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## **Teachers' Experience on Parent-Teacher Collaboration for Students' Learning**

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### **Abstract**

Parent-teacher collaboration is essential for improving students' learning, motivation, and overall development. However, teachers' lived experiences of this collaboration are not explored in the Nepalese context. This phenomenological qualitative study examines teachers' experiences of parent-teacher collaboration for students' learning. It also explores the difficulties and challenges they encounter when working with parents during their teaching journey. This study adopted a qualitative design and applied purposive sampling for selecting secondary-level teachers as participants. An in-depth interview was used to collect data. Based on the research questions, thematic coding and categorisation were done. The findings reveal that teachers' experience of parental engagement involves various practices. However, the study also indicates effective collaboration. In gist, the study highlights parent-teacher collaboration as a complex process that requires flexible, inclusive, and context-sensitive strategies to make a valuable impact among Nepalese schools.

*Keywords:* Parent–teacher collaboration, Teachers' experiences, Parental engagement, Students' learning, Socio-cultural factors

### **Introduction**

Classroom instruction is a key factor that influences students' learning outcomes. However, the social and family context in which students grow and develop is also responsible for their learning outcomes. Parent-teacher collaboration is a crucial factor

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for the overall development of students. Parent-teacher collaboration mainly refers to purposeful and cooperative interaction aimed at promoting academic excellence in students. Such collaboration between parent and teacher strengthens the learning environment of the students. Globally, parental involvement is an essential strategy for the betterment of students' learning. Meaningful collaboration between parents and teachers contributes positively to students' academic performance, motivation, school attendance, behaviour, and emotional well-being (Epstein, 2002). International educational frameworks promote partnership-based approaches that recognise parents as active stakeholders in the teaching–learning process (UNESCO, 2009). Even in the Nepalese context, parents' roles are inevitable for the betterment of students' performance.

Community and parental involvement in school education in the context of Nepal. Policy documents, like the National Education Policy (Lal, 2025) and the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), focus on strengthening school–community relations to promote educational quality, accountability, and inclusiveness (Lal, 2025). These policies encourage promoting parental engagement via regular communication and collaborative decision-making processes in schools. Hence, these conversations clarify the importance of context to establish effective communication channels for parental engagement. Theoretically, parent-teacher collaboration is generally understood through socio-cultural and economic frameworks that conceptualise learning as a socially mediated process influenced by interaction among multiple stakeholders (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This theoretical perspective shows that home and school environments are interrelated in shaping students' learning experiences. Similarly, professional beliefs, experiences, and practices play a significant role in shaping students' behaviour (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Along with this, socio-cultural factors are also responsible for shaping students' behaviours.

Time constraints, communication gaps, socio-economic disparities, cultural mismatches, and role expectations continue to hinder effective collaboration and are responsible for preventing positive outcomes by parental involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2023). Additionally, several studies point out the role of parental perspectives in improving the students' outcomes. In developing countries like Nepal, systematic research is limited to focus on teachers and parents' collaboration for students' learning. Nepalese schools encompass broader socio-cultural environments at the local level (Carney & Bista, 2009). Although there is an importance of parent–teacher collaboration, there is a notable gap in context-specific and experiential research on teachers' perspectives in Nepal. This gap limits the development of context-responsive strategies for strengthening collaboration between schools and families. Based on this

gap, the study aims to explore the existing practices of parent-teacher collaboration for promoting students' learning in schools. Specifically, this study intends to explore the answer to these two major questions, viz. How do teachers experience parental engagement in students' learning? And how do teachers describe the difficulties and challenges in working with parents? Through these questions, this study expects to explore the teachers' experience of parent-teacher collaboration in shaping students' learning behaviour. In addition, it also contributes to a deeper understanding of collaborative processes in community schools in Nepal. It also informs relevant practices for policy implementation, as well as teacher professional development.

### **Methods and Materials**

The research is based on an interpretive qualitative design (Khanal, 2013). Interpretive qualitative design is a research approach used to understand how people interpret, experience, and make meaning of a social phenomenon. It emphasises the participants' perspectives, meanings, and their lived experiences. It comprises phenomena, participants and questions related to the research problem. I employed the purposive sampling strategy to select the informants. Firstly, I collected the parents' responses.

I proceeded with my issues from their introduction and teaching experiences. Then, the informants' parents and I discussed their thoughts about how the gap limits the development of context-responsive strategies for strengthening collaboration between schools and families. During the conversation, the participants' parents spoke very clearly about the research problems. I noted parents' gestures while responding to the answer. Parents participants shared their experiences from the beginning to the present date. Parents and I discussed parental engagement, difficulties and challenges faced by teachers. I recorded audio on my laptop with the informants' permission. This audio is transcribed into text manually. After transcribing the text manually, I did coding, keeping the research questions in mind, as there are two research questions in my study.

Having been coded, I categorized them like home-school communication practices, Time constraints and competing responsibility, learning support at home, limited parental digital literacy, parental motivation and educational expectation, communication gaps between home and school, socio-cultural and economic influencing in engagement, socio- economic barriers, parental participation in school activities, students' low motivation and behaviour issues, and technological engagement in students' learning as in my understanding, and separated them into the parental engagement versus difficulties and challenges category without giving them a

theme. Then, after, I created the categories for both research questions' (RQ-1 and RQ-2) themes. After categorising them, three paragraphs for two themes each are given below:

### **Coding & Categorising: Related to RQ-1**

#### **Parental engagement:**

##### **Theme 1:**

Practices of parental engagement in students' learning (Home-school communication practices, Learning support at home, Parental participation in school activities, and Technological engagement in students' learning)

##### **Theme 2:**

Motivational and socio-cultural factors shaping parental involvement (Parental motivation and educational expectation, & Socio-cultural and economic influences on engagement)

### **Coding & Categorising: Related to RQ-2**

#### **Difficulties and Challenges:**

##### **Theme1:**

Structural and communication barriers are limiting parental involvement (Time constraints and competing responsibilities, Limited parental digital literacy, Communication gaps between home and school)

##### **Theme2:**

Socio-economic and student-related challenges affecting learning (Socio-economic barriers, and Students' low motivation and behaviour issues)

## **Results and Discussion**

The key findings of teachers' experiences on parent-teacher collaboration for students' learning are discussed here based on the theme created after information collection, i.e. thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The following sections illustrate how parent-teacher collaboration enhances students' learning. If they are showing their positive behaviours to their children's learning, then it will hurt their learning, thereby producing weak performance in the school context of Nepal.

### **Parental Engagement in Students' Learning Practices**

The home-school communication practices, learning support at home, parental participation in school activities, and technological engagement are influencing factors for parental engagement in students' learning. Considering these, this section discusses the findings from the informants' experiences.

#### *Home-school communication practices*

This study clearly explored teachers' experiences of parent-teacher communication and its role in supporting students' learning. If there is frequent

communication between the parent and teacher, then this practice helps the students improve their studies. The teacher (T-1) shared his experience in this way;

*“I usually inform parents about students’ progress and difficulties through phone calls and messages. When parents respond positively, students become more serious about their studies.”*

This statement suggests that ongoing communication promotes the responsibility of parents and teachers, that turn inspires students’ academic commitment. In line with this finding, Positive parental responsiveness strengthens the students’ motivation and learning behaviours (Jeynes, 2012). In our context, home–school coordination is often limited; however, this practice becomes really meaningful. Effective communication with parents encourages increasing students’ engagement and motivation in their learning process. As a result, the students’ performance is better than their previous academic performance. Hence, meaningful collaboration is useful for the better performance of students.

#### *Learning support at home*

This study clearly explained the positive parental responsiveness and its role in improving students’ learning. If parents show their positive behaviours in front of their children, then their children automatically show their sensitivity toward studies. In this context, the teacher (T-2) explained,

*“If parents do not show a positive response, students also become careless about homework. They are very careless about their studies, and they don’t show good educational performance.”*

This statement clearly depicts that positive parental responsiveness at home appears to inspire students’ motivation and responsibility toward their learning. Responsive parental involvement helps improve the academic engagement of students (Jeynes, 2012). In the Nepalese context, some of the parents don’t listen and respond carefully; however, this practice becomes really effective in students’ learning. In gist, parental responsiveness helps to strengthen students’ sense of responsibility and academic discipline, which eventually leads to a better career.

#### *Parental participation in school activities*

This study explored the teachers’ experiences of parental negligence and its effect on students’ learning in school activities. If parents are not aware of their children’s learning, then this practice does not help the students improve their studies, and some are very poor in technology, too. The teacher (T-3) added,

*“Some parents are careless about their children's studies. They don't listen to their teachers and school administrators when frequent calls are made from school.*

This statement highlights how parents' negligence can weaken students' motivation in their academic performance. Weak parental communication can negatively affect students' learning behaviours (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Moreover, they are not familiar with communication and technology. In my findings, consistent and responsive home–school communication promotes students' engagement in learning.

#### *Technological engagement in students' learning*

In the modern era, parents' technological engagement empowers students to improve their learning. The students' performance becomes poor, as there is no proper understanding of the proper use of mobiles. The teacher (T-4) said,

*“Parents who attend school programs and use mobile messages to follow instructions understand their children's learning better. However, not all parents are not well equipped with technology.”*

This quote explains that participation in school activities and the use of digital tools promote parental awareness. During our conversation, I did not keep any field notes. However, the teacher's gesture was noticed while responding to the given questions.

The findings indicate that parental engagement in students' learning is practised via diverse and multiple approaches. Communication frequently, home support, school participation, and technology contribute positively to students' learning experiences.

### **Motivational and Socio-Cultural Factors Shaping Parental Involvement**

Parents' motivation within socio-cultural contexts strongly influences parental involvement in students' learning.

#### *Parental motivation and educational expectation*

Some parents have positive motivation towards their students' learning to fulfil their high educational expectations. They also show their readiness to get involved in school activities. Parents with high educational aspirations for their children were more proactive in communication and learning support. These factors collectively reflect the depth and quality of parental involvement in students' learning. Regarding the role of parental motivation and expectation, the teacher (T-1) added the experience in this way;

*“...parents who believe education is important and expect their children to perform well are more involved. They regularly ask about progress and support learning at home...”*

This quote indicates that parental involvement is a motivating factor for students' learning. They are actively involved in their students' educational progress. If they frequently visit and get feedback for further improvement. Overall, the parental motivation and educational expectation also play a significant role in shaping students' behaviours. As a result, if the schools consider parental motivation and educational expectation, the educational achievement of students can be possible to improve.

### ***Socio-cultural influences on engagement***

Socio-cultural factors are important for parental engagement in the students' learning. Teachers claim that parents don't take their responsibilities positively. The value of education in their society is negligible. In this context, the teacher (T-2) reported;

*“In some families, parents think that teaching is entirely the school's responsibility. Due to cultural beliefs and a lack of schooling experience, they hesitate to communicate with teachers.”*

This quote suggests that socio-cultural perceptions of teacher authority and parental roles involve the active participation of parents in the students' progress. In the experience of the teacher, parents expect that schools should take the responsibility to develop the students' potential when they send their child to school. They don't feel comfortable communicating with the teachers. In conclusion, if parents share their responsibility with the school and they communicate frequently with the school, automatically, we can find better achievement in students' learning.

### ***Economic influences on engagement***

Not all parents are economically capable of educating their students. So, they want to be involved in their daily activities. That is their compulsion too. The teacher (T-3) also discussed economic influences on engagement in this way:

*“Many parents go to their work for a daily wage, so attending school meetings means they are losing their income. Even if they want to participate, economic pressure makes their day-to-day lives difficult...”*

This quote illustrates how economic factors affect students' learning. Parents are unwilling to visit the school due to their busy lives. If they show their willingness to visit the school, it creates economic pressure at their home.

### **Structural and Communication Barriers Limiting Parental Involvement**

The teacher (T-3) claimed that parental involvement in students' learning is ineffective due to time constraints, competing responsibilities, limited parental digital literacy, and communication gaps between home and school.

Although many parents were sensitive towards their children's education, structural realities don't support them. Parents' work schedules, household responsibilities, and economic pressures are obstacles. Moreover, the increasing use of digital platforms for communication posed challenges for parents with limited digital literacy. These factors created gaps in home-school communication, weakening collaborative efforts to support students' learning. In this regard, the teacher (T-4) noted the arguments in this way:

*".....Most parents are busy with their multiple responsibilities. Even when meetings are arranged, many parents cannot attend regularly due to a lack of time..."*

This quote suggests that parents are unable to attend the meetings organized by the school due to family responsibilities. They are so busy that they have no time to take a meal. Overall, parents' physical presence and direct interaction with teachers limit sustained collaboration.

### ***Digital literacy and communication barriers***

Digital literacy and communication are the essential components in the day-to-day lives of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, digital literacy and communication barriers are prevalent in our guardians' lives. Some have no idea, and some don't have access to it either. In this context, the teacher (T-5) emphasised digital literacy and communication barriers:

*"We use mobile messages and online groups to inform parents, but some parents do not know how to use these tools properly. As a result, important information does not reach them on time."*

This quote indicates how the lack of parental digital literacy creates communication gaps with schools. Similarly, parents are less familiar with digital technology. If a message is sent from the school, they don't notice the message properly. Their children don't want to share the message with their guardians because these messages were not in favour with them. Overall, parental digital literacy creates communication barriers between the school and parents.

### ***Communication gaps***

Communication gaps are a barrier to students' learning. Due to digital illiteracy, unaware of the parental roles, time constraints, busy schedule, under-emphasised, etc., there exist communication gaps between teachers and parents. The teacher (T-1) described the overall impact of communication gaps between home and school in this way:

*“Because of irregular communication, parents are sometimes unaware of students’ academic problems until they become serious. This weakens our joint effort to support students’ learning.”*

This quote indicates that there is no regular communication between the school and the home. This might be unknown to their children’s academic performance, and they are unaware of the value of education. In this case, parents and teachers' joint efforts become fruitless. In conclusion, ineffective communication delays timely intervention and reduces the effectiveness of parent-teacher collaboration.

### **Socio-Economic and Student-Related Challenges Affecting Learning**

Teachers said that socio-economic conditions of families and student-related issues, particularly low motivation and behavioural problems, posed significant challenges to effective parent-teacher collaboration and students’ learning.

#### ***Socio-economic barriers***

The socio-economic barriers in families often influence parents’ capacity to support learning at home and to participate in school-related activities. Financial crisis, unstable employment, and limited educational resources affect both parental involvement and students’ academic readiness. The teacher (T-2) described the impact of socio-economic barriers in this way:

*“Many parents struggle to meet basic needs, so education becomes a secondary priority. They cannot always provide learning materials or time for their children’s studies, and they have no reading culture in their society. They don’t give proper value to education, saying the elephant is the largest animal on land without studying. If so, why study?”*

This quote indicates that economic hardship constrains parents’ ability to support students’ learning, even when they value education. They give less priority to education than to their social norms and values. Overall, socio-economic barriers are the main factors holding them back.

Some students are from a disadvantaged background. They don’t have their readiness in their study. Their social structure is also not so advanced. The teacher (T-3) quoted students’ low motivation in the following way;

*“Students from disadvantaged backgrounds often come to school without encouragement from home. They show less interest in learning and need extra motivation in the classroom.”*

This quote suggests that limited home support affects students' learning motivation and classroom engagement. In conclusion, disadvantaged group students are not showing their interest and motivation in studies.

Students show their behaviour problems during study. This is because of their cultural influences. The same teacher (T-4) focused on behavioural issues and their influence on collaboration. The culture in which they grow up also influences their behaviour. They don't show good manners while dealing with others.

*“Some students display behavioural problems, and when we try to discuss these issues, parents are either unavailable or unsure how to respond. This makes it difficult to work together for the child's improvement.”*

This statement reflects how student behaviour challenges, combined with limited parental capacity, weaken collaborative problem-solving between teachers and parents in their day-to-day lives. Overall, the findings show that socio-economic barriers and student-related challenges are deeply rooted, collectively limiting parental involvement and negatively influencing students' motivation, behaviour, and learning outcomes.

### **Teachers' experience with parental engagement in students' learning**

The findings indicate that teachers experienced parental engagement in students' learning through multiple practices, viz., home-school communication, learning support at home, parental participation in school activities, and technological engagement. Jeynes (2012) explained that responsive parental involvement helps improve the academic engagement of students. Teachers explained that regular, either formal or informal, communication with parents helped them share students' academic achievement and address learning difficulties immediately. Parents who actively communicated with teachers were more aware of their children's learning needs and more responsive to teachers' guidance. Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained that Weak parental communication can negatively affect students' learning behaviours.

Teachers also noted that learning support at home, viz., monitoring homework and encouraging study habits, positively influenced students' educational achievement. Moreover, parental participation in school activities such as meetings and school programs strengthened trust between teachers and parents, which helps to develop students' confidence. Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) added that professional beliefs, experiences, and practices play a significant role in shaping students' behaviour.

Technological tools further supported communication and learning engagement, although their use varied among parents based on their literacy. Overall, teachers

experienced parental engagement as beneficial; however, some parents were highly involved, and others participated minimally due to contextual barriers.

The findings suggest that parental engagement is a multidimensional process that extends beyond school boundaries into the home environment. Effective home–school communication and parental support at home contribute positively to students’ academic motivation and learning continuity. Teachers’ experiences highlight that when parents actively engage, students demonstrate improved responsibility, confidence, and learning outcomes.

However, the irregular nature of parental engagement reflects broader contextual realities, particularly differences in parents’ time availability, educational background, and access to technology. This indicates that while schools may promote parental involvement, its effectiveness depends on parents’ capacity and readiness to engage. Carney & Bista (2009) said that Nepalese schools encompass broader socio-cultural environments at the local level. So, teachers’ experiences focus on the need for flexible and inclusive involvement that helps to accommodate diverse socio-cultural situations.

### **Difficulties and challenges in parent-teacher collaboration for students’ learning**

Structural and communication barriers, and socio-economic and student-related challenges are the two main challenges found from this study. Structural and communication barriers included parents’ time constraints, competing work and family responsibilities, limited digital literacy, and communication gaps between home and school. Teachers concluded that many parents were not able to respond to school communication due to domestic and professional workload as well.

Hornby & Lafaele (2023) explained that the socio-economic and student-related challenges affect the parent–teacher collaboration. Teachers reported that economic difficulties limited parents’ ability to supply learning resources and adequate support at home. These barriers were closely linked to students’ irregular attendance and behavioural issues.

Limited time and ineffective communication channels reduce opportunities for meaningful interaction between teachers and parents. This reflects the view that institutional communication practices must be responsive to parents’ lived realities. In the same way, socio-economic challenges shape both parental involvement and students’ learning behaviours. Economic pressure often shifts parental focus toward survival needs. As reflected in the teacher (T-4) experiences, these conditions contribute to students’ low motivation and behavioural difficulties.

In my opinion, the findings showed that teachers’ experience and parent-teacher collaboration are valuable processes. Effective parental engagement enhances students’

learning; however, multiple structural, socio-economic, and student-related challenges limit its consistent implementation. Teachers' experiences focus on the need for context-sensitive, flexible, and inclusive approaches to parental engagement, which strengthen the parent-teacher collaboration.

### Conclusion

In this study, I discussed how the findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of parental engagement and the factors that influence students' learning. Parent-teacher collaboration plays a role in shaping students' learning behaviours essential for their day-to-day lives. Along with this, students develop social behaviors to adjust to society. Moreover, I also reflected on practical implications, viz., the need for flexible communication methods and context-sensitive engagement strategies for day-to-day family activities. I also suggest exploring the different regional contexts, examining longitudinal impacts of parental engagement, and investigating interventions that mitigate socio-economic barriers.

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