Continuing to exercise choice after school selection in Nepal

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Insights into parent decisionmaking in local education markets

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Abstract

This paper informs the choice debate by analyzing how parents continue to engage with schooling after their initial selection, using parent survey and focus group data collected in Nepal in 2011. I find substantial heterogeneity within and between public and private schools in how parents engage with their children’s schooling. In particular, the parents who chose smaller private schools had stronger engagement with the school and their children, were more likely to voice their concerns, and consequently were more satisfied. In contrast, parents in below average public schools were highly dissatisfied but had no recourse to action.

Keywords: Parent decisionmaking, school choice, privatization, public-private differences, South Asia, Nepal
1. Introduction

Parents in developing countries face more choices than ever before due to the expansion and diversification of schooling options through private, charter or voucher-funded schooling (Plank and Sykes, 2003; Srivastava and Walford, 2008; Srivastava, 2013). Parental background and involvement play a central role in shaping their children’s achievement (Jeynes, 2007). Additionally, researchers have argued that schools will evolve and improve when schooling becomes a “coproduction” between parents and the school, when parents can actively choose from a variety of schooling options and then participate in the school’s functioning (Bifulco and Ladd, 2005; Schneider, Teske and Marschall, 2000).

There is significant research attention on parental choice, but less attention paid to how parents continue to engage with schools after making their choice, particularly in developing countries. The substantial body of research that focuses on how parents choose includes analyses of parental preferences, their utilization of information to make choices, and the socioeconomic constraints that limit their choices (see review in Chakrabarti and Roy, 2010). An understanding of how parents continue to engage with schooling after having chosen a school is equally important since the expected benefits from choice rests on the notion that parents will engage more actively with the school after having made their selection. While there are studies in the U.S. context on the variations in parental involvement and engagement in different types of schools (Smith and Wohlstetter, 2009), there is an absence of such a literature on parental participation and satisfaction in developing country contexts. That is, there is a lack of focus on “how households interact with their chosen schools once the choice is made” (Srivastava, 2007, p.11).

I address this dearth of literature by conducting a case study of parents’ on-going decision-making and involvement after having chosen a school in the context of Nepal, a low-income country. I study the research question: How do parents continue to exercise choice after their initial school selection? Nepal is an interesting case for the parental choice analysis since the role of the private sector in education provision has grown from providing limited elite access to providing education to a growing group of middle and lower class consumers (Thapa, 2012). Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, a
study on parent decision-making has not been conducted in Nepal, despite significant research attention on public-private differences and education governance initiatives (Bhatta, 2009; Carney and Bista, 2009; Thapa, 2011) in the country.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 situates the paper in the parent decision-making literature. Sections 3 and 4 briefly describe the national context and the data and methods for analysis respectively. In Section 5, I present the results by research questions – parental satisfaction, information gathering, voicing their suggestions and concerns, and their opinions on exiting. Section 6 concludes with a discussion on the variations in parent-school engagements, and provides future search and policymaking implications.

2. Parent Decision-making Literature and Conceptual Framework

Choice ideas have gained global acceptance over the past three decades. A key rationale for the optimism over choice initiatives is the expectation that school choice will expose schools to “powerful market-like forces built on decentralization, competition and consumer sovereignty” (Schneider et al., 2000, p. 40). If parents can choose schools, they can gain higher satisfaction if they can match children to schools of their preference. In choice models, the fact that parents can vote with their feet is then expected to motivate existing public schools to innovate and improve their quality to retain these empowered parents. Skepticism of choice primarily rests on concerns that choice will primarily end up disadvantaging the poor and underprivileged while upper and middle class parents, students and schools students reap its rewards. As a result, choice has the potential to further stratify society rather than ameliorate existing inequalities (Fiske and Ladd, 2001; Hsieh and Urquiola, 2006).

In this study, I focus on the parent choice processes after having chosen a school, building a research design based on the works of Hirschman (1970), Schneider, et al. (2000), and Srivastava (2007). Hirschman (1970)’s concepts of exit, voice and loyalty provide an instructive way for analyzing how the availability of alternatives can change how parents engage with the schools available in the local setting. Hirschman (1970) studied the decline of Nigerian state-run railways, and argued that there are two options that consumers are willing to utilize when responding to a decline in quality in public provision –
exiting (causing decline in the use of public railways and forcing management to figure out ways to stop the exit) or voicing their concerns (forcing management to engage in a search for causes and cures to public dissatisfaction). When considering the example of schools, Hirschman contends that it is important to note that exiting is not the only way of making an “active choice”, but “loyalty” is also a choice mechanism that deters parents from exiting schools and instead ensures that they voice their concerns.

Schneider, et al. (2000) conduct a quasi-experimental analysis of parental choice processes in New York and New Jersey. A key finding is that “active chooser” parents who trade-off schools and make a decision to select a school have higher social capital (PTA membership, volunteering, and trust of teachers), indicating higher on-going engagement with the schools. In Schneider, et al.(2000)’s study they also find that parents whose children are in high performing schools and who pay greater attention to performance are less likely to be thinking about transferring their children. Given the evidence, the authors suggest that choice can raise levels of social capital and assist in the creation of effective and collaborative communities. Studies that have focused on parents who are active choosers of charter, magnet or private schools instead of traditional schools have also found evidence of higher parental involvement and satisfaction (Bulkley & Fisler, 2003; Bifulco & Ladd, 2005; Finn, Manno & Vanourek, 2000). Other research has noted the substantial heterogeneity within charter schools in their ability to engage parents, attributed to differences in legislation, school climate, and parental and school backgrounds (Fuller, 2002; Wohlstetter and Smith, 2010).

Equity concerns, that is, the issue of who chooses and who loses in a choice environment, has long been of concern in most choice contexts (Carnoy, 1997; Fuller and Elmore, 1996). Low-income parents are often unable to fully benefit in choice environments due to their lack of access to elite networks. Moreover, choice programs may also have design components that require parents to cover supplemental schooling costs which make the selection of higher quality schools prohibitive for low-income parents. For instance, in the first two decades of the renowned Chilean voucher program, middle and upper class parents were much more likely to use vouchers which led to strong sorting by income and ability (Gauri, 1998; Hsieh and Urquiola, 2006). In the U.S. context, Schneider et al. (2000) argue that the
fact that parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds will benefit differently in choice environments implies that policies need to be creative about how to give lower SES parents access not just to information but also to valuable networks.

Srivastava (2007) models household choice as a holistic process structured by macro-level attitudinal factors, such as beliefs about education and public-private differences, and micro-level contextual factors, such as local contextual characteristics and individual constraints. Of particular relevance to this study is the author’s application of Hirschman’s concepts of voice, loyalty and exit to the Indian low-fee private school context. Srivastava (2007) finds that households who choose low-fee private schools do not demonstrate loyalty nor do they engage with schools politically by voicing their concerns. Instead, they primarily focus on economic strategies. Their strategies of engagement ranged between staying (for fear of turbulence), frequently bargaining on fees (to reduce their financial commitments), exiting the school, and being a chronic exiter (fee-jumping from school to school).

Srivastava (2007) argues that the disadvantaged groups that finally got access to school choice through low-fee private schooling actively engaged in economic strategies because there were many suppliers and there were few costs of entry and exit. The author concludes by suggesting that similar to Hirschman’s Nigerian public railway context, the public education system in India has limited incentives to improve. Consequently, the strong adoption of the low-fee private sector by the most motivated among the poor may further inequities among the disadvantaged groups.

2.1. Conceptual framework

In this study, I address the question: How do parents continue to exercise choice after their initial school selection? As depicted in the overall conceptual framework on parental choice, Figure 1, I frame parental choice behavior as a series of interlinked processes which includes their selection of a school (not discussed in this paper) and their actions after school selection, the focus of this paper. I expect that school choice will also be affected by macro-attitudinal factors (Srivastava, 2007) such as societal perceptions of public or private schooling, and parents’ beliefs about the value of education. I use the phrase “continuing to exercise choice” to encompass parents’ involvement and engagement with their
children’s education efforts at home and at school, and their consideration of other schooling options. In reporting the analysis, I utilize the term parental “involvement” to denote parents’ regular interactions with their children and teachers, such as attending invited meetings at the school and talking to their children about schooling. I use the term parental “engagement” to denote more active parental participation with the school, such as their demonstrated efforts to voice their concerns to school officials and their participation in school decision-making.

I expect to find that once parents have made a choice, they will become more engaged in the school they have actively chosen (Schneider et al., 2000). In order to understand the extent of their participation, I analyze how parents are monitoring the school and children to stay informed, and formulating their opinions on their satisfaction and concerns with the school. I assume that parents have two main options while engaging with the school when they are unsatisfied – they could either voice their concerns and suggestions to try to improve the school, or they could contemplate exit strategies (Hirschman, 1970). If the school responds to parents’ concerns, then the parents may improve their satisfaction and decide to continue with the school. If they exit the current school, they will need to restart the process and select a new school. In order to flesh out these options of exercising choice, I separately analyze their communications with the school, their past school selection behavior, and current thoughts on exiting. I also analyze how parents are engaged in financial decision-making because of Srivastava’s findings that poor parents in low-fee private schools in India are primarily focused on financial strategies. Thus, the paper examines the following sub-questions:

1. Are parents satisfied with the school?
2. How do they keep themselves informed regarding the school’s quality?
3. How do parents communicate their concerns to the school (voice)?
4. How receptive are they to making major changes such as exiting?

3. Context

See Thapa (2012) for a more detailed background of the education system in Nepal.
Nepal is a developing country situated between India and China, and has experienced significant recent gains in mass access to education, health and financial services (CBS, 2004; CBS, 2011). The most important limitation to Nepal’s continued development is the highly unstable political environment, exemplified by a decade of brutal violence and frequent changes in government. Important historical markers in Nepal have been the beginning of democratic rule in 1991, the consequent disarray caused by political volatility, and the decade-long violent Maoist political struggle which resulted in severe human rights violations between 1996 and 2006 (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2012). The past few years have ushered in a new era as Nepal is finally without a monarchy and does not have wartime violence. However, the nation continues to operate in a fragile state as its political leaders try to develop a new constitution while attempting to address historical injustices in the nascent democracy.

The systematic development of an education system with the objective of a national, formal and universal system only began about 60 years ago. A concern for education quality, for whether children are actually learning, is a more recent development and is generally underscored using the 10th grade school-leaving examination (SLC) results. Much of this attention on quality is fixated on public-private differences. Empirical research has demonstrated a significant gap between public and private school test scores (Bhatta, 2004; Sharma, 2012; Thapa, 2011). Public and private schooling are also clearly differentiated in how they are financed and governed. After a few unsuccessful attempts at establishing a taxation system to finance mass education in the mid-1960s (Padhye, 1976), public schooling is currently funded with a combination of government taxes, fairly low user fees, and increasingly influential donor funds. The private education sector is primarily funded by school fees and private investors, and does not receive government funding. Most private schools are registered as corporations and have to pay a reduced corporate tax to the government. Not surprisingly, public secondary schools in both of the
sampled highly urbanized districts have very low monthly and annual school fees that are not comparable in cost to even the cheaper private schools\(^2\).

The political volatility in the country has demonstrably affected the schooling sector. There is growing recognition that public school teachers play an influential role in politics and are difficult to hold accountable for their schooling effort (Bhatta, 2009; Caddell, 2007). Private schools are considered to be preferable to public schools because they teach in English medium and are perceived to be more managerially efficient (Carney and Bista, 2009; Thapa, 2012). English fluency is considered to be critically important for the child’s future success as a migrant or in any private sector employment in the country. Despite their popularity in urban areas, private schools have often been treated as political battlefields (Caddell, 2007) and are negatively affected by demands for reduced school fees or even calls for nationalization.

Thus, the choices experienced by parents in a country like Nepal are substantively different from the more regulated choice environments in developed countries such as the United States. Due to the lack of an institutionalized local taxation system and limited emphasis on developing and monitoring zoning and entry regulations, parents in Nepal enjoy substantial regulatory freedom to choose any of the public or private schools throughout the country. However, their choices are strongly constrained by their ability to pay school fees. Still, the analysis of this accidental choice environment should be relevant for a number of other low-income developing countries that have experienced similar trends of growing, unregulated privatization. This experience can be placed in the South Asian context, where there has been a growth of a diversified private sector in India (Muralidharan and Kremer, 2009) and Pakistan (Andrabi, Das and Khwaja, 2008). Additionally, the Nepal case also has insights for other developing countries in Asia and Africa with which it shares other structural similarities, such as being land-locked and emerging from conflict.

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\(^2\) For instance, based on available district records, private secondary schools charged an average of $358 (standard deviation = $405) while public secondary schools charged about $24 (standard deviation = $34.5) in 9\(^{th}\) grade in Kathmandu district in the 2011-12 academic year (District Education Office Kathmandu, 2012).
4. Data and Methods

4.1. District, location and school selection

The data on parent decision-making was collected in the two districts of Kathmandu and Chitwan in 2011. These districts were chosen as contrasting but fairly high privatization contexts out of the 75 districts in the country, as demonstrated using district-level schooling characteristics in Figure 2. The specific types and numbers of schooling options available to parents within each district will vary depending on regulations, community characteristics, and parental constraints and preferences. Therefore, in order to conduct more in-depth analysis, I purposively selected three regions to represent variations in schooling and economic contexts within each district – an older city location, a newer city/semi-urban location, and a rural location. The rationale behind selecting different locations was the expectation that in more urbanized areas, there would be a higher density of private schools which may provide more choices in those settings. On the other hand, I expected that privatization and population densities would be lower in rural regions, reducing the number of schooling options in rural settings.

In each setting, I selected a diverse set of 4 to 6 public and private schools that varied in terms of academic performance and reputation. I used geographic proximity to identify a plausible local education market from which to select schools as parents factor in distance while making schooling decisions. The school and parent sample by location and school type are detailed in Table 1. The intention behind selecting a diverse set of schools was to capture the variation of schools available in that setting, and to see how parents discussed their schooling related decision-making in these different types of schools. I based my school selection decisions on discussions with district education officials, discussions with public school principals in my exploratory analysis in the Summer of 2010, and school-level examination outcomes. I then classified the schools into four categories with the objective of capturing how district officials and parents differentiated between types of schools. The “well-known private” schools were those found in the urban and semi-urban regions and that had a strong reputation, took higher fees, and were in high demand. The “smaller private” schools included the schools that primarily served the local community, were relatively new, or were not as well-known as the most prestigious schools in the region.
The “average and better public” schools included historically important public schools and public schools that were performing well in the high-stakes examinations. The “below average public” schools included those schools that had low enrollments and were considered to be struggling in quality by the district officials.

As a result of this prolonged selection process, I contend that this nonrandom selection strategy has helped provide a relatively accurate sense of the diversity of schools available in these locations. The selection of a set of public and private schools within each local education market also allowed me to take the discussion of decision-making beyond parent’s interactions with that one school, or their broader perceptions of public-private differences that exist nationally or at the district level. In addition, the selection of a diverse set of schools helped to highlight the heterogeneity within the public and private sectors.

4.2. Data collection and analysis strategy

The data utilized for the study were the survey and focus group data collected from meetings with sixth grade parents conducted in 30 schools between June and September of 2011. After each school was selected, I first conducted a one-on-one interview with the principal. In each school, I requested the principal to invite a small group of sixth grade parents to the school. Thus, it was up to the principal’s discretion to invite a group of parents for the parent meetings. I decided to hold the parent meetings at the school since this study was part of a larger choice project that focused on school-level analysis. This research design allowed me to observe if the schools had strong relationships with at least a core group of parents. Thus, parent discussions at the school were a more preferable strategy to conducting interviews at the households. I selected sixth grade parents with the expectation that these parents may reconsider schooling decisions once again after their child finishes primary school in fifth grade\(^3\).

\(^3\) I decided not to have a discussion with younger grade parents since they were less likely to have undergone more than one schooling change decision, and would be more affected by geographic proximity. Similarly, I decided not to have a discussion with older grade parents since I expected that they would be more likely to be focused on the high stakes examination outcomes at the end of 10\(^{th}\) grade, and less likely to recall their school choice related decision-making in earlier grades.
At the school’s pre-determined date, I conducted focus group discussions and parent surveys in a designated space (classroom or meeting room) provided by the school. The surveys were close ended and were administered one-on-one by members of my qualitative fieldwork team. I conducted the focus group discussions myself. The surveys included questions to the parents on basic parental characteristics and their responses on the reasons they chose the school (yes/no questions), the other schools they considered, their satisfaction with the school (4-point Likert scale, very satisfied to very dissatisfied), and their involvement and knowledge about their children’s educational interests and teachers (yes/no questions). The focus group protocols were focused on similar broad themes but were semi-structured and allowed for unexpected or deeper answers. The parent meetings lasted between 30 minutes and 2 hours depending on the number of parents who attended these meetings.

The methods utilized for analysis were descriptive statistics of the survey data, and structural coding and pattern coding (Saldaña, 2009; Yin, 2010) of the focus group discussion data. I structured the survey and focus group data into broad themes suggested by the literature, such as responses on school satisfaction or dissatisfaction, their strategies for staying informed regarding schooling, their strategies for communicating their concerns, and their contemplation of exiting strategies. I did the coding of the qualitative focus group data in two rounds - I first did open ended coding within the broad themes. In the second round of coding, I summarized these emergent categories to then highlight the most frequent narratives and unexpected, interesting responses between and within school types.

Clearly, the parent surveys were not conducted on a random sample of parents or schools. In particular, the parents who came for these meetings are likely to be a selective group of the most active parents in these schools unless the school officials had regular interactions with a large group of parents. Consequently, the discussion in the results of parent group differences is of substantive interest, although not necessarily statistically significantly different. Since it was the first such study on parent decision-making conducted in Nepal, it was important to conduct these surveys to analyze the extent to which the literature derived school choice related questioning would translate to the Nepal context.
4.3. Descriptive profile of parent participants

In total, 147 parents were surveyed in the 30 schools, as displayed in Table 2. The number of participants varied substantially by parent meetings, and ranged from meetings with just 1 parent to meetings with 10 parents. The majority of the participants (63%), particularly in Kathmandu, were mothers. Public school parents in the sample typically had more children than private school parents. Of the respondents, parents in the “below average public” sample typically were least likely to belong to one of the more privileged castes (Brahmins, Chhetris or Newars⁴), or read or watch daily news. Public and private school parents varied substantially in education attainment – while the majority of “below average public” school parents who participated had had no previous education, over three-quarters of private school parents had at least completed primary schooling and attended some secondary level schooling. There was also a larger gap in education levels between public and private school parents in Kathmandu than in Chitwan, potentially due to the much larger private sector and the higher participation of mothers in the public school sample in Kathmandu. Additionally, these data highlight the higher concentration of disadvantaged populations in “below average public” schools. If the same general patterns extended to the parent population (Sharma, 2012), then one could argue that the more educated parents have left the public system in favor of the private system in Nepal.

5. Results

5.1. Are parents satisfied with the school?

Parental satisfaction is an important indicator that is associated with parents’ involvement, their need to voice concerns, and their continued consideration of other alternatives. When surveyed, most of the parents tried to stay neutral on their satisfaction with the school. Table 3 displays the survey responses on parental satisfaction on key education characteristics. For instance, less than a fifth of the surveyed parents were extremely satisfied on any aspect of schooling. There were key differences between public and private school parents, particularly on dissatisfaction. For instance, only about 3% of “well-known private” school parents but 50% of the “average and better public” school parents stated

⁴ See Stash and Hannum (2001) for more discussion on the linkages between caste stratification and education.
that they were dissatisfied with the English teaching in their schools. “Below average public” school parents were particularly dissatisfied on discipline and safety. Importantly, over 10% of public school parents were unable to provide a sense of their level of satisfaction on interactions with teachers, the quality of school reports, and their child’s peer groups, instead opting to state that they “did not know.” The lack of response may indicate some discomfort with the survey process but also the parents’ limited involvement and awareness of these major aspects related to education.

In addition, the focus group discussions clearly illustrated that the public school parents were especially dissatisfied with their children’s behavior and the school’s disciplinary and security environment. Some of the most significant negative reactions, all of which came from “below average public” schools, included the children refusing to go to school and repeatedly asking the parents to switch them to some other school. These children also provided their parents with testimonials on the school’s “loose” management and older children running away from school. Some extreme learning environment issues included parents’ sense of vulgarity and violence among the child’s peers. To quote an unsatisfied parent:

You have to say things (as they are) here. It is a bit vulgar. You have to improve things here. We have seen it - I come back from work, and I see the police. They say that such and such were fighting, and wielding weapons. So, that will have a negative impact on the rest of the students. The students are also fighting amongst each other - and that is really bad. So the school officials should try to make the school more disciplined. (July 14 2011, Kathmandu)

Public school parents also expressed their dissatisfaction on extreme academic problems based on their monitoring of the children’s lack of progress, such as the inability to write their names after a year of schooling or repeatedly failing grades at the school. A main additional point of discontent was the fact that public schools were charging fees, despite the fact that public schools were supposed to be funded by the government.

In contrast, the discussions revealed a relatively higher level of satisfaction among private school parents. They were particularly satisfied with the effort exerted by the school in responding to parent
feedback, their ability to maintain discipline, and provide quality education to their children. These parents were also satisfied with their child’s experience at the school, citing favorable testimonials such as an unwillingness to leave the school. Still, some parents in the “well-known private” schools in Kathmandu did suggest that due to the high demand enjoyed by the schools, the schools did not prioritize parental ownership or parental engagement in school decision-making processes. Most of the private school parents primarily expressed dissatisfaction on official school reporting of student performance (report cards), quality of extracurricular programs and facilities, and the high instances of teacher turnover in their schools. They hoped that school fees would not keep rising exorbitantly so that they could continue affording private schools. However, even these parents agreed that they needed to pay school fees to ensure quality and parental ownership in schooling. As one parent noted:

I would prefer the fee-paying school. Because once you pay for something you will recognize its value. Because whatever kind of thing it is, if it is for free, then it will not be considered valuable. (August 4 2011, Kathmandu)

5.2. How do they keep themselves informed regarding the school’s quality?

Parents require information on schooling quality and regular communications to help determine their satisfaction and their future decisions on schooling. As mentioned earlier, the focus group discussions revealed that parents primarily get information on schooling quality through direct interactions and observations with their children, and additionally through discussions with school staff and community members.

Table 4 displays the survey responses on the frequency and nature of parent-student and parent-teacher interaction. The data indicate that parents in private schools are more likely to have regular interactions with the teachers. For instance, almost 40% of Chitwan private school parents, and 30% of Chitwan public school parents, reported having daily to weekly interactions with the class teachers. Importantly, almost a third of the private school parents, but only about 10% of the public school parents, reported that they knew the name of the class teacher.
Public school interactions with parents were less frequent than in private schools. The best public schools tried to engage with the parents on a regular basis and instill a stronger awareness of education and give them schooling related information. The public school parents in “below average public” schools primarily point to discussions with their children and their assessment of the child’s work as evidence of their involvement. These public school parents were much more likely to put the blame on lack of communication and poor quality on the lack of school effort. For instance, in one “below average public” school, where the majority of parents were dissatisfied, the participants mentioned that this was the first time the school had invited anyone for a discussion. To quote a particularly beleaguered guardian:

…the school has to call for meetings time and again to let the parents know about the progress of their child. But this never happens here…If a student does well here, it is not because of the school’s effort but because of their own skills and hard work. (July 14 2011, Kathmandu)

There were important district variations in these parent-school communications. As shown in Table 4, public and private school parents were more likely to report at least monthly contact with teachers in Chitwan than in Kathmandu. Additionally, while the majority of Chitwan parents suggested that they had good relations with teachers, the findings were less favorable in Kathmandu public schools. Interestingly, a higher percentage of private and public school parents in Kathmandu mentioned that they have very frequent interactions with their children on education, and demonstrated that they were more aware of their children’s subject interests. Thus, parents in Kathmandu appeared to have higher contact with children but lower contact with teachers than in Chitwan. Based on focus group discussions, within the sub-sample of the best performing private schools, parents from the rural Kathmandu schools and Chitwan schools appeared to conduct very frequent parent discussions and encourage regular meetings. In contrast, the highly competitive urban and semi-urban Kathmandu private schools seemed to ignore the need to have continued dialogue with parents.

The finding of limited involvement and information gathering from the schools in Kathmandu compared to Chitwan may be attributable to the more individualistic rather than communal social
structure in Kathmandu district. The urban sprawl, high migrant population and high density of schools in the capital of Kathmandu have led to a rise in individualistic and nuclear family lifestyles. These urban transformations may limit interactions between the schools and parents and may have increased the likelihood of parents focusing on getting their children entry into the best possible school and then getting informed on schooling from their children. On the other hand, there may be a more defined sense of community and social obligations in the less populated and urbanized Chitwan district, which increases parental involvement and engagement in all types of schools in the district.

5.3. How do parents communicate their suggestions and concerns to the school (voice)?

Only a few of the parent participants stated that they came to the schools regularly to voice their concerns. Parents in private schools reported having more frequent interactions with the school and more critical discussion with the teachers than public school parents. A potential explanation for this difference in extent of interactions is that private school parents that have higher education levels and pay fees feel entitled to more attentiveness from private school officials. While the private school parents focused on critical commentary and specific improvement needs in all-rounded development and academic results, the public school parents were more concerned about the foundational needs of discipline, safety, and limiting student and teacher absenteeism. The relative emphasis on school satisfaction and parent-school interactions in the different types of public and private schools in the focus group discussions are displayed in Figure 3. Overall, the frequency of coded discussions suggests that “smaller private” demonstrate that they have strong parental involvement and engagement as well as high satisfaction, while parents in “below average public” schools are highly dissatisfied but have weak parental involvement and engagement.

Specifically, parents in “well-known private” schools were generally satisfied that they had gotten access to these highly reputed schools. However, as mentioned in the discussion on parent information sources, officials from these “well-known private” schools in Kathmandu did not seem to have extensive discussions with the parents. In fact, the parents in “smaller private” schools exhibited the strongest signs of parental engagement and loyalty. They mentioned that they were empowered because
they paid fees, and also discussed the specific ways in which they engaged with the school in order to improve the school and ensure that the school personnel were aware of their concerns. They would voice their concerns by coming to the school on their own, and would provide attention at home and regularly monitor the school. In addition, some parents also highlighted how the school principals incorporated their small suggestions regarding textbooks and reusing old materials into consideration. The parents mentioned that it was common to have frequent contact with teachers, initiated and uninitiated by the schools. They also appeared to have more regular interactions with the principals and demonstrated stronger ownership of the school. To illustrate:

When the students are doing really poorly, the teachers do call us here and tell us that they are performing poorly and that perhaps they need to take tuitions. We also just come and tell them these things. Whatever the children say we come and tell them here …

We do put our thoughts out - we say that we have worked really hard to make sure that we can pay the fees and put our child here so that they will do well, but the child says that they don’t understand what is going on in the classroom - what is happening, sir? We have to. (August 8 2011, Chitwan)

The parent-teacher dynamics were different and hierarchical in public schools. For instance, parents in an exceptional public school in Kathmandu with strict parental participation policies were frustrated that the school principal would not listen to their concerns and instead only focused on larger school development plans. That is, parents believed that while the school sought out parental involvement in their children’s education, the public school did not encourage parental engagement in school decision-making. Consistently, the parents in public schools often referred to the schooling decisions as “their” (school officials) decisions, suggesting that parents were not active participants in school decision-making. A common explanation provided by the parents for their lack of engagement was the belief that their lone initiative would not be adequate in motivating the school to enact important changes such as English medium, teacher accountability and pre-primary education. To illustrate:
Despite their dissatisfaction, parents in “below average public” schools appear to be have very weak parental involvement and engagement. That is, some of these parents professed that they lacked time, had little awareness of education and felt ill equipped to discuss education related matters, rarely came to school, were not familiar with the teachers, and did not voice their concerns. In fact, both public and private school parents lamented the lack of parental involvement in public schools, which allowed for the continuance of negligence by the school officials.

5.3.1. Communications and engagement in financial decision-making

The parents appeared to be least engaged in financial decision-making such as fee-setting even though they are highly concerned about school fees. While some private school parents suggest that the school authorities transparently discuss the reasons for fee hikes, others complain that this decision-making is cloaked in an air of secrecy. Private school parents have more space for discussion with teachers and principals on school fees, but are typically only able to get an understanding of the schools’ reasons for fee increases rather than change their decisions on fee raises. Most private school parents may also not press their case since they view school fees as an investment in their children’s schooling and try to be understanding of the inflationary pressures that the schools are facing. They are also more likely to link fee paying status to parent driven accountability and schooling quality, and not be as bothered about having to pay fees. Some parents additionally suggest that there won’t be a unified effort to protest high fees since private schools enroll students from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. To illustrate:
Do they ask you before raising fees or not?
We don’t find out about this at all. The school management committees get together, make a decision, and then we get the notice afterwards. Of course they don’t ask us! They just tell us when we come to pay the fees.

If all of the parents came together and protest the fees, then maybe something would happen. But there are parents who are wealthy and who are poor. There are also parents in America, Japan, and other countries and they have left their children here -so there won’t be that many protests on this really.

(July 27 2011, Chitwan)

In contrast, any school fees taken in public schools are met with resentment, politically as well as by the parents. It is public knowledge, through budget speeches and other media attention, that public schools are expected to be free. Many public schools are primarily populated by poorer parents, which make it fairly difficult for these parents to pay even small-scale user fees. However, while some of the public school parents are very opinionated and dissatisfied on the school fee issue, they are not voicing these concerns frequently. Moreover, they also do not think that the school will address their concerns even if they voice them. To illustrate:

Even if it is difficult, you have to pay as much as is needed...The sirs won’t agree just because we say “we don’t have any money”. We have to pay the fees and we are paying them - we are paying monthly fees after all. You cannot take the exams without paying the monthly fees. (July 9 2011, Kathmandu)

The fact that the private schools typically accept school management’s decisions on fee increases may suggest that schools are able to gain the trust of these families by providing an adequate quality of education. Compared to the highly documented low-fee private sector that has developed in other countries (Srivastava, 2013), there still do not appear to be many schools that could be considered low-fee schools that have similar or lower costs to the public secondary schools in these districts of Nepal. It is unlikely that there are a large number of undocumented low-fee schools at the secondary level in these two districts. The lack of abundant supply of low-fee private schools and the restriction of the study sample to secondary schools are probably the main reasons why I did not find parents going from school to school to find the least cost schooling option (fee-jumping) that was mentioned in the Indian context in Srivastava (2007).
5.4. How receptive are they to making major changes such as exiting?

5.4.1. Considering exiting from the school

Parents’ consideration of exiting is yet another indication of satisfaction as parents who are satisfied are likely not to consider a change of schools (Schneider et al., 2000). Parents were asked whether they were currently considering switching their children to a different school. Most parents had decided that they would not move their children - only 3 (out of 66) Chitwan parents and 7 (out of 81) Kathmandu parents said they were thinking about switching their child. If possible, all parents tried not to change the school in order to give them stability of learning environment for the secondary school grades leading up to the important 10th grade high-stakes examinations. However, some parents were worried that they would have to transition their children due to financial constraints or due to a lack of satisfaction. Parents in some private schools discussed their desire not to transfer as demonstrating their satisfaction, noting that it would be easy for them to use the exit option. According to a parent who had chosen a private school:

You (the school) have to make them (the parents) happy also - because we are the government here. In government schools, the government is their government. Here, if our children are not happy, we can think about taking them to some other school. (August 8 2011, Chitwan)

On the other hand, public school parents were unlikely to think about transitioning their child into better schools because they thought that it would not really be feasible due to the more difficult curriculum in those schools and their financial constraints. Even when dissatisfied, they appeared to be resigned to the idea that it was too late for them to transition their children to some other school. Thus, even the parents in “below average public” schools who are aware of the school’s lack of quality mention that it is not that easy for them to consider other choices. Moreover, given the growth in law and order disruptions, some parents are reluctant to consider moving their children to a school that is further away. Thus, many of these parents effectively have no feasible options for exit. To illustrate the lack of options with a few quotations:
Reasons for exiting for those who had already made a transition

However, since we were talking with parents of sixth grade children we also asked them if they had switched schools earlier in the child’s schooling. As shown in Table 5, about two-fifths of the parents had switched their children to the current school. Some of the parents stressed pragmatic reasons for transfer, such as migration. Importantly, many Kathmandu public school parents had switched from private to public schools due to financial reasons since they were unable to afford higher school fees in secondary schooling grades. These parents hoped that their children had developed an adequate foundation, particularly in English, in the private school and could continue in public school afterwards. Additionally, there also appears to be a gendered decision-making pattern in the ease with which they transfer their children out of public schools. They suggested that their daughters were more pliable and thus more willing to attend public schools than their sons. To quote a mother who had chosen a public school for her daughter:

So you also have a son in boarding school then?
Yes. I had kept my daughter there as well, and then I couldn’t keep her there and took her out. But my son would not agree at all. He’s big now, and it’s now time for him to study in higher grades. But he refuses to come out of boarding (private) school - what can I do? (July 14 2011, Kathmandu)

Thus, these private to public transitions were typically viewed as a “downgrade”, and only utilized if the children were performing poorly or if the parents faced financial difficulties. There were
some instances where the public schools were truly exceptional and were able to attract middle class parents. For instance, one of the parents had transitioned his sons to a highly reputed public school due to a lack of satisfaction with the private school in the area.

Private school parents, on the other hand, had a qualitatively different set of reasons for transitioning their children to the current school. They had typically tried to investigate the new schools as thoroughly as was feasible. They were primarily hoping for better quality schooling - some of these parents suggested that the previous school did not listen to their suggestions and were unable to provide the adequate learning environment for their children. Other private school parents suggested that there was an opportunity for a better future in the more competitive schools due to access to better student groups and reputation. Public to private transitions were rare and would happen at times when the children were extremely dissatisfied and refused to continue going to the public school, or when there were financial incentive that make it possible to send their children to private schools.

6. Summary and Discussion

In this paper, I find that there is substantial heterogeneity between parents who have selected different types of public and private schools in terms of their satisfaction with schooling, involvement with the school, and their continued consideration of other options. In particular, parents appear to be most engaged, satisfied and empowered in “smaller private” schools, which have been able to provide middle class parents more choice and access to higher quality schooling. In contrast, the majority of parents who were unable to choose any type of private school due to financial constraints are dissatisfied on academic and disciplinary aspects of schooling. In “below average public” schools, there is a dual problem of a lack of school effort in organizing meetings to gauge parent satisfaction, and the lack of parental effort in communicating their suggestions and concerns to the school. In addition, all parents appear to have virtually no say in the schools’ financial decision-making, such as fee-setting.

A main concern is the fact that there is a substantial group of dissatisfied parents in public schools who are not engaged in voicing their concerns at the school. Dissatisfaction is not necessarily negative if it can prompt parents to express their problems and work with the school towards making improvements.
However, the parents in these low-performing schools do not appear to have much confidence that voicing their concerns will result in the school listening to their suggestions. This pessimism may partly be attributable to the fact even the best of the public schools appear to have a distanced relationship with the parents, especially in Kathmandu. While not discussed explicitly by parents, an important explanation for the limited parent-teacher interactions in public schools is the socioeconomic gap between the well-educated teachers and the relatively disadvantaged public school parents, which may help perpetuate and even widen inequalities in developing countries such as India (Dreze and Sen, 2013) or Nepal. In particular, the teachers and principals may prioritize satisfying their immediate supervisors in the bureaucracy or their political party superiors, and may not feel as answerable to the less privileged parents in public schools.

Overall, middle class parents have been able to benefit from the choice environment while parents without the economic capacity or educational background are essentially left without choice, and have become relegated to increasingly disadvantaged public schools. That is, parents in the “below average public” schools are effectively not exercising or benefiting from the diverse alternatives that are out of their economic reach. These findings are consistent with the global literature on the stratification consequences of unregulated choice (Fiske and Ladd, 2001; Hsieh and Urquiola, 2006) and the variability of parental involvement by socioeconomic background in the United States (Schneider et al., 2000).

There are also important differences in parental participation within the presumably better functioning private sector, and parents in smaller private schools are the most engaged in school functioning. The parents who had chosen “well-known private” schools, particularly in Kathmandu, suggested that the schools were not deeply engaged with parents. The lack of schools’ engagement with parents in these schools suggests that reputed, high demand schools have higher power and authority in the school-parent dynamic, and do not have to fully engage with parents. In these schools, parents were satisfied due to student quality and school efforts rather than their own interactions and inputs in schooling. In contrast, the parents in “smaller private” schools provided several examples suggesting that there was strong involvement, some engagement in school decision-making, and satisfaction with
their schools. Thus, “smaller private” schools experience parental behavior that is consistent with Schneider (2000)’s analysis that “active chooser” parents are more engaged in the school’s functioning. Furthermore, consistent with Hirschman’s analysis, these parents expressed their need to show loyalty to their current school and try to improve it from within before thinking about more drastic steps like exiting the school. Additionally, they suggest that they are continuously engaged in the choice process - that if they are not satisfied, they can always take the children out and put them in some other institution. A main explanation provided by parents for this active engagement is that their fee-paying status gives them leverage. From the school perspective, officials in “smaller private” schools may be much more committed to their consumers for the logical reason that they have to expend effort to stay competitive. Thus, while public schools have a bureaucratic support system and elite private schools have plenty of resources and high demand, the “smaller private” schools have to rely on maintaining good parental connections for their word of mouth reputation.

Future research on parental participation in Nepal would benefit from more in-depth investigations on parental involvement and engagement and on describing the nature of the competitive environment that would be most conducive for ensuring good “co-production” of schooling. Firstly, while this study provides an analysis of the differences between parental involvement in different types of schools, future studies need to analyze the specific variety of within-home and within-school involvements of parents, including the ways in which parents are engaged in decision-making (Epstein, 2001; Smith and Wohlstetter, 2009). Secondly, there were notable differences between the more urbanized and less urbanized districts of study, with much higher parent-school collaborative relationships in the less urbanized district and rural regions that faced less private competition. These differences suggest that there may be an optimal number of schooling options that may be able to create a productive environment to generate social capital and improve schooling. Quantitative analysis of the relationship between parental participation, competition and community characteristics needs to be carried out to further clarify this hypothesis.
In light of the study’s findings, future school reform oriented policymaking needs to be more cognizant of the fact that parental choice is an on-going process that requires continual engagement. In particular, policymakers in Nepal need to focus on how to improve engagement-linked satisfaction, particularly in the “below average public” schools. Given the lack of interaction and discussion in these “below average public” schools, at a minimum, these school officials need to be incentivized to improve the frequency and quality of their interactions with parents, learning from “smaller private” schools where the engagement-satisfaction synergies appear to be working best for school improvement. For instance, hiring teachers from the local population and emphasizing teacher-parent interactions in official accountability metrics may help partially offset existing socioeconomic inequalities and lead to improved “co-production” of schooling through the combined efforts of parents and teachers.
Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the parents and schools that participated in the parent meetings, Mr. Janardan Joshi, the research team that accompanied her and made the data collection possible, the Department of Education (Nepal) for providing research approval, and Professors Emily Hannum and Sigal Ben-Porath for helpful suggestions in guiding the research.
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Tooley, J., Dixon, P., 2005. Private Education is Good for the Poor. CATO Institute, Washington, D.C.


Fig. 1. Parent Decisionmaking Framework: A Focus on How Parents Continue to Exercise Choice After School Selection. Research framework based on Elacqua, Schneider and Buckley (2006), Hirschman (1970), Schneider, Teske and Marschall (2000), and Srivastava (2007).
Fig. 2. District-level Schooling Characteristics, 2011-12 (Enrollment and Private Market Share)
Source: Ministry of Education (MoE), 2012.
Fig. 3. Relative Emphasis on Parental Participation and Satisfaction (percentage of all coded discussion).

*Source:* Author’s calculations based on parent focus group discussions in Kathmandu and Chitwan, Nepal, Summer 2011.

*Note:* The above chart plots the relative emphasis of the discussions on parental participation and satisfaction. The chart should be interpreted as follows. In “smaller private” schools, more than 20% of the discussions were statements that indicated strong parental involvement or engagement and 40% of the discussions signaled strong satisfaction with the school. In contrast, in “below average public” schools, over 50% of the discussions were focused on statements around parental dissatisfaction and over 20% of the discussions were focused on statements indicating weak parental involvement or engagement.
Table 1
Details of school and parent sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>number of schools</th>
<th>number of parents</th>
<th>average number of parents per meeting</th>
<th>range of parents in the meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>By Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kathmandu district</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>3 - 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-urban</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2 - 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1 - 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chitwan district</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1 - 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>By School Type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Below average public&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1 - 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Average and better public&quot;</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3 - 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Smaller private&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Well-known private&quot;</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1 - 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s calculations based on parent surveys conducted in Kathmandu and Chitwan, Nepal, Summer 2011.

Note: As noted in the text, the four types of schools capture the diversity within and between public and private schools. The “well-known private” schools were those found in the urban and semi-urban regions and that had a strong reputation, took higher fees, and were in high demand. The “smaller private” schools included the schools that primarily served the local community, were relatively new, or were not known as the most prestigious schools in the region. The “average and better public” schools included historically important public schools and public schools that were performing well in the high-stakes examinations. The “below average public” schools included those schools that had low enrollments and were considered to be struggling in quality by the district officials.
Table 2
Basic descriptive profile of parent participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All schools</th>
<th>Ktm</th>
<th>Chw</th>
<th>Below average public</th>
<th>Average and better public</th>
<th>Smaller private</th>
<th>Well-known private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of schools</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants (N)</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Demographic characteristics**

<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% female</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% more privileged caste (Brahmins, Chhetris, Newars)</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Education relevant characteristics**

<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% that read a daily newspaper</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% that watch daily news</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>71.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Education level**

<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% with no education</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with up to primary education (1st grade - 5th grade)</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with some secondary education (6th grade or higher)</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>71.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author’s calculations based on parent survey of Kathmandu and Chitwan, Nepal, Summer 2011.*

*Note: Ktm = Kathmandu district; Chw = Chitwan district. See definition of types of schools in Table 1 note.*
Table 3
Survey: satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their current school (By type of school, percentage of respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Did not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Below average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants (N)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Academic attributes**
- English teaching
  - Public: 5.6
  - Private: 6.7
  - Dissatisfied: 31.8
  - Satisfied: 50.0
  - Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied: 7.0
  - Did not know: 3.1
  - Public: 8.3
  - Private: 0.0

- Teacher listening to parents
  - Public: 8.3
  - Private: 12.0
  - Dissatisfied: 0.0
  - Satisfied: 8.0
  - Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied: 2.3
  - Did not know: 6.3
  - Public: 15.3
  - Private: 4.0

- Teacher helping students
  - Public: 8.3
  - Private: 9.3
  - Dissatisfied: 4.5
  - Satisfied: 12.0
  - Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied: 7.0
  - Did not know: 0.0
  - Public: 11.1
  - Private: 8.0

- Academic report provided by the school
  - Public: 5.6
  - Private: 10.7
  - Dissatisfied: 31.8
  - Satisfied: 28.0
  - Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied: 18.6
  - Did not know: 18.8
  - Public: 15.3
  - Private: 2.7

- Peer groups
  - Public: 4.2
  - Private: 8.0
  - Dissatisfied: 4.5
  - Satisfied: 10.0
  - Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied: 7.0
  - Did not know: 6.3
  - Public: 13.9
  - Private: 5.3

**School climate attributes**
- Discipline
  - Public: 12.5
  - Private: 14.7
  - Dissatisfied: 31.8
  - Satisfied: 6.0
  - Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied: 2.3
  - Did not know: 0.0
  - Public: 1.4
  - Private: 1.3

- Safety
  - Public: 9.7
  - Private: 16.0
  - Dissatisfied: 18.2
  - Satisfied: 12.0
  - Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied: 9.3
  - Did not know: 0.0
  - Public: 0.0
  - Private: 1.3

- Resources and facilities
  - Public: 2.8
  - Private: 8.0
  - Dissatisfied: 22.7
  - Satisfied: 12.0
  - Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied: 20.9
  - Did not know: 9.4
  - Public: 9.7
  - Private: 1.3


*Notes*: Ktm = Kathmandu district; Chw = Chitwan district. See definition of types of schools in Table 1 note.

Parents were asked whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied on the above academic and school climate attributes on a 4-point Likert scale (very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied and very dissatisfied). The table excludes the “satisfied” responses as these responses represent parents who were generally satisfied or wanted to use it as a default response instead of committing to a negative or positive assessment. I disaggregated the dissatisfied responses by the 4 types of schools to highlight heterogeneity within the sectors. I also chose to add the percent of responses who responded that they “did not know” to these questions in order to highlight the public-private differences in these non-responses.
Table 4
Survey: Frequency and quality of parent interactions with their children and school teachers (Percentage of respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All schools</th>
<th>Chitwan</th>
<th>Kathmandu</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher interaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of interaction with teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily or weekly</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-day to monthly</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-monthly or annually</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rare or no contact</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know the name of the class teacher</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child interaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent of interaction with the child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know subject of interest to their child</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Parent survey of Kathmandu and Chitwan, Nepal, Summer 2011.*
### Table 5
Survey: Why did they move their child to the current school? (Percentage of participants)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All schools</th>
<th>By district</th>
<th>By types of public and private schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ktm</td>
<td>Chw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants (N)</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pragmatic and financial reasons</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>19.8</td>
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<td>6.2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>11.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic quality reasons</strong></td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Did not move</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Source: Parent survey of Kathmandu and Chitwan, Nepal, Summer 2011.*

*Note: Ktm = Kathmandu district; Chw = Chitwan district. See definition of types of schools in Table 1 note.*