Parental Involvement in Children's Education

A Gendered Perspective

Razia Stanikzai
ABSTRACT

The importance of parental involvement as an enabling factor in children’s education is well evidenced. Teachers have a critical role in facilitating or hindering parents’ involvement in their children’s learning. The research project provides an analysis of what teachers view as parents’ role in their children’s education with an emphasis on gender-differentiated involvement. It also discusses the barriers to parents’ involvement as well as explores whether teachers understand the importance of two-way communication between teachers and parents and the possibility of instituting such communication. The findings illustrate that teachers are well aware of the importance of parental involvement in their students’ learning. Teachers locate at-home support for children within the sphere of mothers’ role and consider support for children’s learning at other settings such as school and community as part of fathers’ role. In terms of who should participate in mechanism such as School Management Shuras (SMS) or who the teachers should contact for communication about children’s learning experience at school, findings clearly indicate that teachers attribute this role to fathers. However, there are positive variations in the views of teachers in urban setting as well as those of female teachers who consider parent-teacher communication as the role of both fathers and mothers. Furthermore, the reasons for which teachers contact parents are largely with regards to issues such as child’s absence and problem with behaviors and performance. Inviting parents through SMS or calling them through phone were the ways selected by teachers to contact parents. The research identifies the need for schools to proactively encourage parental involvement through making the existing structures such as SMS more active and equally accessible to both mothers and fathers.
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INTRODUCTION

Background
Afghan parents aspire to help their children receive quality education. Parents make important decisions about their children's education based on the knowledge and experiences they have. Research consistently shows that partnership between parent, family and community correlates with higher academic performance for children and is a key to addressing drop-out at schools (National Education Association, 2008). The combined impact of poverty and decades of war together with high illiteracy rate among Afghan population make effective participation and involvement for families challenging. Therefore, it is important to explore teachers’ views about parental involvement in children's learning and identify potential areas for strengthening and expanding parents and teachers/school partnership in children's learning.

Problem Statement
Teachers and parents as the two key stakeholders in the overall development of children need to be aware of the importance of parental involvement in children's learning. Therefore, it requires a two-way communication to create support for children's learning in and out of school. Teachers need to have awareness of the knowledge children bring to the class from home and other settings and the support they get out of school. However, in Afghanistan context, communication on parental role in learning and teachers' involvement of parent is very limited. Given the low literacy rate (39 % for men and 14 % for women) in Afghanistan, parents who themselves are not highly educated or are non-literate need clear and sustained communication and guidance on how to support their children's education. Teachers also need to know what parents do and can do, in their capacity and within their intellectual and material resources to support their children's learning. Schools, particularly teachers, may not have clear strategies for communicating with parents on a regular basis and may underestimate their role in motivating and reinforcing students’ learning. Views, perceptions and attitudes of teachers may impact how effectively parents can get and stay involved in their children’s education. According to Oxfam (2011) there is a need that parents and communities are encouraged to participate in school management and improvement of school safety and security through participatory mechanisms such as Parent and Teacher Association and School Management Shuras (SMS). In Afghan context, parental involvement initiatives need to encompass three settings; home, school and community. The participation of parents in school and community level is recognized by the education authorities for which institutional structures such as SMS and Parent Committees exist. School Management Shuras facilitate the participation of parent, largely men’s, in school affairs as well as in building linkages with the rest of communities. Culturally, in most rural Afghanistan men and women's participation in a gender mixed-setting outside family context is not socially acceptable. SMS tries to engage the religious leaders and other influential community members in order to enhance support for the school. Fathers from poor socio-economic background and those who are non-literate may find it hard to have a voice in SMSs as they may lack the skills and influence to have meaningful engagement. As of December 2011, over 11,000 School Management Shuras had been established, most of which received training and developed School Improvement Plans (MoE, 2012). According to the Ministry of Education (MoE), the key functions of the School Management Shuras until the end of 2011 were primarily to implement a) Quality Enhancement School Grant and b) Infrastructure Enhancement Grant. Most schools received one or two generations of the Quality Enhancement Grant for the amount of at least 1,000 USD per school. The fund for all SMS grants comes from the World Bank and its sustainability is questionable. The description above indicates that the SMSs are largely involved in implementing grants for improvement of school infrastructure and they had not had a solid engagement in students’ learning experiences in and outside the class. However, a review of MoE Education Quality Improvement Program (2012) identified the need for additional tasks for SMS which include monitoring the availability of textbooks, teachers’ absenteeism, class
observation, and obtaining reports on teachers’ professional development. In Afghanistan, parents may be asked to come to school if their children break the rules, or make absence or do something negative. Regular communication with parents on performance of their children does not take place. In order to create continuity in teaching and learning between school and out-of-school contexts especially home, parents’ role and the teachers' understanding of that role is important. A two-way communication in this regard is vital for creating a supportive learning environment for children in and out of school. It is, therefore, important to find out what teachers' experience is with regard to the parents' role in learning and what areas they think that parents can contribute to their children's learning.

Aim
The aim of this thesis is to explore views about parental involvement in children’s education in Afghan context. Parental involvement will be explored from a gender perspective on the different roles that mothers and fathers play in their children’s learning.

Objectives
The objective of the research is to analyze teachers' views about parents' involvement in their children's education and what the potential areas and ways for their involvement in their children's learning are.

Research questions
The research questions derived from the objectives are as follows:

1) What are teachers' experiences and views about parental involvement in children's learning?
2) What do teachers think about communication with parents?
3) Do teachers’ views differ when it comes to mothers’ and fathers’ involvement? How?

Operational definitions

1) Parental Involvement
Parental involvement can be defined in different ways. In this study, parental involvement includes parents' at-home interest, support and engagement such as communication about the expectations parents have from their children, support with the studies and homework, providing advice and encouragement and communicating with the teachers and with the children about their schoolwork (Skaliotis, 2009). Parents’ involvement encompasses a range of actions and beliefs concerning sending a child to school and supporting the child's out-of-school learning through advocating on behalf of the child, communicating with the school staff and maintaining a presence in the school (Epstein, 1992). In an Afghan context, parental involvement includes parents’ awareness of and their efforts to support their children’s learning, in and out of school as well as providing academic guidance and supportive learning environment at home and communication to their children and the school. It also includes parents' participation in school meetings, School Management Shuras and liaising with community for support to school. Preparing a home environment that supports and stimulates children's learning and communicates the value attached to learning is an important aspect of parental involvement in Afghan context. Overall, parental involvement can also be defined as the efforts made by parents to support their children’s learning while their child is in school age (Avvisati, Besbas & Guyon, 2010).

2) School Management Shura (SMS)
Shura means council. School Management Shura is an organized group of people which supports the local school and participates in decision making of the school. School Management
Shura is a council for each school which aims at increasing quality and “change community attitudes towards girls’ education so that support for girls’ schooling becomes the norm rather than the exception” (Solotaroffi, Hashimi & Olesen, 2010). SMS has a structure and its composition includes membership of the school principals, religious leaders, parents (mothers and fathers), village elders, community volunteers, members from Community Development Committee, and a teacher and students’ representatives. School Management Shuras are established, trained, monitored and supported to encourage partnership between schools and community in school affairs for better educational experience of children. According to MoE (2012), some of the main duties of SMS include the followings:

- Developing school development plan
- Supervising and managing the financial affairs of schools & monitoring construction activities
- Creating a positive environment for community engagement to support the school
- Supporting students with their studies at home and in school and encouraging them to study
- Liaising with other institutions in the community
LITERATURE REVIEW
Families play a pivotal role in their children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development from birth through adolescence and their involvement is “one of the strongest predictors of children's school success” (Weiss et al., 2009, p. 34). Partnership between family and school in enhancing students' learning and overall educational experience is of critical importance. An abundance of research on parental involvement in children’s learning exists for countries such as the United States and European countries. However, there is a lack of evidence on parental involvement in children’s learning in context such as South Asian countries and Afghanistan in particular. The literature review below is, therefore, limited. The relevance of the research evidence below is discussed within Afghan context.

What is parent involvement?
The definition of what constitutes parental involvement in Afghan context can include parents’ support to their children’s learning across a range of settings such as home and school. At home, it includes encouraging children to spend time on studying and doing their homework, helping them dress properly for school, making sure they eat, creating a network of support by asking elder siblings or uncles and aunts to help their children with studies as well as making sure that the children go safely to school. A dialogue at home with family members who are at decision making positions in favor of enrolling children in school, supporting them to continue and not to drop out is another important feature of parental involvement in Afghanistan. Furthermore, engagement with the larger community such as generating community support for children particularly girls to walk safely to school is an example of parental involvement at community level. In the home environment, parental involvement is the “overall quality of emotional and verbal responsiveness” (Avvisati, Besbas & Guyon, 2010, p.7) of parents, their acceptance of and involvement with the child and to ensure that materials for learning and a variety of stimulations exist in the environment (ibid). School Management Shuras in Afghanistan are an important vehicle for facilitating community participation and building linkages with the parents. According to MoE Education Quality Improvement Program (2012), the role of SMS should be expanded to include seeking out-of-school children, to ensure they are enrolled and to monitor students’ and teachers’ attendance which requires in-class involvement.

Fan and Chen (2001) identified three constructs of parent involvement: (1) communication refers to parents' frequent and systematic discussions with their children about schoolwork, (2) supervision includes monitoring when students return home from school and what they do after school, overseeing time spent on homework and the extent to which children watch television and (3) parental expectations and parenting style include the manner and extent to which parents communicate their academic aspirations to their children which was found to be the most critical of the three. In brief, expectations of parents and the children’s perceptions of those expectations are associated with enhanced learning achievements.

Parents’ involvement leads to forging relationship between schools and families. Family-school partnerships are child-focused approaches wherein families and professionals cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate to enhance opportunities and success for children and adolescents across social, emotional, behavioral, and academic domains (Albright & Weissberg, 2010 cited by Kim, et al.2012).

Epstein et al. (2002) has developed a framework for defining parental involvement which has six components.
1. Parenting: Enhance parenting and child-rearing skills as well as understanding child and adolescent development at family level. Assist families with setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level.
2. Communication: Communicate school programs and student progress to families through two-
way effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.

3. Volunteering: Improve involvement of families in terms of volunteer work at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs.

4. Learning at home: Involve families with their children in learning activities at home such as homework and other curricular activities and school related decisions.

5. Decision making: Include families as respondents in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through Parent-Teacher Association (PTAs), school councils, committees, and other structures for parents' participation. In Afghanistan context, it will also include School Management Shuras.

6. Collaboration with the community: Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community.

Analyzing Epstien model in Afghan context, it is clear that child-rearing and creating supportive home conditions are the skills that women, particularly mothers within the extended family structure, need to have as early childhood development and arranging home conditions are traditionally what women do. However, a two-way communication, school to home and vice versa requires close relationship between parents and teachers that does not exist now in Afghanistan. Decision making and advocacy in Afghanistan is not confined to the bodies and structures outside school such as PTAs and school committees, but home is the very site where advocacy for the right of children particularly girls to get an education starts. Parents and the children themselves are part of such advocacy for starting and continuing their education. The platform that provides the space for parents to volunteer and collaborate with school is the School Management Shura that Ministry of Education requires each school to have.

Variation in the level of parental involvement exits. Parental involvement changes across childhood and does not remain fixed over time. For example, parents’ checking of homework decreases as the child grows and parents try to find alternatives for involvement in their children's education (Skaliotis, 2009). Older children's curriculum and assignments are often beyond the knowledge level of Afghan parents given the high illiteracy rate and low level of education in Afghanistan. However, encouraging children to study and communicating the value of learning to children is possible at any stage of children's school life.

Diversity in parental involvement

How parents help their children learn better depends on their level of education, gender, socio-economic class and many other factors. Parents can contribute to their children's learning in a variety of ways. Home-based parental involvement such as ensuring that children do their homework as well as school-based parental involvement such as attending school meetings are important for academic achievement of children (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). In Afghan context, ensuring that children especially girls walk safely to school requires parents’ support through involving community.

Parents' involvement in their children's learning is also in terms of their parental style, which has been linked to student performance. Parenting style is divided into three types: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative (Baumrind, 1991). Authoritative parenting style is characterized by parental warmth, inductive discipline, non-punitive practices, consistency in child rearing, and a clear communication of interest in the day-to-day lives of children. Permissive or neglectful parenting is cited by Japanese media as the cause of recent problems in the schools, including bullying, absenteeism, and disruptive behavior in the classroom (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). Afghan parents also have different parenting styles and given the large family sizes, they may be forced at times to adopt authoritarian style where parents have high expectations from their children and expect their children to obey them unconditionally. Parents with this type of parenting style may resort to punishment but are willing to explain the reasoning behind the rules they enforce. Fathers and mothers may contribute to their children's learning differently. Some research has shown that
mother-child and father-child interaction has interesting differences which differently contribute to the children's language development. Some evidence shows that fathers use more challenging vocabulary as compared to mothers and also it was found that mothers referred more to emotions in compared to fathers who more frequently used casual explanatory language (Clark, 2009). However, in Afghan context, the use of challenging vocabulary may depend on the level of education of the parents and cannot be attributed to the parents’ sex. Given the difference in the daily experiences of mothers and fathers and their gendered roles, they may use different vocabulary and draw from different contexts in their interaction with children.

Benefits of parental involvement

In terms of learning what happens before and after school can be as important as what takes place in the class (National Education Association, 2008). Schooling is merely a part of education and therefore parents are intimately involved in 85% of education which occurs outside the school (Munn, 1993). In addition, parents can ensure to make reading materials available for their children particularly in early literacy stage. Shared reading activities with children can effectively enhance their early reading capacity. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that there is a significant positive relationship between availability of reading materials at home and the child achievement in reading (Becher, 1985).

Afghan children who start schooling at the age of seven have already passed a very important early development stage which provides the foundation for future development especially in language and cognitive domains. Parents as well as institutions in the community such as mosques play an important role in that early learning as pre-school education is not provided by the state in Afghanistan except for some kindergarten in urban settings. Parents at home and religious learning at mosque expose children to learning alphabet and acquiring religious knowledge that is important to the families.

Harvard Family Research Project conducted a meta-analysis drawing from 77 studies to determine the impact of parental involvement on K–12 students' academic achievement. The results indicated that parental involvement is associated with higher academic achievement. The achievement scores of children with highly involved parents was higher than children with less involved parents. The pattern held true not only for mainstream students but also for minority students (Jeynes, 2005).

Parental involvement reduces disruptive behaviors on the part of students. To reduce the negative outcome of disruptive behaviors, parental involvement in children's education can play an effective role (Coutts, Sheridan, Kwon & Semke, 2012).

Jeynes (2005) carried out a meta-analysis of parental involvement studies exploring various components to find out which aspects influenced student achievement. Two of the patterns that emerged from the findings were that the facets of parental involvement that required a large investment of time, such as reading and communicating with one's child, and the more subtle aspects of parental involvement, such as parental style and expectations, had a greater impact on student educational outcomes than some of the more demonstrative aspects of parental involvement, such as having household rules, and parental attendance and participation at school functions.

Factors that encourage or inhibit parents' involvement

It is well-evidenced that school's invitation and welcoming environment is very important to encourage parents' participation. The Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning (1994) reports that parents are more likely to participate in schools if they receive information from teachers about classroom activities, the progress of their children, and how to work with their children at home. A variety of factors shape parent involvement in school which includes "request for participation from school" (Shiffman, 2011, p.162) as well as the connection between parents' education and children learning is well-documented. Parents reported the importance of a welcoming and inviting school as demonstrated through positive parent-to-teacher relationships and teacher-to-child relationships and an overall attitude of
professionalism to support parent involvement at school (Charletta, 2011). Unfortunately, in Afghanistan, parents are not contacted by school, unless their children have problems and an invitation from teachers implies as if your child has broken any rule or is lagging behind in studies. In some countries, the school may designate a parent liaison or home-school coordinator to coordinate parent-teacher meetings and develop parent-involvement programs (Ballen & Moles, 1994).

According to Michigan Department of Education (2002) family participation was found to be twice predictive of students’ academic success as compared to family socio-economic class. In Afghanistan like many other contexts, parents are not a homogeneous group. However, there is an expectation that parents’ involvement should fit particular criteria which does not take into consideration the different types of engagement parents have with their children's learning and educational experience (Crozier & Davies, 2007). Parental involvement is often seen as helping child read or do homework which is the kind of support that non-literate parents cannot do. Little value is attached to other forms of involvement such as encouraging the child to study, preparing children for school, asking questions about the daily school experience and communicating the value of education to children. Dissonance can occur between the needs, values and traditions of the home and those of the school (ibid).

There are ways to overcome impediments to parents’ involvement. Organizing school so that at least one person knows each child well, keeping a "parent room" in the building, and encouraging parent-to-parent communication and events are key parts of an effective parent-involvement programs (Berla, Henderson & Kerewsky, 1989). In Afghanistan children often belong to closely knit neighborhoods where their families know each other well and have social relationships. The existing social capital can be mobilized to encourage parent to parent support in getting out of school children into school and reducing drop-out rate.

What hinders parents from engaging with schools and why schools are hard to reach for parents are also an important aspect to explore. In Afghanistan where most of the parents particularly women do not have any experience of education, schools seem intimidating and inaccessible to parents which necessitate a proactive role on the part of school to invite parents. Uneducated and semi-literate parents may feel inadequate in their capacity to help their children. Men may get discouraged from involvement in children's literacy because of the perceived gender roles and feelings of inadequacy in their own literacy (Fletcher & Daly, 2002).

The way parents view their role has a significant impact in how they engage in their children's education. Parents who believe that their role is to get children in school, which then takes over the responsibility of their education, may not actively participate in their children education at home or school (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Other barriers might be parents’ lack of confidence in their own academic competence to support their children (ibid). Parents’ beliefs and self-theories impact the experience of each individual student. Parents who believe children's success in school depends on their children’s efforts and their abilities can always be developed further may be more positive about their involvement in their children’s education (ibid). Parents’ perception of invitation of school is important. If parents perceive that the teachers and the school as a whole do not value parent involvement, this may serve as a barrier to their involvement. Parents who have the cultural capital which is generally valued by school find it easier to take part in school-based activities (ibid). For example, Afghan parents who are educated or have high social ranks in their communities may find it easier to participate in school activities compared to those from educationally and socio-economically disadvantaged families.

In Dale's term schools adopt either expert or transplant model. In the expert model the professional or in a classroom context, the teacher is the expert who holds the valued knowledge and makes all the decisions about the educational matters. In the transplant model, the professional/expert transplant their skills and expertise to the parents in order to help them become more competent to participate in the role of co-teacher or co-educator through programs such as parent classes. In both models above the power center is with the professional (here it is the teacher) who direct
parent involvement based on their decision (Dale, 1996). Given the "gendered nature of parental involvement" (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, p. 4) fathers often state that they do not have time as they are the providers for their families and have serious work commitment (Henwood & Procter, 2003). Gender roles also create barriers in terms of involvement of fathers. In Afghan context, where women are primarily located in the domestic sphere of life, they may not see helping their children to study as something that falls in their domain of work.

Overall, the research evidence above is largely from contexts other than Afghanistan mostly from the United States and some other Western countries. Lack of research evidence from South Asian countries particularly Afghanistan indicated that parental involvement has been an unexplored area. Therefore, in this thesis I would like to contribute to research evidence on parental involvement in Afghan context.
RESEARCH METHOD

The study is designed as a quantitative investigation with the aim to understand teachers' perspectives and experiences with parents' involvement in their children's education.

The quantitative method through the use of questionnaire facilitated exploring the views of a large number of respondents in a short period of time (Bryman, 2012). The questionnaire made it possible to have a wider geographic scope reaching a large sample from seven provinces located in different parts of Afghanistan. The use of questionnaire as a tool for the quantitative aspect facilitated collecting information on a set of pre-determined questions that can be collated and analyzed. To move away from dichotomous questions, I chose to use the Likert scales in some parts which allowed the researcher to build in a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of responses while still generating numbers (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). Regarding questions exploring the barriers that hinder parental involvement, teachers marked their responses on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the strongest barriers and 1 being the weakest. Likert scales in the questionnaire allowed respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on a scale which specified the intensity of their feelings (Bryman, 2012).

The respondents had the opportunity to fill out the questionnaire anonymously. The self-administered questionnaire allowed for respondents to reflect as they answered the questions on their own pace. To allow space for respondents to include their views that were not addressed by the questionnaire, blank spaces were provided.

The questionnaire had 17 questions on the role of fathers and mothers in their children's learning and teachers' perspectives about areas in which parents' involvement could be fostered. The questionnaire aimed to capture how the views of teachers about parental involvement varied based on the role of mothers and fathers in an Afghan context. Some questions were very extensive with over 15 sub-questions. Most questions had multiple answers with one blank answer where teachers could write any answer that was not included in the options. The questionnaires were translated into Dari and Pashto to make it accessible to all respondents. The translated questionnaires were pilot tested (see the questionnaire in Annex 2).

Data collection and analysis

In March, 2013, a total of 255 teachers filled out the questionnaire in seven provinces namely Nangrahar, Parwan, Laghman, Samangan, Balkh, Kandahar and Kabul. The participants of the research were current teachers, both male and female, whose age varied from 17 to 63 years. The teachers taught different subjects in schools located both in urban and rural areas.

Validity in research refers to whether the research method measures what it intends to measure (Denscombe, 2010). The integrity of the findings/conclusion from the research is the main concern of the validity (Bryman, 2012). To ensure the validity of the method, I piloted the questionnaire and had a couple of colleagues involved in education and research to comment on the tool.

Whether the research tools can be replicated and whether they produce the same results repeatedly under similar conditions is called reliability (Denscombe, 2010). To ensure reliability, I piloted the test tools and also did the research in two schools both in Dari and Pashto.

A database for processing the responses was developed. The responses were entered into the database provincially and the questions which were not responded to, were marked with letter x. After cleaning the data, it was collated and percentage for each response was calculated. After analyzing the data as a whole, the data was analyzed by two distinct variables namely sex (male versus female teachers) and location where the teachers taught (village versus city). The exercise generated a nuanced picture of the responses based on teachers’ sex and location of school where they taught. Some of the collated
responses were converted into tables and graphs to illustrate the trends and compare and contrast the responses.

Limitations

The research took place during winter time and most of the schools in the cold climate part of the country were closed. Therefore, I conducted the research largely in the three warm provinces where schools were open. In order to do the questionnaire in the cold provinces, the researcher had to wait until teachers started coming to school in order to administer the exam for students who were conditionally passed. In Nangrahar, the researcher was not able to go to the districts due to security concerns and inability to travel alone. However, the teachers attending the TTC were from different districts and their experience was from village settings. Some of the responses from the participants were overwhelmingly positive with regard to parental involvement, thus, I have been doubtful about the authenticity. Therefore, I have taken the responses on face value without investigating them further.

Ethical Problems

During administering the questionnaire, the researcher ensured that the information about the respondents remain anonymous. To reduce this possibility of teachers’ giving the socially desirable responses, the researcher explained the purpose of the research clearly and the benefits of the research for the future. She also clearly explained that the identity of the respondents will remain anonymous and the research will not have any implications personally for the respondents. Also it was clarified that the respondents have the right to say no or withdraw from the research when they want to do so (Bryman, 2012). Some teachers asked how the research would impact their school and the teachers; the researcher avoided giving any promise. Researcher should avoid “any negative after-effect” which can undermine the potential for future research (de Guchteniere, no date). Furthermore, while administering the questionnaire in the TTC classes, it was also realized that the questionnaire was very long with almost 6 pages which took the time away from the teaching. Therefore, the researcher sought permission from the faculty members and the participants.
FINDINGs

Participating teachers’ profile

A total of 255 teachers were surveyed in seven provinces. The group of the respondents was very diverse with 53 % speaking Pashto and 46% Dari. Participation from other ethnic groups was negligible with one respondent from Pashae and one Turkmen ethnic group. The respondents ranged in age from 17 to 63 years old with an average age of 38 years and the mode of 25 years of age (most of the respondents age is 25). In addition, 39% of the respondents were women and the60% were men. In terms of educational background 54% of the respondents were either TTC students or TTC graduates and 23% and 19% were university graduates and those who had completed secondary levels respectively. The remaining 4% did not identify their level of education. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (75 %) had attended the in-service workshops offered by the Ministry of Education, Teacher Education Directorate. Forty-four percent of the respondents lived in villages and the rest were from cities. The level of experience ranged from 1 to 43 years with most of the respondents having 2 years of experience. Also there was sufficient representation of the urban and rural schools where the respondents taught as 43 % of the teachers taught in schools that were located in the villages.

Major findings

Below are the major findings of the research.

Importance of parents’ involvement

- An overwhelming majority (98 %) of 255 teachers believed that parental involvement in their children’s education is very important.
- A vast majority of teachers (97 %) have responded positively to the question whether they involve family members in their children’s education. In terms of who teachers involve in the children’s education the most, the highest number of teachers (38%) have selected fathers and 32% have selected both fathers and mothers whereas only 12% of the teachers’ response was mothers. However, female teachers selected fathers and the option of both fathers and mothers at the same rate (34%). Analyzing the data by male and female teachers separately, the rate of involvement of mothers is the same (12 %).
- In terms of boys and girls, 85 % of teachers were of the view that parents’ involvement in both girls and boys’ education is important.
- In response to the question about whose (fathers’ or mothers’) involvement was more important, 59% of the respondents were of the view that the participation of fathers and mothers are equally important in their children’s education. However, 20% of the teachers were of the view that fathers’ involvement is more important than that of mothers with 17% who thought it is the other way round.
- Ninety-six percent of the teachers were of the view that they can involve family members in the children’s education.
- In terms of which level of education the parents’ involvement is more important, 45% of the responses are for all the levels and 38% are of the view that it is in grade 1-3. The higher the grade, the lesser number of teachers consider parental involvement important.

Figure 1: The figure illustrates at which level parents’ involvement is very important.
Ways to communicate parents

School Shuras and the use of telephones was the most frequent response for what the best way to contact parents was. However, a gender-segregated analysis of the data revealed that female teachers think that parents can be informed through telephone and Shuras equally well. Most of the male teachers selected contacting parents through Shura and the second selected response was through phones.

Figure 2: The figure shows teachers’ response on how to contact parents

Reasons for which teachers contact parents

- The majority of the teachers contact parents when the student is absent for many days.
- The second most selected reason for which teachers contact parents is the students’ behavioral problems.
- The third most selected reason for teachers to contact parents is problem with the students’ performance
- The least selected reason for teachers to contact parents is when the child does well.
Figure 3: The table below illustrates for which reason teachers contact parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for parents’ lack of involvement in their children’s education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The findings illustrate that lack of time is an important barrier for both mothers and fathers in getting involved in their children’s learning. However, the percentage of teachers that viewed lack of interest and confidence as well as the distance to school as a strong barrier for mothers was consistently higher compared to fathers. Low level of education and illiteracy was rated as the strongest barrier for fathers among all other barriers (34%) whereas lack of tradition for mothers to be involved in education was selected the most as the strongest barrier for mothers. Some differences in the female versus male teachers’ views existed. Female teachers viewed lack of education and illiteracy as the strongest barriers to the mothers’ and fathers’ involvement in their children education with 46% and 40% respectively. The highest selected response by male teachers as barriers for fathers in their children’s education is lack of the tradition of fathers’ involvement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instituting parents and teachers quarterly meetings**

Of those who responded, 86% think it is effective to have a policy that institutes parent-teacher quarterly meetings and 80% think that the schools and teachers can manage conducting meetings with parents effectively. A vast majority of teachers 77% consider quarterly meeting between teachers and school possible with only 8% who think it is not possible. An overwhelming 77% of the teachers thought that it is possible to have quarterly meetings with parents.

**Benefits of quarterly meetings with parents**

In terms of benefits of quarterly meetings and communication between teachers and parents, the most important benefit is the awareness of parents of their children’s attendance and participation in class activities (30%). The second most important benefit for establishing contact between parents and teachers was for teachers to know why children are absent and lag behind in different aspects of their lessons (22%). However, only 13% of teachers considered gaining information about students’ families’ economic and educational level as an important benefit of maintaining contact with parents.
Reasons for parents not to be able to participate in quarterly meetings

The reason selected the most for the quarterly meetings not to take place was the one on young women’s inability to come to school which was selected by 20% of the teachers. The reasons that were selected by 18% and 17% of the teachers was teachers having many students which is challenging for them to meet and also the norm of gender segregation where male teachers may not be able to invite mothers and female teachers may not be able to meet fathers. Insufficient time and lack of space in the school to have a meeting with parents were selected by the equal number of parents (16%). Informing parents were selected the least (13%) as a reason for parents’ inability to attend meetings.

Teachers’ views about areas of involvement

Involvement of parents outside home

In response to the question about who should be involved in children’s education in areas outside home such as school or community, most of the teachers selected fathers.

Of 255 teachers, 46% of the teachers believed that keeping in contact with school falls within the responsibility of fathers whereas 17% thought that it is the role of the mothers with an equal number being of the view that it is a role for both fathers and mothers. Sixty-two per cent of male teachers believe that fathers should maintain contact with schools and only 4% are of the view that mothers should be contacted by school. Female teachers’ response for who the school should contact shows a different picture with mothers being selected by most of the teachers (37%) where as fathers only 21% and all family members by 20%. The data was analyzed by urban and rural variable, the rate for maintaining regular contact with mothers dropped to less than 2% for those teachers who live in rural part of the country.

Figure 4: Teachers’ responses regarding maintaining contact with parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who should the school maintain contact with?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, participation in School Management Shura is viewed as a fathers’ role by teachers living in rural areas with 63% of teachers selecting fathers. Mothers were selected by less than 2% of the teachers living in rural areas to take part in the Shuras. However, analyzing data by sex, more female teachers think involvement in Shuras falls within mothers’ role compared to the role of male teachers.

Figure 5: Teachers’ responses about participation in Shuras
Fathers compared to mothers were selected by a very high number of teachers in areas such as accompanying the child to school and preventing the child to get into bullying. Similarly, all family members are seen to play a role in accompanying the child to school and ensuring that the child does not get into bullying.

**Parents’ role in making important decisions**

Boys’ drop-out: Most of the teachers (46%) were of the view that reducing drop-out among boys falls within the role of fathers. However, mothers were selected only by 9%.

Figure 6: The figures below illustrate difference in the views of male and female teachers in reducing boys’ and girls’ drop-out

Girls’ drop-out: Male and female teachers’ views varied significantly with regard to who has a significant role in reducing girls’ drop-out. Mothers were selected the most by female teachers who were of the view that reducing the drop-out for girls is mothers’ role.

Figure 7: Male and female teachers’ views about parents’ role in girls’ drop-out
Of the teachers (30%) were of the view that fathers make important decisions such as avoiding marriage of children before completion of school. All family members and mothers were also selected by a large group of respondents.

**Parents’ role in terms of academic support and improving attendance**

Regarding areas that involve instilling high aspirations for learning and providing academic support, teachers were largely of the view that these are roles for all family members and fathers. Forty percent of teachers were of the view that fathers should read and provide reading materials for children. The highest number of the teachers believed that all family members should take part in helping children to study in the three months of break and help children do homework. Twenty-Six per cent of the participants selected fathers more as compared to mothers (17%) in terms of encouraging children to study in the 3 months of the school break.

All family members were selected by most of the teachers (34%) to promote children’s attendance and reduce absenteeism. The second and third largest number of teachers selected fathers (27%) and mothers (21%) respectively to promote attendance and reduce absenteeism of their children.

**At-home support**

Most of the teachers (67%) were of the view that helping children to dress properly and be clean and tidy falls within the responsibility of the mothers and similarly 72% of the respondents viewed making sure children eat before they go to school or take food with them was mothers’ role. Mothers were also selected more for other roles such as encouraging children to study at home and asking children about how their school day was. However, an equal number of teachers were of the view that providing a quiet place for children to do homework is the role of all family members and equally of the mothers and fathers.

**Summary of the results**

1) What are teachers’ experiences and views about parental involvement in children’s learning?

Teachers viewed parental involvement very important in their students’ education and the majority of the teachers have stated that they involve parents. Most of the teachers consider parental involvement very important in all grade levels, however, comparing the different levels; teachers think that parental involvement is more important in the early primary grades (grade 1-3). Most of the teachers’ responses indicated that they involve largely fathers. Teachers were of the view that the best way to contact parents is through phone or School Management Shuras. According to the teachers’ experience, the reasons for which they mostly contact parents are absence of students for many days, as well as problems with students’ behavior and performance.
teachers are of the view that lack of time is a barrier for parental involvement in children’s learning. Low level of education and illiteracy were considered as the strongest barrier for fathers among all other barriers whereas lack of tradition for mothers’ involvement in education was selected the most as the strongest barrier for mothers.

2) What do teachers think about communication with parents?
   The majority of teachers considered that it is effective to institute quarterly meetings with parents. They were also of the view that schools and teachers are able to manage quarterly meetings with parents in order to establish communication between school and home with regard to students’ learning.
   In terms of benefits of quarterly meetings and communication between teachers and parents, awareness of parents of their children’s attendance and their participation in-class activities was considered as an important benefit which was the most selected response by teachers. The least selected benefit of maintaining contact with parents was gaining information about student families’ economic and educational level. The challenges teachers perceived in having parents’ participation in the quarterly meetings were having a large number of students. However, for women particularly young mothers, the norm around gender segregation was viewed as a challenge that can reduce mothers’ participation in parents’ and teachers’ regular meetings.

3) Do teachers’ view differ when it comes to mothers’ and fathers’ involvement? How?
   Overall, teachers considered parental support outside home mainly fathers’ role. However, in areas such as maintaining contact with schools, the views of female teachers as opposed to male teachers and teachers teaching in rural part of the country differed. As the most frequent response by female teachers was that maintaining contact with school is mothers’ role. However, in terms of participation in SMS, male and female as well as teachers from rural or urban areas selected fathers the most to take part in the in the SMS. Overall, fathers were considered to play an important role in reducing drop-out for boys and girls. However, female teachers were of the view that mothers play an important role in reducing girls’ drop-out. At home support and care for children which enable children to learn effectively was viewed to be largely mothers’ role.
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In Afghanistan families are the very units that provide physical, socio-emotional, economic and moral support to their children. Children have two primary educators that are their parents and their teachers (DCSF, 2008). Since education starts at home, parents are the first and most influential teachers for their children. Afghan teachers were well aware of the importance of parental involvement in their children’s education as evidenced by the findings of this study where a vast majority (98%) of 255 teachers considered parental involvement very important. It is well documented that “the more intensely parents are involved, the more beneficial the achievement effects” (Cotton & Wikeland, 2001). Research has demonstrated that parents of high-achieving children set high standards of achievement for their children compared with the parents of low-achieving students (Michigan Department of Education, 2002). The data shows that a vast majority of the teachers (97%) involve family members in their children’s education. The findings also revealed that teachers are of the view that parents’ involvement is important at all levels but particularly in early grades (grade 1-3). A sustained relationship between teachers and schools provides the platform for sharing quality information and guidance from school which can help in areas such as improved parenting practices that promote academic success, doing homework, managing time, seeking support from peers and siblings, continuously dialoguing with their children about the importance of education. Whereas there is no evidence that Afghan teachers involve parents in their children’s learning, the finding above may imply that teachers would like to involve parents in children’s learning. The quantitative method used in the study led to some important findings stated above. Whereas the questionnaire facilitated the collection of information on a number of standard questions, however, it did not provide sufficient space for the participating teachers to express their views outside the scope of the questionnaire. A qualitative approach with tools such as semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions would have allowed the teachers more leeway to share their experiences, views and perspectives on the role of parental involvement in children’s education. The participants could have described their views more richly and in a well-rounded manner reflecting the complexity of their experiences. Therefore, a qualitative approach would have resulted in more creative and critical findings that could be partly similar and partly different but surely more comprehensive and richer from what has been found through this study.

Fathers and mothers are differently involved in their children's learning

Child learning is increasingly seen as a “joint responsibility of schools and parents” (Skaliotis, 2009, p. 976). Factors such as parents’ beliefs about what is important and permissible for them to do, the extent to which they believe they can have a positive influence on their children’s education and also their perception about whether or not their children’s school want them to get involved also impact the level of parents and school relationships (Michigan Department of Education, 2002). An important research finding is that most teachers were of the view that parental involvement is important at all levels of school. Comparing among different levels, teachers have selected lower primary level (grade 1-3), a stage where parents’ involvement is more important. According to the findings teachers were of the view that encouraging children to study, eating before leaving for school and dressing properly for school are part of mothers’ role which relates to the gender-based division of responsibilities with women responsibilities are largely domestic. Helping children develop skills that they gradually learn to take care of their basic needs and encouraging them to study is part of responsive and supportive parenting skills. The interaction between parenting skills and children’s learning in school and the conversation that parents have with their children is valuable for the child’s academic achievement (General Teaching Council for England, 2006). Epstein et al. (2002) consider that school and families relations should encompass enhancing parenting and child-rearing skills and understanding child and adolescent development at family level in order to assist families with setting home conditions that support children at each age and grade level. Given the overstretched capacity of Afghan schools, it is not realistic to expect that schools
enhance parenting skills at family level. In Afghanistan, there are no state-supported programs that can help parents strengthen their parenting skills and effectively support their children’s learning at home. Programs to promote effective parenting are supported by governments in other parts of the world such as Bangladesh and India. There is an increased recognition in India and Bangladesh that parents need assistance to strengthen their role in nurturing their children, promoting optimal development and also preventing abuse and discrimination of their children. The governments in both countries provide support to parenting education which is limited to the early childhood age (Jabeen & Karkara, 2005).

Most teachers involve fathers and the second most selected response by teachers was that they involve both fathers and mothers in their children’s education. In terms of whose involvement is more important, teachers (59 %) consider that involvement of both parents is very important. The finding that both male and female teachers involve mothers at the same low rate (around 12 %) can be due to a number of reasons. First women’s lack of mobility particularly in rural part of the country can be an important reason. Out of 179,000 teachers in Afghanistan, only a third of them (29 %) are women with concentration in the urban areas and provincial capitals (MoE, 2012). Given the predominantly male teaching force in Afghanistan, communication of male teachers with mothers could be a challenge due to the cultural restrictions on men and women’s interaction. However, teachers’ views about who should they maintain contact with differs. The finding that most of the female teachers selected mothers and male teachers selected fathers the most for maintaining contact with, is indicative of the fact that communication between girls’ schools and mothers is well possible and female teachers understand the value of mothers’ involvement. Parental involvement is important to improve girls’ enrollment and retention in schools. Only 39% of student population in Afghanistan is girls with the fewer girls in the higher grades (MoE, 2010). According to HRRAC (2007) dropout among females is very high because of parents’ unwillingness to allow their daughters to be taught in mixed schools or by male teachers beyond a certain age mostly likely around 11 years old. This links to another finding of the research that most of the female teachers were of the view that mothers can reduce the girls’ drop-out which can be attributed to the advocacy role of mothers for their daughters’ education within the extended family context.

One of the finding of this study is that reading for children and providing reading materials outside school textbooks largely falls within fathers’ role. Exposing children to cognitively stimulating activities and materials such as books at home which can help them practice language and reading can be important for children’s learning at school. However, in Afghanistan access to books is limited for parents and even non-existent in rural areas. Afghan parents can use the environment at home with the local materials available to provide cognitively and socially stimulating experiences to their children. Mostly living in extended families, parents and grandparents provide children with socially rich interactive opportunities and conversations in a variety of situations.

**Extended family members’ involvement in child’s learning**

Epstein model highlights “family, school and community as overlapping spheres of influence” (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, p.38). Family involvement is indispensable for children’s academic success and building “cross-context reinforcement” (Weiss et al. 2009, p.16). Teachers consider a number of supports part of the role for all family members. For example, one important finding of the study is that communicating high academic expectations to their children was viewed largely as all family members’ role with fathers being as the second most selected response. Another important finding is that teachers think that all family members should be involved in reducing children’s absenteeism and taking part in helping children to study in the three months of break and do homework. The option of “all family members” was also selected the most for providing a quiet place for children to do their homework. Afghan families are largely extended with grandparents, uncles and aunts of the child living along with the nuclear family of the child. The collectivist nature of Afghan society encourages a notion of...
interdependent self rather than independent self (Karlsson & Mansory, 2007). Parents often have many children. Given the large size of Afghan families, older siblings and younger uncles and aunts can set an example for school going children in terms of performance in the family. “A child is hardly ever an only child in Afghan family but has many other children around” (Karlsson & Mansory, p. 140, 2007). Therefore, older siblings, cousins, uncles and aunts can provide the academic support and guidance for the children in the family and can also model effective learning behaviors which are particularly important if parents are non-literate. Grandparents have a lot of authority in the families especially the grandfather who is the center of authority (ibid). In Afghan context, family members gain status as they age. Therefore, mobilizing grandparents in favor of children’s education particularly girls’ retention is very important. However, it is also important to mention that some Afghan grandparents can have patriarchal attitudes giving preference to the boys’ education over that of girls. The findings illustrate that the Afghan extended family structures allows parents, particularly non literate ones, to seek support for their learning from other family members who are more educated.

**Participation at community and school level**

Ministry of Education requires all schools to have an active School Management Shura. MoE continuously strives to strengthen SMS on their roles and responsibilities. Through Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP), the MoE has developed a manual for the establishment of SMS. As part of Global Partnership for Education (GPE), MoE intended to include child-friendly teaching and learning environments, participatory approaches and protection mechanisms in and around the schools as well as outreach strategies to out-of-school children and specifically girls (MoE, 2011). However, SMSs are largely involved in implementing the school grants that are provided by World Bank and are largely used for improving infrastructure in schools (MoE, 2012). The SMSs need additional capacity building to extend their role to improve the students’ in-class learning experience. The findings of the data demonstrate that teachers consider support to children at settings outside home which include the School Management Shuras, primarily the role of fathers. These views are very prevalent among male teachers and teachers who live in rural areas. An inter-play between the gendered roles of parents at home; school and community level exists. Given the mobility of Afghan fathers and their social network at the village and community level, fathers are well positioned to support their children’s education and build linkages with other institutions at the community level. Fathers enjoy a better sense of self-efficacy and may view their participation in support of their children’s education more pronounced in the construction of their roles to support their children’s learning. A number of teachers have stated that the school management through Imam (religious leader) in the mosque can contact parents or disseminate information about schools to the community. The composition of SMS includes the religious leader as a member. Likewise, most female teachers indicate they can involve fathers in SMS.

An important finding is that parents’ involvement in improving their children’s attendance and reducing absenteeism is the most important benefit of parent-teacher quarterly meetings. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Save the Children support schools to set up student councils and Parent, Teachers and Students’ Associations; PT(S)As which work together to overcome teacher shortages and to reduce absenteeism through following up on students who stop attending school. However, these groups are faced with challenges of sustainability and gender equity. Some student groups still lacked the momentum to meet independently without external support by an NGO (Save the Children, 2008). Epstein model for parental involvement includes decision making as one of the equally important component of parental involvement, which include families in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PT(S)As, school councils, committees, and other structures for parents’ participation (2002).

In Afghanistan, parental decisions that are taken at family level are at times more critical to the children’s access to and retention at school. Teachers can involve fathers who are
perceived to have an important role in making these decisions so that enable the children to start and continue their education. According to the evidence of this study, teachers consider fathers an important ally in reducing boys’ drop-out. Fathers were selected by most teachers to play an important role in decisions that may lead to school drop-out such as avoiding marriage of children before completion of school. Girls constitute 38% of the school population in Afghanistan (MoE, 2011). Given the low level of girls’ enrollment in Afghanistan, Afghan schools need to develop outreach mechanisms that create awareness among parents on the importance of girls’ education, communicate with supportive parents to serve as advocate for girls’ education and solicit community’s support to identify female teachers or encourage older women whose mobility is not as restricted as younger ones to come to school and be part of supportive environment for girls (Solotaroffi, Hashimi & Olesen, 2010). Achievements of student bodies such as Students’ Councils, the school students’ committee and PTAs supported by Save the Children included reduction of the number of permanently absent students by following up individual cases and speaking to parents directly, recruitment of new teachers, reduction of corporal punishment in schools (Peterson, 2010).

**Effective home-school Communication**

The definition of family involvement has to be co-constructed in a way that is informed by the Afghan parents’ particularly mothers’ experiences, capacities and aspirations. Evidence illustrates that three psychological constructs are conducive to parental involvement. The first and most important one is how parents construct their role and if they believe that he/she should be involved in their children’s education. The second one is the sense of self-efficacy which is how much parents think that they are capable of involving in and supporting their children’s education and the last one, the strongest among all, is invitation and opportunities by schools for parents’ involvement (Hoover Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Exploring Afghan teachers’ views about how they see parents’ role is relevant to creating opportunities by schools to involve parents. Teachers are largely of the view that a policy that institute quarterly meetings between parents and teachers is well possible. The SMS regular meetings do not provide the space for communication between individual students’ parents and the teachers to discuss students’ learning and other needs. The SMS members are a select group of people and they work on specific agenda on overall school improvement.

However, the evidence of this study highlights that the reason for which teachers contact parents are mostly negative ones where teachers communicate problems with child behaviors and performance. Comparatively, good performance is the reason selected by the fewest number of teachers as a reason for contacting parents. It can be inferred that parents may expect that any communication from school maybe about some problems that their children have. The content of communication between teachers and parents should be mutually determined and empower parents to engage in a meaningful manner in supporting their children’s education and addressing their challenges. A meaningful parent-teacher dialogue is effective for aligning efforts at school and family levels. A two-pronged strategy for improving school and parents’ partnership address the challenge of lack of parental involvement in children’s school experience. The first part deals with “enhancing school capacities for inviting parental involvement which include invitation from teachers and teachers’ responsiveness to life-context issues” (Hoover Dempsey et al. 2005, p. 116), creating a welcoming climate, empowering teachers to make parental involvement “a routine part of staff thinking and planning” (ibid), development of school plan that is responsive to the teachers, parents and community needs, learning about parents’ perspectives and goals for their children’s learning and use of existing parent-teacher-family structures to strengthen involvement. The second part deals with strategies school may use to strengthen parents’ capacities to be effectively engaged in their children’s education. Examples include communicating with parents that they have an important role in their children’s education, giving parents relevant and specific information on what they can do, the effect of their involvement on children’s learning, feedback sessions and networking among parents and teachers (Hoover
Maintaining contact with the families in order to know the families economic and educational background was the benefit chosen by the least number of teachers. The finding reflects a lack of an ecological understanding on the part of teachers and schools that children are not raised in a vacuum and are embedded in the multiple contexts of family, community and larger society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

School as an institution also has embedded perceptions about the roles of parents. Inbuilt mechanisms in school such as School Management Shuras (SMS), Parents’ committee and activities such as School Welcome Day are some of the ways that school communicates to the parents and communities about the value it places on parents’ involvement. According to Oxfam (2011), poverty, insecurity, early and forced marriages and harassment of girls on their way to and from school are some of the most important obstacles to girls’ education in Afghanistan. Parents have a determining role in making these decisions and Shuras engagement with parents can influence their decision. Schools can use “existing parent-teacher-family structures to enhance involvement” and “offer full range of involvement opportunities” (Hoover Dempsey et al., 2005, p.118). These opportunities include school-first-day celebration, parents’ workshop, interactive meetings and networking opportunities to facilitate school and parents’ interaction. Providing academic support such as helping a child to read in early grades is also a role that teachers’ view fathers could do. In addition, given the social network of fathers, they are well able to garner support for the school in the community. Examples include schools successful mobilization of resources for building boundary walls for schools as well as equipping schools with better water and sanitation facilities (Solotaroffi, Hashimi & Olesen, 2010).

The need for a policy on family and school partnership

The mutual benefits of family and school partnership necessitate a comprehensive policy that engages parents’ involvement across key learning contexts in order to promote continuity of learning and “surround children with linked network of supports” (Weiss et al., 2009, p. 6). Given the powerful role of Afghan families in determining the future educational trajectories of their children, parents are an important part of the connected systems of learning supports. “Research shows that children learn everywhere - not just in school” (ibid, p. 4). Coutts et al. (2012) points out that when parents feel that schools are open to and willing to support their involvement, they are more likely to participate. One important influence on parents’ feeling welcome in their children's school is teachers' specific invitations to become involved. Organizations such as Save the Children support schools to establish PTAs and Student councils or in some cases the organization makes PTAs more active and more inclusive by encouraging them to include mothers and student representatives. They also support school in organizing “school Welcome day” which is an open day for parents to come to school. These examples can serve as models for the Ministry of Education’s development of its policies and practices. Training and follow up support on child rights is provided to these school-based mechanisms, which helped student councils, for example, to identify child rights abuses and work towards reducing them in their schools. Individuals working in these groups frequently reported increased self confidence, improved discipline and a greater awareness of the rights of their fellow students (Save the Children, 2008). A systemic and sustained parent-teacher dialogue is the core to forging a partnership between family and school. The evidence generated in this research reflects that teachers consider parent involvement important and are of the view that communication with parents is possible to be instituted. Further research on different modalities, impact of parental involvement and identifying factors that promote or hinder such a meaningful partnership between schools and families is required.
References


Ministry of Education (2012c). *Social Mobilization through EQUIP. Quality Improvement Program*. Kabul


Table 1: Teachers’ views about support to children in out of home setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of work</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>No one</th>
<th>Both Mother &amp; Father</th>
<th>Father &amp; Brother</th>
<th>Mother &amp; Sister</th>
<th>No response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain regular contact with the teacher;</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in the school Shura</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accompany the child to school</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure children do not get into bullying or are bullied or harassed on the way to school</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Teachers’ views about important decision about children’s education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of work</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>No one</th>
<th>Both Mother &amp; Father</th>
<th>Father &amp; Brother</th>
<th>Mother &amp; Sister</th>
<th>No response</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the possibility of boy's drop-out</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the possibility of girls' drop-out</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid any decision about their children, particularly girls, marriage before they complete school to take to school with them</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3: Teachers’ views about academic support to children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of work</th>
<th>Mother %</th>
<th>Father %</th>
<th>All %</th>
<th>Both %</th>
<th>Father &amp; Mother %</th>
<th>Father &amp; Brothers %</th>
<th>Sisters %</th>
<th>No response %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set high expectations for studying (expect their children to do well) and communicate these expectations to the children</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read to younger children and provide a variety of reading materials in the home</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with or check homework</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage children to study in the 3 months of school break</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: Teachers’ view about at-home support for children’s learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of work</th>
<th>Mother %</th>
<th>Father %</th>
<th>All %</th>
<th>No one %</th>
<th>Both %</th>
<th>Father &amp; Mother %</th>
<th>Father &amp; Brothers %</th>
<th>Mother &amp; Sister (MS) %</th>
<th>No response %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage children to study at home</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a quiet place for children to do homework;</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help children dress properly and be clean and tidy for school and increasingly have children take responsibility as they get older</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask children about how their school day was and what they learned</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure children eat before they go to school or have food</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5: Teachers’ views about the importance of fathers’ and mothers’ role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Fathers’ and mothers’ involvement is equally important in their children's education.</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Mothers’ involvement is more important than the fathers' involvement in children's education.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Fathers’ involvement is more important in children’s education than that of mothers</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Neither fathers' nor mothers' involvement is important.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>250</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6: Barriers to parents’ involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liker scale</th>
<th>Lack of time</th>
<th>b) Low level of education and illiteracy</th>
<th>c) The tradition of fathers/mothers’ involvement does not exist</th>
<th>d) The perception that father's/mothers' involvement in education is not his role.</th>
<th>e) School is far away from homes</th>
<th>f) Lack of interest</th>
<th>g) Lack of confidence to take part in children's education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father %</td>
<td>Mother %</td>
<td>Father %</td>
<td>Mother %</td>
<td>Father %</td>
<td>Mother %</td>
<td>Father %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5= Most important</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex II

Teachers' Questionnaire

Teacher’s Profile

Age………… Province

Mother tongue: -----------------

Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐

Are you living in rural or urban areas?,

Have you attended any in-service training? If yes, how many

Education: (Please select one option based on your highest level of education)

Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Teacher Training Institute ☐ University ☐

Islamic Education (Madrasa) ☐ other please specify ----------------- ☐

Teaching Experience:

Years of teaching:…………. (in years)

Teaching Subjects:

  Natural Science ☐ Math ☐ Social Science ☐ Islamic ☐ Language ☐

Others ☐

Teaching Class: Boys ☐ Girls ☐ Mixed ☐

Teaching Level/Grade: Primary ☐ Secondary ☐

Location of the Schools: Rural ☐ Urban ☐

Questions

1) Below are some statements about parents’ involvement in children's education. Please put a tick mark about who should be responsible. See the example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of work</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Sister</th>
<th>Brother</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>No one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) maintain regular contact with the teacher;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Reduce the possibility of boy’s drop out.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>Reduce the possibility of girls’ drop-out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td>Participate in the school shura</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e)</td>
<td>Encourage children to study at home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f)</td>
<td>Set high expectations for studying and communicate these expectations to the children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g)</td>
<td>Read to younger children and provide a variety of reading materials in the home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h)</td>
<td>Accompany the child to school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>i)</td>
<td>Provide a quiet place for children to do homework:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j)</td>
<td>Help with or check homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k)</td>
<td>Encourage children to participate in learning activities when school is not in session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l)</td>
<td>Help children dress properly and be clean and tidy for school and get prepared.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m)</td>
<td>Promote school attendance and discourage absenteeism.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n)</td>
<td>Ask children about how their school day was and what they learned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o)</td>
<td>Ensure children do not get into bullying or are bullied or harassed on the way to school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p)</td>
<td>Make sure children eat before they go to school or have food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q)</td>
<td>Avoid any decision about their children (particularly girls) marriage before they complete school to take to school with them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. What are the most important benefits of having quarterly meetings with parents of individual students?
   a) Parents get aware of the regularity of their children’s attendance and participation in class activities.
   b) Parents can identify the problems of their children (behavior & performance)
   c) Parents get aware of the well performance, or their children’s areas of strengths
   d) Teachers can find out the reasons for low performance or absentees of the students from the parents
   e) Teacher can obtain information about the economic and education status of their students’ families.

3. Is it important to involve parents in their children's education?
   Yes □  b) No □

4. If Yes, at which level is it the most important
   a) Grade 1-3 (lower primary)  b) Grade 4-6 (upper primary)  c) Grade 7-9 (lower secondary)
   d) Grade 10-12 (upper secondary)  e) All of the above  f) None of the above

5. Please select one of the statements with which you agree and circle the letter.
   a) Fathers' and mothers' involvement is equally important in their children's education.
   b) Mothers' involvement is more important than the fathers' involvement in children's education.
   c) Fathers' involvement is more important in children's education than that of mothers
   d) Neither fathers' nor mothers' involvement is important.

6. Please read the statements and put a tick mark to the answer that you agree
a) Parents' (Fathers’ and mothers’) involvement is equally important in girls' and boys' education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>I do not know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) Mothers' involvement is more important in girls' education than fathers'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>I do not know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c) Fathers’ involvement is more important in boys' education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>I do not know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d) Mothers' involvement is more important in boys' education than that of fathers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>I do not know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e) Fathers' involvement is more important in girls' education than that of mothers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>I do not know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7) Do you involve family members in their children's education?
   Yes ☐  b) No ☐

8) If yes, who do you involve more?
   a) Mothers  b) Fathers  c) grandfather  d) grandmother  e) older siblings  f) both father and mothers  g) primary guardian

9. Please circle the answer that you agree with. You can circle more than one answer
   I contact parents when
   a) There is a problem with the child's behavior
   b) When there is a problem with the child's performance
c) When the child has done very well.
d) When the child is absent for many days
e) When the child does not do his/her homework
f) When the child needs help
g) I regularly contact parents to communicate to them about their children's performance
i) I do not contact parents at all.

10. What is the best way to communicate with parents?
a) Calling parents for meeting in school
b) Sending letters to families
c) Visiting the parents
d) Inviting parents to the meeting
e) getting in contact through the school Shura
f) None of these
g) All types

Please add if there is any other way

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

11) Which of the following is a barrier to fathers' involvement? Please rank the least important barrier as 1 and the most important barrier as 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Lack of time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Low level of education and illiteracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. The tradition of fathers involvement does not exist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. The perception that father's involvement in education is not his role.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. School is far away from homes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. It is hard to contact fathers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Fathers’ lack of confidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Add any other reason</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. Which of the following is a barrier to mothers' involvement? Please rank the least important barrier as 1 and the most important barrier as 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Lack of time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Low level of education and illiteracy
C. The tradition of mothers' involvement does not exist
D. The perception that mother's involvement in education is not her role.
E. School is away from homes
F. It is hard to contact mothers
G. Mother's lack of confidence
H. Mothers are often not allowed to come to school
Add any other reason

13) Do you think it is possible to have a policy which can institute parents-teacher Quarterly meeting?
   a) Yes ☐  b) No ☐

14) If yes, can the school and teachers manage and organize meetings with parents?
   b) Yes ☐  b) No ☐

   ) If no, why?
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

15) Do you personally think it is possible for you to have Quarterly communication/meeting with parents of individual students?
   a) Yes  b) No

16) What are the most critical challenges for having quarterly meetings with parents of individual students? You can choose only two or three.
a) Insufficient time
b) Mothers especially young women cannot come to school
c) It is difficult to inform parents
d) There is not enough space in schools to have joint meetings with parents
e) It is impossible as each teacher has many students and she/he can not manage meeting so many parents
f) Cultural reasons. A male teacher can not meet mother and a female teacher may not be able to meet a father. However, meetings with mothers and female teachers and fathers and male teachers are possible.

16 Do you have any additional idea/comment about the last question?

Dear Razia,
I have read your final thesis and before you can get Pass you should correct two things:
On page 24 you have the following quotation: "A child is hardly even an only child in Afghan family but has many other children around" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005 cited by Karlsson & Mansory, 2007). It is not from Hofstede & Hofstede but directly from Karlsson & Mansory, 2007, p. 140. And it should be 'ever' not 'even'
As per Thesis Guide there should not be line space between paragraphs but indent, 1 cm.
I have understood from your communication with Ann-Britt that there seems to be some problem with space between words and after full stops when the text is sent. I have corrected when I have seen such palces and I hope it will not occur again.
Best regards,
Pia