Experiences, Perspectives and Knowledge of Parents of Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Three Inclusive Education Schools in Bhutan

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Dedication

To

my parents, my wife Ugyen, son Tobden, daughter Tshering, my siblings and all other

family members for their unwavering support

throughout my PhD journey. I also dedicate this work to every child with SEN and

their parents in Bhutan and beyond.

Candidate Certification

I hereby certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Acknowledgements

how hard it was for you all to share information about your child's education in the schools.

Finally, I thank each and every individual whom I have not named here but in one way or other provided me with generous support whenever requested. Your support is appreciated. Thank you.

Abstract

This qualitative study on parents' experiences, perspectives and knowledge of inclusive education (IE) of their children with SEN[1] in three schools in Bhutan is first of its kind in the Bhutanese context. Inclusive education in Bhutan, initiated in 2001–2002, is still in the developing stage. This thesis is presented as a thesis by publication and comprises five papers that address five different themes as reported by parents of their experiences, perspectives and knowledge of the IE of their children. Twenty-six parents (13 fathers and 13 mothers) of children with SEN who attend three public inclusive education schools in different regions (urban, semi-urban and rural) of Bhutan participated in the study. The qualitative data gathering method of in-depth interview was used to collect data from the parents. Two forms of data analysis techniques were used, namely, thematic coding analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and a text-mining software, Leximancer (Smith, 2000).

The first chapter is an introduction to the thesis. It provides a description of the Bhutanese geographical setting, a brief history of the Bhutanese education system and the information on the move towards educating for Gross National Happiness (GNH), followed by developments in special educational needs (SEN) and inclusive education in Bhutan. This chapter also sets the socio-cultural context of disability in Bhutan, with a brief description of inclusive education policy and practices in Bhutan. The conceptual framework is presented as a combination of Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence, Epstein's six types of involvement and the Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory model. The first chapter concludes with the research questions, purpose and significance of the study, and a list of definition of terms.

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[1] Children who have disabilities other than a visual or hearing impairment.

The second chapter presents a detailed discussion of the methodology applied in conducting this study, and outlines and justifies the choice of research paradigm, the design of the study, the selection of participants and the data gathering strategy. The development of the interview protocol and guide is outlined, including the piloting of the interview guide, and the final interview guide. The translation process and the use of an interpreter are also highlighted. The methods used to establish the trustworthiness and consistency of the study are presented, the ethical standards are considered and approaches to data analyses are presented. The position as a researcher is discussed followed by a brief outline of the structure of the remaining chapters.

The third chapter consists of a journal article, that focuses on the expectations of parents when including their children in the schools. Their expectations were determined by the type and severity of their child's disability. This paper is currently under review with the *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*.

The fourth chapter reports the parents' perceptions of the benefits and concerns of educating their children in the IE schools. The severity of the disability in the child, placement of the child, parents socioeconomic background, and type of region determined the parents' perceptions of benefits and concerns. A shortened version of this chapter is currently under review with the *International Journal of Inclusive Education*.

The fifth chapter outlines how parents are involved in supporting the needs of the child both at school and at home. Factors such as gender, educational background, socioeconomic activities and the nature of the child's disability are shown to influence parental involvement. This paper has recently been submitted for consideration of review with the *European Journal of Special Needs Education*.

The sixth chapter outlines the results of the parents' communication and collaboration experiences with the school. This study confirmed that there is minimal or no communication and collaboration between the parents and the school personnel. This paper was published in the *International Journal of Inclusive Education* in early 2018.

The seventh chapter comprises an investigation into the parents' awareness and knowledge of policies and legislation for IE of children with SEN. The results indicated that the majority of parents are not aware of the policies of IE for children with SEN and the educational rights of children. Although there were a few parents in the urban region who reported being aware of the IE policies for children with SEN, these parents were not able to articulate with clarity the policies and educational rights. This paper is currently under review with the *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*.

The final chapter presents the summary of findings of all the research themes, including the expectations, benefits/concerns, involvement, communication and collaboration and policy, with the application of the findings to the conceptual framework. The implications of the findings both for policy and practice, and recommendations for future research conclude the thesis.

Note to Examiners

This thesis is in journal-article format. Every attempt has been made to minimize the duplication of material across the chapters. However, some repetitions exist, particularly in the sections relating to the contexts and methodologies of the different chapters. Please consider this repetition.

Although efforts have been made to ensure consistency in the format for the purposes of the overall chapters in the thesis, it is acknowledged that some inconsistencies still remain due to the requirements of the different journals to which the papers have been submitted. Please excuse this inconsistency.

Chapter 3

Jigyel, K., Miller, J., Mavropoulou, S., & Berman, J. (2021). Expectations of Parents of Children with Disabilities in Bhutan Inclusive Schools. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912x.2020.1869189

Chapter 4

Jigyel, K., Miller, J. A., Mavropoulou, S., & Berman, J. (2018). Benefits and concerns: parents' perceptions of inclusive schooling for children with special educational needs (SEN) in Bhutan. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(10), 1064-1080. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1511761

Chapter 5

Jigyel, K., Miller, J. A., Mavropoulou, S., & Berman, J. (2019). Parental Involvement in Supporting Their Children with Special Educational Needs at School and Home in Bhutan. *Australasian Journal of Special and Inclusive Education*, 43(01), 54-68. https://doi.org/10.1017/jsi.2019.3

Chapter 6

Jigyel, K., Miller, J. A., Mavropoulou, S., & Berman, J. (2018). Parental communication and collaboration in schools with special educational needs (SEN) programmes in Bhutan. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22(12), 1288-1305. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1426053

Chapter 7

Jigyel, K., Miller, J. A., Mavropoulou, S., & Berman, J. (2020) Bhutanese Parental Awareness and Understanding of Children's Rights and Policies for Inclusive Education. *Asian Journal of Inclusive Education*, 8(1), pp. 53-77.

No proof of publication could be located for the following:

Chapters 1, 2, and 8

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This study in Bhutan is placed within contemporary education for students who have disabilities and focuses on the involvement of parents in the education of their children. This first chapter provides information about the national context of the study, with some insights into the geography of Bhutan and the aim for Gross National Happiness (GNH) as an outcome of education. Next, the way Bhutanese society perceives disability is presented, followed by the history of special education and the transition to inclusive education, including the policy context for inclusive education in Bhutan. Also, the conceptual framework that draws on two theoretical bases is provided, along with the research questions and the key terms that are embedded in those questions. Finally, the structure of the thesis is outlined.

National Context of the Study

Bhutan is a small landlocked Himalayan country in South Asia situated between China to the north and India to the east, west and south. The country spans about 300 km east-west and 150 km north-south encompassing an area of 38,394 square kilometres, with a population of 779,666 (National Statistics Bureau, 2017). Bhutan is considered one of the last remaining biodiversity hotspots in the world, with forest coverage of approximately 72% of the total land area, with 60% of this forest coverage being protected national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. The majority of the Bhutanese population rely on agriculture and forestry for their livelihood. Hydroelectricity and tourism are the main sources of revenue, although the government cautiously monitors the two industries to ensure balanced and sustainable approaches, thus protecting both the country's environment and the culture. Until the 1960s, Bhutan was largely isolated

from the rest of the world. In the early 1960s, under the rule of the Third King, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, Bhutan slowly emerged from its isolation and initiated the first planned economic development programme called the First Five Year Plan (1961–1966). Under this scheme the major emphasis of economic planning was on public works, primarily road connectivity, health care, education and, forestry. Since then, Bhutan has moved through a radical transformation in its economic development and foreign diplomatic relations. Under the wise and dynamic monarchs, it has joined international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and the Non Aligned Movement (NAM)[2]. It was under the guidance of the Fourth King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk, that Bhutan saw another radical shift when it transitioned successfully from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchical form of government in 2008.

Education in Bhutan

The education system in Bhutan started in the monasteries in 1622, when Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal established the first monastic school in Chari, Thimphu, with thirty monks (Denman & Namgyel, 2008). Subsequently the number of monastic schools increased across Bhutan. Apart from the practice of religion, monastic education also teaches language, arts, literature and philosophy, and still continues to play an important role in the educational system in Bhutan as it thrives and adapts to modern times.

The modern educational system in Bhutan started during the reign of the First King of Bhutan, Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuk, in 1914, when he established the first secular school. It was in the late 1950s and early 1960s that more formal schools both

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[2] A movement formed in 1961 by group of countries who are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc during the Cold War era.

private (*n*=29) and government (*n*=30) were established across the country following a curriculum that was borrowed from neighbouring India. Hindi, the official language of India, was extensively used as a medium of instruction in these schools and it was in 1962 that the government decided to adopt a Western-style education system and the English language as the medium of instruction in all schools.

While traditional monastic education still exists, the current formal education system has undergone an extensive transformation, with the aim of catering for the development of the human resources needed for the 21st century global challenges of socioeconomic development. Within a period of six decades, the educational sector has grown from fifty-nine schools in 1960s to 850 schools and institutes in 2016, including Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centres, primary schools, secondary schools, tertiary and technical institutes in (MoE, 2017a). Similarly, the enrolment figures have increased from 400 in the 1960s to 189,088 students in 2017 (MoE, 2017a).

Educating for Gross National Happiness

In 2009, as part of continued curriculum improvement, the Bhutanese education system saw a landmark change with the integration of concepts, values and principles from Gross National Happiness (GNH) into the school curriculum. The move to Educating for GNH (MoE, 2011a, 2011b) aspires to inform and prepare Bhutanese students to develop:

> deep critical and creative thinking, ecological literacy, practice of the country's profound, ancient wisdom and culture, contemplative learning, a holistic understanding of the world, genuine care for nature and for others, competency to deal effectively with the modern world, preparation for right livelihood, and informed civic engagement (MoE, 2011a).

With this initiative of formalising the concepts, values, and principles of GNH in the school curriculum, the Bhutanese education system aspires to produce GNH graduates for society (see Figure 1.1). As shown in the figure, every youth graduating from schools and colleges is expected to possess the ideal characteristics of a GNH graduate as prescribed within the five contexts, namely workplace, community, family, citizen and self. Such characteristics include being mindful in the workplace, taking responsibility in the family and involvement in the community, to name a few.
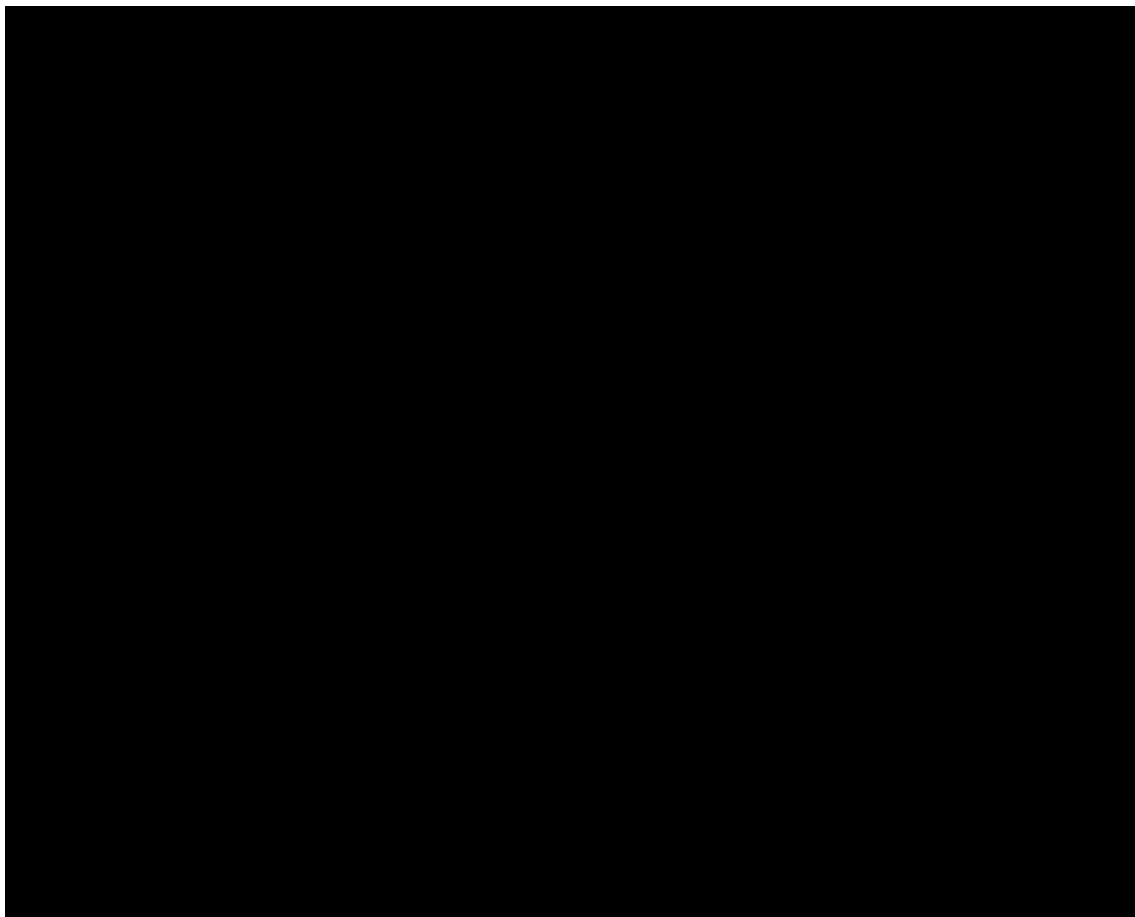
Figure 1.1. GNH and the successful graduate (from MoE, 2011b, p.44)

With the growing importance of the GNH philosophy worldwide, the United Nations (UN) adopted Bhutan's proposal for a holistic approach to development. This initiative proposed by Bhutan was endorsed in 2011 by the international community of sixty-eight countries. (Kelley, 2012). The GNH model has four key pillars that guide

the socioeconomic policies and development, which are further elaborated into nine domains (see Figure 1.2) in an effort to understand GNH better and lay the foundation for its implementation.
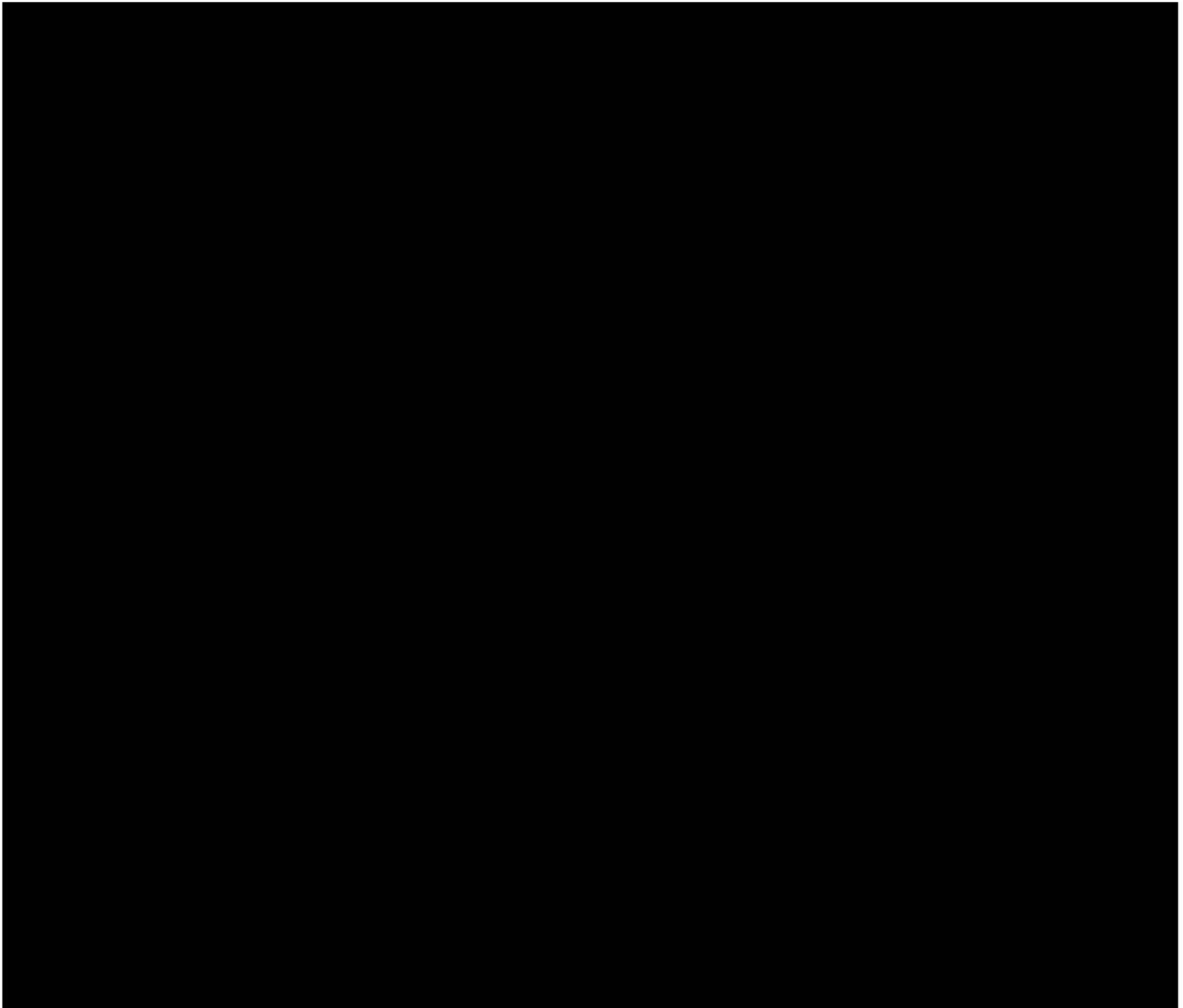
Figure 1.2. The four pillars and nine domains of gross national happiness (Ura, 2009)

These nine domains namely standard of living, health, education, ecology literacy, time use, psychological well-being, community vitality, cultural diversity and good governance, are interdependent and provide a foundation for achieving and upholding the four pillars of GNH. Further, the nine domains are operationalised with thirty-three indicators (see Figure 1.3) that are imperative for enhancement of happiness in an individual (Sherab, 2014).
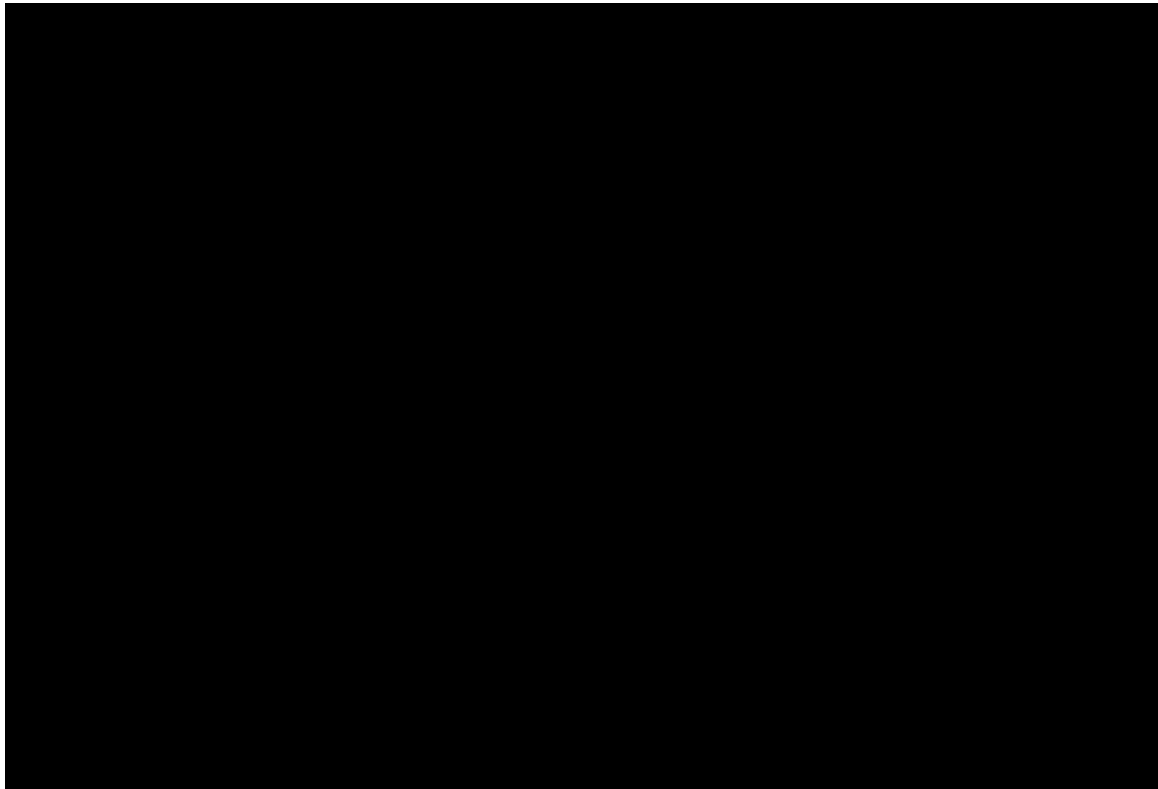
Figure 1.3. The nine domains and thirty-three indicators of GNH. (Ura, Alire, Wangdi, & Zangmo, 2012, p. 21).

Similarly, the thirty-three indicators are used to define and analyse the happiness in an individual and therefore create an index to measure happiness (Ura et al., 2012). For example, *living standards* has three indicators – assets, housing and household per capita income. Therefore, to understand and assess whether people enjoy sufficient and equitable living standards, the importance of assets as one of the indicators is included in the GNH survey. Similarly, *psychological well-being* has four indicators, *health* has four indicators, *time use* has two indicators, *education has* four indicators, *cultural diversity* has four indicators, *good governance* has four indicators, *community vitality* has four indicators and *ecological diversity* has four indicators.

Education in Bhutan for Children with a Disability

In Bhutan, Buddhism is the state religion and approximately 74.7% of the population practise Buddhism, while 22.6% follow Hinduism (Pew Research Centre, 2010). There is a strong belief in both Buddhist and Hindu society that any form of disability is connected to past life deeds, and it is believed that the birth of a child with a disability in the present life is attributed to the actions and merits of their past life (Alur, 2003; Schuelka, 2014). Also, disability in Bhutanese culture is attributed to acts of supernatural elements such as spirits and deities (Yang, 2013). Further, in an ethnographic study on how the wider society of Bhutanese understand disability, Schuelka (2015; 2018) asserts that a conceptualisation of disability from Buddhist beliefs coexists with medical and social models of disability. However, he argues that medical and social models of disability exist 'not only in tension with themselves, but also in tension with the pre-existing socio-cultural constructions of disability' (Schuelka, 2015, p. 821). These observations on the tensions of the models of disability suggest that 'various endogenous and exogenous discourses come together and shape the complex ways in which inclusion and disability are understood by the Bhutanese society' (Kamenopoulou & Dukpa, 2017, p. 5).

Bhutan embraced its first special education system in 1973 by opening a School for the Blind, currently known as the Muenselling Institute, which catered for twenty-six students with visual impairment. In 1979, the institute initiated the integration of their students into a local mainstream school. Since then, students from this institute have had the opportunities to participate equally with other peers in daily school activities in mainstream schools. Today many of the alumni from this institute contribute equally to the socioeconomic development of the country, taking up posts such as physiotherapists, teachers, musicians, entrepreneurs, curriculum officers, etc., to name just a few (Chhogyel, 2006; Dorji, 2017).

Realising the need for such enabling services for children with other forms of disability, the government initiated special education programmes by establishing a self-contained classroom/special educational needs (SEN) unit in Changangkha Middle Secondary School as a pilot project in 2001. This unit provided opportunities for integration of children with SEN into the mainstream classroom. In 2003 another special school, currently known as Wangsel Institute, was established for children with hearing impairments as a SEN unit within the Drugyel Lower Secondary School.

In continuation with the pilot project to support children with disabilities in a mainstream school it was felt that such projects be extended to few other schools across Bhutan (see Table 1.1). With the modernisation of the education system in Bhutan and understanding that such system brings heterogenous children in one classroom with a teacher and all can learn together the concept of Inclusive Education (IE) in Bhutan was introduced in 2011. Although it had existed in the West since the 1980s and 1990s, this was a new concept in Bhutanese context. In addition, the *Education system for All* is in alignment with Bhutan's commitment to international declaration and conventions and the unique concept of GNH that guides IE in Bhutan.

 Dukpa (2014) and Schuelka (2014) assert that IE in Bhutan is still in its initial stage with many challenges that impede the implementation of successful inclusive practices. The challenges include untrained teachers handling heterogeneous classrooms, a curriculum that is rigid, a pedagogy implemented as teacher-centric, inappropriate assessment practices, minimal parent–teacher collaboration, and financial constraints (Dukpa, 2014; Schuelka, 2014, 2018). Despite these challenges, and due to the increasing number of children diagnosed with SEN in Bhutan every year, the Ministry of Education established self-contained classrooms/SEN units in twelve public schools across the country. With the rapid increase in number of non-governmental organisation (NGO) that support people with disability (Sherab et al., 2015) and the

awareness programs jointly conducted by these NGOs and UNICEF (Schuelka, 2015),

the schools that support inclusive education witnessed increasing number of children

seeking admission every year. These units cater for approximately 371 students with

SEN as shown below in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Enrolments in schools that support SEN programmes by geographical

location in Bhutan.

District	School	Enrolment Total
(Urban)		
*Thimphu	Changangkha Middle Secondary School	**67**
Sarpang	Gelephu Lower Secondary School	**34**
(Semi Urban)		
Mongar	Mongar Lower Secondary School	**44**
*Paro	Drukgyel Central School	**20**
Zhemgang	Zhemgang Central School	**12**
(Rural)		
Chukha	Kamji Central School	**20**
Dagana	Gesarling Central School	**26**
Pemagatshel	Gonpasingma Lower Secondary School	**15**
*Samtse	Tendu Central School	**36**
Trashigang	Jigme Sherubling Central School	**47**
Trashiyangtse	Tsenkharla Central School	**30**
Trongsa	Tshangkha Central School	**20**
Total		**371**

Source: MoE (2017a)

Note. *Schools targeted for data collection

In its move to provide education for children with SEN, Bhutan has ratified or is

a signatory to several international declarations, conventions, instruments, policies,

legislation and commitments that address inclusion in education. These include the

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), the Education for All Act (1990), The

Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994),

the Darkar Framework for Action (2000), the Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (2010), the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (2008), and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities (2008). Bhutan's commitment to supporting children with SEN in schools has also been strongly addressed in the Constitution of Bhutan (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2007) and other policies and legislation (Gross National Happiness Commission, 2013; MoE, 2014, 2017b, 2017c).

The recent introduction of programmes for children with SEN in regular schools across Bhutan, the establishment of non-government organisations (NGOs) and awareness programmes through mass media, reflect the current positive socio-cultural changes (Dorji & Schuelka, 2016). Furthermore, drawing on the compassionate attitude of Bhutanese society, the acceptance of children with SEN in these schools has been made easier, as Schuelka (2014) asserts students in Bhutan are friendly, gregarious, inquisitive, and naturally inclusive.

The implementation of IE, partly as a rights-based approach, is an ever-increasing intense global debate (Ferguson, 2008; Yeung, 2012). According to Thomas and Vaughan (2004), the confluence of several streams of thoughts, namely social, political, and educational have provided the impetus for an ideology of IE, which arose particularly from demands for social justice, calls for civil rights, prohibition of discrimination in legislation and educational research and from the voices of service users of special educational services.

Further, Srivastava, de Boer, and Pijl (2015) asserts that rights-based approach and the debate on implementation of Inclusive Education has generated an interest among policy-makers, researchers and practitioners on the questions of how education can be made inclusive. However, due to different contexts and backgrounds in Western

countries as compared to developing countries, implementation of same legislations and policies for IE may not be applicable. Additionally, it is asserted that there is potential for "other factors and actors play important roles" (p. 181) in developing countries and thus result in differences in the pace of implementing inclusive education. (Srivastava et al.). Studies claim that some developing countries are revising education policies based on international statements (Kalyanpur, 2011; Serpell & Jere-Folotiya, 2011), while some at the stage of formulating policies (UNESCO, 2007) and still some expecting NGOs in taking the lead (UNESCO, 2009). Similarly, Bhutan is no exception in considering the global trends of IE, particularly in developed countries and following the ideology of IE in the Bhutanese context as discussed in the next section.

Policy and Practice in Inclusive Education in Bhutan

Inclusive education does not have a universally accepted definition (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006; Pearson, 2005) and appears to be a multifaceted and problematic concept (Mitchell, 2010). Further, Mitchell (2005) asserts that different countries define the concept of inclusion in alignment with their own socio-cultural perspectives. In addition, Miles and Singal (2009) argues that successful Inclusive Education practices depend on the development of a clear understanding of the concept in the social and cultural context of the relevant country. However, Ainscow (2005) defines inclusion as a process of education that addresses and responds to the diverse needs of all learners through increased participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing marginalisation and exclusion. Conversely, most definitions conceptualise Inclusive Education as a process of educating children with SEN in regular classrooms (Blecker & Boakes, 2010).

Practising Inclusive Education is informed by policy that is derived from relevant legislation and developed into guidelines and procedures. Bhutan's first ever draft National Policy for SEN (NPSEN) was presented in 2012 and is yet to be approved by the government. However, Bhutan's developmental philosophy of GNH offers greater opportunities and commitment to support children with SEN in schools as addressed in the Constitution of Bhutan and other documents:

- The Constitution of Kingdom of Bhutan (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2007, pp. 19-20) states:

    Article 9.15: The state shall endeavor to provide education for the purpose of improving and increasing knowledge, values and skills of the entire population with education being directed towards the full development of the human personality.

Article 9.16: The state shall provide free education to all children of school going age up to tenth standard and ensure that technical and professional education shall be made generally available and that higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

- Bhutan's developmental philosophy of GNH as outlined in Vision 2020 (Royal Government of Bhutan, 1999, p.47) "strives to maximize the happiness of all Bhutanese and to enable them to achieve their full and innate potential as human being". Further, the document also states that "education has become the inalienable right of all Bhutanese" (p.18).

- The first policy statement of the National Policy on Special Educational Needs (draft) declares that "children irrespective of abilities shall have equal access and opportunity to education from early childhood to vocational/technical to tertiary without any form of discrimination" (MoE, 2012b, p.8).

It is argued that some of the policy statements are unrealistic and overly ambitious (Schuelka, 2014, 2018). For instance, the draft NPSEN highlights the need for building human resources for each of the schools with SEN programmes and includes personnel such as: teacher assistants, care-givers, counsellors/psychologists, sports instructors, and occupational therapists (MoE, 2012b). Such a range of professional support, even in the developed nations with a long history of inclusive education, has been a challenge for the schools. It is further argued in a study that policy documents at present are unclear and contain several contradictions (UNICEF, 2014). For instance, terminology such as disability, SEN and IE are used interchangeably throughout the policy documents, similar to "terminological ambiguity" (Singal, 2005, p. 334), as evident in India (Singal, 2008). Due to this lack of clarity and confusion in the terminology, interpreting and understanding of inclusion for different people varied and risked "… meaning everything and nothing at the same

time" (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2010, p. 29). It is argued that the way these terminologies are perceived provides a basis for policy framework and efforts to address inclusive education (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2012).

Mandatory policies and laws support effective implementation of inclusive programmes in many Western countries (Bines & Lei, 2011; Charema, 2007; Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012) and also ensure the required services are being delivered. Due to the absence of mandatory policies and laws in many developing countries, it is not surprising that IE and other services related to SEN programmes remain at an embryonic stage and Bhutan is no exception. Thus, in the absence of any mandatory legislation and policies that specify "what services are to be provided, by whom, how, when and where, a *laissez faire* attitude prevails in the provision of educational services" (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002, p. 119) for children with SEN in many developing countries.

Parental Involvement in Inclusive Education

Successful inclusion of children with SEN requires the involvement not only of schools, but also of parents and the community. Recent international studies on IE demonstrate that effective parental involvement improves student behaviour, social skills, attendance and academic achievement (Brandon & Brown, 2009; Lendrum, Barlow, & Humphrey, 2015; Šukys, Dumčienė, & Lapėnienė, 2015). Parents play a key role because they have first-hand experience of their children's needs and knowledge that is valuable to teachers. Teachers and parents can work together to determine the educational objectives for children with SEN and collaborate on choosing and implementing educational strategies to get the maximum benefit and create positive educational outcomes (Eccleston, 2010; Reio & Fornes, 2011).

However, some evidence suggests that the involvement and confidence of parents of children with SEN is lower than that of parents with children without SEN (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Lamb, 2009; Lendrum et al., 2015). Brandon (2007) identified some of the barriers to participation of African American parents of children with SEN that were due to nine factors: cultural and/or linguistic diversity, economics, family composition, educational level of parents, school-home communication, parent–teacher interaction, school-parent interaction, child's success in school and personal constraints (e.g. lack of time, lack of transportation and lack of childcare).

Bhutan is no exception when it comes to parental involvement in children's education especially for parents of children with SEN. In contrast to the parental involvement required by policies and legislations in the Western countries, Bhutanese parents often defer to schools in making decisions and the schools are not required by legislations to collaborate with parents. Therefore, Bhutanese parental involvement in the schools has been found to be minimal (Jigyel, Miller, Mavropoulou, & Berman, 2018), and even less in rural Bhutan, with parents often being reluctant to get involved because they tend to feel that teachers in the school are in the best position to exclusively make decisions about teaching and learning (UNICEF, 2014). Further, the Bhutanese culture of respectful and unquestioning faith in teachers (Phuntsho, 2013) may compound the minimal parental involvement with the school community. In addition, as a result of the free education provided, some parents feel it would be considered ungrateful to question anything about the education system, thus making it a potential barrier for active parental participation in education (UNICEF, 2014).

Furthermore, Bhutan's draft National Policy on SEN (MoE, 2012b) has a gross omission of any reference to the involvement of parents with schools. A striking absence in the draft is any reference to the parents' role in supporting the education of their children with SEN. In contrast, the new legislations and policies implemented in

the Western countries has changed school policies and enhanced parents' involvement in supporting education of children with SEN in mainstream schools (Singal, 2008; Srivastava et al., 2015). It can be argued that involving parents in the education of a child is much easier in developed countries because of the existence of policies and legislations about parental involvement that guide the practice for parents and schools (Hornby & Witte, 2010; Sharma et al., 2012). Therefore, not only have the researchers identified and recommended engaging parents of children with SEN in their child's learning as a positive strategy for social and academic advancement, but policy makers also have widely acknowledged and upheld efforts towards increasing parental involvement (Afolabi, 2014). However, scholars (Ainscow & Miles, 2009; Bourke, 2010; Slee, 2006) have suggested that even in the case of having the best policy, the goals of IE could remain unachieved if the policy fails to inform the practices.

Including children with SEN in mainstream classrooms is rapidly becoming the "dominant educational ideology" (Jones, Thorn, Chow, Thompson, & Wilde, 2002, p.625). However, if inclusion is to become a successful reality, all the stakeholders involved in the education of these children must be acknowledged. Parents, specifically, need to be acknowledged for the very important role they can offer in determining the fate of inclusion in education in Bhutan. The experiences, perspectives and knowledge of these parents concerning education and its policies needs to be heard, to inform the practices and guide the school community and other stakeholders toward establishing collaborative parent–school partnerships. With such mutual collaboration, inclusive education can be brought to life in Bhutan and parents can be given a voice. As strongly supported by many researchers around the world (Gasteiger-Klicpera, Klicpera, Gebhardt, & Schwab, 2013; Hornby & Witte, 2010; Olivos, Gallagher, & Aguilar, 2010; Reupert, Deppeler, & Sharma, 2015), parental involvement in the school's IE programmes plays an instrumental role in the successful inclusion of their

children with SEN. Therefore, this study set out to investigate the perspectives and knowledge of parents of children with SEN based on their experiences with schools with SEN programmes in Bhutan.

Theoretical Frameworks for the Study

There is mounting evidence that the active participation of parents in the school community can be a major strategy for the effective practice of inclusive education and it can be crucial for the education of children with SEN (Afolabi, 2014; Hornby & Witte, 2010; Šukys et al., 2015; Xu & Filler, 2008). This study aimed to investigate and understand the involvement of parents of children with SEN in their school communities, and has been guided by two theoretical frameworks, Epstein's (1992) model of "overlapping spheres of influence" (p. 2) on child development along with her subsequent articulation of types of parental involvement in education (Epstein et al., 2009), and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory (EST). Epstein's model of parental involvement allows a clear focus on what parents do in being involved in their children's education and Bronfenbrenner's EST provides a way of considering the context of those parents' actions.

Epstein's theory of school, family and community influence

Epstein's spheres of influence recognise three major contexts that affect the development of a child, who is at the centre of the overlapping spheres of school, family, and community (see Figure 1.4). The focus of this theory is the child who is affected by the interconnectedness of the three spheres of influence.
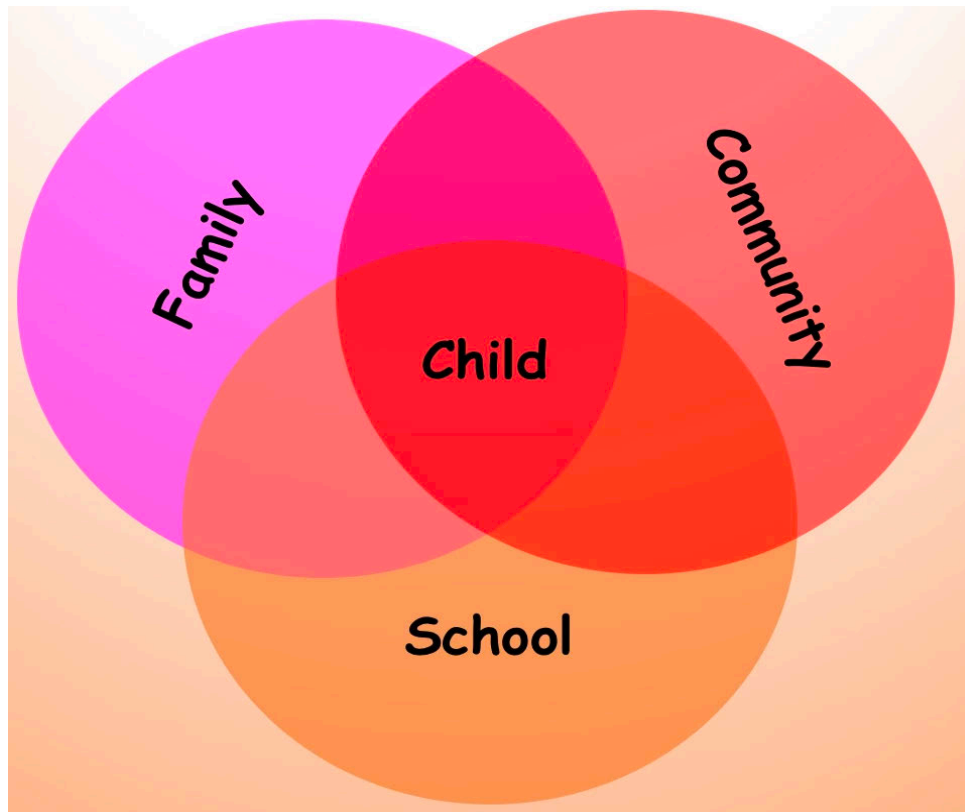
Figure 1.4. Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence on child development

Epstein (1995) argues that the child's success is possible when partnerships exist between these three spheres. Further, Epstein contends that the more the spheres interact with each other, the more successful the development may be for the child. Furthermore, Epstein emphasises that families and schools share responsibility in supporting the needs of their children and this support from the families, schools and the community must be a collaborative approach (Epstein, 1995). Similarly, the overlap and interactions of the three spheres are a dynamic process that continually influences the changing social interactions and exchanges (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). These spheres can be "pushed together or pulled apart by practices and interpersonal forces in each environment" (Epstein 1992, p. 2).

Epstein's six types of parental involvement

As a framework for increasing parental involvement in children's education, Epstein's model suggests that within the area of overlapping spheres of influence of family,

school and community, there are six essential types of involvement that help families and schools to fulfil their shared responsibilities in supporting children's learning and development (Epstein, 1992) (see Figure 1.5).
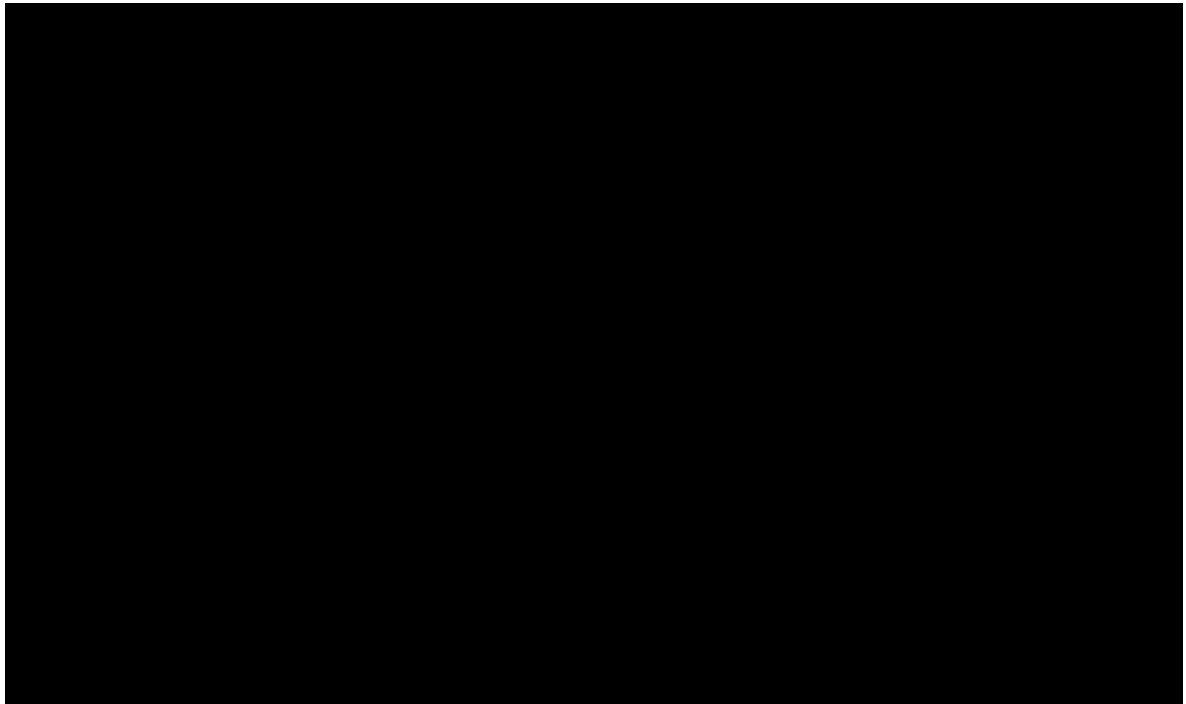
Figure 1.5. Epstein's six types of involvement (Epstein et al., 2009)

Epstein's descriptions of parental involvement have been used in previous studies that have reported that they assist researchers to frame their questions and results to inform and improve practices, thus helping educators develop more comprehensive programmes for family, school and community partnerships (Epstein,1992; Epstein & Connors, 1995; Epstein & Sanders, 2000). Further, the six major types of parental involvement describe practical opportunities for parents to participate at school and at home with "potentially important results for students, parents, and teachers" (Epstein et al., 2009, p. 17). However, it can be argued that the focus of Epstein's model is more as a manual for practitioners and educators on how schools can involve parents. It fails to explore the perspectives of parents about their involvement in the education of their children at school and at home. The present study

addresses these perspectives. All these types of parental involvement in their children's education take place within complex contexts that also need to be understood.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory (EST) states that the development of children is affected by the environment, not only by factors within the child. In EST, development is defined as "the set of process through which properties of the person and the environment act to produce constancy and change in the characteristics of the person over the life course" (Bronfenbrenner, 1992, p.191). Families do not function in isolation but exist and function within a broader environment. Similarly, other conditions such as social, political, biological, and economic affect both the developing child and their parents. According to Adamsons, O'Brien, and Pasley (2007), EST presents a socio-cultural view of human development that focuses on the interactive mechanisms between the individual and the environment.

Ecological systems theory is perhaps most well-known for making distinctions among different ecological systems that have a bearing on the child's development (Pleck, 2007). Bronfenbrenner (1979) indicates that disturbances in one element of the system may have an effect, either positive or negative, on the other elements concerned. Therefore, the functioning of the whole system is dependent upon the interaction between the different subsystems. Understanding the family dynamics as a system in society provides an approach for understanding the experiences, perspectives and knowledge of the parents of a child with SEN in a mainstream school (Hornby, 1995). Therefore, parents' experiences and perspectives about their children's education will ultimately have a direct influence on the development of the child due to the dynamic relationship between the school and the family in this system. Bronfenbrenner's EST, therefore, proposes that in order to fully understand parents' experiences, perspectives

and knowledge of their children's education, the consideration of the social context in which the parents live is crucial.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines the social context as comprising five systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem. These social systems may be considered "topologically as a nested arrangement of concentric structures each embedded within one another" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as shown in Figure 1.6, which shows the interactive systems (Xu & Filler, 2008) that are contained within Bronfenbrenner's EST.
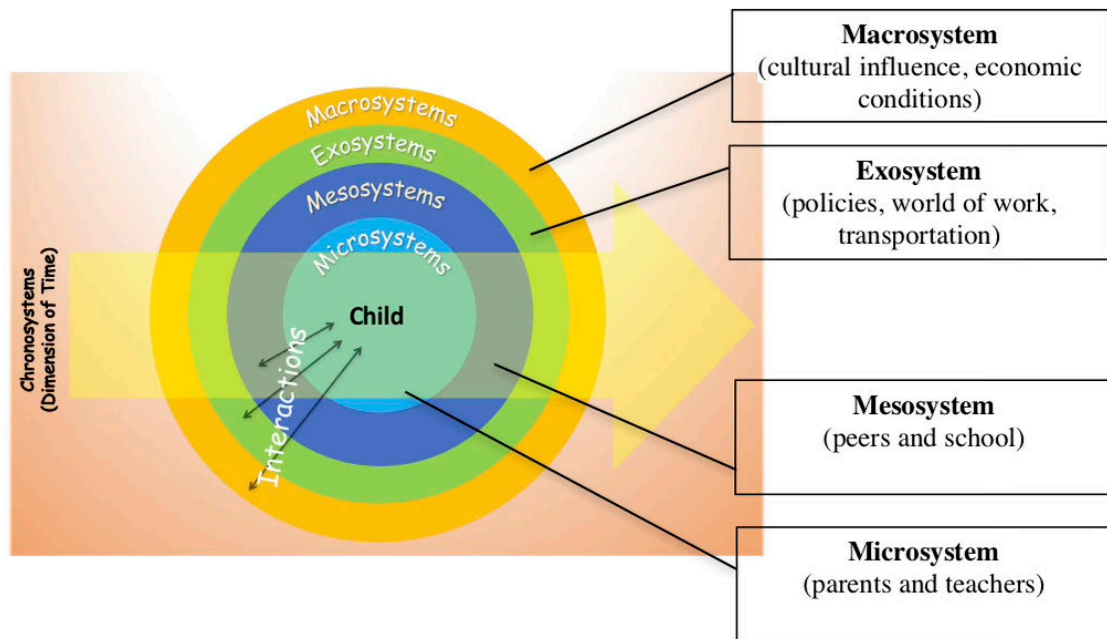
Figure 1.6. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST)

In the following section, each of the systems in Bronfenbrenner's EST is defined and elaborated with appropriate examples:

The microsystem

Bronfenbrenner (1989, p. 227) defines the microsystem as:

a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features, and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of beliefs. (p.227)

This is the system that affects the child most closely (Gestwicki, 2007). The immediate environment of family, school, peers, and community affect the child and vice versa. Berk (2009) asserted that a child's disabilities influence parental participation in the school and the parents influence the child's behaviour and development. For example, a parent's experience of supporting the child at home, such as helping the child with homework (school associated task), reading a story to the child or home intervention (therapies), affects the child's learning and also their engagement with the school.

The mesosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.25) stated:

A mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and the neighbourhood peer group; for an adult, among family, work, and social life).

Different from other systems, the mesosystem comprises the interrelations and processes taking place among two or more settings in which the developing person is actively engaged. For example, effective communication and collaboration between parents and teachers motivate both parties to address the issues concerning the education of the child. In such instances parents have positive experiences and thus support the child's education in the school. A study by Berk (2009) showed that a child's learning progress is influenced not only by activities in the classroom but also by parental participation, and if there is communication between a parent and the school (teacher), the child's development is likely to be influenced by their relationship.

The exosystem

The exosystem is described as "one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.25). This system has no direct influence on the developing person but involves, for example, interaction with parents of other children with SEN, sharing information and extending support to each other. Similarly, social networks influence parental participation in the school, therefore affecting the individual's behaviours, attitudes, expectations, perspective and knowledge (Seginer, 2006).

The macrosystem

In his revised definition, Bronfenbrenner (1989, p. 228) described the macrosystem as consisting of:

> an overarching pattern of the micro-, meso-, and exosystem characteristics of a given culture, subculture, or other broader context, with particular reference to the developmentally-instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, life-styles, opportunity structures, life course options, and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of these systems. The macrosystem may be thought of as a societal blueprint for a particular culture, subculture, or other broader social context.

In other words, the macrosystem is a system that represents the broader social influences such as legislation and national policies, economic circumstances, and cultural and societal expectations (Berk, 2009). The culture of the society can influence the development of the child and their parents' involvement in schools, for example, the Bhutanese culture of respectful and unquestioning faith for teachers (Phuntsho, 2000) may deter parental participation in the school community.

The chronosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1994) defined chronosystem as a system that:

> encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives (e.g., changes over the life course in family structure, socioeconomic status, employment, place of residence, or the degree of hecticness and ability in everyday life" (p. 40).

This system is different from the others in that it relates to the dimension of time and the influences on the child over time. For example, it refers to the economic conditions

and employment of the parents that may act as a barrier to supporting the needs of the child in the school and at home.

Therefore, EST suggests that the child's development and learning are influenced by the role of parents in their child's educational experiences across environmental and social contexts, and across time, and includes the parents' communication with teachers and other professionals, their roles as paraprofessionals and their support for the teachers (An & Hodge, 2013). Similarly, Duhaney and Salend (2000) stress that due to the dynamic inter-connectedness and collaborative nature of the systems involved, parental experiences concerning their child's participation in the mainstream school may have direct implications for the practice of inclusive education.

Application of Theory to this Study

Epstein's parental involvement theory directly addresses a focus on parental involvement in their children's education, while Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides a way to look at the context of that parental involvement. Thus, both of these theories assist in shaping and understanding the focus and the findings of the current research.

Bronfenbrenner acknowledged the work of Epstein as an example of his theoretical framework in action (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) and there are several other applications in inclusive education (Berman & Graham, 2018; Graham, Berman, & Bellert, 2015). Also, Epstein (1992) has cited Bronfenbrenner's EST as a basis for her theory of parental involvement in the education of a child in which the model "integrates and extends" (p.3) Bronfenbrenner's EST. In examining this framework of parental involvement through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's EST, the interaction of spheres of Epstein's model represents the interactions of the nested systems (micro, meso, exo and macro) that affect the child's development. Further, the extent of overlap

of the spheres of influence is "affected by time-to account for changes in the ages and grade levels of students and the influence of historic change on environments" (Epstein, 1992, p.3) similar to the chronosystem in Bronfenbrenner's EST.

Therefore, a hybrid theoretical framework that combines Bronfenbrenner's EST and Epstein's three spheres of influence has been used (Figure 1.7) in guiding this study. The framework as shown in Figure 1.7 illustrates the three overlapping spheres of influence placed pictorially within two of Bronfenbrenner's systems namely, microsystems and mesosystems. Such an arrangement clearly indicates the relationship between the two models and how parental involvement in schools and the community happens between those two layers.
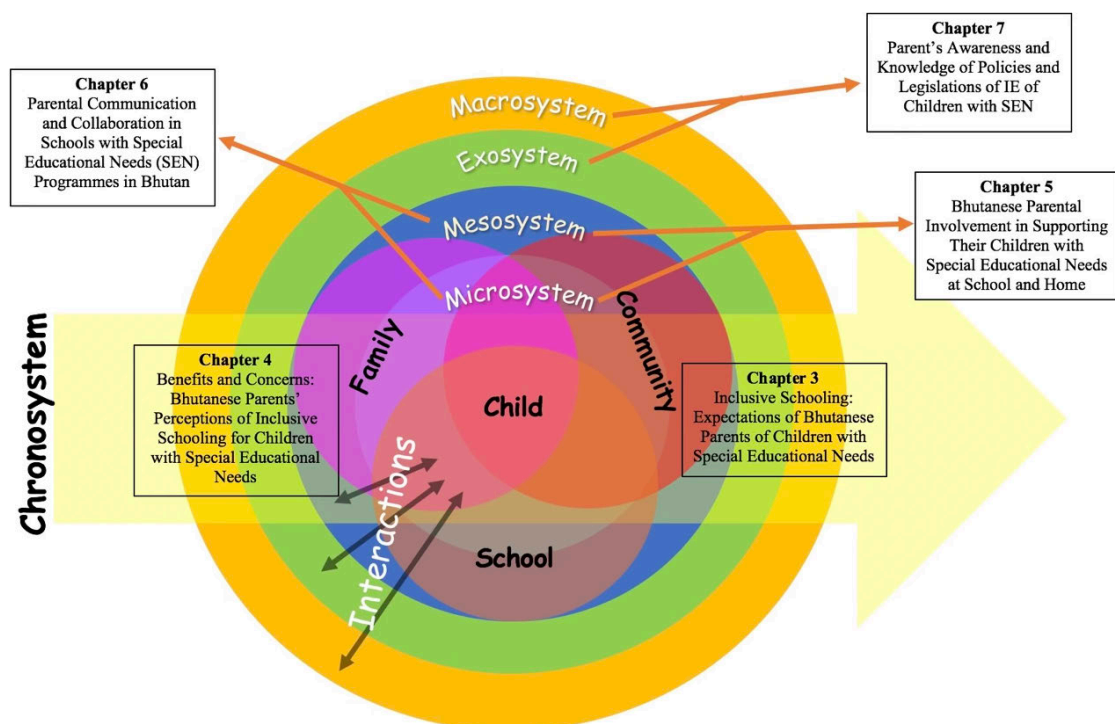
Figure 1.7. Conceptual framework: A hybrid of Epstein's and Bronfenbrenner's theories.

This hybrid approach utilises both Epstein's theory of parental involvement and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, and supports the construction of the following primary research question and secondary questions that guided this study in

exploring parents' experiences, perceptions and knowledge of educating their children with SEN in schools in Bhutan.

Primary research question

What are the experiences, perspectives, and knowledge(s) of parents of children with SEN who are educated in the pilot IE schools in Bhutan?

Secondary research questions

1. What are the expectations of parents of children with SEN in educating their children in the inclusive education schools?

2. What are the benefits and concerns of parents of children with SEN in educating their children with SEN in inclusive education schools?

3. How are the parents of children with SEN involved in educating their children at school and at home?

4. What are the experiences of parents of children with SEN in communicating and collaborating with school staff/professionals?

5. How well informed are parents of children with SEN about policies and legislations on inclusive education?

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to offer a deeper understanding of the experiences, perspectives and knowledge of Bhutanese parents about having their children with SEN educated in IE schools. The findings of this study may have potential impacts in many areas. First, identifying parents' expectations will provide a more precise understanding of parental desires and needs for their children. These practical views can be useful for the schools in further supporting and enhancing their existing services and also for offering other relevant services that are currently not available. Second, examining the positive experiences of parents of children with SEN

will inform the benefits of inclusion that may have an impact on their child and themselves. Such information could provide a practical model for other schools, which may be able to share ideas and incorporate appropriate activities into their programme for supporting SEN children.

Third, an understanding of parental concerns can inform schools and other stakeholders about problems the parents face with regard to having their children included in schools. These issues would remind the school about the practices that exist and render appropriate support for affected children and parents towards effective inclusion. Fourth, examining parental roles in the schooling of their children may reveal how parents support each other in catering for the needs of their children at school and at home and also how they solve issues together. Such findings could inform other parents regarding the best practices that parents can consider in supporting each other to cater for the needs of their child during and after school hours.

Fifth, information on the interaction of parents of children with SEN amongst themselves will inform parent group dynamics and their role in supporting inclusion of their children in schools. These views can inform the community, school and other stakeholders regarding their advocacy role in promoting and supporting successful inclusion in schools. Sixth, understanding of the communication and collaboration skills between parents and school personnel from a parent's perspective will inform the ongoing relationships in supporting each other for an effective inclusion of children. These findings may lead to effective changes in the way schools cooperate and support parents within an inclusion setting, particularly in academic disciplines.

Seventh, parents' awareness and understanding about inclusive policies and legislations will bring to the attention of the school, policy makers, community, government and other stakeholders, the need to work within the existing socio-cultural

context (Schuelka, 2014) and the country's developmental philosophy of Gross National Happiness. Further it will also inform the policy makers and other key stakeholders about considering voices of parents of children with SEN and the need to include them in the decision-making process and framing of policies. Lastly, this study will add to the current dearth of literature on inclusive education in the Bhutanese context regarding parental involvement with the school. These study findings will help the school, policy makers and other key stake holders in implementing evidence-based policies and legislation about parental involvement with schools for delivering quality inclusive programmes, bearing in mind the Bhutanese socio- cultural aspects and philosophy of GNH.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used for this thesis and the definitions are adopted accordingly.

Children with SEN: those children who have disabilities other than a visual or hearing impairment.

Educational level: the educational qualifications of the parents of children with SEN. For example, parents who have completed studies at university are considered as having a high educational level, in contrast to parents who have had no or less than six years of formal schooling, who are considered as having a low educational level.

Experience (lived through): personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events.

Full inclusion: a form of educational provision for children with SEN where they attend the mainstream classroom sessions with their 'typically developing' peers and participate in all the activities according to their potential. Most of the children with physical disabilities attend the mainstream classroom sessions for the whole day though

some are removed from mainstream classroom and 'pull out class' sessions are provided for extra academic support in small groups for Dzongkha, English and Mathematics subjects.

Knowledge: parents' understandings and ideas about SEN provisions available in the SEN school, and awareness of school policies about SEN, national SEN policies and other provisions mentioned in the Constitution and other documents.

Location: the district in which that school is located, coded as, a) "Urban", referring to a location with high density of population, accessible modern facilities and high economic functions, b) "Semi urban", referring to a location with low density of population, accessible to few modern facilities and low economic functions, and c) "Rural", referring to a location with minimal density of population, access to minimal modern facilities and minimal economic functions.

Mainstream/regular school: a school that provides educational experiences for children without special educational needs.

Parent: the biological parent with whom the child lives and who takes care of the child's daily needs at home, at school and in the community.

Partial inclusion: a combination of placement in the mainstream classroom and 'pull out class' sessions, or part day attendance in a SEN unit. For 'pull out class' children with mild to moderate learning difficulties are removed from mainstream classroom for specialised instruction in small groups for English, Mathematics and Dzongkha subjects. Similarly, children with neurodevelopmental disabilities are provided with interventions in the SEN unit for part of the day besides attendance in mainstream classroom.

Perspectives: how parents view or feel about their children with SEN attending the pilot IE school.

Pilot inclusive education school: a trial mainstream school in Bhutan, where children with SEN are supported with a continuum of educational provisions – full inclusion and partial inclusion, depending on the severity of their disability. This school is expected to be a model school for mainstream schools across Bhutan, based on the programme's evaluated success within the framework of the GNH development philosophy.

SEN unit/self-contained classroom: a classroom or unit located in a mainstream school and specifically designated for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities who are segregated from the mainstream classroom and for those children who are partially included. Though children with neurodevelopmental disabilities were segregated, opportunities to interact with non-disabled peers arose during the lunch break and recess times.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter a brief overview of the context for the study is provided, including the historical and policy contexts of education in Bhutan as they relate to students with disabilities. Two theories have been combined to frame the investigation. These theories relate to the overlapping influences on child development and the nature of parental involvement in their children's education, as well as the wider influences on this interplay between families, schools and communities. The research questions have been stated as well as the definition of terms used in the study. Much of the literature base for the study is contained in chapters 3 to 7, as it relates directly to the topics of those chapters. The following chapter will provide greater depth of discussion on the methodological approaches adopted in this study.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

Introduction

To investigate the experiences, perspectives, and knowledge of parents of children with SEN who are in mainstream schools in Bhutan, a primary research question and five secondary research questions were identified in the previous chapter. These questions aimed to tap into the expectations of those parents, their experiences and the perceived benefits and concerns related to their children's education and their understanding of policy. This chapter provides information on the methodology used to investigate these questions. The research paradigm and the design, data gathering strategies, format for the interview and use of translator and interpreter, issues around establishing trustworthiness and consistency, ethical considerations, data analysis procedures, and consideration of the position of the researcher are presented.

Research Paradigm and Design of the Study

Particular patterns of assumptions are generally aligned with particular research paradigms or traditions (Kuhn, 1970, in Cooksey & McDonald, 2011) and these sets of beliefs inform collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data. To address the research aims and questions of this study, the epistemological assumptions of the interpretivist paradigm were considered the most appropriate fit, as the goal of the interpretivist/constructivist researcher is to rely upon the "participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2014, p.8). The interpretivist/constructivist paradigm offers a deep understanding of "the world of human experience" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p.21) implying that "reality is socially constructed"

(Mertens, 2005, p.12). The study employed qualitative research methods to explore and understand the 'real world experiences' of parents of children with SEN. The overview of the research design as it relates to the research questions and the outline of the thesis is presented in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1. Overview of the research design and data analysis plan

Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014) and is an approach suitable for social science inquiry, particularly that dealing with human behaviour (Creswell, 2012). Also, qualitative research is naturalistic, describes

multiple methods that respect the humanity of the research participants and is evolving, emergent and interpretive (Kennedy, 2008). Since this study explored the experiences, perspectives and knowledge of Bhutanese parents of children with SEN, a need for in-depth responses from each of the participants was seen to be very important, as it could reveal the underlying meaning and pattern of relationships pertinent to these people's experiences. Therefore, a qualitative research approach was seen as the most appropriate design for this particular study.

The Selection of Participants

Selection of the participants was based on purposive sampling, as it is the strategy that is most used in interpretivist/constructivist research (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011). The inclusion criteria were designed to achieve the purpose of collecting "information-rich" data (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007), that are relevant to the purposes of the study. Similarly, as emphasised in qualitative research, "we identify our informants and sites based on places and people that can best help us understand our central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2008, p.213). Therefore, the study employed purposive sampling to identify the parents for this study. Assistance was sought from the school principals and the SEN coordinators of the respective schools to access participants who met the inclusion criteria.

A range of geographical locations and educational levels of parents was considered important for gathering a wide range of parental views. In addition, it was also important for both fathers and mothers to be interviewed separately so that the individuals can provide a gender perspective relevant to what they experience and perceive for their children relative to their role as either mother or father. As such, a total of twenty-six participants (13 fathers and 13 mothers) participated in this qualitative study. Initially, twenty-eight participants (14 fathers and 14 mothers) (see

Table 2.1) were selected for the interview, including parents (2 fathers and 2 mothers) for the pilot interview; however, one of the fathers declined to be interviewed because of his official work obligations and, therefore, the mother was not included in the study.

Three schools out of twelve supporting SEN programmes from different regions (urban, semi-urban and rural) in three different districts in Bhutan (Thimphu, Paro and Samtse) were selected. They were considered to be pilot inclusive education (IE) schools in Bhutan. The school in Thimphu, Changangkha Middle Secondary School (urban), was the first pilot IE school in Bhutan, being established in 2001, Tendu Central School (rural), Samtse, was established in 2011 and Drugyel Lower Secondary School (semi-urban) in Paro was founded in 2012. Thimphu had the largest group of parents in the study, as more students with SEN are enrolled in the school compared with Samtse and Paro (see Table 2.1).

The following inclusion criteria were taken into account when selecting the participants (mothers and fathers):

- All parents will have children with SEN in any of the three schools.

- The father and the mother of the same child will be interviewed.

- All parents will have children with SEN who have received at least two years of education in any of the three schools.

- The parents will have children with SEN in any of the three schools from different regions: urban ($n=16$), semi-urban ($n=4$) and rural ($n=8$).

- The parents will have children with SEN students enrolled for either full inclusion or partial inclusion in the schools.

- Where feasible, parents will be selected on the basis of their educational level (high educational level: higher education, low educational level: less than six years of formal schooling or not at all).

- All the parents selected will be proficient either in English or Dzongkha (national language) language.

The summary of the participants according to the selection criteria for this study is presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Summary of the purposive sampling strategy.

Location	Type of Placement	Students' Years in School[3]	No. of Parents
Thimphu (Urban)	Full Inclusion	3	6
	Partial Inclusion	2	4
	Partial Inclusion (without access to mainstream classroom)	2	4
Paro (Semi-Urban)	Full Inclusion	3	6
Tendu (Rural)	Full Inclusion	4	8

The principals of the three schools helped the researcher to contact the participants for the study. The principals were requested to send the information sheet (Appendix A) and the consent forms (Appendix B) to the identified parents. Finding both parents of the same child was a significant challenge in all the research sites as there were either quite a few single parents or one of the parents was not available. Also, finding parents who spoke English or Dzongkha (national language) proficiently, especially in rural Samtse, was another challenge. The Samtse district of Bhutan shares a border with

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[3] (1 student with 2-3 yrs., 1 student >4 yrs.)

India and the dominant population are Nepali language (Lhotshamkha) speakers. However, both parents of thirteen students in the three target schools were identified and participated in the study.

Data Gathering Strategy

This study employed an interaction-based strategy (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011), involving person-to-person connection and interaction, that is, direct face-to-face conversation with a research purpose. An in-depth interview was used to explore the perspectives, experiences and knowledge of the participants. In-depth interviewing is a technique used in qualitative research that involves conducting an intensive individual interview with participants to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Such in-depth interviewing enables the researcher to gain access to a group of people in order to provide both a deep and broad view of situations, people or settings (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 2008).

As recommended by McNamara (2009), the following elements of effective questions for interviews were considered: (a) wording should be open ended, (b) questions should be as neutral as possible, (c) questions should be asked one at a time, (d) questions should be worded clearly, and (e) be careful of asking "why" questions. Creswell (2008) claims that there are various forms of interview design that can be constructed to obtain "thick, rich data utilizing a qualitative investigational perspective" (as cited in Turner, 2010, p.754). Therefore, this study adopted the open-ended interview as proposed by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003). In this interview design, all the participants were asked identical questions, but these questions were worded so that the responses were open-ended, which allowed participants to contribute in-depth information as they wished. It also allowed the researcher to introduce probing questions for follow up. Open-ended interviews were considered the most appropriate

form of interviewing because of the nature of the open-ended questions, which permits the participants to fully narrate their views and experiences.

The interview guide

To ensure the smooth flow of the interview, an interview protocol and an interview guide (see Appendix C) were developed to inform the implementation and administration of the interviews. As "asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first" (Fontana & Frey, 2000 p.645, as cited in Jacob & Furgerson, 2012), it has been recommended that novice researchers use an interview protocol (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Jacob and Furgerson (2012) further confirm that an interview protocol is more than a list of interview questions; it also incorporates the procedural level of interviewing, includes a script for what will be said in the beginning of the interview what will be said at the end of the interview and provides prompts for the researcher for the information that she or he is interested in collecting. Therefore, an interview protocol is not only a set of questions, but also a procedural guide for directing novice qualitative researchers through the interview process.

The protocol included the collection of demographic information about the participants. It also included warm up questions such as *Would you tell me your name? Would you tell me something about you and your family?* and *Where are you from?* for building rapport and establishing a relaxed atmosphere before venturing into the question and answer session with the participants. Similarly, at the end of the interview, appropriate "clearing house questions" (Minichiello et al., 2008, p. 113), such as *Is there anything you would like to share which you thought has not been covered in our conversation?*, were used and participants were accordingly acknowledged for their contribution to the research.

The interview questions presented in the interview protocol were organised into seven themes: positive experiences in an inclusive environment, expectations about inclusion, concerns about inclusion, communication and collaboration between parents and school personnel, parental role in schooling, interaction with other parents of children with a disability and awareness about inclusive policies. For each of these themes, there were one or more main questions with some additional probing questions. According to Minichiello et al. (2008), probing questions are used to generate more in-depth information than the original question posed. Further, they assert that the use of probing questions is a method of clarifying and gaining more detail, especially when trying to understand the meanings that informants attach to the original or primary questions.

In order to ensure that the participants provided rich and detailed qualitative data for understanding their experiences, how they describe those experiences, and make meaning of those experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), the interview protocol was revised by "close reading" (Castillo-Montoya, 2016), which involves a colleague, research team member, or research assistant examining the protocol for structure, length, writing style and comprehension. Further, with numerous rounds of deliberation and scrutiny of the drafts of the protocol and feedback from supervisors, the final protocol was agreed. Maxwell (2013) contends that it is important to "get feedback from others on how they think the questions (and interview guide as a whole) will work" (p.101). Maxwell (2013) further supports the piloting of the interview protocol with people who have similar characteristics as those of the sample to be interviewed for the actual study, and this piloting was undertaken.

Piloting the interview protocol

For any researcher, and specially novice researchers who may be embarking on their first genuine research study, there is no substitute for pilot testing of any instrument for a trial run of any data gathering procedures (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011). Further, it has been suggested that a trial run of planned procedures is essential for managing the process and anticipating and preparing for possible adverse events, such as digital recorders failing or disruption with interviews between the researcher and the participant (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Creswell (2014) similarly points out that the pilot stage will offer useful training that will inform the researcher about conducting an interview with confidence, building rapport with the participant and understanding how well the questions work as intended, thus refining the interview question and procedures.

Further, Cooksey and McDonald (2010) have supported that the "learning value of a pilot test or trial run is incalculable and can save you from disastrous mistakes" (p.343). Additionally, Kvale (2007) emphasises that a pilot test assists in determining the presence of flaws, limitations or other weaknesses and allows the researcher to revise prior to the implementation.

A preliminary pilot test for the interview guide was completed in Armidale, New South Wales, Australia with three participants. It is suggested that the pilot test be conducted with participants that have similar characteristics to participants who will participate in the main study (Turner, 2010). The first two participants were an Australian couple and the other was a Bhutanese mother who had experience of having her child with SEN included in a mainstream school. The principal supervisor arranged for the interview with the Australian couple and the researcher identified the Bhutanese mother to trial the interview techniques. Prior to the interview, they were contacted by

phone, provided with some information about the interview and arrangements made for a convenient time and venue for the interview. The interview was conducted after informed consent was provided and the conversation was recorded with a digital voice recorder and a high storage capacity cell phone as a backup. The interview took place in their respective homes as they wished, and all the interviews lasted for between forty minutes and an hour. With the interview conducted, recorded and transcribed before the next interview, it helped the researcher know if the questions were understood by all the participants in the manner they were intended. The interview also informed enhanced sequencing of the question and sub-questions. The average time the interview would take was also established. With support from the supervisors, the interview guide was again reviewed and refined prior to using it for another round of pilot testing in Bhutan.

Four parents in Thimphu were contacted by telephone with the help of the SEN coordinator (SENCO) in Changangkha Middle Secondary School. As the consent forms had already been received from these participants, the time and venue for the interview was agreed. Although the information sheets mentioned the interview venue being one of the rooms in the school, the parents were able to choose their preferred locations for interview. One of the fathers did not want to be interviewed due to his obligations in relation to an official tour out of the country; therefore, only three parents were interviewed. The interviews lasted for between forty-five and eighty minutes. A digital voice recorder and cell phone were used to record the interview. The parents responded to all the questions, although there were situations where some of the questions required rephrasing. Similarly, one of the sub-questions needed an altered sequencing, for instance asking the probing question for question 5.1 was appropriate after asking question 5.2 (see Appendix C). The audio recordings were transcribed, and member checked by the interviewees.

Piloting the interview increased the confidence of the researcher in conducting the interview and also identified the questions parents would ask for clarification. Transcribing the audio recordings helped the researcher to estimate the time required for transcribing one audio file and thus plan accordingly for the future transcription and member checks.

The interview

A total of twenty-six parents were interviewed, fourteen parents in Thimphu, four parents in Paro and eight parents in Samtse. On average the interview lasted for forty-five minutes, with mothers speaking less than fathers. The location of the interview varied as per the parents' wishes, although in the information sheet for the parents the researcher initially mentioned the school as an appropriate place for the interview. Therefore, the interview contexts included the respective schools, parents' home, offices and inside a car (the particular parent had mobility issues).

During the course of the interview, the researcher was conscious of the bias of both the researcher and the participants. Therefore, every effort was made to deal with bias. In doing so, the researcher ensured consistent use of the interview protocol and the interview guide for the entire interview session for all the participants. Further, the researcher repeatedly informed the participants about the importance of honest responses, assured anonymity and also informed how their honest feedback would contribute to improved educational experiences for children with SEN and their parents in the future. Furthermore, by considering the elements of effective research questions (McNamara, 2009) and the open-ended interview, framing the research questions reduced researcher bias within the study, particularly when involving many participants (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

Although the researcher recruited the participants for the interview in compliance with the inclusion criteria of the sampling procedures, some criteria could not be satisfied. For instance, the criterion on language posed some challenges for the parents especially in the rural school in Samtse district. There were some parents who were not proficient in either English or Dzongkha languages and they preferred their mother tongue, Lhotshamkha, which is a local dialect in the southern parts of Bhutan. Therefore, the challenge of consistency for language was dealt with in a defensible manner. In the following section the process of translation and the use of an interpreter is discussed.

Translation and interpretation

The interview guide, the information for participants and the consent forms were translated into Dzongkha (Appendix D), which is the native language of the researcher (also national language of Bhutan). All the translated versions were executed using a standard translation procedure. Of the three common procedures for translation used in social science qualitative research, single translation, back translation and parallel translation (Liamputtong, 2010), back translation was used for this study. This procedure is most common in social science research due to its rigour in striving for equivalence across languages (Liamputtong, 2010; Lopez, Figueroa, Connor, & Maliski, 2008). In this procedure two translators are involved. The translation from the source language to the target language is undertaken by one translator, and the other translator translates the target language back to the source language without knowledge of the original source version. The back translation of the target language version is then compared with the original source version. The comparison of this back translation of the target language version with the original source version is considered to indicate translation accuracy (Douglas & Craig, 2007).

As the target language is the researcher's first language, all the data were translated from the original source language to Dzongkha by the researcher. This translated target language version was given to another translator well versed with both languages for translation back to English. Once the back translation of this target language version to the original source was performed, comparisons were made for all the sections and they were found to be consistent, with some minor revisions, particularly for the interview guide. An interpreter's assistance was sought for the interviews with the participants in rural Samtse. Following a request from the researcher, the principal of the school kindly provided a teacher who is competent in both English and Lhotshamkha to act as interpreter. The appointed translator also came from the same community, as Chen and Boore (2010) recommend that the translator be fluent in both the source language and the target language. Being knowledgeable about the cultures is an added advantage.

To ensure the accuracy of the interview questions, the appointed translator was asked to read the original version of the interview guide thoroughly before the interview and ask for any clarification. As suggested, the translator has an active role to play in exploring the potential for bringing the second language as close as possible in meaning to the original source language through translation (Chen & Boore, 2010). The procedure for the interview was outlined clearly, and it was explained to the interviewer that the questions the researcher would ask the participants should be accurately translated into Lhotshamkha and the response from the participants accurately translated into English. The translator was also reminded of being extra cautious in the translation of the questions asked and not to act beyond the role prescribed. Since the researcher was well versed with Lhotshamkha, it was an added advantage to cross check if the questions interpreted were accurate and also to check if the translator did not act beyond the role prescribed.

Establishing Trustworthiness and Consistency

Thomas and Magilvy (2011) emphasize that both novice and experienced qualitative researchers often struggle with the term "qualitative rigor" (p. 151). Though frequently debated amongst qualitative researchers, this idea is considered one of the most critical aspects of qualitative research. Similar to validity and reliability in quantitative terms, rigour in qualitative terms is the methods used to establish confidence in the findings or results of a research study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) first addressed rigour in their model of trustworthiness of qualitative research. Validity and reliability are ways of demonstrating and communicating the rigour of research processes and the trustworthiness of the research product (Roberts, Priest, & Traynor, 2006) and "two central concepts in any discussion of the credibility of scientific research are validity and reliability" (Silverman, 2006, p.281). However, Neuman (2003, p.184) asserts that "most qualitative researchers accept principles of reliability and validity but use the terms infrequently because of their close association with quantitative measurement". Further Simon and Goes (2013) emphasise that though validity and reliability are universal in quantitative research, these essential elements of confidence often receive less attention and scrutiny in qualitative research. The model of trustworthiness proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) addresses four components relevant to qualitative research: (a) truth-value (credibility), (b) applicability (transferability), (c) consistency (dependability), and (d) neutrality (confirmability). Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011) assert that the model of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is a much discussed topic in addressing qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1995) proposed "credibility and transferability" as a key criterion for assessing "validity" in qualitative study. Similarly, "dependability" closely corresponds to the notion of "reliability" in qualitative research and "confirmability" to "objectivity".

To assure credibility (internal validity) in this research the following procedures were adopted. In producing the interview guide, a series of revisions were applied to the draft interview questions with the support of the three supervisors and other colleagues, where each and every question was scrutinised and restructured before the final draft was produced. Similarly, during the translation of the interview guide to the researcher's Dzongkha, the process of back translation was undertaken by a translator who is well versed with both languages. Further, in using the interpreter for Lhotshamkha, a local qualified teacher from the same community was involved in the course of the interview. All the interview transcripts were cross checked by playing the respective audio files repeatedly. Furthermore, the interview transcripts were returned to the respective participants for "member checking" (Creswell, 2014), with a request to review the detailed interview response, verify the interpretive accuracy and add any other information that may have been missed during the interview.

Transferability (external validity) is the ability to transfer the results of the study from one group of participants to another (Anney, 2014). Further, Thomas and Magilvy (2011, p.153) assert that transferability is "how one determines the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects/participants". According to Bitsch (2005), the "researcher facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through 'thick description' and purposeful sampling" (p. 85). Thick descriptive data includes a rich and extensive set of details that inform the methodology and context that should be included in the research report (Li, 2004, as cited in Anney, 2014). Therefore, to ensure transferability, the researcher developed simple and coherent research processes, from the choice of the research paradigm to the data collection and final reporting of the study. Similarly, in identifying the key informants' knowledge of the study under investigation (Schutt, 2006), the researcher opted for purposeful sampling. Compared to other probability sampling

methods, it allows the researcher to use a specific category of participants for the study who can provide greater in-depth findings than other probability sampling methods (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

For establishing dependability (reliability), the research processes should be reported in detail so that future researchers can repeat the study, even if they do not necessarily achieve the same results (Shenton, 2004). Thus, Shenton (2004) emphasises that the research design may serve as a "prototype model" (p. 71) for other researchers. Therefore, to address dependability, the researcher provided a detailed description of the research methods applied for this particular study. Finally, to establish confirmability (objectivity), intercoder reliability (ICR) checks were performed for the coding of the transcripts. ICR is a measure that assesses the agreement of the multiple coders for the same transcripts of the data, and also evaluates the extent to which the coders make similar decisions in assessing the characteristics of the text (Campbell, Quency, Osserman, & Pedersen 2013; Mouter & Noordegraff, 2012). Similarly, Krippendorff (2004) and Popping (2010) support that ICR requires that two or more equally capable coders working in isolation from each other select the same code for the same unit of text. Consequently, three of the transcripts were manually coded independently by the researcher and the two supervisors. After the coding was completed for the same transcript (see Appendix E), comparisons were made on the coded words and phrases and all three coders agreed to a common code for each of the segments of the transcripts, otherwise known as inter coder agreement (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, Koole, & Kappelman 2006; Morrisey, 1974, as cited in Campbell et al., 2013).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval is a fundamental part of the research process that should be approached in an appropriate manner (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011). Therefore, in order to adhere strictly to ethical guidelines, approval for the research was sought first from the ethics committee of University of New England (UNE) prior to conducting the study (Appendix F). As the study involved schools, formal consent was sought from the Director of School Education, Ministry of Education in Bhutan (Appendix G). Information sheets (Appendix A) and participant consent forms (Appendix B) were sent through to the respective SEN school principals. Further, the principals collected the signed consent forms from the participants prior to interviews being conducted.

Before conducting the interview, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of their rights, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. They were informed that their participation was voluntary, and they were free to withdraw any time without penalty of any kind. The researcher also informed the participants that the interview would be audio recorded and sought written consent on the interview protocol and interview guide through a dedicated page for informed consent. Furthermore, the researcher informed the participants that their recorded audio, interview transcripts and other documents would be stored in a password-protected folder in a hard drive and retained for five years. After five years, all the recordings would be deleted permanently from the folder and the hard drive.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the process of making meaning from the collected interview data. It involves "making sense of the data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities" (Cohen et al, 2011, p. 537). It is a process of arranging and presenting information obtained in a

systematic way (Minichiello et al. 2008). Similarly, Creswell (2009) claims that the analysis involves "moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data (some qualitative researchers like to think of this as peeling back the layers of an onion), representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data" (p.183).

In analysing the interview data, both manual thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) software, Leximancer (Version 4.5), a text mining software tool (Smith, 2000) were used. Before running the data in Leximancer, all the transcripts were coded manually to identify distinct concepts and "trends within and between participants' response across the same questions" (Miller, Graham & Pennington, 2013, p. 224). Previous applications have found that using Leximancer is more reliable and efficient than a manual operation (Smith & Humphreys, 2006; Indulska, Hovorka, & Recker, 2012; Penn-Edwards, 2010). While manual coding of the data is susceptible to subjectivity in the analysis and requires extensive investments of time in the content analysis process (Smith & Humphreys, 2006), the automatic nature of the process in Leximancer confirms that "any researcher bias is removed… thereby removing issues such as coder reliability and subjectivity" (Isakhan, 2005, p. 9). Similarly, as Leximancer can handle a large amount of text corpora, up to 300mb, researchers can "avoid the problem of selective case reporting while still allowing the analyst to cope with a vast quantity" (Watson, Smith, & Watter, 2005, p. 1234) of material.

However, Indulska et al. (2012) argue that Leximancer can complement rather than displace human interpretation and analysis of large corpi of text, because Leximancer can analyse textual data sets in a repeatable manner by identifying and relating important terms, concepts and relationships. Further, it has been mentioned that the two forms of analysis may be used to complement each other, for instance, to

identify changes of context, emotion, or tone that cannot be identified by Leximancer.

Therefore, this study employed both Leximancer and a manual analysis to the data to

bring intellectual rigour to the task of interpretation.

Manual thematic coding

Of the many "general approaches" (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011 p. 503), the researcher

considered Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis approach for this

study (see Table 2.2). Atkinson and Delamont (2005, as cited in Cooksey & McDonald,

2011) assert that no one particular approach enjoys any dominance and claims to be the

right approach. The steps followed are outlined in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2. Phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Adapted from Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 87)

Analysis of the data for this study commenced as the researcher started transcribing the interviews. Bird (2005, as cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006) claims that some researchers argue that it should be seen as a "key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology" (p. 227). Before transcribing a particular interview, the researcher first listened to the whole interview recording, which helped with becoming familiar with the various key points of the participants and beginning to understand their various perspectives (Rowley, 2012). All the recordings were transcribed by the researcher. Of the many methods available for transcribing, the researcher used verbatim transcription, which does not allow interpretation or

restatement, as the focus is on the intended conceptual meanings of the participant's expressions (Sin, 2010). Further, Braun and Clarke (2006) proclaim that "at a minimum it requires a rigorous and thorough 'orthographic' transcript – a 'verbatim' account of all verbal (and sometimes nonverbal – e.g. coughs) utterances" (p. 88). Furthermore, Rowley (2012) has suggested that the best practice is to listen to the recordings and transcribe them verbatim for further analysis even though it can be extremely time consuming. After completing a transcript, it was checked against the original audio recordings for accuracy and further familiarisation.

The interview transcripts were first organised in table form (see Appendix H), which allowed for "efficient and systematic coding" (Thinley, 2010, p. 67). Initial codes were generated for the entire data set for each of the transcripts by highlighting in green to identify potential patterns and in yellow for other interesting information worth noting. Code words or phrases generated were mentioned against the relevant segment of the text on the next column in the table. This process included coding once, coding many times and un coding for the different segments of the text and collating together within each code. Once the coding for the entire transcript was carried out, a rerun was performed to ensure the correct code word or phrases were assigned against each segment of the text. This process was applied across all the transcripts. The next phase of searching for themes as outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006) was not considered because of the predetermined main themes and the structured interview schedule. However, the sub-themes were generated from the data. Then the sub-themes were reviewed and checked to see if they worked in relation to the codes generated and the entire data set. After the sub-themes were reviewed, the next phase involved generating coherent definitions and names for each sub-theme. It was ensured that the titles of the sub-themes were "concise, punchy, and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.93). In the final phase, the "set of fully

worked-out themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.93) were analysed and a report write-up was produced. Emphasis was laid on providing a concise, coherent and logical account of the data analysis that went beyond the description of the data and developed an argument in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) – Leximancer

Leximancer is a text analysis tool that is used to analyse the content of textual documents. It uses statistical algorithms to automatically analyse text and display the extracted information visually in the form of concept maps, network clouds and concept thesauruses (Harwood, Gapp, & Stewart, 2015; Leximancer, 2016; Smith & Humphreys, 2006). Miller, Graham, and Al-Awiwe (2014) suggest that this software allows for further coding of major themes and concepts. Further, the software identifies a number of concepts and interrelationships without the need for intervention from the researcher. In contrast to the manual coding of the data, Leximancer automatically generates concepts and themes from the uploaded data (Cretchey, Galllois, Chenery & Smith, 2010; Sotiriadou, Brouwers & Le, 2014). The use of the software complements the manual coding and can triangulate findings from the data (Miller, Graham, & Al-Awiwe, 2014).

Several outputs are generated by Leximancer which enables the researcher to understand the relevance of themes, the frequency of concepts in relation to other concepts, concept connectedness ordered lists, the concept co-occurrence matrix, interpretation of colours for themes, the size and brightness of a concept as indicative of the concept's strengths and others. However, the main interactive output of the data mining tool is the extracted concept maps (Appendix I) based on the co-occurrence of matrix, a visual representation of the core concepts and their interrelationships. Therefore, before using Leximancer, the raw data were arranged into different sets for

the analysis that reflected variables such as gender, geographic location, themes, and educational qualifications.

Position of the Researcher

As a postgraduate researcher, it is critical to understand that, far from applying meticulous procedures to find solutions for a particular problem, research entails many factors that affect not only the processes, purposes and outcomes of research projects but also the researcher (Fernandez-Balboa, & Brubaker, 2012). One such factor is the researcher's 'position'. According to Fernandez-Balboa and Brubaker (2012), there are four such dimensions (survival, success, significance and spirituality) that can be experienced, based on the researcher's viewpoint. For this study, the researcher proposed the significance dimension. In this dimension, the researcher is motivated intrinsically to contribute to the greater benefit and the community, although some researcher' motives are ego building and reputation seeking. Further, the Dalai Lama asserts that "scientists … have a special responsibility. Besides [their] own profession, [they] have a basic motivation to serve humanity, to try to produce better, happier human beings" (Fernandez-Balboa, & Brubaker, 2012).

The researcher's interest in this study developed as a result of raising a son, now 13 years old, with autism. Currently, the researcher's son attends an inclusive school, the only inclusive school in Thimphu, the capital city of Bhutan. As a consequence of his son's attendance at the school for the last four years, a very slow positive progress has been observed in his cognitive and behavioural development. A range of developmental challenges have been observed that are due to the range of challenges faced by the school in terms of resources (human, infrastructure, pedagogy and curriculum to name a few). As a parent, such situations have been frustrating and stressful. There were moments when the researcher (I) wished to go to the school and

find out what kind of support was given as per the needs of the child, and to ask who was directly involved with my child, if there was anything I should be aware of as a parent, if there was a need or opportunity for collaboration with the school and many more. However, like many parents in my situation it was not culturally permissible to lay blame on the school, as the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders still have the role of implementing policies, recruiting human resources and providing other resources in this school, and the same may apply to other pilot schools. Furthermore, given the country's economic situation, it is presumed it would not be appropriate to demand services and resources on par with the conditions in developed countries.

Since the establishment of pilot IE schools in Bhutan, more and more children with different forms of disability have been attending these schools. Similarly, parents of these children may have varying experiences, perceptions and knowledge about including their child with SEN in these pilot IE schools across Bhutan. No study has been conducted to date, to understand the participation of these parents in child's education in these schools in Bhutan. As stated earlier in some sections of this paper, because of the importance of parents of children with SEN participating in their child's learning and development, the researcher felt an urgent need to find out about Bhutanese parents' views and participation in their child's inclusion in these schools. With the findings from this study, the researcher is motivated to contribute to the nascent stage of inclusion in Bhutanese schools and the importance of the role of parents in policy formation and implementation for inclusive education in the Bhutanese context.

Chapter Summary

This chapter on methodology outlined the research paradigm, the design of the study, the sampling strategy, the data gathering strategy, and the development of the interview

guide. It also discussed the translation process, the use of a translator and an interpreter and the process used to establish trustworthiness and consistency. Next, the handling of the ethical issues, the data analysis procedures and the researcher's positionality were described. The methodology was designed to address the research question on parental experiences, perspectives and knowledge of educating their children with SEN in three schools from different regions.

The following chapters present the results of the research in format of specific journal articles as submitted for publication and review. Chapter 3 describes the expectations of parents in educating their children in the three schools identified. This paper is currently under review with the *International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education*. Chapter 4 describes the benefits and concerns as perceived by the parents after including their children in the three schools. This paper has been submitted for review to the *International Journal of Inclusive Education.*

Chapter 5 reports the parental involvement in supporting the needs of their children both at school and at home. This paper has been submitted for review with the *Australasian Journal of Special and Inclusive Education.* Chapter 6 reports on the experiences of communication and collaboration of parents with the school in the IE of their children with SEN. This paper was published in the *International Journal of Inclusive Education* in January 2018. Chapter 7 discusses parental awareness and knowledge about the policies and legislation relating to SEN and the educational rights of children. This paper has been submitted to the *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* and is currently under review. The final chapter, Chapter 8, presents the conclusion of the thesis, with a summary of the main findings, the contribution of the theoretical frameworks, the research implications, the limitations of the overall study and areas for future research.

CHAPTER 3

Inclusive Schooling: Expectations of Parents of Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Bhutan

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Inclusive Schooling: Expectations of Parents of Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Bhutan

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the parents' expectations when including their children with special educational needs (SEN) in three pilot inclusive education schools located in urban, semi-urban and rural regions in Bhutan. The participants in this study included twenty-six parents (13 fathers and 13 mothers) of children with SEN who were either fully or partially attending the inclusive school. Parents were interviewed and responses transcribed and analysed using both manual thematic analysis and text-mining software (Leximancer). The results revealed that parents expected the schools to have trained SEN teachers and appropriate physical facilities. Further, these parents expected improvement in their child's social skills and independent future for their children. The findings have implications for policy makers and schools when delivering services to children with SEN and their parents.

Keywords: expectations, ecology systems theory, parents, teachers, inclusion, Bhutan

The birth of our first child, a son, brought tremendous joy for every one of us. I still remember telling myself that I would have to experiment a lot in bringing up Tobden to be a fine young man. Tobden grew up like every normal child, meeting all his developmental milestones for the first two years. He was full of smiles and giggles as we gazed and talked with him. Then we noticed sudden changes in his behaviour. He started throwing unusual tantrums, hitting his head on the floor and having poor eye contact, and there was a deterioration in his verbal and social skills. He did not respond to his name when called and started developing behaviours that were repetitive. Most of the time he would gaze up to one corner of the room for a few seconds time and again, cooing and blurting sounds. (Jigyel, 2014, p.76)

Being advised that their child has a disability is the last thing a parent would like to hear. Initially, the parents' expectations for the future of their child and their family are shattered. The dilemma caused by doubts over what the future holds for the child and the family can cause stress and depression. However, gradually, parents start to understand the new-found situation (Kiernan, Mitchell, Stansfield, & Taylor, 2017) and start "rebuilding their expectations so as to be able to begin to adjust to the news of their child's disability" (Russel, 2005, p. 118). Parental expectations are "various beliefs, assumptions, and aspirations that relate to, but are not limited to, the relationship of students to faculty, curriculum, discipline, culture, acculturation, and family composition as they contribute to children's school achievement" (Adeniji-Neill, 2012, p.3). Further, as their children's advocates, parents should have opportunities to express their expectations and wishes when working with professionals and the professionals should consider and understand the parents' perspectives (Department for Education and Skills, 2001).

Russel (2003) argues that parents of children with SEN have different experiences and sources of information compared to parents of non-disabled children because of the children's additional needs and the limited network of parents sharing similar experiences. With the movement towards inclusive education, the majority of children with SEN are increasingly being educated in regular classrooms with the expectations that these children will live an independent life as adults, will have paid employment and participate in their communities. Parents' expectations regarding their child's abilities, skills, and future educational and occupational choices have a powerful influence on these children's achievements in adolescence and adulthood (Agliata & Renk, 2008; Yazedjian, Toews, & Navarro, 2009).

Supporting parents to develop expectations of positive outcomes for their children may enhance the parents' confidence and improve relationships with the schools. Russel (2005) suggests encouraging parents to have an active role in the education of their children. In acknowledging the expectations of parents, special education teachers and other professionals can align the Individual Education Programme (IEP) for the children with parental goals and desired outcomes (Chaapel, Columna, Lytle, & Bailey, 2012). Further, when the teacher discusses expectations with the parents, it helps parents to clarify their "thoughts and ideas" (Russel, 2005, p.124). Additionally, it is crucial that parents scaffold their children's participation in schooling with "appropriately high and realistic expectations based on cognitive ability and individual needs" (Wong, Poon, Kaur, & Ng, 2015, p. 92).

However, studies have revealed that there are several factors related to the type and level of disability and the socioeconomic status of the family that influence the expectations of parents in educating their children with SEN (Banks, Maître, McCoy, & Watson, 2016; Blacher, Kraemer, Howell, 2010; Child Trends, 2012; Newman, 2005; Russel, 2005). Banks et al. (2016) and Newman (2005) confirmed that parents of

children with general learning/intellectual difficulties, autism or multiple disabilities have lower expectations for both academic and occupational skills compared to parents of children with specific learning difficulties. Further, studies also report that parents from a low economic background hold significantly lower expectations for their children's educational and occupational attainment than parents from high economic background (Blackorby et al., 2010; Newman, 2005).

However, in some studies, parents of children with disabilities have been found to have similar aspirations and expectations for employment and independent future to parents of children without disabilities (Lehmann & Baker, 1995; Whal, 2012). For example, Latino parents in USA expect that their children will acquire basic life skills and social adaptations and reach a level of independence in the future (Rueda, Monzo, Shapiro, Gomez, & Blacher, 2005). Similarly, parents in the USA have hopes and expectations for their children with intellectual disabilities developing vocational skills for future employability through enrolment in vocational training colleges and institutes (Martinez, Conroy, & Cerreto, 2012). In addition, parents expect vocational training and skills development to be important steps in the transition from school to work for their child (Wahl, 2012). However, it can be argued that in their adulthood most of these children encounter challenges in gaining employment and living independently due to social skills deficits, sensory issues and poor communication with employers (Hendricks, 2010; Hurlbutt & Chalmers, 2004; Whal, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Parents' expectations for the future of their children with SEN are derived from their own experiences with the social environment that influences the upbringing of their child. Therefore, it is imperative to address the "origins and effects of parents' expectations" (Russel, 2003, 145). The ecological systems theory (EST) can help in

framing this perspective, as it holds that children's development is affected by both the environment and factors within the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Families do not function in isolation but within a broader social environment, where social, political, biological, and economic conditions affect both the developing child and their parents. EST presents a socio-cultural view of human development that focuses on the interactive mechanisms that occur between the individual and the environment (Adamsons, O'Brien, & Pasely, 2007). Integral to EST, development is defined as "the set of processes through which properties of the person and the environment act to produce constancy and change in the characteristics of the person over the life course" (Bronfenbrenner, 1992, p.191). Bronfenbrenner (1994) defines the social context as comprising five systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. These social systems may be considered "topologically as a nested arrangement of concentric structures each embedded within one another" (Sands, Kozleskli, & French, 2000, p. 79), as shown in Figure 3.1.
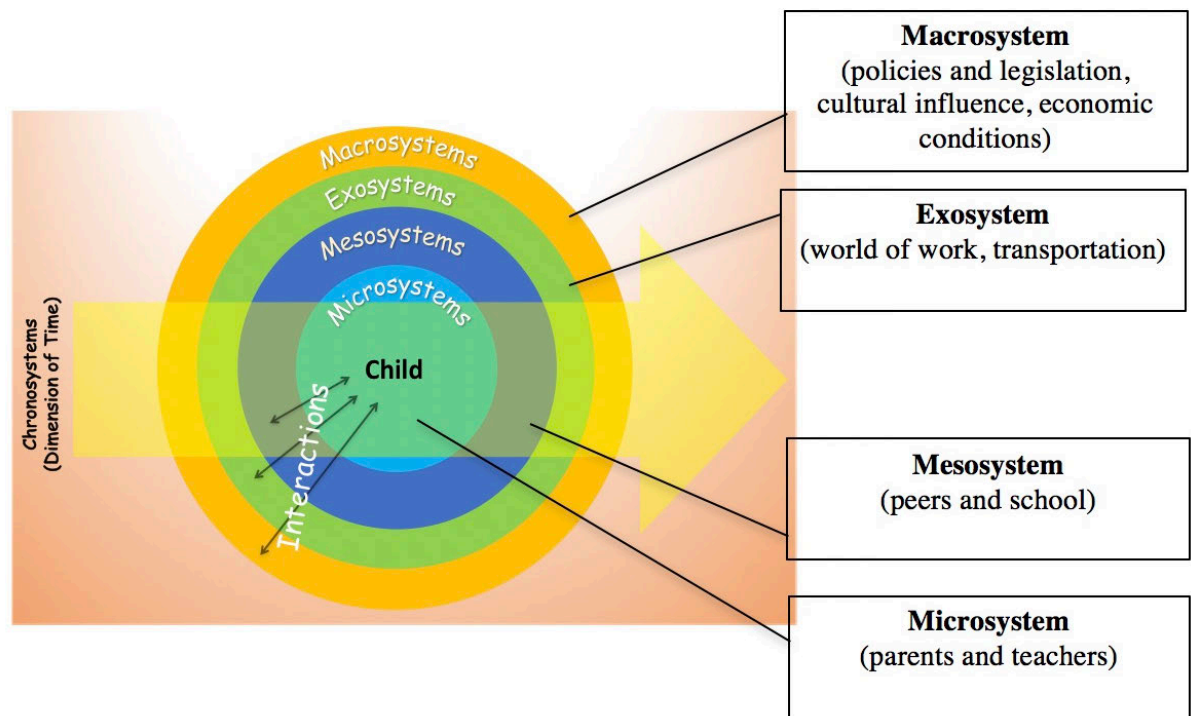
Figure 3.1. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST). (adapted from Xu & Filler, 2008)

EST is perhaps most prominent for making distinctions among different ecological "systems" in relation to the child's development (Pleck, 2007). Bronfenbrenner (1979) indicates that a change in one element of the system may have an effect, either positive or negative, on the other elements concerned. Therefore, the functioning of the whole system is dependent upon the interaction between the different subsystems. Due to the dynamic inter-connectedness and collaborative nature of the systems involved, parents' experiences and expectations concerning their child's participation in the mainstream school may have direct implications for the practice of inclusive education (Duhaney & Salend, 2000). Within this framework it can be argued that the child's development is integrally affected by the involvement of parents in their educational experiences across environmental contexts (An & Hodge, 2013). This involvement is related to the level of their communication and collaboration with teachers, volunteering in the school and help with learning at home (Epstein, 1987).

Because parental expectations will influence a child's development and learning, it is important to understand these expectations. In this study, Bhutanese parents' expectations about educating their children with SEN in three public schools that provide SEN programmes in Bhutan were investigated.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach to gain a deep understanding of "the world of human experience" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison 2013, p.21). The epistemological assumptions of the interpretivist paradigm represent the appropriate fit for the research aims and questions, as the goal of this study relies on the "participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2014, p.8).

Twenty-six parents (13 fathers and 13 mothers) of children with SEN, either with full[4] or partial[5] inclusion in three pilot IE schools located in urban, semi-urban and rural regions in Bhutan (Thimphu, Paro and Samtse), were individually interviewed as part of a larger study (Table 3.1). In selecting these parents, purposive sampling (Cooksey & McDonald 2011) was utilised according to the following criteria:

- All parents had children with disabilities enrolled in one of the pilot IE schools in three regions: urban, semi-urban and rural,

- All parents had children with disabilities who had at least two years of enrolment in any of the participating schools,

- All parents had children with disabilities who attend any type of educational placement (full inclusion and partial inclusion) in the pilot IE schools,

- The father and the mother of the same child would be interviewed, and

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[4] Full inclusion refers to full placement in a regular classroom.
[5] Partial inclusion refers to a combination of placement in the regular classroom and in a SEN unit, or part day attendance in a SEN unit.

- All parents would be proficient either in Dzongkha[6] (national language) or English.

Table 3.1. Profile of parent participants by location and school placement

Location/Region	Level of Placement	No. of Parents
Changangkha / Urban (Thimphu)	Full Inclusion	6
	Partial Inclusion	4
	Partial Inclusion (without access to mainstream classroom)	4
Drugyel / Semi-Urban (Paro)	Full Inclusion	4
Tendu / Rural (Samtse)	Full Inclusion	8

Interview

The technique of the standardised open-ended interview (Turner, 2010) was adopted to explore parents' expectations of their child's attendance at one of three pilot IE schools. The following interview questions and the probes were part of an extensive interview guide that was developed especially for the purposes of this research:

Primary question

What are your expectations of having your child in this school?

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[6]Although Dzongkha is the national language in Bhutan, there are more than twenty different languages spoken, which makes it difficult to communicate with all people in Bhutan.

Probing questions

What do you think about your child's academic achievement?

Similarly, what do you think about your child's social interaction in the classroom and other places?

In what ways do you think that your expectations have been met?

Positionality statement

The interest in this topic for the primary researcher developed as a result of his personal experience of raising a son with autism spectrum disorder, who is currently thirteen years old and attending one of the pilot IE schools that participated in the study. At the beginning of each interview, the primary author acknowledged his position as the father of a child with a disability, thus creating a research setting more conducive to open communication with the participants. In informing positionality, "researchers should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research, seeking to understand their part in it, or influence on the research" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013, p. 225). Therefore, the researcher employed reasonable steps to maintain trustworthiness and consistency by adhering to standard procedures of data collection and interpretation of the data with undue bias. The quote at the beginning of this paper is authored by the primary researcher.

Procedure

Prior to data collection the relevant human ethics committee approval was sought from the University of New England, Australia and the Ministry of Education in Bhutan. The primary author then visited the principals of the three schools, who arranged meetings with the SEN coordinators (SENCOs). The SENCOs assisted in identifying potential parent participants, and information sheets and consent forms were sent to the parents from the principal.

The interview schedule was prepared in English and Dzongkha using a standard translation procedure, and an interpreter assisted with the interviews with parents who preferred to speak in their native language, Lhotshamkha. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and returned to the participants for "member checking" (Creswell, 2014). Further, code names were used for real names of the participants and their children in maintaining anonymity and right to confidentiality. The venue of the interview varied according to the parents' preferences, including locations in schools, offices, the home and, in one case, a car (the parent had temporary mobility issues), and lasted approximately fifty minutes.

Data analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed using a combination of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) and Leximancer Version 4.5 (Smith, 2000) text mining software. In identifying common themes and sub-themes during the manual coding, an inter-coder reliability check was performed on three of the transcripts, which were coded independently by the first three authors. The interview transcripts were returned to the respective participants for "member checking" (Creswell, 2014) to ensure data trustworthiness.

Leximancer is a text-mining analysis tool used to analyse the contents of textual documents. It uses statistical algorithms to automatically analyse text and display the extracted information visually in the form of concept maps, network clouds and concept thesauruses (Leximancer, 2016; Smith & Humphreys, 2006). In addition, the software identifies a number of concepts and interrelationships without the need for intervention from the researcher. In contrast to the manual coding of the data, Leximancer automatically generates concepts and themes from the uploaded data (Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Le, 2014). Therefore, Leximancer can complement, rather than replace,

human interpretation and analysis of large corpi of text, thereby enriching manual thematic coding and providing analysis triangulation which can further ensure trustworthiness.

Results

All parents were asked to talk about their expectations when including their children in the pilot IE schools in Bhutan. Transcripts of the responses from all parents were analysed using both a manual thematic approach and Leximancer. Three themes ('resources', 'social skills development', and 'independent future') emerged from all parents across all regions. For parents in the urban region only, the fourth theme of 'vocational education training' emerged. These trends in expectations were aligned with the type of disability their children has, the placement of the child, the education level of the parents and the location of the school.

Resources

Due to an acute shortage of resources in all schools, most of the parents (*n*=22/26) expressed the need for more resources to support their children. The two sub-themes of *human resources* and *physical facilities* in the schools where the children are enrolled emerged within this theme.

Human resources

The expectations for *human resources*, particularly the need for trained SEN teachers, was heavily emphasised by parents in the urban region as compared to the other regions. Most of these children have severe developmental disabilities. Due to the acute shortage of SEN teachers, the children were forced to stay at home. For example, Father 4 (Urban) was very frustrated with the situation when the school's only SEN teacher was away from the school for a long period. He reported that he felt helpless

and remorseful when he had to keep his child at home as a result of this situation at school:

> And then most of the time if the teacher is (sic) not here, sometimes for weeks or sometimes for months, they don't have to go to school… Sometimes you are made to think that nothing much is done and left careless because we are wasting their time. Because every year for them it is their life, most of the time I always feel pity when I have to leave her in the room.

Similarly, a parent cautiously expressed expectations of having professionally trained SEN teachers although he acknowledged the efforts in supporting his child:

> I think our teachers (have) got to be trained professionally and the teachers that there are in school, I am not saying that they are not qualified, but more needs to be done in terms of expertise and training. Maybe they need to be sent outside of Bhutan for training because it is not only here, there are few schools across the country. (Father 12, Urban)

Furthermore, half of the parents ($n=4/8$) of children with severe developmental disabilities expressed their desperation with regard to the lack of human resources that resulted in keeping their children for an hour or two in the school. These parents also expected their child to attend school all day and be included along with non-disabled children:

> In the school, there is only one teacher, the SEN teacher. Yes, there [are] shortages of such SEN teachers. Most of the time the session for my child in a day is one to two hours ... If they mix her along with any other normal children and keep her till the school finishes that would be good. But for SEN children like her she is sent home after 12:00 pm in the afternoon. (Mother 5, Urban)

Surprisingly, none of the parents ($n=8/26$) in the rural region reported the expectation of the need for trained SEN teachers, and these children are fully included

in the mainstream classrooms. They all stated feeling content with whatever the school provided and wished for the same support to be continued thereafter. This indicates that given their economic background and educational level, parents felt that it is the responsibility of the school to best look after the educational needs of their children and were satisfied with the current situation in the school. For example, Mother 21 (Rural) said, "I cannot say anything about it, but I am happy with the way my child is treated by the school, everything has been provided to my child, what else could I expect more?"

Physical facilities

Half of the parents in the urban region (*n*=6/14) and only one parent in the rural region expressed a strong need for physical facilities such as ramps and accessible toilets. As a parent in the urban region (Father 6) pointed out:

> I wish they should have a very user-friendly environment and very conducive classes with attached toilets. This is the most challenging not only for my child but I can see other special needs children, they have lots of problems with the toilet because it is not user friendly. (Father 6, Urban)

One parent in the rural region discussed her expectations of the need for the provision of physiotherapy equipment that would help her daughter gain mobility. All the other parents of children with mild disabilities reported their satisfaction with the physical facilities available in the school.

Social skills development

Most of the urban parents (*n*=6/8) of children with partial inclusion focused more on their expectations for social skills development of their children. However, there were some parents of children with full inclusion in semi-urban (*n*=1/4) and rural (*n*=1/8) regions who also discussed their expectations for social skills development. In

discussing this theme, two sub-themes, *speech development* and *social interaction,* emerged. Both sub-themes applied to the parents in the urban and semi-urban regions and speech development applied to a few rural parents.

Speech development

Speech development is a primary concern for parents (n=8/26) of children who have severe developmental disabilities and cerebral palsy. These parents placed more emphasis on their expectations for speech development than for pursuing academic learning:

> The other thing is if he can develop his speech. If all these are accomplished I would be very happy and I will feel very relieved. I do not have the hope of enrolling him in private schools and completing university. (Father 18, Semi-Urban)

Improvement in social interaction

Very few urban parents (n=3/14) whose children are partially included were concerned with the way their children usually interact with other children in the school. These parents reported that their children display behavioural problems and are therefore ignored by non-disabled children. Now that these children have shown moderate improvement in their social skills over the years, the parents have expectations that their children will have positive social interactions with other non-disabled children:

> and learn how to deal with other people, how to deal with his friends. Just now he is not much attached with friends. That's why he used to be single all the time, he used to stay alone. I am hoping that he will improve that one, I think he will be together with his friend one day. (Mother 15, Urban)

Independent future

More than half of the parents (*n*=16/26), irrespective of the placement and type of disability in their children, strongly indicated their expectations for an independent future for their children. Half of these parents (*n*=8/16) have low expectations for academic outcomes in their children and expect their children to learn only basic daily living skills as a means for independence in the future. Most of these children have severe developmental disabilities. These parents are concerned about their child's future in their absence:

> For me I do not expect much in her. But I expect at least that she can live an independent decent life by doing something on her own and I do not expect her to work like others and earn her bread. And also at least I expect that she can cook her own meals and serve herself, also do domestic chores, and also at least she can do something. (Mother 13, Urban)

In contrast, parents (n=8/26) of children with disabilities such as cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities have high expectations for academic outcomes. Since these children have sound academic performance, their parents recognise the need for education that will help with future employability, although they are of the opinion that their children will not be able to opt for a blue-collar job in the future. Therefore, they expect their children to be financially independent and employed:

> Even if he cannot walk, he is studying well, we are happy with that. We do not know what his expectations are but we have been thinking that if he studies well further he will get some job in the future and stand on his own. That's our expectation. (Father 16, Semi-urban)

Vocational education training

As a means for future employability and independence for children with moderate developmental disabilities, a few urban parents (*n*=4/14) whose children are placed either fully or partially expressed their expectations of having vocational education training for their children. These parents have low expectations for academic learning and therefore expect their children to be enrolled in vocational training institutes:

> … not much hope in academic side… the only hope that I have from her is that at least she can learn a few words, learn a few numeric, a few alphabets which may be some benefit at least in her life but at some point I also thought that uh I also thought of sending her to Daktsho (Vocational Institute) ... I thought vocational training will be more benefiting for their career. (Father 12, Urban)

Results from Leximancer

All the responses from twenty-six parents on the same question considered for thematic analysis were analysed with Leximancer text-mining software (Version 4.5). As part of the analysis, each parent was anonymously tagged in order to detect trends in the responses, and comparisons were made for parents from the different regions (rural, semi-urban and urban). Before running the Leximancer analysis, all similar terms expressed as both singular and plural words were merged as one (such as student and students, child and children). Similarly, words like *improve* and *improvement*, *expect* and *expectations* were merged because they were closely situated in the semantic space. Further concept words such as *sir, home,* and *at least* were removed, as some were redundant and some represented 'filler' words such as 'um', 'uh', 'like', 'I mean' etc. to name a few.

Leximancer generated the themes in rank order as shown in Figure 3.2 with *child, expect, life* and *government,* as dominant themes emerging across all interview responses.

Theme	Hits	
child	42	
expect	34	
life	15	
government	13	
happy	9	
able	8	
education	7	
time	6	
speech	5	
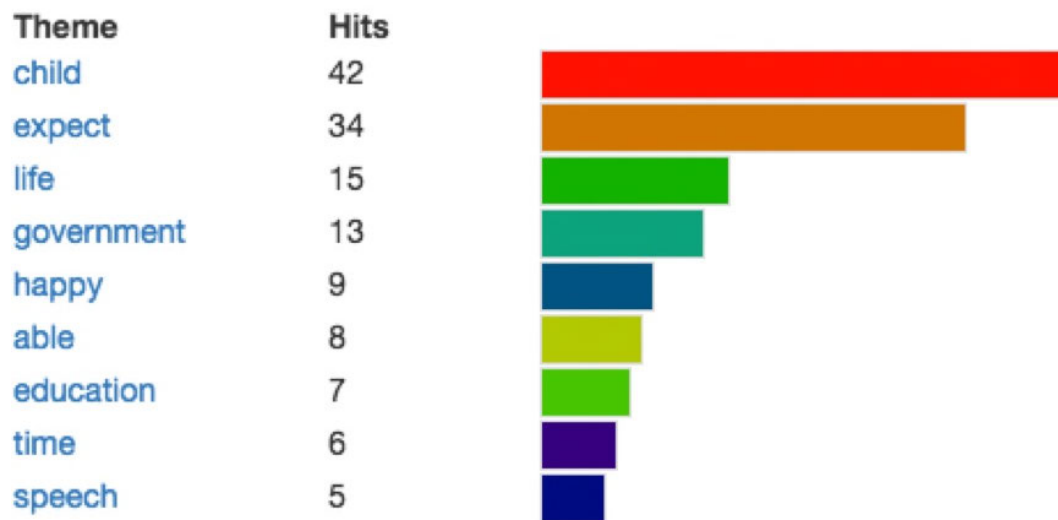
Figure 3.2. Parents' expectations in relation to having their child in the school.

As shown in Figure 3.3, the positions of the themes and concepts can determine the closeness of the "semantic relationship" (Cretchley, Rooney & Gallios, 2010, p. 320; Scott, Masser & Pachana, 2015, p. 2185) between the themes and concepts. Overlapping theme circles illustrate that some of the concepts are common to the same themes. Similarly, if a theme or concept sits close to a region marked on the map, it is relatively more associated with the data from the specific region than a theme more centrally located on the map, which is more likely to be shared across all the regions. In addition, the concept map also indicates, "key themes" (Cretchley et al., 2010, p 321) as circles in rank order, with dominant themes (cluster of semantically related concepts) appearing in the centre of the map. The prominence of the concept in the map is indicated by the size of the dot: the bigger the dot, the more prominent the concept.
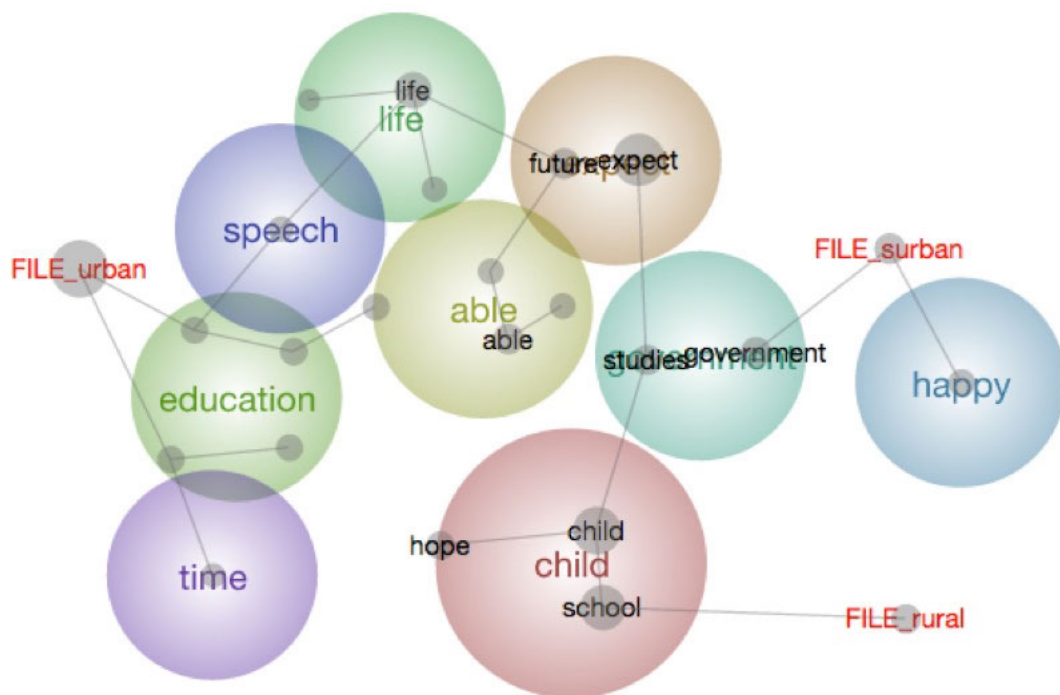
Figure 3.3. Concept map identifying themes and concepts tagged for different regions.

The dominant themes of *child, expect* and *life* are located in the centre of the map and the different region (rural, semi-urban, and urban) category file tags as generated by Leximancer. This indicates that these dominant themes are shared across all the groups for each of the different regions. Addressing these themes, the parents from these different regions discussed their expectations (*expect*) of their children (*child*) for an *independent life* and *future* employment. All outputs (excerpts) of transcripts linked to the corresponding themes and concepts provide strong agreement with the results for the thematic analysis. However, as shown in the map (see Figure 3.3), the transcripts analysed using tag categories for different regions are associated with different areas in the map. The two tagged regions, rural and semi-urban are relatively near each other on the concept map, indicating more commonality in the content of the transcripts. The

thematic analysis confirms the similar types of disability and placement of the children in the rural and semi-urban schools as opposed to the children in the urban school.

Similarly, most of the themes are positioned close to the tagged responses for parents located in the urban region, which indicates greater parental expectations compared to those from other regions. These were parents of children with developmental disabilities who emphasised the development of *speech* and the need for more *time* in the school. In contrast, concepts such as *government, school* and *happy* are closer to the rural and semi-urban regions. Most of the parents from these regions discussed being *happy* with the support provided by the *government* and the *school* as opposed to parents from the urban region. These parents from the rural and semi-urban regions also expected the government to provide employment in the future for these children after they complete their formal education.

Summary of findings

Overall, in comparing the results of the manual coding (thematic analysis) with the results from Leximancer, it is evident that there is high agreement between the results of the two forms of analysis. Therefore, in conclusion, both thematic analysis and the Leximancer results indicate that parents of children with severe developmental disabilities have greater expectations compared to the parents of children with physical disabilities. Most of the parents of children with partial inclusion in the urban region expect the schools to provide trained SEN teachers. Similarly, most of these parents expect that their child can be enrolled in VET, become independent in the future and develop social skills. Some parents expect speech development and extended school time for their children. However, they have low expectations for academic gains. In contrast, parents of children engaged in full inclusion in the semi-urban and rural regions expect their children to perform better in academics and secure employment in

the future. However, the parents of children engaged in partial inclusion expressed concerns and have lower expectations for their children's future. In contrast, the parents from the rural and semi-urban regions are comparatively content and have higher expectations for their children in the future.

Discussion

It is understandable that every parent has high expectations for their children. Generally, through their own experiences and participation with the school, information from the media and other parents, the expectations of parents of children with SEN are developed over the course of their child's education; however, there is little attention paid to parents of children with SEN (Russel, 2003). In addition, it is believed that parents of children with SEN have different experiences and sources of information due to their child's additional needs and the smaller network of parents with similar experiences. The parents who participated in this study are no different. Therefore, as a part of a larger study on experiences, perspectives and knowledge of parents of children with SEN in three pilot IE schools in Bhutan, this study explored the expectations of these parents with regard to the inclusion of their children in these schools.

In considering parents' expectations of resources, social skills development, independent futures and vocational training, the highest expectation found in this study was for trained SEN teachers in the schools. This study confirmed the absence of trained SEN professionals in all schools, which is consistent with the findings from previous studies in Bhutan (Dorji, 2015a; Jigyel, Miller, Mavropoulou, & Berman, 2018; Kamenopoulou & Dukpa, 2017; Sharma, Forlin, Deppeler, & Yang, 2013). Therefore, as was found in a similar study in rural Australia, the parents of children with severe developmental disabilities expressed their concern about the "limited

number of special programmes hours" offered to their children (Tait & Hussain, 2017, p. 334).

Surprisingly, even today, the two colleges of education in Bhutan do not offer degree courses specific for inclusive education (Dorji, 2015a; Kamenopoulou & Dukpa, 2017). Though these colleges of education do offer "a standalone compulsory module" (Dorji & Schuelka, 2016, p. 192) on special educational needs, the lack of adequate preparation of pre-service teachers in teaching children with SEN has been a major concern as evident in Bangladesh (Ashan, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2010), India (Sharma, Moore, & Sonawane, 2009) and Hong Kong (Chong, Forlin, & Lan, 2007). This finding strongly reflects the urgent need for provision of providing professional development training (Ashan et al., 2011; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; MoE, 2014) to the teachers who are educating children with SEN in all the schools and, most importantly, introducing specific degree courses for inclusive education and special education to pre-service teachers.

Of note, except for the need for trained SEN teachers, no parent addressed the need for teachers' aides and caregivers in the schools. It may be assumed that these parents are not aware of such provisions as being necessary for supporting the individual needs of their children in the school. A study in Australia reported that parents of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities emphasised that a teachers' aide is an important resource for both their child and the teachers (Tait & Hussain, 2017). However, in the interim since the data were collected for this study, the provision of teachers' aides and caregivers has now been addressed as a prerequisite in the Standards of Inclusive Education (MoE, 2017b). The provision of teachers' aides and caregivers in schools will be a significant relief to those parents who are required to stay in the schools daily to assist their children (Jigyel et al., 2018), therefore freeing

the parents to have some time for themselves and engage in economic activities at home and elsewhere.

In line with expectations for physical resource facilities, parents mainly emphasized the need for accessible environments in the schools, including accessible toilets. This finding is consistent with prior studies in Bhutan (Chhetri, 2015; Zam, 2008) that reported a lack of physical resources posing greater challenges in supporting the needs of children with SEN. By extension, it also indicates constraints in financial resources (Dukpa, 2014; Schuelka, 2014), which impede the enhancement of effective inclusive education. This finding could be attributed to the existing economic conditions of the country. However, the recently developed Standards of Inclusive Education (MoE, 2017b) have emphasised that the schools should create the most accessible environment.

A key outcome of this investigation centres on the parents' expectations of their children's development of speech and social interaction. Due to the speech impairment in their children, the parents have low expectations for academic learning and therefore expect speech improvement in their children for academic gains, as evident for Latino parents in the USA (Hughes, Valle-Riestra, & Arguelles, 2008). Furthermore, upon seeing the progress in their child's social interaction, these parents develop high expectations of their child acquiring social skills and interacting with non-disabled peers and making as many friends as possible, which is similar to parents in Denmark (OECD, 2006) and Ghana (Vabderpuye, 2013). These findings could be attributed to the fact that these parents prioritise improvement in social skills as being more important than academic learning.

Another outcome revealed that most of the parents emphasized expectations for an independent future for their children, which is similar to the outcomes of a study in

urban India (John, Bailey, & Jones, 2017). Similarly, it was evident that parents of children with severe developmental disabilities prefer that their child learns and uses daily living skills for an independent future (Vanderpuye, 2013). It is not surprising that these parents expect higher social skills outcomes over academic outcomes, and this preference is in alignment with outcomes from other studies (Fernandez-Alcantara et al., 2017; Kenny, Shevlin, Walsh, & McNeela, 2005). However, in this study, parents of children with cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities stated that they expect higher academic outcomes as a means for future employability and to become independent, which is also in agreement with previous studies (Rambiyana & Kok, 2002; Vanderpuye, 2013).

Similarly, in this study, a few parents of children with developmental disabilities expressed their expectations of vocational education training for their children for future employability (Wahl, 2012). In addition, the parents also expect their children to acquire functional academic skills and to be able to use these skills for their daily living. This finding reflects that despite the child's disability, these parents have expectations and aspirations for their child's future. It can be confirmed that the expectations of the parents in this study align with other studies that have been conducted in different parts of the world (OECD, 2006) and also confirms the assertion of parents' expectations as a universal trait (Adeniji-Neill, 2012). Further, reviews of past studies by Adeniji-Neill (2012) conclude that expectations motivate parents to encourage their children towards successful schooling. Furthermore, since parents play a critical role in planning the Individual Education Programme (IEP) of their children with professionals, it allows professionals and teachers to develop programmes that are more aligned with parental expectations of their children's inclusive schooling. Therefore, parental communication and collaboration with the school and the educational professionals is an imperative for realising these expectations of parents

and their children. Unfortunately, as confirmed by Jigyel et al. (2018), communication and collaboration between the Bhutanese parents and the school were found to be minimal.

As portrayed in the theoretical framework section, parents' expectations for children with SEN can be related more closely to each of the systems in Bronfenbrenner's EST. Table 3.2 presents a summary of the parental expectations that have resulted from their experiences of the inclusive education of their child.

Table 3.2. Bhutanese parents' experiences and expectations of educating their children with SEN: A perspective form Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1992)

Systems	Experiences	Expectations
Micro (parents and siblings)	Parents' experience of behavioural changes in the child after the placement of the child in the inclusive school.	Expectation of improvement in the child's social interaction with non-disabled peers and their ability to make friends.
Meso (peers and school)	Parents' experience of the placement of their children in the SEN unit for a limited time (half of the school sessions daily). Most of the time, when the only SEN teacher is out of school children are forced to stay home.	Expectations of schools providing enough SEN teachers to keep their child in school for the full length of the daily school sessions.
Exo (community connection)	Very few parents had experiences in the area, therefore they had limited awareness and understanding of SEN policies and educational rights of the children.	Expectations of knowing more on the policies and rights with the understanding that it can serve as a basis to raise concerns and seek clarification for the support of their children provided by the schools.
Macro (cultural influence)	Experience of culture that respects teachers and higher authorities with the understanding that they know more than parents.	Deterrence of their participation in the education of their children, which therefore influenced their expectations.
Chrono (dimension of time)	Parents experience unavailability of inclusive education at school and health facilities in their place of residence. Over time, parents change place of residence to be where facilities are available.	Expectations of placement of the child in an inclusive school and educating the child. Further, expectations of an independent and employable future for their children.

The present study had two methodological limitations in particular. The aim of the study was to include parents with both high and low educational attainments in the

three regions sampled; however, in the semi-urban and rural regions, it was not possible to include such a group of parents. It was beyond the researcher's control to include both levels of education as the parents in these regions were almost all farmers and army personnel, which meant there were no parents available with higher level educational qualifications. Including more parents with high educational attainments may have provided a greater comparative perspective and understanding of their expectations across the regions and the diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The aim was also to interview parents who are proficient in either English or Dzongkha (the national language); however, finding participants in semi-urban and rural regions in particular who satisfied this criterion was a major challenge, and the parents from these regions opted to be interviewed in their local language. It is noteworthy that although Dzongkha is the national language, there are more than twenty different languages spoken in the different regions of Bhutan (Phuntsho, 2013). It was fortunate that the first author is able to speak many of the languages common in Bhutan and could therefore accommodate this variation. Standard translation procedures and various safeguards were incorporated to ensure the trustworthiness and consistency of the data collected.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are valuable implications emanating from this research data for schools, professionals, curriculum developers, and parents alike if the parents' expectations for successful education of their children in inclusive education schools is to be met. A primary finding in this study is that parents expect trained SEN teachers in schools, which requires immediate attention by the Ministry of Education and other concerned agencies. In addition, the parents expect that their children are able to attend the school daily and stay longer than the current provision of two to three hours. The

findings of the study provide insights about the challenges and commitment of the school, teachers, children, families, and community as a whole that illustrate the 'experimentation and progression towards enabling policies; establishing infrastructure as well as developing human resources for the implementation' (Mukhopadhay, 2009, p.70) in a less developed country. Further, it presents as a social justice issue and provides additional compelling evidence that there is an urgent need to employ many more trained SEN teachers in the schools of Bhutan. Also, the provision of teachers' aides and caregivers needs to be actioned to meet not only the children's self-care and educational needs but also their parents' expectations. In addition, it is strongly advised that the government, Ministry of Education and schools respond to these parental expectations in order to provide inclusive education for all Bhutanese children with SEN.

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

We, the Research Masters/PhD candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated in the *Statement of Originality*.

	Author's Name (please print clearly)	% of contribution
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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

We, the Research Masters/PhD candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that the following text, figures and diagrams are the candidate's original work.

Type of work	Page number/s
Figure 3.1	62
Figure 3.2	73
Figure 3.3	74

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CHAPTER 4

Benefits and Concerns: Parental Perceptions of Educating their Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Bhutan

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Benefits and Concerns: Parental Perceptions of Educating their Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Bhutan

Abstract

The present qualitative study explored Bhutanese parents' perceptions of the benefits and concerns in relation to the inclusive education of their children with special educational needs (SEN). Also, the study explored the benefits for the parents themselves, and their perceptions about how the schools could address any concerns. Twenty-six parents (13 fathers and 13 mothers) of children with SEN who are either fully or partially included in three pilot IE schools located in urban, semi-urban and rural regions in Bhutan were individually interviewed as part of a larger study. The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that inclusion is associated with social benefits for parents of children with developmental disabilities, while parents of children with physical disabilities perceive the caring and supportive environment to be the major gain from inclusion. For a few parents, the inclusion of their child in the school alleviate some of the burden of daily care. Most parents are satisfied with the physical presence of their children in the school despite limited school resources and their concerns about behavioural problems, bullying and academic learning. Implications for parent advocacy in the school and the need for counselling both for parents and their children are discussed.

Keywords: parents, perceptions, benefits, concerns, inclusion, Bhutan

Introduction

Parents are key stakeholders in their children's education and possess unique knowledge regarding their children's characteristics, strengths, preferences and needs (Berger & Riojas-Cortez, 2004). To enable and support parent involvement in the education of their children with disabilities, it is paramount to understand parents' perspectives concerning about their children's education (Swick & Hooks, 2005). Previous research has investigated parents' perceptions of the benefits of inclusion and their concerns for their children, and themselves (Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, Kitching, & Eloff, 2005; Fish, 2006; Lalvani, 2015; Lui, Yang, & Sin, 2017; Rogers, 2007). As inclusive education (IE) has gained momentum in the last decade in Bhutan (Dorji, 2015a; Dorji & Schuelka, 2016), it is important to understand parents' perspectives about the inclusion of their children with special education needs (SEN).

Inclusive Education in Bhutan

The concept of IE was introduced in Bhutan during 2011–2012, which is very recent compared to other countries (UK, USA and Europe), where the term started to be used in the 1980s and 1990s. As a result of advocacy and awareness, there is "recent policy emphasis upon enabling full access and participation" (MoE, 2017c, p.5) for children with SEN, and there has been a steady increase in the number of children with SEN enrolled in IE schools in Bhutan. Inclusive education in Bhutan is still in its infancy, with many challenges impeding the implementation of successful inclusive practices (Dukpa, 2014; Schuelka, 2014). Some of the challenges include the shortage of trained teachers to support the diverse needs of children with SEN, the application of inappropriate assessment practices (MoE, 2014), lack of community involvement (Sherab et al., 2015), minimal parent–teacher collaboration (Jigyel, Miller, Mavropoulou, & Berman, 2018) and financial constraints (Schuelka, 2014). More

importantly, the concept of "borrowing policy" (Duke et al., 2016, p.908) from other countries has been problematic, as the distinctive socio-cultural context of Bhutan needs to be considered for the smooth transition from special to inclusive education (Dorji & Schuelka 2016; Sharma, Forlin, Deppeler, & Yang, 2013).

Parental involvement in Bhutanese schools has been found to be minimal (Jigyel et al., 2018), particularly in rural Bhutan, with parents often being reluctant to get involved. This can be attributed to their belief that teachers in the school are in the best position to make decisions about teaching and learning (UNICEF, 2014). At a deeper level, the Bhutanese culture of complacency and unquestioning faith in teachers (Phuntsho, 2000, 2013) may deter parental involvement with schools. Another potential barrier for parental participation in education in Bhutan may be that some parents think that it would be considered ungrateful to question anything about the free public education system (UNICEF, 2014).

Parental Perceptions of Benefits and Concerns with Inclusive Education

Parents of children with moderate to severe disabilities have identified academic and social benefits for children with disabilities being taught in inclusive schools (Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Lui et al., 2017; Stevens & Wurf, 2018). Some of the benefits also include the provision of general information and services related to positive family outcomes (Davis & Gavidia-Payane, 2009) and different intervention strategies for their children (Heiman & Berger, 2013), opportunities for collaborative decision-making processes in regard to the placement of their child and the development of individualised education programmes (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013).

Despite the aforementioned benefits of inclusive education for the children and their parents, empirical research has documented parental concerns regarding social isolation, negative attitudes, poor quality of instruction, and untrained teachers in inclusive classrooms (Leyser & Kirk, 2004; Magumise & Sefotho, 2018). For example, parents of children attending mainstream government primary schools in regional Australia expressed the "most concern about the ability of the teachers to support inclusion" (Stevens & Wurf, 2018, p.7). Similarly, parents in Lebanon indicated their concerns with the lack of "properly trained and qualified staff" (Wehbi, 2006, p. 339), which explained why they accompanied their children in the classroom. Another study in the US reported insufficient educational and other resources for parents to support children with SEN and the need for professionals to support parents (Griffin & Galassi, 2010). Further, parents in the US indicated their concerns over learning difficulty, being bullied, and coping with stress for children with autism spectrum disorders (Lee, Harrington, Louie, & Newschaffer, 2008).

Although there are some studies on parents' perceptions and experiences of inclusive education (Hotulainen & Takala, 2014; Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013), to our knowledge there is no published research on Bhutanese parents' perceptions of inclusive education. Further, these studies conducted in other countries are "characterized by a more developed inclusive education system" (Wong, Poon, Kaur, & Ng, 2015, p.88) and their outcomes cannot be generalised to the Bhutanese context, in which education for children with SEN is at an early stage. Therefore, this study is timely in exploring parents' perceptions of the benefits and concerns in regard to the inclusion of their children with SEN in the three pilot IE schools in Bhutan. Further, the study aims to explore parents' views about the ways that the school could address their concerns.

Method

The current research is part of a larger qualitative study that investigated the experiences, perspectives and knowledge of parents of children with SEN in three IE schools in Bhutan. Twenty-six parents (13 fathers and 13 mothers) of children with SEN who are either fully[7] or partially[8] included in three pilot IE schools located in urban, semi-urban and rural regions in Bhutan (Thimphu, Paro and Samtse) were individually interviewed (Table 4.1). All parents of children with SEN were recruited via purposive sampling (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011) using the following inclusion criteria:

- They had children with disabilities enrolled in one of the pilot IE schools in three regions: urban, semi-urban and, rural,

- They had children with disabilities with at least two years of enrolment in any of the participating schools,

- They had children with disabilities attending any type of educational placement (full inclusion and partial inclusion) in the pilot IE schools,

- The father and the mother of the same child would be interviewed,

- They would be proficient either in Dzongkha[9] (national language) or English.

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[7] Full inclusion refers to full placement in a regular classroom.

[8] Partial inclusion refers to a combination of placement in the regular classroom and in a SEN unit, or attendance in a SEN unit for part of the day.

[9] Although Dzongkha is the national language in Bhutan there are twenty different languages spoken. Due to the geography of Bhutan, with its Himalayan environment, there are areas of the country with their own language spoken, which makes it difficult to communicate with all people in Bhutan.

Table 4.1. Profile of parent participants by location and school placement

Location/Region	Level of Placement	No. of Parents
Changangkha / Urban (Thimphu)	Full Inclusion	6
	Partial Inclusion	4
	Partial Inclusion (without access to mainstream classroom)	4
Drugyel / Semi-Urban (Paro)	Full Inclusion	4
Tendu / Rural (Samtse)	Full Inclusion	8

The interview

For the purposes of the study, standardised open-ended interviews (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007) were used to seek parents' perceptions of the benefits and concerns related to inclusive schooling for their children with SEN. The following questions about benefits and concerns are part of an extensive interview guide that informed a broader study that sought parents' perceptions of their roles in schooling and interactions with other parents, their expectations of inclusive education for their children, their awareness of educational policy and their experiences with communication and collaboration around their children's education.

Theme 1. Benefits

Main question

Can you tell me how your child has benefitted by coming to this school?

Probing questions

What do you think has been the greatest benefit for your child? Why?

Main question

How do these benefits affect you?

Theme 2. Concerns

Main question

What are your concerns about your child being included in the school along with other children?

Probing questions

How do these concerns affect your child?

How do these concerns affect you?

In what ways do you think that the school could handle the issues that are concerning you the most?

Positionality statement

It is well accepted that, despite the application of meticulous procedures to find solutions for problems, research affects not only the processes, purposes and outcomes of the research projects but also the researcher (Fernández-Balboa & Brubaker, 2012). To this end, "researchers should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research, seeking to understand their part in it, or influence on the research" informing positionality (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013, p.225).

The primary researcher's interest in this topic grew out of his personal experience of raising a son with autism who is currently attending one of the schools contacted for the study. Therefore, the primary researcher declared his position as the father of a child with SEN at the beginning of every interview, thus creating a conducive environment to open communication with the participants. The researcher

also took reasonable steps to maintain trustworthiness and consistency by adhering to standard procedures in data collection and interpretation of the data without bias.

Procedure

Following ethical approval for the research (Human Research Ethics Committee, University of New England; Ministry of Education in Bhutan), the primary author contacted the principals of three schools, who arranged meetings with the SEN coordinators (SENCOs). With the assistance of the SENCOs, potential parent participants were identified, and invitations to participate, including information sheets and consent forms were sent from the school principals.

The interview guide was prepared in English and Dzongkha (using a standard translation procedure). Interviews with parents who preferred to speak in their native language, Lhotshamkha, were conducted with the assistance of a local interpreter. The venue of the interview varied accordingly to the parents' preferences and included schools, offices, homes and, in one case, a car (the parent had temporary mobility issues). Interviews were completed in approximately fifty minutes. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim in preparation for analysis. Anonymity of participants was ensured in the transcript files and in reporting the data. All questionnaire, interview data and signed consent forms were secured and stored as required by UNE Human Research Ethics Committee policy.

Data analysis

Interview transcripts of twenty-six participants were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These participants included both fathers (n=13) and mothers (n=13) of a child with SEN and were interviewed separately to best understand the gender perspective in supporting their child with SEN. In identifying common themes and sub-themes during the manual coding, an inter-coder reliability check was

performed for three long and rich interview transcripts, which were coded independently by the first three authors. To ensure data trustworthiness, the full interview transcripts were returned to the respective participants for "member checking" (Creswell, 2014, p.201), asking them to verify the interpretive accuracy and add any other information that may have missed during the interview.

Findings

Benefits and concerns of including children with SEN in pilot IE schools

The thematic coding of parents' responses to the interview questions about perceptions of the benefits (see Figure 4.1) and concerns (see Figure 4.2) of including their children with SEN in the pilot IE schools generated themes and sub-themes.
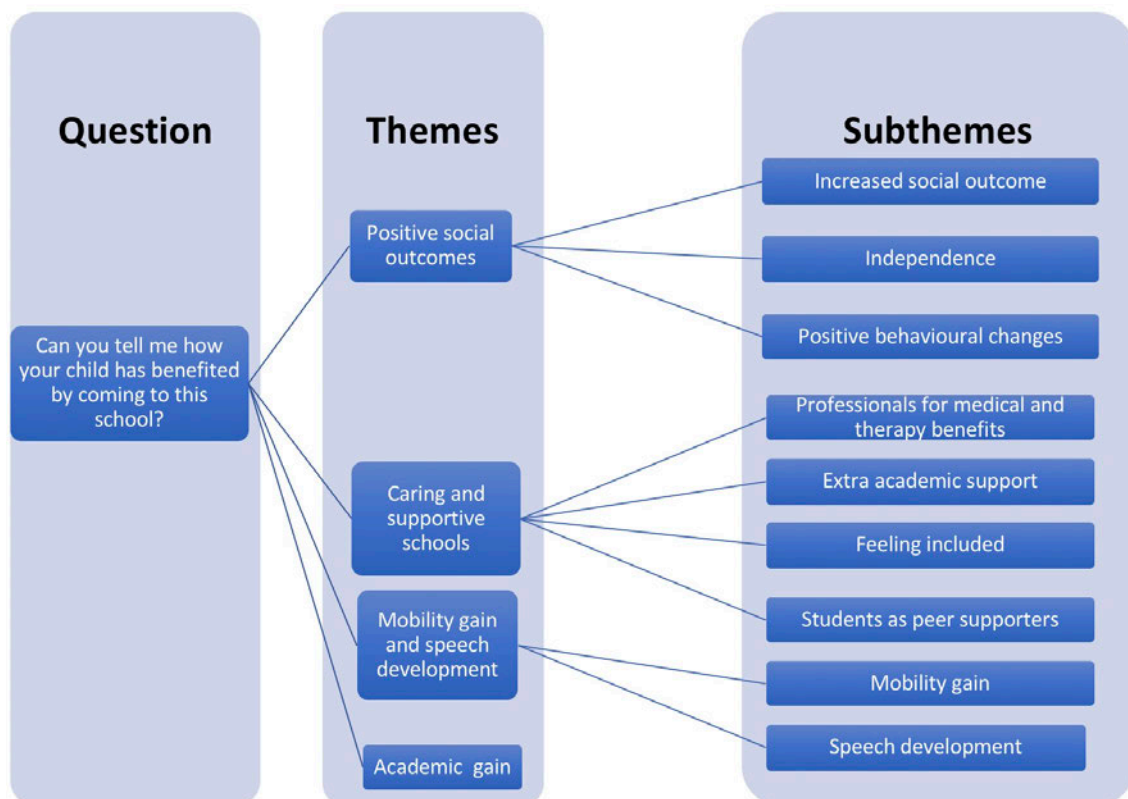
Figure 4.1. Results of thematic coding: Benefits for children

In regard to benefits, three themes were identified: *positive social outcomes, caring and supportive schools* and *mobility gain and speech development.* These were

common across parents from all the regions while the theme of *academic gains* was reported only from parents in the rural and semi-urban regions.
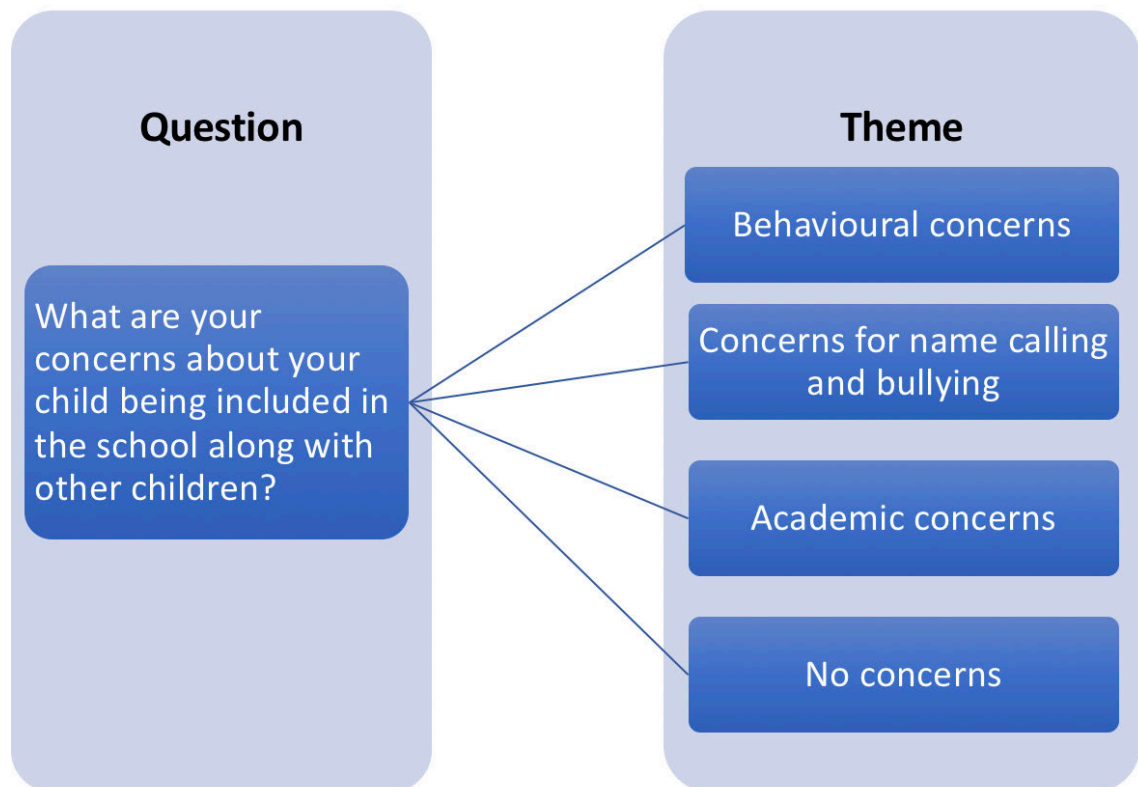
Figure 4.2. Results of thematic coding: Parents' concerns

Parental concerns that were themed as *behavioural concerns, concerns of name calling and bullying* and *academic concerns of the parents* were influenced by the type of disability and the placement of the children with SEN as well as the location of the school. Surprisingly, most of the parents (*n=6/8*) in the rural region reported that they do not have any concerns about having their children fully included in the mainstream classroom. Specifically, it was mentioned that their children have mild disabilities and are well supported by the teachers at school. In presenting these themes, the benefits that align with the concerns are combined where appropriate.

Positive social outcomes

Parents' perceptions about their children's social outcomes were highlighted in the benefits around positive social outcomes and in concerns about behaviour. Three

sub-themes emerged for positive social outcomes. Half of the parents (n=6/14), mainly in the urban region described the increased social interaction they had observed in their children after their inclusion in the school. For example, one parent said, "there she started interacting with friends" because "she gets exposed to many friends … interacts with other children … and she can see and meet other people and parents …" (Father 12). These parents perceived that placing their children with other non-disabled children provide opportunities to interact with each other and make friends.

Children's improved self-care or emerging independence is a key feature for some parents in the urban and semi-urban (n=5/18) regions. These parents emphasized their children's independence in self-care and going to school, which translated into making the parent's life easier. For example, Father 4, Urban, said, "Now slowly when it comes to toilet and (sic) it has improved her independence. One thing is now she is all independent".

Positive behavioural outcomes such as decreased aggression and expansion of children's interests in other activities are the most dominant positive social outcomes identified by parents (n=10/26) residing across all the regions. Half of these parents (n=8/14) resided in the urban region and very few in the semi-urban (n=1/4) and rural (n=1/8) regions. For example, parents described their children's past aggressive behaviour as opposed to their current, decreased aggression.

> Before joining the school she was afraid of coming out in the crowd, she could not face the crowd. But now she can face the crowd and she has improved a lot … like she gets along with her friends, but before she used to pull her friends' hair and was aggressive. Now she is little sober. Before she was very hyper. (Mother 5, Urban)

Similarly, parents (*n*=3/4) of partially included children (without access to the mainstream classroom) discussed the expansion of their children's interest in other activities after having them placed in the SEN unit in the school as opposed to the beginning when their children exhibited a range of restricted or limited interests and play:

> And then also usually in the past she is more like you know, she will touch everything and then have lack of interest to any activity and then she will leave the thing and go. But now I think she always gets engaged with one activity. So, with that in terms of the interest I find it that there is a lot of improvement. (Father 4, Urban)

However, counter to these positive behavioural outcomes the parents in the urban (*n*=5) and semi-urban (*n*=2) regions were concerned about their children's anxiety and physically aggressive behaviours, which contributed to troublesome situations in relation to their school peers:

> Yes, I am worried so much about him attending the mainstream classroom because all the students in that classroom are younger and as he is aged I am worried very much about him beating other children, tearing books, or if he does something to the teacher. (Mother 2, Urban)

Interestingly, a concerned father expressed his fear that his daughter's behaviour would be aggravated upon including her in the special unit along with other children with SEN who exhibit more severe behaviours than his daughter:

> My initial worry is because my daughter is slightly better than most of the other student, and in that way, I also saw the worst-case student also. … Because they stay together, and then mostly even if she is not shaking her hand or something like shivering, if she sees and then she might feel that it is ok, and she might start doing it. (Father 4, Urban)

It is worth noting that almost all the children (*n=6/7*) in the urban region had developmental disabilities such as ASD, ADHD and Down syndrome, except for one child with a physical disability.

Caring and supportive schools

Another theme that emerged was about caring and supportive schools, within which there were four distinct sub-themes (see Figure 4.1) and related concerns around bullying and name calling (Figure 4.2). Half of the parents (*n=15/26*) acknowledged the care and support the school community provided for their children. In this theme, the geographical location of the schools and the needs of the children determined the sub-themes that emerged.

A few parents in the urban (*n=2/14*) and semi-urban (*n=1/4*) regions, whose children have speech and gross motor delay and a physical disability acknowledged the schools for providing professionals for medical and therapy support with assistance from hospitals, expatriates, and other non-governmental organisations. Some of the professionals are volunteers from countries such as the US and Australia. Such support is not available in the rural region, so this was not mentioned by those parents:

> … at several occasions, medical teams come here for check and verify her hearing problems, they check her tongue problem and if there are other health issues, … if she had never been brought here she wouldn't have, may not get this sort of attention, that's how we are quite privileged, quite happy that SEN is doing a lot. (Father 8, Urban)

A focus on extra academic support provided by teachers was mentioned by very few parents in the urban (*n=2/14*) and semi-urban (*n=1/4*) regions:

… and then for his studies also there are lots of support. Even when he cannot write well and does not finish the work like other normal children, the teacher considers him and provides necessary support (sic). (Mother 17, Semi-Urban)

The third sub-theme was related to the students feeling included in the school. A few parents from the urban ($n=3/14$) and rural ($n=1/8$) regions, mainly parents of children fully included, discussed how their children are accommodated by the teachers and other students in these schools. They reflected that their children feel more comfortable because the school includes other children with disabilities. Similarly, they also reported that the other non-disabled students are used to everyday interaction with these children with SEN and treat them like any other children.

… students are used to seeing such kind of students and then the way these normal students deal or treat the SEN children is like anybody because they are used to seeing many SEN children in the school. …SEN children are treated normal like any other child I think my son is feeling comfortable. (Mother 7, Urban)

Finally, the role of classmates as peer supporters was identified particularly by the rural and semi-urban parents. It was reported that the schools appoint older non-disabled students as peer supporters who assist children with SEN in using the toilet and transporting them from home to school and vice versa. Such practical support has been a huge relief for parents:

When it comes to reaching him to the school and getting him back home the school has been assisting my son. During the interval, sometimes I cannot go to the school with my small child so from the school, the senior boys of class eight help him to get to the toilet. (Mother 17, Semi-Urban)

Despite parents' acknowledgment of caring and supportive schools, a few parents of children with full inclusion in the urban (*n*=2) and rural (*n*=2) regions reported concerns over the effect of their children being bullied by non-disabled children. Calling of names and using derogatory comments such as "choelo" (local term for insane), "zhaw" (cripple), "tshagyem" (dumb) and "bjadu" (deaf) by the non-disabled children were also reported:

> I feel very disheartened when people call her dumb, insane and so on … Other people do not allow my daughter to play with their children saying that she is dumb … said that such disability will be passed on to their children ... when they say such thing about my child it hurts me a lot. (Mother 9, Urban)

Name calling and bullying is reported by children with SEN who can communicate verbally with their parents, and their parents commented that such incidents create negative attitudes in their children towards their school.

Mobility gain and speech development

Mobility gain and speech development were identified as benefits by half of the parents (*n*=16/26) across all the regions. In addressing the mobility gain, they attributed this gain to the traditional therapeutic programmes done at home mainly in the rural region and professional assisted programmes in the urban region. Further parents in the rural region also reported that their children are made to walk to the school along with other normal children who assist them despite the challenging geographical terrain:

> Once she got into the school, she improved a lot. Before she had to be supported from both sides when walking but now we do not need to support her, she walks on her own. Once she joined the school her hand also improved a lot. She also walks well on her feet. (Mother 21, Rural)

Similarly, half of the parents (*n*=12/26) across all the regions discussed moderate speech development. It was mainly the urban parents (*n*=5/14) who reported that support is available from professionals such as SEN teachers, physiotherapists and speech therapists. They further explained how they have learnt from these professionals and apply therapeutic strategies at home after school hours with their children:

> So, we were given some tips about her real physical problem and how to literarily do some exercises and give her some therapies at home about the fine motor exercises and the tongue exercises because she has a little bit of speech problem. (Father 8, Urban)

It has to be noted that, unfortunately, professionals such as physiotherapists and speech therapists are available only in the urban region, where they are based in the public hospital and visit the school occasionally to support the children and their parents.

Academic gains

Very few parents from the semi-urban (*n*=1/4) and rural (*n*=3/8) regions indicated any academic gains for their children. Surprisingly, none of the parents in the urban region mentioned academic gains, indicating a lack of focus on academic learning for these children, which may indicate that academic learning for the majority of parents may be secondary to other perceived needs and the development of their child.

Academic concerns were reported by only a few parents in the urban (*n*=3) and rural (*n*=1) regions whose children are fully included reported academic concerns. Contextually, Bhutanese classrooms are overcrowded with forty to forty-five students in a classroom. These parents discussed their doubts over the kind of attention their children get in the classroom in terms of academic support. Further, they reflected on

the development of low morale in their children and negative attitudes towards academic learning:

> When she is in the regular class there are huge number of students around forties, she might not get proper attention and due to which she may not be able to give attention to what the teacher teaches and that's how she might lose her interest in studies … she may feel that she is not able to do similarly to other students, she might lose interest and then gradually she might degrade her studies. That's my major concern. (Father 8, Urban)

Benefits for parents

Two further themes with four sub-themes, emerged across all the regions from the parents' responses to the question about how they, themselves, benefited from their children's attendance at the inclusive school (see Figure 4.3).
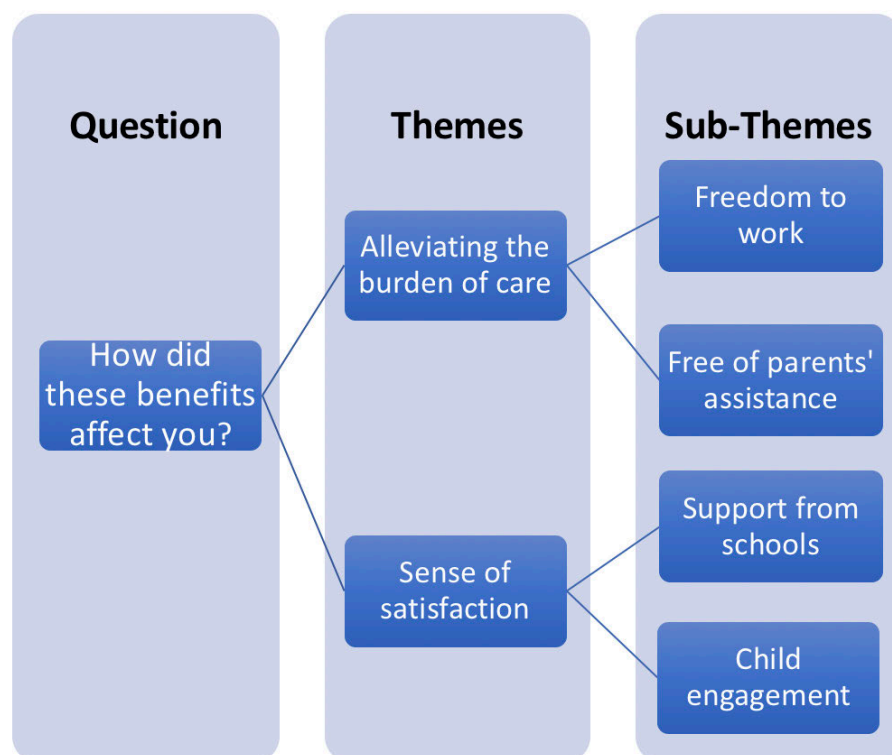
Figure 4.3. Results of thematic coding: Benefits for parents

Alleviating the burden of care

Almost all the parents ($n=25/26$) reported benefits from including their children in these three IE schools; however, the type of benefit varies according to the type of inclusion (full or partial) of their child. Half of the parents ($n=13/26$), mainly parents of children with full inclusion, reported that inclusion alleviates the burden of looking after their children either in the school or at home, which has improved their living conditions. Since both sub-themes of *freedom to work* and *free of parents' assistance* were reported together by the parents, the discussion for these sub-themes is considered together:

> Because of these benefits I need not go to school and look after her and sometimes when madams[10] ask me to come I do go. Otherwise she goes herself to the school and comes back home herself. I need not stay with her and look after her from morning till evening. It is advantage for me because I can go anywhere and get the work done. Before I used to run a small business but later I had to leave it because I had to look after her and now I do not need to look after her. (Mother 9, Urban)

Notably, parents expressed their past inconvenience, of needing to stay at school for the whole day to assist their child to go to the toilet, the library, the SEN unit and other places. Such situations affect these parents socially, financially and psychologically in functioning in their daily lives. Perhaps unsurprisingly, most mothers ($n=10/13$) expressed these concerns, indicating that care of the child rests with mothers in general.

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[10] Term used as a respect for the female teachers.

Sense of satisfaction

Half of the parents (*n*=10/26) reported their satisfaction from having their children included in these schools. In addressing this theme, varying sub-themes emerged, though some were common to the sub-themes of *support from schools* or *child engagement*. The satisfaction of parents was related to the support they received from the school and their children being engaged despite the outcomes of development in the children.

Some parents (*n*=7/26) across the regions acknowledged the support they received from the schools for their children. This support varies for different regions but includes features such as availability of medical professionals and therapists, provision of older students as caregivers, provision of basic stationary and mobility equipment and monetary support. The discussion for this sub-theme has already been addressed in the earlier sections.

A few parents (*n*=3/26) of children with partial inclusion (without access to a mainstream classroom) expressed a sense of satisfaction for just having their child brought to the school and kept engaged. They stated that not being able to attend the school at all would be stressful for them as well as for the children, who would not know what to do if kept home.

> Well I feel like it is very good like we use to worry so much that he is doing nothing and we are not able to do anything but since he has shown some improvements since he has started doing some other activities, we feel quite satisfied because he has started going to school and then because of those activities I think got these changes. (Father 10, Urban)

How the schools could address parental concerns

Parents were asked how they thought the school could handle issues of concern and two themes emerged in their responses (see Figure 4.4).

Need for awareness and counselling

The parents from urban (*n*=3) and rural (*n*=1) regions suggested that the school can play its role in preventing such unfortunate incidents of name calling and bullying by advocacy, promoting peer awareness in the school and providing counselling to the child with a disability. As one mother (27, Rural) put it, "she does not listen to us, the school should provide her with advice and guide her. Similarly, the school should from time to time remind the other students of how to deal with such disabled children".

Question	Theme
In what ways do you think that the school could handle the issues that are concerning you most?	Need for awareness and counselling
	Need for trained SEN teachers
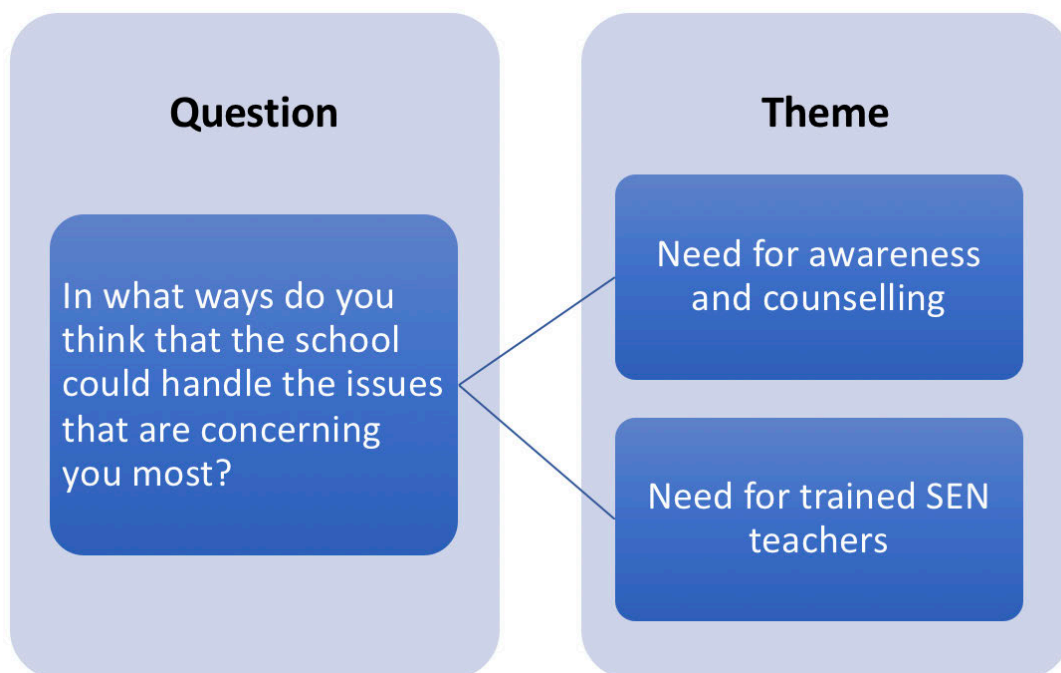
Figure 4.4. Results of thematic coding: Parents' perceptions on how the school could address the concerns

It is worth noting that apart from the need for counselling for the children affected by name calling and bullying, parents highlighted the need for counselling for

the parents too. This points to the fact that parents undergo psychological stress in raising a child with SEN:

> I think counselling is very important … not only to the children even to the parents I sometime feel the parents get into depression because when you have such kind of children you know when they cannot play around, when they cannot do when other children could do. Counselling is very much important. (Father 6, Urban)

Need for trained SEN teachers

The need for trained SEN teachers who can handle children with behavioural problems and provide behavioural intervention was raised by the urban parents (n=4) of children with these difficulties, for example:

> ... if there was … trained SEN teachers so that these teachers know about such children and deal accordingly, then I thought our children would benefit a lot. As of now there is shortage of SEN teachers. There is just one SEN teacher handling all the children with SEN and it is very difficult for her to handle. (Mother 15, Urban)

Discussion

Data reporting on benefits of inclusive education for children with SEN and their parents in Bhutan, along with some parental concerns and suggestions for handling those concerns, are discussed. These parental perceptions have helped to highlight key issues related to the effectiveness of inclusive education that pertain to social outcomes for the students, the nature of care and support in schools, a specific focus on mobility and speech development, and a sense of satisfaction for parents along with alleviation of their constant burden of care. Moreover, directions for strengthening

inclusive education that involve disability awareness, counselling for students and their families and building teacher expertise are proposed.

Benefits for children

Positive social outcomes

Perceived benefits related to positive social outcomes were defined by increased social interaction, independence and positive behavioural changes. It was predominantly the urban parents of children with mild-to-moderate developmental disorders who reported on these outcomes and this finding is consistent with the findings of previous research in social participation (Koster, Pijl, Nakken, & Van Houten, 2010). Also, in agreement with other studies (e.g., Cicero & Pfadt, 2002; Keen, Brannigan, & Cuskelly 2007), parents of children with developmental disabilities indicated an increase in their children's independence in toileting after inclusion in mainstream schools.

In line with positive behavioural outcomes parents reported decreased aggression and expansion of interest on a task for their children, as had been previously revealed (McCurdy & Cole, 2014; Roberts, Mazzucchelli, Studman, & Sanders, 2006). Although the current study did not investigate the kind of interventions teachers and parents used to generate these positive social outcomes, it may be assumed that some interventions have been applied. It is also very likely that positive social outcomes are also reinforced by "natural contingencies" (Gena, 2006) such as being exposed to non-disabled peers and imitating their behaviours, rather than by the intervention reinforcements.

Earlier research (e.g., Fish, 2006; Whitaker, 2007) presented parental concerns about including their children with developmental disabilities in inclusive schooling. However, in this study, it was mainly the parents of children with severe developmental

disabilities who pointed to anxiety and challenging behaviours in their children. Parents' fear that their children will create a commotion in the classroom and disrupt learning activities underpinned these particular parental concerns, as has been shown in previous studies (Leyser & Kirk, 2004; O'Connor, 2007; Rogers, 2007). Similarly, they fear that the aggressive and erratic behaviour of their children may physically hurt their peers in the mainstream classroom. This finding reflects the need for parents and teachers to collaborate and use therapies such as Applied Behaviour Analysis and Early Start Denver Model programmes to increase useful behaviours and reduce those behaviours that cause harm and interfere with learning.

Interestingly some parents are worried that their children's moderate disabilities will be exacerbated upon seeing the behaviour of peers with severe disabilities. They fear that their child will start imitating the inappropriate behaviour of their peers with severe disabilities, which is similar to the evidence from parents in a study by Rafferty and Griffin (2005). Similarly, parents of non-disabled children in Bhutan fear that their children "would contract some aspect of disability" (MoE, 2017c, p. 46). This finding suggests caution around these kinds of views that parents hold, as it may build doubts about including their children in inclusive schools.

Caring and supportive schools

Caring and supportive schools emerged as a common benefit across the three schools in this study and the nature of care and support provided by the teachers depended upon the type of disability in each case and the location of the schools. Due to the availability of resources and better health care facilities in the urban region, the parents in this region had greater advantages compared to those in the semi-urban and rural regions. A lack of quality health services, social service opportunities, education opportunities and transportation in rural regions add stress and hardship to families and

children alike, all of whom desperately require these services (Beloin & Peterson, 2000). Therefore, the less resourced conditions in the rural and semi-urban regions may be a factor in schools not accepting and including children with developmental disabilities in the schools. Here, further research is needed to investigate schools that do not have children with developmental disabilities but only children with physical disabilities. Despite the variations in resourcing, most of the parents described the school as an "invaluable source of support" (Ludlow, Skelly, & Rohleder, 2012, p. 390).

One of the interesting outcomes identified, in relation to caring and supportive schools, in the rural and semi-urban schools was the use of peer support for the children with physical disabilities. This finding highlights the absence of full-time caregivers in the schools to manage mobility and self-care needs. However, research suggests that peer support provisions are emerging as an effective alternative to the over-reliance on adult caregivers for intervention in middle and high schools (Carter & Kennedy, 2006; Downing, 2006). Further, Carter and Kennedy (2006) recommend these interventions may involve one or two non-disabled peers providing social and academic support to their classmates with severe disabilities under the supervision of adults. Additionally, the Buddhist cultural values of compassion and inter-connectedness accepts and accommodates inclusion of children with disability in the society that further provides opportunities in implementing policies and practices (Dorji, 2015; Schuelka 2015, Subba et al., 2018). It is worth mentioning here that the provision of paraprofessionals and caregivers was recently recognised for the first time in the Standards for Inclusive Education (MoE, 2017b).

Children's feelings of being included were identified as another aspect of caring and supportive schools. In agreement with Leyser and Kirk's (2004) research in the US, parents reported that their children have feelings of acceptance and comfort upon

seeing other children with SEN in the school and that they also recognise the non-disabled peers becoming more accepting and sensitive to individual differences. This finding could be attributed to the accommodating environment and effective awareness of individual differences in the school community. However, it can be argued that this may not always be the case, as children who have behavioural difficulties are often rejected and not liked by their non-disabled peers (Ališauskas, Kaffemanienė, Melienė, & Miltenienė, 2011; Fernández-Alcántara et al., 2017; Mand, 2007).

Paradoxically, although parents reported on the support and care provided by the schools to their children, these parents also shared concerns for name calling and bullying as confirmed in studies in Bhutan (MoE, 2017c; Schuelka, 2015). Schuelka (2015) commented on the cultural practice of giving people names, based on their physical attributes, during random encounters on the street, usually by complete strangers and the acceptance of name calling as a "term of endearment and as a negative name to call a person with a disability" (p. 825). However, in agreement with other studies (Ališauskas et al. 2011; Chmiliar, 2009), parents feel hurt and the victimised children feel rejected and isolated, often expressing frustration with teasing and bullying. They, therefore, develop negative attitudes towards attending school. These concerns are even more worrying for parents of children with limited communication ability. Therefore, it is important that monitoring of victimisation is conducted regularly rather than relying on self-report. Apart from teachers being vigilant, appropriate information may be sought from non-disabled peers. Further, consistent advocacy by SENCOs, teachers and other members of the schools amongst the school children would prove beneficial. In addition, professional school counsellors can serve as beneficial advocate for both parents and their children with SEN in times of distress.

Mobility gain and speech development

Surprisingly, most of the rural parents of children with mobility issues reported that their children are able to walk independently to school after being included in the mainstream schools. These parents believe that the therapeutic support provided at home has been significant in making it possible for their children to walk. This finding could be attributed to the consistent support from the parents at home, and the peer support as discussed earlier may motivate and serve as a role model.

Interestingly, half of the parents interviewed reported some positive speech development in their children. It was mainly the parents in the urban region who attributed these gains to the support from the speech therapist and the SEN teachers. However, language and communication skills do not improve by chance, and SEN teachers and other professionals should ensure a learning environment that is conducive for the development of language and communication skills (Allen & Cowdery, 2012). This finding points to the effectiveness of the intervention both at school and at home as a result of collaborative efforts between parents, therapists and the SEN teachers.

Academic gains

In agreement with other studies (Lindsay, 2007; Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009), there were very few parents of children with physical disabilities who pointed to academic gains for their children. However, these parents did not explicitly discuss the extent of gains of academic learning. This finding highlights that despite the parents not providing academic support to their children at home, reasonable gains in academic learning are evident. However, there is also empirical evidence that indicates a greater level of academic achievement for children with SEN when their parents are involved (Carter, Sisco, Melekoglu, & Kurkowski, 2007).

Although it has been found that parents with higher levels of education become involved in their children's education, than parents with lower levels of education (Šukys, Dumčienė, & Lapėnienė, 2015), none of the parents in the urban region reported academic gains. This finding may indicate that these parents do not have expectations of academic learning due to the severity of the disability in their children. Instead, the parents in this study emphasised functional skills as more beneficial than academic learning for their children, as has been found in previous research (Kenny, Shevlin, Walsh, & McNeela, 2005).

Interestingly, parents in the rural region indicated that they do not have any concerns about including their children with physical disabilities in the mainstream school along with non-disabled children. As expected, they have minimal involvement in their child's education and no collaboration with the school teachers (Jigyel et al., 2018) due to their low educational level and socioeconomic status and personal constraints, which is in agreement with other studies (Brandon & Brown, 2009; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). These parents also reported that they are happy with the school's support and care extended to their children and are thankful to the government. This finding also may be explained by the fact that, in general, the Bhutanese culture of complacency and unquestioning faith in teachers (Phuntsho, 2000, 2013) would have deterred reporting of their concerns or it may be these parents "just do not care about their children's education" (Taub, 2006, p. 56).

Benefits for parents

With respect to how the benefits of IE for their children has had an impact on these parents, the findings confirm that parents addressed their perceptions according to the type of inclusion of their children. It is worth noting that it is mainly the mothers who have been relieved from the burden of caring for their children. It was highlighted

that in the past these mothers were stay-in-school mothers, but with progression of

inclusion, these children attained independence from parental assistance. Further, the

teachers and non-disabled children in the schools also care for and assist these children.

Therefore, these parents indicated that they have opportunities to tend to domestic work

at home, look after siblings, work for extra income and run a business, to name a few.

In addition, it was mainly the parents of children with partial inclusion (without

access to mainstream classroom) who reported on their satisfaction with the support

from schools and, more importantly, the fact that their children are engaged in the

school. Despite moderate or no gains in academic learning, behaviours and social skills,

these parents indicated their sense of satisfaction from having included their children in

the mainstream schools.

How schools can address parental concerns

Strategies for strengthening inclusive education that have been identified in

these parents' perceptions are related to disability awareness, counselling for students

and their families and increased teacher expertise in teaching students with SEN.

Need for awareness and counselling

In addressing how the schools could support the parents with their

concerns of name calling and bullying, it was perceived that there is a need for

increased awareness of their children's disabilities within the school community.

Coincidentally, the results are in agreement with a recent large-scale study (MoE,

2017c) that revealed extremely limited knowledge and awareness in Bhutan about

disability. The notion of disability awareness has been explored in many contexts as

communities move towards increased inclusion in education. It can be argued that

disability awareness interventions have been found to have an impact on knowledge

about, attitudes towards and acceptance of students with disabilities in schools (Ison et

al., 2010; Lindsay & Edwards, 2013). A study in Australia with 259 non-disabled students in secondary schools reported that those students who received more sessions of awareness on disability programmes, had more favourable attitudes towards students with disabilities than those students who had less sessions (Rillotta & Nettelbeck, 2007).

The parents emphasised the need for counselling support from the school for both themselves and the children. It was mainly the parents of children with severe developmental disabilities in the urban school who felt the need for such support. In addition, these parents emphasised their feeling of depression in caring for children with SEN. Therefore, this finding reflects the need for intervention of professional school counsellors and their role is increasingly important (Taub, 2006). Similarly, school counsellors can help parents to overcome "barriers" (Taub, 2006, p.56) that impede their involvement in the child's education by offering alternative times for meetings, conducting home or worksite visits and collaborating with parents as partners. However, it is timely that the Standards of IE SEN have emphasised eliminating discrimination and bullying of children with SEN in the schools and the need for counselling support for those affected (MoE, 2017b).

Need for trained SEN teachers

In agreement with previous studies in Bhutan (Chhetri, 2015; Dorji, 2015a; Kamenopoulou & Dukpa, 2017) it is worrying that Bhutanese teachers lack expertise in handling children with SEN in mainstream classrooms and the SEN unit. Further formal teacher preparation in Bhutan for IE is "almost non-existent" (Kamenopoulou & Dukpa, 2017, p. 4). This issue of the expertise of teachers in inclusive education has been the focus of considerable international research (Ashan, Deppeler, & Sharma, 2013; Bukvić, 2014; Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2014) and underpins the development of

training programmes in inclusive education for initial teacher education as well as in-service education for practising teachers as mandated in the Standards of IE (MoE, 2017b).

Limitations

The current study has some methodological limitations that require attention. Firstly, although the study intended to interview participants who are proficient either in Dzongkha or English, finding participants who would fit this criterion, particularly in the semi-urban and rural regions, posed a major challenge. Therefore, the interviews were conducted in their own local dialect with assistance of an interpreter. Standard translation procedures and various safeguards were considered for the process of translation. However, it was fortunate that the first author spoke many languages and could accommodate this variation. Secondly, due to the schools in the semi-urban and rural areas providing only full inclusion, it was beyond the researcher's control to include an equal number of parents representing children with full and partial inclusion as intended. Including more parents of partially included children would have undoubtedly elicited further insights into their perspectives on the benefits and concerns of inclusion.

Recommendations

This study has proposed some valuable ideas for the schools, professionals, policy makers and other stakeholders alike to recognise and address the benefits and concerns as perceived by these parents. A key finding of this study is that parents are particularly concerned about the absence of trained teachers for children with SEN. Therefore, it is suggested that the Ministry of Education and other concerned agencies consider these provisions as a priority for implementation at the earliest convenience. The study also highlights the need for caregivers and paraprofessionals as a means for

easing the burden on the teachers with large class sizes and the stay-in-school mothers of children with severe developmental disabilities. Similarly, the practice of respite care in Bhutan is long overdue especially for parents in need of respite from caring for their children around the clock. It is suggested that the government, policy makers, practitioners and concerned agencies develop and implement comprehensive respite care support for families raising children with developmental disabilities and behaviour problems. Further, the Government and concerned agencies should also find ways of providing professional and therapy services in the rural regions that could benefit the children and their parents. Finally, the study also highlights the need for advocacy and awareness in the school community of including children with SEN and the need for counselling services to both the parents and the children.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

We, the Research Masters/PhD candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that the following text, figures and diagrams are the candidate's original work.

Type of work	Page number/s
Figure 4.1	95
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CHAPTER 5

Parental Involvement in Supporting Their Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) at School and at Home in Bhutan

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Parental Involvement in Supporting Their Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) at School and at Home in Bhutan

Abstract

This paper reports a qualitative study that aimed to explore parents' involvement in supporting their children with SEN/disabilities both at school and at home in Bhutan. Further, the study also examined the interaction between the parents themselves in supporting each other. Individual interviews were carried out with twenty-six parents (13 fathers and 13 mothers) of children with either full inclusion or partial inclusion in the three schools located in three regions (rural, semi-urban and rural) and analysed using manual thematic coding and Leximancer text-mining software. The urban parents are comparatively more involved than the parents in the other two regions both at school and at home after school due to their children's severe developmental disabilities and the need for constant care. The results also indicated minimal interaction amongst the parents, and it was the stay-in-school urban mothers who have consistent interaction with other parents in the school. These interactions are impromptu and informal. The implications relate to the development of parenting education programmes and parent support groups to strengthen parental involvement in the education of their children with SEN in Bhutan.

Introduction

Parental involvement in their children's education is important as it contributes to the "educational process and experiences of their children" (Jeynes, 2007, p. 245). It can involve participation in school activities concerning the child as well as school-associated activities at home, such as homework (Smit, Driessen, Sluiter, & Sleegers, 2007). Parental involvement for children with SEN is even more crucial due to the fact that parents have a "unique understanding of their child's needs" (Lo, 2008, p. 405). They are considered the best advocates for their child's interests and making decisions about what is best for the child. When families have children with special educational needs (SEN), parental involvement is increasingly being considered to be irreplaceable (Balli, 2016; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Lo, 2008) as there is a strong correlation between parental involvement and these children's attendance, academic achievement, behaviour and social skills (Lendrum, Barlow & Humphrey 2015; Šukys, Dumčienė & Lapėnienė 2015). Parental involvement in education plays a critical role in children's holistic development through nurturing (Harris, 2009) and, on this basis, parents are encouraged to look for specific ways to enhance their children's development. In addition, parental involvement in education can be beneficial for the parents themselves. Since parents of children with SEN experience a high degree of stress with regard to the future of their children, it has been argued that if they are deeply involved in the education of their children, their stress levels will decrease and they will experience greater self-confidence and sense of fulfilment (Reio & Forines, 2011).

Parents also become involved through parent-to-parent relationships and support groups, which is an important aspect of parental involvement in education. Parent support groups can provide opportunities for parents to gain knowledge and skills in coping with their child's SEN and improving their parenting skills (Lo, 2010). Parents gain moral support and encouragement within relationships that are more equal

and less discriminatory than others related to education (Galpin et al., 2017; McCabe, 2008; Shilling et al., 2013), and parents in these relationships can experience a reduced sense of isolation, loneliness and guilt (Shilling et al., 2013).

However, despite widespread acknowledgement of the value of parental involvement in schooling, parents of children with SEN experience barriers (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) that impede their participation in their children's education. Some of these barriers arise due to cultural and linguistic diversity, family composition, parents' educational levels and socioeconomic status, personal constraints such as lack of time, transportation and child care (Brandon, 2007; Graham-Clay, 2005; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Jigyel, Miller, Mavropoulou, & Berman, 2018; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). For example, Lo (2008) reported that Chinese American parents of children with SEN are not involved in the education of their children with SEN due to barriers such as language, inflexible working time and lack of transportation and child services. Therefore, these Chinese American parents use a variety of community resources and informal networks to support their children at home, with the intention of counterbalancing school learning (Lo, 2008) and being more focused on systematic teaching at home (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Similarly, Lithuanian parents with a higher level of education are significantly more involved at home and school than others in the education of their children with SEN (Šukys et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the nature of a child's disability can affect parental involvement in schooling (Bennett & Hay, 2007; Benson, Karlof, & Siperstein, 2008). Some studies (Benson et al., 2008; Lecavalier, Leone, & Wiltz, 2006) have suggested that parents of children with ASD reduce their involvement in the school. Conversely, it has also been found that the more severe the physical disability a child has, the greater the participation of parents in the schooling of the child (Bennett & Hay, 2007; Newman, 2005).

These complexities that underpin parental involvement and that are evident in previous research need to be understood in the Bhutanese context. This study aims to shed some light on parental involvement, particularly in supporting children with SEN both in school and at home. The study also extends to some aspects of interaction within the parents themselves. Using the Epstein model of "overlapping spheres of influence" (Epstein, 1992, p. 2) as a theoretical framework, parental involvement at school, at home and with other parents can be explicitly understood through six types of parent actions in the education of children (Epstein, 1987).

Within these three spheres of influence there are six activities: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. As defined by Epstein (1987), in *parenting*, parents provide basic needs to the child, of food, clothing, shelter, health and safety. They also provide school supplies, help the child complete school-related work and establish home environments that encourage learning and good behaviour in the school. In *communicating*, Epstein emphasises a two-way communication between the parents and the school with a focus on the progress of the child. The channels of communication may involve phone calls, home visits, conferences and other school programmes. *Learning at home* involves parents providing learning opportunities at home with development of social skills and basic daily living skills, helping with homework and school-related activities and therapeutic support. *Volunteering* is recruiting and organising parent help and support at school, home and other locations. In *decision making*, parents actively participate in the decision-making processes in the school as a member of the school management committee. In this way, parents can also take ownership of their child's education and can actively influence policies and decisions. *Collaborating with the community* focuses on parental involvement with services and resources in the community to support schools, students and their family practices. It also includes parents' efforts to

communicate with other parents to share experiences and information that can enrich their lives.

Alhough there are numerous studies on parental involvement in educating children with SEN in many parts of the world, there is a dearth of studies on parental involvement in Bhutan. As an increasing number of children with SEN have been included in schools in Bhutan recently this study is necessary and timely. The findings presented here are part of a larger qualitative study that investigated Bhutanese parents' experiences, perspectives and knowledge of aspects of the education of their children with SEN in three schools in Bhutan.

Method

A qualitative research design was used to explore and understand the "real world experiences" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013, p.21) of parents of thirteen children with SEN attending three schools located in urban (Thimphu), semi-urban (Paro) and rural (Samtse) regions in Bhutan. These twenty-six parents were individually interviewed as part of a larger study (see Table 5.1). Recruiting these parents using a purposive sampling strategy, ensured the following inclusion criteria:

- All parents had children with disabilities enrolled in one of the three schools in urban, semi-urban or rural regions,
- All parents had children with disabilities with at least two years of enrolment in a participating school,
- All parents had children with disabilities attending full inclusion[11] or partial inclusion[12] in the schools,

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[11] Full inclusion refers to full placement in a regular classroom.
[12] Partial inclusion refers to a combination of placement in the regular classroom and in an SEN unit, or part day attendance in an SEN unit.

- The father and the mother of the same child would be interviewed,

- All parents would be proficient either in Dzongkha[13] (national language) or English.

Table 5.1. Profile of parent participants by location and school placement

Location/Region	Level of Placement	No. of Parents
Changangkha / Urban (Thimphu)	Full Inclusion	6
	Partial Inclusion	4
	Partial Inclusion (without access to mainstream classroom)	4
Drugyel / Semi-Urban (Paro)	Full Inclusion	4
Tendu / Rural (Samtse)	Full Inclusion	8

The interview

An open-ended interview guide (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) was designed to explore parents' experiences and perceptions of parental involvement in supporting their children both at school and at home. To explore parental involvement, the following questions were formulated. These questions were part of a more extensive interview guide; however, for this study, the following questions were asked.

Theme 1. Parental involvement in schooling

Primary question 1

[13]Although Dzongkha is the national language in Bhutan there are more than 20 different languages spoken, which creates difficulties in communication for all people in Bhutan.

Would you tell me your role in supporting your child attending this school?

Primary question 2

Would you tell me your role in supporting your child after school?

Theme 2. Interaction with other parents of children with SEN

Primary question

Would you share with me about your interaction with other parents of children with a disability?

Probing question

What do you think of having such interaction with other parents regarding your child's participation in the school?

Positionality

Positionality "reflects the position that the researcher has chosen to adopt within a given research study" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 71). As a researcher, "it is critical to pay attention to positionality, reflexivity, the production of knowledge and the power relations that are inherent in research process in order to undertake ethical research" (Sultana, 2007, p. 380). Cohen, et al., (2011) state that reflexivity is "the concept that researchers should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research, seeking to understand their part in it, or influence on the research" (p. 225), thus informing positionality.

In raising a son with autism spectrum disorder, who attends one of the participating IE schools in this study, the primary researcher developed an interest in investigating the experiences, perspectives and knowledge of Bhutanese parents of children with SEN attending these pilot IE schools. Therefore, at the beginning of every interview the primary researcher explained his position as a father of a child with SEN which created an environment that was conducive and open for the participants to

communicate. Reasonable steps were adopted for trustworthiness and consistency by adhering to standard procedures in data collection and interpretation of the data without bias.

Procedure

Following ethics approval (Human Research Ethics Committee, University of New England; Ministry of Education in Bhutan), the primary author implemented the data collection procedures. The principals of the three schools were first contacted and arrangements were made to meet the SEN coordinators (SENCO). Then, with the assistance of the SENCOS, parents who met the inclusion criteria were identified. Information sheets, consent forms and invitations were sent to the potential participants from the principal.

Individual interviews were conducted using the developed interview schedule both in English and Dzongkha (using a standard translation procedure), and assistance was sought from an interpreter for parents who preferred to speak in their native language, Lhotshamkha. The interview venue varied according to the parents' preferences, and included, schools, offices, homes and, in one case, a car (the parent had temporary mobility issues). Interviews were completed in approximately fifty minutes. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were handed to the respective participants for member checking (Creswell, 2014). In member checking, the parents were asked to review their interview responses, verify the interpretive accuracy and add any other information that may have been missed during the interview ensuring trustworthiness of the data.

Data analysis

Qualitative data for twenty-six parents involving fathers (n=13) and mothers (n=13) were collected and analysed to provide their perspectives, experiences and

knowledge for inclusive education of children with SEN. These fathers and mothers were interviewed separately to understand the gender perspectives of their involvement in supporting their children with SEN in school and at home. In analysing the interview transcripts, two different methods were employed: thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and Leximancer Version 4.5 (Smith, 2000) text-mining software. The thematic analysis identified the common themes and sub-themes and the first three authors performed an inter-coder reliability check for the first three full transcripts, which were coded independently. Where differences occurred between the coders, all three coders worked together to develop consensus around a common code for each of the segments of the transcripts. In addition, the interview transcripts were analysed using Leximancer. Where appropriate, the sections of transcripts that addressed each of the interview questions were run separately by Leximancer and analysed.

Leximancer is a computer software that contains techniques adopted from the areas of "computational linguistics, network theory, machine learning, and information science" (Grech, Horberry, & Smith 2002, p. 1). Leximancer searches or mines texts automatically or through "hand-seeding parameters" (Penn-Edwards, 2010, p.253) devised by the user for identifying "key themes, concepts, and ideas" (Leximancer, 2007). The outputs are presented visually in the form of concept maps, network clouds and concept thesauruses (Smith & Humphreys, 2006; Appendix I). Therefore, Leximancer can complement, rather than replace, human interpretation and analysis of large corpi of text, thereby enriching manual thematic coding and providing analysis triangulation which can improve validity or trustworthiness.

Findings

In this section, the findings of the manual thematic coding and Leximancer are presented for the two themes *parental involvement in the schooling of the child* and *interaction with other parents of children with SEN*.

Theme 1: Parental involvement in the schooling of the child

All parents were asked to report their role in supporting their children to both attend school and with after school care. The types of support parents seem to provide their children to attend school include getting the child ready for school in the morning, transporting the child to school and assistance as caregivers during school hours. Similarly, the parents' roles after school include getting their children from school, academic support for some children and home-based support for a few children. In the urban region, both parents are equally involved in supporting their children either in attending school or after school. In contrast, in the semi-urban and rural regions, it is the mothers who support their children on all occasions, with fathers reporting that they have engagements in the farmlands or in other businesses.

Sub-theme 1: Support in school attendance

The main support for the children's attendance from all parents is preparing the children and transporting them to school. In the urban region, almost all the parents (*n*=13/14) are responsible for taking their children to school. A parent reported on their relative engagement in taking the child to school when she said, "Sometime whoever gets early like sometime if I am not quite busy I go and reach[14] my kid and then most of the time we both go and then sometime my husband goes and drops him to school" (Mother 7, Urban).

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[14] The word "reach" here implies "take the child to the school".

Similarly, mothers (*n*=3/4) from the rural region discussed how they help their children get ready for school and take them to school. For example, Mother 25, as well as helping her child get ready for school, further reported how in the past she had sat beside her child in the classroom and supported him with writing tasks:

> I do prepare him by washing him, help him wear his clothes, give him food. Then I send him along with his friends in the afternoon to the school. When he was of smaller age I used to bring him to the school and take him back to home. But now I do not need to reach him and get him back home.

However, two urban mothers (*n*=2) reported their role as stay-in-school parents due to the fact that there is no school funding for employing teacher assistants and caregivers. For example, Mother 2 of a child with high needs, talked about assisting her child with self-care (i.e. using the toilet and eating lunch). Further, she also reported extending her support to other children by escorting them from the SEN unit to the mainstream classrooms.

> I help him with his toilet needs, during the lunch time I make him eat his lunch, …. When he has sessions in the mainstream classroom, since the location is up there I take him up there and not only my child, since I am here in the school whole day, I also help by taking other children whose parents are not here.

The fathers in the semi-urban and rural regions reported not being able to support their child attending school due to their work and are fully dependent on their wives:

> As I am busy with my taxi and I have to travel a lot I am not in a position to support my child every time. Most of the time it is my wife who goes to the school with him and stays with the son all the time. (Father 18, Semi-Urban)

Sub-theme 2: Academic and social support after school hours

In terms of parental support after school hours, the parents in the urban region reported that they are involved in providing home-based therapeutic support and academic support for some children. Almost all parents reported providing home-based therapeutic intervention for their child, depending on the needs of the child:

> So, when I reach home I do ask her what she has been taught in the school, what did you do today in the school and this is what I talk about to her. Then I also make her practise eye contact and for about half an hour I make it a point that I talk with her. She responds to me using her hands but I do not let her do that. She does not look at me so I make her look at me. So, this is what I am doing nowadays. (Mother 5, Urban)

Father 6 (Urban) talked about helping his child with homework assigned by the school, although he emphasised that he does not force the child too much in doing it. He said, "After school at home I guide him and of course I guide him means I teach him little bit if there [is] homework but I don't pressure much I always keep him independent".

It was observed that the parents in the semi-urban and rural regions do not provide academic support for their children after school. This was explained in terms of their limited educational background. For example, Father 20, Rural said, "As both of us are not educated and we cannot teach her". However, a few parents (n=4/26) reported providing home-based support, mainly physiotherapy exercises. For example, Mother 27 (Rural) said, "For her at home what can we do? It is all about her exercise. I help her with exercise. For her it is all about exercise other than that what can she do".

Leximancer analysis

The responses of all twenty-six parents for the theme *parental role in the schooling of the child* was further analysed using Leximancer. The feature of tag

categories was incorporated as part of the tools available with Leximancer. Using tag features allowed analysis of the data for the parents based on different regions (urban, semi-urban and rural) with a concept map (see Figure 5.1). Such provision enabled detection of trends in the responses and the opportunity to make comparisons of parents from the three different regions based on how the themes and concepts are positioned on the map.
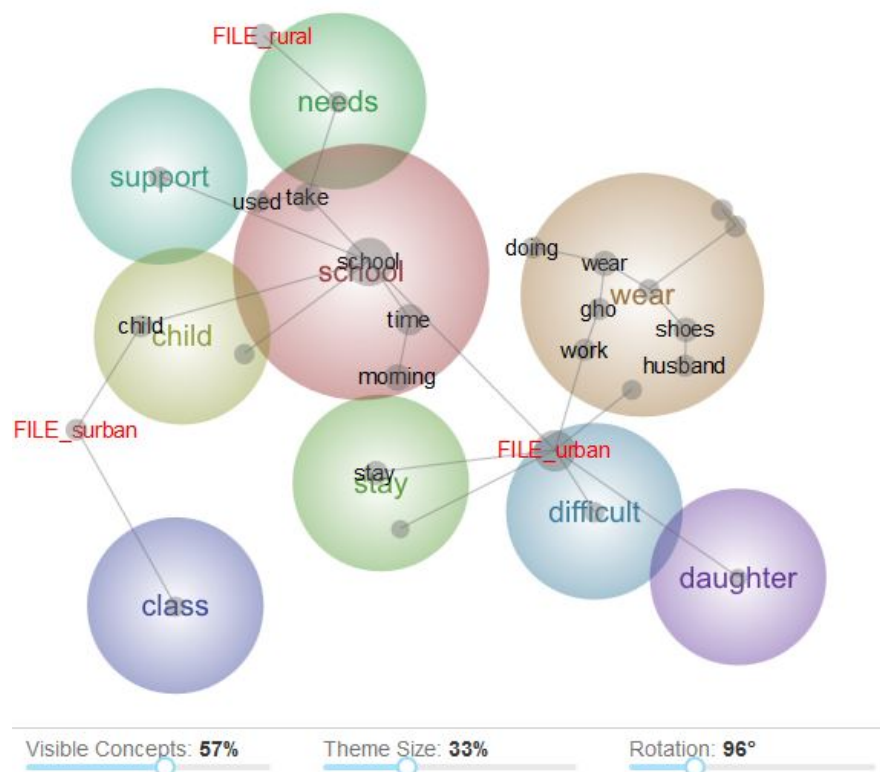
Figure 5.1. Concept map for parental role in the schooling of the child, comparison between groups.

The concept map includes themes and corresponding concepts clustered within the theme circle. These clusters of concepts form the themes as represented by the circles and are heat-mapped to indicate the importance. The concepts are shown on the map as dots. The prominence of the concept in the map is indicated by the size of the dot, the bigger the dot the more prominent the concept is. The concepts that tend to settle near one another in the concept map and attract one another strongly is the result

of these concepts appearing together in the same pieces of text. As shown in Figure 5.1, the positions of the themes and concepts can determine the closeness of the "semantic relationship" (Cretchley, Rooney & Gallios, 2010, p. 320; Scott, Masser & Pachana, 2015, p. 2185) between the themes and concepts. Overlapping theme circles illustrate some of the concepts being common to the overlapping themes. Similarly, if a theme or concept sits close to the regions marked on the map, it is relatively more associated with that region. Further, if the theme is more centrally located more on the map, the more it is shared across all the regions marked. The concept map also indicates "key themes" (Cretchley et al., 2010, p 321) as circles in rank order with the dominant themes (cluster of semantically related concepts) appearing in the centre of the map. A list of representative excerpts is generated by Leximancer as an output linked to these themes and concepts to understand how and why the concepts appear together in the transcripts.

In considering the excerpts for the dominant themes of *school* and *wear*, it is observed that there is consistency with the thematic analysis, therefore strongly confirming the results for the theme *parental role in the schooling of the child.* For instance, as discussed in the thematic analysis section on the theme of *parental role in the schooling of the child*, parents prepare their child for the *school* every morning by helping them *wear* clothes. Further, as shown in Figure 5.1, most of the themes and corresponding concepts cluster around the urban region, therefore indicating that, over-all, parents in the urban region are more involved in the schooling of the child than the parents in the semi-urban and rural regions.

In summary, parents' support for their children involves transporting the children to school and providing some home-based intervention as per the needs of the children. A few parents in the urban region, mainly fathers, support their children with

academic learning after school. It is mothers in the semi-urban and rural regions who take the lead role in supporting their child at home.

Theme 2: Interaction with other parents of children with disability

All parents were asked to talk about their interaction with other parents of children with SEN. Some of the parents from urban settings (*n*=4/14), predominantly stay-in-school mothers, shared their experiences of interacting with other parents. When their children are engaged in the classrooms and the SEN unit, these parents frequently have the opportunity to interact with each other. However, there were some parents (*n*=10/26) who have minimal impromptu interaction with other parents either at school, associated with parent–teacher meetings or outside of school. The remainder of the parents (*n*=12) across the various regions indicated that they have no interaction with other parents due to their obligations for work and other engagements.

Sub-theme 1: Awareness/ Sharing information about the child

Parents (*n*=15/26), mainly mothers, reported having casual discussions with other parents on issues such as sharing information on the nature of disability, behavioural issues and management of their children at home. They appreciated being able to share this knowledge with other parents of children with SEN and they reported they are able to raise awareness of inclusion for some parents who may not know about it.

> Yes, we have to interact with them. Some parents do not put their child in school because they are ashamed, and I told them that my child is also disabled and once I put her in School A (name changed), she does not fear being in the crowd, she mingles with other children and if you also put your child in the school there will be some improvement. I do tell the parents if I come across, as they keep their child at home and do not put them in school. (Mother 5, Urban)

Sub-theme 2: Consolation

Half of the parents (n=8/14) who interact with other parents discussed their feelings of relief when they share with others about the children's disabilities. Furthermore, some of the parents reported comparing their children's disability to other children:

> When we have such discussions, we come to know that it is not only our child with such disability, there are also other children with disability, some even worse. We could also see more progress in our child as compared to some other children and it makes us feel at ease. (Mother 19, Semi-Urban)

Sub-theme 3: No interaction

Almost half of the parents (*n*=12) reported that they do not interact with other parents of children with SEN at all. This was explained as being due to their engagement with daily jobs for some and no contact with each other for some:

> I haven't met, maybe my colleague but we didn't talk much because we just happen to know that he has a son almost my daughter's age. But we happen to meet in odd place you know, public places where you can't basically talk properly. So, I would say no. (Father 4, Urban)

Leximancer analysis

Similarly, the responses of all twenty-six parents for the theme *interaction with other parents of children with disability* were further analysed using Leximancer, which generated a map of themes and concepts (see Figure 5.2) for parent groups from different regions by using features of tag categories.

The dominant themes of *child*, *problem*, *talk* and *disability* are more centrally located in the map than the other themes and the different region (urban, semi-urban and urban) category file tags as shown in Figure 5.2. Most of the dominant themes are

more salient to the urban region as shown by the proximity of the theme considered for the tagged group of regions. Such an arrangement of the themes and concepts indicates that comparatively more parents in the urban region are associated with these themes. Similarly, it also indicates that more parents in the urban region reported interacting with other parents of children with a disability. Further, it is evident that more mothers than fathers reported on these dominant themes.
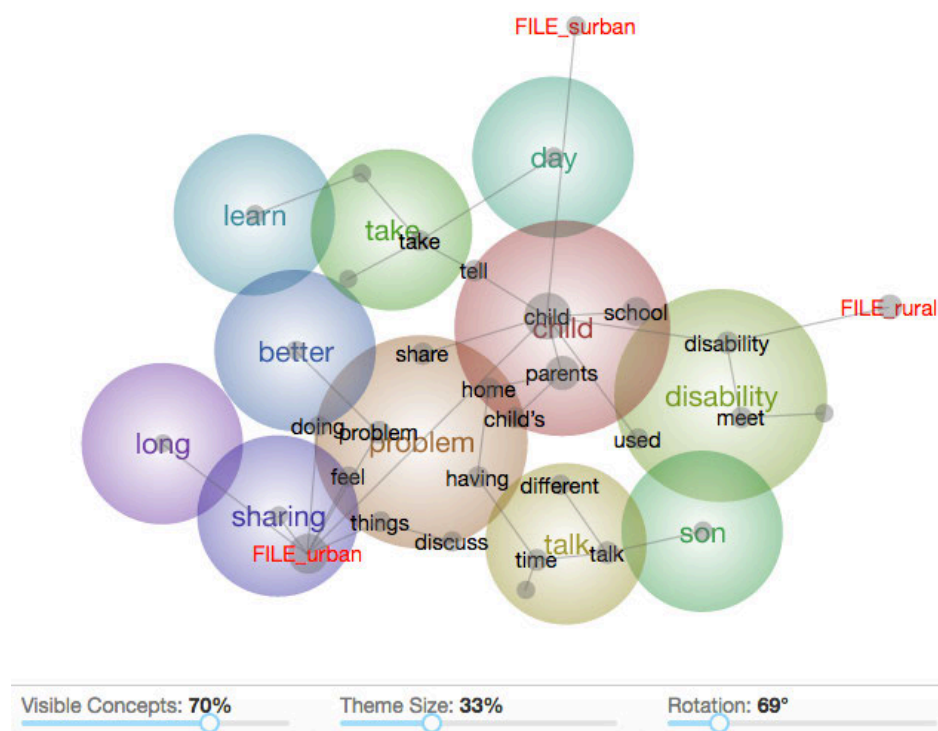
Figure 5.2. Concept map for interaction with other parents of children with disability, comparison in regions.

In addressing these themes and concepts, the Leximancer results are consistent with the results of thematic manual coding. Therefore, there is strong confirmation of the results as discussed for the theme *interaction with other parents of children with disability*.

In analysing the parents' discussion on their interaction with other parents of children with a disability, both forms of data analysis techniques, manual coding and

Leximancer analysis, produced similar results. It is confirmed that parents in the urban region, particularly the mothers, reported having more informal interaction with other parents of children with disability compared to parents in the other regions. A few fathers reported brief interactions either in the school or whenever they come across parents they know in other places. These parents mainly share information about the children's disabilities and how they support and manage their children. The parents reported feelings of relief when sharing information about their children and their parenting. The parents also talked about raising awareness for those parents who are not aware of the existence of inclusive schools that support children with SEN. There was no evidence of formal parent-to-parent support to initiate the interaction among these parents. Instead it was informal.

Discussion

The main finding of this study showed that urban parents are more involved than semi-urban or rural parents in supporting the needs of their children both at school and at home. Mothers in the semi-urban and rural regions are the primary supporters as their husbands are busy with farming or business and are unable to contribute. The findings of this study are in agreement with Dhingra, Manhas, and Sethi's (2007) outcomes that showed mothers are involved more than fathers in visiting schools and interacting with the teachers. There were a few stay-in-school mothers who have impromptu and informal interaction with each other; however, most of the parents either have minimal or no interaction with other parents. The types of parental involvement that were evident in this study were parenting, volunteering, learning at home and communicating with the community.

Parenting

Most of the parents in this study are involved in the daily routines of *parenting*, through providing the child with basic needs (help with washing, providing food, putting on clothes, to name a few) and transporting them to school, as has been identified in previous research (Newman, 2005; Vanderpuye, 2013). This finding may be explained by the severity of the disability that affects the gross motor skills, resulting in high level of dependence in relation to self-care needs and transportation to schools.

Fathers in semi-urban and rural regions are not involved in supporting the children either at school or at home and are completely dependent on the mothers who fulfill these roles. This evidence confirms the findings reported by Savelsberg (2014) in which fathers' work commitments, as well as their perceptions that they do not have a defined role, impede their involvement. In addition, the low level of education may also influence involvement in providing for the educational needs of their children (Afolabi, 2014; Brandon, 2007; Vanderpuye, 2013). This situation where fathers are less involved than mothers (Rogers, Wiener, Marton, & Tannock, 2009; Savelsberg, 2014) is of concern because the involvement of fathers can have far-reaching effects on their children's education (Carpenter & Towers, 2008; Greif & Greif, 2004) and also provide support to alleviate the mothers stress and increase family cohesion (Flippin & Crais, 2011). In these contexts, the need to include parental involvement in the national and school policies is critical for effective inclusive education of children with SEN. Similarly, the schools should put in measures to educate and motivate hard to reach parents about the importance of parental involvement in the education of the child. This need is explicitly reflected in the Bhutanese document *Realizing Vision 2020 Policy and Strategy* (Ministry of Health and Education, 2003), which states that "maximum participation by parents should be secured in order to achieve partnership in education"

(p.37), and in the *Standards for Inclusive Education 2017* (MoE, 2017b), which expects

schools to establish communication systems with families.

Volunteering

Interestingly, there were a few urban mothers involved as stay-in-school

mothers providing self-care assistance for children with severe developmental

disabilities (Jigyel et al., 2018), and these mothers voluntarily extend their assistance to

other children whose parents do not make it to the school. As such, *volunteering* is

happening informally and in response to the absence of caregivers and teachers' aides

in these schools. Further, the concept of employing caregivers and teachers' aides have

not been introduced in schools in Bhutan. Of note, the recent standards and policies

(MoE, 2017b) in Bhutan have outlined the need for caregivers and teachers' aides, but

such resources have not yet been made available in schools.

Learning at home

Most of the parents in the urban region are involved in supporting the

educational and therapeutic needs of their children at home, in contrast to only very few

parents, mainly mothers, providing such support in the semi-urban and rural regions.

Epstein (1987) describes this kind of involvement as *learning at home.* These findings

may be attributed to the fact that socioeconomic status has a significant role in

influencing the involvement of parents in the education of their children both at school

and at home, and higher levels of education were found in the urban families. Previous

studies have shown that parents of low socioeconomic status have lower levels of

involvement in supporting the educational needs of their children (Cooper, 2010; Lee &

Bowen, 2006) whereas middle-class parents are more involved in the education of their

children both at school and home (Lim, 2012; López & Stoelting, 2010). Also, parents

of children with severe developmental disabilities are less likely to be involved in

supporting their children with homework and other educational tasks (Newman, 2005; Vanderpuye, 2013).

Further, while most of these parents were involved in providing therapeutic support, a few urban fathers help with academic homework tasks, although they did not emphasise this much. This finding suggests that these parents may not have high expectations for academic learning, perhaps due to the severity of the disability in their children, or lack of confidence or time in providing this type of support for their child. Instead, the parents in this study emphasised functional skills as being more beneficial than academic learning for their children (Jigyel et al. 2018; Kenny, Shevlin, Walsh, & McNeela, 2005).

Collaborating with the community

Another finding of this study relates to the interaction between the parents of children with SEN which aligns with Epstein's (1987) *collaborating with the community*. The stay-in-school mothers in the urban region have consistent informal interaction due to the fact that these mothers stay in the school every day to provide self-care for their children and there are opportunities to interact with each other. These mothers exchange practical information about disabilities, coping strategies and awareness of inclusive education, which allows them to share knowledge and skills related to coping with their child's needs (Lo, 2010; McCabe, 2008; Shilling et al., 2013). Further, it was revealed that such interaction in parents provide a great sense of reciprocity and mutual support, acknowledging that giving support is as important as receiving it (Shilling et al., 2013).

A similar study with Chinese parents in Massachusetts, USA, found that the parents in this study felt that interaction with other parents of children with SEN makes them realise that there are other parents with similar issues and some even more

challenging than theirs (Lo, 2010). Therefore, it can be argued that a "shared social identity with other parents" (Shilling et al., 2013, p.605) fosters a sense of community, belonging, empowerment and feelings of less isolation and guilt (Galpin et al., 2017; Lo, 2010; McCabe, 2008; Shilling et al., 2013). More importantly, the parents emphasised that they have a feeling of "emotional support and comfort" (McCabe, 2008, p. 312) in sharing their experiences with other parents of children with SEN. This finding implies the positive influence on the well-being of the parents of children with SEN as they progress through different phases of life in bringing up their children.

As expected in agreement with other studies most of the parents either have minimal impromptu interaction or no interaction with other parents of children with SEN due to their personal constraints (e.g. lack of time, lack of transportation, lack of child care) (Brandon 2007; Jigyel et al., 2018; LaRocque, et al., 2011). It can be assumed that due to the absence of parent support groups or other similar agencies, the opportunities to meet and discuss issues about their experiences are limited.

Parent responses to the questions in this study revealed they are using the four types of parental involvement of *parenting, volunteering, supporting learning at home* and *collaborating with the community*. There was little evidence related to *communicating* and *decision making*. However, responses to other questions in the wider study have provided evidence related to *communicating*, in that most of the parents (n=22/26) have minimal or no communication with the teachers and other school personnel and that one-way communication from teachers to parents was predominant, although there were a few stay-in-school mothers who have consistent communication with teachers (Jigyel et al., 2018). Similarly, it was revealed that all the parents are not involved in *decision making* in the framing of policies and legislations for IE of children with SEN both at school level and national level (Jigyel et al., 2018).

Limitations

This study has included some methodological challenges that should be acknowledged. First, there were only a few participants that were parents of children with SEN partially included and they all resided in the urban region. It was beyond the researchers control to include an equal number of parents of children with partial inclusion and full inclusion as intended as the schools in the rural and semi-urban regions provide only full inclusion placements. Including more parents of children with partial inclusion would have undoubtedly provided further insights into their perspectives of involvement in the schooling of their children and their interaction with other parents alike. Another challenge is derived from the medium of language in interviewing these parents. Although this study intended to interview parents either in Dzongkha or English, finding parents with this criterion in the rural and semi-urban regions posed a major challenge. An interpreter's assistance was sought for parents who wished to be interviewed in their local dialect. However, standard procedures and various precautions were considered for the process of translation. Although an initial limitation, it was fortunate that the first author speaks many languages and could accommodate this variation.

Implications

The findings of the present study offer major implications in relation to parental involvement in supporting the needs of children with SEN both in school and at home as part of the development of inclusive education in Bhutan. Most of the parents across the regions placed major emphasis on their roles in *parenting* and *learning at home*, highlighting their needs for access to opportunities for their own learning about these vital roles in their children's lives. There is a need for parenting education programmes

and parent support groups to further improve parenting skills in providing learning opportunities both at home and at school for their children with SEN.

This need for parenting education programmes to support inclusion is explicitly acknowledged in Section 3.5 of the *Standards for Inclusive Education* (MoE, 2017b) with a responsibility placed on school leadership to actively provide opportunities for their families. More importantly, parents in the rural and semi-urban regions should be provided with opportunities that may particularly motivate fathers' involvement. Also, teachers and other school personnel could be provided with training to increase their competence in working with parents and therefore maximise parent involvement in the education of the children.

The minimal interaction between the parents themselves, which was informal and impromptu, highlights the need for schools to provide opportunities for parent-to-parent support groups that would allow and encourage parents to learn together and support each other for the successful inclusive schooling of their children. It is assumed that with the formation of parent-to-parent support groups across the country, there are opportunities for raising awareness of education for children with SEN. Further, these will inform the important role of parental involvement in supporting the needs of the child both at home and at school and therefore provide the best support for the child.

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

We, the Research Masters/PhD candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated in the *Statement of Originality*.

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CHAPTER 6

Parental Communication and Collaboration in Schools with Special Educational Needs (SEN) Programmes in Bhutan

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Parental Communication and Collaboration in Schools with Special Educational Needs (SEN) Programmes in Bhutan

Abstract

This study explored the experiences of communication and collaboration of parents with the teachers of their children with special educational needs (SEN). In this investigation in the Bhutanese context, twenty-six parents (13 fathers and 13 mothers) of children with SEN, either fully or partially included in three schools with SEN programmes in Bhutan located in urban, semi-urban, and rural regions in Bhutan were individually interviewed. The interview data were recorded, transcribed and analysed using both manual thematic coding semantic mapping and text mining analysis (Leximancer). The majority of parents (n=21/26) were found to have either minimal or no communication or collaboration with the school. It was mainly a few mothers (n=4), and no fathers, who reported consistent communication and collaboration with the school, whose children were partially included in the schools and had high support needs. The findings have implications for building channels of communication and collaboration between parents and school staff in order to support their children with SEN in Bhutan.

Keywords: communication, collaboration, parents, teachers, inclusion, Bhutan

Introduction

Successful inclusive education requires partnerships between educators, parents, other professionals and the community (Epstein 2010; Lynch and Irvine 2009; O'Connor 2007). Existing disability research demonstrates that effective parental involvement improves students' school attendance as well as their social skills and academic achievement (Lendrum, Barlow and Humphrey 2015; Šukys, Dumčienė and Lapėnienė 2015). To enable parental involvement in inclusion, it is imperative to develop and maintain their communication and collaboration with school staff, particularly with the teachers involved in their children's education, as these play critical roles in the development of strong working relationships between parents and teachers (Epstein 2010). Disability legislation and policies, for example, in the US (Education Act 2002), the UK (Department for Education and Skills 2001) and Australia (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Requirements, n.d.; Department of Education, Training and Employment, n.d.) have recognized the importance of effective communication and collaboration between parents of children with disabilities and their schools in supporting children's learning and behaviour.

Inclusive Education in Bhutan

An inclusive approach to education was introduced in Bhutan from 2011–2012, which was much later compared with Australia, the UK, USA, and parts of Europe where it was introduced during the 1980s to 1990s. Inclusive education in Bhutan is still in its initial stage of implementation with many challenges, including lack of community involvement, and ineffective parent–teacher collaboration impeding adoption of successful inclusive practices (Dukpa, 2014; Schuelka, 2014). More importantly, the 'concept of borrowing policy' (Duke et al. 2016) from other countries without considering socio-cultural context and resources in Bhutan has been

problematic in implementing inclusive education (Dorji & Schuelka 2016; Sharma, Forlin, Deppeler, & Yang, 2013).

Bhutanese parental involvement in the schools has been found to be very minimal, even less in rural Bhutan with parents often being reluctant to get involved, because they tend to feel that teachers in the school are in the best position to make decisions about teaching and learning (UNICEF, 2014). In addition, as a result of the free education provided, some parents feel it would be considered to be ungrateful to question anything about the education system, thus gratitude is a potential barrier for active parental participation in education (UNICEF, 2014). However, the policies and legislation have emphasised the need for parent–school collaboration in supporting the needs of child with SEN (MoE 2014, 2017b).

Communication and Collaboration: International Perspective

Communication is the process of transmitting information and common understandings from one person to another (Keyton 2011). It is also critical in building a trusting partnership and a sense of community between home and school (Angell, Stoner and Shelden 2009; Falkmer et al. 2015; Williams and Sánchez 2013). Strong communication allows parents to "engage and participate" (Nagro 2015, 256) in their children's educational experiences, improving their understanding and engagement in decision making on behalf of their children (Epstein et al. 2009; Keen 2007). Communication involves both impressions created and words expressed (Graham-Clay 2005). Expressed communication in the school context consists of two types, one-way or two-way communication (Berger 2008). One-way communication involves utilizing channels such as, letters, newsletters, report cards, websites, etc. for informing parents about events, activities or their children's progress (Graham-Clay 2005). Two-way communication involves conversations between parents and teachers, which may occur

through telephone calls, home visits, parent–teacher conferences, and other school-based community programmes (Graham-Clay 2005).

In their research review, Falkmer et al (2015, 12) concluded that two-way communication is "good communication" given that teachers listened to parents, asked for advice, and informed parents of their children's problems and progress. Considering that in two-way communication parents and teachers are engaged in dialogue, it is recommended as "necessary" (National School Public Relations Association 2006, 6), for facilitating better relationships and trust, as well as change of attitudes (Keen 2007; Whichard-Bond 2013). Further, Swick (2004) asserts that communication between parents and teachers should be consistent through various means. Conversely, Cox (2005) suggested that teachers should use both one-way and two-way communication to actively involve parents in their children's development and learning, particularly for children with SEN.

In education, collaboration is a partnership between caregivers and school professionals where the groups capitalize on "each other's judgments and expertise in order to increase the benefits of education of students" (Turnbull, Turnbull and Wehmeyer 2007, 84). In the context of inclusion, the collaboration of parents with professionals and service-providers is regarded as a cornerstone in educational practices for children with disabilities and as a foundation for successfully meeting the needs of these children (Danklefsen 2008; Lalvani 2015). Furthermore, the collaboration between teachers and parents is critical for planning individualised education programmes (IEPs) for children with disabilities (Fish 2008; Tucker and Schwartz 2013)

Despite widespread acknowledgement of the value of parental involvement for the education of children with and without disability there are "various barriers"

(Hornby and Lafaele 2011, 38). These barriers can be derived from cultural or linguistic diversity, family composition, family educational level and economic status, and personal constraints e.g. lack of time, lack of transportation, lack of child care (Brandon 2007; Graham-Clay 2005; LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling 2011). For example, Chinese American parents of children with SEN confirmed that barriers such as language, inflexible work schedules, lack of transportation and child services, prevented them from participating actively with the schools (Lo 2008).

Parental involvement in their children's inclusive education is supported by effective communication and collaboration between school and home, and this is recognised in policy in a number of countries. The present study set out to explore Bhutanese parents' experiences of communication and collaboration with teachers and other school staff in schools with SEN programmes aiming to contribute to the dearth of relevant research in that local context.

Method

A deep understanding of "the world of human experience" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2013, 21) was sought in this interpretivist study by reliance on the "participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell 2014, 8). Twenty-six parents (13 fathers and 13 mothers) of children with SEN, either full[15] or partial[16] inclusion in three schools with SEN programmes located in urban, semi-urban, and rural regions in Bhutan (Thimphu, Paro, and Samtse) were individually interviewed as part of a larger study (Table 6.1). Parents of children with SEN were recruited via purposive sampling (Cooksey and McDonald 2011) upon meeting the following criteria:

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[15] Full inclusion refers to full placement in a regular classroom
[16] Partial inclusion refers to a combination of placement in the regular classroom and in a SEN unit, or part day attendance in a SEN unit

- All parents had children with disabilities enrolled in one of the schools with SEN programmes in three regions: urban, semi-urban and rural;

- All parents had children with disabilities with at least two years of enrolment in any of the participating schools;

- All parents had children with disabilities attending any type of educational placement (full inclusion and partial inclusion) in the schools with SEN programmes;

- The father and the mother of the same child would be interviewed;

- All parents would be proficient either in Dzongkha[17] (national language) or English.

Table 6.1. Profile of Parent Participants by Location and School Placement

Location/Region	Level of Placement	No. of Parents
Changangkha / Urban (Thimphu)	Full Inclusion	6
	Partial Inclusion	4
	Partial Inclusion (without access to mainstream classroom)	4
Drugyel / Semi-Urban (Paro)	Full Inclusion	4
Tendu / Rural (Samtse)	Full Inclusion	8

The interview

For the purposes of the study, the technique of the open-ended interview (Gall, Gall and Borg 2007) was adopted to explore parents' experiences with communication

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[17]Although Dzongkha is the national language in Bhutan there are more than 20 different languages spoken which presents difficulties for all people in Bhutan to communicate.

and collaboration with teachers and other school staff. The following questions, used in these themes on communication and collaboration, are part of an extensive interview guide which had been developed especially for the purposes of this research:

Theme 1. Communication

Primary question

Tell me about your communication with the teacher(s) of your child.

Probing questions

How often do you meet with your child's teacher?

What sort of issues do you discuss in your meetings?

Do you communicate with other staff of the school?

Would you like to tell me about the type of feedback that you receive from your teachers and other school personnel?[18]

Theme 2. Collaboration

Can you tell me about your opportunities for collaboration with your child's teachers and other school personnel?

Positionality statement

It is well accepted that, research, despite the application of meticulous procedures to find solutions for particular problems, affects not only the processes, purposes, and outcomes of research projects but also the researcher (Fernandez-Balboa and Brubaker 2012). To this end, "researchers should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research, seeking to understand their part in it, or influence on the research" (p. 225) informing positionality (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2013).

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[18] This particular probing question was asked to reiterate the type of communication the parents had with the school.

The interest in this topic for the first author developed as a result of his personal experience of raising a son with Autism Spectrum Disorder, who is currently thirteen years old and is attending one of the schools with SEN programmes schools participating in the study. Therefore, at the beginning of each interview the primary researcher declared his position as the father of a child with a disability, creating a research setting more conducive to open communication with the participants. The researcher also took reasonable steps to maintain trustworthiness and consistency by adhering to standard procedures in data collection and interpretation of the data without undue bias. After the completion of this study, the researcher hopes to contribute to the nascent stage of inclusive education in Bhutanese schools, by facilitating parent advocacy groups and school partnerships.

Procedure

Following the ethical approval for the research (University of New England and the Ministry of Education in Bhutan), the first author contacted the principals of three schools, who arranged meetings with the SEN coordinators (SENCOs). With the assistance of the SENCOs potential parent participants were identified, and information sheets and consent forms were sent from the principal.

The interview schedule was prepared in English and Dzongkha (using a standard translation procedure), and the assistance of an interpreter was used in interviews with parents who preferred to speak in their native language, Lhotshamkha. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and then taken back to participants for "member checking" (Creswell 2014). The venue of the interview varied accordingly to the parents' preference such as, schools, offices, home and, in one case, a car (the parent had temporary mobility issues), and lasted approximately 50 minutes.

Data analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed using a combination of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) and Leximancer Version 4.5 (Smith 2000) text mining software. In identifying common themes and sub-themes during the manual coding, an inter-coder reliability check was performed for three of the transcripts that were coded independently by the first three authors. In a reconciliation process, all three coders agreed to a common code for each of the segments of the transcripts.

Leximancer is a text mining analysis tool used to analyse the contents of textual documents and uses statistical algorithms to automatically analyse text and display the extracted information visually in the form of concept maps, network clouds and concept thesauruses (Leximancer 2016; Smith and Humphreys 2006). In addition, the software identifies a number of concepts and interrelationships without the need for intervention from the researcher. In contrast to the manual coding of the data, Leximancer automatically generates concepts and themes from the uploaded data (Sotiriadou, Brouwers and Le 2014). Therefore, Leximancer can complement, rather than replace, the human interpretation and analysis of large corpi of text thereby enriching manual thematic coding and providing analysis triangulation which can improve validity or trustworthiness.

Results

In this section, the findings of the manual thematic coding and Leximancer are presented for the two themes of communication and collaboration.

Communication

Namely, five sub-themes (*communication on-demand*; *frequent communication*; *themes of discussion*; *no communication with other members of the school*; and

feedback which has been addressed in a separate section) emerged for theme "communication".

Communication with teachers on-demand

Most of the parents (*n*=21/26) reported that they communicated either once in two or three months or not at all, depending on when teachers asked for a meeting or if they were invited to attend sports activities and excursions. For example, a mother said:

> It may be about two to three times in a month when the teacher asks me to come. Otherwise they are busy with their teaching and all. I do come to the school quite often but I hesitate to talk with them as I see them very busy with their work. (Mother 19, Semi-Urban)

On the other hand, parents who were engaged in employment, such as businesses, farming, and government organisations, mentioned time constraints on their behalf which inhibited them from attending school events and communicating with teachers. As a parent, who was a government employee in an urban area, admitted "most of the time I do not get time to talk to teachers in the school".

Frequent communication with teachers

Few parents (*n*=4), particularly urban mothers who had consistent communication with the schools, reported meeting the child's teacher daily or three to four times in a week. These responses came from parents of children who were partially included and who assisted their children in the school for half or a full day. Mother 2, reported meeting the SEN coordinator and other teachers on a daily basis as she said, "Yes, I do meet with the teachers. Sometimes I meet them once in a day or twice, not when attending the mainstream class but when attending here in the unit." Also, another mother who was acting as the parents' coordinator reported, "Since I go to school every day with my child, most of the time I meet them. Moreover, I am the parents' coordinator, so I meet them every time." (Mother 15)

Themes of discussion

The issues that these few mothers (*n*=4), discussed with the SENCO and other SEN teachers, were about learning of daily living skills, social skills and managing behaviour issues:

> I usually ask how my child stays in the classroom, how is he doing … does he listen to you when you instruct him? I do discuss about him with the teachers and I also ask if anything is required for my child ... what is required for this ADLS (Activities for daily living skills). (Mother 2, Urban)

However, very few parents (*n*=4) of children with full inclusion indicated discussing academic issues with the SEN teachers.

Communication with other school staff

Almost all parents (*n*=22/26) reported that they had no direct communication with other staff in the school. These parents felt it unnecessary to communicate with other members of the school since they did not deal with their children. For example, Mother 15, Urban said, "We do not have that much communication with other teachers as they do not deal with our children. It is only with the SEN teacher and other teachers who deals with our children."

Theme	Hits	
teachers	102	████████████████████████
child	65	██████████████
time	44	██████████
communicate	19	████
madam	19	████
talk	17	████
tell	15	████
times	9	██
work	6	█
fine	3	█
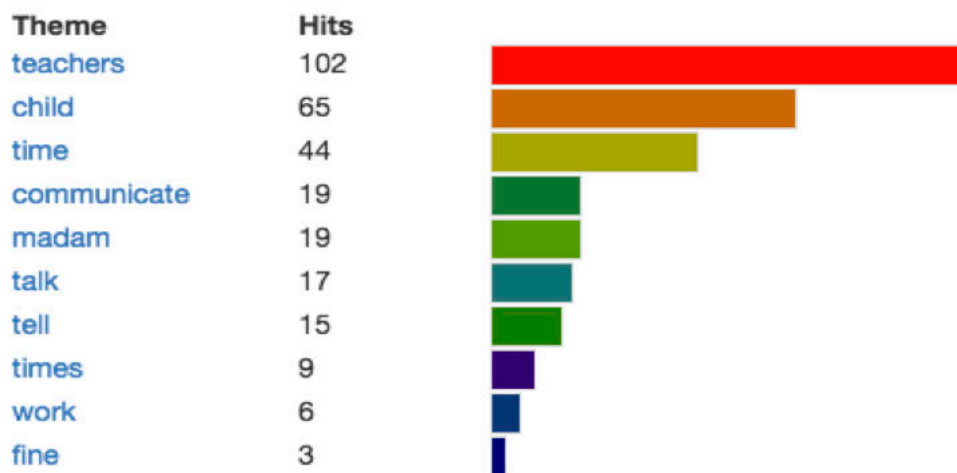
Figure 6.1. Ranked order of themes showing parental communication with school

All responses to the questions about communication were further analysed with Leximancer text-mining software (version 4.5). Anonymous tagging was assigned to detect trends in the responses and make comparisons of parents from different regions: rural; semi-urban; and urban based on how the themes and concepts are positioned on the conceptual map (Figure 6.1). The prominence of the concept in the map is indicated by the size of the dot, the bigger the dot the more prominent the concept is. The concepts that tend to settle near one another in the concept map and attracting one another strongly is resulted by these concepts appearing together in the same pieces of text. These clusters of concepts form the themes as represented by the circles and are heat-mapped to indicate the importance. Leximancer software generated the themes in the form of a ranked bar chart as shown in Figure 6.1, with "teachers", "child", and "time", as dominant themes emerging across all interview responses. In considering the hits column in Figure 6.1, the hits for the theme "teachers" (n=102 Hits) is very high compared to themes "child" (n=65 Hits) and "time" (n=44 Hits), therefore the results for this section are discussed in conjunction for each of the themes. The Hits column denotes the number of text blocks for that theme. In observing these text blocks for

each of the themes, almost all the text blocks in the themes "child" and "time" are repeated in the most dominant theme "teachers".

As shown in Figure 6.2, the position of the themes and concepts can determine the closeness of the 'semantic relationship' (Scott, Masser and Pachana 2015, 2185) between themes and concepts. Overlapping theme circles illustrate some of the concepts being common to the overlapping themes. Further, if a theme or concept sits close to the regions marked on the map, it is relatively more associated with that region. Furthermore, if the theme is centrally located more in the map, the more it is shared across all the regions marked. Similarly, the concept map also indicates "key themes" (Cretchey et al. 2010, 321) as circles in rank ordered with dominant themes (cluster of semantically related concepts) appearing in the centre of the map. A list of representative excerpts is generated as an output by Leximancer linked to these themes and concepts to understand how and why the concepts appear together in the transcripts.
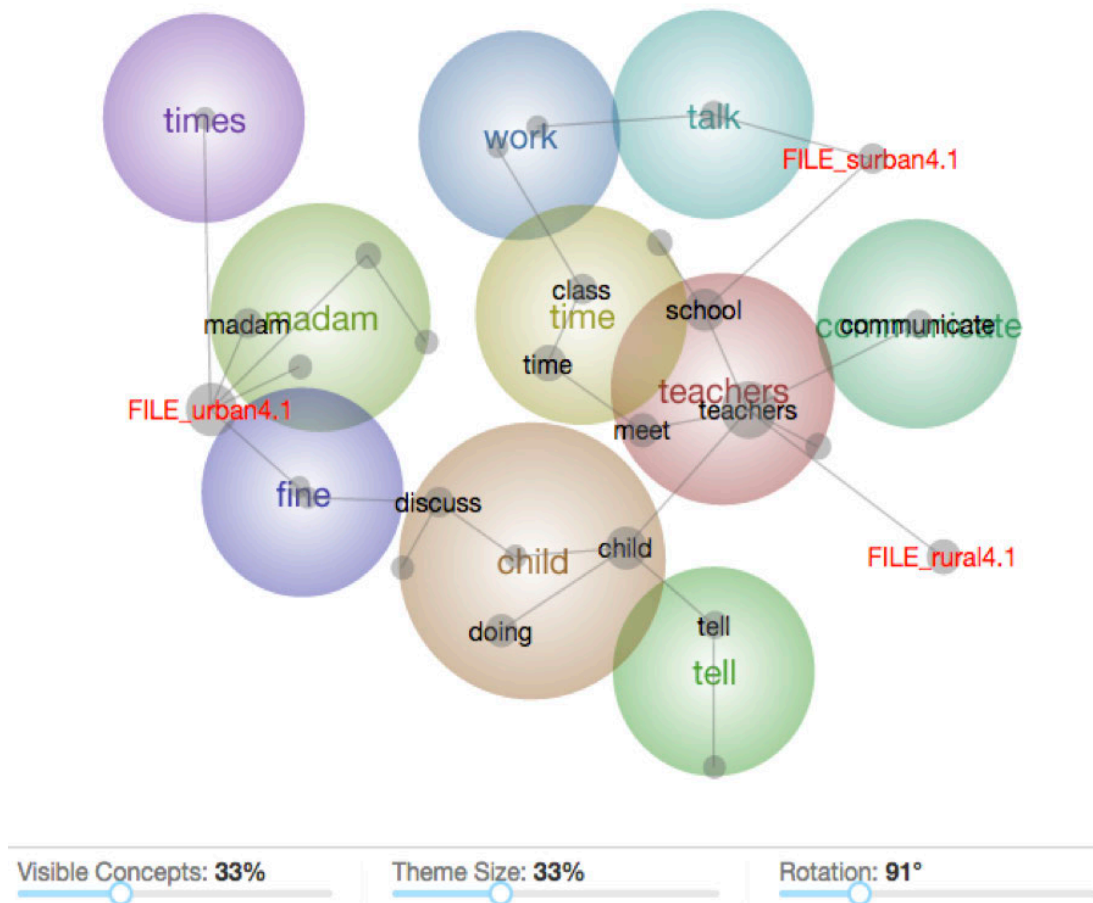
Figure 6.2. Concept map for communication, comparison between groups

The dominant themes "teachers", "child", and "time" are centrally located on the map as shown in Figure 6.2. The two regions, semi-urban and rural are relatively closer, indicating more overlap in the content of the data. These two regions are more connected to the moderately important theme, "communicate". Similarly, the moderate themes "fine" and "madam" (name for a female teacher) are more connected to urban region indicating more association to this region.

In addressing the most prominent theme, "teachers" with its concepts (*teachers, school* and *meet)*, the excerpts mainly addressed if parents had communication with the teachers, the frequency of their meetings with teachers, the issues discussed and whom they communicated with. For example, a parent from urban region who had minimal interaction with the teachers said, "in a year it would be twice that we meet the teacher"

(Mother 5). Similarly, there were parents who reported meeting teachers and communicating when schools organized events such as, sports activities, meetings and excursions. For example, Mother 13, Urban reported that her communication with the teachers "depends upon the programmes they organize, like sports, meetings and during excursions".

There were indications from the excerpts that mainly parents of children partially included, reported discussing issues of their child's behaviour in the school. For example, Father 10 (Urban) said, "Most of the time about child, his behaviour, his improvements and what needs to be done, those sorts of things we discuss". But parents with children fully included discussed issues related to academic learning, as Mother 17 (Semi-Urban) said, "The issues that I discuss is all about his studies, … So, it is only about asking how my child is doing with studies". Further the excerpts also indicated that parents interacted either only with the SENCO or concerned teachers. For example, Mother 19, Semi-urban said, "I do not communicate with the other teachers and other staff(s). I talk to his class teacher only, as she knows more about him".

Overall, both the thematic analysis and Leximancer analysis results indicate that parents had minimal interaction with the teachers and other school staff and one-way communication was predominant. Most of these parents had communications when the schools had events that required parents' participation. However, there were very few mothers in the urban region who had consistent communication with the SENCO and the teachers. It is indicated that the issues discussed were not substantial as most of the parents had casual impromptu communication. Communication with other members of the school were non-existent except for very few mothers in the urban region who reported onetime communication with the school principal.

The results for the sub-theme "feedback as communication", derived from manual thematic coding and further analysed using Leximancer is presented next.

Feedback as communication

Overwhelmingly almost all parents (n=21/26) reported that they had not received any formal feedback about their children from SEN teachers and other school personnel, including teachers. Half of the parents (n=11/21) received only informal verbal feedback occasionally either by phone or during impromptu meetings with the teachers. Such feedback was provided when the children exhibited behaviour problems or could not cope with academic learning. For example, a father reported he had received verbal feedback in an informal setting when he came across the teachers. He said, "It is a verbal feedback, so it happens when we have a casual talk not in a formal setting … when we meet …" (Father 1, Urban). Furthermore, few of these parents (n=5/26), received a report card at the end of the year and their children were partially included. The report card contained information about the child's progress (communication skills, social skills, behaviours, academic skills, and sensory skills) throughout the year:

> Last year at the end of the school, they did give us a written report … not an
> exam report card as he cannot write his examination. It was about his
> behaviours, what he knows and other things … (Mother 19, Semi-Urban)

Of note, almost half of the parents (n=10/21) reported no feedback in either written or verbal forms. For example, Mother 21 (Rural) said she "have not heard anything from her teachers." Similarly, Father 18 (Semi-Urban) reported, "I did not receive any kind of feedback(s) be it written or verbal".

The Leximancer generated a bar graph (Figure 6.3) and a concept map (Figure 6.4) concurrently with dominant themes "verbal", "teacher", and "report" across the

regions. However, these dominant themes are inclined more to the responses from

parents in urban and semi-urban regions. Similarly, all the dominant themes overlap

with each other which indicates that the concepts that form these themes are common to

the overlapping themes.

Theme	Hits
verbal	43
teacher	21
report	14
child	7
tell	4
talk	4
provide	3
meeting	3
someone	2
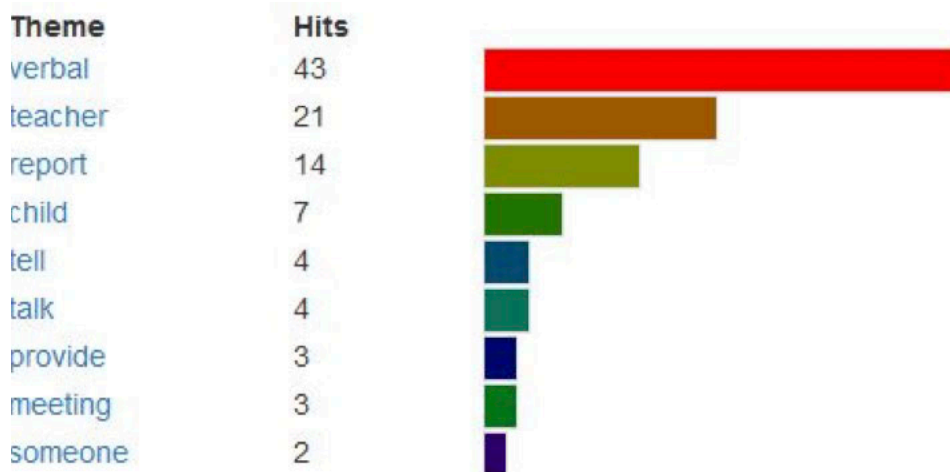
Figure 6.3. Themes in ranked order showing the form of feedback practiced across the

schools
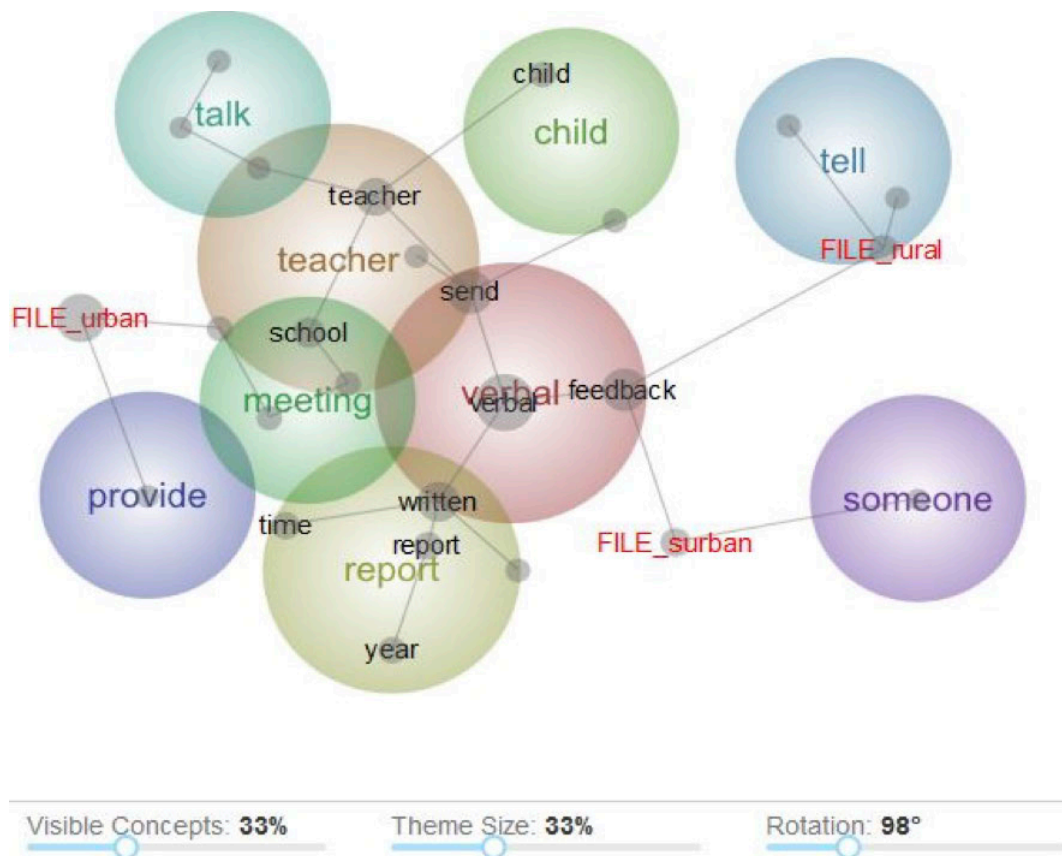
Figure 6.4. Concept map for feedback, comparison between groups

In considering the excerpts generated by Leximancer for the dominant themes "verbal", "teacher" and "report" it is strongly suggested that all the parents received informal verbal feedback on rare occasions. For example, Mother 23 (Rural) said, "It is always through verbal feedback and I have never received a kind of written feedback about my son studying in the school".

There were only very few excerpts that addressed parents receiving a written report at the end of the year. These parents mainly resided in urban region and had children with cognitive disability and speech and gross motor problems:

> They do provide it in written form. They have a booklet in their school which
>
> mentions what the child is doing and all … they provide in a year once about
>
> everything, the progress and all. We do get it in a year, once. (Mother 5, Urban)

In conclusion both the thematic analysis and the Leximancer analysis for communication strongly confirm occasional informal verbal feedback existed as being the most used across the regions. Feedback either written or verbal did not exist according to all the parents. However very few urban parents of children with partial inclusion reported the teachers providing year-end report card. In observing the trend of the feedback provided by the teachers to the parents, it can be confirmed that one-way communication is predominant way of communication in providing feedback to parents.

Collaboration

Two sub-themes, *no collaboration* and *stay-in-school* mothers emerged for the theme "collaboration".

No collaboration

Most of the parents (*n*=21/26) across the regions indicated having no collaboration with SENCO, teachers and other school personnel. These parents reported their engagement with jobs, farming and business activities as an impeding factor to collaboration and further reported that occasionally attended parent–teacher meeting. For example, a government employee said, "Because our work is something that's affecting patients directly. So, I can't really go and spend my time in the school" (Father 12, Urban).

Stay-in-school mothers[19]

It was mainly the urban mothers (*n*=4/26) who stayed with their children in the school who had some collaboration with the SENCO and other SEN teachers. These

---

[19] Mothers who stayed with their children in school daily for the whole session. These mothers were housewives with low education backgrounds and were unemployed.

mothers reported assisting the SENCO and concerned teachers whenever asked and further reported that the teachers sought their opinion in supporting the children:

> Yes, we do get opportunities, when they have something to do and does require our assistance, they call us parents and discuss. They do tell us that they would like to do something with the children and what would be best to do for the children, so in that way we sit together and work it out with these teachers.
>
> (Mother 2, Urban)

It is also worth noting that, these stay-in-school mothers assisted other children with SEN whose parents could not provide assistance in the school due to their commitment with work:

> Yes, I do help the teachers. Sometimes the children make(s) the classroom very dirty, they paint all over the places, they spill colours on the table. So, we clean it, sometimes we clean the classroom. Other time we help the children with their lunch, because some of the children do not have their parents coming to the school as they are working in the office. So, since we do not go to office and we are here every time we look after them. (Mother 15, Urban)

The results of Leximancer for the responses of the parents for the theme collaboration are presented in the next section.

Leximancer generated the bar graph (see Figure 6.5) and the concept map (see Figure 6.6) concurrently with dominant themes "school", "class" and "work". The theme "work" is more associated with rural region due to its proximity than other regions. Similarly, themes "school" and "class" is more associated with urban region.

Theme	Hits	
school	26	
class	10	
work	5	
opportunities	4	
SEN	3	
outside	3	
requested	2	
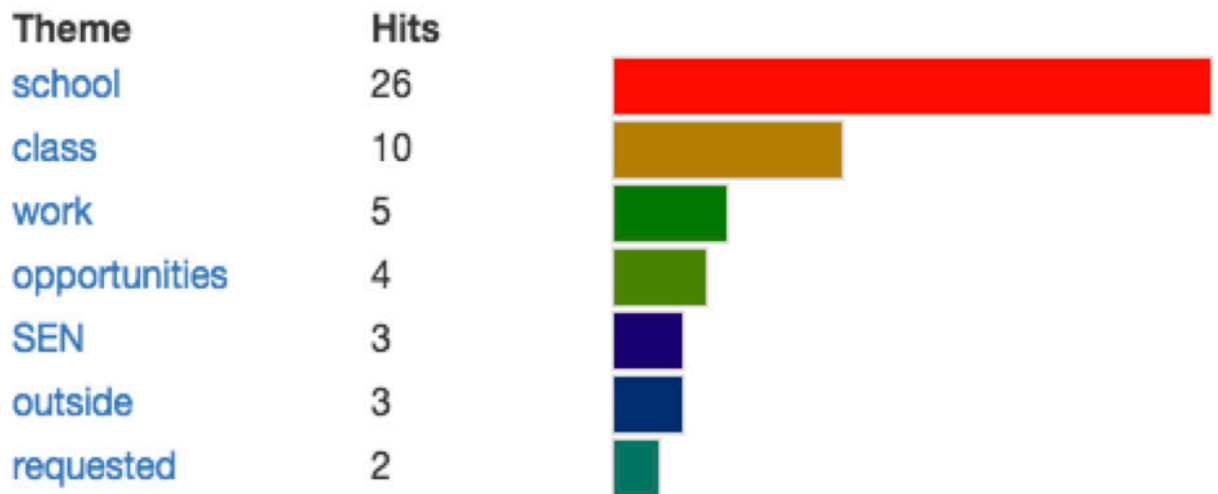
Figure 6.5. Ranked order of themes showing parental collaboration with the school personnel
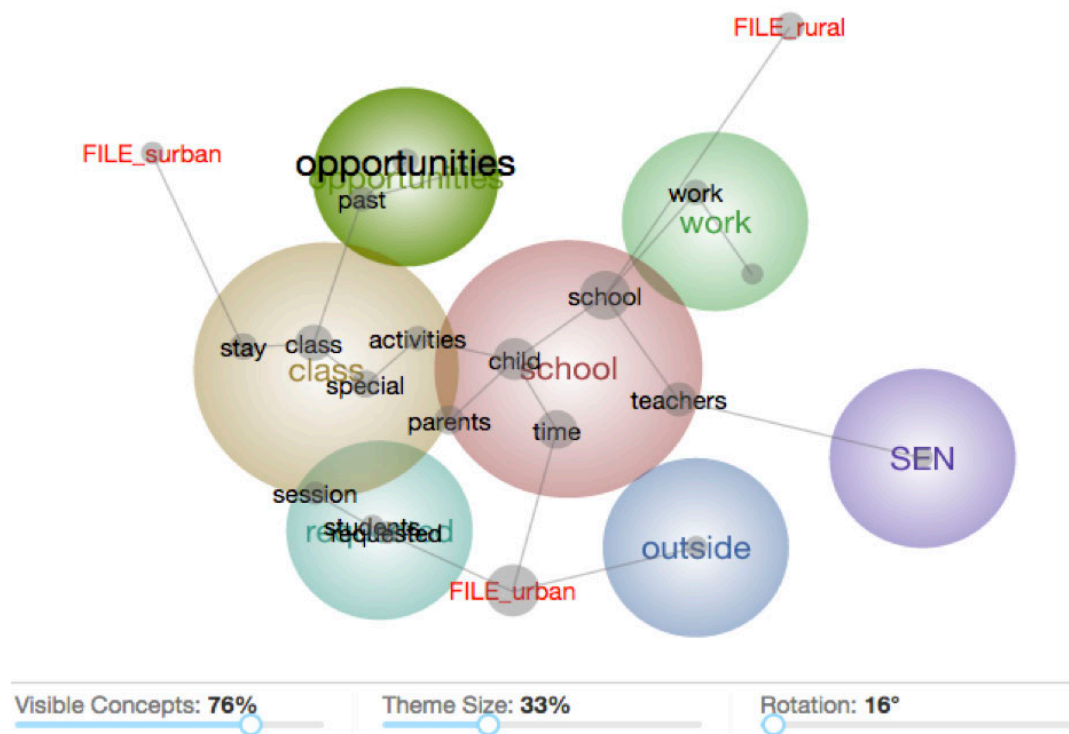
Figure 6.6. Concept map for collaboration, comparison between groups

It is evident that there were few excerpts that addressed parents having some collaboration with the SENCO and other SEN teachers. For example, a stay-in-school Mother 11 (Urban) shared, "Yeah sometimes when the children become (sic) violent

and when Madam is alone I do come and help her". However, most of the excerpts indicated that there were parents who reported having no collaboration with the teachers due to their engagement with work. For example, a father who was a government employee reported, "normally I don't get time and for most of the sessions my wife attends those things" (Father 8, Urban).

In conclusion, both the results of manual thematic coding and Leximancer analysis strongly suggest very minimal collaboration between parents and the schools. Economic activities such as office work, farming and businesses were the main barriers for parent–school collaboration. However, the results also indicated few urban stay-in-school mothers of children partially included had collaboration with the SENCO and other concerned teachers. These mothers fulfilled the role of caregivers and consequently were more attached to the SENCO and the concerned teachers.

Discussion

This study investigated parental experiences of their involvement with teachers and other school staff responsible for their children's inclusive education in three Bhutanese schools. The main finding of this study has shown that very few parents had consistent communication and collaboration with the school and almost all the parents interviewed had no direct communication with principals, assistant principals, teachers or office assistants. The parents felt that school personnel, except for the SENCO and other SEN teachers, did not have a role to play in the education of their children.

The urban mothers whose children were placed partially in the mainstream classroom had the most consistent communication and collaboration either with a SENCO or other SEN teachers, but had no communication with other members of the school. This finding may be explained by the fact that these mothers were stay-in-school mothers who brought their children to the school, assisted their children with

toilet needs, assisted students with eating meals, moved their children from the SEN unit to the mainstream classroom and vice versa, and took the child back home after school. On rare occasions these parents were asked to help their children with writing skills. These roles, usually carried out by paraprofessionals, were being done by parents since inclusive education in Bhutan is in its initial stage of development (Dorji 2015a; Schuelka 2014; Zam 2008) resulting in an acute shortage of trained human resources by international standards (Chhetri 2015; Kamenopoulou and Dukpa 2017; Schuelka 2014).

One-way communication, in the form of end of year report cards and occasional teacher directed phone calls, was prevalent for parents of children who were partially included. Of major concern, is the finding that almost all the parents did not receive any kind of feedback on the progress of their children. The majority of the parents rarely received only impromptu informal verbal feedback or no feedback on their children's learning at all. This finding could be attributed to the absence of a system of proper feedback being in place, more importantly feedback in reporting about the holistic growth of the children was absent. Furthermore, as reported by Sherab et al. (2017) the large class size of forty to forty-five students in Bhutanese classrooms, and without classroom assistants, may have precluded teachers from providing formal feedback regarding the child's progress.

Two-way communication, within which the teacher asked parents for their advice about what could be best for the child, was reported only by the very few stay-in mothers, and those interactions were minimal. Also, parents felt that teachers did not communicate their expectations of "regular and meaningful" communication (Barrera and Warner 2006, 73) and did not use a variety of strategies for making their communication with parents as informative and interactive as possible (Barrera and Warner 2006; Ferlazzo 2011; Graham-Clay 2005; Lloyd-Smith and Baron 2010).

In line with the findings reported by previous studies (Abu-Hamour and Muhaidat 2014; Koster et al. 2010; O'Connor 2007; Wong et al. 2015) in which the parents' main motive of including their children in mainstream school was increased social opportunities, almost all the Bhutanese parents in this study identified their child's development of skills for activities of daily living (ADL), social skills, and behaviour issues as the topics of any communication with the schools.

Almost all the parents indicated work commitment as a barrier to collaborating with the SENCO and other SEN teachers. This evidence confirms previous findings (Baker et al. 2016; Mueller and Buckley 2014; Velsor and Orozco 2007) in which work commitments and available time were barriers for parent–teacher collaboration. Most of the parents were farmers, government employees, and business men and women who were engaged with their daily work, and thus, economic and time constraints (Bennet-Conroy 2012; Graham-Clay 2005) hindered parents from involvement with the school. Further this finding may be explained by unquestioning faith for teachers (Phuntsho, 2000; 2013) and the parent's feeling in general that it is the responsibility of the school to best look after their children's educational needs which deters parental involvement with the school community. Anecdotally, in general, Bhutanese people are socialised, even more so with people from rural areas and from low educational backgrounds, to be totally respectful and cordial to teachers.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The findings of this study suggest several implications for the schools and the education system in considering effective communication and collaboration with the parents of children with SEN. Since this study did not include the perceptions of the school staff it is not possible to understand their expectations of communication and collaboration, and whether they would be receptive to any processes that would

increase parental involvement in the school. However, for a successful parent–school collaboration in supporting their children, especially children with SEN, it is critical that both parties promote effective regular interactions using meaningful expressed communication. These schools could also provide a welcoming ambience and a parent friendly environment at the first instant parents enter the school premises. Currently this is not the case.

Another way to ensure effective communication could be for the school to implement consistent expressed communication that involves one-way and two-way exchanges. One-way communication such as introductory letter and flyers at the start of the school year, weekly classroom newsletters, communication books, and report cards should be used consistently wherever possible. More importantly, two-way communication such as telephone calls, home visits, teacher-parent conferences, and various school activities involving parents to name a few, should be implemented regularly wherever possible. In addition, providing feedback about the holistic development of the child should be a regular practice of teachers.

Schools should empower parents' involvement for a positive collaborative relationship. One of the ways to empower parents is to organize parent–teacher meetings to talk about the holistic development of the child and discuss issues concerning the child on a regular basis. Further, possibilities of home visits by teachers may be explored with those parents who cannot make it to the school. Another important strategy is to empower and encourage parents' involvement in the beginning of the school year during the development of individualized education plans (IEP). Similarly, schools could explore possibilities for parents to initiate programmes such as parents' night, sports day, concerts and fairs to promote parent–school collaboration.

Although the Standards for Inclusive Education (MoE 2017b) mention the involvement of parents of children with SEN, there is no explicit mention of the roles of parents in supporting the needs of their children. However, parent–school collaboration in supporting children with SEN is advocated (MoE 2017c). Therefore, there is a critical need for education policies to include detailed guidelines of how parents and schools can take on shared responsibilities and work together for successful inclusive programmes.

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

We, the Research Masters/PhD candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated in the *Statement of Originality*.

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Other Authors	Associate Prof. Judith Miller	12.5
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	Associate Prof. Jeanette Berman	5

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We, the Research Masters/PhD candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that the following text, figures and diagrams are the candidate's original work.

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Name of Candidate: Karma Jigyel

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CHAPTER 7

Parental Awareness and Knowledge of Educational Rights and Policies for the Education of Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Bhutan

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Parental Awareness and Knowledge of Educational Rights and Policies for the Education of Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Bhutan

Abstract

This qualitative study investigated parental awareness and knowledge of the educational rights, legislation and policies that are relevant for their children with special educational needs (SEN). Twenty-six parents of children with SEN who are either fully or partially included in three schools with SEN programmes located in urban, semi-urban, and rural regions in Bhutan were individually interviewed as part of a larger study. Manual thematic analysis of the interview transcripts in combination with computer-assisted analysis (Leximancer text-mining software) revealed that the majority of parents (*n*=21/26) are not aware of the educational rights and policies related to education for their children. The implications of the findings for the review of the Bhutanese National Policy of SEN are discussed, highlighting the need for greater parental awareness of their children's rights to participate in schools in Bhutan.

Keywords: inclusive education, special educational needs, parents, policy, Bhutan

Introduction

Bhutan has several key policy documents that acknowledge the educational rights of all children and, despite the absence of policy for inclusive education (IE), in principle, the philosophy of IE is inherent in most of the policy documents of Bhutan (Dorji & Schuelka, 2016). However, one of the major concerns and an area of concrete action identified at the UNESCO 48th International Conference on Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future, was the importance of awareness in the public domain of educational rights and policies for inclusion of children with SEN for the effective implementation of inclusive education (UNESCO, 2009). Parents of children with SEN should be aware of the legislation and policies that affect their children's access to education (Engelbrecht et al., 2005; Trainor, 2010; UNESCO, 2009), as parental awareness can contribute to the effective implementation of inclusive education (Bacon & Causton-Theoharis, 2013; UNESCO, 2009). In addition, Lui, Sin, Yang, Forlin, and Ho (2015) found that in Hong Kong, parents' knowledge about IE policy is a significant predictor of their positive attitudes towards inclusion.

However, it has been well documented that parents generally have little awareness and knowledge of legislation (Lavery, 2016; Parsons, Lewis, Davison, Ellins, & Robertson, 2009; Tisdall & Riddell, 2006). In particular, Burke (2017) found that both rural and urban Latino parents of children with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the USA asked for more information about their children's rights. Similarly, an empirical study in Albania (Balli, 2016) reported that the majority of parents (65%) of children with SEN are not informed by the school about relevant educational legislation and policies.

Interestingly, the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Bhutan has drafted the first ever National Policy for Special Educational Needs (NPSEN) (MoE, 2012b), but it still

awaits endorsement by the government (Dorji, 2015a; Dorji & Schuelka, 2016; Schuelka, 2014). Today, there are twelve schools in different parts of Bhutan with SEN programmes that provide IE for children with SEN. Therefore, this empirical study endeavours to contribute to our understanding of parents' awareness and knowledge of educational rights, legislation and policies in the Bhutanese context. These findings may prove beneficial for policy makers, teachers, parents, schools and other stakeholders alike in implementing successful inclusive education for children with SEN.

Inclusive Education in Bhutan

The Bhutanese education system has embraced the concept of IE since 2001, which was much later than the West (Australia, Europe, UK and USA), where the approach has existed since the 1980s. Inclusive education in Bhutan is in the initial stage, with many challenges being identified as impeding the implementation of successful inclusive practices (Dukpa, 2014; Schuelka, 2014). These challenges include teachers being ill prepared to address the diverse needs of students in general education; adherence to a rigid national curriculum; a prevailing teacher-centred pedagogy, inappropriate assessment practices, minimal parent–teacher collaboration and financial constraints. Despite these challenges, as a consequence of the increasing number of children with SEN in Bhutan (Ministry of Health and Education, 2002), the Department of Education recognised the need to pay more attention to this group of children and their families (Ministry of Health and Education, 2002). Since 2001, Bhutan has established twelve self-contained classrooms in twelve public schools across the country. These self-contained classrooms, called "SEN units", cater for about 371 students with special education needs, as shown below in Table 7.1. These children have disabilities such as, autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity

disorder, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, learning difficulties, physical disabilities, speech disorders and speech and gross motor problems.

Table 7.1. Enrolments in schools with SEN programmes by geographical location in Bhutan (MoE, 2017a)

District	School	Enrolment Total
Urban		
*Thimphu	Changangkha Middle Secondary School	67
Sarpang	Gelephu Lower Secondary School	34
Semi Urban		
Mongar	Mongar Lower Secondary School	44
*Paro	Drukgyel Central School	20
Zhemgang	Zhemgang Central School	12
Rural		
Chukha	Kamji Central School	20
Dagana	Gesarling Central School	26
Pemagatshel	Gonpasingma Lower Secondary School	15
*Samtse	Tendu Central School	36
Trashigang	Jigme Sherubling Central School	47
Trashiyangtse	Tsenkharla Central School	30
Trongsa	Tshangkha Central School	20
Total		**371**

Source: MoE (2017a)

Note. *Schools targeted for data collection

In the move to provide education for children with SEN, the government has ratified several international declarations, conventions, policies, legislation and commitments that address the education for children with SEN in inclusive schools. In

particular, Bhutan is a signatory to the Education for All Act (UNESCO, 1990), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 (MoE, 2009), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2011 (MoE, 2012), the Proclamation of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in 2008 (MoE, 2012a), and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), to name a few. Bhutan's commitment to the educational support of children with SEN in mainstream schools has also been directly addressed in the Constitution of Bhutan (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2007) and in other current national policy documents and legislation (Gross National Happiness Commission, 2013; MoE, 2014).

IE Policy and Practice in Bhutan

Practising effective inclusion is informed by policy that includes relevant legislation, guidelines, principles and procedures. Although Bhutan commenced its first education services for children with SEN in 2001, policies for these services did not exist. Therefore, in order to "guide programmes and projects to spearhead special educational services" (MoE, 2012b, p. 4), it was only in 2011 that the Department of School Education circulated a separate draft National Policy on SEN (NPSEN) and IE, in congruence with the principles of Educating for Gross National Happiness (MoE, 2011a, 2011b). The first statement of the draft NPSEN declares that "children irrespective of abilities shall have equal access and opportunity to education from early childhood to vocational/technical to tertiary without any form of discrimination" (MoE, 2012b, p. 8). Bhutan's developmental philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) as outlined in *Vision 2020* (1999) "strives to maximize the happiness of all Bhutanese and to enable them to achieve their full and innate potential as human beings" (p. 47).

Further, the document also states that "education has become the inalienable right of all Bhutanese" (p. 18). In addition, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2007, pp. 19–20) states:

> The state shall endeavor to provide education for the purpose of improving and increasing knowledge, values and skills of the entire population with education being directed towards the full development of the human personality (Article 9.15)
>
> The state shall provide free education to all children of school going age up to tenth standard and ensure that technical and professional education shall be made generally available and that higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit (Article 9.16)

However, Schuelka (2014) has argued that some of the policy statements are unrealistic and overly ambitious. For instance, the draft NPSEN mentions the building of human resource capacity for the schools with staff such as teachers' assistants, caregivers, counsellor/psychologists, sports instructors and occupational therapists (MoE, 2012b). Even for the school in the developed nations with a long history of special and inclusive education, the provision of such professional staff, has been a continuing challenge. It is further argued in a study by UNICEF (2014) that SEN policy documents in Bhutan at present are unclear and contain several contradictions. For instance, terminology relating to disability, SEN and IE are all used throughout the policy documents as if the differences between them are fully understood and appreciated. Similarly, the "concept of borrowing policy" (Carrington et al., 2017; Duke et al., 2016; Schuelka, 2012, 2018; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014) from other countries without considering the socio-cultural context and resources in Bhutan has been problematic (Dorji & Schuelka, 2016; Sharma, Forlin, Deppeler, &Yang, 2013). Problems such as absence of disability rights (Dorji, 2015b), acute shortage of human

resources, and financial implications (Dukpa, 2014; Schuelka, 2014) have been identified as barriers to the implementation of education for children with SEN in Bhutan.

Policy and legislation have been found to be central to the successful implementation of IE in a number of countries. Carrington et al (2017) assert that the promotion of IE for children with SEN requires a clearly stated policy, and drawing upon research undertaken in Australia, New Zealand and the UK, Hardy and Woodcock (2015) conclude that "policy matters" (p. 143). In addition, there is consistent evidence of the effect of mandatory policies and laws (Bines & Lei, 2011; Charema, 2007; Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012). These "powerful orders that must be obeyed" ensure that the services required have been provided for children with SEN (Obiakor & Eleweke, 2014, p. 384) and are also a basis for monitoring policy enactment.

In contrast, it has been shown that the implementation of IE and the provision of services for children with SEN in developing countries has remained at the nascent stage due to the absence of mandatory policies and laws that influence the provision of these services (Charema, 2007; Mutepfa, Mpofu, & Chataika, 2007). Thus, in the absence of any mandatory requirements specifying what is to be provided, by whom, how, when and where, a laissez faire attitude prevails in the provision of services for children with SEN in many developing countries (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002).

A specific aspect of education policy is concerned with parental involvement in children's education, particularly for families of children with SEN. Engaging parents of children with SEN in their child's learning has not only been identified and recommended by many researchers as a positive strategy for their children's social and academic advancement, but has also been widely acknowledged and upheld by policy makers, who have recently initiated efforts to increase parental participation (Afolabi,

2014; Dom & Verhoeven, 2006). Hornby (2000) states that in developed countries, since the policies and legislation about parental involvement have been guiding the practice for parents and schools, it has been much easier to involve parents in their child's education. Without such policies and legislation on parental involvement, it is likely that there will be barriers to addressing IE. A study in rural New Zealand confirmed that one of the most notable weaknesses in parental involvement in the schools is the lack of written school policies on parental involvement (Hornby & Witte, 2010). This focus on parental involvement is also missing from Bhutan's draft NPSEN.

It is therefore timely to consider the voices of parents of children with SEN and the potential benefit of including them in the decision-making processes and framing of policies in Bhutan. There is a potential opportunity to bring to the attention of the parents, schools, policy makers, community and the government, the benefit of addressing parental roles and responsibilities in the existing policies in Bhutan. It can be argued that parents play a "pivotal role in the initiation and maintenance of support" (Wong, Poon, Kaur, & Ng, 2015, pg. 85) for IE of children with SEN. Further, it is the parents who have been the driving force in the movement for including children with SEN in regular schools (De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2010). Therefore, in this study, levels of parental awareness and knowledge of policies about the inclusion of children with SEN were examined in three schools in Bhutan.

Method

This study aimed to explore the awareness and knowledge of parents of children with SEN who are attending the three schools with SEN programmes in relation to educational rights, legislation and policies that guide their children's education. The need for in-depth responses from each participant was considered important in order to gain access to and understand "activities and events which cannot be observed directly

by the researcher" (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 2008, p. 66). Therefore, a qualitative research approach was implemented, due to its inherent epistemological assumptions of the interpretivist paradigm that relies on the "participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2014, p. 8).

Participants

Twenty-six parents (13 fathers and 13 mothers) of children with SEN were recruited using purposive sampling (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011). In order to achieve "information-rich" data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 289), the following inclusion criteria were applied to the recruitment of participants:

- All parents had children with SEN enrolled in one of the three schools with SEN programmes in three different regions: urban, semi-urban and rural,

- All parents had children with SEN with at least two years of enrolment in any of the three schools,

- Both the father and the mother of the same child with SEN would be interviewed,

- All parents selected would be proficient either in Dzongkha[20] (national language) or English.

The three public schools with SEN programmes were from three different districts (Thimphu, Paro, and Samtse). The school in Thimphu, Changangkha Middle Secondary School (urban), was established in 2001 and was the first school that piloted SEN programmes in Bhutan. Tendu Central School (rural), Samtse, was established in 2011 and Drugyel Lower Secondary School (semi-urban) in Paro was founded in 2012. Thimphu (urban) had the highest number of parents, which reflected the greater number

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[20]Although Dzongkha is the national language in Bhutan there are nineteen different languages spoken. Due to the geography of Bhutan, with its Himalayan environment, there are areas of the country with their own language spoken which makes it difficult to communicate with all people in Bhutan.

of students with SEN enrolled in the school compared with the schools in Samtse (rural) and Paro (semi-urban) (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2. Profile of parent participant by location and school placement

Location	Type of Placement	Students' Years in School[21]	No. of Parents
Thimphu (Urban)	Full Inclusion	3	6
	Partial Inclusion	2	4
	Partial Inclusion (without access to mainstream classroom)	2	4
Paro (Semi-Urban)	Full Inclusion	3	6
Tendu (Rural)	Full Inclusion	4	8

The interview

An in-depth interview approach using open-ended questions was used to explore parent (Gall et al., 2007). Open-ended interviews are viewed as the most appropriate type of approach as they enable the participants to fully narrate their views and experiences (Turner, 2010).

Parents were asked to respond to the following interview questions as part of a more extensive interview guide:

1. How aware are you about the SEN policies and legislation?

2. How do you get information about the rights of your child in education?

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[21] (1 student with 2-3 yrs., 1 student >4 yrs.)

3. What would you like to know (more) about the SEN policies and legislation? Why?

Face-to-face individual interviews were carried out by the primary researcher with twenty-six parents and the same procedure was followed for each interview to ensure trustworthiness of the data. Although most of the parents were interviewed in English and Dzongkha as intended, some parents preferred to speak in their native language, Lhotshamkha[22]. The assistance of an interpreter/translator was sought for these parents and the standard translation procedure was followed in preparing the interview schedule for English and Dzongkha. With permission from the participants, all interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. All interviews were transcribed in full verbatim and the interview transcripts were returned to the respective participants for "member checking" (Creswell, 2014). Each interview lasted approximately fifty minutes.

To ensure that any "influence on the research" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrrison, 2011, p. 225) was open and to create a conducive environment for effective communication with the participants, before the start of each interview the lead author would declare his position in the research to the participants. He is also a parent of a child with SEN (autism), who had been attending one of the schools contacted for the purposes of this study.

Data analysis

The analysis of the interview data was based on a combination of manual and computer-assisted methods. Namely, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) followed by the use of a text mining software (Leximancer Version 4.5; Smith, 2000). For the identification of themes and sub-themes, three transcripts were manually coded

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[22] Language spoken by the people of Nepali origin who settled in the southern foothills of Bhutan.

independently by all the authors. After manual coding of the same transcript, comparisons were made of the coded words and phrases and all three coders agreed to a common code for each segment of the transcripts (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, Koole, & Kappelman, 2006).

In contrast to manual coding, Leximancer automatically generates concepts, themes and interrelationships from the uploaded data without the intervention of the researcher (Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Le, 2014). The software allows for further coding of major themes and concepts which can complement, rather than displace, the human interpretation and analysis of large corpi of text. Leximancer can analyse textual data sets in a repeatable manner by identifying and relating important terms, concepts and relationships (Indulska, Hovorka, & Recker, 2012). Further, a mixed approach of merging manual and automated data analyses has been recommended (Hallcom & Harris, 2010), as the two forms of analysis may complement each other; for instance, manual coding may be able to identify changes of context, emotion, or tone that cannot be identified by Leximancer. In addition, Hallcom and Harris (2010) assert that it is the experience of authors that some manual processing must be "interspersed" (p. 70) with computer-assisted qualitative data analysis that provides an intimacy with the data, which leads to the drawing of credible and defensible deductions. To this end, this study employed both approaches to complement the analysis of the data and strengthen the findings of the qualitative investigation.

Findings

Findings from the twenty-six parents (n=13 fathers and 13 mothers) of children with disability on each of the three questions are presented below employing a combination of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and computer assisted

qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) software, Leximancer (Version 4.5), a text mining software tool (Smith, 2000).

Thematic analysis

All parents were asked to report on their level of awareness of the rights of their children in education and their knowledge of the SEN policies and legislation adopted by the government and the schools. These parents were also asked to report on the sources of information about the rights and policies of children with SEN. Furthermore, parents were asked whether they would be interested to know more about the educational rights and SEN policies and justify their views.

Awareness and understanding of educational rights and SEN policy

Surprisingly, the majority of parents (n=21/26) across the three regions (urban=10/14, semi-urban=4/4, and rural=7/8) reported not being aware of the educational rights and SEN policies. For example, Mother 17, (Semi-Urban) was quick to respond that, "No I have no idea about such rights and policies for special children and I haven't heard of any such policies". Despite being unaware of the policies and legislation, these parents highlighted that it was the responsibility of the government to support parents and children with SEN.

However, there were a few parents (n=5/26) who reported being aware of the educational rights and SEN policies. Further, they also reported that they use mass media (school events, television and newspapers) for their information about educational rights and SEN policies:

> Only after admitting her (daughter) here, the school had many events (sic) and they were sharing this information through media (sic) and when you come to school for attending such events, from those events only I could hear some rights for such kind of children. (Father 8, Urban)

Similarly, some parents reported that they gather the information on educational rights and policies of SEN from local NGOs and by attending seminars and conferences.

> Yes, I am quite aware of the individual rights and disability rights through media for example we have this children and women organisation, RENEW. And we have this ability society organisation ABS, which help our children. I am fairly aware (Father 12, Urban)

Although these parents confirmed being aware of educational rights and SEN policies, they were not able to explicitly discuss the educational rights and SEN policies.

Parents' interest in knowing (more) about rights and policy

All parents emphasised that it is very important for them to know the rights and policies related to supporting their children's education and raising concerns with the government, school and other stakeholders. Furthermore, the parents also reported that this could be a basis upon which to seek clarification. For example, a parent said:

> Yeah if there is (sic) such policies we would like to know about it. Because, if we know what are facilities and then what (sic) the policies say about their education and what type of education they will be able to take up and then I think it will be good to know all those policies so we can according to their rules set, then we might we can even ask questions if it is not about we can I mean according to the aid we can demand or request I mean their rights. (Mother 7, Urban)

In summary, these findings indicate that the majority of parents are not aware of the educational rights and SEN policies. Although a few parents are aware of the rights and policies, they are not explicitly discussed, even though these parents are government employees with a high level of education, except for one mother with a low educational background who has frequent contact with the school. Media sources,

mainly newspapers and television, school events, teachers, advocacy from local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and conferences and seminars are some of the sources that inform these parents about their children's rights and SEN policies. The need to understand and have access to educational rights and SEN policies are viewed by parents as being crucial for supporting the children with SEN.

Computer-assisted analysis

Full responses from the twenty-six parents were analysed with the Leximancer (Version 4.5) text-mining software (Smith, 2000). In preparing for the analysis, all parents' responses were tagged by location to detect trends in the responses and make comparisons of parents from different regions, based on how the themes and concepts are positioned on the map.

Leximancer generated the themes in rank order (see Figure 7.1) with "child", "disability", "school" and "aware" as dominant themes emerging across all the interview responses. The *Hits* column indicates the count of the text blocks associated with the corresponding themes, which comprise the different concept words appearing in the text blocks. These concept words appear either in some of the excerpts or text blocks for that particular theme or can be repeated in excerpts of other themes.

Theme	Hits	
child	53	
disability	14	
school	13	
aware	11	
people	8	
feel	7	
SEN	7	
understand	6	
friendly	3	
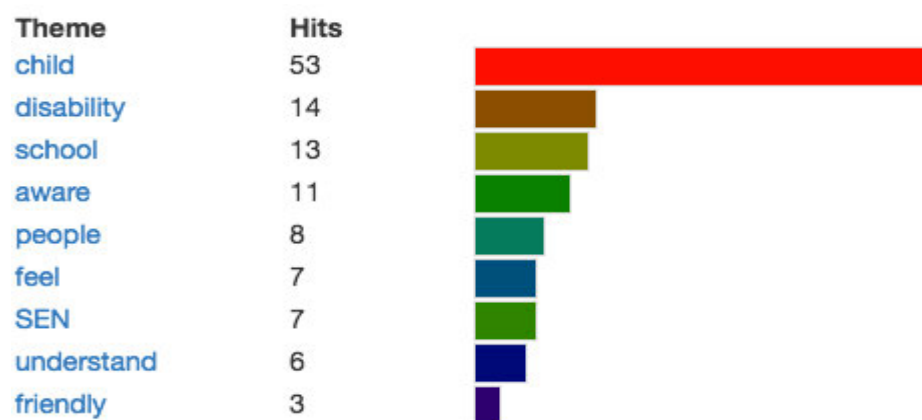
Figure 7.1. Rank order of themes showing parents' awareness of SEN policies

Similarly, Leximancer generated the concept map (see Figure 7.2) with the dominant themes, of "child", "disability", "school" and "aware" centred in the map, which indicates that these themes are shared across all the regions.
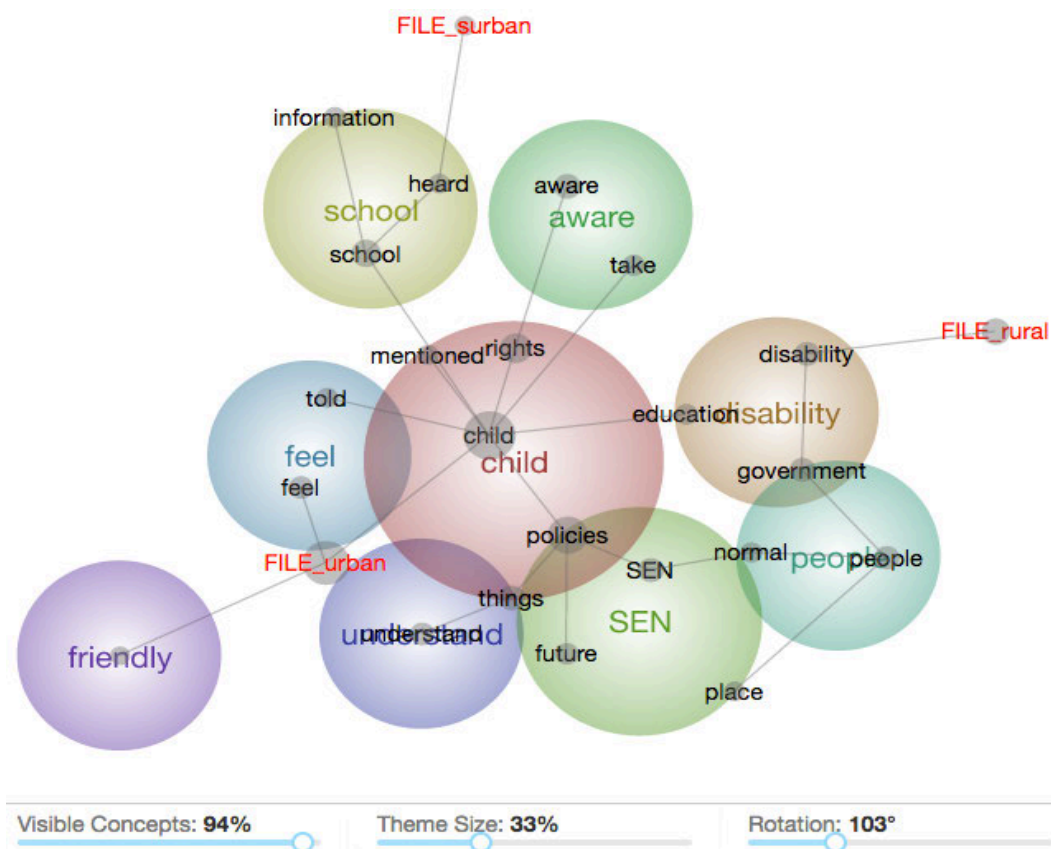
Figure 7.2. Concept map for awareness of SEN policies, comparison between groups

These themes are heat-mapped to indicate their relative importance. For example, in Figure 7.2, red indicates the most important theme, orange the next and so on according to the colour wheel. Further, the degree of proximity of the theme circles to each other describes the semantic relationship between the concepts of these themes, and with overlapping circles suggesting that the views expressed are similar.

Furthermore, if a theme or concept sits close to the regions marked on the map, it is relatively more associated with responses collected from parents in that region.

Therefore, in considering Figure 7.2, most of the themes are positioned near the tag of the responses from the parents located in the urban region. The most dominant theme of "child" with its concepts of *policies* and *rights* is positioned near the urban region, indicating that it is discussed more by the parents from the urban region. To understand how and why concepts appear together in the transcripts, a list of representative excerpts/text blocks is generated by Leximancer as an output linked to these identified themes and concepts. In observing these text blocks for each of the themes, almost all of the text blocks in the themes "disability", "school" and "aware" are repeated in the most dominant theme "child". Therefore, the results for this section are discussed by selecting appropriate excerpts of interview data that Leximancer aligned with the theme "child".

Most of the excerpts indicated that parents have no awareness and understanding of education rights and SEN policies for children with SEN. For example, Father 4, Urban said, "No, I am not aware of this, I don't know whether the child with disability (sic) has the right to education or not, I am not aware of any kind of provision. Is it there? I am not sure". A few excerpts indicated that parents, mostly in the urban region reported being aware of child rights and policies of SEN via various media sources such as television and newspapers and from school teachers. For example, Mother 5 (Urban) reported that "these days the newspapers do mention about the child rights".

The analysis of both the manual thematic coding and the computer-assisted coding generated similar findings. It is evident that only a few parents, mostly from the urban region, are aware of the rights, SEN policies and legislation, although they could not clearly discuss the education rights and policies. However, all parents reported the need to have access to relevant legislation and policies and to understand their children's rights in order to further support their education.

Discussion

Despite the need for parents to be informed about the educational rights and the SEN policies and legislation for supporting their children in a successful educational experience, the empirical evidence of parents' knowledge and understanding of educational rights, SEN policies remains very sparse. One of the outcomes of this investigation concerns the levels of awareness and understanding of educational rights and SEN policies and legislation for these parents. In agreement with past research (Balli 2016; Burke, 2017; Lavery, 2016; MoE, 2017c) the majority of parents in this study do not have either awareness or knowledge of educational rights, policies or legislation. This finding may be explained by the fact that these parents have little communication and collaboration with the teachers and other school personnel (Jigyel, Miller, Mavropoulou, & Berman, 2018). Similarly, another empirical study (Subba, 2018) in Bhutan confirmed that parental support to the schools supporting children with SEN was minimal. Further, it may be assumed that the policy awareness programmes conducted by the concerned agencies are either ineffective or insufficient.

In addition, the lack of parental awareness and knowledge of SEN policies and legislation may not be so unusual in the Bhutanese context, as the draft NPSEN (MoE, 2012b) has not included the roles and rights of parents in supporting the needs of children with SEN. However, it can be argued that legislative mandates and policies that encourage parental involvement in the school and that guarantee the parents' rights and involvement in decision-making processes are an essential part of the policy frameworks and legislation (Burke 2013; Hess, Molina, & Kozleski, 2006; Peters, 2004) for successful implementation of education for children with SEN. As confirmed in a recent study in Bhutan on knowledge, attitude and practices on children with disabilities (MoE, 2017c), the few parents who reported being aware of the educational rights and policies of SEN reside either in the urban region or have high levels of

education. These parents received information on policies and legislation regarding SEN from school teachers, SEN teachers, external experts, television, radio, internet, newspapers and other parents, which is in agreement with the study by Balli, (2006). However, in agreement with the recent studies, these parents are not able to explicitly name and discuss any legislation and policies (MoE, 2017) and school principals, teachers, and parents were aware of school level policy and national level polices on SEN education at the superficial level (Sherab et al. 2015).

The findings of this study point to the readiness of parents to learn about and understand educational rights and relevant legislation and policies. Further, it appears that despite the doubts of these parents concerning the services provided in the school, they are apprehensive about raising concerns and seeking clarification, as they do not have the needed knowledge, experience and confidence (Jigyel et al., 2018).

In agreement with previous research (Afolabi, 2014; Agaliotis & Kalyva, 2011; Engelbrecht, et al., 2005; Gillies, 2005; Nespor & Hicks 2010; O'Connor, 2007, 2008) parents perceive that if parents' participation and rights are mandated in SEN policies and other legislation, parents have the option to gain redress for their grievances if they are not satisfied with the services provided by the school. In contrast, Engelbrecht et al. (2005) posited that parents who are not well informed about SEN policies often accept the refusal of access to inclusion for their children without challenging the process. Advocacy for their child may be diminished in these situations.

Of note, several studies have confirmed that in developed countries the importance and positive effects of mandatory policies and laws in implementing IE are acknowledged (Bines & Lei 2011; Charema, 2007; Eleweke & Rodda 2002; Sharma, Loreman & Forlin 2012). In contrast, research has also indicated that implementation and provision of inclusive services in developing countries has remained in its nascent

stage due to the absence of mandatory policies and laws that influence the provision of these services (Charema, 2007; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Mutepfa et al., 2007). Bhutan is no exception. Bhutan's draft NPSEN was recently developed, with the final draft prepared in 2012, but is yet to be endorsed by the government. However, it is hoped that parental participation in the education of their children with SEN will be foregrounded in the more recent *Standards for Inclusive Education* (MoE, 2017b) in Bhutan.

Study Limitations

This study has several shortcomings. Firstly, only a few parents with a high level of education, all of whom live in the urban region, participated in the study. Access to parents with high educational attainment in other regions may have provided a greater comparative perspective of awareness and knowledge of educational rights and SEN policies. Secondly, in abiding with the inclusion criteria for this study "the father and the mother of the same child would be interviewed", there were no 'single parents' interviewed, which may have provided greater diversity of parental awareness and knowledge of SEN policies.

Thirdly, although the study intended to interview parents proficient either in English or Dzongkha (the national language), finding participants who satisfied this criterion, especially in semi-urban and rural regions, was a major challenge and these parents opted to be interviewed in their local language. It is noteworthy that although Dzongkha is the national language, there are twenty other languages spoken in the different regions of Bhutan (Phuntsho, 2013). The first author speaks many of these languages and could accommodate this variation. The translation process and the use of an interpreter may pose a threat to the trustworthiness and consistency of the data collected; however, standard translation procedures and various safeguards were

followed. Fourthly, including an equal number of parents of children with full inclusion and partial inclusion was planned; however, parents of children with partial inclusion in semi-urban and rural schools were not available. The fifth limitation is associated with the dearth of literature to guide the interview schedule to ensure it was relevant to the Bhutanese context. As this is the first known study on this topic set in Bhutan, this limitation is understandable. Finally, the researcher's own position as a parent of a child with SEN may have influenced the interview procedure. To counteract this influence, the researcher followed the interview guide and protocol strictly during the entire interview with parents.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The evidence from this study indicates that parents of children with SEN lack awareness and knowledge of their children's educational rights, related policies and legislation in Bhutan. These findings confirm the need for the Ministry of Education, and the government to consider "this matter as a major concern to be addressed through advocacy for public understanding, awareness and support of policies" (UNESCO, 2009, p. 17). In particular, efforts must be put in place to reach parents from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. This finding also raises concerns about the present acknowledgement of educational rights and the existence of SEN policies at school level. Research is needed to explore if schools in Bhutan have their own SEN policies, specifically the rights of children with SEN to participate in education and rights regard to parental involvement.

This study refers to the acute need to embrace parental rights and involvement in the SEN policies and legislation. Without such specific clauses included in the NPSEN (MoE, 2012b), the findings indicate that parents may be excluded from addressing their grievances and advocating for their children. Furthermore, the need to

establish the role and responsibilities of parents in the education of their children with SEN should be considered critical and highlighted in future policies and legislation. Similarly, policy makers, the Ministry of Education, the school and other related stakeholders should encourage and seek the active participation of parent representatives in the development of the policies for SEN. This research has highlighted the pressing need for parents to form support groups and take up advocacy roles which could play a key role in disseminating information for educational rights and SEN policies to the Bhutan community.

We, the Research Masters/PhD candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that the following text, figures and diagrams are the candidate's original work.

Type of work	Page number/s
Figure 7.1	192
Figure 7.2	192

Name of Candidate: Karma Jigyel

Name/title of Principal Supervisor: Associate Professor Judith Miller

                                       July 9, 2018

Candidate   Date

                                       July 9, 2018

Principal Supervisor   Date

CHAPTER 8

Conclusions

Introduction

The first section in this concluding chapter is a summary of the main findings that were presented and discussed in detail in Chapters 3 to 7 relating to parents' expectations of school for children with SEN. The perceived benefits and concerns around their children's attendance at school, parental involvement in their children's development and learning at home and at school, their experiences of communication and collaboration with schools and parent knowledge of rights and policies related to the education of their children are all presented as the findings of this qualitative investigation. The second section of this chapter presents an application of the findings to the theoretical models as they relate to the enhanced conceptual framework. The third section highlights the implications of the findings for both practice and policy in education in Bhutan and the fourth section contains recommendations for future research and policy development. Finally, the limitations for the overall study are outlined.

Summary of Main Findings

Parental expectations

The expectations of parents aligned with the type of disability of the child, the nature of placement (full or partial inclusion), the educational level of the parents and the location of the school. Overall, it was the parents of children with developmental disabilities living in urban places who have greater expectations and concerns for their children. In contrast, the parents of children with physical disabilities residing in semi-urban and rural are comparatively content and have higher expectations for their

children than parents residing in urban areas. The urban parents of children with severe developmental disabilities emphasised that they cannot take their children to school most of the time due to the shortage of SEN teachers, resulting in there being no substitute teacher in the SEN unit when the SEN teacher is away from the school. Further, these parents expect their children to be able to stay at school for a longer. It is usual practice for the children to only have half-day 'sessions' in the school. These parents also reported their expectations of an accessible environment with accessible toilets in the school. With moderate speech development and improvement in social interactions for their children, the urban parents reported high expectations of speech development and social interaction skills in their children. However, since these parents have lower expectations for academic learning, the parents of children with severe developmental disabilities expect their children to learn basic daily living skills for an independent future. Furthermore, the parents of children with moderate developmental disabilities expect their children to be enrolled in vocational training institutes for employability and independence in the future. In contrast, the parents of children with physical disabilities highlighted their expectation of their children's completion of school education as a means for employment and an independent future.

Parental perceptions of benefits and their concerns

Parents reported the benefits for their children with a disability after including them in the school along with non-disabled children. These benefits include positive social outcomes, caring and supportive schools, mobility gains, speech development and academic gains. The perceptions of benefits were influenced by the severity and type of disability of the child and the type of placement (full or partial inclusion), as well as the location of the school. Parents of children with severe developmental disabilities reported the main benefits being positive social outcomes such as increased social interaction, becoming more independent and improved behaviour. However, these

parents also identified issues of concern around the inclusion of their children in schools. These concerns are influenced by the type of disability of the child. For example, parents of children with severe developmental disabilities raised concerns about their child exhibiting aggressive behaviours that may cause harm to other children and disrupt the teaching and learning process inside the classroom.

The benefits of caring and supportive schools, was highlighted by all parents across all regions. The parents of children with speech and gross motor problems and physical disabilities in the urban and semi-urban regions acknowledged the schools for providing medical assistance and therapy support with assistance from the public hospitals. Also, these parents appreciate the extra academic support provided by the teachers for their children. A few parents of children with full inclusion reported a sense of security in their children because the school community treated these children like any other child. Parents in the rural and semi-urban regions in particular acknowledged how schools provided peer support for their children to assist with both toileting and transportation between home and school. Contrary to these claims, non-disabled children were also reported to be the source of behavioural issues such as bullying and name calling. These concerns were reported by parents across all regions. Some parents of children with full inclusion reported concerns of bullying and name calling by non-disabled children that resulted in the child developing a negative attitude about going to the school and parent sentiments being hurt.

The parents across all regions reported benefits such as mobility gain and speech development in their children after including them in the school. The parents of children with physical disabilities attributed the mobility gain to the therapeutic interventions provided at home. Similarly, urban parents of children with speech impairments reported moderate speech development in their children as a result of support from speech therapists, physiotherapists and the SEN teachers. A few parents

of children with physical disabilities in the semi-urban and rural regions reported moderate academic gains in their children as well as mobility gain and speech development. There were also a few parents in the urban and rural regions who raised doubts over academic learning, the support their children received and their children's low morale and negative attitude to academic learning.

The parents also reported benefits for themselves after having their children included in the schools. All parents asserted that after including their children in the schools, they were relieved to a great extent from the burden of caring for their children, which makes their life much easier, unlike in the past. It was mainly the parents of children with full inclusion who emphasised the alleviation of the burden of caring for their children both at school and at home. Other parents whose children are partially placed (without access to mainstream classrooms) expressed their sense of satisfaction for having the opportunity to place their children in the school along with non-disabled children, irrespective of the development outcomes in their children. These parents reported that being placed in the school is more beneficial for both parent and child than keeping them idle at home. Such a situation would have put both the parents and the child under stress.

To address the aforementioned concerns, these parents perceived the need for awareness and counselling for their affected children and for themselves. These parents highlighted the need for increased awareness of the ill effects of bullying and name calling within the school community. A key theme as reported by few parents was also the need for trained SEN teachers in practice to provide behavioural interventions for children with behavioural problems and to explicitly teach communication skills.

Parental involvement at school and at home

Urban parents are more involved in supporting the needs of their children both at school and at home than those in the rural and semi-urban areas. Both the mothers and fathers in the urban region share responsibilities in supporting their children either in attending the school or at home. In the semi-urban and rural regions, it is predominantly mothers who are more involved in the education of the children both at school and at home. These mothers are mainly involved in supporting and preparing the child with basic daily needs and transporting the child to school. However, some urban mothers are involved as stay-in-school helpers to provide assistance with self-care needs due to the severe developmental disabilities of the children. These mothers have consistent interaction with the teachers in the school, although it is informal and impromptu. Further, these mothers extend voluntary support to other children with developmental disabilities whose parents do not come to the school.

Furthermore, it is the urban parents who are more involved at home in supporting the needs of their children after school hours. Predominantly, the support includes providing therapeutic intervention and leisure activities, and some fathers help their children with homework. None of the parents in the semi-urban and rural regions support their children with academic learning due to their own self-reported low educational backgrounds.

Interaction between parents of children with SEN are minimal and impromptu. It is the stay-in-school mothers in the urban region who have the most consistent casual interaction with other parents of children with SEN who stay in the school to assist their children. In interacting with other parents, they reported sharing information about the type of disability, behavioural issues and how they manage their child at home. In sharing such information, these parents feel relieved with a great sense of reciprocity

and support in each other. Further they reported that interacting with other parents provides emotional support and comfort, knowing other parents with a similar situation exist. There were also parents who do not have such interaction with other parents due to their daily job obligations and other economic activities.

Parent communication and collaboration with schools

Most of the parents in this study have minimal or no communication with the teachers and other personnel in the schools their children attend. They communicate only when the teachers occasionally asked for their attendance at school for meetings and other activities. However, there were some urban stay-in-school mothers of children with partial inclusion who have regular communication with the special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and other teachers; however, as this communication is more impromptu, the issues discussed are not substantial. One-way communication from the teachers to parents dominate the interactions. Overwhelmingly, almost all the parents have no direct communication with other staff in the school.

Providing formal feedback on the progress of the child to the parents from the school was reported as absent by most of the parents. Occasional informal verbal feedback either by phone call or during impromptu meetings with the parents was reported by the parents across all regions. Parents reported receiving year end summative report cards about their child's overall progress of communication skills, social skills, academic skills and sensory skills.

Most of the parents across the regions reported no collaboration with the school due to work commitments, which is the main barrier that impedes their connections with schools. Almost all the parents are engaged in economic activities such as farming, business and government jobs. In addition, low levels of economic resources, minimal educational background and socio-cultural aspects of respect for teachers and superiors

were identified as barriers that impede parent involvement with the school and teachers. However, some urban stay-in-school mothers reported having regular collaboration with the SEN teachers and other teachers, mainly related to providing the basic needs of their children. This includes providing food and transporting the children to toilets and classrooms away from the SEN unit. On some occasions when the SEN teachers are attending meetings, these parents also replace the teachers in the SEN unit to look after their children.

Parental awareness and knowledge of educational rights and SEN policies

Almost all parents across the regions reported not being aware of the educational rights and SEN policies. A few parents indicated receiving information from mass media such as television and newspapers and from the SEN teachers during events organised by the schools. Similarly, parents also reported receiving information from local NGOs and by attending seminars and conferences. However, these parents were not articulate in explaining these rights and policies. Worryingly, the draft *National Policy on SEN* (MoE, 2012b) makes no mention of parental involvement in the education of the children with SEN. However, the recent *Bhutan Education Blueprint* (MoE, 2014) and *Standards for Inclusive Education* (MoE, 2017b) make reference to parental involvement but with lacklustre emphasis. The standards include details of policies schools will be expected to develop and make known to families with respect to *admission*, *policy development and implementation*, *learning* and *transition and movement*.

All parents in this study strongly agreed with the importance and need for understanding the educational rights and policies in relation to their children with SEN. These parents highlighted that being aware of legislation and policies would give them

an avenue to seek clarification by allowing them to address issues and grievances to the schools and concerned authorities.

These findings have been considered separately in Chapters 3 to 7. In the following section they will be combined as a whole, in reference to the theoretical frameworks used to scaffold the design of the study.

The Findings Applied to the Theoretical Frameworks

Theoretical frameworks about Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence and types of parental involvement (Epstein, 1992), as well as Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) helped to guide and design this study. These theories helped to make sense of what was happening and give direction for how schools and education systems can better support parental involvement in their children's schooling. The findings of the study have been mapped against these two key theories, with Bronfenbrenner's EST addressing the social and cultural environments that influence parents in supporting their children's needs and Epstein's theory of parental involvement articulating how the parents are involved in supporting their children at home, at school and in the community.

Bronfenbrenner's EST

The findings for each of the papers in Chapters 3 to 7 is applied to Bronfenbrenner's EST as shown in Figure 8.1. Bronfenbrenner's EST emphasises the "importance of interactions within and between life contexts (e.g., work, school, family, etc)" (Duerden & Witt, 2010, p. 108) that exist in environmental systems, which represent different spaces for interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Further, these systems influence each other and ultimately affect the learner. Similarly, it is asserted that multiple environments can bring about a significant difference in the outcomes of

academic and social development in children with SEN (Bengoechea & Johnson, 2001).
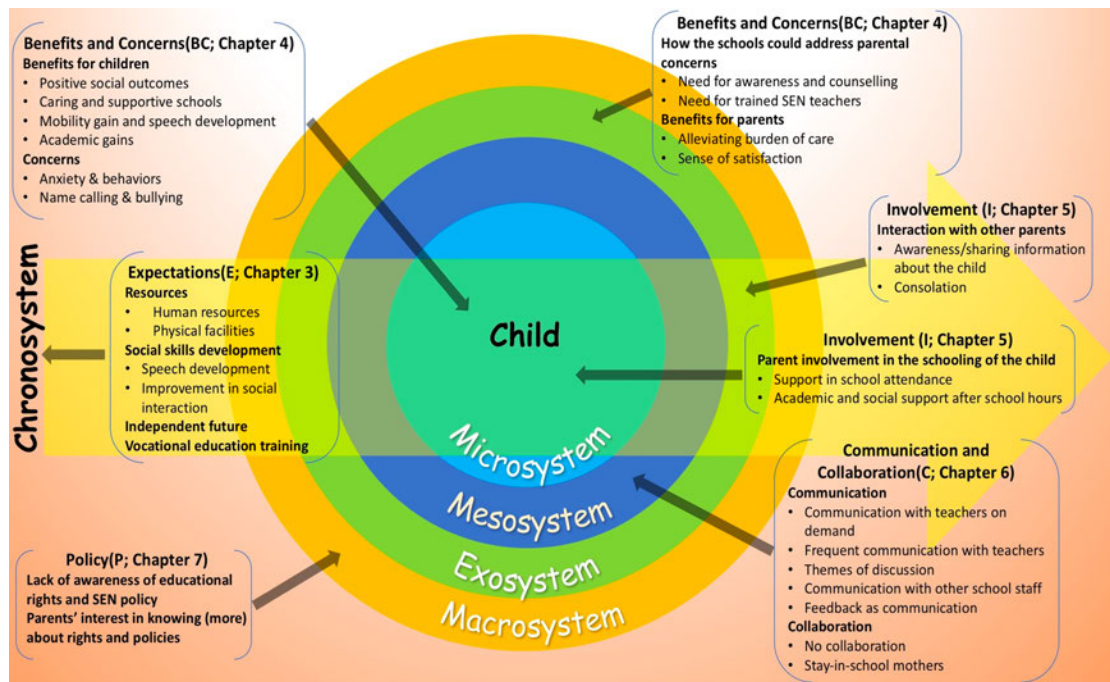
Figure 8.1. Findings from chapters applied to Bronfenbrenner's EST

Therefore, addressing the findings of each of these chapters in terms of the different systems that make up the complex "entire ecological systems" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 37) help with understanding how the interactions in the multisystem context affect how parents, school and community (Epstein's overlapping sphere of influence) support the academic and social development of the child. The following section address the findings in each of the chapters from the perspectives of Bronfenbrenner systems.

Expectations of parents relating to *resources*, *social skills development*, *vocational education training* and *independent future* for their children can be achieved over a period of time (chronosystems) given the appropriate support by parents, school and the community. Therefore, the results reported in Chapter 3 are relevant to the chronosystems and everybody involved in supporting the child needs has to understand

the dynamics of the environment in which the child exists and how this influences the child over time.

The *benefits for children* and *concerns* (as reported in Chapter 4) that affect the child and as experienced by parents exist as a result of the interaction within the immediate environment of family, school, peers and the community (microsystem). Therefore, the development of the child depends on the "content and structure of the microsystem" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 39). Similarly, the outcomes of benefits and concerns on *how the schools could address the parental concerns* (Chapter 5) and the *benefits for parents* (Chapter 4) do not involve the child as an active participant, but such "events indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40) and is within the exosystem. Therefore, the partnership of parents, school and community is crucial in supporting the needs of children with SEN. Further, the outcomes of parents' involvement, namely *interaction with other parents* (Chapter 5), as "family social networks" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p.40) within the exosystem are especially likely to indirectly affect the development of the child.

Furthermore, the outcomes of *parent involvement in the schooling of the child* (Chapter 5) directly influences the child. During such events, the parent and the child are directly involved in the microsystem. The more the parents are involved in supporting the needs of the child in the school and at home, the more the child's academic and social development are enhanced. Therefore, parents' direct interaction with children and their schooling needs is crucial for the child's academic and social development.

Parent *communication* and *collaboration* with school personnel and other parents in the community (Chapter 6), which "comprises the interrelations among

major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in his or her life"
(Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p.515), is within the mesosystem. Such events are influenced
by the interaction among the family, work, economic backgrounds and social life.
Therefore, unless the schools understand these situations and initiate alternatives for
"hard to reach parents", effective communication and collaboration between parents
and schools are unlikely to occur, and this trend may prove to be a barrier to the
learning and development of the children.

Parents' knowledge and *awareness of educational rights and SEN policy*
(Chapter 7) provides parents with information about what can be expected when
educating their children and changing their attitudes and ideologies (Tekin, 2011),
therefore "embracing the institutional legal and political" systems (Rosa & Tudge,
2013, p. 247). Such an overarching belief system or ideology is the hallmark of the
macrosystem and may be considered a societal blueprint (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Epstein's spheres of influence

The research outcomes of this investigation as presented in the different papers
are now applied to Epstein's (1992) overlapping spheres of influence. When mapped
across the overlapping spheres of influence, the research outcomes or findings provide
an insight into the roles of each of the spheres in supporting the needs of the children
and how they intersect. Figure 8.2 provides a visual representation of this placement of
the findings of the investigation. Successful outcomes of learning and development in a
child are influenced by the "shared responsibilities of home, school, and community"
(Epstein et al., 2002, p. 5).
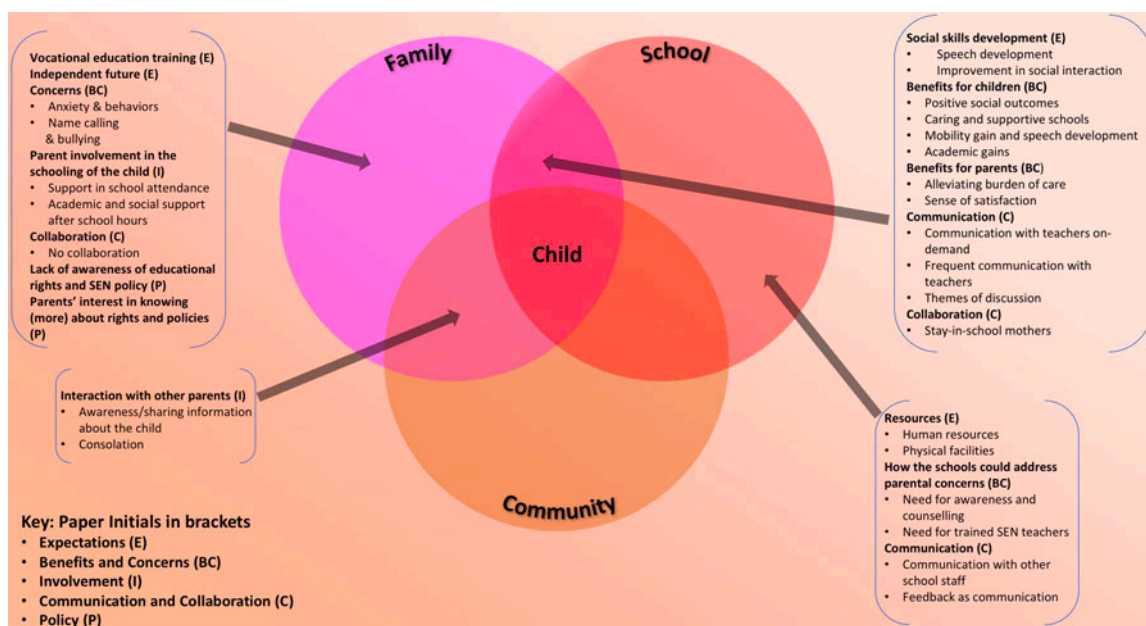
Figure 8.2. Outcomes of the study applied to Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence.

This model of spheres of influence recognises that family, community and school are the three major contexts that support the child to learn and grow and can "be pushed together or pulled apart by practices and interpersonal forces in each environment" (Epstein, 1992, p. 2). Therefore, more collaboration and partnership between these three domains (spheres) in supporting the needs of the child will lead to more positive learning and development in the child. In this model, there are some practices where families, schools and communities work separately and some where they work together to influence learning and development in the child. However, this does not imply working in complete isolation, which can otherwise act as a barrier to supporting the academic and social development of the child.

This study investigated parents' experiences, perspectives and knowledge of educating their children in the schools, and the findings are applicable to the spheres of *family* and *school* and the *intersections of family and school* and *family and community*.

Therefore, the following explains how each of the findings are applied to the aforementioned spheres and their intersections as a theoretical framework.

Family

In this context, the outcomes of this study when mapped in the sphere of family as shown indicate that the parents struggle with navigating these issues all by themselves. For example, the parents' expectations of enrolling their children for *vocational education training* and an *independent future* for their children can be achieved when all the three spheres of influence work together. Therefore, these expectations of the parents can be achieved if there is a strong sense of acceptance in the community that children with SEN can contribute to the society as an individual and if the school and the parents prepare the child for VET with a strong foundation. Similarly, concerns of parents for their children's *anxiety and behaviours* and *name calling and bullying* cannot be resolved unless the schools adopt appropriate measures to tackle these issues together with parents as partners. It also requires awareness and advocacy in the community, which calls for partnership of all three spheres.

The involvement of parents in supporting the needs of their children both at school and at home can be enhanced when the schools involve parents as partners in addressing the needs of the children and when the community has support mechanisms outside school for the inclusion of the child in the community. The evidence in this study of absence of collaboration with the school for most of the parents calls for the schools as the primary sphere of influence to initiate ways of involving parents as partners in the education of their children. Similarly, once parent support groups are formed in the community, they can work along with the school to ensure parents work in partnership with the school to support the needs of the child, therefore involving all three spheres of influence. With partnership of all three spheres, the awareness and

advocacy of *educational rights and SEN policies* can be implemented effectively to ensure a strong inclusive society.

Family and school

Some of the outcomes of this study indicate that there is some degree of partnership between the parents and schools, which address the issues for both the child and the parents to some extent. For instance, although parents report only moderate expectations, *increased social interaction* for the child may be further optimised when family, school and community work consistently as partners. The more they work together, the greater the observed improvement in social skills experienced by the children. In contrast, when working in isolation both the parents and the school would find it difficult to solve issues of concern. Similarly, even though parents report only moderate gains, the perceived benefits of *positive social outcomes*, *mobility gain and speech development* and *academic gains* may be further enhanced when all three spheres of influence work together as a partnership.

Alleviating the burden of care, which is a benefit for the parents of children with physical disabilities, was evident as a result of school support, but for parents of children with severe developmental disabilities this is not the case. Therefore, in collaboration with the school, the mothers of children with severe developmental disabilities were expected to stay in school as *stay-in-school mothers* due to the acute shortages of human resources in the schools. These issues of *stay-in-school mothers* who have the extra burden of taking care of their children every day may be addressed if parents, schools and the community work together to find appropriate solutions. As evident in the study, most of the parents have minimal *communication with teachers on-demand*, with only one-way communication from teachers to parents. The *stay-in-school mothers* have frequent communication with the SEN teachers: however, it is

informal and impromptu. Therefore, to open up effective communication that can serve the purpose of supporting the needs of the children, both spheres of school and family need to put in effort with two-way communication, with schools taking the lead for open communication with parents.

School

In considering the findings applied to the school sphere as shown in Figure 8.2, it is evident that the schools can take a lead in addressing the concerns of resources and communicating with parents. Further, it does not imply that the school is fully responsible and that parents and the community do not need to participate. The school as an institution has to take the lead in initiating the provision of resources required but at the same time collaborate with parents and the community. For instance, in meeting parents' expectations of *human resources* and *physical facilities,* the school as an institution can initiate a resolution by providing the resources required; however, at the same time, they need to be collaborating with parents and the community. Similarly, the concerns of the parents for the *need for awareness and counselling* for both the child and the parents can be addressed by the school with the involvement of the parents and the community as partners. Since the findings indicate that parents do not have *communication with other school staff,* the school can initiate ways for parents and other school staff to interact.

Family and community

As evident from the findings of this study, there is minimal interaction between the family and the community in supporting children with SEN. For example, it was only the few *stay-in-school mothers* who had interaction amongst themselves in the school. During these interactions these parents feel a great sense of reciprocity and support from each other when they *share information about their children* and their

experiences of caring. Further, interactions with other parents in a similar situation provide them with a feeling of *consolation*. Therefore, it is imperative that there is support within communities for parents to connect with each other to enhance their parenting experiences and increase empathy and a sense of community responsibility for parenting all children.

Epstein's six types of parental involvement

The investigation undertaken in this study concerning the parents' experiences, perspectives, and knowledge of educating their children with SEN in the three schools offers several key findings that relate to Epstein's six types of involvement, as shown in the Figure 8.3. Relating these outcomes of the investigation with Epstein's six types of involvement will provide a basis for rich "interpretation and understanding" (Astwood, 2009, p. 86) of parental involvement in supporting the needs of their children in partnership with the school and the community.
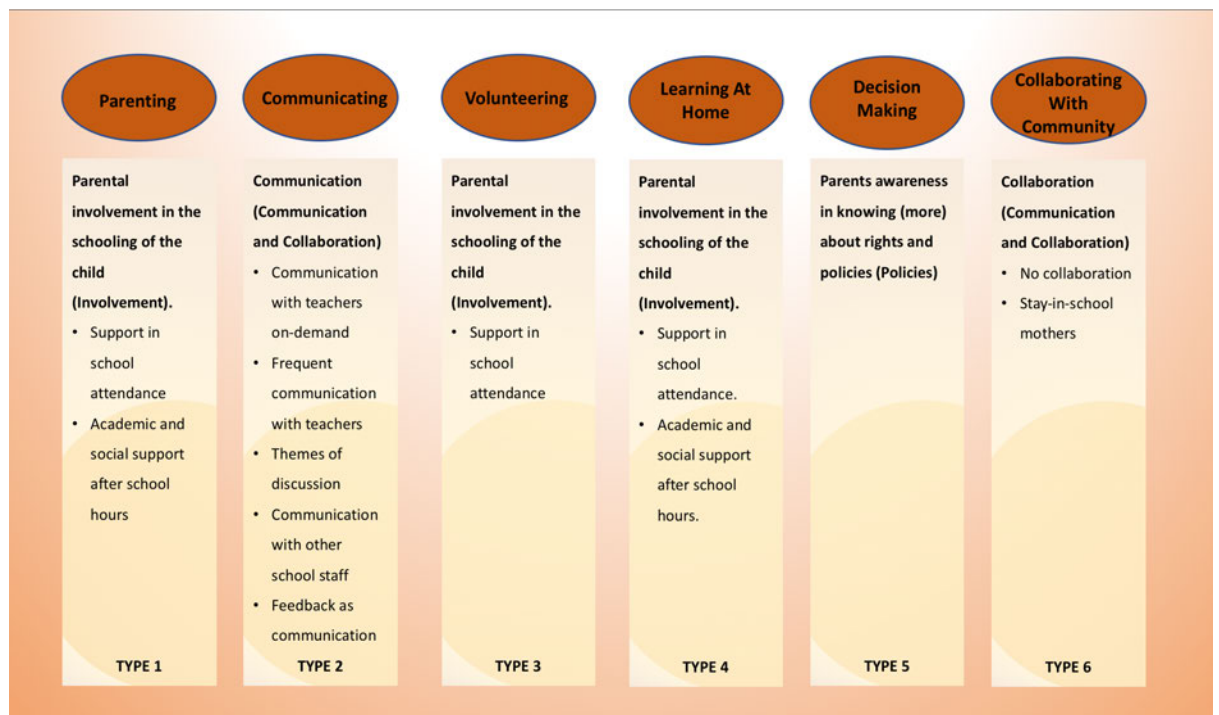
Figure 8.3. Findings applied to Epstein's six types of parental involvement.

Therefore, aligning the outcomes of this investigation with the type of parental involvement in the model, particularly the first five types of involvement, reminds both the parents and the school about the existing practices and the expectations of working together as partners for each of the type of involvement. In applying this model of involvement, it will "help families and schools fulfil their shared responsibilities for children's learning and development" (Epstein, 1992, p. 11) as a plan for effective partnership. Similarly, the sixth type of involvement provides practical suggestions for how the community as a whole can work with schools and families to support children's learning and development.

For instance, *academic and social support after school hours* (see Figure 8.3) may be enhanced by the school through interventions such as providing "information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning" (Epstein, 2009, para.1). Similarly, the different types of parental involvement may be enhanced by the school or experts providing opportunities for parents to connect with each other. Such a partnership system for supporting the learning and development of the children with SEN will reap benefits for families, schools and the community.

A theoretical framework for parental involvement in Bhutan

Combining Bronfenbrenner's ecology system, Epstein's spheres of influence and Epstein's six types of parental involvement to provide a theoretical framework for guiding this study enables a deeper understanding of parents' involvement and identification of their expectations in supporting the needs of their children in the school and at home. Application of the Bronfenbrenner and Epstein theories support the fact that the collaborative efforts of parents, school and the community are critical for the holistic development of the child. Combining Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems,

Epstein's spheres of influence and Epstein's six types of parental involvement (see Figure 8.4) as a hybrid model to interpret the findings of this study may assist with addressing the current practices of parental involvement in supporting children with SEN in Bhutan.
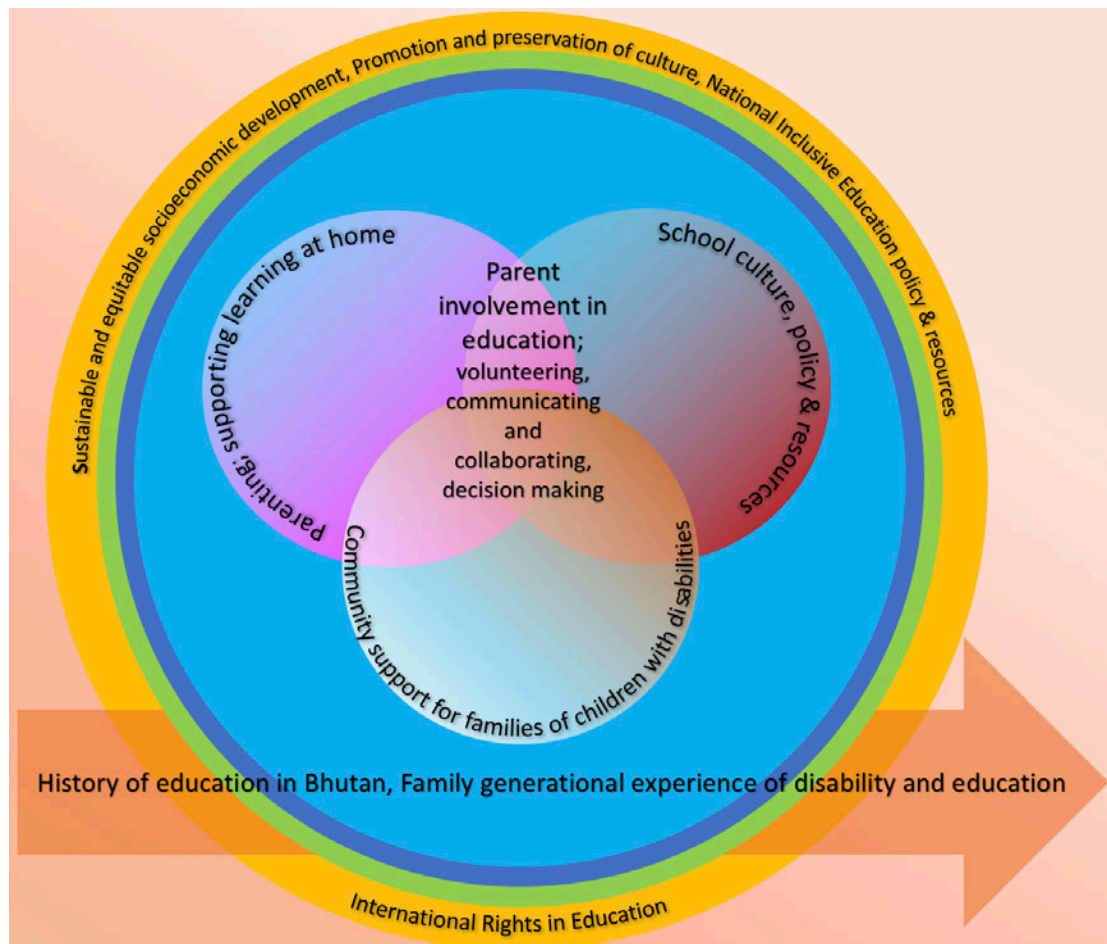
Figure 8.4. A theoretical framework for parental involvement in Bhutan.

Further, this hybrid model may not only provide a blueprint for understanding the barriers that inhibit parental involvement, but may also provide practical recommendations for how to increase effective parental involvement with due consideration of the socio-cultural environment. In addition, this model may also be used in developing and implementing school programmes to invite and motivate maximum parental involvement and provide a basis for developing policies of parental engagement and teaching learning modules for pre-service teachers. In considering this

model, Bhutan may then aspire to uphold the two pillars of GNH (see Figure 8.4): sustainable and equitable socioeconomic development (standard of living, health and education) and promotion and preservation of culture (time use, psychological well-being, community vitality and cultural diversity).

Limitations

This investigation had a number of methodological limitations that require attention. First, although it was intended to include equal numbers of participants representing different educational backgrounds in each of the regions (high educational level: higher education and low educational level: less than six years of formal education or not at all), finding parents with a high educational background in the semi-urban and rural regions was a challenge. Ideally, including more participants with higher educational levels from other regions may have provided a more optimal comparative understanding of their experiences, perspectives and knowledge of educating their children with SEN.

Second, the study proposed to interview participants who are proficient either in Dzongkha or English; however, finding participants who matched this criterion, particularly in the semi-urban and rural regions, posed a major challenge. Therefore, the interviews were conducted in local dialects with the involvement of a skilled interpreter. Standard translation procedures and various safeguards were included for the translation process, although this may have influenced the trustworthiness and consistency of the data collected. However, it was fortunate that the first author speaks many languages and could accommodate this variation. Of note it is worth mentioning that although Dzongkha is the national language, there are more than twenty other languages spoken in the different regions of Bhutan (Phuntsho, 2013).

Third, despite the inclusion criteria of an equal number of participants representing children with full inclusion and partial inclusion, it was beyond the researcher's control to satisfy this criterion. The schools in the semi-urban and rural regions provide only full inclusion placement. Including more participants whose children have only partial inclusion from other regions would have undoubtedly elicited further insights into their experiences, perspectives and knowledge.

Finally, this study investigated only the parents' experiences, perspectives and knowledge of educating their children in an inclusive school. The perspectives of principals, SENCOs, SEN teachers, teachers and peer supporters would have provided more qualitative evidence and triangulated the findings to better understand the current system of special educational needs programmes in Bhutan.

Despite these limitations, this study has provided significant evidence about parent involvement in their children's education that has implications for inclusive education policy and practice, as well as directions for future research

Implications for Policy

In 2012 the draft National Policy on SEN (MoE, 2012b) in Bhutan did not mention parents and their stake in the education of their children. However, recently, the Ministry of Education has endorsed *Standards for Inclusive Education 2017* (MoE, 2017b), which does mention parent participation in line with the results of this study that have confirmed the importance of parents' involvement in their children's inclusive schooling and have emphasised the need for policies on parental involvement both at national and school level. The need for, and the importance of, parent – teacher partnerships should be emphasised in education system policy along with detailed guidelines of how schools and parents can take on shared responsibilities to deliver effective inclusive education. In addition, schools should have policy guidelines on how

and when information will be provided to parents and the school's expectations in regard to parents collaborating with them. More importantly, in formulating these policies, due diligence must be provided in consideration of Bhutanese values. As demonstrated in this study, the theoretical frameworks of Bronfenbrenner (ecology systems theory) and Epstein (parental involvement) can contribute to a meaningful representation of the processes for parental involvement in schools, that takes into account the cultural context within which education is being provided for students with disabilities.

This study also found that for these families, the system of employing paraprofessionals and caregivers in schools with SEN programmes is non-existent, despite some mention in the draft National Policy for SEN (MoE, 2012b) and the much clearer expectations set out in the *Standards for Inclusive Education* (2017b). The need for paraprofessionals and caregivers is imperative when children have care needs that are outside the responsibility of teachers. Given the situation of a shortage of SEN teachers, large class sizes and the perceptions and responsibilities of parents as evident in this study, it is essential that these issues be explicitly addressed in policies that outline the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals and caregivers in supporting successful inclusive education for children with SEN.

Implications for Practice

This study highlighted the minimal communication and collaboration between the parents and school staff, thereby reducing opportunities for implementing effective inclusive education. Therefore, to promote successful parent–school collaboration in supporting their children with SEN, it is critical that both parties promote effective regular communication. This may be accomplished in several ways by considering different avenues of communication that include a focus on the schools creating

welcoming atmosphere, as well as welcoming words, that will reap long-term benefits through relationships between home and school. Schools need to be conscious of the impressions they create for parents. A welcoming ambience when parents enter the school grounds as well as a 'customer friendly' environment on meeting the parents in the school would assist in this regard. Currently this is not the case.

Another way to ensure effective communication is for the school to implement consistent expressed communication that involves both one-way and two-way exchanges. One-way communication such as introductory letters and flyers at the beginning of the session, weekly classroom newsletters, communication books, and report cards should be used consistently wherever possible. More importantly, two-way communication such as telephone calls, home visits, teacher – parent conferences and various school activities involving parents to name a few, should be implemented regularly wherever possible.

The schools can empower parental involvement to ensure a positive collaborative relationship. One of the ways to empower parents is to organise parent – teacher meetings, on a regular basis, to talk about the holistic development of a child and discuss issues concerning the child. Further, possibilities of home visits could be explored to ensure connection with those parents who cannot make it to the school, with prior permission from the parents. Empowering parental involvement at the beginning of the school year sessions during the development of individualised education plans (IEP) can facilitate a positive and mutually beneficial partnership. Also, the schools could find opportunities for parents to be involved in events that will promote parent–school collaboration such as parents' nights, sports days, concerts and fairs.

As evident in some schools, assigning non-disabled students to assist physically challenged children with toileting and moving around has benefited both the child and the parents. Therefore, it is important that such practices of peer support be organised in other schools along with academic and social support where appropriate and applicable. Such practices are emerging as an effective strategy that results in significant achievement in terms of academics, social skills and reduction of problem behaviours (Carter & Kennedy, 2006; Carter et al., 2007; Downing, 2006; McCurdy & Cole, 2013).

Similarly, the findings also indicate the absence of caregivers and paraprofessionals, although the draft National Policy of SEN (MoE, 2012b) and the *Standards for Inclusive Education* (2017b) mention recruiting caregivers and paraprofessionals in the IE schools. The study also suggests the need for trained teachers to handle children with developmental disabilities and behavioural problems. Therefore, it is essential that the Ministry of Education and other concerned agencies consider these provisions as a priority.

In addition, this study has highlighted the demanding experiences of parents struggling to care for their children who have severe developmental disabilities. Respite care may help reduce parents' stress, enable them to complete daily tasks, and have time to spend with other children (Harper, Dyches, Harper, Roper, & South, 2013; Robertson et al., 2011) and help families to live "a more ordinary life" (Robertson et al. 2011, p. 369). The practice of respite care in Bhutan is much needed to support parents who have children with severe developmental disabilities and behaviour problems. It is necessary for practitioners and concerned agencies to develop the concept and implement respite care support for families raising children with developmental disabilities and behaviour difficulties. By extension, the study also implies the need for

raising awareness of disability with non-disabled peers, as well as providing counselling services for parents and their children.

One of the primary findings of this study revealed a parental concern around the shortage of trained SEN teachers in all the schools. The parents emphasised their expectation of these schools having trained SEN teachers so that there is effective delivery of support to meet the needs of their children. Similarly, the study also revealed that the length of time that many of the students could attend school depended on whether the SEN teacher was present. When a teacher is not available, these children are kept at home. Therefore, this compelling evidence is a reminder of the urgent need to employ trained SEN teachers, paraprofessionals and caregivers. To meet the immediate need for trained SEN teachers in these schools, professional development short courses for interested teachers may go some way towards solving some of the existing problems. It is also critical that degree courses for inclusive education and understanding special educational needs be introduced into the two colleges of education to address the acute shortages of trained SEN teachers in the future.

In terms of general parental involvement in schools and the development and learning of their children at home, there is a need for parenting education to further enhance parents' skills and knowledge. Also, schools need to try harder to connect with the hard to reach parents in the semi-urban and rural regions. The minimal casual interaction between the parents of children with SEN, which provide immense moral and psychological support to these parents, could be built up by schools employing strategies to support the formation of formal parent-to-parent support groups to include as many parents of children with SEN as possible.

Future Research

In response to the previously limited evidence regarding parental involvement in their children's education in the Bhutanese context, this study has set a starting point for future research. In revealing that the parents of children with SEN have minimal involvement with the schools, it was evident that they are not involved in individualised educational planning (IEP) for their children in collaboration with the teachers and SENCOs was evident. Therefore, a study that addresses IEPs as a core topic of interest could provide a structure for practices of parental involvement in creating IEPs with the schools. Such individual planning provides for excellence in inclusive education that responds to the individual needs of each student.

This study was limited to the views of parents about their involvement with the school. Therefore, a study that also includes teachers' and principals' views about parental involvement will provide more qualitative evidence with more holistic perspectives from both parties about their partnership. Also, future research could extend to more schools in other regions and engage more parents, making it possible for greater representation of groups of parents and therefore eliciting further insights into the understanding of experiences, perspectives and knowledge of different groups of parents about educating their children.

In conducting this study, it was observed that the two schools in the semi-urban and rural regions provide support only for children with physical disabilities, unlike the school in the urban region, which is providing support to children with developmental disabilities. Therefore, investigating these disparities of provision of accessibility for children with different types of disabilities will better inform education in Bhutan.

To conclude, this study is the first study of its kind to investigate the parents' experiences, perspectives and knowledge of educating their children with SEN in

schools that support SEN programmes. The findings of this study have the potential to inform the policy makers, curriculum developers, schools and other stakeholders about the need to strengthen the role of parents' and the parent, school and community partnership in supporting the needs of children with SEN. Similarly, this study also informs the need for strengthen the legislation and policies both at national and school levels that address parental involvement in the education of children with SEN. The author as a parent of a child with special needs envisages that this study is imperative for advocacy of parental involvement in supporting the needs of their children by collaborating with the school and the community to ensure a brighter future.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A Participant Information Sheet

School Contact Details such as below
School Name
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
Phone   02 6773
Fax   02 6773
@une.edu.au
www.une.edu.au /

INFORMATION SHEET For PARTICIPANTS

I wish to invite you to participate in my research project, described below.

My name is Karma Jigyel and I am conducting this research as part of my PhD in the School of Education at the University of New England. My supervisors are Associate Professor Judy Miller and Senior Lecturer Sofia Mavorpoulou.

Research Project	Experiences, Perspectives and Knowledge of Parents of Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Three Pilot SEN Schools in Bhutan.
Aim of the research	The research aims to explore experiences, perspectives, and knowledge of parents of children with SEN in three pilot SEN schools in Bhutan.
Interview	I would like to conduct a face-to-face interview with you at Tendu Central School. The interview will take approximately one hour. With your permission, I will make an audio recording of the interview to ensure that I accurately recall the information you provide. Following the interview, a transcript will be provided to you if you wish to see one.
Confidentiality	Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study will remain confidential. No individual will be identified by name in any publication of the results. All names will be replaced by pseudonyms; this will ensure that you are not identifiable. If you agree I would like to quote some of your responses. This will also be done in a way to ensure that you are not identifiable.
Participation is Voluntary	Please understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary and I respect your right to withdraw from the study at any time. You may discontinue the interview at any time without consequence and you do not need to provide any explanation if you decide not to participate or withdraw.
Questions	The interview questions will not be of a sensitive nature: rather they are general, aiming to enable you to enhance my knowledge of the challenges and opportunities for better rural resource governance.
Use of information	I will use information from the interview as part of my doctoral thesis, which I expect to complete in March 2018. Information from the interview may also be used in journal articles and conference presentations before and after this date. At all times, I will safeguard your identity by presenting the information in a way that will not allow you to be identified.
Upsetting issues	It is unlikely that this research will raise any personal or upsetting issues

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Research Project	**Experiences, Perspectives and Knowledge of Parents of Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Three Pilot SEN Schools in Bhutan.**
Aim of the research	The research aims to explore experiences, perspectives, and knowledge of parents of children with SEN in three pilot SEN schools in Bhutan.
Interview	I would like to conduct a face-to-face interview with you at Tendu Central School. The interview will take approximately one hour. With your permission, I will make an audio recording of the interview to ensure that I accurately recall the information you provide. Following the interview, a transcript will be provided to you if you wish to see one.
Confidentiality	Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study will remain confidential. No individual will be identified by name in any publication of the results. All names will be replaced by pseudonyms; this will ensure that you are not identifiable. If you agree I would like to quote some of your responses. This will also be done in a way to ensure that you are not identifiable.
Participation is Voluntary	Please understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary and I respect your right to withdraw from the study at any time. You may discontinue the interview at any time without consequence and you do not need to provide any explanation if you decide not to participate or withdraw.
Questions	The interview questions will not be of a sensitive nature: rather they are general, aiming to enable you to enhance my knowledge of the challenges and opportunities for better rural resource governance.
Use of information	I will use information from the interview as part of my doctoral thesis, which I expect to complete in March 2018. Information from the interview may also be used in journal articles and conference presentations before and after this date. At all times, I will safeguard your identity by presenting the information in a way that will not allow you to be identified.
Upsetting issues	It is unlikely that this research will raise any personal or upsetting issues

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INFORMATION SHEET For PARTICIPANTS

but if it does you may wish to contact your local Community Health Centre (add the phone number here) or Lifeline on 13 11 14.

Storage of information

I will keep hardcopy notes and recordings of the interview in a locked cabinet at the researcher's office at the University of New England's School of Education. Any electronic data will be kept on a password protected computer in the same School. Only the research team will have access to the data.

Disposal of information

All the data collected in this research will be kept for a minimum of five years after successful submission of my thesis, after which it will be disposed of by deleting relevant computer files, and destroying or shredding hardcopy materials.

Approval

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No..........., Valid to ../../....).

Contact details

Feel free to contact me with any questions about this research by email at kjigyel@une.edu.au or by phone on +975 17632073.

You may also contact my supervisors'. My Principal supervisors name is Judy Miller and she can be contacted at jmiller7@une.edu.au or + 612 6773 5071 and my Co-supervisors name is Sofia Mavropou;ou and she can be at smavropo@une.edu.au or +612 6773 3846.

Complaints

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at:
Mrs Jo-Ann Sozou
Research Services
University of New England
Armidale, NSW 2351
Tel: (02) 6773 3449
Email: ethics@une.edu.au

Thank you for considering this request and I look forward to further contact with you.

Regards,
Karma Jigyel

APPENDIX B Participant Consent Form

**CONSENT FORM
for
PARTICIPANTS**

Research Project: Experiences, Perspectives and Knowledge of Parents of Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Three Pilot SEN Schools in Bhutan

I, ..., have read the information contained in the Information Sheet for Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.   Yes/No

I agree to participate in this activity, realizing that I may withdraw at any time.   Yes/No

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be quoted and published using a pseudonym.   Yes/No

I agree to be identified in this research.   Yes/No

I agree to the interview having my audio recorded and transcribed.   Yes/No

I would like to receive a copy of the transcription of the interview.   Yes/No

I am older than 18 years of age.   Yes/No

....
Participant   Date

....
Researcher   Date

APPENDIX C Interview Protocol and an Interview Guide

Code number: _____

Name of Parent: _____ Gender: _____ Age: ___

Occupation: _____

Educational Background: _____

Place: _____   Urban ☐   Semi Urban ☐ Rural ☐

Number of Children with Age and Gender: _____

_____

Number of Children (SEN) with Age and Gender: _____

Number of Children (SEN) Enrolled in School: _____

Number of Years the Child (SEN) Attended the School: _____

Date of Interview: _____

_____   _____

Signature of Interviewee   **Signature of Interviewer**

	Theme	Interview Questions
Perspective	**Theme 1: Parents' positive experiences in an inclusive environment**	**Question 1. 1** **Can you tell me how your child has benefitted by coming to this school?** • What do you think has been the greatest benefit for your child? Why?
Experience		**Question 1.2** **How did these benefits affect you?**
Perspective	**Theme 2: Parents' expectations about inclusion**	**Question 2.1.** **What are your expectations of having your child in this school?** • What do you think about your child's academic achievement? • Similarly, what do you think about your child's social interaction in the classroom and other places (playground, park, home)? • In what ways do you think that your expectations have been met?
Knowledge		**Question 2.2** **Can you tell me about the available resources (i.e. teachers, para professionals, SENCO, computers, books, I pads etc.) that the school provides to support your child's learning?** • In what ways have all these been helpful to your child?
Experience		
Perspective		**Question 2.3** **What else do you think that this school could offer to your child?**
Perspective		

Experience		**Question 2.4** **What would you suggest the school management in order to meet your expectations?** **Question 2.5** **Can you tell me something about your child's current placement in the school (i.e. mainstreamed, integrated, or segregated)?** • Would you like to share with me your preferred choice of placement and why would you choose it?
Perspective **Experience** **Experience** **Experience** **Perspective**	**Theme 3: Parents' concerns about inclusion**	**Question 3.1** **What are your concerns about your child being included in the school along with other children?** • How did these concerns affect your child? • Similarly how did it affect you? • How do you handle such issues? • In what ways do you think that the school could handle the issues that are concerning you most?
Experience **Experience** **Perspective**	**Theme 4: Communication and collaboration (teamwork) between parents and school personnel**	**Question 4.1** **Tell me about your communication with the teacher(s) of your child.** • How often do you meet with your child's teacher? Why? • What sort of issues do you discuss in your meetings? • Do you communicate with other staff of the school? Why? **Question 4.2** **What form of feedback do you receive from teachers and other personnel?** • How often do you get feedback? • For what aspects of your child do you receive feedback from the teachers and other school

		personnel about your child's progress?
		• How satisfied are you with the feedback you receive from school?
Perspective		**Question 4.3**
		Who are the people in the school that you think can have an important role in giving you information about your child? Can you explain why?
		Question 4.4
Experience		**Can you tell me about your opportunities for collaboration (teamwork) with the child's teachers and other school personnel?**
Experience	**Theme 5: Parental involvement in schooling**	**Question 5.1**
		Would you tell me your role in supporting your child attending this school?
Perspectives		• In what ways would you like to assist the school and the teachers to help your child learn effectively? Why do you think so?
Experience		**Question 5.2**
		Would you tell me your role in supporting your child after school?
Experience		**Question 5.3**
		Can you tell me about the issues that you discuss with each other regarding the schooling of your child?
		• How do you deal with such issues together?
Experience	**Theme 6: Interaction with other parents of children with disability**	**Question 6.1**

Perspective		**Would you share with me about your interaction with other parents of children with disability?** • What issues do you discuss with these parents? • What have you gained from these discussions with other parents? • What do you think of having such interaction with other parents regarding your child's participation in school?
Knowledge	**Theme 7: Parents' awareness about SEN policies**	**Question 7.1** **How did you decide to put your child in the current school after realizing your child's disability?** • How do you get information about the rights of your child in education? • Would you like to know more about the SEN policies and legislations? Why? • What is your opinion about the existing policy for inclusion? • Could you discuss if the concerned agencies and other stakeholders are doing enough in supporting the needs of your child?
	Now that we have come to the end of the interview is there anything that you would like to mention which you thought has not been covered in our conversation?	
	Finally, I would like to inform you that when I finish my PhD I will prepare a report with the main findings of this study which will be sent out to concerned agencies, other stakeholders, and Bhutanese population, mainly parents of children with disabilities like you, who have children educated in mainstream school. **Thank you so much for your time today. Your views are very important for my study and I hope the findings of this study will benefit the community at large and in particular the children with special education needs and their parents.**	

APPENDIX D Translation of Interview Guide in Dzongkha

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དྲིས་ལན་གྱི་རེ་འདུ་མིག།

</div>

ཞིབ་འཚོལ་པ་དང་ ཞིབ་འཇུག་གི་ དགོས་དོན་བཤད་པ།

དེ་གི་མིང་ ཀཀུ་འཛིགས་རྒྱལ་དང་ ང་ སྨྱུ་རྡོ་ཤེས་རིག་མཐོ་རིམ་སློབ་གྲྭའི་ནང་ལུ་ ལས་རམ་བཟད་པ་ལབད་ ཕུག་ལུམ་ཨིན། དགོ་སྟེ་ ཉུསི་ཀྱི་ལེལ་ ཨར་མི་དུ་ལེ་ལུ་ ཡོད་པའི་ནེ་ཉུ་ཉིང་ལེནད་ གཙུག་ལག་སློབ་གྲྭའི་ནང་ལུ་ གཅིག་སྐྱེལ་ཤེས་ཡོན་ནང་ལུ་ གཙུག་ལག་གཡགས་དབང་གི་ ཤེས་ཡོན་སྤྱང་བའི་བསྒྱང་ཨིན།

སློབ་བསྐྱེད་ནིའི་དོ་ནས་ཏྲི་ག

1.   ནུ་གི་ མཚན་ག་ཅི་ལུ་ས་སྨོ?

2.   ཁྱོད་རའི་ བཟའ་ཚང་གི་སྐོར་ལས་ གསུངས་གནང་མས།

3.   ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་ ཨ་ལོ་ སློབ་གྲྭའི་ནང་འཚུལ་ཏེ་ ལོ་ག་དེ་ཅིག་ སོང་ཡི?

4.   ཁྱོད་ལུ་ སློབ་གྲྭའི་ནང་ འགྱོ་མི་ ཨ་ལོ་གཞན་ཡང་ ཡོད་ག?

བཅད་དོན། 1) གཅིག་སྐྱེལ་ཤེས་ཡོན་ལུ་ པ་ས་གི་ཉམས་ཆོང་ལེགས་ཁོག།
ཏྲི་ 1 པ།
ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་ སློབ་གྲྭའི་ནང་འཚུལ་ཏེ་ པ་ན་ཕོགས་ག་ནེ་སྟེ་རང་ སྐྱལ་ལི་ག་གི་ སྐོར་ལས་ གསུངས་གནང་མས།

   • ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་བསམ་འཆར་ལས་ འབད་བ་ཅིན་ ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་ལུ་ པ་ན་ཕོགས་སྤྲོལ་རང་ ག་ཅི་སྦྱང་ཡི? ག་ ཅི་འབད?

ཏྲི་ 2 པ།
གཞན་ལ་ ག་ནེ་སྟེ་རང་ སྤྲང་ཡི?

བཅད་དོན། 2) གཅིག་སྐྱེལ་ཤེས་ཡོན་གྱི་སྐོར་ལས་ པ་ས་གི་རེ་འདོད།
ཏྲི་ 1 པ།
ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་ སློབ་གྲྭ་འདི་ནང་ ཡོད་མི་ལས་ རེ་བ་ག་ཅི་ར་འདོད་ག?

   • ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་གིས་ སློབ་གཱང་ནང་ལས་ དཔེ་ཆ་སྦྱང་ཐངས་ གད་འབད་རང་ཡོད་བཙམ་མཐོང་མས་ག?

   • དེ་བཟུམ་སྦེ་ སློབ་གཱང་དང་ ཕྱི་ཁ་ལས་པར་ མི་སྐྱེ་དང་ གཅིག་ཁར་ འབྲེལ་བ་འཐབ་ཐངས་ ག་དེ་ འབད་འདུག་གོ?

   • ག་དེ་འབད་བ་ཅིན་ ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་རེ་བ་འདི་ བསྐྱབ་ཚུགས་ནི་ བཟུམ་ཅིག་འདུག?

རིམ་ ༡ པ།

ཆུད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་གི་ སྐུལ་ནི་གི་རྒྱུ་སྐོ་རང་བབད་ སློབ་གྲྭའི་ཁོ་ལས་གནང་ལོད་མི་ མཆུན་རྒྱེན་འདུབྱེ་བབད་ན། སློབ་ དཔོན། རྒྱུ་སྐོ་རང་། སློབ་རིག་ ཀི་དེ་བཱ) གཅིར་རང་འཚོབ་དོ་ག་གི་ སྐོ་ལ་ལས་ གསུང་གནང་།

• དེ་ཚུ་གིས་ ཆུད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་ལུ་ ཕན་ཐོགས་ ག་དེ་སྦེ་རང་བྱུང་དོ་ག?

རིམ་ ༤ པ།

ཆུད་ཀྱི་འཕལ་འཆར་ལས་པབད་པ་ཅིན་ སློབ་གྲྭ་འདི་གིས་ ཆུད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་ལུ་ གཅིར་རང་བྱིན་ཚུགས་ནི་འབྱམ་ཅིག འདུག་གོ?

རིམ་ ༥ པ།

ཆུད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་གི་ དགོང་འི་སློབ་གྲྭའི་སྐོ་ལ་ས་ པསམ་འཆར་ག་ཅི་ལོ་ད་གོ?

བཙོད་དོན། ༡) པས་ཚུ་གི་ གཅིག་སྐྱི་ལ་ཤེས་ལོན་གྱི་སྐོ་ལ་ས་ཚ་ཚུང་།

རིམ་ , པ།

སློབ་གྲྭའི་ཨ་ལོ་གཞན་ཚུ་དང་ གཅིག་ཁར་ ཆུད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་ལང་ཚུ་གས་པ་ད་ སེམས་ཁར་ ཚ་བྱུང་ གཅིར་རང་ ལང་ལས་གོ?

• ཚ་བྱུང་དེ་གིས་ ཆུད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་ལུ་ ག་དེ་འབད་ གནོད་པ་མས་གོ?

• དེ་བརྫམ་སྟེ་ ཆུད་ལུ་ གནོད་པ་ ག་དེ་འབད་ བྱུང་མས?

• གནས་སྐུངས་དེ་བརྫམ་ལུ་ གནོད་ལེན་ ག་དེ་སྦེ་ འབད་ཕ་སྦོ?

• ཆུད་ལུ་ ཚ་བྱུང་སྦོ་ལ་འབད་ལངས་མི་དེ་ སློབ་གྲྭའི་ཁོ་ས་ལས་ གནོད་ལེན་ ག་དེ་སྦེ་ འབད་པ་ཅིན་ དྲག་ནི་མས་གོ?

བཙོད་དོན། ༢) པས་ད་སློབ་གྲྭའི་བར་ན་ གོ་བརྡ་དང་ མཉམ་འབྲེལ་(སྟེ་ཚན་གྱི་སྐུ་ཚུ་གི་སྐོ་ད།

རིམ་ , པ།

ཆུད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་འི་སློབ་དཔོན་(ཚུ་)དང་ འབྲེལ་བ་ག་དེ་འབད་རང་བཐབ་སྦོ?

• ཆུད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་འི་སློབ་དཔོན་དང་ ཚར་ག་དེ་ཅིག་ འཕྲད་པ་སྦོ? ག་ཅི་འབད?

• དེ་བསྐང་ གནད་དོན་ ག་ཅི་གི་སྐོར་ལས་རང་ ལོ་རྒྱུས་སྐྱབ་སྦོ?

• སློབ་གྲྭའི་ལས་བྱེད་པ་ གཞན་ཚུ་དང་གཅིག་གཱར་ལང་ འབྲེལ་བ་འཐབ་ནི་ཡོད་ག? ག་ཅི་འབད?

རིམ་༣ པ།

ཨ་ལོའི་སློབ་དཔོན་དང་ ལས་བྱེད་པ་ཁན་ཚོ་ལས་ བསམ་ལན་ གཅིག་ལྷུགས་རང་ ཐོབ་ནི་འདུག་གོ?

• བསམ་ལན་ གྱངས་ཀ་ གང་དེ་རེ་ཐོབ་ནི་འདུག་གོ?

• ཆུད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་གི་ ཡར་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་སྐོར་ལས་ སློབ་དཔོན་དང་ སློབ་གྲུའི་ལས་བྱེད་པ་ཚུ་ལས་ བསམ་ལན་ གཅིག་གི་སྐོར་ལས་རང་ ཐོབ་ནི་འདུག་གོ?

• སློབ་གྲུའི་ནང་ལས་ བསམ་ལན་ཐོབ་མི་ཚུ་གིས་ ཆུད་ བསམ་པ་ཇོ་གསལ་མས་ག?

རིམ་༤ པ།

སློབ་གྲུའི་ནང་ལས་ ཆུད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་གི་སྐོར་ལས་ གནས་ཚུལ་བྱིན་མི་ གཙོ་ཅན་ གདན་ག་རང་ཨིན་ཟེར་ཨཚོམ་
མས? གཅི་འབད་ཨིན་ན་ བཤད་པ་རྒྱབ་གནང་།

རིམ་༥ པ།

ཆུད་འདི་ཨ་ལོ་གི་ སློབ་དཔོན་དང་ ལས་བྱེད་པ་ཚུ་དང་ གཅིག་ཁར་ མཉམ་འབྲེལ་ འབད་ནི་གི་གོ་སྐབས་
གདེ་འབད་རང་ ཐོབ་ཅི་ག་གི་སྐོར་ གསལ་བཤད།

བཀོད་རིམ་ ༤། སློབ་སྟོང་གི་དོན་ལས་ ཕམ་གི་ལྷུ་བགན།
རིམ་༡ པ།

ཆུད་ཀྱི་ཨ་ལོ་ སློབ་གྲུ་བདེན་བཙུག་འི་དོན་ལས་ ཆུད་ཀྱི་ རྒྱབ་སྐྱོར་འབད་དགོ་པའི་གནད་དོན་ གཅིག་རང་ཡོད་
གོ?

རིམ་༢ པ།

སློབ་གྲུའི་དུས་ཆོད་རྟགས་པའི་སྐྱལ་ལས་ ཆུད་ཀྱིས་ ཨ་ལོ་ལུ་ རྒྱབ་སྐྱོར་འབད་དགོ་པའི་ གནད་དོན་ གཅིག་རང་
ཡོད་གོ?

རིམ་༣ པ།

ཆུད་འདི་ཨ་ལོ་སློབ་གྲུའི་དང་ ཚོམ་བསྒྲུབ་པའི་སྐོར་ལས་ ཆུད་རང་ན་དགོཔ་ གནད་དོན་དང་ད་ཀ་ལས་ གཅིག་
སྐོར་ལས་རང་ ལོ་རྒྱུས་སྒྲུབ་ཨི་ཡོད་གོ?

• གནད་དོན་དང་ དཀའ་ངལ་ཚུ་ གཅིག་ཁར་སྟོན་དེ་ བསལ་ཐབས་ གང་དེ་སྙེ་སྟོན་མ་སྨོ?

APPENDIX E Sample of Inter Coder Arrangement

Transcript Data	Author1	Author2	Author3	Theme
I: Hello! My name is Karma Jigyel and I am from Paro College of Education. Currently I am pursuing PhD studies in Inclusive Education at the University of New England, Armidale, Australia. As a part of my study I am conducting this interview with you to explore your experiences and concerns of having your child in this particular school. Uh... that's in ▮▮▮▮▮ Middle Secondary School. So uh. First could you please tell me your name? P: Uh. I am ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ . I: Can you tell me about your... you and your family? P: uh. I am from ▮▮▮▮ . And I have three kids la. Three children uh... two boys and one daughter la and then my eldest is having little difficulty in terms of speech and in terms of his growth la and my other two kids they are normal and then my middle one is studying in class five and then younger one in class three.		*Notes* *Oldest with speech and growth delays*		

I: Las thank you… P: and.. and.. in same school la in ██████. I: Ok thank you… uh how long have you been living here in ██████? P: uh.. it is just three years and then five months la I uh.. I had come here in 2013 la. I joined this office in January 2013 as TEO. I: Thank you, how long has your child been attending this particular school? P: Uh… ever since we came to Thimphu he started going to ██████ la, so before that he was attending normal school where he had difficulty as well as school had… teachers had difficulty dealing with him. Now I think uh… ever since I came here in 2013 he joined ██████ where we are comfortable and he is also comfortable. I: Thank you uh… do you have other children attending this school? P: Yeah, my two of my children are also studying in same schools but uh… these two kids are not		*Two others typically developing* *3 5 years*		

like uh the eldest one la. They are normal and then they are going to same school with him.				
Question 1.1				
I: Thank you, uh.. now can you tell me how your child has benefitted by coming to this particular school? P: Uh when he was studying in normal schools with other normal children uh he had a difficulty in understanding uh the speech of other friends la uh and then other children had a difficulty in understanding his language even as a parent we had a difficulty in understanding his language la. Sometime he goes with the sign language which is not uh that uh thing a perfect one still then uh after coming here uh before that he was quite aggressive, now after coming here in first year he had a problem.. he still had that aggressiveness but then later slowly slowly he started uh picking up the speeches and he started uh getting adjusted with the environment of uh ███████ as well as with the other students and then now I think compared to 2013, 12, 11, 12, 13, he has improved a lot	- Improved speech - Adjustment with school environment - Adjustment with peers - Lots of improvement compared to past years *Child's initial condition prior to receiving inclusive education*	*Note: Early information belongs as an introduction to this student's context* *Code: Speech has improved adjusted to the school environment as per other students*	Partial inclusion: greater benefits compared to full inclusion: copying language and adjustment to school	Positive outcomes in communication and adjustment

I: That's a very good news la. Uh what do you think has been the greatest benefit for your child …. uh you know coming to this particular school? P: Uh… at at least uh he could read he could uh he could read he can uh uh he can understand he can also uh now uh… write what uh teacher wants him to write and then then I think uh he can still uh lit uh understand little bit of English which is quite uh good for him. Actually uh so that's why these days uh .. you know he has been watching all these English uh cartoon where he some time laugh alone… is a very good sign uh actually I found it quite a beneficial after uh coming to ▮▮▮▮ and joining uh ▮▮▮▮▮ Middle Secondary School… And then uh importantly uh we have we have benefitted. Before we were not knowing the real uh problem with him. Now after coming here we came to know his problem and then as a result we could uh deal with him and then we could understand his problem so as a result … actually uh..uh.. I did see much benefit to him but more benefit to us because we could understand his problem.	- ability to read - ability to understand - Ability to write *Indicates that parents have benefitted more than the child by understanding the child's problem.*	*Improved reading and writing and understands English* *Code: parents came to know the problem*	Improvement in reading, writing, and comprehension of English Improvement in parental awareness of their child's problems: Greatest benefit.	Positive academic outcomes Positive academic outcomes

I: Ok Thank you.. Now if you are to name just one benefit in him, I mean his attending this school may be you would have seen some changes in him .. what could that be just to mention one very good change in him the benefit .. P: Uh….. I think I need some time to think… ha…ha…ha.. I: That's ok…that's ok…uh if you want me to rephrase the question P: Yeah.. Yeah please				
I: I could do that. Now suppose uh it could be in terms of behaviours, it could be in terms of learning, it could be in terms of social relationship so what do you think uh from these aspects uh you know you could see some concrete evidence I mean improvement in him or something like that.. P: Ok <mark>before he was very aggressive</mark>, not I think <mark>he has become little sober</mark> and <mark>then before he was very restless</mark> <mark>tough restless these days but then he still uh attends his thing uh morning uh school rituals like attending assembly, and then going to classes and then mingling with the</mark>	- development in behaviours such as becoming sober, developing patience, ability to go to toilet - Development of vocabulary for Dzongkha *Child's initial condition prior to receiving inclusive education and age factor*	<mark>*Adapted to routine of School, improved friendships, vocabulary and physical independence (toileting)*</mark>	Positive behavioural change: Socially appropriate behaviours Vocabulary acquisition	Positive social outcomes

friends and then he started knowing the people so I think these are the changes that I could see uh and then the another one is uh he could uh he had developed the vocabulary in terms of Dzongkha late before he he had a difficulty in speaking and then telling us the right word. Now uh he he can do it that changes we could see and then the in terms of behaviour also before I think he had a difficulty to go to toilet whereby he passed urine as well as uh thing everything in the bed. Now he has I think must be because of the age he he stopped that and he has started going to the toilet himself even in the midnight. And these are the changes we could see.			Emerging independence in self-care because of maturity	
Question 2.1	-			
I: Thank you. Uh what are your expectations of having your child in this school? P: Uh I do not have big expectations I just wanted uh him to know the environment where he can understand people where he can improve himself in terms of uh speaking and then in terms of … uh getting along with the people around. So these are the expectations. I do not have big expectations because we cannot expect him to uh…. do big things, at least I we just	- Awareness of the environment - Understanding people - Able to speak - Respond and understand love - Future benefit *Parent do not have big expectations*	*Parental expectations are for their son to fit in.* *Social skills* *'no big expectations'*	No big expectations: language (speaking) and social skills	Low expectations

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wanted him to enrol himself so that in future he will benefitted for what he had learnt and then uh… so the uh uh even we expect him to know more of the surroundings even the love uh shown by his siblings, parents and then then love I think in terms of uh showering love and then to understand about love he is not bad actually he is ok with this he knows the people around and then uh I do not have big expectations as such.				
I: thank you. Now what do you think about your child's academic achievement? P: Uh… he is ..improving though he has.. uh so I think though he has difficulty in writing and then every evening we sit together and then I before he writes his homework I write on the sheet of a paper then he copies and then then uh…that's how I think he is doing well in academics but the only thing is ….. he can he can he understa…he knows the letter but then is very difficult for him to alter that letter. That's the problem but then I have no problem because at least he understands.	- Improvement in academics - Writing homework - Recognise the alphabets *Parent assist with writing for the child and the parent is content with the child's progress*	*Father working with son in evenings to help him improve*	Difficulty with writing (learning the alphabet)	Academic difficulties

APPENDIX F University Ethics Approval Letter

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM TO: A/Prof Judith Miller, Dr Sofia Mavropoulou & Mr Karma Jigyel

School of Education

This is to advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved the following:

PROJECT TITLE: Experiences, Perspectives and Knowledge of Parents of Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Three Pilot SEN Schools in Bhutan

APPROVAL No.:   HE16-101

COMMENCEMENT DATE: 20 May, 2016

APPROVAL VALID TO: 20 May, 2017

COMMENTS: Nil. Conditions met in full

The Human Research Ethics Committee may grant approval for up to a maximum of three years. For approval periods greater than 12 months, researchers are required to submit an application for renewal at each twelve-month period. All researchers are required to submit a Final Report at the completion of their project. The Progress/Final Report Form is available at the following web address:
http://www.une.edu.au/research/research-services/rdi/ethics/hre/hrec-forms

The NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans requires that researchers must report immediately to the Human Research Ethics Committee anything that might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol. This includes adverse reactions of participants, proposed changes in the protocol, and any other unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

In issuing this approval number, it is required that all data and consent forms are stored in a secure location for a minimum period of five years. These documents may be required for compliance audit processes during that time. If the location at which data and documentation are retained is changed within that five year period, the Research Ethics Officer should be advised of the new location.
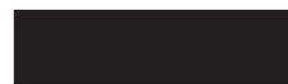
Jo-Ann Sozou
Secretary/Research Ethics Officer

11/05/2016   A16/11

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APPENDIX G Approval Letter from Ministry of Education, Bhutan

Department of School Education
Ministry of Education

DSE/SPCD/Adm(8)/2016/1466

11/04/16

To,
The Principal
Tendu Central School/Drugyel LSS/Changangkha MSS
Samtse/Paro/Thimphu Thromde

Data Collection

Sir,

Mr. Karma Jigyel, PhD student of University of New England, Armidale, NSW Australia is undertaking the research on the topic "**Experiences, Perspectives and Knowledge of Parents of Children with Special Educational Needs(SEN)**" in your school and it require the involvement of parents of the children.

Therefore, you may kindly render your necessary support to enable him to collect data on the above cited research topic in May 2016.

Yours Sincerely,

(Jamyang Choeden)
Offtg. Director General

CC:
1. DEO/TEO, Dzongkhag Administration/ Thromde, Thimphu for information.
2. Person Concerned, for information and follow up.
3. Office file

Post Box No. 112, Kawajangsa, Thimphu, Bhutan, Tel: PA: +975 2 325325, www.education.gov.bt

APPENDIX H Sample of Manual Coding Interview Transcript

Transcription Data	Codes and Notes	Themes
I: Hello! My name is Karma Jigyel and I am from Paro College of Education. Currently I am pursuing PhD studies in Inclusive Education at the University of New England, Armidale, Australia. As a part of my study I am conducting this interview with you to explore your experiences and concerns of having your child in this particular school. Uh… that's in ▮▮▮▮ Middle Secondary School. So good morning. P: Kuzu Zangpola I: Could you tell me your name? P: ▮▮▮▮ My name is ▮▮▮▮ I: Would you like to tell me about you and your family? P: I have three children and youngest one is diagnosed as a cleft feet where he cannot walk independently….. he is managing to walk with crutches at the moment. I: And what work do you do? P: I am a civil servant. I work in department of road safety and transport authority in ▮▮▮▮. I: Thank you. and how long have you been here living here in ▮▮▮▮?		

P: Well in ▮▮▮▮▮▮ uh it is uh more than ten years I am here in ▮▮▮▮▮▮ . I: And how long has your child the youngest child been attending this particular school? P: uh since last year he was admitted here. I: And do you have other children attending the same school? P: Yes he has a one elder brother in class eight.		
Question 1.1		
I: Uh now can you tell me how your child has benefitted by coming to this school? P: Well to be frank uh this baby was born in my hand. I was lost you know. There was nobody who could consult me and <mark>I was lost in fact I prayed for his death because you know I thought he will be suffering and at the same time parents will be suffering.</mark> But uh somehow we had to accept that he is born with deform deformity. Then somebody told us that you have your child has to be admitted in ▮▮▮▮▮▮ because this is the school where you your baby will be taken care. Yes I have admitted him here. They take care about but the <mark>I mean the place is not very conducive for the disabled.</mark> I: Ok P: That what I can say is not uh I have informed principal also he is saying they will develop soon, they have put up budget but at the moment specially <mark>the toiletries he has lot of problem because he cannot bend, he cannot go independently.</mark>	Note The parent hoped for the death of his newborn baby when he realised the deformity in the baby.	Concerns for accessible environment in the school

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I: Now having him here in this school as you mentioned he has been here for about two years including this year. So did you come across any benefits in him I mean a kind of improvement, a change in him? P: I could not get you sir. Uh improvement means cognitively he is fine. He is been treated as a normal student not like other SEN special children. He is treated as normal person but what I am saying is when he would move around the place in not conducive. That's all. otherwise it is very beneficial. Yes he is treated as a normal child only cognitively. I: ok, so do you mean that your child has a place with any other student and that gives him kind of some you know identity or something like that. P: o yes o yes of course at times he has I can feel that he is developing kind of depressions because when children move around and play around he also like to you know play and one day it so happened was trying to play with a boy but the boy was not cooperating with him since he is a since he could not walk around so he has used his crutches to you know beat him. That was quite scary. Otherwise he is ok. I: So as such any other benefits in him despite his uh you know weakness, regarding the mobility, any other benefits you could see in him/? P: uh yes of course the teachers are taking care, they are giving extra concentration to my baby and other who is special needs children. It is benefited. **I: Ok thank you. Just to ask again do you have anything that you thought yes this was the greatest benefit of having him in this particular school?**	- not child friendly school - difficult accessibility to toilet - has opportunities like any other normal children in terms of academic learning	

P: Well I have lot of expectations but I don't see much of kind because when VIP visits they are been pulled up to a different place and given special visit and may be on Thursday doctor comes and they are checked. Uh…uh… other than that I didn't see any difference than other. **I: ok thank you, now yes I believe there are some benefits for your child being placed in this school, so how did these benefit affect you as a parent?** P: ==Well I I always have a feeling that yes this is a right place, this is a right school that my child will be taken care but uh they are doing best yes they have expertise from Australia, sometimes they have uh visitors special visitors and they take care.== Otherwise I don't see any difference.	- rejection from friends - aggression - extra attention from teachers - right school for his child (inclusion)	Concerns for social responses/acceptance
Question 2.1		
I: Thank you. Now what are your expectations of having your child in this school? P: uh one thing is for sure my child is getting may get into depression when he as he grows up because I have informed earlier. He would like to play around, he would like to dance around here he like to do but he cannot do. Sometimes he wanted to attend assembly, national assembly but uh the you know morning assembly but he could not		

do. There he gets frustrations. I thought in this regard the teacher can play a vital role by giving a counselling and yet and yes uh uh I keep saying you know you are the best, look at other fellow who is worse than you, that keeps him encouraged and that way I think that that way it is benefitting plus he could also feel yes I am better than that you know he walks around. **I: Ok so now uh when it comes to academic achievement so what do you think about your child's you know academic performance and all?** P: Uh academically he is doing fine, he is doing fine. Last year he was admitted in PP class, uh unfortunately he met with accident and his right leg was you know got fractured and I could not send him to school so this year he continued in same class PP and so he is doing good. Academically he is doing good. **I: Similarly, what do you think about your child's social interaction in the classroom and other places you know like playgrounds or maybe at home with his brothers, sisters, so how how, is he very sociable?** P: Yeah he is he is sociable; he is very talkative but uh since he is he could not walk around mobility is limited so quite difficult. Otherwise he is ok. **I: Now un yes uh looks like you are quite happy with his academic achievement or be it his kind of the way he interacts with other friends you know sociable and so on. So now in what ways do you think that your expectations have been met? So are you satisfied you know the way he interacts the way he learns things in the class and all.** P: I am satisfied. I am satisfied. I think he is doing good in this area.	- counselling from teachers - academically sound - very sociable	Low expectations Positive academic outcomes

		- expectations met	Positive social outcomes
Question 2.2			
I: Ok. ok so now would you like to tell me about the available resources that the school provides to support your child's learning? For instance like uh you know there are professionals who handle him maybe or his teachers or the resources like computers, books the school may provide to him. To enhance his learning and so on. P: but now in this regard he is considered as a normal child except the problem with the mobility.so of course teacher gives extra attention <mark>but uh not to that extent with the extra facilities otherwise he is ok.</mark>		- supportive teachers - no other supports	Supportive teachers Limited resources
Question 2.3			
I: So uh now what else do you think that this school could offer to your child? P: I wish they should have a very uh <mark>user friendly environment and very conducive classes with attached toiletries.</mark> This is the most challenges not only my child but I can see around special needs children there they have lots of problems with toiletries because it is not user friendly.		- accessibility for SEN children	Need for accessible environment
Question 2.4			
I: Ok thank you. Now in case you need to suggest the school management in order to meet these expectations what would your suggestions be?			

P: Uh timely again I am talking to I am reporting to principal that you know my baby is having this problem the and and principal also accepts since uh I think this school was recognised very lately as a SEN and but of course other uh other other from other school it has facilities but not to that expected uh…	- accessibility issues	Need for accessible environment
Question 2.5		
I: **Can you tell me something about your child's current placement in the school? In the sense uh he is placed in the normal classroom like any other children throughout the day. Is that case for your child or …** P: Yes throughout the day he is mixed with the normal kids. In fact I requested school class teacher I mean to why he is not been you know grouped into with other special needs children he is saying no no your baby is normal so by if you put them you know since he is cognitively ok he will feel low.so that's why he is placed in normal class. I: **ok now yes you did mention about you know asking the teachers why not placing him with the special educational needs children in the SEN unit, so now given the choice would you like to share with me you know in your preferred choice of placement and why would you choose it?** P: the I feel he should be sometimes looking at the situation placed with the SEN children uh since sometimes on Wednesday I think they have a library class, since he cannot walk now we have to they have to travel to go to the library room so it is quite difficult. So of course the teacher give extra extra care to him. I wish you know not all	- full inclusion	Full inclusion

the time with the normal children but sometimes he may be pull up with these SEN children.		
I: SEN children and what services do you expect when he is put with other you know SEN children? Anything in your mind? P: not not much, only problem is he cannot walk independently so they can help him to go around. That's all.	- occasionally along with other SEN children - keep him engaged	Preference for partial inclusion
Question 3.1		
I: **Ok thank you. Now what are your concerns about your child being included in the school along with other children?** I: uh well I am quite happy because now I I can feel now he is uh he is normal human being like us, of course the mobility problem. I am am proud because after coming to this school I came to know he is he is included where he is normal normal human being. Of course he cannot walk independently. I: **any concerns for instance like your child has some difficulties and he is with you know many friends inside the classroom so did you have a kind of you know uh a fear or you know where you thought oh my child would you know other children would you know uh uh bully my child uh other children would you know name him with name him differently you know a kind of that concerns. Did you have that concerns?**	- inclusion	Concerns for social responses / acceptance

P: Oh yes obviously because I also feel sorry when he cannot play, when he cannot go around, and uh yes there were incidences because some bullied him because he he is on crutches...excuse me. I: it is ok. Now as you mentioned you have concerns so how did these concerns affect your child? Pause I: when he got bullied or when he had incidences where you already mentioned that his friends ignored him, so how did it affect him? P: uh I feel when times come he has to accept that, he has to accept that he is not like other children where he can go around uh he has to accept when time comes I am feeling that sometimes of course why I am saying is he he may get into depression is he says 'apa wish I could walk around like other children', sometimes he says this and that's that really makes me sad sir. I: and how do you handle such issues as earlier you mentioned that your son sometimes expresses such you know uh when he expresses that he would like to have an opportunity like any other child. So how does this how do you handle such issues now? P: uh I always compare with other children who is worse than him. I always compare I say look at that u look at that children. How worse he is. There are children who comes on wheel chair, there are children who carry on nap. So that way he also get	- empathy - child's wish to walk like any other normal child - comparison with other severe SEN children - Counselling	 Depression concerns

encouraged. He has he is he thinks maybe he thinks he is better than them. So that way I am counselling him. **I: Thank you. Now in what ways do you think that the school could handle these kind of issues that are concerning you most?** P: I think <mark>counselling is very important</mark> and one thing is here in ▓▓▓▓▓▓ other students who are normal also use to looking at such kind of children that's why they don't … I mean they don't make difference with abnormal and normal. Suppose if I admit into other schools where there where there are no other SEN children so he will be the focus he will be concentrated. So here that that is quite interesting they acted as normal. I: Ok once more uh when uh I think there were incidences as you mentioned like your son been you know left by his friends and you know so now this is just one example maybe there are many other incidences where such issues happen every time maybe. **But in such cases what do you think that the school could handle, how the school could handle such issues. You mentioned one one is counselling for him, did you mean for him, counselling for him?** P: Yes for him and for everybody uh child with this deformities. Uh yes this school is better uh because there are other children also like him so the <mark>counselling is very much even not only to the children even to the parents I sometime I feel the parents get into depression because when you have such kind of children you know when they cannot play around, when they cannot do where where other children could do. Counselling is very much important.</mark>	- counselling for both the child and the parents	Provide moral support Need for counselling support for the child and parents as well

I: ok so when you mentioned counselling for parents do you did you have any opportunity like you were counselled by the teachers or professionals out here in the school. Were there any situation… P: No not much.		
sQuestion 4.1		
I: now would you like to tell me about your communication with the teacher or teachers of your child? P: no I have a very good contact with class teacher here. Here she keeps me updating how he is behaving so uh there are expertise from Australia also. I went to her and I asked how how he is doing. Uh she said uh he is doing ok and she is… only the mobility problem otherwise he is a normal children. They are treating him as a normal children. **I: thank you. Now how often do you meet with your child's teacher and why?** P: I I I always come to drop him and pick him up. So by the way I always see his teacher and talk to her, where she always uh keeps saying you know he is doing good in class uh even he writes well. Otherwise it is ok. **I: now as you meet you know as you mentioned when you come to drop your child to the school or you come to get your child from the school so as you meet with the teacher the particular teacher of your child or other teachers, do you what issues do you discuss on such meetings?**	- good communication with teachers, particularly class teacher - brief meet most of the time	Communication with class teacher and expatriate from Australia

P: uh unless there is extra programme from teacher uh I mean the school so I don't because I just drop him and pick him and that's all. If there are change.. if there are any programme teacher used to inform us and then accordingly we would we attend the programmes. **I: Thank you. Now do you communicate with other staffs of the school and why?** P: No, I I always consult with the class teacher only. Class teacher because she knows better.	- no discussions as such - no communication with other staffs	No communication with other school personnel
Question 4.2		
I: Alright. Now what form of feedback do you receive from receive from teachers and you know other personnel like regarding your son. Now when I say what forms of feedback. Is it verbal feedback or do you get kind of written feedback? P: No just the verbal verbal feedback. Uh the class teacher keeps saying no yeah suppose for correction he moves he try to walks at least up to the teacher's desk after you know after completion of his you know writing or homework. So she keeps me saying I I think he he may walk and she was also quoting one example. There was uh there was one student same like my baby that he walked because you know in the class they act as a normal because since there are lot of other children like him. That is the only feedback I got from her. **I: Ok. Now how often do you get such feedbacks you know you said verbal so how often do you get.**	- informal verbal feedback	Informal verbal feedback

P: Very rare. Very rare I: **Ok now for what aspects of your child do you receive feedback from the teachers and other personnel you know school personnel about your child's progress? You did mention earlier yes but anything you would like to add further?** P: no I: **Now how satisfied are you with the feedback you receive from the school. Maybe the quality or the quantity?** P: You know he is doing good in the class. I: So are you satisfied in a way are you satisfied with the way the teacher provides feedback to you as of now? P: <mark>I am I am satisfied.</mark>	- very minimal feedback - satisfied with the feedback given	
Question 4.3		
I: **Now who are the people in the school that you think can have an important role in giving you information about your child. And can you explain why?** P: The first is the <mark>class teacher. Class teacher because uh from morning to till uh till afternoon he he is in the class so class teacher would be best.</mark> I: Ok so class teacher. Other than class teacher anybody….. that would like to you know you thought are important in sharing the information about your child to you?	- class teacher - engaged with the child through out the day	Class teacher

P: other parents… other parents I: even the parents? P: even the parents.		
Question 4.4		
I: Ok now can you tell me about your opportunities for collaboration with the child's teacher and other school personnel? P: other schools no I didn't of course with teachers I often see her. With other schools you mean? I: uh sorry, now when I say opportunities for collaboration, so were there any you know kind of opportunities where you came to the school you stayed with your child helping the teachers at the same time helping your child you know it can be in the classroom or in the play field or any any other on any other occasions? P: <mark>uh in this case when when time permits I do come. I go inside the class and uh stay near by him and help him.</mark> I: So you had such situations, is it? P: Yes sir.	- few assistance to the child in the classroom	Very minimal collaboration
Question 5.1		

I: Now uh would you tell me your role in supporting your child attending this particular school? So he comes in the morning so what is your role there now? P: So uh <mark>every morning I drop him. I come to school and I make sure he gets inside the class of course he cannot attend the assembly. As soon as his class starts I go to office</mark> and uh <mark>I have a baby sitter always being kept nearby him</mark>. So when class gets over she calls me and I come and pick him up. I**: Thank you. Now given the opportunity like if you had time and all. in what ways would you like to assist the school and the teachers you know like to help your child learn effectively and why do you think so?** P: Uh uh I feel the school should give more time to him. Uh of course they keep saying he is normal but I always have a feeling at the back of my mind that he is not normal like other children. I: Ok now if you were to assist the school you know be it the teachers or any other personnel in the school to help your child learn effectively, what, how how in what ways could you assist? P: <mark>Well I am not sure of this but if the school calls me I can always help them.</mark>	- take and fetch the child - baby sitter attached with the child throughout the day in the school - available if the teacher seek assistance	Dependent on baby sitter
Question 5.2		
I: Now would you like to tell me your role in supporting your child after school? - assist with home work		Support for homework

P: After school at home I guide him and of course I guide him means I teach <mark>him little bit if there are homework</mark> but I don't pressure much uh I always keep him independent.		
Question 5.3		
I: ok. Now would you like to tell me about the issues that you discuss with your wife regarding the schooling of your child? P: with my wife? I: Yes about your child, the issues. P: <mark>yeah we always keep updating how how he has been behaving in the class how he is talking. Other than that not very much.</mark>	- behaviours in the classroom	Behavioural concerns
Question 6.1		
I: Thank you. Now would you share with me about your interaction with other parents of children with disability? So, were there any occasions that you had interaction other parents of children with disability? P: <mark>Yes we do share.</mark> I think every parent has a same kind of feeling because uh I am really <mark>worried about his life because uh I know as long as we are there uh we will we will help them we will assist them but in case in case we are not there we always have a feeling how would they you know spend their life.</mark> So I was sharing this to other parents also they also had the same feeling.	- interaction with other parents - discuss about future concerns	Impromptu interaction with other parents

		Future concerns
I: other than that any issues that you discuss with these parents. P: not much, not much. We we just talk about treatment, how the treatment has been done with the baby how it happened, how long you know they have been treating that's all. **I: Now what have you gained from you know this kind of discussions with other parents?** P: Yeah, <mark>I always compare because now every child has a every different nature of sickness so accordingly we do.</mark> **I: So uh well as I as I was telling you you have some discussions and all, so did you gain anything insightful even that uh really help you or that you know gave you some kind of confidence?** P: <mark>Yeah it gave me some confidence because uh I feel fine I feel in the class my my baby is better than them.</mark> **I: Now what do you think of having such interaction with other parents regarding your child's participation in school?** P: Uh I think we have we have to meet often, how how to talk about child's behaviour. I: Do you mean with the parents?	- comparison - consolation	Comparison of severity of disability Psychological support Sharing learning

P: with the parents. I have I have never attended such kind but yes last year my wife was uh called by the authority, school management and she attended. I didn't I didn't attend.		
Question 7.1		
I: ok now how did you decide to put your child in the current school after realizing your child's disability. I think you did mention that earlier. P: uh because all a a <mark>you know informed me that probably that the ███████ is the school where disability children are admitted. So I thought here the facilities will be better and a care will be better so that's why that's how I have admitted here.</mark> I: Ok thank you. Now how do you get information you know about the rights of your child, about the SEN rights, you know there are rights for special educational needs, there are policies for special educational needs children, you know the school and all. so did you come across such policies. P<mark>: No no I didn't see any policies in place for SEN people.</mark> Even recently uh there was a wheel chair friendly inauguration in Centenary Park. Other than that I didn't see any policies. I: Ok so you haven't come across such policies. Ok now would you like to know more, I mean more about the SEN policies and you know legislations… P: Yes surely because I see the government is taking care of the uh Blind person, there are schools and what do you say there were other them is 'deaf, deaf' person?	- second hand information	Schools reputation

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I: Deaf ok P: Deaf person but I didn't see day care centre or any policy in place for disability where there is mobility problem I didn't see. I didn't see anything like that. I: So you would like to know more P: Yes yes **I: So why do you like to learn more I mean the SEN policies?** P: Because you see as a parents suppose when you want to go to uh uh may be to visit temple uh uh and he cannot go. So I feel you know even going to hospital, or monasteries, or shopping complex there should be accessible accessible I mean what do you call uh roads and user friendly footpaths you know. But that will only come if policies are in place. So I didn't see any policies. I: such uh.. P: Yes **I: Ok now could you discuss if the concerned agencies and other stakeholders are doing enough in supporting the needs of your child? You know when I say concerned agencies, you would have heard about Bhutan Ability or Ability Bhutan, similarly Draktsho, or the physio therapy unit in the hospital. Are they doing enough to support your child?** P: Yes, I heard about Draktsho, but I have never been to that place. Ability Bhutan, yes I have heard about and physio therapy yes every every weekends I take him to physio	- no awareness in SEN policies and legislations - the need for special school	No knowledge of rights of children in education No knowledge of SEN policies and legislation

therapy, for exercise. <mark>More than that we didn't have any meeting or gatherings raising these issues.</mark>	- no support from the agencies - support from government hospital	No support from local NGOs
I: ok now that we have come to the end of the interview is there anything that you would like to mention which you thought has not been covered in our conversation? P: not much but I was told I was told in Australia such kind of people are being taken care by the government. Do you know in Bhutan I am sure the disability person like my children, there must be around five to ten percent only. And I feel in the land of GNH so the government should take care of these people. I mean may be with a hostel facilities or day care centre where where you get uh uh basic facilities, like counselling, medications, and all. But we don't have such facilities in our country. I wish this was there. I: Anything further? P: Not not much. I: Finally, I would like to inform you that when I finish my PhD I will prepare a report with the main findings of this study which will be sent out to concerned agencies, other stakeholders, and the Bhutanese population, mainly parents of children with disabilities like you all, who have children educated in mainstream school. Thank you so much for your time today. Your views are very much important for my study and I hope the findings of this study would immensely benefit the community at large and in particular the children with special education needs and their parents. Thank you	- awareness of special schools and other facilities in Australia	Need for special schools / institutes

P: Thank you so much Sir.		

APPENDIX I Sample of Concept Map Generated by Leximancer