

A Project entitled

**Hong Kong kindergarten teachers' attitudes towards home-school collaboration,
difficulties they perceived and related suggestions: An interview study**

Submitted by

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Declaration

I, _____ declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of Prof. LI Hui, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

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Abstract

Home-school collaboration has long been known as a crucial factor to promote children's learning and development. However, it is noticed that most research in this area was conducted from the perspectives of parents, while limited of it explored the views of kindergarten teachers. Therefore, this study aims to reveal kindergarten teachers' attitudes, the difficulties they faced in home-school collaboration, and relevant suggestions given by them. In this research, 5 Hong Kong kindergarten teachers who have worked in a local kindergarten for at least 2 years are recruited as participants. Semi-structured individual interviews are conducted, and thematic analysis is used as the analysis method. Upon analysis, it was found that all the interviewees agreed that home-school collaboration is important. Reported difficulties when promoting home-school collaboration mainly include low parental engagement and inappropriate education methods. Teachers suggested strategies such as involving parents in school affairs and educating parents, can be effective ways to encourage parent-teacher partnership. These findings are expected to provide a reference for policymakers to understand the situation that frontline kindergarten teachers are facing. It is also acknowledged that both parents, teachers, and schools should make efforts to improve home-school collaboration, as well as children's growth and development.

**Hong Kong kindergarten teachers' attitudes towards home-school collaboration,
difficulties they perceived and related suggestions: An interview study**

1. Introduction

This study aims to investigate the attitudes of kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong towards home-school collaboration, and the difficulties they faced when attempting to implement strategies to encourage such involvement. Relevant suggestions to improve home-school collaboration are also mentioned.

Home-school collaboration simply refers to the process of different systems or individuals, including but not limited to schools, families, parents and educators, participate in decision-making for shared objectives and solutions relevant to students (Cowan et al., 2004). It is a cooperative and interdependent partnership formed by parents and educators by pooling their resources together when they develop mutually agreed academic and behavioral goals. It is believed that there is a common agreement that parental involvement in children's education is an important factor in promoting children's academic success and well-being in various aspects (Brown & Medway, 2007). It is also shown that parents who actively engage in their children's

education can influence children's academic achievement, social and emotional development, and overall well-being in a positive way (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014). However, while most of these research are conducted from the perspectives of parents, limited studies explore the views of frontline kindergarten teachers. As the critical role in promoting parental involvement, kindergarten teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards parental involvement can have a significant impact on whether parents feel encouraged to participate in their children's learning. By examining the views and practical experiences of kindergarten teachers regarding parental involvement in children's learning, an insight into teachers' beliefs and attitudes, as well as the difficulties and barriers, can be revealed. Through understanding the perspectives of kindergarten teachers and the challenges they face when involving parents in children's learning, related departments and educators should be able to understand the needs of frontline teachers. Appropriate amendments to current approaches and relevant support can be provided, so that the effectiveness of parental involvement can be maximized, fostering positive and collaborative home-school partnerships.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Parental involvement

Parental involvement is used to describe a variety of ways that parents and caregivers take part in their children's educational and developmental experiences and learning. According to Epstein and Sanders (2002), parental involvement refers to the parents' active participation in their children's education, and to what degree they are involved in it. Parental involvement can include a wide range of actions, activities, and behaviors, like helping children with their homework, attending school events, being a member of the Parent-Teacher Association, having frequent communication with teachers, and engaging in educational activities at home (Kreider, 2000). The above examples of parental involvement emphasize that there are various roles that parents can take when involved in children's learning. The issue of parental involvement has received increased attention in society in recent years for its potential positive impact on children's academic achievement and well-being in different aspects. Abundant research has shown that parental involvement can lead to improved academic performance, increased motivation as well as engagement, and higher self-esteem in children (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Taylor, 2004). Furthermore, parents' involvement in children's education also demonstrated advantages on children's school

performance, such as better attendance records, fewer behavioral problems, and lower chance of school dropout (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). The study results mentioned above have proved that parental involvement has solid and practical benefits to children's development.

2.2. School-based learning

Numerous research and studies have proved that parental involvement demonstrated a positive relationship with the academic achievement and well-being of children. In fact, in most of the research, parental involvement are divided into two types, home-based parental involvement and school-based parental involvement (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). While the above definitions are adapted in western countries, it may not in consistent with Hong Kong context. In Chinese culture, it is noted that parental involvement was divided into 4 types, which is home discussion, home supervision, school communication, and school participation (Ho, 1995, as cited in Lau et al., 2011). Specifically, Ho (1995) suggested that the site of involvement, which is home and school, should be the primary focus when conceptualizing parental involvement (Lau et al., 2011). By considering both western and local context of definition, it is acknowledged that for home-based involvement, it generally defined as the

interactions of the children and parents taken outside of school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). The focus of these kind of parental behaviors usually are the learning-related behaviors and attitudes of individual child, while the corresponding parental activities are helping with homework, review on examinations, and monitoring child's learning progress, to name a few. On the other hand, school-based parental involvement activities are that undertaken by parents in school. It generally focused on individual child, such as attending parent-teacher conference and observing child in class or school activities. The major difference between home-based and school-based parental involvement is the latter one may pay extra attention on school issues, such as taking part in school public events and volunteering to help with school activities. Jeynes (2012) acknowledged that school-based parental involvement demonstrated positive relationship with the academic achievement and all-rounded well-being of children. It further specifies that school-based parental involvement is comparatively more advantageous to children's development and learning.

To define school learning, the definition of "learning" can first be made. Carroll (1963) defines learning as the progress of learners going from ignorance of some concrete facts or concepts to understanding of it, or from incapability of performing certain acts to capability to do so. Extending from this definition, school learning

refers to the progress of learners understanding new knowledge and demonstrating new abilities through formal education within a school setting. Since this research focused on the Hong Kong kindergarten setting, the scope of school learning in the context of this research focused on the learning experiences of children in Hong Kong kindergartens. According to the Education Bureau (2020), there are six learning areas in the Hong Kong kindergarten curriculum, which are ‘Physical Fitness and Health’, ‘Language’, ‘Early Childhood Mathematics’, ‘Nature and Living’, ‘Self and Society’, and ‘Arts and Creativity’, while all these learning areas consist of the elements of ‘Values and Attitude’, ‘Skills’, and ‘Knowledge’. Moreover, regardless of the scale of operation and the size of the campus, most kindergartens in Hong Kong can create stimulating learning environments that cater to children’s real-life experiences and interests, such as corners of different themes with corresponding teaching aids, which can facilitate children’s self-learning (Education Bureau, 2020). Based on the three teaching and learning approaches, ‘Real-life themes’, ‘Integrated approach’, and ‘Learning through play’, children in Hong Kong kindergartens will experience a variety of learning activities that can cater to their needs in different aspects. The content mentioned above, including the curriculum, environment, and learning and teaching approaches, are composed to be scope of ‘school learning’ in this research.

2.3. Research questions

It is undoubted that school-based parental involvement is advantageous to children's learning, as it can cater to students' all-rounded development in multiple aspects. To boost efficient parental involvement, the role of kindergarten teachers are vital, as they are the major executors of such involvement. This highlights the importance of the cooperation between parents and kindergarten teachers, also known as home-school collaboration. These two stakeholders play a significant role in home-school collaboration. Yet, it is noticed that much research are based on parents' perspectives, while limited of it discover the view of kindergarten teachers. To fulfill this gap, this research hopes to investigate the practical difficulties and challenges that teachers may encounter when they are trying to involve parents in children's learning. By inviting kindergarten teachers to share frontline experiences, the difficulties they encountered and constructive suggestions are expected to be revealed. In general, the research aims to explore the views and perspectives of Hong Kong kindergarten teachers about parental involvement and identify practical challenges and difficulties when teachers attempt to perform such involvement. By achieving these research objectives, this research should be able to reveal an insight into how educators and kindergarten teachers can better support parental involvement in children's school learning, hence promoting effective home-school collaboration.

The following are the research questions of this study:

1. What are the attitudes of Hong Kong kindergarten teachers towards home-school collaboration?
2. What are the difficulties when Hong Kong kindergarten teachers trying to promote home-school collaboration?
3. What suggestions do Hong Kong kindergarten teachers have for improving home-school collaboration?

3. Methodology

3.1. *Participants*

Hong Kong kindergarten teachers who worked as teaching staff in local kindergartens for at least 2 years are qualified as the target participants. The requirement of at least 2 years of working experience ensured that the participants had enough experience in teaching and communicating with parents. In this study, a total of 5 local kindergarten teachers were recruited as participants. Convenience sampling and purposive sampling were used when recruiting targeted kindergarten teachers to participate in

the study. The participants of the study were all come from different kindergartens so that larger varieties of responses were expected to be collected. The names of participants would not be mentioned for the reason that they agreed to take part in the research based on anonymity.

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of participating teachers

Teachers	Age	Years of experience	Education
Teacher A	21-30	2	Bachelor
Teacher B	21-30	2	Bachelor (studying)
Teacher C	21-30	2	Bachelor
Teacher D	21-30	2	Higher diploma
Teacher E	21-30	2	Bachelor (studying)

3.2. Procedure

This research is a qualitative study, and the major research method is semi-structured individual interview with Hong Kong kindergarten teachers. The interview questions were all open-ended so that interviewees can have rooms to share. Before the interviews, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and displayed the interview questions to the interviewees, in order to ensure that interviewees had comprehensive understanding towards the study. During the interview, the researcher might ask probing questions to obtain more information from the interviewees.

The interview questions were:

1. How important do you think home-school collaboration is in Hong Kong kindergarten settings?
2. Can you describe the current strategies or practices of promoting home-school collaboration in your kindergarten?
3. Can you share some experiences of you promoting parental involvement in the past? What was the result?

4. Did you find any challenges or difficulties when you tried to involve parents into children's learning? How did you address the problem?
5. As a critical role to facilitate parental involvement, what recommendation do you have for improving collaboration between kindergarten teachers and parents?

The individual interviews last for around 30 minutes at most, and interviewees can choose to have the interviews online or offline. Moreover, since all the interviewees chose to perform the interview online, they were allowed to answer the questions by texting or audio recording, depending on which method they think is more comfortable to express.

The method of data analysis used in the research is thematic analysis. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2012), thematic analysis method can help to identify, organize, and offer insights into patterns of meaning across the data set. This method is considered suitable for this study, as similar opinions and patterns can be identified, hence, to find out the attitudes, difficulties, and suggestions that are agreed by the interviewed kindergarten teachers regarding the issue of home-school collaboration. Through coding and theming process, commonalities across the data set can be identified. With

various sayings supporting one theme, it can be ensured that the interpretation is evidence-based.

4. Results

4.1. Attitudes towards home-school collaboration

The attitudes of kindergarten teachers toward home-school collaboration were examined, in order to frame their opinions and points of view for the ground of research.

4.1.1. Importance of home-school collaboration

When asked about interview question 1, whether they think home-school collaboration is important, 100% of them agreed that home-school collaboration is important among the 5 interviewed teachers. It provided a strong foundation for the study that teachers shared the same view regarding the issue. Some teachers elaborated on why they think that developing parent-teacher relationships is crucial, in which two main reasons were drawn. First, there was the teacher's opinion that the change in children's caregivers contributed to why they considered home-school

collaboration important (see appendix 2). The teacher explained that since there is an increasing number of dual-career families, which refers to families where both parents are working, it may lead to frequent change in children's daily caregivers. Common caregivers other than parents include grandparents and foreign domestic helpers.

While different caregivers were likely to take care of and educate children in different ways, it may result in children's learning needs changing from time to time.

Therefore, teachers need to understand the family life and situation of children regularly to implement appropriate learning and teaching strategies. Besides, teachers also acknowledged that home-school partnership is important because of the compact timetable and curriculum at school (see appendix 3). The teacher claimed that although teaching content will be reviewed with children at school regularly, parents' studying at home with children also plays a vital role in children fully mastering the knowledge. Learning at school and at home can create a different learning atmosphere for children, for the reason that children can have individualized attention at home but not at school. Areas where children may have confusion with can be identified easier during home learning. It is ideal when parents noticed children's learning problem at home and shared it with teachers, creating a home-school partnership for the sake of children, becoming one of the importance of home-school collaboration.

4.1.2. Benefits bring by home-school collaboration

Some teachers also shared what benefits can home-school collaboration brings to support the importance of it. Suggested by 40% of the interviewees , the first significant advantage is it can enhance the communication and relationship between teachers and parents (see appendices 1 and 2). Home-school collaboration facilitates the sharing of important information between teachers and parents. Teachers can provide updates on students' academic progress, behavior, and achievements in school, while parents can share insights about their child's strengths, challenges, and personal circumstances. This exchange of information helps both parties gain a more comprehensive understanding of the child's needs and creates a foundation for effective communication. Moreover, home-school collaboration also promotes mutual understanding among teachers and parents. Teacher once said that “It can also help them to know what teachers have to do in their work, so that they can understand more about each other.” (see appendix 3) Through developing this kind of mutual understanding, the alignment of goals between both parties can be fostered.

Other than the relationship between teachers and parents, it is worth noting that the parent-child relationship is also expected to be enhanced via home-school

collaboration. Under home-school collaboration, it is common for parents to be invited to school and conduct activities with children. The teacher acknowledged that when schools offer parent-child activities opportunities, it gives a chance for them to get along. For example, when the kindergarten invited parents to come and have story-telling time with their children after a series of parent lectures, the teacher reported that children were engaged in the story and the feedback was positive (see appendix 1). Another teacher shared a similar experience that there were once when parents and children were invited to make handicrafts at home for the school's anniversary celebration. When children brought back the finished products, the teacher was told that parents and children had great interactions during the process (see appendix 3). Through home-school collaboration, there are various activities organized by the school which allows parents and children to participate together. These are precious chances for parents and children to get along with each other, promoting intimate parent-child relationship.

The ultimate benefit of promoting home-school collaboration is it can improve children's learning. Some interviewees shared similar experiences that when parents showed higher engagement in children's learning, there would be improvements in children's performances (see appendices 2 and 4). When parents actively engaged in

students' learning, they would understand the learning progress and what was taught at school. This understanding enables parents to extend and reinforce their children's learning beyond the classroom and integrate it into their daily lives. By making connections between what children learn in school and real-life experiences, such as incorporating concepts into daily conversations or the surrounding environment, parents can effectively raise their children's interest in learning. When children realize the practical applications of what they are learning in real world, their intrinsic motivation will be naturally increased. As children notice the connection between their learning and real-life experiences, learning takes on greater significance and enjoyment. In short, by actively engaging in children's learning, parents can become a vital role in promoting children's learning, curiosity towards the world, and critical thinking skills.

4.2. Difficulties faced when promoting home-school collaboration

4.2.1. Low parental engagement

When asked about the difficulties that kindergarten teachers faced when promoting home-school collaboration, two-fifths of the teachers stated that low parent engagement is the major problem (see appendices 4 & 5). Teachers indicated that

some parents were unable to monitor their children's learning progress because of their jobs, while some parents underrated their children's learning issues and thought that their kids were still in kindergarten and need not focus too much on their education, which resulted in them not accepting teachers' suggestions for learning. Without engagement in children's school performances, parents are not able to identify problem in children's education, creating a significant communication problem. As previously mentioned, effective communication is crucial for building bonding between parents and teachers. It allows both parties to exchange important information regarding children's academic performance, behavioral issues, and school activities, to name a few. To further elaborate, first, when there was a lack of communication between parents and teachers, parents may not grasp vital information regarding children's academic strengths and weaknesses, making it difficult for them to provide necessary support and guidance. Parents may then overpass the specific areas where their children were struggling or excelling with, preventing them to address those problem effectively. Additionally, behavioral issues that arise in the school environment may go unnoticed by parents if there is a lack of communication. Common behavioral problems that occur in school include interactions with peers, disciplinary issues, and emotional well-being. If parents are unaware of these issues, they cannot work with teachers to develop strategies or interventions to help their

children overcome these challenges. Furthermore, a lack of communication can result in parents being unaware of important school activities, events, or deadlines.

Children's learning experiences may not be satisfied because of parents' not participating in such events which can complement their learning. By missing these opportunities, children may feel parents unsupportive, impacting their overall learning performances and sense of belonging in both settings.

4.2.2. Not giving chances for children to learn

Apart from low parental engagement, some teachers also denoted that some parents did not provide chances for children to learn unconsciously. Teacher explained that when children failed to do certain tasks or felt annoyed about it, some parents would rush to help them immediately, since they think that there was a need for them to do so when children cannot do it or lose temper (see appendix 1). Another teacher even shared a concrete experience about it, saying that once when children were learning to write on the copybook, some parents would hold their hand and help them to finish the homework (see appendix 5). In fact, learning for kindergarten children relied much on their own exploration and hands-on experiences, but when parents did not provide adequate space for children to explore and learn, it may create obstacles for

home-school collaboration. While home-school collaboration allows parents to know how children performed at school, it also help teachers to comprehend how parents reinforce and extend classroom learning at home. With effective home-school collaboration, teachers would receive feedback from parents about children's learning progress outside the school. It is also easier for teachers to apply proper learning and teaching strategies, fostering comprehensive support for children's education. On the other hand, however, if parents intervene excessively in children's learning, or even complete the learning tasks for children, believing that children can reach certain developmental milestones, it can lead to misunderstanding regarding children's development. Both parents and teachers may share the same misconception that children are progressing appropriately. This may become challenging for teachers to accurately assess the true learning progress of children, or even implement inappropriate learning and teaching strategies.

4.2.3. Unfamiliarity of how to assist children's learning

It is noticed that parents feeling unfamiliar with how to assist children's learning can bring barriers to home-school collaboration. The teacher indicated that some parents had expressed concerns to her, saying that they did not know how to help with

children's learning at home (see appendix 2). Meanwhile, the teacher also noticed that the education method for some other parents was inappropriate. It help the teacher come to the short conclusion that parents' unfamiliarity with home-based education methods became one of the difficulties in home-school collaboration. When parents are not familiar with the correct ways of supporting children's education, this means they may lack of confidence or knowledge to do so. As aforementioned, one of the major aspects of home-school collaboration is the exchange of information between parents and teachers. Yet, if parents are unsure about children's learning, they may find it difficult to ask questions, seek clarification, and provide relevant information about children's home learning. Hence, making them struggle to communicate with teachers. On top of that, when parents are unfamiliar with children's learning, they may also feel hesitant to be involved in children's education, as they are not sure whether certain decisions are beneficial to children's learning or not. They may worry about doing more harm than good, or unintentionally hindering children's learning progress. This hesitation may be the reason why some parents are reluctant to participate in school activities or offer additional support at home. In this way, when parents refuse to communicate or cooperate with teachers, the effectiveness of home-school collaboration is negatively affected, becoming one of the difficulties in such collaboration which cannot be ignored.

4.3. Suggestions to improve home-school collaboration

Teachers were asked to recommend ways to improve the collaboration between parents and teachers, in order to explore what do teachers viewed as effective to enhance home-school collaboration. Among the 5 interviewed teachers, there were 4 suggestions that can be summarized.

4.3.1. Involve parents in school affairs

First and foremost, a vast majority of the interviewed teachers have suggested to involve parents in school affairs (see appendix 1-4). According to their feedback, teachers believed that holding regular parent-teacher meetings can help to foster direct communication and exchange of thoughts between parents and teachers. These meetings provide a common platform where parents can express their own opinions and concerns, while the school can take this chance to review and consider it. These meetings serves as a crucial ways for parents to voice out on different aspects of the school development, such as curriculum, extracurricular activities, policies, and facilities, to name a few. After parents proposed these ideas, the school should have review and consider carefully on those suggestions. This process allows parents to

realized that the school attached great importance to their opinions. When parents feel valued by the school, they are more likely to realized that they are a vital role in children's learning and growth, further encouraging them to collaborate with teachers for the children's sake.

Other than that, the importance of Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is also be highlighted (see appendix 4). The teacher shared that although it is an existing practices in her kindergarten as one of the strategies to strengthen the partnership between parents and the school, she still wanted to highlight the significance of it. In the Parent-Teacher Association of the teacher's kindergarten, there is a Liaison Officer, who is responsible for releasing school news to parents from time to time and inviting parents to serve as event volunteers, in which non-PTA members can also participate. This Officer plays as an essential role in keep parents informed about school events, educational development, and relevant changes of the school. By keeping parents in line with the school affairs, they are urged to stay involved in children's learning. Furthermore, by inviting non-PTA members to take part in the voluntary work, it creates an encouraging atmosphere with a common goal that all of them are hoping for the good of their children. In short, the Parent-Teacher

Association serves as a bridge between the school and parents, fostering an environment of mutual support, engagement, and collective efforts.

4.3.2. Educate parents

Another significant suggestion given by teachers is to educate parents. The teacher explained in detail about a phenomenon she observed in her school, which make her believes that amending parents' inappropriate beliefs is crucial. The teacher noticed that when children failed to do certain task or was losing temper about it, most parents would rush to help them (see appendix 1). She pointed out that most parents are too worried about their children, so they wanted to protect them in any way. Yet, these acts may prevent children from exploring freely. The teacher added that since kindergarten children are in the learning stage, everything to them can be an opportunity to learn. It is important to let them try and explore the surroundings freely. By amending parents' improper beliefs, it is believed that parents and teacher can then collaborate collectively and create a better learning environment for children.

Apart from amending parents' inappropriate beliefs, it is also important to provide guidance to parents, as suggested by an interviewed teacher (see appendix 2). In most

cases, parents are not education experts, which means they may not be aware of an ideal education method. To facilitate home-school collaboration, it is important for teachers to guide parents step by step. The teacher suggested the ideal steps to guide parents when she noticed there were problems with children's learning. First, she would contact the parents and identify the problem with them, building a foundation for the following discussion. Then, she would analyze the original education method with the parents, explaining what was wrong to them and guiding them to think of and apply new education strategies. Besides, for parents who did not spend much attention on their children's learning, teachers would also keep encouraging them to take the initiative to follow up on their children's learning (see appendix 5). Through ongoing guidance and support, parents should be able to be more equipped to support children's learning, as well as to communicate with teachers and the school.

4.3.3. Promote frequent communication

As suggested by interviewees, frequent communication between parents and teachers is one of the keys to promote home-school partnership. The teacher mentioned that to ensure regular communication with parents, various approaches such be adopted, such as having conversations with parents after school and conducting phone calls (see

appendix 3). Through these kind of regular interactions, teachers can gain a better understanding of children's recent situation, allowing a clearer and more comprehensive overview of children's overall development. Additionally, the teacher also suggested that promoting constant communication is an opportunity for teachers to promote effective cooperation. When parents and teachers were familiar with children's performance at both the school and home, parents know what needs them to cooperate at home to help children to achieve various desired results, while teachers can comprehend what adjustments are required in children's school learning.

In addition to communication with class teachers, the interviewee also pointed out that the communication between parents and other parties, like the principal and other teachers, should also be valued (see appendix 2). The interviewee indicated that when parents visit the kindergarten, the principal and other teachers in her school will grasp the chance to talk with them, hoping to understand their views towards the school and the recent situation of their family. Although this is the practice of the interviewee's school, it is worth noting that it may not be a usual practice in other kindergartens, since most parents only contact the class teacher of their children. Yet, if parents also have frequent communication with the principal and other teachers, a more comprehensive perspective can be provided. For instance, when parents share with the

child's past class teacher about the child's learning problem, as the past class teacher was familiar with the child, he or she is likely to provide a different view, which can help with the learning problem. Therefore, it is believed that when parents communicate frequently with not only the class teacher of children but also the principal and other teachers, children's learning will be beneficial.

4.3.4. Additional support from schools and teachers

When reviewing the interview results, it is noted that teachers generally suggested two types of additional support that can help to enhance home-school collaboration, which is support provided by the teachers and the kindergartens. First, for additional support provided by teachers, the teacher suggested that it is crucial to break down teaching steps for children in need (see appendix 5). For children whose learning progress fell behind or with special needs, teachers may apply different strategies or tailor-made support for them, in which breaking down teaching steps is considered a simple and effective method to do so. Since teachers are experts with professional knowledge, when breaking students' learning into smaller pieces, they are capable of locating the weaknesses of particular students. For example, when the process of children learning to write is broken down into first correcting the posture of children

holding a pen, then writing the word step by step, it is easier for teachers to discover which part of the learning is difficult for children. When teachers find out children's specific learning problems, they can notify parents and instruct a correct method to help with children's learning. Parents can then do the same as teachers said at home, fostering both children's learning and home-school collaboration at the same time.

On the other hand, for support provided from the schools, the interviewee claimed that schools should take up the responsibility to promote and encourage home-school collaboration (see appendix 4). The interviewed teacher acknowledged that the daily workload of kindergarten teachers is already heavy, it is difficult for them to devote extra and sufficient time to learn skills about collaborating with parents. In this case, the kindergarten, as one of the chief stakeholders, should take the initiative to promote such collaboration. For be specific, schools can offer short-term training course regarding skills of collaborating with parents, or establish more comprehensive communication tunnels between teachers and parents, to name a few. In this way, teachers can feel encouraged to communicate with parents, and it is believed that this is ultimately good for parent-teacher partnership.

5. Discussion

5.1. *Attitudes towards home-school collaboration*

This study found that Hong Kong kindergarten teachers demonstrated a positive attitude towards home-school collaboration. All of the interviewees indicated that they valued the partnership with parents, for the reason of the change in social dynamics and the compact school curriculum. This finding filled the research gap from teachers' perspectives. As the aforementioned, most present research only focuses on parents' views but rarely explores the views of kindergarten teachers. One example is the study of McDowell et al. (2018), which investigated the impacts of parental involvement on children's academic achievement, but did not take the teachers' views into consideration, even though teachers play a vital role in children's academic success. Therefore, this research filled the research gap by gaining teachers' views. By affirming that Hong Kong kindergarten teachers generally possess a supporting attitude toward home-school collaboration, it has built a solid foundation for future discussion about strategies to promote such collaboration.

5.2. Difficulties when promoting home-school collaboration

While this study proved that the attitudes of Hong Kong kindergarten teachers are supportive and positive towards home-school collaboration, they also perceived various difficulties when trying to promote such collaboration. This study found that the most reported difficulties included low parental engagement and inappropriate education methods. This finding is in consistent with the existing research. Pang (2004) found out that parents' lack of time is one of the major difficulties causing ineffective parent-teacher partnerships. When parents lack time because of work, they spend less time handling children's learning issues relatively, leading to low parental involvement in students' learning. Moreover, parents are less likely to help with children's learning problems and provide corresponding needs when they lack time. Hence, an inappropriate education method may be applied to children, bringing unsatisfactory effects on children's learning. Generally, it showed that when parents did not spend sufficient time and attention on children's learning, their willingness to work with teachers for children's learning is likely to decrease, resulting in ineffective home-school collaboration.

5.3. Suggestions to improve home-school collaboration

Regarding the suggestions to improve home-school collaboration, this study summarized four suggestions given by the interviewed teachers, including involving parents in school affairs and having frequent communication with parents. These suggestions are considered practical in Hong Kong kindergarten settings and are in line with previous research. The finding of Bull et al. (2018) showed that when parents feel valued by the school and the positive attitudes of the principal and teachers, they are more encouraged to be involved in school events and children's education. When teachers apply strategies suggested in this study, such as involving parents in school decisions and events, parents will feel that the school attached high importance in their opinions, or when teachers communicate frequently with parents, parents will feel the passion of teachers. Both two examples can make parents feel involved, hence, encouraging them to collaborate with teachers, fostering the parent-teacher partnership.

6. Limitation and Implication

6.1. Limitation

One significant limitation of this study is the low sample diversity. All the interviewed teachers in this study have only 2 years of working experience, for the reason that convenience sampling method was used as one of the sampling methods in this research. However, this sample diversity is considered not representative enough because it lacks the views of kindergarten teachers with different years of working experience. The longer the teachers work in the early childhood education field, the more experiences they gain, and their views may change from time to time. The difference in working experiences may affect how teachers view the issue of home-school collaboration. Yet, while this study only interviewed kindergarten teachers with 2 years of working experience, teachers with more working experience were not interviewed, limiting the comprehensiveness of the study.

To address the deficiency of the study, it is suggested that the sample diversity should be expanded for future research. Kindergarten teachers with different years of working experience can be recruited to participate in the study. By having a larger sample pool and more diverse samples, it is expected that the result can be more

representative. In addition, a study to investigate if there is a correlation between the number of years of experience and views towards home-school collaboration can also be conducted. As mentioned above, the difference in years of working experience in the field may lead to different views towards certain issues. By understanding the possible correlation between these two factors, continuous improvement can be made with reference to different teachers' needs and suggestions.

6.2. Implications

This study aims to reveal kindergarten teachers' perspectives regarding home-school collaboration. The research is expected to improve the existing practices and policies in home-school collaboration areas. Frontline kindergarten teachers play a pivotal role in home-school collaboration, yet policymakers may not be aware of the situation teachers face. Through exploring teachers' perspectives and the challenges they face, it gives policymakers an insight into the current situation regarding home-school collaboration, including the obstacles and expected support. Decision-makers can then make reference to teachers' suggestions to allocate necessary resources, training, and support to enhance collaboration practices. These advancement strategies can equip teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources, empowering teachers to

engage in partnerships with parents, and hence, improving the quality of home-school collaboration, as well as children's development.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, the importance of home-school collaboration is undeniably crucial to children's learning and growth. Yet, being hindered by obstacles such as low parental engagement and using inappropriate education methods, the effectiveness of home-school collaboration greatly decreased. To improve the parent-teacher partnership, both parents and teachers should make efforts to align goals and perform frequent communication. This research revealed the insights of frontline teachers, creating a more comprehensive picture regarding the issue of home-school collaboration. It is hoped that by considering teachers' perspectives, schools and relevant stakeholders and authorities can take this research result as a reference and improve relevant policies to help foster home-school collaboration.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Transcript (Teacher A)

1. How important do you think home-school collaboration is in Hong Kong kindergarten settings?

Home-school collaboration is very important in Hong Kong because it can help kindergartens and parents establish a good bridge of communication, while both two parties are children-oriented. Therefore, home-school collaboration can promote the relationship between kindergartens and parents, and also promote the relationship between children and parents.

2. Can you describe the current strategies or practices of promoting home-school collaboration in your kindergarten?

My kindergarten currently has a lot of practices to promote home-school cooperation. For example, parents are invited back to the kindergarten every morning to read books to their children. Different parents are invited so that parents can try to teach children to listen to stories in the school. There are also various events held in the kindergarten, for example, once we held a tour to Ocean Park on Saturdays, and the school also invited parent volunteers to assist with the event. Moreover, the school also holds activities in some festivals, such as making Mid-Autumn lanterns during the Mid-Autumn Festival, and having dragon and lion dances during the New Year.

3. Can you share some experiences of you promoting parental involvement in the past? What was the result?

I have held two parent lectures before, the first one was about children's emotional intelligence. The first part of the activity is for parents to listen to us talking about children's emotions, how to control children when they have

emotions, what methods to use to help others, etc. Then parents would know how to deal with children when they have negative emotions. After the lecture, the next part of the activity is for children and parents to make "Emotion Bottles" together. They can make different emotions such as happy, sad, angry, and calm. This can give parents and children a chance to get along and let them understand that emotions can coexist. The results of the activities were very good because many parents participated with good responses. This activity also promoted the next activity. The second activity is also a parent lecture, which is about reading companionship. The activity is divided into two parts. The first part is we share about the techniques of accompanying reading with parents, such as questioning methods, the six-heta method, filling and expansion, etc. After the completion, there will be another activity which is children picking a book they like, and parents use the skills that we taught to read stories with the children. During the activity, parents and children had a good time while children were engaged when listening to the stories, so I think the results are pretty good.

4. Did you find any challenges or difficulties when you tried to involve parents into children's learning? How did you address the problem?

The main challenge is that when a child fails to do something or is unhappy with that, parents will immediately go to help him. They will feel that it is a must to help the children when they cannot do it or losing temper. But I think we need to tell parents that we can let children try on their own first, and then they can learn from their mistakes after they have tried. Because parents are often too worried about their children, so I think there is a need for us to tell parents that children can learn from their mistakes. And since they are still in the learning stage at this age, we can allow them to try and explore on their own. So I think this is the biggest challenge, which is when parents find that children cannot do it, they will immediately help them instead of letting the child try independently.

5. As a critical role to facilitate parental involvement, what recommendation do you have for improving collaboration between kindergarten teachers and parents?

I think regular parent-teacher meetings can be held to allow parents to express their opinions, and kindergarten teachers can also receive their opinions. I think parents can be allowed to suggest what needs improvement and some activities during parent-teacher meetings, such as which places to visit, so that parents can feel more involved, and they will also know that the school attaches great importance to their opinions.

Appendix 2: Transcript (Teacher B)

1. How important do you think home-school collaboration is in Hong Kong kindergarten settings?

I think home-school collaboration is very important for the kindergartens in Hong Kong. For children, teachers and family members are the ones they have the most contact with. To promote children's development, the two must have close cooperation and contact, so that children's needs can be observed and assistance can be provided for their growth. Secondly, there are many dual-career families in Hong Kong, which means that children's daily caregivers may change. Therefore, teachers should have closer contact with children's parents to have a better understanding of the children's situation.

2. Can you describe the current strategies or practices of promoting home-school collaboration in your kindergarten?

The current methods used by my kindergarten to promote home-school collaboration include phone calls, writing handbooks, eClass, sending notices, updating school websites, parents' class observations, parents' home-based assessments, and children's portfolios.

3. Can you share some experiences of you promoting parental involvement in the past? What was the result?

In the past, there was a child who did not meet the developmental milestones of their age in the assessment, so I called the child's parents to share the child's situation in school. At that time, parents shared with me how their children were studying at home, and also told me that they did not know how to assist their child with the learning. Therefore, I teach parents on the phone about how to assist children's learning in order to help the child master the concepts, and I also provide additional help to that child in school. Although the results are not of the

highest standard, we can see that after discussion with parents, the children's performance has improved.

4. Did you find any challenges or difficulties when you tried to involve parents into children's learning? How did you address the problem?

When I try to involve parents in their children's learning, I find that many parents' teaching methods are inappropriate, resulting in children's learning difficulties. At that time, I would first understand the current educating methods with the parents. When I discovered the problems, I would analyze the problems in their educating methods with the parents, and then guide the parents to apply new education methods to better assist the children's learning.

5. As a critical role to facilitate parental involvement, what recommendation do you have for improving collaboration between kindergarten teachers and parents?

I think the schools can involve parents participating in various kinds of activities. In this way, not only parents can better understand the school's daily operations, but also the communication between the school and parents can be increased.

Appendix 3: Transcript (Teacher C)

1. How important do you think home-school collaboration is in Hong Kong kindergarten settings?

I think it is very important because the timetable and curriculum in school are too tight. Although we will review the content with children in school, it still relies much on parents to keep revising with children, so that they can fully learn new knowledge. Also, there are many parent volunteers in our kindergarten who will help with simple tasks, such as paper cutting. This kind of assistance also helped a lot with teachers.

2. Can you describe the current strategies or practices of promoting home-school collaboration in your kindergarten?

We call parents on a regular basis to tell them about their children's situation and chat sometimes to understand the recent situation of their family, probably once every two months. Moreover, when parents come to school, different teachers and the principal will have close communication with the parents by chatting with them to understand their views towards the school. Also, all the announcements and notices will be uploaded to eSchool for parents, and all announcements will be made carefully and closely.

3. Can you share some experiences of you promoting parental involvement in the past? What was the result?

For example, once parents made cake handicrafts for our school's 45th anniversary. We have prepared a parent-child material package with all the methods and samples for parents to refer to. Parents would know how to make it by reading those instructions, so they can make it with their children at home. When the children brought back their finished products, they were all very

beautiful, and we knew that they had great parent-child interactions during the process.

4. Did you find any challenges or difficulties when you tried to involve parents into children's learning? How did you address the problem?

Our school had held a Chinese Culture Day. All the children can bring one parent to come back and participate. The major difficulty is mainly due to space constraints. To prevent overcrowding, we arranged a timetable which instructs timeslots of playing stall games and eating snacks for different classes, so that the safety of both parents and children can be ensured.

5. As a critical role to facilitate parental involvement, what recommendation do you have for improving collaboration between kindergarten teachers and parents?

I think there needs to be more communication between parents and teachers, such as what needs parents to cooperate at home so that children can achieve various desired results. In fact, parents are doing it for the best of their children.

Therefore, when the school has the opportunity for parents to participate as volunteers, I think parents can take this chance to get in touch with more children and understand how the classrooms work on a daily basis. It can also help them to know what teachers have to do in their work, so that they can understand more about each other. To sum up, I think encouraging communication and volunteering opportunities are both important.

Appendix 4: Transcript (Teacher D)

1. How important do you think home-school collaboration is in Hong Kong kindergarten settings?

I think the most important thing in home-school collaboration is to establish a relationship with parents. Many school affairs require parents' consent and support before they can be implemented smoothly. Parents' participation in school affairs also helps their children's learning and growth in school.

2. Can you describe the current strategies or practices of promoting home-school collaboration in your kindergarten?

Currently, our school has a parent-teacher association (PTA), and members of the PTA hold regular meetings with parents. During the meeting, the school will first report to parents about the current situation of the school, and then discuss upcoming activities together. Some of the school activities will be funded by the PTA (for example: travel bus fees for picnic day and Christmas gifts, etc.). When the school publishes event notices, items funded by the PTA will also be clearly listed. In addition, the PTA has a Liaison Officer, who is responsible for releasing school news to parents from time to time and inviting parents to serve as event volunteers, so that parents who are not members of the PTA can also participate in school affairs.

3. Can you share some experiences of you promoting parental involvement in the past? What was the result?

For children who cannot catch up with the class or have special learning needs, teachers will propose some improvement suggestions to parents so that parents can also study with their children at home. The effectiveness depends on the participation level of parents. Since some parents are busy with work, even if teachers give suggestions, parents may not be able to follow up. However, for

children whose parents can engage in their learning, the children's learning will be generally improved after a period of time.

4. Did you find any challenges or difficulties when you tried to involve parents into children's learning? How did you address the problem?

The major challenge is parents' participation and engagement. Some parents are unable to follow up on their children's learning due to work, while some parents despise their children's learning problems and believe that their children are still in kindergarten and do not need to pay too much attention to their studies, leading that teacher's suggestions on learning are not accepted. In such cases, teachers will continuously encourage parents to take time and study with their children at home, teachers will also provide additional assistance or adjustments to children at school.

5. As a critical role to facilitate parental involvement, what recommendation do you have for improving collaboration between kindergarten teachers and parents?

I think the daily workload of teachers is already heavy and it is difficult to devote sufficient time to home-school collaboration matters. If schools want to promote parent-teacher collaboration, they should consider teachers' workload and provide additional support.

Appendix 5: Transcript (Teacher E)

1. How important do you think home-school collaboration is in Hong Kong kindergarten settings?

It is very important.

2. Can you describe the current strategies or practices of promoting home-school collaboration in your kindergarten?

Our school has a Parent-Teacher Association, parent-child activities, parents lectures and parents' day.

3. Can you share some experiences of you promoting parental involvement in the past? What was the result?

When possible, I will talk with parents after school about children's learning and provide suggestions. However, some of them will follow up while some of them will ignore it.

4. Did you find any challenges or difficulties when you tried to involve parents into children's learning? How did you address the problem?

For example, when children are doing the copybook, some parents will hold their children's hands and help them to do homework. As a result, children have never known how to write and cannot even master the basics of holding a pen. When children are doing homework in groups, I will first correct their posture of holding a pen, and then write the words step by step for them to follow. In the later stage, I will verbally explain the stroke order and let the children follow the stroke order that I told them.

5. As a critical role to facilitate parental involvement, what recommendation do you have for improving collaboration between kindergarten teachers and parents?

I suggest that parents who did not pay much attention to their children's learning can take the initiative to try to follow up more with their children's learning, so that children can benefit from it.

INFORMATION SHEET

Hong Kong kindergarten teachers' attitudes towards home-school collaboration, difficulties they perceived and related suggestions: An interview study

You are invited to participate in a project supervised by Professor Li Hui and conducted by Leung Yuen Tung, who are staff / students of the Department of Early Childhood Education in The Education University of Hong Kong.

The introduction of the research

The purpose of this study is to explore the attitudes, difficulties, and suggestions of Hong Kong kindergarten teachers regarding the issue of home-school collaboration. By revealing the perspectives of kindergarten teachers, it is hoped that relevant adjustments can be made to improve home-school collaborating practices.

The methodology of the research

A total of 5 participants will be recruited. A 30-minute individual interviews will be held. The interview will be conducted through online or face-to-face meetings in a distraction-free environment. Hong Kong kindergarten teachers who worked as teaching staff in a local kindergarten for at least 2 years will be qualified as the target interviewees. The interviews will be semi-structured, in which the researcher may ask extended questions based on a set of general questions to obtain more in-depth answers. The interviews will be conducted between February 2024 to March 2024.

The potential risks of the research

Your participation in the project is voluntary. You have every right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. All information related to you will remain confidential, and will be identifiable by codes known only to the researcher.

Confidentiality

Your real name will not be shown in the research paper. The data will be stored in a personal computer offline, and no data will be uploaded to online drive. The data will be kept for 180 days, all the data will be deleted afterwards.

If you would like to obtain more information about this study, please contact Leung Yuen Tung at telephone number or their supervisor Professor Li Hui at telephone number

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the Human Research Ethics Committee by email at hrec@eduhk.hk or by mail to Research and Development Office, The Education University of Hong Kong.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

Leung Yuen Tung

Principal Investigator

Appendix 7: Consent form

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**Hong Kong kindergarten teachers' attitudes towards home-school collaboration,
difficulties they perceived and related suggestions: An interview study**

I _____ hereby consent to participate in the captioned research supervised by Professor Li Hui and conducted by Leung Yuen Tung, who are staff / students of Department of Early Childhood Education in The Education University of Hong Kong.

I understand that information obtained from this research may be used in future research and may be published. However, my right to privacy will be retained, i.e., my personal details will not be revealed.

The procedure as set out in the **attached** information sheet has been fully explained. I understand the benefits and risks involved. My participation in the project is voluntary.

I acknowledge that I have the right to question any part of the procedure and can withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

Name of participant

Signature of participant

Date
