result the student's outcome is not up to the expectations of the school. It would also depend upon the students' capabilities to carry out the homework even if the parents are illiterate and how the children understand the instructions to be carried out the homework properly at home. The parental involvement is seen as a means to bridge the gap between the school and home.

According to Mestry and Grobler [15] the influence of the home and family environment on school achievement has not received the attention it deserves. Most often it is not a lack of interest that prevents parents from becoming involved in the learners' education, but rather the challenges of poverty, single parents, cultural and socio-economic isolation. [15] The home environment and parental involvement in learning were seen as two key influences on children's learning. The support that families provide for their children at home has the greatest impact on school achievement (Ross, Graham & Barnard, 2010). The Harvard family research showed that complementary learning is effective when working to improve the learning outcomes of the most disadvantaged learners [16].

2.5 Factors That Affect Parental Involvement in Homework

There are contextual factors that deter the parental involvement in homework on children's learning. Parents' beliefs about what is important, necessary and permissible for them to do with and on behalf of their children; the extent to which parents believe that they can have a positive influence on their children's education. A few of them are the real factors that prevail the parental interest in homework on children's learning.

a. Illiterate parents: Most of the parents in the villages are illiterate. They do not know how to read and write as they have never been to school. Mulken [17] states, “Parents in rural areas are less likely to be educated themselves, and so have less ability to provide support for their children. The children may read in front of them so proudly but parents as they do not comprehend, it rather gives children choice of literary work could badly affect the learning of the children” (p.3).

b. Least Concern: The parents are always bogged down by the agricultural works, there isn't concern on children's studies. Besides, the parents do not have specified time for children's learning. As agrarian by nature, the farm works, household chores, raising livestock keep them totally busy which in turn is being understood as least concern in children's learning.

c. Culture: The parents in evening drink and socialize themselves. This not only brings negative impact on children's understanding but also involve the children in the process. The children may be involved in serving alcohol as a gesture for parents' hard work during the day. Such culture predominantly affects children's perception of the world they live in.

d. The family's socio economics status: Besides parental involvement, there is another important factor for students' academic achievement and that is family's socio-economic status [18]. The research findings show that there is a positive relationship between the socio economic status of the family and the academic achievement of students [19]. Thus, it appears that socio-economic status correlates with academic achievement positively. Furthermore, scholars have demonstrated with their research that children who come from low socio-economic background in their early school years' experience more problems as they grow older. These children tend to drop out of the school early and are less likely to seek college education [20].

Though studies have shown that students from higher income families tend to do better at school, students from all backgrounds do benefit if their parents become involved [21-23] concluded for their study, that students from a low socio-economic background, achieved more academically if their parents were involved with their school.
3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the techniques that would be used to gather data for analysis and interpretation regarding the research purpose and questions of the study.

The purpose of this study was to explore the Impact of Parental Involvement in Homework on Children's learning in Yadi cluster, Mongar District. It was also intended to study how the school homework policy helps to foster parental involvement in supporting and monitoring their child's homework, to investigate how parental involvement in homework bridges the school and parents and identify some of the factors influencing the involvement of parents in their children's homework.

The parents' involvement would enhance the children's academic performance through their support and guidance in doing homework. Based on the purpose of the study, the following research paradigm, design, strategy of inquiry, site, data collection tools, and sampling technique were employed.

The researcher used the qualitative approach and phenomenology as a research design. A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomena [24]. In this, it is less concerned with facts but rather with understanding the nature of human activity. And in fact, the phenomenological study is aimed at social science that would interpret and explain human actions and thoughts through descriptions of fundamental structure of reality which seems self-evident to me remaining within the natural attitude [25].

It too requires an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter and gives priority to what the data contribute to important research questions or existing data. Thus, the research topic aligns with the qualitative method. In this approach 'the researcher brings personal values into the study and collaborates with the participants' [26]. Therefore, the current study was intended to explore the impact of parental involvement in homework on children's learning.

The study involved students, teachers and, parents as the interview participants, 3 principals, 3 teachers, 3 students and 3 parents from the selected schools were interviewed and thus, there were a total of 12 participants.

3.1 Data Collection Tools

Research tools are very important instruments to gather information. It is determined as ‘an attempt to see the universe from the subjects' point to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, to uncover their lived world before scientific explanations [27]. The interview was used to gather data through an interactive process of communication between the interviewee and the interviewee.

As the novice researchers, we used the semi-structured interview as it would allow us to have enough flexibility to re-word the questions during the interview time. These questions guide the researchers took the required responses from the participants. The researchers interviewed the participants by maintaining the leading questions in mind; and free to vary the phrasing and order of the questions to some extent. It also allowed flexibility to re-word the questions to correspond in the interview hour. It is a sort of verbal interaction to data from the participants. All the interviews were recorded, which were later transcribed.

The data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews. The interviews were audi-taped, transcribed, and then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, and compared to previous research gleaned from the extensive literature review.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion of findings of the current study are presented in the following sections.

4.1 Support in Writing Homework

This study shows that literate parents are directly involved in the academic support of children at home after school hours, while illiterate parents are involved indirectly. Parents are often eager to support their children's learning but do not always know how to help or why their involvement is important [14,28] Bhutanese students come from illiterate family background and this is one major factor that causes inefficient parental involvement in support in writing homework in Bhutan. The teachers are of the view that parents have failed to justify their responsibilities in line with the need and expectation of the children and the education system.
It also reveals that the parents in the remote schools although support their children positively, yet as they are illiterate, they are not in a position to help their children in writing homework. Similarly, a large majority of the student participants indicated that their parents usually advise them to study. It was also evident from almost all the interviews conducted with parents. Henderson & Berla [22] also contend that the school will benefit by parental involvement because there will be a boost in the educators morale, more family support and better academic results.

The children who come from educated family have tended to perform better than children from the uneducated family. It also affects their literacy skills to have their parents to read and help them to write homework. Therefore, parental involvement in homework can have positive effects on their children’s reading skills and encourage their reading comprehension by talking to them and making sure there are perpetually there to stand in writing homework on time.

The findings of the study revealed that the parents who support their children morally had a good rapport with children. In the Bhutanese context, advising to write homework and study hard, not to bunk from the classroom were some clichés that probe in as we talk about children’s learning.

“My parents ask me to directly go to school. Listen to the teachers, whatever they say. Do not run away from school. Do not make a friend with the bad company” (Student: S204).

4.2 Moral Support from Parents

Parents make the greatest difference to achievement through supporting their learning in the home rather than supporting activities in the school (Harris & Goodall, 2007). The parents who support their children morally had a good rapport with children. In our context, advising to write homework and study hard, not to bunk from the classroom were some clichés that probe in as we talk about children’s learning.

The study indicated that the children were made to do some household work, and some even to work in the field. The point is substantiated by the following comment made by one of the student participants.

“If I do not help my parents, when can support my parents, since my brothers and sisters are working as civil servants, but I see no one help our parent and when I am here I must help and at same time study hard and write homework on time” (Student: S404).

In addition, the study also revealed that most of the parents had moral obligations and responsibility to bring up their children. However, some parents were not aware of the school system, activities, homework, and learning modes of the school and how these could be enhanced in children at home. Since parents do not know the system, the purpose of sending children to schools get easily defeated. It also indicated that not only to help in writing homework at home, but frequent interactions with the teacher concerned also need to be taken care. Gadsden [29] points out that greater parental involvement at early stage in children’s learning positively affects the child’s school performance including higher academic achievement. Failure of the parents to meet these specific needs can have wide-ranging and long-lasting negative effects [30].

4.3 Homework Policy

The findings of the study show that the parents were not able to follow the homework policy as most of them are illiterate and many of them have no time to pay attention to their children, and a few of them were not aware of the homework policy. It was reminded that if parents don't assist their children in homework, they will not perform well in school.

The literature points out that parental involvement can be regarded as an important aspect of education and parents normally adjust their support as their children progress from one grade to the next [31] It is highlighted that a school’s homework policy address questions parents often have about homework [32] Teachers should make sure their students fully understand the concepts and possess the skills needed to complete any homework assignment. For example, requiring students to practice math problems at home that they do not fully understand in class will only discourage and frustrate them. Further, practicing a skill that is either not well understood or worse misunderstood “might also serve to habituate errors or misconceptions” [33].
According to Hill & Craft [34] parental support is also influenced by their children’s age and scholastic needs. Parents also need to understand the teacher’s homework policy and expectations, particularly parents of younger students, who will be more actively involved in the assignments. All parents, however, need to know that their support and encouragement can be critical to the successful completion of assignments.

The study revealed that the involvement of parents in the school activities and in their children’s learning is rather difficult in Bhutanese context. It also indicated that he parents are not aware about the homework policy, and at home they cannot help their children in doing homework, but giving advice would be enough for them because they cannot read and write. It further shows the teachers were not able to follow the homework policy and most of the parents are illiterate and also no time to pay attention to the children. Few of the parents are not aware of the homework policy and cannot help their children. These points are supported by the following comments by the participants.

Most of the parents are uneducated and there are fewer chances of helping their children in writing homework. There are a few civil servants who can help their children in writing homework and performance well in the school." (Principal: P201)

“The school has already displayed the homework schedule in the classrooms and it is being disseminated to the parents.” (Principal: P203)

“I am not aware of the homework policy in the school”. (Parent: PT403).

“We have to do lots of daily house chores in the house to help their children, but tell them to read and write something” (Parent: PT 203)

The students often view doing homework as one of their least favorite after-school activities [35,36]. In addition they argue that trying to get students to complete homework has become one of the most frequent and frustrating behavioral problems for the teachers it is seen that there are few challenges for the children not getting enough support from the parents.

4.4 Perception /Attitudes of Parents

The results of the current study show that although parental willingness to be involved in pupils’ homework is high, this involvement is hampered by many socio-economic factors, including illiteracy and low income. On many occasions, homework is not only incomplete, but also not done, and the pupils are not learning beyond the school. In the absence of clear, written policy on homework, there is a poor fit of inclusion of homework as the unwritten part of the curriculum. Georgiou and Tourva (2007) examined the relationship between parents’ perceptions of their children’s academic achievement, their beliefs of being involved, and their actual involvement. Therefore, the need for parental care in writing homework is genuinely felt.

The learners who are supported both at home and at school display a more positive attitudes towards their school work [37]. Therefore, when the parents adopt a positive attitude towards the school and education then their children are more likely to do the same. According to Hill & Taylor [34] in order to establish and maintain an effective relationship between the family and the school, we first need to identify the barriers within that specific community.

4.5 Benefits of Homework

The findings from this study that most of the parents are illiterate and the school were being located in the remote area, hence the parents were not able to help their children and they gave only moral support. The educated parents provided enough support, advice on the importance and benefits of homework to be completed by their children. The children who write homework on time achieve better learning outcome and perform well in the school. The benefits of homework begin in school. Students who complete their homework successfully improve their chances for academic success. But homework develops habits and attitudes that work to a student’s advantage far beyond the classroom. Qualities like self-discipline, responsibility, and a love of learning benefit students throughout their lives. The main purpose of giving the homework is now lost and the learners and parents become despondent. Excessive homework can also create tension between the parents and the child because it infiltrates on family time [38].
There are many benefits of homework for the children but the parents must well aware about it and share knowledge about the homework that must be taken care by the parents to help in writing homework and also pay more attention the children at home to boost learning. Assigning homework facilitates the cooperation between parents, school children and the teacher [39]. For instance, Bryan and Nelson [40] state that especially parents have the opportunity to monitor their children's progress. Therefore, the teachers and parents should do their best to make use of homework applications.

### 4.6 Frequency of School and Parents Meet in a Year

This findings of the study in regard to the interaction between parents and school is consistent with past studies such as by Bower & Griffin [41], which found that:

> Low parent attendance despite efforts by the school to include them in activities. Engagement was not apparent in the study, and the researchers observed a lack of communication between parents and teachers. The researchers determined that schools and teachers did not build effective relationships with parents.

It is also evident of the fact that the school and parents interact genuinely only when the parents are called by the school to disseminate the academic performances and some issues of the children. The teachers know about the individual children having less interaction between parents and the school had not much impact on children's learning. It can be recommended that there is a need for parental involvement in homework to enhance student learning and performance throughout his or her life.

### 4.7 Challenges Faced by the Teacher to Assess Homework

The findings also showed that most of the parents are uneducated and children do not get support and there is difference in support provided by parents to their children's learning. The children whose parents are educated do much better than children whose parents are uneducated. The schools in this study context are located in a remote place and parents have to carry out daily chores in the village. And the children are not able to get enough support from their parents.

According to Mncube [42] parents in disadvantaged areas in most cases do not speak the language of learning and teaching, and accordingly this will affect the communication between parent and child with regards to the instruction about homework assignments. The parents of low socio-economic background are found to be less involved in supporting writing of homework and cognitive intellectual activities [43] and parents who are affected by poverty might not regard the education of the learners as a priority as their daily needs will take preference.

The study revealed that there are many challenges faced by the teachers while assessing their homework. They do not get enough time to check their homework as they have to carry out many activities besides classroom teaching. However, the teachers manage him or herself to assess their children's homework. It becomes even more challenging for them, when parents do not support their children in doing homework and children are not able to write homework on time. This is evident in the following responses given by one of the teacher interviewees.

> “When there is no support from the parents, the children are not able to write homework on time” (Teacher: T202)

> “It hampers our normal teaching when I make them write homework in the class.” (Teacher: T202)

The study results also indicated that the parents might not make learners’ homework a priority as they have to provide food and other needs for the family that takes preference over schoolwork. It emerged that parents are not home to supervise the learners after school. Parents work hard in the field to provide food for the family. On many occasions the parent returns home very late at night. Parents are therefore not deliberately away from home. It is therefore a challenge for the parent to spend quality time with the learners to assist them with homework activities.

### 5. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to explore Impact of Parental Involvement in Homework on Children’s learning in the remote primary schools. Homework can bring together children, parents, and teachers in a common effort to improving student learning. Teachers are a vital link in making this happen. The benefits of homework begin in school. Students who complete their homework successfully improve their chances for
academic success. But homework develops habits and attitudes that work to a student's advantage far beyond the classroom.

The empirical evidence from the participants in this study highlighted the fact that many challenges such as Support in writing homework, Moral support, Homework policy, Perception /Attitudes, Benefits of the homework, Frequency of school and parents meet in a year and Challenges faced by the teacher to assess homework and a lack of educational stimulation were but a few challenges that negatively affected parental involvement in writing the homework assignments of the primary school learners. Despite these many challenges the parents still want their children to succeed in academic work but do not know how to help the learners due to the illiterate background.

This study revealed that our parents although contribute to children's learning as much as possible but they lack in academic support as they do not have an educational background. Majority of the teacher participants reported that the need for parents to have frequent interaction with the school would impact children's learning. The study also found that the factors that affect the effective learning of our students as well as the rationale for interaction.

The study was a venture to discover the relation between the teachers and parents that take up the responsibility for children's learning. As I have explored the findings, the researcher is hopeful that the concern parents and teachers would look into this matter diligently. I am hopeful that recommendations recommended would be considered favorably so that our future leaders of Bhutan gain best out of it.

The study makes one realize that our parents need to enhance their involvement more for better learning in children. The schools also have to understand their problems and further initiate the ways and strategies for a better future. The better the children, be it in academics or attitudes, the better the future of the nation. I hope our teachers and parents serving in the remote take this as a source of wisdom to generate and gear up the momentum to support our innocent children in remote schools.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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