



Students' Equitable Participation in Education: Rethinking Academic Guardianship in Nepalese Public Schools

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/jotmc.v9i9.90454>

Abstract

This case study explores the ways to create supportive environment for the students of Nepalese public schools to ensure their equitable participation in school education. Through purposeful sampling, I interacted with 25 students, two principals, and a teacher using open ended long questions and phone call conversations. Additionally, I collected data from 240 students via open ended short questions. Creating themes and meaning units, I analyzed why the guardians are unable to involve in school activities and I drew a conclusion with the help of teachers and students' experiences. The results show that only 30 % percent guardians are capable to support their children in learning. Furthermore, the subordinate guardians, schools, teachers, peers, and local agencies can work as the alternative guardians to manage learning environment of students by providing them proper guidance and support in their learning needs. This study is significant for guardians, schools, and teachers to play the role of guardians and assist learners to manage their learning. Moreover, it provides feedback to the policy makers to design the policy going beyond the traditional concept of guardianship to ensure the equitable participation of diverse learners.

Keywords: alternative guardianship, learner agency, schools and teachers as guardians

Introduction

The constitution of Nepal (2072 B. S.) has provisioned social justice based education accepting education as the fundamental human right. Similarly, the right to education (31) aims for free and compulsory education up to basic level and free education up to secondary level. To implement this provision, the education policy (2076 B. S.), compulsory and free education act (2075 B. S.), sustainable development goal (2030 A. D.), and School Education Sector Plan-SESP (2079-2088 B. S.) have designed policies, guidelines, and programs to ensure equitable access of all school level children and provide them quality education according to their pace, level, and learning style. The progress in access of education of school students is good; however, the dropout, class completion, and sustainable rate are not satisfactory due to which the all children lead to less participation in school education (SESP, 2079-2088). Parental involvement related

studies have argued that the school level students are unable to take part in regular learning activities in school due to social, economic, and cultural aspects (Katel & Katel, 2024; Kunwar, 2024; Shahi, 2021; Shrestha, 2024). On the one hand, the existing literature shows that the learning regularity of children is badly affected by the less participation of guardians in schooling activities and on the other hand, Thomas et al. (2019), Moneva et al. (2020, and Eutsler (2019) highlighted the importance of parental involvement for better learning, effective communication skills, and quality use of technology to engage children in sustainable learning. Thus, there is essentiality of new approach to engage diverse learners in school education.

Regarding the context of Nepalese public schools, those children whose guardians support them in learning with required resources perform better in academic and personal life. Conversely, those whose guardians are unable to support and guide their children and the children without guardians are unable to participate in learning process and are prone to drug addiction, child marriage, and disruptive behaviors in the society (UNICEF, 2019; UNESCO, 2017; World Bank, 2020). Therefore, blaming guardians is not the solution of equitable quality education instead the stakeholders of education and policy designers are expected to think out of the box regarding the academic guardianship of those children who need parental support. As a teacher, I find my students interested in learning; nevertheless, they are unable to engage in learning process due to different personal, family, and socio-cultural aspects. As Pandey (2025) mentions teachers as silent guardians of students to enhance self-confidence, critical awareness, and learning environment, I also guide my students to overcome their personal and social-cultural problems and then some of them improve their academic and behavioral performance and some of them need further supports. So, I realized that if the schools think alternative ways of guardianship to ensure equitable participation of diverse learners, they engage in learning actively and the sustainable development goal of education is achieved. This situation provoked me to explore the understanding of teachers, principals, and students regarding equitable participation of students and involvement of guardians in schooling of children to develop a new approach.

As an alternative approach to guardianship, Fernandez-Martin et al. (2022) focused on the peer tutoring which can contribute to enhancing self-regulated learning. Additionally, Pandey (2025) mentioned teachers as silent guardians of students to enhance self-confidence, critical awareness, and learning environment. Likewise, MacLeod (2017) referred to teachers, local professionals and agencies as the alternative guardians for intellectually disabled individuals to address their diverse needs. Moreover, Crook & Kenny (2012) exemplified government agencies including ministers and prime minister as the guardians of refugee children in Malaysia. The available studies discuss the impact of guardians for the development of their children and alternative guardianship for special children. However, in the Nepalese context, there are limited studies on alternative guardianship to address the problems of diverse children and children without guardianship or good guardianship.

Therefore, this study is required to fill the research gap of alternative ways to guardianship in the context of Nepalese public schools to ensure equitable participation of each secondary level student in school education. The main purpose of this study is to explore alternative ways to provide support system for all students in public schools with a focus on finding out the exact

situation of guardians, reasons behind less participation of guardians and alternative ways to provide academic guardianship to school level children through the following research questions:

- a. Why do guardians of public schools hardly involve in school activities?
- b. How do students and teachers view on alternative guardianship?
- c. What are the alternative ways to provide guardianship for equitable participation of students in school education?

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Academic and Alternative Guardianship

Guardians are those persons who are in the school record as the guardians (Education Act, 2028). Similarly, grandparents, parents, sisters, brothers, and any person who manage for the study and nurturing of students are regarded as guardians but for the purpose of school management committee representatives, only parents and grandparents are valued as the guardians (Education Regulation, 2059). Likewise, MacLeod (2017) mentioned teachers, local professionals, and local agencies as the guardians. Crook & Kenny (2012) referred government bodies as the guardians, and Pandey (2025) explained teachers as the silent guardians. Now, the concluding point is that academic guardians are those supporters and environment creators who work for holistic development of any child taking their responsibility and accountability to create study environment and nurture them. Furthermore, in broad sense, any person who supports students in learning process and holistic development are considered as guardians.

The role of guardians is unexplainable as they play unlimited roles for the growth of their children. However, the guardians, according to education act and regulation, are for managing study environment and nourishment of the students. Additionally, guardians are for addressing all types of needs of learners (MacLeod, 2017), helping them to make right choice or decision (Kohn et al., 2013), encouraging for effective communication and expressions (Moneva et. al., 2020), security and creating opportunities (Crook & Kenny, 2012), and for developing critical awareness, self-confidence, and moral values (Pandey, 2025). Thus, guardians are prominent and significant support systems for learners' holistic development.

Alternative guardianship (AG), in legal and disability studies, is understood as a framework that provides decision-making support while preserving an individual's autonomy and guiding individuals to maintain their legal rights and receive assistance from trusted supporters such as family, peers, or professionals in making informed choices (Kohn et al., 2013). Likewise, AG is a formal, temporary legal status that authorizes a non-parent to act as a child's primary caregiver and decision maker which can be directed by court declaration with the transfer of parental rights from biological to appointed guardians (Weiss & Bowers, 2018). The appointed guardians work for education and welfare of children providing educational consent and participating in school related activities as the guardian of the child (U. S. Department of Education, 2023).

Sarkar (2016) highlights alternative decision-making arrangements ranging from shared decision-making to supported decision-making as more empowering than full guardianship, reflecting a global shift toward rights-based models. Together, these perspectives indicate that while laws provide a foundation, successful guardianship alternatives require trained personnel,

monitoring systems, and cultural acceptance to ensure children's well-being and protection (Davidson et al., 2023; Murtaza, 2023; Sarkar, 2016; UNICEF, 2023). Thus, if parents are unable to take care of their children or if the guardians are not available to support their children, the alternative guardianship is required (MacLeod, 2017; Crook & Kenny, 2012). Based on these concepts, alternative guardianship in educational context can be taken as the management or provision of responsible persons for the guardian less children to do all required activities for their nourishment and education either constructed via legal rights or by social systems.

Parental Involvement in Nepalese Public Schools

Parental involvement in well performing public school of Chitwan District is increasing to enhance students' academic achievement and overall learning environment by controlling, guiding, managing, and supporting school systems (Paudel, 2022). Participation of guardians through School Management Committee (SMC), Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), and informal parent-teacher interactions contributes to improved classroom performance, better attendance, and enriched home learning environments (Khadka, 2024; Paudel, 2022). Likewise, the studies conducted in Lalitpur and Makawanpur districts indicate that practices such as assisting children with homework, engaging in academic discussions at home, and providing emotional support significantly influence students' cognitive and affective growth (Bhattarai & Thapa, 2023). This argument indicates that the role of parents is significant for students' all-round development.

In contrast, poverty, low parental literacy, and long distances to schools reduce the capacity of many parents to actively engage in their children's education (Shrestha, 2024; Katel & Katel, 2024). Furthermore, limited communication channels between schools and families, alongside traditional social norms that restrict parents' decision-making roles and weaken sustained participation of guardians (Gautam, 2023). The problem is particularly evident at the secondary level, where parental engagement tends to decline as students advance academically (Poudel, 2024). Due to lack of awareness, the guardians involve in gambling, drinking alcohol, nonsense gossips on the one hand and they focus on household chores, daily activities, and agriculture on the other hand rather than giving priority to their children's study environment. They cannot play the role of motivator, counselor, and supporter for their children; consequently, their children become low-performing students and drop out the school (Shahi, 2021).

Challenges of Guardian Involvement in Public Schools

Economic hardship is a major factor (Shrestha, 2024) and Low literacy levels among parents also hinder meaningful engagement (Kunwar, 2024; Shahi, 2021). Similarly, cultural norms and gender roles further restrict involvement, particularly for women, who may feel discouraged from participating in school committees or decision-making processes (Gautam, 2023). Guardians are busy in managing to afford for daily expenditure laboring, working abroad and cannot give time to their children (Shahi, 2021). Schools often lack systematic channels for engaging parents and guardians (Bhandari, 2023). For parents of children with disabilities, additional obstacles include inaccessible school facilities, limited awareness of inclusive education policies, and insufficient guidance from school staff (Basnyat, 2023). These challenges highlight the need for comprehensive strategies to strengthen parental involvement, including structured communication mechanisms,

parental education programs, and policies that actively empower all guardians to participate in their children's education.

Promoting Guardian Participation in School Activities

Active engagement of guardians through School Management Committee (SMC) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) in school development enhances both student performance and institutional advancement (Bhattarai & Thapa, 2023; Katel & Katel). Strengthening parent-teacher relationships and creating supportive home learning environments further contribute to students' cognitive and emotional development (Subedi, & Dahal, 2024; Shahi, 2021). To encourage an effective participation, schools in Nepal are increasingly implementing structured communication channels, such as regular parent-teacher meetings, use of digital platforms, and community outreach programs that educate parents about their role in children's education (Basnyat, 2023; Katel & Katel, 2024). Additionally, fostering inclusive school climates that respect and value all guardians, regardless of socio-economic status or literacy level, has been shown to increase engagement and sustain long-term parental involvement (Kunwar, 2024). These evidences indicate that the target of education policy and national curriculum framework is achieved by encouraging guardian involvement in school activities through social audit and regular meetings with the guardians.

Enhancing guardian participation in Nepalese public schools requires a multifaceted approach that addresses social, cultural, and institutional barriers (Katel & Katel, 2024; Shahi, 2021). Parents' active involvement in monitoring homework, attending workshops, and contributing to school decision-making processes influence student motivation and academic achievement (Shrestha, 2024). Schools that provide orientation programs, parenting education sessions, and awareness campaigns about the importance of parental engagement have attained higher participation rates, particularly among marginalized and disadvantaged communities (Gautam, 2023). Furthermore, community networks and local leaders to facilitate communication between schools and families can bridge gaps caused by low literacy or geographical distance (Bhandari, 2023). By creating inclusive, transparent, and supportive mechanisms, conducting awareness programs, getting help of SMC and PTA, rewarding active guardians, creating community parenting groups, doing regular effective communications, doing satisfactory assessment, maintaining transparency in school operations, doing door to door engagement of parents, and conducting counseling service for parents, Nepalese public schools can empower guardians to take an active role in shaping the educational experiences and outcomes of their children (Katel & Katel, 2024; Shahi, 2021).

Methods and Procedures

As the main purpose of case study is to make a comprehensive understanding about certain social or institutional phenomenon analyzing participants' perception, experiences, and detail of the case (Creswell, 2013), I employed case study research design. Via single site qualitative case study, I explored a case of a school related to guardianship of students collecting data purposefully from 240 students of grade nine and ten with the help of open ended short questions to identify the capability and incapability of guardians to guide their children, Similarly, I collected responses via

open ended long questions from 25 students to understand their perceptions on alternative guardianship and status of their guardians for helping them in schooling and whole personal growth. Moreover, I talked to two principals and a teacher in phone calls to identify how the schools and teachers can play the role of guardians to enhance learning environment of students. Good qualitative case study presents an in-depth understanding of the case and analysis of multiple units within the case to understand a specific issue, problem, or concern in detail (Creswell, 2013). Thus, I analyzed the data by making themes generated from the research questions and participants' experiences to make a comprehensive understanding on alternative guardianship. To maintain the ethical issues and quality standard of the data, I triangulate data by comparing perceptions of students and teachers presented in short and long open ended questions. At the same time, I explained my purpose deliberately by making informed consent, agreeing for pseudonyms, and promising for anonymity and confidentiality of participants' responses (Creswell, 2018).

Results

Status of Public School Students' Guardianship

The status of guardianship in public schools is miserable as they are trapped by their traditional and ignorant mentality towards public schools and their educational, economic, and social conditioning also disturbing them to be capable guardians. While taking responses through an oral question from 240 students; whose guardians are able to attend the school if school calls them for teacher-parent meeting and then 40 students out of 240 informed that their guardians would come to school. By looking that hazardous condition, I collected their responses in written form and found that only the guardians of 65 students are ready and able to give time to the school for the required discussions in the school and rest of all are unable to visit the school as most of them are farmer, daily weigh workers, workers in India, and some students stay with subordinate guardians like grandparents, uncles, sisters, brothers, and alone. Students mentioned that their parents are unable to give sufficient time at home due to over business for daily livelihood management.

I found that 80 out of 240 parents gave five to ten minutes to talk about their children's study, 52 parents provided thirty to fifty minutes, and 108 out of 240 students' parents rarely provides time to their children at home. Students reported that some of the guardians make their children busy in their household chores saying there will not be any loss if their children do not go to school for few days and some parents involve their children in labor claiming that earning few amount of money is better than going to school. This evidence shows that most of the guardians are unable not only to provide time to their children at home but also to school. The guardians who give five to fifty minutes times to their children are expected to visit school and contribute to school development and for 108 students, there is requirement of alternative guardianship or school-guardian partnership program along with parent education.

Regarding the current status of guardians, Prasad, a school principal, explained his experience that around ten percent students' guardians can participate in school activities actively and other guardians are not able to attend directly in the school. Similarly, Tika, another principal, is distressed towards the role of guardians but she is hopeful to increase participation of guardians through phone contact and social media. Moreover, Damodar, a teacher, claimed that forcing all

the guardians to attend the school is not fair. However, the schools and teachers can cooperate with guardians by using technology, taking help of local teachers, and contacting them by any other means. All of the participants agreed to use alternative ways to involve guardians to create better environment for students either with main guardians or with alternative guardians as the main priority of the guardians is working for daily livelihood due to economic, social, and awareness aspects.

Reasons behind Guardians' Exceptional Visit in School Activities

The national and widespread problem of public schools often heard is ignorance and less participation of guardians in school activities. To check this statement, I conducted this study and found the reasons why there is unsatisfactory involvement of guardians in school activities and proper guidance for their children. On the basis of students' responses, the first reason is that the guardians do not see any meaning of going to school as the schools are not doing better for educational environment, secondly, they have to complete the significant duties for nurturing their children and going to school to understand the status of their children is second priority. Meanwhile, some of the guardians cannot visit the school directly due to inconvenient time. One of the students explained that her father is a teacher who works in another school and due to same time of school; he cannot come to the meeting of her daughter's school. Furthermore, another reason is that the guardians of many students work in India and they stay with subordinate guardians whose priority is not to be engaged in school activities.

Prasad agreed that the guardians cannot come to school due to their economic, social, cultural, and political problems. He further added that when there is trustworthy relation with teachers, guardians visit school hopefully otherwise they ignore school due to low academic achievement of their children. He mentioned a case of a student that after the student got support from him as a subject teacher, the student talked to his parents and his mother met him at school and requested to make further improvement in her son. Likewise, Tika presented a case similar to Prasad that after her good rapport with the students with better teaching in the class, the guardians automatically visited her and expressed their concern that they are ready to support it means the role of teachers as a guardians attract the guardians of students to school activities. Similarly, Damodar presented the ill behaviors of school which discourage guardians to involve in school activities. He exclaimed with sorrow that some of the guardians visit schools with hope and curiosity but returns home being furious and discouraged with school environment. He further highlighted a case of a guardian who transferred his children one school to another after finding some unmanaged and teacher less classes at the school frequently.

Roles of Schools as a Guardian of Students

Students accepted the school as the guardian. However, they suspected that the schools are not really paying attention as the role of guardian. They mentioned that the school can be their guardian by providing good learning environment in the school and guiding students for the right decision. Similarly, they added that the students face the problems of pure drinking water, hygienic breakfast, clean toilets, and opportunities of extracurricular activities for holistic development which should be managed well by the school to play the role of guardians. Moreover, they

demanded for the equal and equitable behavior from school for all the students to maintain their motivation and continuous learning. Prasad is positive towards SMC and PTA's role as the guardians but he could not get full support from them as the guardians of students. He added that the political reasons, lack of awareness as the guardians, and having no such a vision towards school as guardians, SMC and PTA could not involve in the guardianship of students. Tika welcomed the concept "school as the guardians" and illustrated the role of school for it. She added, "School cannot reduce the poverty of students' guardians and cannot control the social disruptions but schools definitely can guide students to live economic life and teach students to live in society successfully." Damodar explained, "In our time, the school had the rights and responsibilities to regulate students. Similarly, guardians also used to respect and trust the schools and teachers." He described the role of school as the guardians that the schools can take help of the teachers available in the communities and the local agencies can help schools to engage guardians in school activities.

Teachers' Roles as a Guardian of Students in School

All of the students accepted teachers as the guardians. However, they stressed on the improvement of behaviors of some teachers and requested to be learning friendly. The common expectations of all students from teachers as guardians include equal behavior, no comparison among students, treating as their own children, understanding their guardians' problems, giving extra time for learning, and making meaningful learning rather than finishing course. Based on the students' responses, it can be concluded that few teachers are not playing the role of guardians while teaching students as the students feel discriminated and unsafe in the class. Students suggest focusing on learning rather than just finishing course and treat students as their children.

From the side of teachers, Prasad also discussed teachers (e.g., class teacher and subject teacher) as the central person to play the role of guardian for the students. He further explained that when class teachers keep records of all students by understanding their main traits and conditions and if subject teachers teach students with proper guidance and supportive behaviors, teachers can prepare students for learning and the schools and guardians also become more responsible towards students. He further added, "Class teacher are not just the person for taking attendance, they can be good guardians for the students." Similarly, Tika mentioned that school can make friendly and safe environment through class teachers and subject teachers coordinating with concerned authorities to solve the problems of students. Damodar praised the concept "teacher as a guardian" and explained his experiences that the teachers as a guardian in the class takes care of all students, make the class safe and engaged with meaningful learning activities, gives first priority to the students' progress, and does not think to leave the class in the name of doing other activities in the school.

Roles of Students as a Self-guardian to Manage Learning

Half of the students accepted that they can be guardians of themselves and take in-charge of their learning and behavior modification. One of the students told his story that he goes to labor in constructions cite and earns five hundred per day. When the school closes during summer vacation and festival vacation like Dashain, he earns ten to twenty thousands and maintains his study expenses throughout the whole academic year and he manages his every activity of learning as he has the total responsibility of his family so he accepted himself as a self-guardian. Likewise,

another boy of grade nine also mentioned that he is taking all responsibilities of his family as his father is in India and his mother is disabled. The major responsibilities that all of the students accepted to do are managing study environment for themselves, helping guardians to earn money, making right decision carefully, following schools rules, helping parents in household chores, laboring in construction site during long vacations, giving and taking help to/from friends. This situation indicates that the students who study in grade nine are compelled to take responsibility of not only study but also management of household chores. Therefore, some of the students are ready to help each other in learning process to ensure equitable participation of their friends.

Prasad explained that the students can play the role of self-guardianship when they are fully aware about their responsibility and supported by the teachers even though they live with subordinate guardians. He further added a case of a boy who did good self-guardianship. The boy left the school in class nine due to family problem but returned home from India after two years and admitted in school again and then he did well for not only himself but also played the better role as the guardians in the class. Tika asserts, "Teachers can teach with full effort and honesty ensuring learning of each student as the guardians, they should not afford students' expenditure which students can do themselves after the intellectual support from teachers." Damodar mentioned that most of the students of grade nine to twelve can manage their learning better when they get proper and timely guidance and support from teachers and schools. He further added, "If the school designs the program for learning and earning together, the students can learn and earn as a result the guardians also contribute for school development positively." The concluding remarks of teachers' perceptions on self-guardianship is that the students cannot do better only after developing critical awareness on them, supporting them in learning, and guiding them in problems they are facing in society and in the school.

Other Alternative Guardians for Student

Besides parents, schools, teachers, and peers, there can be other persons, agencies, and professionals who can contribute to creating the supportive environment for those students who are guardian less and seek good guardianship? Damodar asserted with confidence that the local government including ward office and non-government organizations allocate budget for parent education, provide dress, and stationaries to the needy students. Similarly, they can design safety and awareness program in the community level from which the children and guardians can be supported. Prasad sir explained the example of taking guardianship by the elected citizen representatives but it should be continuous not just during admission campaign and election time. He further added, "If all the stakeholders are focused on making mannered and competent manpower, there will not be any child who is called disruptive and low achiever so the local government can play active role for it." Tika agreed with the prior participants and added that SMC and PTA members can conduct campaign coordinating with grant providers and manage the fund for disadvantaged children to provide them required support. She explained, "I have seen some of the teachers, SMC/PTA members, and citizen representatives distribute stationaries and other supports to the needy students from which I am inspired to run a campaign in my school too." Thus, the other guardians are also significant stakeholders as main and alternative guardians for contributing to manage study environment for all students.

Roles of School-Guardian Partnership for Learning Environment

Although the solo contribution of parents, teachers, schools, and alternative guardians is significant for students learning, the collaborative efforts through schools-guardian partnership program adds more comprehensive learning environment for all type of students. Supporting this argument, Prasad sir highlighted the value of collaborative tasks of schools with guardians. He explained, “I along with my staffs went to the house visit of a student who was good but was deteriorating his study due to tension of long route from home to school. He did better after we managed his problem collaboratively.” Similarly, Tika described this program’s essentiality explaining it as an upper step after the support of guardians and teachers individually. Damodar agreed with previous participants and further illustrated the necessity of this program to creating fertile learning environment via collaboration of guardians and teachers to support the learners identifying their actual learning style and habit of learning. All of the participants stressed on the using platforms of social media and technology to share the learning status of students in both school and home. The students also accepted the contact between guardians and teachers through social media as it saves time and convenient for all to talk in any situation. In conclusion, the school-guardian partnership program goes beyond the support of guardians at home and support of teachers at school, putting guardians and teachers together for ensuring equitable participation and better learning.

Discussion

The findings are similar to existing literature in terms of alternative guardians and different in terms of supporting students in learning process. Despite significant role of parents in students’ academic achievement and personal growth, the public schools in Nepal are going through the problem of less participation of guardians in students’ learning and school development. Therefore, this study endeavored to identify the exact status of guardians and explored alternative guardianship for equitable participation of students who are guardian less and under the marginalized guardianship for which I found my participants positive towards the schools, teachers, peers, and self-guardianship as the alternative guardians. Furthermore, I pointed out local government including ward office, campaign groups, non-government organizations, and donation providers as other alternative guardians for the students to manage study environment. Moreover, as the advanced management of study environment for students, I found school-guardian partnership program which can help teachers and guardians to work collaboratively either teachers visiting students’ homes or guardians visiting schools for the betterment of children’s learning. The rationale of this study is due to the low/no awareness of guardians and their conditioning only for nurturing their children with basic needs no more attention on better learning. In the context of Nepalese public schools, my main argument is that the guardians who are contributing for their children and school, they are to be promoted and sustained whereas the children who are not under good guardianship, the schools should design alternative programs to ensure equitable participation of all students in learning.

Shahi (2021) also found the same status of guardians as I mentioned earlier and he pointed out the unsatisfactory participation of guardians in public schools as they prioritize their children’s stomach rather than mind, they are busy in gambling, drinking alcohol, working abroad, and

working long hours for daily livelihood. Parents also torture their children due to their low achievement in school and threaten to leave school and work with them to earn money. Similarly, Fernandez-Martin, et al. (2022) highlighted the good effect of peer tutoring for self-directed learning which is supportive to self-guardianship and Mouni (2024) supported self-guardianship exploring how learner autonomy can be boosted up by providing psychological, strategic, and problem solving support to the students. Eutsler (2019) discussed the apps and platforms to make good partnership between teachers and parents to enhance reading skill of children which matches with guardian-school partnership. Thomas et al. (2019) presented why the guardians rarely visit public schools claiming that the parental involvement in school is affected by the academic achievement of their children; the better academic achievement the more participation of guardians and the lower achievement the lesser participation of guardians.

Maharjan (2016) also supported guardian-school partnership program emphasizing on the collaborative support of families, teachers, and communities for the children to enhance their learning rather than playing separate role (e.g., only parents and teachers). The study of Poudel et al. (2024) also stressed on the collaborative contributions of schools, teachers, and parents to create academic excellence of students. In contrast, Wagle (2012) presented the reasons of dropout that when the children become guardian less, they are forced to child labor, early child marriage, and addictions due to which they dropout from school and Moneva et al. (2020) added the significance of parents' communication with their children which is contributing to academic achievement in school. These two studies go beyond discussing guardian participation in school. Katel & Katel (2024) mentioned the strategies to promote guardians' involvement in school development which provides guidelines for how schools can play the role of guardians for students.

For the foundation of this study, the concept of teacher as a guardian illustrated by Pandey helped me to clarify teacher as a guardian as he describes teachers' roles as nurturer, guide, and ethical mentor who can promote students' emotional well-being, critical thinking, and holistic development. He accepted that teachers can guide for not only learning but also for self-trust and moral behaviors. He further explained how the teachers can contribute to the holistic development of learners. Teachers can identify the level of distress and performance of students and can help accordingly. The author supported the ideology of Angelou that people forget our words and actions but they never forget how we made them feel about anything. Teachers' timely emotional support prevents students from long term psychological problems. They can engage students in judgment free communications to encourage students to express their concerns and to be connected with any useful resources. Through open dialogue, peer support, and teamwork, learners improve emotional resilience and academic performance. Teachers encourage for developing critical thinking, exploring new ideas, and challenging the pre-established systems. Teachers are skillful to identify and develop unique abilities of students and provide tailored support to nurture their inner talent. They can create the classroom as the center for discovery and innovations. A simple kind word and empathetic gesture of teachers can be transformative moment for students.

Conclusion

As the purpose of this study was to identify the exact situation of guardian support and alternative ways to guardianship of children, I found that the schools, teachers, peers, self-guardianship, local agencies, and government bodies can work as the good alternative guardians for those students who are roaming without guardianship and seeking for the support of guardians. Furthermore, the schools should go beyond the trap of traditional concept of guardianship and seek for the alternative ways of guardianships suitable to the students of 21st century by using technology and the theory of learner agency, autonomy, and investment. The existing literature explains the necessity of alternative guardians for disabled and refugee children conversely this study emphasizes the management of alternative guardianship for those students who are guardian less and whose guardians are unable to guide their children, respecting and accepting the value of core or traditional concept of guardians.

This study is not the alternative or opposition to the role of main guardians (e.g., parents and grandparents) but a supportive ways to ensure the guardianship for all children. All of the stakeholders blame each other for the failure of students in SEE but no one talks about the alternative ways to promote guardian participation in the growth of school and students. The implication of this study will be as the insights to provide guardianship to all learners of public schools in Nepal and the schools and teachers should change their role from teachers to guardians as they are central stakeholders of creating learning environment for the students. In the digital age, there are multiple ways to be connected guardians so there is no great meaning of saying the result of public school is poor due to less participation of guardians in school. The further research can be done on this issue in other schools and districts as it was limited to a school of Kailali district and the research can be conducted on effectiveness of teachers' role as the guardians and its practices in well performing schools.

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