

# 1. Introduction

- In the late 1990s, the Hong Kong Government already started to advance home-school cooperation and established the Committee on Home-School Cooperation in 1993. According to information provided by the Committee, about 223 schools had parent-teacher associations in 1993. The number of schools having parent-teacher associations rose to 1395 in 2002/03. Among different types of schools, 87% of secondary schools, 89% of primary schools, 25% of kindergartens, and 90% of special schools already have parent-teacher associations. Although the number of parent-teacher associations is increasing continuously, there has not been any study directly focusing on the effectiveness of parent-teacher associations until 2001. In order to enhance teaching quality and strengthen home-school cooperation, the present study not only analyzes the present functions and effectiveness of parental organizations, but also explores for effective good practice. The findings are for the reference of parental organizations<sup>1</sup> of different types of schools so that they can improve their work and step up their development on home-school cooperation in the future.

## 2. Objectives of the study

- The Department of Applied Social Studies of the City University of Hong Kong was commissioned by the Committee on Home-School Cooperation to carry out the present study. The objectives are to conduct analysis based on the following seven areas:
  1. The present situation of parental organizations.
  2. The appraisals and expectations of relevant personnel (relevant policy-makers, school managers, principals, teachers, discipline teachers, counseling masters, social workers, parents and students) on parental organizations.
  3. The roles and functions of parental organizations.
  4. The effectiveness of parental organizations.
  5. The good practice of parental organizations.
  6. The opinions of relevant policy-makers.
  7. The suggestions on improving and developing parental organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> Since parental organizations, which participated in the present study, were mainly parent-teacher associations, parental organizations that mentioned in the study were parent-teacher associations.

### **3. Process of the study**

- The present study collected data from May 2001 to June 2002. The information gathered was mainly from (1) a large-scale questionnaire survey, (2) focus group discussion before and after the questionnaire survey, and (3) individual interviews with relevant policy-makers.
  
- The collection of data was divided into six stages:
  1. From May to June 2001, secondary schools, primary schools, kindergartens and special schools in Hong Kong, which have parental organizations, were sampled. School personnel, parents and students were invited to participate in focus group discussion. Twenty-five focus groups were conducted and 107 people provided their opinions.
  2. Primary questionnaires were dispatched to all parental organizations of secondary schools, primary schools, kindergartens and special schools in Hong Kong between July and August 2001. A total of 563 organizations responded. The design of structured questionnaires drew on information collected from focus group discussion and other sources. Sample surveys targeted secondary schools, primary schools, kindergartens, and special schools that had parental organizations.
  3. Questionnaire surveys were conducted between February and July 2002. A total of 208 schools and its parental organizations participated in the survey. A total of 38,166 individual parents, students and school-related personnel participated in the survey, 30% more than the original plan (29,400 people).
  4. Telephone interviews were conducted with 1,086 parents whose children were studying at schools without parental organizations and towards their children (563 children) who were studying at secondary and primary schools between April and May 2002.
  5. Individual interviews with seven relevant policy-makers and executives were conducted between March and May 2002.
  6. A total of 13 post-study focus groups were conducted in June 2002. A total of 85 parents and teaching staff whose parental organizations had more activities were chosen to participate in the groups and provide their opinions.

## 4. Results of the study

- The following sections (4.1 to 4.5) report the results collected by the research team based on the analysis of the first five areas stated in the above objectives of the study. Section 4.6 chiefly outlines policy-related personnel's opinions.

### 4.1. Present situation of parental organizations

- The present study collected copies of the constitutions of 563 parental organizations to conduct qualitative analysis. It appeared that most of the parental organizations registered in the form of association (79.9%). In addition, a considerable number registered as affiliations with schools (17.8%). Only a small number registered in the name of companies (2.3%). Most chairpersons were parents (97.5%). Parent members mostly participated on voluntary basis (60.0%). On average, the year of establishment of parental organizations was 6.3 years, as at July 2001. Parental organizations predominantly appeared in the name of parent-teacher associations (98.2%). Only a very small number was parental associations (1.8%) and nearly half of them were members of regional federations of parent-teacher associations (43.4%).
- Based on the constitutions of parental organizations, the most common objective of parental organizations was to enhance and strengthen home-school contact (89.7%); the next was to upgrade students' well-being (65.2%), more than half (54.5%) set both as their objectives. Parental organizations could be categorized into two types in accordance with these objectives: (1) parental organizations, which specially put emphasis on students' development and (2) parental organizations, which put emphasis on organization's functions. The former emphasized students' health and study and parents' sense of belonging to the school whereas the latter emphasized education effectiveness and school resources.
- The data from the questionnaire survey illustrated that activities organized by parental organizations were diverse. In 2000, the most common and solely organized activity was parental meetings (including regular meetings and annual meetings) (on average 4.43 times each year). The next was distribution of publications or news dispatches (3.53 times on average), followed by reading club/parent-child reading activity (2.55 times on average). Position taking,

Parental talks/training were also the common activities organized by parental organizations (2.50 times on average).

- For home-school cooperation, the most frequent and solely organized activity by schools was arranging communication between parents and teachers (11.94 times on average). The next was organizing individual or group counseling (4.70 times on average) and different kinds of training courses (4.34 times on average), followed by arranging parents to participate in class activities or to observe lessons (3.34 times on average). Comparison of these activities shows that the natures of the activities of parental organizations and schools were different. This shows that the roles and functions of parental organizations did not overlap with schools.
- The study revealed that there was much cooperation between parental organizations and schools in organizing activities. However, there was little cooperation in reconciling conflicts, joining community activities, and contacting regional federations of parental organizations. Generally, parental organizations did not resist the intervention of schools into their administration. Their relationship with schools was harmonious and free of conflict. Overall, the progress of the establishment of parental organizations was good. Nevertheless, regarding parents' participation in education, it could only achieve the efficacy for enhancing home-school communication, widening parents' participation, assisting in providing part of the educational services, and so on. Parents' participation in school management still needs further development.

## 4.2. Parents, students and school-related personnel' appraisals and expectations on parental organizations

- This section shows the comprehensive analysis of the appraisals and expectations of parents, students and school-related personnel on parental organizations based on the questionnaire survey. The study suggested that parents, students, and school-related personnel's appraisals and expectations were inconsistent. Among different types of schools, their responses were obviously different.

## 4.2.1. Appraisals on parental organizations

### 4.2.1.1. Parents

- Parents of kindergartens and special schools generally thought that parental organizations could achieve their objectives. The most achievable objective was establishing affable relationship with schools. The next was contacting or communicating with schools and discussing mutually concerned issues. Nevertheless, parents' appraisals of secondary and primary schools on parental organizations' achievement of objectives were generally not too high.
  
- Parents' satisfaction with the performance of parental organizations generally lay at "a bit satisfied" level. They were most satisfied with promotion of their children's healthy physical and mental development. The next was promotion of their children's academic development of, amplification of parents' potential in assisting the implementation of school policies and the improvement of school facilities and promotion of affable parent-teacher relationship. Compared with the parents of secondary and primary schools, parents of special schools and kindergartens indicated that they were more satisfied with the performance of parental organizations.
  
- Overall, parents' appraisals of parental organizations lay at an average level. The study data demonstrated that the following three reasons could help explain the above phenomenon:
  1. The establishment period of parental organizations was still short (6.3 years on average). Many parental organizations were at the beginning stage. They required time to explore and improve their work.
  2. Expectations and appraisals were subjective feelings. Generally, some parents might not realize the differential effectiveness of parental organizations.
  3. The effectiveness amplified by parental organizations could not specifically manifest within a short period.

### 4.2.1.2. School-related personnel

- School-related personnel's satisfaction with the performance of parental organizations lay on average at "a bit satisfied" level. They were most satisfied with the performance of parental organizations in promoting affable parent-teacher relationship. The next was promotion of students' healthy physical and mental development, amplification of parents' potential in assisting the

implementation of school policies and the improvement of school facilities and promotion of students' academic development. School-related personnel of special schools and kindergartens were more satisfied with the performance of parental organizations. Conversely, school-related personnel of secondary and primary schools were less satisfied with parental organizations.

#### 4.2.1.3. Students

- The study showed that students generally considered that the assistance offered by parental organizations was less than that of parents and school-related personnel. However, the appraisals of students among different types of schools on parental organizations were different. Normally, students of special schools thought that parental organizations helped them a lot. Primary school students thought that there was more assistance than did secondary school students. Researchers believe that this phenomenon was understandable. It seems that because students were indirect beneficiaries of organizations of home-school cooperation, their contact with home-school cooperation organizations was indirect. Their participatory frequency was lower than that of parents and schools. To many students, the emphasis of parental organizations was on organizing activities for parents. Therefore, students only formed shallow feeling toward parental organizations.

### 4.2.2. Expectation on parental organization

#### 4.2.2.1. Parents

- Parents' expectation of parental organizations was at average level. This could make sense in that parents did not consider parental organizations as the channel for safeguarding their interests. Nevertheless, according to priority ranking, parents mostly expected parental organizations to foster healthy physical and mental development of students. The next was to boost students' academic development, to amplify parents' potential in assisting the implementation of school policies and the improvement of school facilities as well as to promote affable parent-teacher relationship. Among different types of schools, the expectations of the parents of kindergartens and special schools were comparatively higher.

#### 4.2.2.2. School-related personnel

- School-related personnel's expectation on parental organizations was on average rather high. They mostly expected parental organizations to foster students'

healthy physical and mental development. The next were promoting affable parent-teacher relationship, boosting students' academic development, and amplifying parents' potential in assisting the implementation of school policies and the improvement of school facilities. Among different types of schools, the expectation of the school-related personnel of kindergartens was the highest.

- Overall, the appraisals and expectations of parents of kindergartens and special schools toward parental organizations were higher than that of secondary and primary schools. This might be due to the need of communication in home-school cooperation for the education of kindergartens and special schools. In the wake of this, the relationship between schools and parents was therefore very close.

### 4.3. The role and function of parental organization

- According to Pages 14 and 15 of the Parent-teacher Association Handbook published in January 1997 by the Committee on Home-School Cooperation, the aims of parent-teacher associations are:  
“(1) To strengthen contact and communication between parents, teachers, and schools, and to promote the affable relationship between them. (2) To advance home-school cooperation and to promote students' healthy physical and mental development, and academic development collaboratively. (3) To amplify parents' potential in discussing education affairs, supporting schools in terms of resources, and assisting the design of school policies.”
- “The work of parent-teacher associations is multilateral. Through recreational, cultural, and educational activities, it can strengthen the understanding between parents, teachers, and schools and sharing of experiences and can cultivate affable relationship so that they can have tighter cooperation between one another to strive for the well-being of students and schools.”
- There was a very good description about the present general roles and functions of parental organizations in section 1, parents' situation. Specifically, their central roles and functions were to promote home-school contact and students' well-being, which corresponded to the objectives and functions of parent-teacher associations formulated by the Committee on Home-School Cooperation. The key point of this section mainly is to analyze parental organizations' objectives and functions, based on the questionnaire survey regarding the contact and

feelings of parents, students, and school-related personnel concerning parental organizations.

### 4.3.1 Parents

- Based on the frequency of contact between parents and parental organizations according to the questionnaire survey, the most frequent contact was receiving parental organizations' publications or news dispatches (4.16 times on average last year). The second frequent was encouragement by parental organizations to participate in activities (1.66 time on average), followed by attending or helping to organize talks about parental organizations (1.43 time on average). The least frequent was participation in parental organizations' meetings (1.37 time on average).
- Besides, parents believed that the functions<sup>2</sup> of parental organizations toward them were: (1) to cultivate them to have the mentality to take up a position. (2) To maintain their willingness to participate. (3) To train their abilities of taking up a position. (4) To enhance their communication with schools. Moreover, the study also illustrated that the existence of parental organizations provided the opportunities for parents to take part in decision-making. Nevertheless, parents of kindergartens and special schools on average participated more intensely in the decision-making of parental organizations than did parents of secondary and primary schools.

### 4.3.2 School-related personnel

- The results of the study reveal that school-related personnel believed that the usefulness of parental organizations for them was facilitating: parents to communicate with schools, home-school cooperation, parents to help their children with their study, parents in taking up a position, parents to participate in community work, and participate in decision-making. Among the above aspects of usefulness, apart from the comparatively small usefulness of facilitating parents in making decisions, other kinds of facilitation were on average above

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<sup>2</sup> According to the functional theory in sociology, the functions of social activities are mainly cultivating, maintaining, training and contacting. Cultivating refers to setting up objectives. Maintaining refers to keeping intrinsic materials. Training refers to improving competence. Contacting refers to promoting the relations of multi-aspects.



satisfactory level.

- The study also discovered that school-related personnel of special schools and kindergartens on average deemed that parental organizations provided much help in parent-school communication.

### 4.3.3. Students

- For students, they mostly considered that the functions of parental organizations were to organize activities for parents, followed by organizing activities for students, promoting students' participation in school activities and home-school cooperation activities.

## 4.4. Efficiency of parental organizations

- Apart from analyzing the subjective appraisals of parents, students and school-related personnel, the present study also attempted to (1) compare the difference between schools with parental organizations and those without parental organizations in terms of students and parents on home-school contact to explore objectively the effectiveness of parental organizations based on statistical analysis; (2) probe the progress of students and parents of schools that with parental organizations in terms of the performance of every related areas in a year.
- The analysis indicated that students and parents of schools with parental organizations apparently participated more actively in home-school cooperation activities. The priorities of their active participation were firstly allocating more time to participate in activities, followed by planning activities, contacting schools or parents and participating in voluntary work. Moreover, parents of secondary schools with parental organizations manifested a comparatively harmonious and cooperative relationship with schools. Furthermore, parents of primary schools that with parental organizations also evidently had more communication with schools and children. These results objectively depicted that parental organizations were manifestly effective for promoting home-school contact.
- In exploring the progress of home-school cooperation among parents of schools

with parental organizations, the analysis revealed that their performance in strengthening home-school cooperation was obvious. Parents of kindergartens had evident progress in establishing harmonious relationship with schools and developing skills to handle children's problems. Parents of special schools apparently gained deeper understanding of their children's situation. Parents of primary and secondary schools manifestly enhanced their communication with and trust in schools and children. Researchers believed that these enhancements imply that parental organizations might demonstrate significant effectiveness. This effectiveness also illustrated that there was a positive effect of parental organizations on increasing the abilities of parents and their contact with schools, which was beneficial to enhancing the well-being of parents and students.

#### 4.5. The good practice of parental organizations

- The present study defined the **good practice** of parental organizations as something “to promote parental organizations, **structural features (organizational)** of the performance of parents or their children and **activities** obviously and effectively.” The so-called “**effective**” refers to the methodology, which could promote parental organizations and the performance of parents or children apparently. This effectiveness could manifest in objective statistical analysis and subjective judgment by parents and school-related personnel.

##### 4.5.1 The good practice derived from statistical analysis

- Researchers found out the good practice through statistical analysis of contact between parental organizations and parents. This contact could be categorized into cultivating, maintaining, training, and promoting. Researchers then attempted to examine the effectiveness of parental organizations based on these four aspects:
  1. Cultivating: parental organizations helped parents take up a position, cooperate with schools, respect schools mutually and participate in decision-making regarding schools and parental organizations through parental meetings (including regular meetings and annual meetings) and news dispatches and other cultivating works. It showed that releasing news dispatches was favorable to improving students' interpersonal relationship and their sense of belonging to schools.
  2. Promoting: parental organizations arranged promotional services including communication with schools, reconciliation of conflicts, and so on that were

effective in advancing parents to provide schools with essential support and to build up mutually respecting relationship. Voluntary services and decision-making were examples.

3. Maintaining: this kind of work included arranging contact with professional personnel outside school for parents, relaying opinions to schools, and encouraging parents to participate in activities. These works were useful in maintaining home-school contact and enhancing cooperation.
  4. Training: training works included planning, organizing and participating in a variety of talks and training courses. This aspect of work could help promote harmonious relationship between parents and schools as well as parents' voluntary services and decision-making.
- The above results corresponded largely with the findings of the focus groups.
  - Besides, the analysis of the survey also indicated that the following good practice was helpful to parents or students:
    1. Releasing publications or news dispatches by parental organizations could help students build up good interpersonal relationship (as it promoted communication between parents and students).
    2. Organizing seminars and consultation meetings by parental organizations could strengthen parents' support for schools.
    3. Arranging communication between parents and teachers by parental organizations could increase parents' understanding of their children and parents' trust in students and schools.
    4. Holding school management meetings collaboratively by parental organizations and schools could boost parents' communication between schools and students.
    5. Solely organizing or collaboratively organizing large-scale recreational activities (for instance, game day or sports day) by parental organizations could increase students' sense of belonging.
    6. Conducting home visits by parental organizations could reinforce students' devotion to school activities.
    7. More committees in a parental organization could pose a positive effect on students' interpersonal relationship.
    8. More staff in a parental organization (generally referring to school-assigned or voluntary, unpaid personnel) could lead to a harmonious relationship between parents and schools.

## 4.5.2. Parents' appraisal on good practice

- Meanwhile, parents pointed out that some activities of parental organizations or activities of home-school cooperation were the most useful to them and students according to their subjective feelings and questionnaire survey or focus group.

### 4.5.2.1. According to the answers of parents in questionnaires

- Most parents deemed that the publications or news dispatches received in the past one year was helpful contact with them. More parents of secondary schools thought that this kind of contact was the most helpful. The second was arranging communication with schools and teachers through parental organizations. The third was relaying opinions to schools. This appraisal was most obvious among parents of secondary schools.
- Most parents deemed that encouraging students to participate in activities was useful to students through contact with parental organizations. This appraisal was most dominant among parents of kindergartens. The second was receiving parental organizations' publications or news dispatches. Parents of secondary schools especially considered that this contact was helpful to students. The third was arranging communication with schools and teachers through parental organizations.

### 4.5.2.2. According to the parents of the focus group or opinions of the teaching staffs

- Effective parental organizations' activities mainly included talks, workshops, resource centers, sociable activities, and regular meetings. These activities allowed exchange among parents. However, they could only be successful if a substantial number of parents participated in the activities.
- School activities that were effective included the game day, reading club, reading scheme, sports day, game stalls, lesson visit, and so on, which were different from the activities organized by parental organizations. Their effectiveness lay in deeper understanding of parents towards their children, improvement of the emotions of parents and cultivation of students' characters and group spirit.
- Effective activities organized by schools for parents included talks, voluntary services, training courses, and so on. The effectiveness of these activities founded upon the close cooperation between teachers and parents and exchange

among parents. The more the participants, the richer the exchange opportunities and content as well as the higher effectiveness of the activities could be.

- The organization skills of the chairperson of a parental organization were the key factor determining the effectiveness of a parental organization.
- Opinions of the focus group affirmed many effective parental organizations. The works included supporting schools, monitoring schools, and promoting exchange among parents, home-school cooperation, students' study, parenthood, and the well-being of parents and students.

#### 4.6. Opinions of the policy-related personnel

- The present study interviewed seven key persons responsible for policy-consulting, making, and implementing who were in connection with home-school cooperation. Two of them were government officials. Other five were public figures. Comprehensively, they deemed that the government (policy-formulating and policy-implementing branches) should value parents' opinions and strive for parents' agreement regarding to the work and policy when formulating policies of home-school cooperation, parental organizations and education. In striving for parents' agreement, there was a need for the government to make parents understand the meaning of the policy. Before putting forth the policy, discussion could be held and parents' opinions should be reported through parental organizations. When specifically implementing the policy, community resources such as voluntary services and so on were required to be coordinated so that the related work and policy could be implemented successfully. In a bid to tie in school-based management, parents' participation in school ruling was required.
- Since parent-teacher associations have already been established in most government schools and government subsidized schools, the work of parents has already started. Nonetheless, most kindergartens did not have parental organizations. Consequently, related personnel believed that the development emphasis of home-school cooperation in the future should be put on kindergartens. Actually, home-school cooperation was very essential to the cultivation of infants. Parental organizations should effectively utilize parents' enthusiasm at this stage to subsume them into the track of home-school cooperation as soon as possible.

- Parents' development work mainly lay in the aspects of parental education and home-school cooperation. Parental education should focus on education at a broad dimension to make parents understand the perspectives of professionals, the aims of education reform, the work of schools, and the situation of resources so that they could accommodate and cooperate with schools. Parental education should also help parents eradicate the mindset of a "self-centered parent" and help them develop cooperative conviction. For home-school cooperation, development needed time to cultivate and was in a proper and progressive sequence. The cooperative relationship between parents and schools should be equal. Parental organizations were the core of mobilizing parents, which played the role as a bridge between schools and parents. They should strike a balance between their rights, responsibilities and the degree of their developmental maturity.
- For schools, they should escalate every effort to advance home-school cooperation and discuss with parents about how to reach a consensus so that parents and students could acquire benefits. Schools should understand parents' needs, excavate and develop parents' strengths, and give parents rights or abilities. Moreover, schools should divide work responsibilities among staff and strengthen management of resources distribution to enhance the effectiveness of the activities. Teachers should suit their action to their words and welcome parents' participation.

#### 4.7. Summary of the findings

- According to the data shown in the survey of parental organizations' performance in 2001, the existence of parental organizations reinforced parents' participation in home-school cooperation, the harmonious relationship between parents and schools and communication among parents, schools, and children. Apart from this observation, activities of parental organizations could be generally divided into cultivating, maintaining, training, and promoting. Activities such as releasing new dispatches, seminars, consultation meetings, arranging communication between parents and teachers, collaboratively holding school administration management meetings, sports day/game day, individual/group counseling, parenting/parental talks/training, home visits, reading club/parent-child reading, etc., were helpful to parents, students, and schools. In short, the more active parental organizations in organizing activities,

the more benefits parents and students could gain.

- Meanwhile, the data also illustrated some negative effects that are worth attention. (1) The study discovers that parents of primary schools that with parental organizations revealed less understanding of their children. Researchers deem that this might reflect that parental organizations had raised primary school parents' concern about their children, which led them to consider their understanding of their children as inadequate. (2) Secondary school students whose schools had parental organizations scored lower marks on positive affect. This problem reverberated in the focus group. It illustrates that parents also noticed that students might hold a disdainful attitude toward home-school cooperation and generate anxiety about parental organizations. This might also be because secondary school students of a school without a parental organization did not have any experience with the problem, and so they did not have the chance of self-reflection. (3) Parental organizations strengthened parents' competence. Nevertheless, students could not benefit immediately. This implies that the effectiveness of parental organizations might not be immediate, in particular when it required more time to show the effectiveness to students. (4) Lastly, parents and teaching staff in the focus group revealed that there were many technical difficulties in parental organizations or home-school cooperation. These included insufficient space, distant location, and inability to provide services to parents and students who were in need. These results depict that certain difficulties existed in the work of parental organizations. Whether parental organizations would bring negative long-term consequences to parents and students still needs confirmation with further study.

## **5. Suggestions**

- According to the above study results, researchers try to give some concrete suggestions on the development of home-school cooperation with reference to the government and its agencies, parental organizations, and schools.

### **5.1 The government and its agencies**

#### **5.1.1. Reinforce the development of kindergartens' home-school cooperation and consolidate the foundation of parental education.**

- Currently, most secondary and primary schools operated or subsidized by the

government have already established parent-teacher associations, which set the foundation of home-school cooperation. On the other hand, the progress of kindergartens in establishing parent-teacher associations is laggard. Only about 25% of them have parent-teacher associations now. The study results showed that parents and related personnel of kindergartens had higher expectation of and satisfaction with parental organizations than did those of secondary and primary schools. This demonstrated that the home-school cooperation of kindergartens had a good foundation for development. In fact, most parents of kindergartens maintained quite a lot of cooperation with schools. Hence, the authority should actively promote and consolidate kindergartens' home-school cooperation so that parents can pass this good experience to primary and secondary schools in future.

#### 5.1.2. Develop parental organizations and accept opinions from every aspect

- During the process of education development for parents, formulation of home-school cooperation, and setting of educational policies, the authority not only has to listen to the opinions of parents and professional educationists, they also should let parents understand the guiding principle of education if they want to advance the smooth implementation of the policy. The government can collect parents' opinions through parental organizations in order to obtain parents' agreement with the policy and build up a consensus.

#### 5.1.3. Promote parental organizations and develop parental education actively

- For the development of education for parents, the authority can foster parents' group spirit through parental organizations to let more parents understand the importance of this job, which is a direct benefit. The related government agencies and community organizations can jointly organize a variety of training courses, parenting talks, and other activities with parental organizations in an attempt to upgrade parents' techniques and abilities for educating their children.

#### 5.1.4. Allocate resources and develop quality parental organizations

- Currently, the development of parental organizations (primarily parent-teacher associations) in terms of quantity is very satisfactory. Therefore, it should start to put emphasis on enhancing the quality of parental organizations at the present stage and to perfect the operation of parental organizations. The authority can



undertake the suggestions based on the following aspects:

1. Organize training courses of parental organizations in order to provide parents and teachers with the opportunities of professional training and advance their organization competence.
2. Organize experience sharing sessions for parental organizations so that they can absorb successful experiences and to consider them as a reflective mirror.
3. Organize some seminars about educational policies for parental organizations. On one hand, this can collect parents' opinions. On the other hand, this can provide them with the opportunities to understand the content of the policies in detail and grant them the competence to cater to the implementation of the policies.
4. Arrange schools to provide parental organizations with space to facilitate contact between members and their sense of belonging to the organization.
5. Ensure that every school has specifically responsible staff for assisting parental organizations in implementing the work so that parental organizations can operate smoothly.

#### 5.1.5. Coordinate community resources and jointly cultivate the new generation

- In implementing home-school cooperation, the authority should reinforce management to avoid chaos and overlap of the distribution of resources in the community. Besides, contact between parental organizations and the community should be enhanced so that community resources can fit in with family and school education to jointly cultivate the younger generation.

## 5.2. Parental organizations

### 5.2.1. Set clear aims

- Parental organizations should have their own clear aims and focused work and they should develop the due work based on these aims. If the aim focuses on promoting communication and cooperation between parents and schools, then the function of serving as the bridge between schools and parents should be mainly amplified. If the aim is to promote students' maturity, then the work of supporting parents and students should be focused. Parental organizations should try their best to avoid taking up too many different types of works, which leads to work overloading and ambiguity of power and responsibility.

### 5.2.2. Organize activities that are suitable to schools and parents

- Activities organized by parental organizations should better be suitable to the needs of schools and parents. For specific activities, parental organizations can release news dispatches, organize seminars, arrange communication between parents and teachers, organize/jointly organize large-scale recreational activities, and conduct home visits more frequently.

### 5.2.3. Encourage students to participate in parental organizations' activities

- Parental organizations can try more to organize activities that both parents and students can attend at the same time so that students have the opportunity to understand and realize the functions of parental organizations for them and become motivators driving parents to participate in home-school cooperation activities.

### 5.2.4. Enhance the quality of committees

- The study realizes that the effectiveness of a parental organization depended on the competence of the chairperson. Thus, parental organizations should center on enhancing the quality of chairperson and committees. Arranging members to take part in administrative talks, training courses, or sharing sessions more can boost the healthy development of parental organizations.

### 5.2.5. Increase the number of parental staff

- The study illustrates that the number of committee and staff members of parental organizations posed a positive effect on home-school cooperation. Thereby, parental organizations can select more parents as the standing committee members and recruit more assistants to strengthen the competence of the organization and promote exchange among parents.

## 5.3. Schools

### 5.3.1. Support the development of parental organizations

- Schools should provide professional opinions to parental organizations, give them support on administration, and excavate parents' potential to help parental organizations amplify their effectiveness.

### 5.3.2. Cultivate parents to be the partner of schools on education

- The cooperative relationship between parents and schools should be reciprocal. Both parties require time to develop into maturity. Schools can play a leading

role in this aspect to allow parents to have adequate communication with schools, to participate in school activities and eventually to guide them to engage in the decision-making process of schools.

### 5.3.3. Widen the capacity of home-school cooperation

- Schools should encourage teachers to communicate with parents more often in an attempt to foster sentiments among schools, parents, and students. In the mean time, teachers should be allowed to receive related training to facilitate them to handle parental problems.

## 6. Outlook

- At present, Hong Kong's education orients to school-based management. Parents will have a seat in the school board. As a result, the participation of parents and parental organizations will both increase in future. To cater to their participation, regional federations of parental associations are developing flourishingly, which aid parents to take part in discussion on educational policy. The roles that parents play will become increasingly significant in these areas. Parental organizations and regional federations of parental associations will also incarnate their active functions. The ideal development of these functions can emerge from the following aspects.

### 6.1. School-based management

- School-based management requires parent representatives to take part in the school board and to participate in school decision-making on the ground of students' education and development. Under more powerful and autonomic school-based management, parents' role of decision-making will be more amplifying. The present study stated that seminars and training courses organized by parental organizations, promotion of contact between parents and schools, consultation meetings and regular meetings that jointly organized by parental organizations and schools, and many other aspects could help promote parents' participation in decision-making. At the same time, parents' participation in decision-making in schools or parental organizations helps reinforce the effectiveness of parental organizations and leads the performance of parental organizations to a satisfactory level. Parents' participation in decision-making and effectiveness of parental organizations are closely bound up. The attitude of cooperating with schools and solving problems harmoniously, which parents

maintain when taking part in the decision-making process of schools is, in accordance with the study, the factor amplifying parental organizations' effectiveness.

## 6.2. Regional federation of parental associations

- In mid 2002 when the present study finished, 10 districts already established federations of parent-teacher associations. The development of regional federations of parental associations will provide parents with more resources and assist in coordinating regional work to raise the efficiency of work in parental education and parental organizations. Nevertheless, the present study indicates that regardless of parental organizations or schools, their contact with regional federations of parental associations was not very high. Parental organizations, which have more contact with regional federations of parental associations, did not indicate manifest assistance to parents. Consequently, the development of regional federations of parental associations will not only be confined to the increase in quantity, but also require the intensification of work. They need to strengthen their cooperation with schools and attract parental organizations and parents to join in their work. Mature regional federations of parental organizations should unite parents or parental organizations and schools and lend their mutual support for school education before their functions can improve effectively. Moreover, regional federations of parental associations can also foster parents to take part in decision-making in order to promote parents' participation in school-based management and education policies.

## 6.3. Participation in discussion about education policies

- The transparency of Hong Kong's education policies is increasing. Parents' participation in policy discussion is more and more open and welcome. Parents' participation in policy discussion not only enhances their competence in making decisions and participation in decision-making, but also deepens their concern about and contact with the community and even the whole society. The contribution of parental organizations to these aspects should not be overlooked. The study indicates that training courses, seminars, and activities that relayed parents' opinions organized by parental organizations also promoted parents' participation in community. Hence, in enhancing parents' participation in discussion on education policies, the work of parental organizations will be very crucial. Parents' participation in community and discussion on educational

policies will be very influential in amplifying home-school cooperation and educational effectiveness. The existence of parental organizations definitely helps promote parents' participation in community affairs and discussion on educational policies, which are advantageous to the implementation of educational policies and consolidation of power and resources from different sectors.

## **7. Conclusion**

- The values of the present study are to affirm the functions of parent-teacher associations and point out the direction for improvement, which are specifically helpful in fitting in with the Committee on Home-School Cooperation on “deepening home-school cooperation, propelling educational improvement.” It is hoped that a more detailed exploration about the development of home-school cooperation can be conducted in future.

**Study of  
the Effectiveness of Parental Organizations  
in Hong Kong**

**Executive Summary**

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