

Parental Involvement in Indian Education:

An Exploratory Study of Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions and Practices Towards Parental Involvement in Edukans' World Teacher Program and STAR-School Program



EDUKANS

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Abstract

Parental involvement (PI) is considered an indicator of children's success in education. It has benefits for schools, teachers, and local communities. In the Indian Boudh district, such practices are uncommon. The local Youth Council for Development Alternatives (YCDA) cooperates with the Dutch organization Edukans, to increase educational quality and stimulate PI in the district. However, little is known on the perceptions and practices of local stakeholders towards PI. For this research, interviews were held with parents and teachers of primary schools and analysed qualitatively. The results indicate that participants consider PI to be important and that there are already PI initiatives at schools. Nevertheless, parents' and teachers' perceptions of their own and the other party's contribution to PI differs. This research underlines the need to bring together both parties and find common ground between them. Several implications for Edukans and the YCDA are provided, focussing on strengthening PI in the district by using cultural sensitive methods and a community-based approach.

Keywords: parental involvement, primary education, India, Edukans, YCDA

Samenvatting

Ouderbetrokkenheid wordt gezien als een indicator van het succes van kinderen in het onderwijs. Het heeft voordelen voor scholen, leerkrachten en lokale gemeenschappen. In het Indiase Boudh district zijn dergelijke praktijken niet veelvoorkomend. De lokale 'Youth Council for Development Alternatives' (YCDA) werkt samen met de Nederlandse organisatie Edukans om de kwaliteit van onderwijs te verbeteren en ouderbetrokkenheid in het district te stimuleren. Echter, er is weinig bekend over de percepties en praktijken van lokale belanghebbenden met betrekking tot ouderbetrokkenheid. Voor dit onderzoek zijn interviews met ouders en leerkrachten van basisscholen afgenomen en kwalitatief geanalyseerd. De resultaten indiceren dat participanten ouderbetrokkenheid belangrijk vinden en dat er al bestaande initiatieven zijn op scholen. Toch verschillen ouders en leerkrachten in hun perceptie van hun eigen bijdrage aan ouderbetrokkenheid en die van de andere partij. Dit onderzoek onderstreept de noodzaak om de verschillende partijen bij elkaar te brengen en gemeenschappelijke grond te zoeken tussen de hun interesses en achtergronden. Verschillende implicaties voor Edukans en de YCDA worden gegeven, gefocust op het versterken van ouderbetrokkenheid in het district door middel van cultureel sensitieve methodes en een 'community-based' benadering.

Sleutelwoorden: ouderbetrokkenheid, basisonderwijs, India, Edukans, YCDA

Parental Involvement in Indian Education

Worldwide, millions of children are excluded from primary education due to factors like poverty, ethnicity, language, and disabilities (UNESCO, 2015). India is no exception in this regard. With children aged below fourteen comprising 28% of the population, 7.7 million teachers, and 1.4 million schools, India has the second biggest educational system in the world (Ganig & Gulati, 2017; Kingdon, 2017; Sahni, 2015). In the last decades, Indian primary education has improved substantially, mainly as a result of the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act in 2010. This act involves the provision of education for all children between 6 and 14 years old (Kamal, 2015; Government of Odisha, 2009). It also guarantees specified standards of education, including hours and days of school functioning, pupil-teacher ratio, and teacher quality (Swain, n.d). Besides, special attention was given to the improvement of education for girls, orphaned, disabled, and vulnerable children (Govinda, 2008; UNESCO, 2015). In addition, the educational budget more than doubled between 2007 and 2012 (Accountability Initiative, 2013).

However, Indian primary education is still subject to many challenges. Despite increased resources, the poorest districts are not realizing improved learning outcomes (Accountability Initiative, 2013). There are still low school enrolment rates and high school drop-out -and teacher absenteeism rates (UNESCO, 2015). Other challenges are related to child labor -and marriages, the weak link between education and employment opportunities, corruption, and gender inequity (Azam & Kingdon, 2013; Chudgar & Sankar, 2008; Rawal & Kingdon, 2010). Forcing back educational backlogs is a priority on national and international levels (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor Regeringsbeleid, 2009). An important note in this mission is the belief that schools are only partly responsible for education. Parents carry a responsibility for their children's education as well (Schnabel, 2016). Parental involvement (PI) is considered an important predictor of children's successes in education. PI has been defined as:

Parental aspirations for their children's academic achievement; parents' communication with children about school; parents' participation in school activities; parents' communication with teachers about their children and; parents' rules at home, which are considered to be school-related. (Fan & Chen, 2001)

PI can prevent school absenteeism -and drop-out and can contribute to transitions to higher education, safer learning environments, positive attitudes towards learning, social

behavior, persistence, and the wellbeing of children (De Baat, Messing, & Prins, 2014; Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2005; Mcwayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004). Moreover, PI appears to be a cost-effective mean to improve the quality of education (Van der Werf, Creamers, & Guldemont, 2001). Other benefits of PI include improved parent-teacher relationships, teacher morals, and increased parental confidence, satisfaction, and interest in adult education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Parents feeling a 'sense of ownership' towards schools contributes to their empowerment, which is indispensable for strong parenthood (De Winter, 2000). Parents need to be respected as partners in education and should be provided with organizational support, enabling them to channel their interest to benefit the school. This can increase the familiarity between both, generate social closure, and transform schools into community assets (Nogura, 2008).

Odisha is one of the poorest states in India and scores inadequately in quality of -and access to education (Edukans, 2017). Odisha's government is not taking adequate measures for strengthening education in the backward districts (Janata Vikas Manch, 2011). Problems in the state are related to bureaucracy, budgetary provision, infrastructure, neighborhood schooling, school buildings, inadequate teachers, a lack of teacher -and child motivation, and a problematic pupil-teacher ratio (Edukans, 2017). In the Boudh district there is awareness that PI can positively influence children's education. However, there are problems with the establishment of PI because parental literacy, -support, and -coordination with teachers are inadequate (Edukans, 2017; Swain, n.d.).

The local organization Youth Council for Development Alternatives (YCDA) focuses on joint action with communities and service providers to enable children of marginalized communities for a sustainable future with improved socio-economic -and family situations (YCDA, 2017). The YCDA works with the 'STAR-school program', which exists of five dimensions: (1) a safe learning environment, (2) active student participation in learning, (3) well-trained and motivated teachers, (4) well-functioning school management, and (5) parental and community involvement (Edukans, 2014). This program is designed by the Dutch NGO Edukans, an organization that aims to improve the quality of -and access to education in backward regions, like the Boudh district. One of Edukans' other programs is the 'World Teacher Program' (WTP). This program is designed to support the STAR on the dimensions (2), (3), and (4). It is a long-term, yearly recurring exchange program in which groups of Dutch (head) teachers visit schools in developmental countries. Together with local colleagues, the educational system and practices of the visiting country are studied and ideas for the improvement of education are developed. Edukans considers possibilities to expand

the current WTP in India by including dimension (5) of the STAR, to support parental involvement. However, the perceptions and practices of stakeholders in the district regarding this issue have not yet been researched. Insight in practical knowledge from the local context can provide valuable information and can be an addition to Western knowledge on this matter (Ansell, 2005). This could strengthen the supporting role of the WTP for the STAR-school program and the improvement of PI in the district.

The objective of this research is: gaining insight in the support needs in the Boudh district, regarding PI, in order that recommendations, contributing to further tailoring and improvement of the WTP and STAR-school program, can be formulated. Support needs is operationalized in emotional support, practical support, and informative support (House, Umberson, & Landis, 1988). This research addresses three research questions: (1) "What are parents' and teachers' practices regarding PI?", (2) "What are parents' and teachers' perceptions towards PI?", and (3) "What environmental factors do parents and teachers experience regarding PI?".

Parents and teachers from primary schools in the district are involved, as they are the most important stakeholders regarding PI. This choice was made because both function within children's immediate surroundings, or as Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000) denominate this: within children's micro-system. Parents and teachers directly influence children's development. However, their influence is different, as they have various beliefs, intentions, and interests about what is best for a child. Establishing good connections between the school -and the home environment and corresponding the most essential norms and values of different child-raising environments are important in bringing together all those involved with the child (Berk, 2006; Nogura, 2008; Putnam, 2001). De Winter (2017) calls this 'bridging of social capital'. Inconsistency is expected between parents and teachers, because they will provide different insights on the matter of PI.

In the following section, operationalizations on the concepts from the research questions are provided and expectations about the outcomes of this research are formulated.

Practices

Although the terms are closely related, some recognize a difference between 'parental involvement (PI)' and 'parental participation (PP)' (Smit, Driessen, Sluiter, & Brus, 2007). PI is operationalized as involvement of parents in upbringing and educating their child at home and at school. PP is operationalized as participation of parents in activities at their child's school and being able to influence it's organization and daily practices. Arnstein (1969) distinguishes six gradations of PI and PP at schools, which can be divided into informal -and

formal activities. Together these form the 'participation ladder', which exists of the informal gradations: *awareness; being asked for opinions; thinking along; joining conversations; learning at the home; effective communicating; volunteering at school; practicing pressure and control on education; good parenting; emphasizing personality development; and parental aspirations and expectations* (Fan & Chen, 2001; Georgiou, 1996). The formal gradations of the ladder are: *contributing to decision making; advocacy at school; having shared responsibilities; being in provision of services; and collaborating with the community* (Menheere and Hooge, 2010).

Since PI is one of the STAR's dimensions, the expectation is that there will be existing initiatives at schools in the district, mainly informal ones (YCDA, 2017). It is predicted that *good parenting, emphasizing personality development, and parental aspirations and expectations* will be present because these aspects take the least of parents' time and energy efforts (Drèze & Gandhi, 1999). However, the supposition is that the School Management Committee (SMC), an official council of local parents and teachers, will be involved in formal ways. *Having shared responsibilities and collaborating with the community* are activities that match the terms of reference of SMC's (Government of Odisha, 2014). It is presumed that parents and teachers will not have a demanding need for practical and financial support, because PI is generally cost-effective and low-cost (House et al., 1988; Van der Werf et al., 2001).

Perceptions

Perception is operationalized according to the conceptual framework of the ASE-model, in the behavioral determinants: Attitude, perceived Social influence, and experienced self-Efficacy and skills (Ajzen, 1991; Lechner, Kremers, Meertens, & De Vries, 2008). The ASE-model is used to gain insight in personal factors that influence parents' and teachers' behavior, their intentions, and their likeliness to act in a certain way (De Vries, Dijkstra, & Kuhlman, 1988).

Attitude. Parents' attitudes are expected to be chiefly influenced by their *appreciation of education, their own learning experiences, and information about -and invitations to PI possibilities* (Lechner et al., 2008; Menheere & Hooge, 2010). It is predicted that most parents will appreciate their child's education, since parental appreciation of education in India is generally high (Drèze & Gandhi, 1999). However, it is also expected that some parents will have a dim view of education and the Indian schooling system, because of its' low teaching standards (Drèze & Gandhi, 1999). This view can originate from their own learning experiences, in a time where educational standers were lesser developed

(Van 't Rood, 2017). Regarding information about -and invitations to PI possibilities, the expectation is that the attitude of parents will be more positive if schools provides them with information about -and invitations to PI possibilities. Parents, especially when low-educated, generally have a more 'wait-and-see attitude' towards PI (Menheere & Hooge, 2010). These parents are most effectively involved when teachers actively encourage them (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Similarly, schools that welcome parents and value their opinions, develop more an effective PI (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Teachers' attitudes are expected to be mainly influenced by their *outcome expectations* and *judgments of advantages and disadvantages* regarding PI (Lechner et al., 2008; Menheere & Hooge, 2010). The supposition is that teachers will have a critical and slightly negative attitude towards the matter since India does not have a tradition of PI in primary education. Traditionally there has been a clear separation between the tasks and responsibilities of the school and the home environment (Menheere & Hooge, 2010). This separation influences teachers' outcome expectations and judgments regarding PI. However, the expectation is that teachers who are familiar with the positive outcomes and advantages of PI will have a positive attitude, since they are properly prepared to work with it (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002).

It is predicted that parents and teachers will have need for informative support. This includes information that helps solving personal or environmental problems (House et al., 1988). Informative support can provide practical applications and can contribute to more positive attitudes towards PI. For teachers, it is supposed that they need informative support to learn how and why they should use PI (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002). For parents, it is assumed that they need informative support to be informed about the advantages and positive outcomes of PI (Menheere & Hooge, 2010). It is expected that parents also need emotional support to learn how to become more involved in education. This concerns love, care, empathy, trust, and acting in a way that makes others feel valued (House et al., 1988). It is predicted that this kind of support needs to include invitations to PI possibilities and building on parents' self-efficacy and skills (Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002).

Perceived social influence. Perceived social influence is expected to be based on parents' and teachers' *social norms* regarding PI and the *social pressure* and/or *support from the environment* to contribute to PI (Lechner et al., 2008). It is assumed that social norms in the Boudh district are in line with the norms and values of the collectivistic culture of India (Verma & Triandi, 1999). In such cultures, parents and teachers are expected to *act as role*

models for children. Parents who believe that their role is only to send children to school, which then takes over responsibility for their education, are not likely to become involved in education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). However, social pressure and/or support from the environment is expected to have a positive influence on PI (Menheere & Hooge, 2010). For teachers, *supporting policies on PI* and *positive attitudes from colleagues* can make teachers more inclined to involve parents.

Experienced self-efficacy and skills. Experienced self-efficacy is based on parents' and teachers' *expectations and beliefs about their own competence, skills, confidence, and beliefs about their own time and energy* regarding PI (Bandura, 1993; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). It is expected that parents will have low expectations about their own competences and skills, since many parents in the district have a low SES and are uneducated (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Green et al. 2007; Kim, 2009). This can make parents feel less confident because they lack academic skills and might believe that their involvement is not of additional value (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Moreover, it is expected that parents will not invest a lot of their own time and energy in their children's education, mainly because of their work duties (Mishra, Chaudhury, & Nambi, 2012). Parents must make a cost-benefit analysis regarding their child's education and the required amount of their own investment in this (Drèze & Gandhi, 1999).

It is expected that teachers will have a higher expectations about their own competences and skills, since teachers have a higher SES are generally higher educated (Menheere & Hooge, 2010). Therefore, teachers are expected to be confident in their professionalism. Teachers might even feel less obliged to involve parents, because they can be sensitive for external involvement and interference in their classrooms (Dom, 2006).

Environmental factors

Environmental factors, consisting of protective factors and barriers, are related to either the school, teacher, or parent level. Firstly, the *social network of schools* is expected to be a protective factor for PI, since organizations like the YCDA are providing networking opportunities for schools in the district (YCDA, 2017). Schools with strong, wide, and stable social networks can contribute to families' access to food, housing, health -and social services, adult education, and employment training (Kim, 2009). Secondly, *policies on PI* are expected to be a protective factor for PI. It is supposed that policies on PI will be present at the schools, since this is compulsory for schools in Odisha (Government of Odisha, 2009).

Policies can positively influence teachers' and schools' views and actions (Desimone, 1999; Kim, 2009).

An expected barrier for PI at the level of the teacher can be the *involvement of teachers*. The government obliged all schools in the district to appoint a SMC (Government of Odisha, 2014). Since formal contact from parents generally goes via the SMC, the assumption is that parents will not have much individual contact with teachers. This negatively influences the chance of teachers to show interest in the home situation and wellbeing of a child. Consequently, it makes them less approachable for parents who struggle with child-related issues (Bordewijk, Dries, Harkink, & Visser, 2007). In addition, lack of individual contact is expected to increase the risk of *distant parent-teacher relationships*. This can also form a barrier, because distant relationships generally miss respect, trust, mutuality, support, and shared values, expectations, and beliefs about each other and the child (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hughes & Kwok, 2007).

Expected barriers for PI at the level of the parents can be *parents' health situations*. The expectation is that parents' health situation will, in many cases, not be sufficient. In the district, many people struggle with health problems (Ager & Pepper, 2005). The life expectancy of people in Odisha is 57 years and many people suffer from malaria (Government of Orissa, 2003; Peters et al., 2002). Besides, death rates of females between the ages of 20 and 24 are amongst the highest in India (World Bank, 1996). Due to parents' poor physical -or mental health, they are less able to take part in effective social support networks (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). Furthermore, *parental circumstances* like parents' work situations are expected to form barriers for PI (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). In the district, most parents are engaged in agricultural work activities (Mishra et al., 2012). It is presumed that many families will struggle with the demands of their work situation. Farmers face many challenges, like the consequences of climate change, drought, and a lack of modern farming methods. Furthermore, it is expected that parents' *low SES (socioeconomic status)* and *low educational background* will form barriers for PI as many parents in the district are poor and uneducated (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Green et al. 2007; Kim, 2009). Parents with a low SES often lack resources, time for support and participation, transport possibilities, or have caretaking duties for younger children or other family members (Eldering, 2006). Besides, parents with a low educational level may feel inferior to teachers who they know are better qualified than them (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). These parents are also less familiar with the educational system and are less able to support their child (Traag & Van der Velden, 2011).

In the following section, the method of this research will be described.

Method

Type of study

This research was exploratory of nature. A qualitative research method was used, focused on detailed descriptions of situations, interactions, and people (Baar, 2002). This research was interpretative, flexible, openly approached, and mainly focused on subjective sense-making of participants' experiences, attitudes, and opinions (Baarda, De Goede, & Teunissen, 2013). The inductive way of researching allowed the participants to give meaning to their stories. Besides, the holistic approach strengthened the study of PI at primary schools in the Boudh district as a whole (Baarda et al, 2013).

Participants

This research involved six primary schools in the Boudh district. The schools, located in rural areas, had on average 143,5 students and 5,8 teachers. The participants were submitted by the YCDA. They formed a convenience sample, which means that the participants were easy to reach (Robinson, 2014). Thirteen parents were involved, including six mothers and seven fathers. Their average age was 38,7 years old and their average amount of children was 3,3. It was required that parents' children attended a STAR-school. Because the YCDA submitted participants from their own network, eleven of the parents were SMC members. Most parents dropped out of primary school, as is representative for that generation in the Boudh district (Swain, n.d.). Besides parents, eleven teachers were involved, including four female -and seven male teachers. This division was chosen because generally more male teachers work in primary education in the district (YCDA, 2017). Teachers' average age was 41,7 years old and their average teaching experience was 10,3 years. It was required that teachers were qualified and worked at a STAR-school. This sample is representative for STAR-schools in the district. Generalizations to other schools, or to not-SMC parents cannot be made without consideration.

Instrument

For the data-collection, in-depth interviews were conducted to acquire detailed descriptions of the participants' perceptions and practices regarding PI. In-depth interviews give the researcher flexibility in the formulation and order of the questions and provide opportunities for sense making during the interview (Baar, 2002; Boeije, 2010). Throughout the interviews, a topic list was used as guideline, contributing to the reliability and internal

validity. The topic list ensured that all relevant issues were covered and gave the possibility for regular recapitulations per topic (Baarda et al., 2013).

The topic list, directed to the three research questions, consisted: (1) participants' formal -and informal practices (e.g., decision making; collaborating with the community; good parenting; effective communicating; volunteering; pressure and control on education; personality development; aspirations and expectations; and practical support needs). An example question for teachers is: "How is your contact with the parents?". (2) participants' attitude (e.g., their appreciation of education; own learning experiences; information about - and invitation to PI possibilities; outcome expectations; judgements of (dis)advantages; and informative -and emotional support needs), perceived social influence (e.g., social norms and social pressure and/or support from the environment), and self-efficacy and skills (e.g., beliefs about the own competence; skills; confidence; and time and energy investments). An example question for parents is: "What are important skills that parents need to support their child's education?". (3) participants' views on experienced barriers and protective factors (e.g., schools' social networks; existing policies on PI; involvement of teachers; parent-teacher relationships; and specific characteristics of parents and/or families). An example question for teachers is: "What makes it easy/hard for schools to implement PI?".

Procedure

For the data-collection, in March and April 2018, the researcher traveled to the Boudh district. The researcher first had exploratory conversations with YCDA staff members, to get familiar with the local context, the educational system, and practices of the local communities. These conversations contributed to the formulation of the interview questions, the holistic approach, and the reliability of this research. Before the data collection started, all participants were informed about the objective of this research. They were requested to verbally give informed consent to participate. They were also asked permission to record the interviews after they were assured of their anonymity (Boeije, 2010). Translators from the YCDA assisted, because most participants did not speak English. The interviews started with general questions about age, gender, number of children, educational background, and professional experience. Subsequently, the interview continued following the topic list. The average durations of the interviews were 18:52 minutes for the parents and 19:46 minutes for the teachers. The interviews were held on the school grounds. To ensure the reliability of the study, answers of the participants were summarized during the interview (Baarda et al., 2013). Besides, different interview techniques were used, including making notes, using

probing questions, and asking for clarification. This improved the internal validity of this study.

Analysis

The recorded interviews were manually transcribed and analyzed by use of the qualitative and inductive analysis method of Baar (2002) and Baarda et al. (2013). Common themes and regularities in the data were sought (Boeije, 2010). The reliability of this method was assured by the transparent and systematic process of sorting the labels and composing them into dimensions and core labels (Baarda et al., 2013). The internal validity of this research was guaranteed by keeping the labels as close to the original formulations of participants' statements as possible (Baar, 2002). Describing the nature and characteristics of the core labels was the main objective of the analysis (Baar & Wubbels, 2013).

In the following section, the results of this research will be described.

Results

In this section, the main findings per research question are discussed. Core labels have been italicized and are illustrated with quotations from the interviews (i.e., qualitative data). The letters (P) and (T) stand for parents or teachers.

Practices

Many parents and teachers indicated that their *school organizes monthly Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)*, where *all or most parents attend*: "*He (T) is saying that whenever there is a need, they (P) come. Usually they turn up during the PTA or whenever there is a demand*" (T10). Certain teachers had different experiences and encountered that *only some parents, or only fathers would attend*. As an informative support need, teachers mentioned that they would like to learn how to effectively organize PTA's and attract more parents. Furthermore, every school had a *SMC* and *monthly SMC meetings*. Some teachers pointed out that the SMC's responsibilities and tasks are mainly *practical of nature*, for instance *capturing unwelcome guests, cleaning the environment, and construction work*.

Teachers indicated that they are the ones taking different kinds of *initiatives for contact with the parents*, like *visiting parents' houses* and *advising parents*. However, they did feel the need for *more teacher initiatives, -guidance, and -interaction with parents*. Parents also indicated that they *seek contact with teachers* and *ask them questions*. They mentioned that *teachers are giving them feedback*. Some parents felt the need for *more teachers, better caretaking by the teachers, and better occupation of the children*. Both practical -and emotional support needs are mentioned here. Parents and teachers shared that

the reason for them to get in contact with each other was often *related to problems*. They gave examples about *children being absent often*, or *about to drop out*: "If the children are having issues than he (T) regularly contacts with the parents individual, than they (P/T) discuss with. If a child is in an irregular very absent like dropout than directly he (T) will regularly go to that particular parent" (T1). A reason for teachers to visit parents' houses is that *less parents come to the school*, although teachers believe their schools *actively invites parents*. Nevertheless, most teachers experienced that *parents are interested in their child* and that *parents like to have contact to discuss about matters*. In contrast to what teachers experience, parents believe that *many parents are visiting the school regularly* and that parents are generally *involved*. Some parents and teachers shared that *parents were giving teachers feedback* about school matters.

Both parents and teachers indicated that *teachers give the children homework*. About the question whether parents would help their children with homework, the teachers were divided. Half of them thought that *some parents help their children*: "Those parents, who are uneducated, they send their children to the coaching classes, like tuition class" (T2). The other half thought that *parents do not support their child at home*: "No, no, no, the parents never support them (children) in their home (T3); Parents are not helping. As it is the rural area, the parents are not much more conscious about their children" (T5). On the contrary, many parents think that *parents are helping their children* with homework, through *monitoring, investing time, and checking*:

"She (P)'s a metric, she can help. Earlier, parents were not much aware but now they're already doing that. She's saying all the parents are illiterate. Earlier the decision was not clear in that but now all the parents are aware and parents are helping their children. Guiding." (P9)

Some parents are *sending their children to tuitions*, where the children can make their homework.

Most parents *did not finish primary education* and are *illiterate*. Many indicated that their own parents were not involved in education: "No, parents are not cautious about that study that time" (P6). Some parents thought that these days, *parents are more concerned about their children*. Other parents mentioned the need for trainings for parents, that should focus on matters like *awareness, what is necessary for children, and the right to education*. This reflects the demand for practical and informative support.

Perceptions

Attitude. Both parents and teachers defined PI as a *triangle process*, where *involvement with the children* is important. Teachers added *involvement with the school and teacher* to this definition. Both recognized the informative support need to *make parents more involved, get them to come to school on a regular basis, get them to give their children feedback, and get them to help with -and check their children's homework regularly*. In the definition of PI, parents and teachers thought of *parents checking their children* and in particular *checking their study improvements and checking their learning and tasks*.

Both parents and teachers found PI *important and necessary*: "*It is their (P) village. If they do not support us (T), how we can develop their child? So their involvement and their support is more necessary for the development of the nation and the schools*" (T3). Teachers mentioned many advantages of PI like *parents knowing the level of their child and improvement of the teachers, children, schools, and education in general*. All parents and most teachers saw *no disadvantages about PI*.

Skills that parents and teachers mentioned that belonged to 'good parenting' were *involvement with education and good child raising*: "*He (P) is talking in the aspect of monitoring. Monitoring skill, working as an educational situation like whenever he (child) is coming to school or how he is studying. Also and how he is studying his other activities in the school*" (P4). Moreover, teachers found *giving support to the child and specific characteristics like being an educated person* important. Individual parents added *giving teachers feedback and counseling teaches and other parents* to the list. Parents were also asked about their own experiences at primary school. Most parents thought that *education had improved* through the years and that there is a *big difference* between now and then. Matters like *inadequate schools with no buildings or insufficient/inadequate teachers who were lazy or beating the children* were mentioned. Besides, *no governmental support* characterized the school time of many parents:

"There is quite difference. In her (P) time, teachers are beating the children. Children learn that, due to fear. In that time, government had not providing any dress material, study material, MDM, nothing that provided. But now government provide all these things. It's better. That is a free punishment zone." (P1).

To questions about characteristics of a good school, parents responded with *good facilities, involvement of parents/the community, good teaching, and a good and positive school environment* with space for *joyful learning, playgrounds, and beautification*.

Perceived social influence. Most parents experienced *teachers as a positive influence* on PI. Many believed teachers to be *good, well trained, and actively involved*. Some saw

teachers as *good role models* for children. Many teachers experienced *parents as a negative influence* on PI: "*Parents might come for PTA meeting but not like. All of them are mostly illiterate and that kind of mindset is yet to come. Maybe it will take a hundred years more*" (T4). Teachers assumed that *parents do not value education, are not concerned about it, have negative mindsets towards PI, and do not have the ability to understand their children*. Some teachers, however, experienced a *positive influence from parents*: "*They are good parent, so that come to take, come to school, interact with teacher and discuss about the things*" (T8). These teachers saw that *some parents want to improve their children*, therefore they *interact with the teachers*. It is interesting to see that there is an inconsistency among teachers about the influence of parents.

Both parents and teachers perceived *parents' negative attitude towards education* as a negative influence on PI. According to some teachers, this attitude is caused by *lack of awareness of the importance of education*. Most teachers agreed that *more awareness from parents* is necessary to improve PI, especially awareness to *come the meetings regularly and to improve the school*. This can be seen as a need for informative support. Parents and teacher experienced the *school as a positive influence* on PI. Parents did so because they believed that the *school is of good quality* while teachers felt like the *school is actively trying to establish PI*. Many teachers saw themselves as *good role models for children*, which *positively influenced them*. Considering social influence, it appears that parents and teachers have different and sometimes contrasting thoughts about each other and other social influences around them.

Experienced self-efficacy and skills. Most parents and teachers seemed to have positive ideas towards themselves and their skills: "*They (P) encourage that if you (child) learn more and more, and you are in top of the class then you will get a very good job like a teacher, like other professions also*" (P1). This quote illustrates how many parents see themselves, namely as *encouraging and supportive* towards their children's education. Some added that they were *stimulating their children by giving rewards*. Other skills that parents thought to possess were *talking to children, giving examples, and comparing them to peers*. Teachers also indicated that they were actively *encouraging* the children, however they did this through *praising, inspiring, and stimulating future ambition*:

Students freely question in the difficulties of the topic. He (T) encourages like you are very good, you can do well and you learn more and more than you can make it in the top. Some clapping also for the children and involvement with other

children also to guide and help the development of the children and also to guide and encourage them to learn more and more things about the study (T3).

Teachers felt they possessed skills like *creating a safe learning environment, proper teaching, counseling, giving examples, giving special attention to children, and offering guidance for development.*

Environmental factors

Protective factors. The most important protective factor, mentioned by parents and teachers, was *parents sending their children to tuitions.* Besides, teachers added *parents valuing education* as an important factor: *"Not all (P) are educated. Some send their children to the tuition, that means that one of the teachers is teaching the children and takes money from the parents" (T1).* To a lesser degree, factors like *parents buying study material, -sending their children to school regularly, -counseling their children, -investing money in education, -checking their children's homework, and -sending their children to private schools and governmental support* were named. The factor *parents letting their children marry at older age* was also brought up: *"I (translator) ask her (P) when she'll give her marriage. She said that let her be twenty or twenty-two, then we will think about it, if child studies well then let her go, for a higher study also" (P5).*

Barriers. Many barriers for PI at schools were named. One, mentioned often, was *parents' labor duties*, which in many cases means that *parents are engaged in agriculture* and therefore *they do not have time* for PI. Many parents and teachers thought that *parents' low educational background* formed a barrier as well, as *many parents are uneducated and/or illiterate*: *"They (P) don't have time because mostly all the parents are having a profession of agriculture, farming. Second thing is, they are illiterate. Only thing is that they don't understand the importance of education, or they will come" (T4).* A few parents and teachers indicated *parents' lack of money* as a barrier. One parents spoke of taboo's in the community being barriers, like *child marriages and not investing in girls education.* *More involvement of the community* was mentioned as a support need: *"So if they (parents) have that plan, to go to that village and have a community meeting, in the community also to discuss about the education, that is a good move" (T11).*

In the following section, the outcomes of this research will be discussed, limitations to this research will be given, and implications for Edukans and the YCDA will be provided.

Discussion

When looking at current PI practices in the Boudh district, mainly the lower ladders of the participation ladder occur (Arnstein, 1969). Principally PI practices executed from parents' home environment are present. Although the general attitude of parents and teachers towards education is positive and both consider PI to be important, the present practices are generally informal and passive. Besides, PI at school and participation practices remain uncommon. Literature offers explanation for this, as parents can struggle with PI because of time and energy efforts (Braveman et al., 2008; Drèze & Gandhi, 1999). This is explicable, considering the many barriers, like agricultural labor duties and a low SES, that parents face. However, the PTA's and SMC are approachable possibilities for parents to become actively involved in formal ways. Their functioning corresponds with the expectation of existing educational policies on PI being a protective factor (Desimone, 1999; Kim, 2009; Government of Odisha, 2009). Nevertheless, this factor would probably be more effective if the SMC would function on higher levels of the participation ladder and would have more formal responsibilities (Fan & Chen, 2001; Georgiou, 1996). Besides, by no means all parents make use of the existing opportunities.

Many teachers indicate that they are willing to collaborate with parents and that they take initiatives for contact. However, teachers find that many parents are passive and fail to maintain regular contact with the school and teachers. This matter can work as a vicious circle; the lesser the contact, the poorer the relationship (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hughes & Kwok, 2007). Teachers also believe that parents are not supportive enough in helping children with homework. Remarkably, teachers only include parent-related matters in their definitions of PI and see only parent-related barriers in the establishment of PI. Reflections on their own role in PI are absent. This can be explained by the fact that teachers have high expectations about their own competencies and skills (Menheere & Hooge, 2010). Besides, they generally have more confidence than parents. The reason for this could be found in their professionalism. Moreover, the fact that 'being a teacher' is a highly respected job in the Boudh district can contribute to this feeling. This high amount of self-efficacy and confidence in their own skills can explain why teachers in the district not always consider parents as equal partners in education and sometimes value parents' efforts negatively.

Parents disagreed with teachers' statements about parents' passivity, non-involvement, and absence at schools. They indicated that they are supporting their child's development, involved with the school, and actively seek contact with teachers. An unexpected insight was the fact that contact between parents and teachers is almost every time problem-based. This probably evolves out of necessity, since both parents and teachers

do not have the time to invest in positive relationships. Remarkably, parents and teachers do not always seem to mind this, they would still characterize a problem-based relationship as a good one. The assumption that low educated parents would have low expectations about their own competences and skills appeared to be untrue. Just like the teachers, parents had positive ideas towards themselves and their skills in relation to the children. The skills that were mentioned were not intellectual of nature; parents preferred skills like monitoring, encouraging, and supporting the children. Parents' uneducated background did not influence them from using these skills, which was against the expectation.

However, participating parents did acknowledge that some other parents were struggling with PI. This difference in PI practices can be explained by the fact that participating parents were almost all SMC members. They are already more involved and have more contact with teachers than average parents. For not-SMC parents, the suggestion from literature, about lack of parent-teacher contact and poor relationships hindering PI, corresponded (Bordewijk et al., 2007). Although schools and teachers challenge this, parents' absence at school can be caused by lack of invitations from the school and teachers (Menheere & Hooge, 2010). Even though schools claim to have an open and welcoming attitude towards parents and teachers assert that they are actively involving them, it is possible that some parents experience invitation efforts of school and teachers differently than they are intended. Besides, it is possible that the existing PI concepts, the PTA and SMC, do not match these parents' interests. Further research could provide insight in the specific needs of uninvolved parents. Regarding homework, parents thought that many others of their community were helping children with homework, in contradiction with teachers' opinions. Furthermore, when parents were not able to, they would send their children to a tuition. This unexpected phenomenon was considered to be a protective factor, also recognized by teachers.

An explanation for some parents to keep resisting PI can be their own negative school experiences and uninvolved parents, which many parents indicated that they had (Drèze & Gandhi, 1999; van 't Rood, 2017). Notable is that many parents already have more supportive attitudes than their own elders, who were mostly not involved in education at all. It seems that positive attitudes towards education are growing little by little, possibly inspired by governmental policy changes and initiatives from organizations like the YCDA (Kamal, 2015; YCDA, 2017). However, taboo's like child marriages -and labor are still leaving a mark on many communities and influence people's mindsets. Parents' negative attitude and lack of awareness can withhold them from becoming involved. It strikes that the communities

are divided. Some parents, especially SMC members and the higher educated ones, appreciate education and see the importance of PI. Others have traditional beliefs and practices, which are deeply ingrained in the communities. Mostly, if parents choose to invest in education, they relinquish from taking action themselves and put their faith in teachers and tuitions.

Altogether, PI in the Boudh district is clearly in transformation. Compared to a few decades ago there is more PI in schools on informal as formal levels. In the process of increasing PI, active and positive teachers and SMC members functioning as role models for other parents seem to be working elements. Further research is needed to study how these elements can be effectively used. However, there still remains a group of parents that, for various reasons, restrains from PI, despite all efforts to involve them.

Limitations

When interpreting the results of this research, several limitations need to be considered. To start, all participating schools were STAR-schools. Therefore, it is possible that parents' and teachers' perceptions regarding PI are influenced by the perceptions of the YCDA. Besides, it is likely that schools have comparable practices regarding PI. It should be kept in mind that the results of this research cannot be generalized to other schools in the district, especially not to schools that are not STAR-schools. However, practical implications can be generalized with caution, because the stories of participants are recognizable and therefore usable.

It should be noted that this research took place in a rural setting. The findings are, to a certain extent, only generalizable to situations where the same phenomena occur (Baarda et al., 2013; Boeije, 2002). Related to this limitation is the fact that the participants in this research were easy to approach, especially the parents. Many of the parents were members of the SMC, which implies that they are more involved in the education and could have a certain interest in taking part in the study (Baarda et al., 2013). It would be interesting to further research the perceptions and practices of parents that are not in the SMC, in order to get a complete overview of the situation.

It is possible that parents and teachers gave socially desirable answers to the interview questions. The researcher did attempt to avoid such answering, by assuring participants that their answers would be used with respect for their privacy and solely for academic purposes (Boeije, 2010). However, it is still likely that participants wished to leave a 'good impression' in sharing their perceptions and practices regarding PI. This point relates to the limited interview-experience from the researcher. It is possible that the questions were too guided, as

otherwise parents might not understand the questions. The researcher possibly asked probing questions, not at the right moment or in the right way, what could have resulted in not obtaining a complete answer (Boeije, 2010). Therefore, it is plausible that not all opinions and experiences of the participants were retrieved. Moreover, the personal background of the researcher, being a primary school teacher, might have influenced the focus and questioning in the interviews. To continue, there was no cyclic approach in the study. As there was little time between the interviews in the beginning phase, the analysis started afterwards. It is possible that some topics on the topic list should have been adjusted or added to acquire more accurate information from the participants.

There is also the limitation inherent to the cross-cultural bias. To reduce this risk, the qualitative analysis method stayed close to the wordings of the participants. However, it is likely that information got lost in translation or was translated in a different way. This could only be coped with by seeking confirmation and repeating answers in order to check if they were understood correctly. This however was dependent on the judgement of the translators.

Implications

The objective of this research was to gain insight in the support needs in the Boudh district, regarding PI, in order that recommendations, which contribute to the further tailoring and improvement of Edukans' WTP and STAR-school program, could be formulated. In this section recommendations will be given to Edukans and the YCDA. The recommendations for the YCDA can contribute to the improvement and adjustment of the STAR-school program regarding PI. The recommendations for Edukans can contribute to further develop the WTP in terms of PI, to make it more supportive of the STAR-school program.

SMC. At this moment, the SMC's in the district are mainly used for practical matters, initiated by the school. When the SMC members are empowered and gain more confidence and knowledge, they can function on higher levels of the participation ladder (Arnstein, 1969). It is recommended that Edukans, in collaboration with the YCDA, provides training for the SMC members so that they are better capable to fulfill PI activities (Smit & Driessen, 2002). In these trainings it is important to also involve teachers and head-teachers, to create a common vision on PI within a school. SMC members can, for instance, advise the school during application processes of new teachers. SMC members can also function as 'bridges' between schools and the community, when they learn how to stimulate uninvolved parents to get involved and come to school.

Strengthening parent-teacher relationship. In order to reflect the interest and capacities of a target group, the stakeholders should be involved in the designing process of

PI at schools (Baar, Wubbels, & Vermande, 2007; Novins et al., 2013). In the current situation, parents are little involved in education, nor get the chance to think about how PI should be shaped at the school of their child. It is also important to give the involved professionals, in this case the teachers, a chance to adapt the program to their working approaches.

Involved parents and teachers generally have a negative attitude towards uninvolved parents that can hinder them to become involved with the school. Therefore, it is advised to strengthen the relationships between parents and teachers and focus more on positive attitudes (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002). Edukans' WTP can be used to train teachers how to positively approach parents, how to utilize teachers' central position in the community, and how to give PI shape at schools. The WTP can also be directed to parents. In order to tempt parents to get involved with the school, it is of importance to connect to their personal motivation. Recognizing talents and skills that parents have can increase their motivation to get involved with the schools (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). It should be kept in mind that all initiatives towards parents should be easily accessible, otherwise parents might not be inclined to participate because of their work duties and other barriers. Furthermore, research shows that meetings with all stakeholders to exchange information and discuss barriers and solutions contribute to the effectiveness. This way, involvement and motivation to carry out the intervention as intended can be encouraged (Novins et al., 2013; Saldana & Chamberlain, 2012).

Awareness. The YCDA is in a strong position to help parents in becoming more aware of child rights and their own role in education. Through training at the schools, parents can increase their confidence and the upbringing of children at home and at school can be adjusted. Parents and teachers indicated that they can use these kinds of support and they believe that uninvolved parents will benefit from it as well. The focus of these trainings should be on awareness about education, coming to school regularly, giving children feedback, and helping children with homework.

The YCDA can also help strengthen the relationships between parents and schools. Generally target groups show an increased chance of adopting information when they determine the source of information as reliable, when they are effectively engaged and activated, and when outcomes contribute to their interests and future benefits (Barwick et al., 2005; Novins, Green, Legha, & Aarons, 2013; Rogers, 1995). Therefore, it is of importance to demonstrate all PI's benefits to the parents. Currently, PI mainly contributes to the 'at-risk' approach, since parents and teachers only have contact when there are problems at hand.

However, PI can also be relevant in a more positive perspective, when parents and teachers are responsible for the development of children together (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Since the perceived social norm is the main influence on attitudes, the expectation is that PI needs to become part of the social norm, in order for parents to become actively involved (Novins et al., 2013; Overstreet, Cegielski, & Hall, 2013). This can generate social closure and increase parents' sense of ownership' towards the school and their child's education (De Winter, 2000). It will also contribute to the pedagogical civil society, where it takes a whole village to raise a child (De Winter, 2012).

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