HOME-SCHOOL COOPERATION RESEARCH REPORT

Executive Summary, Overall Findings and Recommendations

The Research Team

Dr. S. M. Shen (Leader)
Mr. I. W. Pang
Mrs. S. Y. S. Tsoi
Dr. P. S. F. Yip
Mr. K. K. Yung

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

This report presents a comprehensive picture of the current home-school cooperation in Hong Kong based on the findings of the very first territory-wide survey on this issue supplemented by three focus studies. This research was commissioned by the Committee on Home-School Cooperation of the Education Department.

2. Objective

The research aimed at getting a clear picture of the existing situation of home-school cooperation in Hong Kong. The objectives are:

(a) to provide information on the current mechanisms, patterns, practices and activities of home-school cooperation in local kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools;

(b) to provide information on perceptions, attitudes and expectations of parties concerned, including:

   (i) school managers,
   (ii) school principals,
   (iii) teachers,
   (iv) student guidance teachers/student guidance officer/school social workers;
   (v) parents, and
   (vi) students; and

(c) to provide information for the understanding of difficulties and problems encountered by the parties concerned.

3. Methodology and Scope of Study

3.1 The research consisted of some preliminary qualitative research followed by a territory-wide survey and three focus studies.

3.2 The survey covered the six related parties, listed in 2(b), of three school settings in Hong Kong. The three school settings were kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. In the report, special schools and ESF/International schools were isolated from the three school settings because of their very different nature. The report, therefore, presents survey findings on five school settings.
3.3 Over 100 informal interviews and 16 focus group discussions were conducted prior to the general survey. All school supervisors and principals as well as the teachers, school social workers/student guidance teachers, parents and pupils of 340 selected schools were invited to take part in the survey. A total of about 42,000 completed questionnaires from the six related parties were collected for analysis. The overall response rate was about 80% with some discrepancies among different parties in different settings.

3.4 The three focus studies were:

(i) The Parents-Teachers’ Association (PTA),
(ii) Practices of home-school cooperation, and
(iii) Parent education in schools.

3.5 For the three focus studies, a questionnaire had been mailed to each chairperson of all Parents-Teachers’ Associations, about 200 semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews as well as six group discussions were conducted.

4. **Overall Findings and Discussions**

4.1 The desirability of enhancing home-school cooperation was generally recognized by all parties.

4.2 Overall speaking, the cooperation of home and school was at a level where parents would cooperate at home by urging their children to study hard and felt quite satisfied if they were well informed of the school policy/operation/measure; on the other hand, schools felt that parents needed only to be informed rather than to be consulted or to be involved in decision making. Both sides were reluctant and not prepared to upgrade the involvement of parents in school matters.

4.3 The most common means of communication were school circular/letter and the pupil’s handbook. The communication via meetings for parents was basically one-way and top-down. Individual contacts were usually problem-oriented.

4.4 Parents were quite concerned about their children. They put a lot of effort on their children’s academic study although they regarded that school should shoulder the main responsibility of teaching subject knowledge.

4.5 The academic study was exerting a great pressure on both secondary and primary school students. Apart from that, pocket money, self emotional and self behavioral problems were also troubling the secondary school students.

4.6 Academic study of the students dominated all reasons of contact between teachers and parents.

4.7 Contacts were mostly initiated by schools. Parents had seldom contacted the school. Even when they had serious dissatisfaction, they were very reluctant to initiate contact with the school.
4.8 Although the school supervisors agreed that school should allocate more funding to enhance home-school cooperation, the school management committee had done very little in this aspect. Most of the committees had not formulated any policy concerning parents. A proportion of the principals and teachers were not sure of the attitude of the school management committee on home-school cooperation.

4.9 Most of the principals did not think that an effective PTA could be set up yet, not to mention the involvement of parents as managers. On the priority list, they had a number of other things to do to enhance home-school cooperation before setting up a PTA or involving parents as managers.

4.10 In descending order of percentages of principals’ responses, the three areas regarded to be "very much needed" to be improved are:

(i) to reduce the workload of teachers
(ii) to provide training to parents (e.g. parenting skill)
(iii) provide training to teachers

4.11 In general, teachers had very similar perceptions and attitudes as the principals.

4.12 School social workers/student guidance teachers were neither certain nor satisfied with the school’s effort in consulting parents about school policies. They were also dissatisfied with the parents’ effort in initiating contact with school personnel.

4.13 Parents themselves had very little desire to get involved in school operations, functions or decision-making. They welcomed more information from the school, more explanation of the school policies and procedures, and more channels to facilitate parents to give suggestions.

4.14 Students did not welcome contacts between parents and teachers. The secondary school students did not see that their teachers or parents could be of much help when they had problems. Many a time they had turned to their peers for help or had left the problems to themselves.

4.15 The major difficulty perceived by all parties was the lack of time and the mismatch of time between parents and teachers. The heavy workload of teachers was also regarded as a major factor hindering home-school cooperation.

4.16 Other barriers included parents’ lack of parenting skill, teachers’ lack of training on how to cooperate with parents and inadequate communication between teachers and parents, etc.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The importance of home-school cooperation should be publicised by the Government and relevant bodies and in schools.

5.2 Teachers and parents who are two of the major sources of support to children need to upgrade their skills to become more helpful to children in solving their problems.
5.3 School based parent education programmes will be useful. Support will be needed from the Government and the community.

5.4 The school is at a better position to take the initiative to enhance home-school cooperation. A policy and some infrastructure for parents' matters could be very useful.

5.5 The school should strengthen its lower levels of parents' involvement before exploring further cooperation with parents at higher levels such as involving parents in decision making process.

5.6 Teachers' workload and training programmes should be reviewed in light of the principals' and the teachers' perceptions.

5.7 At this stage, most schools and parents do not have the desire to include parents as managers as suggested in the School Management Initiative (SMI).

5.8 Further research is needed to see whether more parental involvement in school matters would improve the educational outcome. Different schools may have to decide on the optimal level of parental involvement most suitable for their own schools.
OVERALL FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

For the convenience of discussion and comparison, a few notations are used.

Firstly, the following notations are used to refer to the respective questionnaires in the survey:

- **M**: Supervisor/Manager
- **H**: Principal/Head
- **T**: Teacher
- **G**: Parent/Guardian
- **EP**: Primary School Pupil
- **ES**: Secondary School Pupil
- **SW**: School Social Worker/student guidance officer/student guidance teacher

The number followed the above notations refer to the question number in the particular questionnaire. For example, T18.6 refers to the question 18.6 of the questionnaire for teachers.

Secondly, as before, a set of notations is used to designate various settings as follows:

- **Setting S**: Secondary school setting
- **Setting P**: Primary school setting
- **Setting K**: Kindergarten setting
- **Setting E**: ESF and international school setting
- **Setting SP**: Special school setting

The discussion in this Chapter mainly refers to the settings of P, K, S and SP, unless otherwise stated. Schools in setting E were found to have a somewhat different set of practices and perceptions in general.

1. **The Importance of Home-School Cooperation**

   The importance of home-school cooperation to the educational outcome of pupils seemed to be generally recognized by all parties (H20.10; M20.a-f; SW21.3; T18.10; G108-111). The majority of the principals and teachers in settings SP, K, P and S expressed that their schools **should allocate more existing resources to enhance home-school cooperation** (H20.6; T18.6). However, within each individual party, there were different perceptions on the levels of cooperation desired (H20; T18; G124-127,133; M25, 29, 35).

2. **The Desired Level of Home-School Cooperation**

   It appeared that the most desirable level of cooperation of schools and parents is at the level of informing or being informed. There was reluctance in all parties to further their
cooperation at higher levels, e.g. to consult or being consulted about school policies and to invite or being invited to assist in school operation (M29; H9, 15, 18.6, 20.8; T17.6, 18.8; G124-127).

3. Role of The School

Though schools recognized the importance of home-school cooperation, many of them did not seem to have taken initiatives in promoting home-school cooperation. Some of the schools seldom organized meetings for parents (H7). Very few schools had a parent policy and infra-structure for promoting home-school cooperation (M23; H10, 11). Many schools personnel did not think that they should consult parents in school policies or inform them about the major decisions of the management committee (H20.7,8; M15, 29). Many schools did not issue newsletters, annual reports or other publications for parents (H8). It seemed that many schools had expectations upon parents to "cooperate" with them by taking good care of their own children and to reinforce learning at home (H22.1,2; T20.1,2), but not "to involve them in major school decisions" (H20.7,8,9).

Schools, except those in setting E, perceived that their responsibilities in children education were mainly about subject knowledge and children behaviour in schools (H21; T19). Principals and teachers perceived that schools had slightly more responsibilities than parents in moral and civic education, physical development and aesthetic development and slightly less responsibility in the social, psychological and emotional development of children and the least responsibility in children behaviour outside schools. The fact that schools regarded that they had a relatively smaller responsibility in the social, psychological and emotional development of children was consistent with the fact that secondary school pupils did not find teachers helpful in solving their personal, emotional and social problems (ES 89-91, 93). It was worth to note that 37% of the primary school principals and 46% of the primary school teachers regarded that the major or total responsibility of the social development of children felt on parents.

4. The Perceptions and Attitudes of the related parties

4.1 Supervisor/manager

Many present supervisors or managers did not initiate contacts and had little contacts with the parents (M13, 14, 19a). They neither discussed parent matters in board meetings nor generated a parent policy for schools (M20, 23). Their concepts and intentions on home-school cooperation, for example in the setting up of PTA, were not known to a considerable number of teachers (T23.4). Only half of the supervisors thought that they themselves should definitely be involved in setting up a parent policy (M24). In addition, they considered that the channels of communication in schools were just right (M21). It appeared that some supervisors either did not consider themselves to be directly accountable to parents in the education of pupils or place home-school cooperation on the list of top priority. The latter explanation was also supported by the fact that only less than one-third of the supervisors in settings K, P and S thought that the school should be definitely financed to enhance home-school cooperation (M30).
4.2 Principal/head

Principals tended to have a positive attitude towards enhancing home-school cooperation. However, there was generally more consensus to involve parents at lower levels than at higher levels (H18, 20). To enhance the cooperation, principals expressed the needs to carry out teacher training, parent education and provide various sorts of contacts with parents. Yet, teachers’ workload appeared to be their most serious concern (H16.4, 18.3). It appeared that whether home-school cooperation could be further enhanced in a school would hinge on the availability of additional human resources and the principal’s ability to develop and re-allocate the human resources in schools.

From both the survey and the focus study (Chapter 36), it was agreed that home-school cooperation and teacher-parent relationship might be affected by inadequate teachers’ performance (H14), parents’ misunderstanding of school measures (H14.1) and the mismatch of expectations between parents and the school (H16.7, SW15.8). It was also pointed out by more than half of the SSW/SGO/SGT that parents were afraid of or not used to voicing their opinions to schools (SW21.4). It appeared that the principal had to encourage teacher-parent communication first before seeking further home-school cooperation.

4.3 Teacher

Many teachers disagreed that parents’ opinions on teaching were useful to them (T18.2). Contacts between parents and teachers were infrequent (T6) and they were mainly on academic or behavioural problems of pupils (T8). In ordinary schools, one-third of the teachers regarded that it was beyond their normal duties to promote home-school cooperation (T15.5). The majority of teachers thought that the school should not take up the role of parent education (T18.5). They did not regard that it was their responsibility to enable parents to educate their children. They seemed to expect parents to look after their own children, to reinforce children’s learning at home and take more initiative to communicate with them (T20.1-3). It appeared that if teachers treated parents as partners, it was only in the sense that parents should support the learning of their children at home.

In the focus study (Chapter 36), parents were frustrated about teachers’ absence in parents’ activities and PTA teacher executives often found it difficult to invite their colleagues to attend parents’ meetings. These reluctant teachers did not seem to be answerable and accountable to parents in the educational matter in practice.

4.4 School Social Worker (SSW), Student Guidance Officer (SGO) and Student Guidance Teacher (SGT)

The efforts of school social workers and student guidance teachers were generally regarded as satisfactory by the principals and teachers in concerned settings (H22.10; T20.10). Yet, principals seemed to appreciate the SSW/SGO/SGT more than teachers did. About 20% of teachers in settings P and S were "not certain" probably because such efforts were not explicitly made known to teachers and/or communication might be lacking between teachers and the SSW/SGO/SGT.
School social workers and student guidance teachers seemed to have spent much more time on dealing with individual pupils' cases than planning activities for parents (SW11, 12). They were of the opinion that they had done a good job in improving the child's behaviour and parent-child relationship (SW10). Their major difficulty was getting the involvement from parents and the lack of time (SW13).

Many SSWs/SGOs/SGTs were uncertain about the attitude of the school on home-school cooperation (SW13.6, 17.12, 21.9, 22.5-7). It seemed that in many schools the issues of home-school cooperation was not discussed during formal or informal communication between SSWs/SGOs/SGTs and the school personnel.

4.5 Parent

About 20-30% of the parents in primary schools were perceived not taking care of their children's studies at all (EP10-12) and there was an even higher percentage of secondary school parents found behaving similarly (ES15-18). The SSW/SGO/SGT seemed to reflect similar situations (SW21.12). About 50% of the secondary school pupils pointed out that their parents did not have the time to come to school (ES74). About 30-50% of them regarded that their parents could not help them in solving their various problems (ES79, 81-84). The above-mentioned figures, which were quite different from those of setting E, would be worth attending to.

The majority of the parents in setting P and S never initiated contacts with schools through any means (G38-41). The contacts, if any, were mainly about the academic performance of pupils. Their difficulty in contacting the school seemed to be mainly on time scheduling. The reluctance of parents taking initiatives in contacting the school was also reflected by school personnel (H22.3, T20.3, SW22.3). This reluctance might be related to parents' "lack of time", as perceived by various parties (H17.2, T16.2, SW13.8, 15.2). It was noticed that there were considerably more parents "not invited" to school functions than parents' "not wishing to take part" in various functions (G68-77). The present relationship between schools and parents might well be described as "the pleasure of mutual ignorance". This pattern might be maintained or reinforced if neither of the parties "intervene", i.e. to take the initiative to contact.

Moreover, parents in settings SP, K, P and S tended to think that schools should have more responsibility in handling children's behaviour in schools (G80). The percentage of parents showing that schools should be totally or mainly responsible was shown as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>SP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of Parents</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the one hand, it might imply the schools in setting K, P, S & SP had more power in handling the behaviour problems of children in schools. On the other hand, it might mean that parents in these settings actually "delegated" more responsibility to schools and were less ready to involve themselves in concerned school matters.

An opposite trend was identified in a similar comparison in the school responsibility of teaching subject knowledge as follows (G79):
Setting | K | P | S | E | SP
---|---|---|---|---|---
% of Parents | 57 | 63 | 67 | 74 | 52

This pattern seemed to be consistent with the higher participation of the parents in other settings in reinforcing children’s learning at home than the parents in setting E (G83).

### 4.6 Pupil

Pupils are the "clients" in home-school cooperation. It was worth to note that the majority of the pupils in settings P and S disliked parents coming to schools or teachers and parents making contacts with each other (ES 75, 77, 78; EP23, 36). From both the survey and the focus study (Chapter 36), it was suggested that this attitude was probably originated from the negative and problem-oriented nature of the contacts. It was also shown that the reasons of contacts, especially in setting P and S, were often related to pupils’ academic or behavioural problems (T8; H13.1,2). A comparison of the "like" to "dislike" ratio of pupils about the teacher-parent contact is tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESF and International Schools</th>
<th>Local Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary schools</td>
<td>1 : 1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td>1 : 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was alarming to find the exceedingly high ratio for local primary school pupils in their dislike of teacher-parent contacts. This high ratio of like/dislike (1 : 4.7) in setting P was almost equivalent to that of setting S, i.e. 1 : 5.2. This phenomenon could not be explained by pupils’ "quest for independence" which could probably be one of the explanation for secondary school students. It appeared that these pupils in setting P & S would tend to block the communication between home and school to defend their own "interest".

The supporting system of the pupils in settings P and S was felt different from that of setting E. Secondary school pupils in setting E were more satisfied with their relationship with parents, teachers and peers/classmates, and also their conduct and activities in schools than their counterparts in setting S were (ES6, 8-13). Between settings, the differences in pupils’ dissatisfaction over academic performance were especially significant (ES11):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Setting E</th>
<th>Local Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>32% (Setting P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>67% (Setting S)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, the pupils in settings P and S, when compared to those in setting E, obtained relatively less help from parents and more help from their friends/classmates when they had problems. When they encountered relationship problems with their peers and classmates, pupils in setting S mainly obtained their help from their friends or classmates (ES53):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Secondary Students in Setting E</th>
<th>Students in Setting S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person offered most help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parent</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friends/classmates</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nobody</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This was a worrying situation, since most teenagers in setting S did not see parents or teachers as a source of support. It seemed that parents in setting S were not regarded as helpful as those in setting E. Besides, up to 40% of the pupils in setting S felt that nobody could help their other problems (ES48-61).

In summary, it appeared that the pupils in setting S and P might be subject to greater pressure and demands from teachers and parents and received less support from them. This might help in our understanding of pupils' suicide.

5. The Present System of Home-School Cooperation

5.1 Patterns of communication

Schools mainly used circulars and pupils' handbook to contact parents (H8, G12, 13). However, to some parents, especially those in secondary schools, these means were found not useful (G18, 19). Relatively less schools, especially those in setting P, issued publication for parents. This means was found useful to even less parents (G20), probably owing to the content of the publications as revealed in the focus study (Chapter 36) and the education level of the parents (G6). Other more popular contacts initiated by schools included "telephone contact", "inviting to interview at school" and "sending questionnaire". However, more than 50% of the parents said that they were never contacted via these means (G14, 16, 17). It appeared that those contacts made by schools only reached a few of the parents only. Another type of contact, home visit, was very rare (G15).

Contacts initiated by parents were more often in the form of telephone contact and pupils' handbook. There were more "face-to-face contacts" in setting K and setting P and more use of "making appointment" and "letters" in setting E (H12; G38-41). Yet, the majority of the parents in setting P and S had never contacted the school via any of the means mentioned above in the past year. On the other hand, the majority of teachers in settings P and S showed dissatisfaction over parents' initiatives (T20.3).

5.2 Activities for parents

At first glance, it appeared that schools organized quite a few activities for parents (H5). Yet, it was shown in the focus study that many of the activities were focused on parents of children of certain forms, e.g. P1, P6 and S1 (Chapter 36). The meetings were mainly concerned with the orientation for parents and the introduction to P1 and S1 admission. Half of the schools claimed that they organized some sort of parent education for parents. Social functions were less popular in settings K, P and S, but more popular in settings SP and E, indicating possibly closer teacher-parent relationship in these two settings.

From the perspective of parents, the percentages of parents showing that they were never invited to various types of meeting in the past year were as follows (G33-37):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of meeting</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>SP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>school meeting</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>form meeting</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class meeting</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interview</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appeared that the majority of the parents in setting P and S were never invited to any meeting besides individual interviews. A significant number of principals and teachers in settings P and S also showed dissatisfaction of the schools' efforts in this area (H22.8; T20.8). Schools' efforts in encouraging parents to attend meetings were to be desired. Further analysis showed that the meetings in all settings except those in setting E were mainly at the school level and form level (G33-35). Class-level liaison was comparatively unpopular.

### 5.3 Parents' assistance in schools

Parents' assistance in schools was popular only in setting E and least popular in settings P and S (H15, G68-70). In setting E, the majority of schools invited parents to assist in classrooms, school functions, extra-curricular activities and school operation. Yet, in settings P and S, very few schools had invited parents to assist in any area except in fund raising. Actually very few parents had helped schools in organizing various functions. Even in setting E, only less than 10% of the parents had assisted in the school.

Comparison between settings showed that when there were more parents attending school functions, there would be more assistance from parents (G68-70). It might suggest that to promote parents' assistance in schools, schools needed to attract parents to attend school functions first. It seemed that when more parents took interest in schools, further involvement of parents at higher levels could proceed more easily.

Further, it seemed that it was easier for schools in setting E, SP, K and P to invite parents to attend school functions than those in setting S. Least interest was shown in the parents in setting S in various levels of participation (G68-70, 73-75). Among schools in setting S, those taking in the pupils of Band 5 had the lowest attendance rate of parents in various meetings (H6). These schools apparently had to put in much more efforts to "motivate" parents to involve in school functions.

When asked if schools were satisfied with their efforts in inviting parents to assist in school functions, principals and teachers in setting S tended to be dissatisfied, with about 20% of them showing "not certain". Principals and teachers in other settings were generally satisfied, while the ones in setting E were very satisfied (H22.9; T20.9). Apparently there was potential for the improvement in inviting parents in settings SP, K, P and S, especially those in setting S to help.

### 5.4 Parents' assistance at home

Parents in settings SP, K, P and S played a stronger role in reminding their children to do homework than their counterparts in setting E. The percentage of parents indicating they always did that was shown as follows (G83):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>SP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of parent</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This indicated that homework supervision was regarded as more important by parents of settings SP, K and P. It seemed that parents in setting SP, K and P might be regarded as a different type of school partner, i.e. they reinforced their children’s learning at home instead of going into schools to help.

5.5 Consulting parents

In practice, schools in setting E consulted parents more than those in other settings. In the academic year 92/93, least consultation was found in setting S in most areas except in the setting up of a PTA (H9). While the principals and teachers in setting E were almost all satisfied with their efforts in consulting parents, their counterparts in setting S tended to be just fairly satisfied, with about 20% indicating "not certain". The personnel in setting S seemed to think that they should increase their consulting of parents in order to enhance home-school cooperation in their schools (H18.8; T17.8).

When asked if parents should be consulted on the major development and related operation of schools, the majority of the principals and teachers in settings K, P and S were on the negative side, while most of the school personnel in setting E were on the positive side (H20.8; T18.8). This pattern might be related to the fact that these school personnel in settings K, P and S regarded that their parents were less educated or that they were lacking understanding in educational matters (H17.3,5; T16.3,5). It appeared that if schools wished to secure more useful feedback from parents, they should first "enable" the parents.

5.6 The issue of the PTA

The majority of the schools in settings K, P and S neither had a PTA nor a PA established (H23.1,2). Half of the existing PTAs were only set up within two years (H23.4). It appeared that many of the PTA executives were not experienced and needed substantial support.

About half of the special schools had PTA/PA, with PAs more than PTAs. While in setting E, the majority of schools had PTA/PA, with considerably more PTAs than the PAs. The relatively more PTAs/PAs in setting SP than the other local schools was consistent with the belief that parents needed much support from other parents in the upbringing of children with special needs.

The purposes of setting up a PTA as considered by supervisors, principals and teachers were to improve the communication and relationship between parents and schools (H24.5-7; T22.5-7; M32a,c). Quite a few of the school personnel disagreed that the PTA should help in formulating school policies (H24.10; T22.10) and supervisors tended to disagree that the PTA should monitor the work of the school (M32f). Yet, principals and teachers agreed that the PTA could be used to collect and reflect parents’ opinions to schools (H24.7, T22.7).
The setting up of PTA seemed to be getting some support from supervisors, principals and teachers (H25.4–6; T23.4–6). Yet, at present, the majority of the schools seemed to adopt a "wait and see" attitude towards the setting up of PTA (H23.6).

There were some worries among school personnel, especially among supervisors, over the possibility of the PTA interfering with the school administration (M34a) and infringing the professional autonomy of teachers (H25.9; T23.9). Yet, it was found in the focus study (Chapter 35) that most existing PTAs had lived peacefully with schools.

When asked what was most needed to enhance home-school cooperation, the setting up of PTA was not listed among the top priorities. Perhaps schools considered that they had other areas to improve and were worried about increasing the teacher's workload (H18; T17, T25.1).

The major difficulties in setting up the PTA perceived by principals and teachers, were very similar to the ones for enhancing home-school cooperation, i.e. teachers' workload, teachers' lack of skills, parents' lack of interest, time, and the understanding in educational issues (H25; T23, 25.1, 25.5).

Parents' interest in joining the PTA was not great. Only about half of them would like to join the PTA as members. Less than 10% of parents were willing to serve as PTA executives in various settings except E. One-third of the parents in settings K, P and S were not certain if their schools had PTAs (G128, 131).

On the other hand, more than one-third of the teachers were willing to serve as PTA executives and about half of them were uncertain about their willingness, possibly suggesting they were uncertain of the nature of the job (T24).

School social workers and student guidance teachers were shown to be more ready to take part in discussing matters related to the PTA than to take up actual responsibilities in the PTA (SW26–27). This was probably related to their time constraints (SW13.3).

Concerning the effectiveness of the existing PTA, about two-third of the PTAs were considered to be fairly successful by the principals in promoting home-school cooperation (H23.5). About 90% of the principals in setting E thought that their PTAs were either very successful or fairly successful in promoting home-school cooperation. However, this group in setting E, who should have more experience in running the PTA, tended to disagree that the PTA was the most effective way to enhance home-school cooperation (H20.4). Their views were opposite to the ones adopted by the principals in other settings. It seemed that many principals in other settings, who had little experience in the PTA, might have too high an expectation of the effectiveness of the PTA, possibly owing to the publicity of the PTA undertaken by the Government.

In the focus study on the PTA (Chapters 35, 36), the present PTAs were found not quite possible to address the primary concerns of parents, i.e. the academic and behavioural problems of pupils. Further, some existing PTAs were not active and might be lacking the support from teachers and parents. It seemed that the development of the PTA should be towards providing more parent education, catering for the parents' concerns about the
academic and behavioural problems of children, providing parents' network to support each other and facilitating interactions between parents and between teachers and parents, preferably in small groups.

5.7 Parents as managers

The majority of the principals and teachers in setting E agreed that parents should be represented in the school management committee (SMC) (H20.9; T18.9). However, there was significant reservation shown in the attitudes of school personnel in all other settings, especially in settings K and P. It was interesting to find that teachers in setting S were more positive than their counterparts in settings SP, K and P. It was noticed that a significant percentage of the principals and teachers in other settings were "not certain" whether parents should serve as managers, indicating possibly that they did not know enough about its implication.

Marked contrast was also shown in the supervisors' views on parents' serving as managers. The percentage of supervisors showing "it should and can be done" was shown as follows (M35):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>SP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of Supervisor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The "reluctant" attitudes of the supervisors in involving parents as managers in the four settings might be partly explained by the fact that about half of the supervisors did not agree that it would improve the quality of the school (M36a).

When principals and teachers in settings SP, K, P and S were asked what was most needed to be done by schools to enhance home-school cooperation, "to include parents in the SMC" was considered to have the lowest priority among the 11 areas listed. The majority of the respondents regarded there was no need for such inclusion.

Apparently, the schools, other than those in setting E, were not ready to invite parents to serve in the SMC yet. School personnel indicated that they had a lot of areas in home-school cooperation that schools should put their efforts in and were ready to work on (H18; T17). It was worth noting that the attitude of school personnel was still conservative, despite that the SMI had been implemented for almost 3 years since 1991.

Concerning the views of parents, only one-third of the parents in settings SP, K, P and S thought that there should be parent representatives in the SMC, while about half of the parents were "not certain" (G133). Moreover, only less than 10% of the parents in settings SP, K, P and S expressed that they wished to have a say or monitor the selected school operations (G124-7).

' It was worth noting that nearly 70% of the parent respondents in settings SP, K, P and S were not certain if their schools had a SMC (G132). It appeared that one of the most urgent tasks of the school was not "to invite parents to sit in the SMC", but rather to well inform parents about its basic operation. It seemed that schools should well inform parents first and invite them to discuss school matters, before asking them to make decisions on and to monitor the school work in the SMC.
In the focus study (Chapter 36), whether a parent representative could represent other parents in the SMC was challenged by school managers. This might be justified since most schools did not have a PTA yet, not to mention a developed PTA. If parent managers could not to some extent represent other parents, their influence or input in the SMC would be very minimal and their presence might only had a symbolic meaning.

5.8 Parent education

It was shown by school personnel that the majority of parents were lacking understanding in educational matters (T16.5, H17.5, SW15.4), lacking confidence to participate (H17.7, T16.7, SW15.6), not being able to see the importance of home-school cooperation (H17.6, T16.6, SW15.5), and also lacking the knowledge and skills in parenting (H17.4, T16.4).

From the focus study on parent education, it appeared that parent education programmes provided by those schools were effective and overwhelmingly well received by their parents (Chapter 37). It was also found that teachers had benefitted from participating in such kind of programmes. At the time of the survey, a large proportion of principals and teachers did not see it as their responsibility to provide parent education to parents (H20.5, T18.5). This disagreement seemed to have something to do with the perceived workload of teachers. It was found that among various settings, the higher the workload perceived, the less school personnel believed that they should promote parent education (H16.4, T15.4). If parent education was to be provided by schools, it seemed that external resources have to be sought. As discussed in the focus study (Chapter 36), resources from voluntary agencies, especially those in the local community, could be sought. It appeared that both the resources of parents and social workers from other agencies could be further explored (H19). From the focus study, teachers were shown to be the right persons to take part in the parent education programme, provided that their workload could be significantly reduced. If the school made an effort to offer this programme, it would probably not only enable the parents in parenting, but also provide a supporting network for the parents and establish good school-parent relationship.

5.9 Teacher training

A considerable portion of teachers, especially those inexperienced teachers, indicated that they were not confident when dealing with parents in various matters (T13). A proportion of teachers showed that they felt tense, frustrating and helpless in dealing with parents (T9). Some of their interviews with parents were actually not effective (T12). The level of confidence, good feelings and effectiveness in interviews seemed to be decreasing from setting K to setting S. This trend was consistent with the declining teacher-parent relationship from setting K to S (T5.6) and the decreasing frequency of teacher-parent contacts from setting K to S (T6). Together with the findings from the teachers’ interviews conducted in the focus study (Chapter 36), it appeared that teachers had improved their confidence and skills in working with parents upon increasing contacts. “Learning by doing” seemed to be able to serve as a motto for teachers’ working with parents (T14.6).

The majority of principals and teachers agreed that teachers were lack of skills and training in promoting home-school cooperation (H16.3, T15.3, 25.5). Providing training to teachers was one of their major recommendations in the 11 areas provided (H18.2, T17.2). A very
high percentage of teachers considered that they should acquire the skills from pre-service, in-service and school-based training (T14.1.3).

Concerning the running of the PTA, the majority of teachers in setting K, P, S and SP agreed that their worry was "not being well trained for the assignment". Yet, in setting E in which half of the school had the PTA, only 30% of teachers had such worry. From the focus study, teachers strongly wished to learn from others' experience in PTA. It seemed that more discussion and sharing of experiences between PTA executives should be facilitated by concerned bodies.

5.10 Training of social worker and student guidance teacher

Nearly half of the SSW/SGO/SGT either disagreed or were not certain that home-school cooperation was part of their professional training (SW21.1). This might be an area worth further looking into by relevant body on such training.

5.11 Teachers' workload

Teachers' workload was generally perceived by all school personnel as the most serious difficulty in enhancing home-school cooperation (SW17.6; M27d; H16.4; T 15.4; H 25.7; T 23.7, 25.1). This feeling seemed to be strongest in setting S, strong in setting P, followed by setting K and SP and least strong in setting E. On the one hand, this trend seemed to be consistent with the percentage of teachers regarding that enhancing home-school cooperation was beyond their normal duties (T15.5). On the other hand, it seemed that teachers' workload was also perceived by the SSW and the SGO/SGT as the most serious difficulty in enhancing home-school cooperation (SW17.6). When principals and teachers were asked what was most needed to be done to enhance home-school cooperation, "reducing teachers' workload" came up distinctively to the top of the list among the 11 areas (H18, T17). Besides, the strong feeling of heavy workload was expressed throughout the focus group discussions organized for secondary school teachers.

It was suggested that a part of the perceptions of teachers' workload might be related to the mismatch of time between parents and teachers (H16.6, T15.6), since teachers might need to work beyond their school hours in order to contact parents. Teachers' workload might explain, to some extent, their reluctance to organize or join parents' activities (Chapter 36) and their lack of understanding of pupils' problems (ES89, 90). In summary, it seemed that further enhancement of home-school cooperation would depend critically on the availability of teachers.

5.12 Resources

The majority of the principals in settings K and P agreed that the lack of space/facilities and the lack of financial support were also the major difficulties in enhancing home-school cooperation (H16.8,9). The lack of space/facilities did not appear to be as serious a problem in settings SP and S as it was in settings K and P. The shortage of space was a more serious problem to the teachers than the principal (T15.8), since teachers might be lacking rooms to interview parents in private.
5.13 Programmes of home-school cooperation

In the focus study (Chapter 36), 28 kinds of practices of home-school cooperation were identified and discussed. These practices could serve a very broad range of purposes as follows (Section 36.3.2):

1. communication of information,
2. discussing problems of individual children,
3. involving parents in their children's learning,
4. helping with the running of the school,
5. developing interest in and understanding of the school,
6. providing opportunities for parents' own education and development,
7. enlisting parents' views in decision making policy making, and
8. active involvement with, and support for, family and community life.

It appeared that all the 28 means of communication and links were potentially useful. Whether they were effective or could serve certain purposes really depended on how they were run and implemented. However, some activities appeared to be able to serve more purposes. For example, class-level liaison, organizing a carnival or a parent-child activity day. When planning activities for parents, it seemed that parents' abilities and interests should be carefully considered. Parents' active participation should be stressed and their contribution valued and acknowledged. It was also found important to give parents feedback on their opinions and suggestions.

It seemed that many parents were hard pressed by the busy working life of Hong Kong. Some parents were lack of communication and happy experiences with their children. Recreational activities seemed to suit the needs of at least some of the families and at the same time create opportunities for teachers and parents to meet each other in a positive atmosphere.

To enhance home-school cooperation, it seemed that the cooperation in pupils' learning programme in subject areas or family life education as practiced in some schools could be further explored. On the one hand, this type of cooperation is linked directly to pupils' learning. On the other hand, it can occur more frequently and may have greater impact on the parties concerned.

Parents seemed to have gained a lot in being involved in schools. It appeared that through activities, parents' interest in education and their senses of efficacy and responsibility could be enhanced. Parallel to the assistance given to schools, parents were found to understand more about the school, make more friends, improve their parent-child relationship and self esteem, and achieve personal growth as a whole.

It appeared that the school could serve as a facilitator in supporting the parents in their growth, based on the favourable parents' experience in parents' groups and parent education programme (Chapters 36, 37). Though the school had to allocate some resources to educate the parents, these efforts may in turn benefit the school, the teachers and the learning outcome of pupils as a whole.
Every school seemed to have its own climate, culture, parents' background, different needs in home-school cooperation and different degrees of readiness for various home-school links. There seemed to be no single recommendation of the type of activities that they should go for. However, to secure the continued support from teachers and parents, it appeared that it was important to create early success. For some schools, starting from the lower levels of parents' involvement may be more easily achieved at the beginning. These activities may include better informing the parents about the school and about their children, encouraging parents to attend school functions and publishing newsletters for parents. For some schools, the school personnel may be ready to invite parents to assist in school operation, to seek parents' advice on school policies or to set up a Parents-Teachers' Association. In the interviews, it was perceived that schools with a genuine cooperation at the higher levels always had good practices already at the low levels of parents' participation.

When developing home-school cooperation in a school, it was suggested to look at the impact of the current home-school programme as a whole, identify areas that are well-developed, as well as the gaps and weaknesses that need to be tackled. This exercise will help to set the direction and priorities of home-school work. Associations, about 200 semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews as well as six group discussions were conducted.
RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to the findings of the survey and focus studies, we would like to make the following recommendations. These recommendations would not be referred to specific settings, unless otherwise specified.

1. General Principles

In formulating the recommendations, the following principles are adopted by the research team. This set of principles serves as our basic assumptions and is believed to be useful in enhancing home-school cooperation in Hong Kong.

1.1 Home-school cooperation is important to the education outcome of children. Parental involvement is one of the key variables associated with school effectiveness. The more involved parents are with their children's schooling, the greater it seems are the chances of their children doing well (Munn, 1993). Plowden Report (1967) indicated that "the variation in parental encouragement and support has much greater effect than either the variation in home circumstances or the variation in schools" and therefore "education must be concerned with the whole family".

1.2 It was stated in the Charter for Youth (Commission on Youth, 1993) that "the family, as the primary care-giver for youth, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance for the fulfilment of such role". The school is one of the sites in the community to support the family in the upbringing of the younger generation. It should do what it can to increase the parents' interest and support towards the education of their children. The community should therefore help to maintain the functioning of family and to provide support to the school in involving parents in helping their children.

1.3 Home-school cooperation hinges on both parents and the school. Both have important roles to play to enhance home-school cooperation. However, the school should take the initiative to enhance home-school cooperation. Without the school's initiative, home-school cooperation would be very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

1.4 In a community with increasing concerns of civic rights and civic participation, it is desirable for the school to become more transparent and answerable to parents.

1.5 Parents are taking the main responsibility for the upbringing of their children. They should provide primary care and guidance to their children.

1.6 To fulfil their roles in educating the children, parents and teachers are responsible for improving their skills in working with each other whenever possible in order to provide quality education.
2. **Weaknesses and Positive Trends in the Present System**

A few weaknesses and positive trends were identified in the survey and focus studies. Inevitably, it involved some value judgements of the research team.

*Some Weaknesses*

2.1 **Inadequate communication between home and school**

The communication between home and school was mainly one-way and mainly through school circulars and handbook. The school played the informant's role and parents played the information receivers' role, passively awaiting to be informed or contacted. Meetings between school personnel and parents were infrequent in general. There were few direct contacts between teachers and parents in setting P and S. A significant portion of parents had never been contacted by the school or did not make contact with the school. Even under severe dissatisfaction, some parents did not or dared not forward their views to the school authority.

2.2 **Negative image of the teacher-parent contacts**

The limited contacts between individual teachers and parents are often problem-oriented. The majority of pupils, especially those in setting P and S, did not like teachers and parents to contact each other.

2.3 **Parents did not know enough about the school**

Many parents were not well informed about the school, its policies, operation, curriculum, expectations and difficulties. They were also regarded as lacking understanding in educational issues. On the one hand, many parents were not invited to attend school functions. On the other hand, many parents were neither interested in attending school functions nor taking part in school activities.

2.4 **Children's lack of support in non-academic aspects**

The majority of the children in settings P and S sought help from their peers or themselves in solving their social and emotional problems. It seemed that many children did not regard parents and teachers as helpful in their problem solving.

2.5 **Lack of parent policy in schools**

Most schools did not have a parent policy or an infra-structure to coordinate parents' matters in schools. Many a time principals, teachers and SSW/SGO/SGT were not certain of the views of the school towards issues concerning home-school cooperation. In many schools, parents' work has not been much discussed nor treated as having high priority.

2.6 **Heavy workload of teachers**

The workload of teachers, especially those in setting S, was perceived as the major difficulty in enhancing home-school cooperation by the school personnel. Teachers
seemed to be heavily engaged in other important and urgent business in schools and could not find the time to make more contacts with parents or involving in promoting home-school activities. The mismatch of time between parents and teachers seemed to have added extra burden to teachers who attempted to initiate the contacts.

Some Positive Trend

2.7 Parents’ emphasis on children’s academic work

Many parents seemed to care about the academic development of their children, regardless of the pupils’ actual academic attainment. They had indicated their willingness to participate in the academic development of the children.

2.8 Some innovative attempts of the teaching professionals

It was found in our focus studies that there were quite a few enthusiastic and innovative education professionals in the sampled schools. They were ready to review their practices and embark on new innovations for the benefit of pupils. It was found that recently the number of PTAs had increased significantly, many schools have been trying various ways to involve parents and that some good practices of home-school cooperation have emerged.

2.9 The need for parent education is generally recognized

Despite the limited contacts between home and school, parent education had always been a main theme in parents’ meetings. To equip the parents, many schools organized talks on parenting and some schools initiated a systematic parent education programme. These programmes were generally quite well received by parents. It seemed that the importance of parent education was generally recognized.

3. Suggestions to Schools

The present family structure in Hong Kong is subjected to the great impact of the rapidly changing society and that the parents need the support of the community, including the school teachers. Schools are in a very advantageous position to reach and support parents. Schools can also meet the multiple needs of parents through parent education programme.

3.1 To develop a climate conducive to home-school cooperation

A school climate conducive to home-school cooperation should be developed. The importance of home-school cooperation needs to be made known in school. Guidance for home-school cooperation and its development for teachers, parents and pupils would be needed.

3.2 To provide effective channels of communication

To increase the cooperation and understandings between schools and parents, it is advisable for schools to check whether the existing channels are effective and whether
parents are aware of these channels. Contacts and dialogues between parents and teachers should be encouraged and feedback from parents have to be dealt with properly.

3.3 To help parents to understand and take interest in the school

More information about school policies and operation should be given to the parents. The school needs to acquaint parents with its curriculum and the new development in the education system as parents felt the need to be informed about educational matters. The school may also want to communicate to parents some of its difficulties and limitations so that parents may adjust their expectations and to render their support.

3.4 To make the school an attractive place

A more open and attractive school environment is desirable. Parents should be encouraged to visit the school and attend the school functions. To encourage parents to come to the school, appreciation should be shown to parents and their children whenever possible. In all interviews related to children’s problems, parents’ self-esteem should be maintained, if not possible to enhance.

3.5 To review its present practices in home-school cooperation

Existing practices and programmes of home-school cooperation should be reviewed. The areas that are well developed, as well as the gaps and weaknesses that need to be improved should be identified.

3.6 To develop a parent policy and set up an infra-structure

A parent policy to steer its home-school cooperation towards the intended direction could be useful. A whole-school and cross-curriculum approach to home-school cooperation may be worth to be considered. An infra-structure could be set up to develop, implement, monitor and review the policy. The infra-structure may be a home-school cooperation committee headed by the principal, assistant principal or a senior teacher. The committee may keep a parents’ profile to enable the school to identify parents’ needs and to secure parents’ assistance if applicable.

3.7 To embark on staff development programme

The quality of home-school cooperation hinges on teachers. Staff development programmes for teachers in working with parents are needed. Both external training, school-based training and the exchange of experiences between schools and within schools should be encouraged.

3.8 To secure the assistance from the community

In running the home-school programme, the assistance of the SSWs/SGOs/SGTs and the external support, especially those from the voluntary agencies in the ‘local community, may be solicited. The resources of parents and pupils in school can also be utilized.
3.9 To consider parents' interest, parents' time and the purposes of the programme in planning

When planning activities for parents, it is advisable to consider parents' interest. Different parents may have different needs and preferences. Different programmes may be required to reach different parents and engage their interest. While some parents may enjoy reading school publications, other parents may prefer direct contacts or taking part in social functions.

It is preferable if the activities can serve multiple purposes and all parties including parents, teacher and even pupils, can learn in the process. Activities studied in Chapters 36 and 37 might give some insights.

Further, to encourage parents' participation, it is necessary to arrange activities at a time most suitable to parents. Teachers' participation in the occasion should then be encouraged and facilitated by various proper means. The school is advised to organize programmes to address parents' concern, i.e. the learning and behavioral problems of children. These programmes may include the following (see Chapter 36 for details):

a. parent education programmes
b. class-level liaison for parents
c. systematic telephone interview
d. parent-child activities
e. devising or adopting some behavioral and learning programmes which involve parents in the education process of children

3.10 To organize meetings for a small group of parents

Meetings for small groups of parents of the same class or the same level should be developed. Parents can learn from each other and they are very keen to find out how parents of their children's peers deal with different problems so that they can gain insights from them. This sharing of experience is especially useful and relevant for parents who come from the same school. In addition, teachers taking part in these meetings should be able to learn from the parents' experiences and collect useful feedback for the improvement of teaching.

3.11 To set up a parents' network

In addition, it would be useful for the school/the class teacher to build up a network for parents so that a lot of the problems related to children's development can be solved through mutual helping without involving the school personnel. The school can also make use of the network as an efficient communication tool and a source to gather parents' opinions.
4. Anticipated Changes: All Actors

We understand that many teaching professionals and parents have been providing a good service for the young generation. Suggestions on home-school cooperation would probably add more "burden" to the lives of various actors in the scene. Yet, we believe that it may be worth the efforts to have further advancement in this important and strategic area in improving children's learning and growth. Perhaps the task of home-school cooperation will be better accomplished via rearranging the priority of work, equipping and developing oneself in the concerned areas and securing the support from the Government and the community.

With reference to the findings in the survey and insights from the focus studies, we attempt to make the following suggestions to the various "actors" in home-school corporation.

*The Supervisor/School Managers*

4.1 It is desirable for the school to have a policy for parents.

4.2 School managers should be involved in the formulation of policies concerning parents. It would be beneficial if they can show more interest in parents' matter and meet parents sometimes.

4.3 Effective channels of communication with parents should be available in schools.

4.4 Support should be given towards staff initiatives in home-school cooperation.

*The Principal*

4.5 A parent policy to increase the contacts with parents should be formulated in the school, together with teachers and the parties concerned.

4.6 It would be beneficial if the principal could review the effectiveness of current channels of communication between parents and the school, together with the teachers concerned, to release more school information to parents, to undertake more consultation with parents and also set up channels to receive complaints from parents. Such a review might bring about innovative ways for staffs to involve parents.

4.7 It would be useful for the principal to bridge differences, to facilitate the contacts and to exchange of views between teachers and parents. Teachers should be encouraged by various means to attend parents' meetings. Increasing the contacts between parents and teachers can certainly help to improve mutual understandings, reduce the possible conflicts and the mismatch of expectations and to develop shared objectives for educating children.

4.8 Contacts of a more positive nature between teachers and parents should be encouraged. Teachers should be encouraged to provide parents with more positive feedback about their children, more about their all-round development and not only on pupils' academic and behavioral problems.
4.9 Support should be given to the staff to explore various innovations to involve parents in the learning process of children.

4.10 Class-level liaison should be encouraged in schools, in addition to the mass meetings for parents. It would be useful for class teachers to inform parents of the progress of their children in groups and discuss with parents matters related to the children’s learning and behaviour.

4.11 A redeployment of physical and human resources to meet the job requirements of new ventures in home-school cooperation might be necessary.

4.12 The SSWs/SGOs/SGTs should have sufficient space in school for their working with pupils and parents. He/She may facilitate the exchange of views between the SSWs/SGOs/SGTs and teachers so that teachers can understand parents better.

The Teacher

4.13 The significance of involving parents in the education process of pupils had to be recognized by the teachers. At present, there was some mismatch of expectations between parents and school, and some teachers do not seem to treasure parents’ opinions. To enhance home-school cooperation, teachers need to be ready for a change in their attitude towards parents -- to regard parents as their "partners" in the education process of children. On the one hand, they might need to place specific emphasis on enabling parents. On the other hand, they should be ready to negotiate with parents.

4.14 There is a need for teachers to continuously upgrade their skills in working with parents. They should attempt to be more sensitive towards parents' feelings and to listen to parents. This may encourage parents to forward their opinions to schools and reduce the possible conflicts. Further, teachers can share information with parents about the development of individual children to enhance their mutual understanding of the children concerned.

4.15 At present, few pupils in setting P and S seek help from teachers. It is important for teachers to gain their trust and to attempt to understand their personal problems and family backgrounds better.

4.16 Positive messages to the pupils and their parents might make teacher-parent and teacher-pupil contacts welcoming and constructive. Pupils can then become a supporter rather than a "barrier" in home-school cooperation.

4.17 At present, ordinary pupils seem to receive less attention as teachers often focus on "problem" pupils. It would be desirable if teachers can make contacts with parents of the majority of ordinary pupils as well as those with difficulties.

4.18 In view of the workload of teachers, it is desirable for teachers to consider whether in making more contacts with parents might have more positive outcome on the learning of their students. The school should give support to this rearrangement of priority.
4.19 It is desirable for teachers to work closely with and increase the dialogue with the SSWs/SGOs/SGTs in handling the problems related to pupils' family.

**The School Social Workers/The Student Guidance Officers/The Student Guidance Teachers**

4.20 There is a need to fully utilize the expertise of the SSWs/SGOs/SGTs and their limited time available in schools. The SSW/SGO/SGT may serve as the parent educator and the resource person of the school. It would be useful if he/she draw resources into the school from their own agency and the voluntary agencies in the local community. He/She can also play an advisory role in the setting up and running of the PTA if necessary.

**The Parent**

4.21 Parents need to realize the difficulty of the teachers not to be able to allocate enough time to take care of every aspect of the development of individual pupils. They should share considerable responsibility in the all-round development of their children.

4.22 Parents should try to improve their parenting skills so that they can look after their children effectively. Whenever possible, parents should make themselves more available to their children and provide greater care and guidance to them.

4.23 Parents should not overlook the importance of appreciating their children when it is appropriate and should try to maintain a good relationship with them, so that their children would approach them in times of difficulties. Parents as "helpers" is a resource seldom used by children. Parents may want to explore the possibilities to enhance their helpfulness to their children.

4.24 It would be helpful if parents could try to take initiative to contact the school concerning the development of their children and make their views known to the school personnel through appropriate channels.

4.25 As school circulars and school publications are considered as important channels of communication between parents and school, parents might need to pay more attention to these contacts.

4.26 Parents might need to review their role in participating in school activities. Perhaps, they should give greater interest to school activities and respond more often to school invitations.

4.27 Parents have resources and talent to contribute to the betterment of school and the students. Whenever possible, it is desirable for them to render their assistance towards the school.

4.28 The majority of parents were satisfied with the relationship with class teachers. It might be encouraging to teachers if parent can show such appreciation.
4.29 Parents in the same school can try to establish close relationship with each other so that they can share relevant experiences and support one another in rearing their children.

The Pupil

4.30 Pupils in settings P and S should be helped to appreciate the support that parents and teachers could offer in dealing with their various problems. They should make their difficulties known to the adults around them.

5. The Issues of "the PTA" and "the Parent as Manager"

5.1 While the promotion of the PTA is well intended by the Government, it is not recommended, at least at this stage, that all schools should set up the PTA. Schools have different cultures and parents' background. Some teachers and parents therein may not be ready for setting up the PTA yet.

5.2 Schools are advised to identify their major concern and needs in home-school cooperation and to examine whether the setting up of the PTA will be most effective in addressing these needs. Schools need to consider whether their substantial efforts spent on parents' matters should be restricted to the setting up and running of the PTA.

5.3 Based on the experiences of the existing PTAs, schools need not be too worried about the intervention of the PTA in school matters. Findings from focus study show that intervention has been very rare. However, it is essential that schools have sound management and effective teaching at all times.

5.4 Training should be provided to teacher and parent executives of PTA, with the assistance of experts and experienced PTA executives.

5.5 Besides organizing social and recreational functions, the PTA could address the parents' concern of the learning and behavioral problems of children. It is desirable for PTA to provide parenting programme, to facilitate the exchange of views and experience between parents, and between teachers and parents. It could identify meaningful joint venture for teachers and parents to work together.

5.6 At present, schools are not prepared to invite parents to serve in the school management committee and parents do not seem to be ready and interested either. To include parents as school managers in most schools now might not be appropriate.

5.7 Instead of stressing the managerial role of parents, the partnership between schools and parents and the mutual accountability between schools and parents should be emphasized. The role of parents as educators in the home setting should be stressed upon, encouraged and well supported.
6. **Some Implications**

6.1 **To add manpower to the school**

To enhance the home-school cooperation, the teachers' workload problem, especially that in setting S, has to be looked into. The teaching period of teachers may need to be reduced, to allow teachers to have more contacts with individual pupils and their parents. Additional clerical support may be needed to assist teachers to carry out non-teaching duties and in their working with parents.

6.2 **To provide additional support to schools accepting academically low achievers**

More support should be given to those secondary schools accepting academically low achievers since these schools had greater difficulty in making contact with parents. Parents in these schools also need more support from the school in helping their children.

6.3 **To provide teacher training**

Both appropriate pre-service and in-service teachers' training can equip teachers for working with parents. The exchange of experience between schools in home-school cooperation and in the setting up of the PTA should also be facilitated. We suggest further research to examine whether existing teacher training programmes would need to be modified to incorporate the concepts of parental involvement and the skills of working with parents.

6.4 **To provide parent education**

Resources in the social service for children, youth and families should be channelled and/or provided to schools to organize parent education programmes for parents concerned. Since developmental needs of children vary across settings, different parent education programmes should be provided throughout the kindergarten, primary and secondary settings and as early as possible to enhance the parents' efficacy and competence in parenting so that parents can become a better support of their children.

6.5 **To develop curricula which incorporate parents in the learning process**

There is a need, when designing or revising curriculum, to involve parents in the learning process of pupils when appropriate. It seems that the "home-school cooperative approach" in learning may occur in various subjects and in the personal and social education programme. Parent education can also be incorporated into the existing curriculum for personal and social education or moral education to equip the children to face the challenge of parenthood in the future.

6.6 **To develop a policy on home-school cooperation**

There is a need of a central policy on home-school cooperation in Hong Kong, with specific reference to the recommended role of schools and parents in the education
process of the children and on the provision of parent education and teacher training. Such formulation would facilitate schools to formulate their own parent policies.

6.7 To facilitate the change

a) The advantages and strategies of home-school cooperation should be publicized in order to motivate and to increase the confidence of teachers and parents in their cooperation. The direct service for children, youth and families provided by Government departments and the community should be publicized for parents and teachers information.

b) The resources for supporting schools and homes need to be coordinated and used effectively in the areas of parent education and teacher training.

c) Having a central unit would be helpful in the planning, coordinating, monitoring and constantly reviewing the promotion of home-school cooperation in the region and to secure required resources to support the school to implement concerned programmes. Existing social services for children, youth and families could be brought into the school to provide expertise in facilitation of parent education.

d) Since mismatch of time between teachers and parents is one of the most serious concern of teachers and parents, schools should be given guidance and encouraged to devise creative solutions to overcome this difficulty.

e) In the future school design, consideration should be given to the space needed for home-school activities. Providing room(s) for the purpose of interviewing parents was suggested by school personnel in the focus studies. For existing schools, the possibility of creating extra spaces and rooms should be examined.

f) The problem of parents’ lack of time could be reduced if they were given more support by their employers to attend school interviews and functions.

7. Future Research

7.1 It should be emphasized that the amount of data collected is enormous. Because of the large sample sizes, very detailed data analysis could be carried out and a lot of information would be able to be explored. The analysis would not be only providing information on home-school cooperation at the time of the survey but also providing a very extensive reference basis for future related studies.

7.2 Many other areas worth investigating have also been pointed out in this chapter.