

PARENTAL CHOICE OF PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN HONG KONG

**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctorate of Education**

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to identify and examine the factors that are affecting Chinese parental decisions to enroll their children in local private non-profit Christian primary schools in Hong Kong. Two research instruments were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from parents. These include the questionnaire survey and the follow-up telephone interviews. A total of 1404 questionnaires were given out, to three different schools, with a return rate of 82%. A total of 59 parents who returned their questionnaires were interviewed for explanation of their responses. Documentary analyses were conducted to assess whether or not the case schools are in line with the parents' expressed preferences.

The study identifies three leading criteria which parents use in the selection of a private primary school. The "academic-centered" aspects and the "child-centered" aspects (Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998) have been found to be parents' major concerns and they are closely linked to teacher attitudes which parents value highly. The selection criteria were perceived to be influenced by traditional Chinese cultural values on education and character development.

A parent-school interaction pattern has been established in this study. It reflects the concern of parents on the effectiveness of the school in enhancing students' discipline and academic performance through teachers with positive attitudes. Common parental school choice factors are examined and discussed. The study established that parents perceived positive teacher attitudes to be interconnected with student's behavioural and academic performance. It also established that parents who perceived the effectiveness of Chinese cultural values on education also perceived improvements in child's behavioural and academic performance.

This study provides school administrators with additional understanding of the interconnecting relations between children's school performance and teacher attitudes. A model of private school choice framework was created to show the interactions among parents, teachers, students and the school management.

Key words

Chinese cultural values

Hong Kong

Primary school

Parental choice

Private

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Chapter I

Introduction

Management issues within the author's own institution

The author, in her role as an insider researcher, was prompted to undertake this research study in order to locate the factors that affect parental choice of private primary schools in Hong Kong after working with private primary school parents for over ten years. Johnson (1994:9) claims the advantages of looking for particular aspects of management within the researcher's own institution, since the aspects "which would justify close study are probably known" to the researcher who does not need "to travel to new sites either during or outside working hours". A few parental choice factors had been assumed to be relevant to Hong Kong professionals in the field without conducting a formal study by the researcher. These assumptions were established by the researcher's informal data collected throughout a longitudinal period of approximately ten years. In order to provide data for investigation and analysis of the topic of enquiry, the researcher selected two sample schools, NY and CK, in addition to the researcher's own school, SC, to locate answers to the research questions.

Defining the terms

Who are the "Chinese" parents?

The purpose of this study is to identify and examine the factors that are affecting Chinese parental decisions to enrol students in private primary schools in Hong Kong. The term

“Chinese” refers to the Chinese population who are brought up in an environment where Chinese cultures are deeply embedded. Examples of places where such an environment is found are Hong Kong, Mainland China and Taiwan.

Does the ethnicity “Chinese” convey any cultural influence in parental decision?

Bush (1995) suggests that “informal aspects” are the central features of cultural models and that cultural models consist of these approaches:

Cultural models assume that beliefs, values and ideology are at the heart of organizations. Individuals hold certain ideas and value-preferences which influence how they behave and how they view the behaviour of other members. These norms become shared traditions which are communicated within the group and are reinforced by symbols and ritual (Bush, 1995:130).

Closely linked to Bush’s interpretation of cultures, Ownbey (1991:16) defines “Chinese cultures” as the “unique heritage” that influences the values of the Chinese population in general. The decision of Chinese parents to enrol students in private primary schools is therefore assumed to be affected by Chinese cultural values.

What kind of “private” primary schools are included in the study?

The term “private” is further narrowed down to those private primary schools that are non-profit. Profit-making schools that are allowed a percentage of profit margin have been excluded from this study. “Primary schools” are referred to as those schools that are adopting the main-stream curriculum for locally born Chinese children between the age range

of six and eleven. The major medium of instruction in these primary schools is Cantonese which is a Chinese dialect used by 98% of the Chinese population in Hong Kong.

Aspects related to “academic performance”, “school discipline” and “teacher attitude”

Definitions of the key terms used in the study were established with reference to the interpretations by researchers who conducted studies in parental school choice factors.

“Academic” is defined by Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998: 653) as the “educational progress that is primarily oriented toward success in examinations – in particular, examinations valued more as perceived indicators of some general level of achievement and learning than as measures of skills attained for specific occupations”. “Academic performance”, in this study, is pointing to students’ academic success in public examinations.

Buttrum (1994:59, 144) of the United States defines “good discipline” as a “safer environment” for the children. Dale (1997:451-468) of the United Kingdom claims that “good discipline” can be a matter of social order. “Discipline” was defined by Bernstein (1977:38-39) as “conduct, manner, and character”. “School discipline” was interpreted by Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998: 653) as the “personal, social, and pastoral aspect of school” which help to create an environment where children feel “happy, comfortable and safe” and discipline is therefore related to “welfare issues”. Best et al.’s (1983:255) study of teachers’ views on pastoral care in one school suggested that they perceived their pastoral role as one of maintaining discipline and control. In Hong Kong, “good discipline” refers to personality

development and the provision of a conducive environment for learning (Cheung, 1993; Fung, 1996; Tsang, 1998). “School discipline” is therefore referring to students’ behavioural performance as influenced by the school policies in pastoral care and character guidance in this research.

“Teacher attitude” was encompassed in Cheng’s (1994:54-71) “teacher leadership style” which is found to be “strongly related to social climate and student-affective performance”. Cheng (1994) relates teacher attitudes to their “use of power” in two distinct dimensions of leader behaviour: one is concerned with “people and interpersonal relations” and the other is related to “production and task achievement”. The two dimensions are considered to be contributory to teacher leadership style. The former dimension is summarized as “consideration” which refers to teachers’ provision of “friendship, mutual trust, respect, warmth, and interest in the relationship between the leader and members of the group”. The latter dimension is summarized as “initiating structure” which refers to teachers’ ability to establish “well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and methods of procedure”. Teachers’ use of power in these two dimensions has been found to be related to students’ educational attitudes, and the ways they relate to students in these dimensions are therefore defined as “teacher attitudes” in this study.

Private primary education versus public/subsidized education in Hong Kong

Educational choices available for primary school children in Hong Kong

Parents in Hong Kong have the privilege to choose their children's schools in primary education. They can enrol their children in public or subsidized schools without paying any school fee. As an alternative, parents can enrol their children in private primary schools by paying a monthly school fee ranging from HK \$ 300 to over HK \$10,000 per month.

Public and subsidized education in Hong Kong

Public primary schools are government-run, with teachers hired directly by the Education Department. Subsidized schools are managed by school management committees of religious bodies or private organizations which are committed to contribute voluntary services to the development of education in the Hong Kong society, with close adherence to the codes of education. Under most circumstances, these religious bodies or organizations are required to raise funds for constructing the school buildings even though the land is provided free by the government. Staff salaries and operating expenses of subsidized schools are also fully funded by the government.

Under the Hong Kong Education ordinance, all children have to receive nine years of compulsory education, from primary one to primary six followed by three years in the secondary schools. All the nine years of education provided in public and subsidized schools are free of charge to students in the territory. Primary school students are allocated

to government and subsidized schools through the Primary One Admission central allocation system which requires 100% student admission whenever places are available.

Nature of private primary education for Chinese students in Hong Kong

Private primary schools are self-dependent, with no monetary support from the government.

Private schools can be further divided into two types, the profit and non-profit ones. Profit schools are permitted to maintain a certain profit margin, when non-profit schools are not allowed to do so. In terms of the language of instruction in school, private schools are divided into local and international schools. Local primary schools are run for Chinese students whose medium of learning is “Cantonese”. International primary schools are operated for children whose medium of learning is either “English” or other foreign languages.

Number of private primary schools in Hong Kong

A total of 81 private primary schools (Education Department, 1996) are spread in thirteen out of sixteen districts of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories. These districts include Kowloon City, Wong Tai-sin, Eastern Hong Kong, Wanchai, Shamshuipo, Lantau, Sai Kung, Yuen Long, Yaumatei and Tsimshatsui, Kwun Tong, Mongkok, Central and Western parts of Hong Kong, Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi Island. No private primary school is found in the North of Hong Kong Island, Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan districts. The total private primary school population is 74,000 in 1996 (Education Department, 1996a).

32 private primary schools are on Hong Kong Island, 5 are in the New Territories and 44 are in Kowloon. The district with the greatest number of private primary schools is Kowloon City where a larger number of popular secondary schools are located. The tendency to establish private primary schools in areas where popular secondary schools are located is encouraged by the existing Secondary School Place Allocation System which allocates secondary school places to most of the primary school students who reside or enrol in primary schools within the same catchment areas.

47 out of the 81 private primary schools are non-profit. Only 8 out of the 24 private primary schools in Kowloon City are non-profit, the lowest percentage of non-profit private primary schools of all the school districts.

Purpose of the study

Comparing the differences between Chinese and western parental choice factors

The current study examines concepts of parental choice in education and its practice in Hong Kong. The study relates to the Hong Kong context and the findings are compared to the concepts of parental choice in western countries. Factors and backgrounds contributing to their choices in education are analyzed in relation to the emergence and existence of private primary education in Hong Kong.

Examining the roles of private primary schools in the Hong Kong education system

The success of private primary school education in Hong Kong, as indicated by the number of schools and pupils, poses the following two questions to educators:

1. If private schools are providing a unique service currently unmatched by public schools, then decisions must be made as to whether or not those “adaptations to changing external conditions” (Coleman, Bush & Glover, 1994:34) need to be adopted by the public school system;
2. If private schools are providing a service that can be replaced by public schools in the future, then decisions must be made by the management of private schools on their future roles in the education system of Hong Kong.

Parental/child influence in school selection and selection strategies by parents

The investigation also examines the degree of parental and child influence in school choice. School selection strategies by parents as well as students’ academic and behavioral change, as observed by parents, prior to and after the school choice, are also investigated. Parental choice of a school for their child is assumed to be influenced by parental cultural values and their definition of a quality school. Their concepts of parenthood and filial piety are therefore included in the investigation. Children’s influence in school choice is also examined in addition to assessing the needs of children and their parents.

The role of quality management and marketing in relation to school choice

Since parental choice of a school is very likely to be the outcome of successful school management or marketing strategies, the study also aims at examining the relationship between school choice, quality management and marketing techniques.

Research questions

The study seeks to identify the reasons parents use in determining whether or not to enrol their children in a private primary school. It also helps to identify several variables related to their choice. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the factors affecting Chinese parental decisions to enrol their children in private primary schools for the first time? How are these factors ranked by the parents?
2. What are the parental perceptions of changes since their children's enrolment in private primary schools?
3. What are the explanations responsible for parents' selection and their children's behavioural changes after enrolment in private primary schools?
4. What is the influence of Chinese cultural values on child development and parental choice?

Answers to these research questions are obtained through two research tools ----- the survey and the follow-up interviews. Documents from the three sample schools are also examined, to investigate if relevant patterns emerge from the topics of enquiry.

Significance of the study

The impact of "Chinese" parental influence in primary school choice

Private education and parental choice have been a subject of research interest in the United States and the United Kingdom for decades. Parental choice of public school places is even linked to the amount of funding in England (Coleman, Bush & Glover, 1994:33, 46). In the Chinese world, the relationship between parental choice and private education has yet to be evaluated. It is generally agreed that different factors will be considered by different ethnic groups (West, 1994) in their school selection behaviours. The Chinese have a long history of education, dated back to the teaching of Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.). Within the family, filial piety and the five types of relationships (father, mother, husband, wife and children) were regarded as the corner-stones of the Chinese way of life. Parental authority within the family was absolute and should not be challenged by the children. Hence they can direct their children to attain educational goals much easier than western families. Parental choice, especially in primary education, therefore plays a significant role in the Hong Kong context where Chinese people constitute more than 98% of the total population.

The drive for improvements in primary education

The recent economic decline in Hong Kong has led to a growing concern about the effectiveness of education (Hong Kong Entrepreneur, 1997) because an increasing number of competent Asian countries seem to be gradually taking over the status of Hong Kong. The

value of free education has been questioned and the accountability of school managers was challenged. Should the government continue to provide free education if it is unable to meet the expectation of parents? On the other hand, if the primary reasons for choosing a private school are for better academic programs, then, it should follow that enrolment in private schools would decrease if public schools could improve and meet the needs of students as a result of competition. If parents choose private schools for these reasons, the government should learn how to establish public schools that can provide quality education as demanded by the parents. If parents choose private schools for other reasons, decisions must then be made to examine what kind of practices in private schools are attractive to parents and need to be adopted by public schools.

With an in-depth understanding of factors influencing parental choice in education, Hong Kong educators in both public and private schools may be prompted to make improvements on the areas concerned and help contribute to the enhancement of education. It is therefore the objective of the writer to conduct research on factors affecting parents' decision to enrol their children in private primary schools.

Contribution of the study

To educationalists in Hong Kong, this study has important contributions to an understanding of parental choice factors in private primary education for three reasons:

1. There has been no research on parental elementary school choice behaviour in Hong

Kong, and there is a need to obtain primary data concerning their decision process in elementary school selection.

2. Little research has been conducted concerning parents' perception of the benefits their children obtain from private primary education in Hong Kong.
3. The Hong Kong education department has been providing minimal support for the operation of private primary schools, including those run by non-profit bodies (Hong Kong Education Department Administration Circulars, 1999). The funding flexibility recommendations stated in the Education Commission Report No.7 (1997:23-30) and the Review of Education System: Reform Proposals (2000:16) did not include any form of support to be provided to the existing private schools. The "Direct Subsidy Scheme" is intended to be introduced only to aided primary schools (the Education Commission Report No.7, 1997:30). The roles of private primary education will be examined in this study and the findings will shed light on the need for further research in this area.

Scope of the study and assumptions

Parents as the stakeholders of educational services

Whether education is a service to clients or customers is a debatable statement, depending on the nature of services and the identity of its customers/clients (Harvey, 1996:26). If parents are considered to be "customers" (Coleman, 1997:23, 63) or "stakeholders" (Coleman, Bush & Glover, 1994:33, 45) of the educational services in the society, should they be allowed a choice in the selection of schools for their children? It then implies that schools have to be

responsive to the “wants and needs” (Coleman, 1997:9, 71) or “demands” of the stakeholders through the concept of marketing (Coleman, Bush & Glover, 1994:37, 40). Taylor (1986) also suggests that parents’ rights in education should include “choice”.

Quality indicators as guides for parental choice

In the past decade, there has been a deep concern about the quality of education provided in the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. As a result, the Education Commission in Hong Kong has published the Educational Commission Report No.7 in 1996 - the Quality School Education Consultation document - which emphasized that the education system should be student-centred and school-based to develop a quality culture. In the summary of recommendations, the above report emphasized that schools have to develop output indicators for self evaluation. Perceptions of the school by parents, students and teachers were considered important output indicators by the Education Commission (Hong Kong Entrepreneur, 1997:83).

Quality education in the public sector

Despite the fact that Hong Kong provides free education for nine years, including six years in primary schools and three years in secondary schools, there are still eighty-one private primary schools (Hong Kong School List, 1996). With few exceptions, private primary schools are perceived to be more popular and generally have higher academic standing (Radio and Television Hong Kong, 1999). The existence of these 81 schools, therefore, leads to the

assumption that there are some perceived deficiencies in the current public and subsidized primary school system. These deficiencies are likely to be discovered through analyses and reflection from the parental school choice factors in this study.

Limitations and delimitations

Limitations

This study examines factors that are affecting Chinese parental decisions to enrol students in private primary schools in Hong Kong. As indicated earlier, the “Chinese” parents have included only samples from Hong Kong and might not be capable of representing all Chinese parents from the culturally Chinese societies such as Taiwan and Mainland China, even though there are substantial commonalties among parents in these three places. The ways parents educate children are in one way or another affected by the social features that exist in the immediate environment. Chinese parents who reside in western countries such as the United States, Canada and the European countries are even more remote to traditional Chinese cultures when compared to Chinese parents in other Asian countries, and findings from this study might not be reflective of their school selection behavior.

As with many other countries, the education system in Hong Kong keeps changing in order to match the current needs of the society. Factors that are considered significant to parental decisions to enrol students in private primary schools are therefore likely to vary from time to time depending on circumstances and with close reference to the societal characteristics.

Findings from this study are not likely to be capable of reflecting the school selection behaviors of all Chinese parents in the world.

There was no relevant Hong Kong academic literature on parental choice of private primary schools at the commencement of this study. Factors linked to parental choice of secondary schools in Hong Kong are therefore used to provide insights in relevant areas. In fact, only fragmented informal and indirect information about parental primary school choice behaviours can be located from parent-child magazines or newspapers in the market place (Parentage, 1999; Sing Tao Yat Po, 1999).

The study was limited by the sample size of the target population. Generalizability of the findings was limited to emerging themes and pattern for further study. It was also limited to the ability and cooperation of the interviewees and also the expertise and skill level of the interviewer in collecting and analyzing the data.

Delimitations

Samples are drawn from three private primary schools in Kowloon which has a greater number of private primary schools than Hong Kong Island and the New Territories.

Organization of the study

Three sample schools were selected to provide data for the study after an initial conceptual framework had been established. Chapter I outlines the purpose and significance of the study, listing the research questions to be answered. Chapter II provides a literature review of empirical findings as well as concepts of parental choice of school. Chapter III explains the methodology, including the reasons for selecting the research methods and instruments, followed by chapter IV, V and VI which provide survey and interview findings from the three sample schools. Chapter VII provides the analyses and comparison of data with reference to the framework derived from the findings. Documentary analyses are used to reflect on how much the three schools have accomplished with reference to their established missions and their parental expectations. Findings are then interpreted and presented as a model for further research. Concluding remarks and recommendations are presented in Chapter VIII.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Definition of ‘choice’ and anticipated products of ‘education’

Choice

In the education context, the word ‘choice’ has different meanings to different people in different countries and localities (Rofes, 1992:503). ‘Choice’ refers to “the affirmative decision parents make when they send their children to a school....” (Smrekar, 1996:8). Factors affecting school choice are “multifaceted”, as they are linked to both interest in the selected schools and explanations of school success which are focused on a combination of qualities in the area of curriculum, instructional approaches, program types or organizational features (Raywid, 1995:309).

For some, ‘choice’ means they are free to compete for admission to a popular school (Report on Primary One Admission, 1998:6) or decide whether their children go to public schools or private schools (Report on Primary One Admission, 1998:8) or receive their education at home (Rofes, 1992:504). For others, ‘choice’ means that they have a substantial influence on which schools their children attend “by choosing where to live” (Rouse, 1998:61; Rofes, 1992:504) or travel to schools that are not located within their residential districts (Rouse, 1998:61; Report on Primary One Admission, 1998:8). In East Harlem, ‘choice’ refers to the freedom of sixth graders to choose a school with the specialties they prefer to take in the junior high schools within the district (Rofes, 1992:504). Wong (1997:85) interprets ‘choice’ as the freedom of Taiwanese to establish the types of schools that one considers appropriate. This includes the choice of course content, teaching methods, teacher types or student target population. In Milwaukee of the United States, ‘choice’ means that some poor families can send their children to private schools, free of charge, because the government will provide needy families with vouchers (McGroarty,

1994:94; Rofes, 1992:504) to be redeemed at any private schools. An inclusive summary of the meaning of 'choice' is allowing parents to choose the school that "best meets the needs of their children" (Johnson, 1990:95; Sauter, 1994:32; Smedley, 1995:97; Forbes, 1996:25) or enables parents "to choose the type of education best suited to their children" (Education Commission Report No.7, 1997:46).

In Hong Kong, 'choice' also has different meanings in education:-

- (a) Choice can mean that parents may choose to send their children to any public or private school (Report on Primary One Admission, 1998:8);
- (b) Choice can mean that parents may send their children to schools in different districts under the "unrestricted discretionary places" category (Report on Primary One Admission, 1998:8; Report on Secondary School Place Allocation, 1998:3-4);
- (c) Choice can mean that parents may select schools with specific subject types or course content, schools with different funding sources, schools that provide more diversities, and schools with different religious backgrounds, etc. (Education Commission Report No.7:46; Report on Primary One Admission, 1998:8; Report on Secondary School Place Allocation, 1998:3-4).

The rationale for educational choice

Parents' rationales for school choice reflect their values and areas of interest. From the organizational point of view, Pardey (1991) states that organizational values shape their goals and decision making. These organizational values are reflected in their mission (Chubb, 1995:299) and every aspect of the organizational behaviour which includes teachers' performance and students' abilities and achievements. As parents' educational choice is an underlying force that pushes educational institutions to enhance their performance, Chubb (1995:297) believes that educational choice helps to improve the American educational system

in general, when educational leaders become more accountable for their outputs. Harvey and Busher (1996:31) stress the importance of identifying the rationales of educational organizations as they help parents to make reasoned choices that match with their children's needs. The following section highlights the varieties of rationales as derived from school choices. They are established through the interpretation of education professionals whose beliefs differ from one another. These rationales provide the evidence of why a given decision is made in the school choice process.

Choice ensures 'customer' satisfaction

West-Burnham (1992a:28-42) defines parents and students as 'customers' since "a customer is anyone to whom a product or service is provided". His supplier-customer relationships model (West-Burnham, 1992a:31) considers parents as the 'final customers' and therefore their needs have to be fully understood and met. He suggests that it is important to ensure "customer satisfaction" by being responsive to "children, community and the full range of stake-holders in education". He sees customer choice as the result of service satisfaction. Harvey and Busher (1996:31) quote Gray's postulation (1991) to promote "customer care" and to enhance levels of "customer" satisfaction. In the large-scale study of Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:650-676), one of the purposes was to locate "the factors and criteria that influence parental preferences" and found that some changes which emerged in the education system are the result of "school responsiveness to parents". Ogawa and Dutton (1997:333-353) researched parents' attitudes towards school choice and found that parental satisfaction and dissatisfaction are closely linked to their opportunity to use vouchers. All these researchers consider that parental satisfaction plays a significant role in school choice.

Coleman, Bush and Glover (1994:33,46) consider that the management of external relations is linked to educational choice by parents and students. In this context, they relate educational

choice to marketing, postulate adopting an 'open' organization policy and emphasize the importance of being accountable to 'customers'. They point out that schools have to be "aware of the needs of the 'customer' and to consider the nature of the 'market' in which they operate" (Coleman, Bush and Glover, 1994:33). An example was given that educational choice determined funding which was controlled by the number of pupils enrolled. West-Burnham (1992:28-36) claims that maintaining customer satisfaction is crucial to ensuring successful marketing in educational choice. A number of strategies that affect parents' choice of schools have been recommended to ensure quality customer service. These include "conformance to requirements", "continuous improvement", "responsiveness", "integration", "focus on delivery" as well as "listening to customers" (West-Burnham, 1992a:36-39).

Choice reflects how well a school looks after the child and how best it meets the identified needs

Harvey and Busher (1996:29-31) indicate that the different needs and wants of children and their parents have to be identified in order to have "a high quality product" to attract their choice. These include their need to locate a school with a favourable learning environment and good educational standards; a school where student performance is rated high; a school that is capable of giving children happiness and allowing them to have positive personal and social development (Harvey, 1996:36).

Similar needs, including "the atmosphere of the school" as well as "health, ability and temperament of the child concerned", are highlighted by Harvey (1996:35) when she quotes research data regarding factors affecting parental choice of schools. Other needs commonly identified by parents are "good discipline", "proximity to home/ease of access", etc. (Harvey, 1996:36). She also points to parents' needs in respect of the

school curriculum, facilities and pastoral care as well as social benefits of children when she develops her marketing strategies.

Needs and preferences of parents have been perceived to be a driving force that encourages schools to be more responsive to the parents who are consumers in the education market (Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998:650).

Choice includes the right to access both “basic needed” and “desired” education

The “equality argument” in favour of formal schooling claims that the equal right to education should be interpreted as the equal opportunity to receive “basic needed education” as well as the chance to get more “desired education” (Johnson, 1990:6). Johnson indicates that the coexistence of public and private fee-paying education reflects the urge for school choice (Johnson, 1990:7). She reports the findings of a number of researchers and concludes that parental choice is a right which also promotes the accountability of schools (Johnson, 1990:10-11). Harvey and Busher (1996:31) also highlight the “commitment to meeting the needs of parents and students with a high quality product”. Consistent with Johnson’s reports on the general consensus for schools to be sensitive to individual needs, Harvey and Busher (1996:31) also claim that parents need to be informed of how well schools look after their children’s needs. Individualists claim that parents should have the right to be fully informed of all school information so that choice may be exercised effectively (Johnson, 1990:11). Johnson (1990:12) considers that “rights in school” should be extended to the school authority in regard to student admission, curriculum planning and policies for hiring staff. She claims that schools should be given the right to select students they prefer, when parents exercise their right over school choice. They should also be given autonomy in the school curriculum design and in the

appointment of teachers. These ensure that education can be provided in accordance with the established mission and goals of the school. The “desired education”, from the perspective of the school and that of the parents, then creates a partnership relationship which keeps influencing one another throughout the schooling years (Johnson,1990:12). The type of education that emerges, whether it be “basic needed” or “desired” education, is therefore the product of a “co-choice” emerging from the partnership relationship of the school and its parents. School choice then suggests that both the providers and the consumers should have the right to voice their opinions and request the other party to meet their “desired” needs.

Choice and niche marketing

The “image” or “visual identity” of a school, as perceived by parents and students, affects their choice (Coleman, 1997:27). Marketing education therefore plays an important role. Coleman (1997:9) suggests that marketing education is “to identify the needs and wants of students, pupils and their parents”, and then to attempt to meet their needs. Marketing education involves not only promoting the strengths of a school but also conducting a comprehensive development planning cycle (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991:5) that is capable of ensuring continuous improvements. Smedley (1995:96) also claims that the needs and wants of parents and students are crucial constituents in marketing education. He suggests focusing on what they want and places emphasis on “good pastoral care and discipline” and “the distinctiveness” of the school. He also recommends raising awareness of the school, to consider niche marketing, as well as be aware of the competition (Coleman, 1997:26). Coleman (1997:27) also points out that image building relates to a constructive building process and establishing public relations with the media.

Harvey and Busher (1996:29-30) claim that it is more feasible to target specific client groups

when marketing education, since it is unlikely to meet all the variety of needs and wants in the community. They point out that independent schools “can elect to service a niche market for particular parent wants and income brackets”. They suggest “to identify these parent niches in the market by specifics or by descriptors” such as “the range of courses”, “extracurricular activities”, “media exposure”, “age”, “gender”, “geodemographics” or “people’s preferred lifestyle”, etc.

The nine elements that affect school choice, as identified by Barnes (1993), were highlighted by Coleman (1997:27) to demonstrate the impact of marketing in education:

1. the school logo,
2. the school prospectus,
3. effective sign-posting,
4. stationery embossed with the logo,
5. distinctive school uniforms,
6. responsive front-line staff and pupils,
7. the headteacher’s established public profile and ability to make apt speeches and presentations on public occasions,
8. the impression given by pupils,
9. the reception area and the handling of telephone contact.

Foskett (1992) and Gray (1991) also stress the need to create “an institutional identity” through “promotion and public relations” as well as integration of well-planned “marketing strategies” (Coleman, 1997:28).

The marketing model developed by Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993) suggests four ideal types of school marketing strategy that relates to curriculum and style of learning (Coleman, 1997:17).

The “broad open”, “enhanced open”, “basic niche” and “enhanced niche” strategies are proposed to be undertaken “to attract students from one or more niche markets” in the light of the school’s identified vision.

Choice promotes parental involvement

West-Burnham (1992:38) considers parental integration an essential component of a successful school. He suggests “actively, deliberately and systematically” informing and involving all parents in school activities in order to integrate parents into the organization. The American Federation of Teachers (1993:19) recommends “restoring parents’ involvement in helping their children succeed in school”, since parents’ contribution to school success is highly valued. Closely linked to the rationale of Coleman, Bush and Glover (1994:47), Smrekar (1996:1) finds that parents are more involved in school-based activities when they exercise “choice”. Fliegel (1990) also states that choice creates the sense of ownership among parents when they select the school themselves and the ownership concept empowers parents “to get more involved with their child’s education” (Sauter, 1994:74). It is assumed that “enhanced choice creates communities of shared values that inspire the loyalty and commitment of parents and teachers” (Smrekar, 1996:8). Coleman (1995:303-308) considers parental involvement a “social capital” that helps to establish social connections among parents and these form a network that is capable of resisting family problems. Support through such network was proved to be viable among the parents that help the Catholic schools to enforce academic demands on students who are from disadvantaged or deficient families (Coleman, 1995:306). On the same stance, both Coleman (1995:303-308) and Winborne (1995:365) have included parent/community involvement among the major components of successful schools. Johnson (1990:11) also values parents’ partnership role with the school when building up “a fully comprehensive school system”.

The Education Commission Report of Hong Kong (1996) has also incorporated parents’

participation into the quality assurance list. Parents' positive perception of the school is considered one of the quality indicators (Education Commission Report No.7, 1996) found in quality schools. The Education Commission Report encourages parents to participate in school management to increase the transparency and the credibility of the school management system. Parents' active participation in school is also considered one of the ten effective components for primary schools in Taiwan (Lee,1996:203-204). Parents' relationship with school staff and their perception of the school were closely examined in his research. Consistent with Lee's study, Lam (1998:44-45) also emphasizes the need to win parents' trust, support and full participation in order to build up an effective school that prepares students for a harmonious society and an optimistic country.

Choice leads to accountability and student achievement

Chubb (1995:297-301) considers that the significant qualities for school choice are student achievement and school effectiveness, as affected by the accomplishment of mission, strong leadership, professionalism and autonomy in schools. He postulates that school choice holds educators accountable to the resource-providers, which can be the governance system or parents, and leads to improvement for the benefit of students. Johnson (1990: 11) also sees parental choice as a significant monitoring medium that is capable of ensuring educational quality. Chubb considers student achievement the determinant of educational success. Consistent with Chubb's stance, the Education Commission Report No.7 of Hong Kong (1996) prioritizes student academic achievement as the most important quality education output indicator. Coleman (1995:303) also points out that the effectiveness of Catholic schools is bringing about growth in student achievement by being more demanding in terms of the course work that they require of students. Educators, therefore, need to ensure that student achievement in their responsible schools is rated high.

Factors that lead to student achievement, such as staff's sense of mission, strong leadership, professionalism and school autonomy, have to be promoted (Chubb, 1995:298-299). Winborne (1995:365) also identifies strong administrative leadership, a sense of mission and student achievement as his components of successful schools. For a school to be effective in leadership, with ambitious goals, high in professionalism, it is necessary for the school to have autonomy in terms of organization (Chubb, 1995:300-303). The Education Commission Report No.7 of Hong Kong (1996:7-8) highlights the need to set "clear and commonly accepted goals" among all school staff, to allow "greater autonomy in school management" and to require "a higher degree of accountability for school performance", to ensure effectiveness.

Societies need to provide autonomy to school management and yet hold schools accountable for their performance. Coleman, Bush and Glover (1994:45) state that "the accountability of the school or college is to the market-place". They support "open enrolment" (Coleman, Bush and Glover, 1994:46) so that parents are given the right to choose a school they like. Chubb (1995:302) considers that school accountability to the market place, through "the competitive process", that is to parents and students, provides school management with the incentive and flexibility to organize effectively, to develop missions and to operate more professionally. Chubb (1995:303) suggests many ways in which schools can increase their competitiveness and quality through a market oriented system which "emphasizes more choice and competition".

Tannenbaum (1995:471-473) suggests that "the joint accountability entailed in a system in which all participants freely choose to be involved" leads to quality improvement. She points out that lack of accountability fails to provide incentives for education professionals to develop programs to meet the specific needs of their students. She recommends having a new conception of schooling by restructuring a new form of accountability system that meets the demands of "equity, diversity, and excellence".

Forbes (1996:25) offers the same line of thought as far as accountability is concerned. By putting a group of poorly performing students in private schools, the students end up by doing far better than their peers left in the same situation, in the public schools. He indicates that school choice works because it compels schools to be accountable for their performance. He supports establishing “standards” and that “accountability makes a difference”.

A conclusive function of school choice is to provide “a system of rewards and sanctions to provide incentives and cutbacks based on the schools’ responsiveness to their clients” (Sauter, 1994:74).

Choice, quality and the role of funding

From the macro economic point of view, school choice can increase the quality and effectiveness of education by introducing more competitive factors and options into the educational system (Boyer, 1992; Chubb, 1995:302; Raywid, 1995:309; Winborne, 1995:366-368). Boyer, Chubb, Raywid and Winborne suggest that school choice helps to upgrade the performance of the educational system. West-Burnham (1992a:34) states that meeting parents’ expectations is “the hallmark of quality”.

Sauter (1994:73) reports that educators become more accountable to improve the quality of educational services when school choice serves as a competitive, free market mechanism. He quotes that:

Transforming parents into education consumers will force the school to shape up or lose customers. It forces teachers and school administrators to improve instruction and toughen standards if they are to retain students, and with them, funding (Sauter, 1994:73).

Chubb's survey (1995:298) indicates that choice not only enhances quality of education but also helps to lower government spending. He points out that poorly operated schools exist because teacher salaries, per pupil expenditures and class size were "unrelated to school performance". Forbes (1996:25) suggests that "nonpublic schools, such as parochial schools, can give inner-city kids better education at a fraction of the cost of public schools".

Gwartney (1990) also agrees that parental choice can lower government spending in education without sacrificing the quality of education. He considers that additional spending in the US educational system without structural change is unlikely to improve the quality of education. He suggests that fundamental reforms that provide for parental choice, competition and greater flexibility are needed. He proposes parents to be empowered with the purchasing power (through a voucher system) and choice in order to choose the best school for their children. He concludes that it is only the best schools, those that can provide quality education at an economical cost, would thrive and expand. Gwartney's rationale in education is confirmed by Levin's philosophy of accelerated education for an accelerating economy (Levin, 1999:2-10). Levin suggests that human capital will be returned to the government only by creating a course of education that complements the changes in the economy (Levin, 1999:5). He recommends schools in Hong Kong to consider participating in "the Accelerated Schools Project" and "to work together for change that will improve quality and attend to new competencies that will be important in Hong Kong's economy" (Levin, 1999:8).

Further support of the relationship between national spending in education and educational standards is available from the report of the Third International Mathematics and Science Test. Countries with low spending in their educational budget (South Korea and Czech Republic) are at the Top of the TIMSS league table (Economist, March 29, 1997). High spenders such as America and Denmark do much worse. High performance is not accompanied by high

spending. Obviously, there are many reasons other than spending why one country does well and another does badly. However, the success of low spending countries does demonstrate that spending more on schooling is not a prerequisite for improving standards.

Rofes (1992:511) says that “choice will save taxpayer dollars” if the government provides direct subsidy to students who move to private schools. When full education funding for public education is increasingly replaced by a partial subsidy scheme for private enrolment, the government will be able to reduce dollars allocated to public schools. The direct effect will be to ease the tax burden imposed on tax-payers.

Niskanen (1991) also suggests that parental choice of schools ensures school performance and that excellent school performance affects state economic earnings, as reflected by increased productivity. He reviews the slow growth of output and real income of the US economy. To increase the growth of the US economy, he suggests that it is necessary to improve the performance of public primary and secondary schools. He considers that parental choice and competent local school authorities are the two key elements for improving public schools. His analysis assumes that school choice helps to increase state income with the help of productive achievers in the effective educational system. The American Federation of Teachers (1993:19) also suggests that the declining academic performance of American students weakens their ability “to meet challenges of a global economy”. Niskanen (1991) concludes that there is an inter-related chained impact among school choice, the school performance, productivity of students, and the state income.

Consistent with Niskanen’s (1991) analysis of the economic output from quality education, the Certified Management Association of Hong Kong comments that availability of quality school education to students enhances the competitive power of Hong Kong and “will initiate social

improvement and economic prosperity” (Hong Kong Entrepreneur, 1997:86). Similarly, Rofes (1992:510) states that “America’s continued success in the international economy depends on improving the quality of education its children receive”.

Sandy and Duncan (1996) examine whether or not students who attended private schools can earn more than those who attended public schools. They conclude that respondents who attended private schools have better labor market experiences than those who attended public schools, even when adjustments are made for school quality, family background, educational achievement, occupation and motivation.

Conceptualization of Public/ Private Schools

For years, the distinctions between public and private schools have been (a) the source of funding (b) control over admission of students (Lieberman, 1989; 1990). Traditionally, private schools have been funded through a combination of "private" sources (from religious bodies, organizations, businesses, gifts, etc.) and school fees, while public schools have been funded through taxes. Private schools have the right to deny admission to whoever they choose. Public or state schools usually need to admit students whenever places are available, since the funding comes directly from the government. A third difference between public and private schools - a derivative from the first two - has been the requirement for public schools to adhere to state or government regulations regarding curriculum, student policies and staff qualifications (Lieberman, 1989; 1990).

Increasingly, private schools in Hong Kong do, in fact, demonstrate adherence to Hong Kong Education Department regulations (Education Department, 1998c). Most private schools follow closely the curriculum of the Education Department, to prepare students

for public examinations. Teacher-training is provided by the Education Department to teachers in both public and private schools, though priority is sometimes given to teachers in public schools. In most cases, private schools are also provided with the opportunity to access teaching materials and support provided by the government (Education Department, 1998-99). Hence the distinction between educational services provided by public and private schools in terms of the curriculum content and service support is not very apparent, except that the degree of accountability towards parents seems to be more direct in private schools and less direct in public schools (Lieberman, 1989; 1990).

The Range of Choices

Johnson (1990:27-28) suggests that many parents make school choices for their children without “perfect knowledge of the market concerned”. They may choose a school because of its proximity to their home location or because of the forms of education offered. On the other hand, teachers have a comprehensive picture of the diversity within the education system. She invites parents to consider the following alternatives before selecting a school for their child (Johnson, 1990:28):

1. Public or private
2. ‘free’ or fee-paying
3. selective or non-selective (by various criteria)
4. strongly or nominally religious
5. residential or non-residential
6. single sex or co-educational
7. all-through or age-related
8. institutional or home-based

Residential and home based education are not very common in Hong Kong, but in other

respects most Hong Kong parents can enjoy a high degree of freedom for school selection. Items (1) and (2) are closely related, since all Hong Kong public schools from primary one to secondary three are "free" - which means that parents do not have to pay anything for their children. On the other hand, most private schools are 'fee-charging', ranging from a few hundred to over ten thousand Hong Kong dollars per month. Harvey (1996:35) claims that the difference between "the maintained" or "the private sector" is a common area of research for educators.

Criteria for school choice: identified needs of students and their parents

Smedley (1995:97) indicates that parental choice of schools is based on:

- (a) whether schools meet individual needs;
- (b) location;
- (c) whether siblings study in the same school;
- (d) academic standards;
- (e) gender;
- (f) ethnicity.

Other significant criteria of choice, as quoted by Harvey (1996:35), include the religious ethos, word-of-mouth reports, prior family contacts with a school, educational standards and the atmosphere of the school. Most parents are also reported to have made "a child-focused choice" based on "the health, ability and temperament of the child concerned", or "a school-focused choice" based on "size, nature of student-intake (mixed or single-sex), amenities, etc." She further cites Johnson's finding that "...the choice of secondary school was made for the oldest child: subsequent children followed on as a matter of course" (Harvey, 1996:35).

Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:650-676) found that parental choice factors are related

to the “academic-centered” and the “child-centered” aspects which are linked to the “instrumental-academic value perspective” and the “intrinsic-personal/social value perspective”. They found that parents emphasize their child’s scholastic performance on one hand, but they are also concerned about their child’s happiness and social well being in school on the other hand. The quality of affective support provided to the child would be influenced by the environment where the school discipline, peer relationships as well as child-teacher interactions play a significant role.

In the Hong Kong context of secondary school choice, three researchers (Cheung, 1993; Fung, 1996; Tsang, 1998) point out that the three decisive criteria of school choice in order of importance are:

- (1) Good discipline, good academic performance, and admission of students with good academic performance (Cheung, 1993:97);
- (2) Teachers’ quality, students’ discipline outside campus, and teacher-student relation (Fung, 1996:73-75);
- (3) School culture, whether or not the medium of instruction is English, and teacher-student relation (Tsang, 1998:51,96,117,121).

Major common factors of school choice

One major area of current educational research has been the study of factors affecting the choice of schools by parents. Substantial research has been conducted to examine parental school choice factors in the United States and the United Kingdom. Unfortunately, data relating to the above subject in the Hong Kong context are restricted to those applied to secondary school choice (Cheung, 1993; Fung, 1996; Tsang, 1998) or informal information published in the commercialized magazines in the market place (Eugene International Limited, 1996; 1999) and in newspapers (Sing Tao Yat Po, 1999).

The following criteria have been found to have a major influence on the choice of schools by parents in the United States, the United Kingdom, and in Hong Kong:

(I) Good Academic Programmes and Standards

Sauter (1994:148) has conducted in-depth interviews for parents in the Metropolitan area in Minnesota. The result demonstrates that parents consider “good academic programmes and standards” to be the most important criterion for the selection of public schools for their children. Buttrum’s third criterion of school choice is “better quality of instruction” and “quality of academic course offerings” (Buttrum, 1994:49). Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:980-676) report their findings that “there is a sharpening of focus on the academic in most schools”. Different strategies have been used to monitor students’ progress towards obtaining the best results in national examinations. They found that “academic progress and examination performance” of students seems to be the leading factor of attractiveness in school choice.

Cheung (1993:93) ranked second the good academic performance of students. Tsang (1998:31-32) indicated that “the medium of instruction”, whether or not it is English, is closely related to the academic standard of the secondary school of choice in Hong Kong. Parents in Hong Kong, in general, consider consistent and historical good academic standards the key factor in school choice (Eugene International Limited, 1996;1999; Sing Tao Yat Po, 1999).

(II) Better Student Discipline or Safer Environment

Coldron and Boulton (1991:169-178) found that “security” (e.g. no bullying) is one of the four major reasons of parental choice of a school. Buttrum (1994:49) conducted a questionnaire survey for parents in selected private schools in Arkansas. The result

demonstrates that American parents consider “better student discipline (or a safer environment)” to be the most important criterion for the selection of private schools for their children. Smedley (1995:97) states that “most parents “feel very protective towards their vulnerable 10 year old children” and that security may be the most important criterion for those families choosing a new school. Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:650-676) report about the parental concern of their children being “safe” in the school and their attention to “matters such as bullying”. Bussell (1998:135-147) found that “security” is one major concern of parents in school selection. In Gorard’s (1999:25-47) review of school choice research, he reports that “security criteria” used in school choice involve “a general concern for the safety and welfare of the child”.

In Hong Kong, “good discipline” was ranked most important by Cheung (1993:93) and “students’ discipline outside campus” was ranked second by Fung (1996:73-75). Tsang (1998:96,117,121) rated “school culture” the most decisive criterion of secondary school choice in Hong Kong and he further analyzed that the school’s ability to maintain good discipline is an important aspect of “school culture”. However, “good discipline” was not highlighted to be a key factor of choice in the informal documents (Eugene International Limited, 1996;1999; Sing Tao Yat Po, 1999).

(III) Teacher-student Relations

Sauter (1994:148) suggests that “competent and superior teaching staff” ranked next to good academic programmes and standards. The second criterion in Buttrum’s (1994) ranking of school choice is that of positive attitude of staff and students. The “pastoral aspect of schooling”, which is linked to teacher-student relations, is also considered by Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:650-676) to be one major consideration of parents in school choice.

Cheng (1994:54-71) found that teachers' leadership style is "strongly related to social climate and student-affective performance", and positive teacher leadership style contributes to effective learning in a Hong Kong classroom. Hong Kong journalists also broadly report that parents are impressed by conscientious teachers in primary schools (Eugene International Limited, 1996 & 1999; Sing Tao Yat Po, 1999). Both Fung (1996) and Tsang (1998) rated "teacher-student relationship" third in importance, in their analyses of parental choice of secondary schools in Hong Kong.

(IV) Word of Mouth Reports

Harvey (1996:35-48) conducted an action research study on the factors which influence parental choice of preparatory schools for their children. The findings show that there were no published data on the factors which influence parental choice of preparatory schools. This leads to the preparatory heads' assertion that word-of-mouth is the strongest source of influence. Informal data provided in the Hong Kong commercialized magazines and newspapers also suggest that word-of-mouth impact is very influential in parental choice of schools (Eugene International Limited, 1996;1999; Sing Tao Yat Po, 1999).

The four factors identified above have reflected most of the common areas of parental concern when considering whether or not to send their child to a particular school. They suggest that there are many factors affecting parental choice at different school levels. It will be difficult to generalize which is (are) the most influential factor(s) affecting school choice. Other possible factors have included parents' relationship with the head teacher or those in senior management positions (Harvey, 1996:35-48).

Quality management leads to parental choice of a school

Parental choice of a school for their child, as indicated in the last section, is influenced by overt factors such as academic and behavioural performance of students and teaching attitudes of staff or other physical factors related to the chosen school. These factors relate to the quality of a school which is the product of management. “Managing quality” is therefore essential to ensure that a successful school is capable of generating quality indicators which students and their parents are able to perceive. “Quality management” helps to determine, to a certain extent, whether or not parents will choose a particular school.

Definition of “quality”

“Quality” is a common theme in management training. It applies to almost all types of business including education. Marsh (1992) defines “total quality” as “a philosophy with tools and processes for practical implementation driven by all the employees of an organization in order to satisfy and delight customers”. West-Burnham (1994:71) suggests that “quality consists in the experiences of the customer rather than the aspiration of the supplier”. In parental choice of a school, parents are “customers”, and staff, being “the employees” of the school, are expected to satisfy the needs of parents in order to “delight” their “customers”.

The “Quality” framework and the “quality” components

Marsh (1992) has identified the following components that are closely related to and responsible for “quality”: a) values, leadership and strategy;

b) people;

c) quality assurance; and

d) customers.

“Values, leadership and strategy” of the institution are essential components that affect the quality of service. Therefore, having a school mission and good leadership skills of educational administrators contribute to the quality of a school. “People” are referred to as the employees. “Quality assurance” is guaranteed when appropriate tools and processes are adopted by employees. In this respect, appropriate attitude of teaching staff towards students ensures quality. With the satisfaction and delight of “customers”, “quality” is considered to be in existence. The needs of students and their parents, being “customers” in an educational organization, have to be entertained. This corresponds with the findings of Fung (1996) and Tsang (1998) who suggested that teacher qualities and teacher-student relationships are two of the four major factors of parental choice of schools.

Assuring “Quality” through “Total Quality Management”

West-Burnham (1992: 15) draws on Dale and Plunkett’s (1990) work and claims that “quality” in education may be identified through a “hierarchy” as below:

Total quality management

Quality assurance

Quality control

Inspection

He regards total quality management as the key feature of “quality” and that “quality is defined by the customer, not the supplier” (West-Burnham, 1994:171). The products of total quality management in an educational institution are perceivable qualities such as “good discipline” or “high academic performance” or “positive staff attitudes” as discussed in the earlier sections.

“Quality” means responding to the needs of school customers & inviting their participation in planning, implementation and evaluation

Parents’ perception of a school contributes to their choice. West-Burnham (1994:171) points out that “quality consists of meeting stated needs, requirements and standards”. What he suggests is that “quality” ensures “accountability is direct, immediate and personal”. Meeting the needs of “customers”, that is, students and their parents, is significant in educational management, when “schools have to compete for pupils and their income is tied closely to their level of recruitment” (Bush, 1995:34). Bush suggests creating a link to the external environment, responding to the needs of parents and the local community who are “customers” of educational institutions (Bush, 1995:42-43, 115). The collegial model of Bush (1995:57) has highlighted the need for the participation of parents and students in decision-making. In primary schools, parents are prioritized as the target “customers” when they make decisions for their children. Therefore, “the experiences of the customers”, as illustrated by West-Burnham (1992b), would be the satisfaction level of parents towards “quality” of the school. The satisfaction level of parents and students is also highly valued by Horine (1995:174) and has been included on her quality indicator list. Schargel (1997: 210) also reports that “parental involvement” helped to have a positive turnaround in a New York school. Since parents’ concern is focused on “the progress of their own children” (Bush, 1995:87), the quality indicators which are to be discussed later will be directed towards children’s learning.

Massaro, Roche and Bayless (1995) report that the future trend of quality involvement in public schools will be the direct and dynamic involvement of all customers in decision making, design of process improvements, and development of the strategic priorities. Parents, students, staff and the citizens develop the strategic imperatives

that guide the development of the school district. This cross-functional strategic team also designs the specific, results-driven protocols that continuously feed data back into the system. In short, the school 'customers' not only develop agreements on specific strategic goals, but also design the ways in which they are continuously able to know the success of the strategies.

Massaro et al's (1995) approach represents a departure from the traditional quality control system where customers are surveyed for their input but the development of specific plans and the evaluation of progress, remain the responsibility of the supplier. Though the old system is not necessarily bad, it may constrain the creativity within the process of quality improvement. Total quality education is a process where the customers and the supplier (the educational service providers) are linked together from the start, and stay linked - all the way to implementation and continuous evaluation.

Massaro et al (1995) have shown that schools involving both students and parents in all facets of students' learning resulted in higher student achievement. Quality can be achieved through the voice and participation of the customers. The Policy Objective for Education and Manpower Bureau (Education Commission, 2000) has placed "parent and teacher participation" in the School Management Committee as one of the key indicators of quality education in Hong Kong. The target is to have all government schools to "have parents and teachers participating in School Management Committees by the 1999-2000 school year" (The Policy Objective for Education and Manpower Bureau, 1999:5). Treating parents as support staff with their increased participation in planning and implementation of school activities encourages them to share ownership of the school and serves as an incentive for parental choice of the school.

Parental assessment of school “quality” using Anderson’s (1995) quality indicators

With the decision to develop an in-depth characterization of the student, Anderson (1995) developed a list of quality indicators after extensive testing with parents, business and customers. The list of quality indicators that parents may use in school choice includes:

- a. Learner empowerment;
- b. Communication skills;
- c. Positive staff esteem;
- d. Life-long learning;
- e. Complex thinking skill;
- f. Wellness lifestyle;
- g. Environmental conscience;
- h. Love of learning;
- i. Global view;
- j. Environmental view; and
- k. Increased scores on Provincial Testing Academic Achievement.

(Anderson, 1995: 245)

Standards of Anderson’s quality indicators were defined each with a certain level of expectation, as established by individual schools. The top five standards to be achieved were listed as:

- a. Students will become empowered learners;
- b. Students will become skilled communicators;
- c. Students will have positive self-esteem;
- d. Students will be critical and creative thinkers; and
- e. Students will become life-long learners.

(Anderson, 1995: 246)

Anderson’s quality indicators, expressed in the form of student achievements, are consistent with the school choice criteria of Chubb (1995), Winborne (1995), Coleman (1995), Tannenbaum (1995) and Forbes (1996) who indicate that school accountability and student achievements are significant factors for parental choice of a school.

Marketing education leads to parental choice of a school

Harvey and Busher (1996:27) suggest that marketing education functions to “explain to potential clients the services or products they are about to purchase, as well as to persuade them to buy a particular brand”. The ultimate goal of marketing education is therefore the parental choice of an identified school.

Definition and rationale of marketing

Gray (1991:2) defines marketing as “a management process, responsible for anticipating, identifying and satisfying consumer wants and needs with a view to making profit”. Majaro (1982:3) states that marketing is “....the management process which identifies, anticipates and supplies customer requirements efficiently and profitably”. Lancaster and Massingham (1993:5-7) define marketing both as a function, which “...forms the interface with the firm’s existing and potential customers” and as a philosophy, which “....puts the customer at the very centre of the firm’s corporate purpose”.

Harvey and Busher (1996:26) reported Wragg’s (1993) “strong hostility to education becoming subject to market forces”, when marketing “subsumes an ideology that makes the needs and wishes of an organization’s customers/purchasers more important than its members’ preferred methods of working”.

On the other hand, Kotler and Levey (1969) were among the first “to articulate the changing scope and broader definition of marketing”. They suggest that “marketing technology can be used, not only by business, but also by non-business entities” (Arnold and Fisher, 1996). The first concept of marketing is “selling, distributing,

persuading, and all other traditional functions”. The second concept is “ sensitively serving and satisfying human needs” (Arnold and Fisher, 1996). In this respect, marketing education would be the tool for satisfying the needs of students and their parents in their school choice process.

Creating a positive image of a school through marketing

Coleman (1994) states that the role of marketing is relevant in strategic management, and that the relationship between schools and their customers, including parents and the wider community, needs to be examined. Stott and Parr (1992:22) recommend “...to draw attention to the gap (or discrepancy) between the supposed institutional image and the desired one” when marketing a school. They name a number of criteria for assessing the parental perception of a school image. These include the school’s facilities, its academic emphasis, teacher qualities, students’ achievements in sports and music, warm friendly atmosphere and the degree of welcome to parents. They indicate that “it is unlikely a school will achieve excellence in all things and may have to focus on a few” (Stott and Parr, 1992:32). A school might need to minimize the gaps between how it wants to be seen and how it is actually seen, and to prioritize the gaps that need to be tackled. From the parental perspective, the criteria of school choice, as discussed in the previous sections, should be their area of interest. This leads us to believe that an effective marketing strategy should be centred around the parental criteria of school choice.

The seven Ps in marketing education to students and their parents

McCarthy (1981), Doyle (1994) and many others have defined marketing as “product”, “price”, “promotion” and “place”. Borden (1965), as well as Harvey and Busher (1996:26), consider these four Ps the ingredients for “a marketing mix”. Rushton

and Carson (1985:19-40) distinguish service industries from manufacturing industries as their products are intangible and led Cowell (1984) to add three further Ps in the marketing mix – “people”, “process” and “physical evidence”.

The “product” quality, features, name, packaging, services or guarantees which come with the purchase are considered by Doyle (1994) to be significant in marketing. Applied to educational marketing, the product “quality” would be students’ academic, behavioural and other achievements. The special characteristics of the school form its “feature” and the “name” and “packaging” would be the school’s image as perceived by parents. “Services” available include pastoral guidance or after-school activities that meet children’s needs. “Guarantees” could be the affiliated primary schools or secondary schools or the type of umbrella schools or feeder schools that are attractive to parents. “Guarantees” could also be the outstanding public examination grades of students or the high percentage of admittance to the university. These product qualities are likely to be significant factors of choice for parents.

The product “pricing” affects choice, and the pricing changes depend on the associated circumstances and competitors in the market environment. In education, the rate of school fee is a choice factor. Harvey and Busher (1996:27) suggest to develop products or services “at a price which the customers can afford to pay”. However, a lower rate might not be attractive to customers. Harvey (1996:17) indicates that “perceived value in the eyes of the customers might in some circumstances make it essential to charge a high price”. It is therefore essential to identify the target customers prior to establishing a fee structure when payment is applied. Reasons for choosing a school on the basis of pricing can be very complex as there might be a parental search for social segregation when parents are willing to

pay a high tuition fee or simply the relief of financial burden when they locate free places in the education system.

“Promotion” is the point at which “selling becomes an active part of the marketing mix” (Harvey, 1996:18). Doyle (1994) considers that industrial promotion includes advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations. Harvey and Busher (1996:27) suggest that marketing a school includes “the need to explain to potential clients the services or products they are about to purchase” and “what opportunities are offered to students”. Examples of these can be the school mission, the course content, and the qualifications or credibility of teachers.

“Place” entails not only the location of a school (Harvey, 1996:18) but also the environment (Harvey and Busher, 1996:28). A school of choice, as mentioned earlier, can be its proximity to the child’s residence or for the convenience of parents (Buttrum, 1994; Harvey, 1996:36) or the facilities or space available.

“People”, “process” and “physical evidence” (Cowell, 1984) involve teaching staff and administrative leaders of a school. The quality of educational services “depends on the personal skills and attributes of each provider within an organization who is in contact with the clients” (Harvey and Busher, 1996:27). Whether or not students are able to learn effectively in an environment that motivates learning interest depends on the quality of “people” (staff), the “process” (the implementation strategies) as well as the “physical evidence” (the outcome).

Based on the analysis of the 7 Ps, marketing education effectively would need to highlight the strengths of the school, including the course content and services

available, the school fee, the staff attitude, the outcomes, and all other factors that are valued by school customers. Reasons for the parental choice of an identified school can be assessed in relation to the seven Ps.

The impact of educational marketing on parental choice of a school

Coleman (1994) recommends to concentrate on “the needs of the students, and operating within the normal planning cycle” so that the fear of promotional impacts from marketing can be removed. Kotler’s (1987:13) view of the marketing outcome seems somewhat sanguine:

Marketing competition at its best, creates a pattern of varied institutions, each clear as to its mission, market coverage, needs specialization and service portfolio.

Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993) consider that schools and colleges might incorporate marketing strategies in order to keep school customers informed of the educational services available and matters related to access, resources, curriculum and organization of the institution can also be made known to them.

In fact, parent customers are given the opportunity to access school information when marketing strategies are adopted by educational institutions. With information from a variety of schools, they are given more school choices. By referring to the quality assessment strategies, as mentioned in the earlier sections, parents are able to locate the strengths and weaknesses of the educational institution so that they become more confident of their choice.

Attitudes & values of Chinese parents in educational choices: conventional and contemporary thinking

Children contribute to Hong Kong Chinese parents' sense of personal growth, spousal relations, family happiness and family wholeness (Shek, 1996). Children are highly valued and parental choice of education for their children becomes important. Though not strongly emphasized, the traditional Chinese values of security and posterity obtained from parenthood do exist among Chinese parents in Hong Kong (Shek, 1996).

Conventional attitudes and values of Chinese parents in educational choices

The teachings of Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.) are deeply rooted in Chinese parents. Beliefs in conduct-related attributes of "politeness", "righteousness", "integrity" and "fear of shame" are considered to be as important as family-related attributes of "being grateful to parents" and "filial piety" which form the traditional values of Chinese cultures (Confucius, 551-479 B.C.E.; Weidong, 1999:11-18; Fan, 2000:3-10). In school selection, there was great emphasis on the curriculum and teacher qualifications (Confucius, 551-479 B.C.E.). Mam Chi states in Tai Hok (690-630 B.C.) that his mother moved house because of her fear that her child's academic-related attributes might be negatively affected by peers in his residential area. In those days, Chinese parents were even more critical in school choice and demanding in children's academic performance. Children who were unable to memorize teachings provided by teachers had to be beaten (Confucius, 551-479 B.C.E.). For centuries, academic excellence was the only requirement to win a job of high rank in the government organizations. Though academic outcome is not the only factor of school choice, it remains as one of the three major factors on the priority list (Smedley, 1997; Sauter, 1994; Buttrum, 1994; Horine, 1995; Cheung, 1993; Fung, 1996; Tsang, 1998).

Chinese parents' perception of an ideal child in modern Hong Kong

Shek and Chan (1999:291) conducted interviews to investigate parents' perception of attributes of the ideal child in Hong Kong. It indicates that:

Results based on content analyses of the parents' narratives showed that four categories of attributes of the ideal child emerged from the data: family-related attributes (good parent-child relations and fulfillment of family responsibilities), academic-related attributes (good academic outcome, positive attitude toward studying, fulfillment of responsibility in studying, and high education attainment), conduct-related attributes (good character, self-discipline when going out, obedience to the law, no acquaintance with undesirable peers, and no naughtiness), and other attributes (such as having good relations with others and being mature). No gender effect was evident with regard to parents' perceptions of characteristics of the ideal child. The findings suggest that Chinese parents' perceptions of attributes of the ideal child are closely related to traditional values in Chinese culture.

Parental concept for School Choice in Hong Kong

Cheung (1993:iii) explored the concept of school popularity in Hong Kong and found that "good discipline, excellent academic results, and winning prizes in competitions" are the leading three factors of choice. Cheung quoted Hunter's definition of discipline (1991:38-39):

Children need to be disciplined, and the way things are and the way the world is, they need discipline both at home and at school.....The pupils are well-behaved, they seem responsible and courteous and give a good impression of the school generally.

Cheung states that “good academic results was a factor cited by many as important to good reputation of a school”. Hunter (1991:39) suggests that the school’s emphasis on good examination results was seen as important for the child’s future job prospects for most parents.

His investigation also suggests that “hearsay” (Cheung , 1993:19), which was referred to as “word-of-mouth” by Harvey (1996:35-48), is an important source of information for parents’ ultimate secondary school choice. “Close contacts with parents” and “quality of teachers” (Cheung, 1993:76-77) are also significant factors for school choice.

Fung’s (1996:vi) finding, in his research on the relationship between parental choice and marketing strategies in secondary schools of a newly-developed district, was closely linked to Cheung’s, when “discipline” was ranked the second most important criteria for parental choice of a school. He claims that “teacher quality”, being the key factor of choice in his study, includes “teachers’ qualification, experience, competence and enthusiasm” (Fung, 1996:45). Consistent with Cheung’s analyses, he defines “discipline” as the positive behavioural performance of students and that poor discipline would be referred to as “speaking foul language or smoking in public” and associating with “triad” members (Fung, 1996:74).

Tsang’s (1998:96,117,121) investigation of the relationship between the socio-economic status and the parental choice of secondary schools reports that the priority list of parental choice factors is closely associated with students’ academic standard and the school culture. Whether or not school children are disciplined is considered by Tsang as a key component of the school culture.

Attitudes and values of the Hong Kong government on educational choices

Hong Kong was handed back to Mainland China on 1st July 1997 and was named “The Special Administrative Region of China”. Policies established since then were under the influence of China to a certain extent. The quality indicators listed in the Education Commission Report No.7 (1997:8-9) also reflect the influence from Chinese cultures. They recommend that a quality education system should aim to foster among youngsters “an all-round development covering ethics, the intellect, the physique, social skills and aesthetics; bi-literacy and tri-lingualism; self-learning ability and an inquisitive mind; a sense of responsibility towards the family, the community, the country and the world”. This implies that a school of choice for parents should be one that is capable of helping children to achieve the above listed objectives.

Findings from the above four sections are consistent with the parental school choice criteria discussed earlier. Parents and the community highly value the children’s academic and behavioural (conduct-related) attributes. They also value the children’s family-related attributes and good relationships with others. These correspond with the analysis of Marsh (1992) who claims that positive attitudes by staff are important components of a quality school, since children’s socialization practices and attributes are built up more from modeling of adult attitudes and behaviours than from their teachings.

Child’s happiness and child’s influence in school choice

Smedley (1995:99) indicates that children’s decisions in school choice are crucial factors in parental considerations. He says that most parents choose schools where their children think they will be happy. Coldron and Boulton (1991:169-178) report that “happiness” is a criterion of parents’ choice of a school. Hunter (1991:31-41) indicates

that “a happy school atmosphere” for a child is important from parents’ perspective. Child’s happiness is found to be “an overriding concern” of American parents when selecting a primary school for their children (Bussell, 1998:135-147). Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:650-676) indicate that school managers “see the importance to parents of their children being happy.....” when parents value highly the “child-centered” factor in their school choice decision.

Though West et al (1991) found that two-thirds of children agreed with their parents over choice of school, Walford’s (1991) study of a city technology college reported that significant choices outside the neighbourhood schools were made by children themselves. Only ten per cent of the children perceived the school choice decision as having been made by parents, forty per cent by the joint decision of parent and child, and fifty per cent by children’s own decision. Coldron and Boulton (1991:169-178) found that children prefer to go to a school where their friends, relatives and neighbours are going. West et al (1991) reported similar findings from their study of children’s perceptions at the time of transfer. Smedley (1995:99) claims that children’s feelings toward the school are often highly valued by parents when making their final decision for a school choice.

Coleman (1997:26) also found children to be playing an increasingly important role in school choice. She says that “parents do choose schools where they think their children will be happy” and where their individual needs are met. Attention should therefore be drawn to the specific needs of children whose decision in school choice influences their parents (Coleman, 1997:26).

Privatization and School Choice

The term "privatization" denotes transferring activities conducted by public employees to the private sector (Lieberman, 1989). The activities transferred may include funding as well as the actual delivery of services. In the context of education, the emphasis is on the delivery of educational services (Coleman, 1997:73; Lieberman, 1989:5). According to Lieberman (1989), privatization should be distinguished from educational vouchers or tuition tax credit.

Privatization of educational services can be carried out in a variety of ways including:

- (a) contracting (with independent contractors);
 - (b) vouchers;
 - (c) load shedding (refers to "government withdrawal from both funding and providing a service") (Lieberman, 1989:8);
 - (d) franchising;
 - (e) subsidies to non governmental suppliers;
 - (f) voluntary service;
 - (g) sale of government assets;
 - (h) construction or purchase of public facilities with leaseback arrangements.
- (Lieberman, 1989:6-7)

There are various reasons behind the privatization of the educational process.

(Lieberman, 1989; Hirschhoff, 1986; West, 1994). From a macro point of view, Lieberman (1989) expressed the view that educational reform to improve American education could be by means of fostering competition of private schools with public schools and among themselves.

From a micro point of view, Hirschhoff (1988) considers that the choice of private schooling may

be because of a conflict between the availability of public schools and the parents' educational objectives for their children. As an alternative, private schools may be offering something that cannot be obtained in the public schools. First, conflict may occur because the curriculum and methods of the public schools are not in line with the parents' religious beliefs or with their secular values - political, moral or cultural in nature (Hirschhoff, 1988). Second, in the absence of conflicts, parents may choose private schooling for substantive and non substantive reasons:

(I) Substantive Reasons - Parents may choose a private school to assist them in inculcating their religious beliefs and political, moral and cultural values in their children. Other substantive reasons include obtaining a particular course of instruction (e.g. swimming), the use of a different educational method or adherence to a particular educational philosophy.

(II) Non-substantive Reasons - When compared with substantive reasons, non-substantive reasons for choice of private schools requires substitution of private for public schooling rather than supplementation of public schooling. First, parents may have perceived superior instructional quality- based on factors such as qualifications of the staff, better physical facilities, better enforcement of disciplinary rules. Second, choice may be based on the desire to have one's children attend school with certain kinds of other children. Third, parents may want a different kind of organizational control over school policies and administration than that of public schools. Fourth, school location may be the reason for the choice of a private school. A fifth possible reason is a family tradition of sending children to private schools. (Hirschhoff, 1988:42-43)

Other researchers, such as West (1994), found that factors which are considered to be important by parents in private school selection include: good discipline, good examination results, academic excellence and a school meeting the child's needs/ desires (West, 1994:116).

West also postulated that parents from different ethnic, social and religious groups choose or opt for schools using different criteria. Christian parents, for example, consider the religion of a school, of paramount importance. Some parents, predominantly middle class, will only consider independent schooling.

Diverse Perspectives on School Choice: Equity Issues

Unfair competition due to the "cream-skimming hypothesis" in private schools

The arguments for school choice are based on the idea that private schools can fulfill unmet demands for quality education. On the other hand, Smith and Meier (1995), based on their research findings, postulated a "cream-skimming hypothesis". The idea is that, as private schools take the students with the best chance of academic success, public school performance suffers. Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:116-117) also report that parental choice by open enrolment has the effect of "bringing about increased opportunity for cream-skimming and hence inequality". Gewirtz and Ball (1995) and Gwirtz et al. (1995), quoted in Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:116), have shown schools seeking students "who are 'able', 'gifted', 'motivated and committed' and middle class, with girls and children with South Asian backgrounds being seen as particular assets in terms of their potential to enhance test scores". Tsang and Hung (2001) indicate that the Hong Kong government's encouragement of popular schools to implement a highly selective admission policy under the direct subsidy scheme, reflects the "cream-skimming hypothesis" which helps these schools to appear successful. They indicate that "the academically able do seem to be the 'cream' that most schools seek to attract" when they help to "make the school appear successful in terms of test scores" (Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998:117). The results also indicate that private schools attract "customers" by offering religious services and racial segregation. If public schools also respond to this competitive market in the same fashion as private schools, there may be no need for the private

schools.

The case against the "cream-skimming hypothesis" in private school is also supported by the American Federation of Teachers (1993). It is suggested by the Federation that the following could be implemented in both public and private schools to deal with equity issues between the two types of schools:

- (a) Clear and challenging academic standards;
- (b) Student assessments based on the above standards;
- (c) Accountability of schools and students based on performance;
- (d) Rigorous standards for teachers;
- (e) Firm and fair discipline in schools;
- (f) Removal of chronically disruptive and violent youngsters to alternative schools;
- (g) Restoring parents' involvement in helping their children to succeed in school.

Several other reasons were provided by the Federation to support that private education is not the only solution to increase the quality of American education, such as:

- (1) Private schools may not choose all children equally. Private schools pick children on the basis of grades, recommendations, scores on entrance examinations.
- (2) Private education would reduce accountability in education.
- (3) Private education is more expensive than public education.
- (4) The Milwaukee voucher experiment reinforces the conclusion that private schools do not out-perform public schools.

(The American Federation of Teachers, 1993, Volume 17, Part III, pp. 19-26)

Education vouchers are not capable of opening up private schools to the poor

The study of Witte et al. (1995) in Wisconsin, quoted in Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:128),

has concluded that education voucher available to everyone is not capable of opening up private schools to children of the disadvantaged working class when the money available through the voucher scheme is likely to encourage private schools to become more selective and make them afford to demand “add-on payments in addition to vouchers”. Allowing education vouchers to follow parental choice of schools is unlikely to be an effective means to ensure student selection that segregates the poor.

Abdication of responsibility by the public education system

The studies of Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998) discuss the relationship of the school, the state and the market as far as devolution and choice in education are concerned. They point out that “devolution can be seen as a complete abdication of responsibility by the state” (Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998:45). Adler (1993:3), quoted in Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:124), suggests that “there is an urgent need to find a balance between the rights of parents to choose schools for their children and the duties of (public) authorities to promote the education of all children”. Gewirtz et al. (1995, quoted in Gorard, 1999:26) indicate that the concept of market in school choice is being used as a “hands-off” policy the governments that attempt to pass the state responsibility for the quality of education to the individual as consumer. Public education in England and Wales, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Sweden, according to their studies, seem to constitute a coherent trend in which “state bureaucracies fragment and the notion of mass systems of public welfare, including education, disappears” (Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998:31). They consider devolution in education is being used by the state as an effective strategy of “shifting the blame” when failure of individual schools can be attributed to “poor leadership or teaching quality” of self-management of schools and unequal achievement among students can be explained through “poor parenting” (Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998:45). They further comment that their emphasis on “market-type mechanisms” and “marketized” devolution has allowed “consumer rights increasingly come to prevail over citizen rights” and

education is offered to “individual consumers by competing providers rather than provided collectively by the state for all citizens (Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998:35, 46).

In the context of the Hong Kong education system, the School Management Initiative Scheme which devolves budget and management to publicly funded schools was introduced since 1991. Its objective of “allowing schools greater flexibility in management and the use of resources” (Education Department, 1997a: 21,24) aims at establishing a school-based quality culture which makes individual schools become distinctive and thus attractive to parents. The direct subsidy scheme, with funds that follow enrolment in public schools, was broadly promoted to the subsidized and grant schools in Hong Kong (Anon, 2001). It declares that the scheme was established to allow additional funding through “add-on payment” (i.e. students are required to pay tuition fee in addition to the government funds provided). These two schemes, though they were promoted to be capable of enhancing school qualities which will provide more choice options for parents, were criticized to be an abdication of the government’s responsibility to provide collective education for all citizens in Hong Kong (Anon, 2002).

Markets in school choice bring about inequality

Lauder and Hughes (1999) claim that markets in education do not work as they “exacerbate social and educational inequalities” to the advantage of “those more privileged”. Lauder et al (1995:53) show that, where schools can choose the students they admit, socio-economic status and ethnic factors “appear to influence school selection, even when prior achievement has been taken into account”. Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:117-118) state that parental choice will “reinforce the existing hierarchy of schools based on academic test results and social class”. In the system of allocation by catchment areas, Gorard (1999:29) reports that ‘pseudo-accommodation’ in another area requires family finance which could provide school choice only to those who could afford it. In Hong Kong, promotion of the direct subsidy scheme to popular

public schools by the government by approving add-on tuition fees up to the maximum annual amount of HK \$68,800 was criticized to be a system that encourages social class stratification which excludes the poor (Anon, 2001).

Schools judged to be good in the studies of Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:117-118) are most likely to be “academically selective schools or formerly selective schools with a persisting academic reputation and socially advantaged intakes” . Whitty, Power and Halpin also found that “schools which faced financial losses under the formula funding system tended to be schools which drew the greatest proportion of pupils from the most disadvantaged section of the community”. Walford (1992:137), quoted in Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:124), argues that “the main purpose of the recent moves toward greater choice is not to build a more fair and generous educational system but to put an end to egalitarianism, and rebuild a differentiated educational system that will more closely aid social reproduction.” Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:19) point out that “schools with a mainly middle class and Pakeha (or, increasingly, Asian) population tend to achieve better on national examinations because of the high level of ‘readiness’ and motivation of the pupils, and relatively low levels of social problems that impinge on educational processes”. Gorard (1999:28) wraps up that several British researchers have concluded that “markets in education are essentially a class strategy” when parental choice requires parents’ capacity to access options available, to articulate their needs, and to familiarize with present educational programmes .

Lauder and Hughes (1999:82,138) suggest that school choice has become an “orthodoxy” of politicians who wish to gain support from middle class parents when they push to create “a mechanism of exclusion” that shifts from “meritocracy” to “parentocracy” (Lauder and Hughes,1999:29). Whitty and Edwards (1998:213), who analysed the school choice policies in England and the US, find that some education reforms were accountable to “central government”

and “market forces”, with “producer interests” being “subordinated to those of consumers (meaning both parents and employers of labour)”. Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:41) also indicate that the recent education reforms in the five countries declared their intention to be “responsive to needs of communities and interest groups”. Since school choice intakes are judged on “credential outcomes”, the mechanism enables parents with more cash to unlock the doors to gaining credentials, and therefore children with well off backgrounds have greater opportunities of being admitted to popular schools (Lauder and Hughes, 1999:31-32). Children of the working class are totally excluded in the education market when the intake is based on “credential outcomes” (Lauder and Hughes, 1999:32). Lauder and Hughes (1999:31) postulate to allow children with mixed social backgrounds to study in one school in order to help them “develop tolerance for one another’s lifestyles and cultures”. They stress that markets are not neutral since they are influenced by cultural and political interests and selection is therefore based on “class” and “ethnicity” (Lauder and Hughes, 1999:37).

According to their investigation, Lauder and Hughes (1999:42-62) report that inequality in school choice is also brought by the working class parents’ lack of knowledge of schools and their practical inconvenience in sending their children to study in a school that is far from home. The Gewirtz model, quoted in Gorard (1997:52-53) indicated that some parents, who are described to be the “frustrated” and “disconnected” groups, decide not to exercise their school choice option. On the other hand, middle class parents’ familiarity with the school intake convention and their ability to pay for travel expenses increase their children’s opportunities of being admitted to popular schools. They criticize that “education markets trade-off the futures of young working class students to the advantage of those more privileged” (Lauder and Hughes, 1999:138).

Parental choice is likely to bring about increased segregation between schools

Gorard (1999:30) indicates that freedom to choose a school includes the freedom to choose on ethnic or religious grounds. This suggests that the increase of parents' power to choose may lead to "increased segregation between schools in terms of the mean socio-economic status of their pupil intakes". Since income and wealth are unevenly distributed in society, those with low family income and little education are inevitably excluded from the popular schools when pupil intakes are polarized by increased socio-economic segregation, as reported by Lauder and Hughes (1999:121-128). Gorard (1999:31) says that the outcome might even lead to parental choice of a school based on its "current social class, gender, or racial breakdown". Gorard and Fitz (1998:365) state that the chief argument against school choice is that "education is not really a marketable commodity" and it is therefore the role of the government to avoid increasing "social stratification" through the implementation of parental choice policies. The direct subsidy scheme which encourages innovative popular schools to charge 'add-on tuition fees' in addition to the grants obtained was criticized by the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union to be a policy that heightens social segregation between schools with different sources of funding (Anon, 2001).

Parental choice of schools is likely to undermine the liberty of their children

The quest for choice of schools according to the wish of parents has substantially increased in Scotland, Wales, England and the USA in the 1980s and 1990s (Gorard, 1999:27). However, Gorard (1999:27) pointed out that parents are not necessarily capable of exercising the right to select a school that functions to ensure liberty for the benefit of their children. They might be depriving their children of "a more normative education" based on the protection of their "minority sub-culture", their "religion" or their wish of "not over-educating" their children who are expected to inherit their agricultural job when they finish schooling (Gorard, 1999:27-28). Whitty and Edwards (1998:213) also reported that the Netherlands and Denmark also "contain

their children's schooling within their own cultural and religious frame of reference". Gorard (1999:27) reiterates "whose values" should apply as far as the value of school choice is concerned.

Markets are likely to lead to a decline in overall educational standards

Lauder and Hughes (1999:128) claim that markets in education "polarize" school performance, when children attending a high socio-economic status school were found to score significantly higher in both mathematics and reading. Barlow (2000:75-77) comments that the "polarization" has damaged schools with a high proportion of low achievement and low social economic status students when these students bring about a "spiral of decline". Apple (2000:315-318) states that "markets are likely to lead to a decline in overall educational standards" when markets "work to privilege those (identifiable) groups who already possess considerable amounts of economic, cultural and social capital". The academic decline in schools with children of low social economic status is brought by "the spiral effect" when "white flight" and "brown flight" continue in the working class schools (Lauder and Hughes, 1999:132). Lauder and Hughes (1999:135) conclude that student characteristics such as "the prior achievement, social class, ethnic and gender intake" are the key factors in school success. This implies that "the social conflict theory" is "a more powerful predictor of the outcomes of education markets", and explains why the overall educational standards decline among students in working class schools. They suggest that "reducing poverty and social exclusion" (Lauder and Hughes, 1999:138) should therefore be considered effective ways of raising educational standards. Anyon (1995:89), quoted in Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:131), also concludes that the solution to maintaining equity in education is "the ultimate elimination of poverty and racial degradation".

Background to choice of primary school in Hong Kong

Kindergarten to pre-university education in Hong Kong

Most children in Hong Kong start preschool education at the age of three. Kindergarten education, with a duration of three years, is not compulsory. The intense competition to enter popular primary schools leads to adverse effects on education at the kindergarten level (Education Department, 1998:6). Kindergarten children are mostly expected to receive “spoon-fed” education which requires them to memorize a substantial amount of the course content, in order to be prepared for the primary one admission examinations (Sweeting, 1995). Primary school education is six years, followed by three years of junior secondary school education. The nine years of education, from primary one to year three at the junior secondary school, is compulsory but free for all school age children (Education Department, 1997c). From the fourth year of secondary education (upper secondary school) to the university level, a tuition fee is charged. Duration of the entire secondary school course is five years, followed by either a one-year or a two-year pre-university course, depending on which university the student wants to enter.

The changing range of school choices for primary one applicants in Hong Kong

The 1998 report on primary one admission (Education Department, 1998) shows that there is a total of 732 primary schools providing primary education in Hong Kong and 709 of these schools operate primary one classes. The Education Department (1998) reported that the decreasing birth rate in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Statistics Department, 1999) and the uneven distribution of primary one applicants have led to vacant primary one places in 23 primary schools. As there is a feeder school system between affiliated primary and secondary schools, competition for admittance to a primary school with a popular feeder secondary school is very keen. Parents are likely to impose pressure on their child should they wish their child to be admitted to these schools of choice (Education Department, 1998). A system of centralized

allocation of Primary One places on a district basis was therefore introduced during the 1982-83 school year, aiming to reduce the pressure imposed on children. Admission written tests are forbidden and a points system based on family connection with the school was established to prioritize the applicants wishing to be admitted to a government or subsidized primary school in Hong Kong. Private primary schools and primary schools of the English Foundation are not included in the public allocation system. There are two admission stages: the Discretionary Admission stage which allocates 65% of the places and the Central Allocation stage which allocates the remaining 35% of the places. 30% of the discretionary places are restricted to applicants residing in the same school net and 35% are open to applicants residing in any school nets. The Central Allocation stage, which comes six months after the release of discretionary places, provides 35% of the places to children living in the Primary One Admission school net. Admission to these places is allocated randomly by computer.

Under the Primary One Admission allocation system, a substantial number of students are unable to obtain a place in the school of their choice. Many parents of these children prefer to apply for admittance to a private school where a tuition fee is charged rather than accept a place at a school not of their choice. Under the Secondary School Place Allocation system, most primary school students of a school net are distributed to secondary schools of the same catchment area (Education Department, 1997c). Such an allocation system encourages the emergence of private primary schools in school nets where popular secondary schools are located. An example of this is Kowloon City where only 8 non-profit making private primary schools are found out of the total of 24 (Table 2.1). Most of the profit-making private primary schools in Kowloon City were established after the Primary One Admission system was set up (Education Department, 1996a). To allow students to be admitted to a secondary school of their choice outside their residential area, places in popular secondary schools are then divided among eighteen districts, disregarding where they are located (Education Department, 1997c).

Such practice has been implemented in the past ten years with reference to the annual reflections from school representatives in regard to school choice preference of their students’ parents. Cross boundary school allocation is generally acceptable to parents when the school is their choice of preference (Educationa Department, 1997c).

The handover of Hong Kong from the British Government to the SAR of China on 1st July 1997 marked another turning point in the education system. All secondary schools, except 114 schools which have passed the assessment test conducted by the government, have to be named as a Chinese secondary school in order to promote effective learning through using mother tongue language which is now the official language of Hong Kong. Competition for admittance to primary schools that are attached to these 114 English secondary schools became more intense. The number of private primary schools that provide a curriculum which caters for admission to an English secondary school has increased since then (Sing Tao Yat Po, 1999).

Region	School Net	Number of private primary schools in Hong Kong	Number of private non profit-making primary schools
New Territories	Tsuen Wan	0	0
	Tuen Mun	0	0
	Kwai Chung & Ching Yi	1	0
	Tai Po	2	0
	Yuen Long	1	1
	North	0	0
	Island	1	0
Hong Kong Island	Central & Western	10	7
	Wan Chai	11	6
	Eastern	11	8
	South	0	0
Kowloon	Mongkok	1	1
	Kwun Tong	4	4
	Yau Ma Tei & Tsim Sha Tsui	2	1
	Shamshuipo	10	8
	Wong Tai Sin	3	3
	Kowloon City	24	8
Total		<u>81</u>	<u>47</u>

Table 2.1 Number of profit-making and non profit-making private primary schools in Hong Kong

Privatization and student achievement in Hong Kong

In 1971 primary education was made free and compulsory in Hong Kong (Post, 1994). Prior to that, a large number of private voluntary bodies helped to provide free education to meet the community needs when the government was unable to satisfy all demands (SC School, 1997). Sometimes, a small tuition fee was charged to maintain the school operation. The “state-led school expansion” after 1971 marked the change of the nature of private primary schools in Hong Kong. Free private primary education was no longer needed and the demand for quality education came into being, when the state-run free education was unable to satisfy all the specific needs of students and their parents (SC School, 1997). Voluntary organizations which used to give free education have now been directed to match this societal change by providing educational services that are superior to those found in the public sectors.

Students enrolled in private primary schools are mostly children from well-off families with parents who are prepared to provide additional care and financial support. These parents have chosen to pay a tuition fee for the private education of their child when places offered in the public sector were unfavourable. Consistent with the analysis of Buttrum (1994), education offered by private schools in Hong Kong seems to be supplementing the deficiencies of the system which is not able to meet some of the demands and needs of parents. There are no research findings to show that students in private primary schools out-perform students from the public sector, even though there is a public perception that students in private primary schools seem to have reached a higher academic level and appear to be more disciplined. This is likely to be the “cream-skimming hypothesis” effect postulated by Smith and Meier (1995), when private education attracts quality students, or the choice is based purely on the parental demand for social segregation. Research on student achievement in private primary schools of Hong Kong should be a new area of interest when answers to related questions cannot be located.

Privatization and policy implications in Hong Kong

Privatization is currently an area of interest in education (Education Department, 1996b). A consultation document of the Education Commission Report No.7 (Education Department, 1996b) reports that the present funding arrangements in public and subsidized schools give no flexibility to the school management system which has to be accountable for student achievements. With the exception of the "School Management Initiative" schools (Dimmock, 1998:485-486), flexibility is "confined to the non-salaries portion of school fund which is less than 10% of the total funding". The lack of funding "does not provide sufficient incentives for schools to take initiatives and accept responsibility for the achievement of quality education" (Education Department, 1996b). The report also mentions "the lack of a clear plan of action" as well as the absence of "clear targets for both academic and non-academic achievements of students". It is important to note that the current code of education has established a very complex system that does not permit the principal to penalize or dismiss teachers who do not fulfil their duties. These teachers are guaranteed to remain in the position as long as they do not commit serious offences (Education Department, 1998c). The same policy applies to the school principal and all other staff in a government or subsidized school. Privatization creates a different picture, when all staff are expected to cope with realities in the "wild environment" (Bush, 1995:12), to ensure education quality in order to compete with other private schools. The Hong Kong government has recently announced that privatized non-profit secondary schools will receive substantial financial support from the education department, to encourage education professionals in the private sectors to develop a tailor-made quality system to meet client needs (Education Department, 1998d). It is unclear if similar types of support will be extended to private primary schools in the future. The implications of these privatization policies will be discussed in the later chapters.

Summary

The issue of parental choice of educational services for their children has been widely researched by global educators in recent decades. Despite the case against school choice, researchers generally believe that choice fosters competitive school behaviours that lead to quality assurance. The concept of adopting an “open” organization policy, as postulated by Coleman, Bush and Glover (1994), is one effective way to achieve quality. The efforts spent on meeting demands in these changing external conditions help to guarantee the day-to-day self-evaluation of schools in operation. With an in-depth understanding of factors influencing parental choice in education, educators in both public and private schools would be prompted to make improvements in the areas concerned and help contribute to the enhancement of education.

Chapter III

Methodology

Identifying the aims prior to the selection of methodology

Cohen and Manion (1994:84) suggest that a specific aim needs to be elicited before outlining the research questions which should include subsidiary topics related to each of the issues under investigation. The specific objectives of this study are:

1. Identifying the parental choice factors,
2. Identifying the parental perception of changes after their child's enrolment in private education,
3. Identifying reasons for the parental choice and the child's behavioural changes, and
4. Identifying the influence of Chinese cultural values on child development.

As the broad aim of this study is to uncover the reasons for parental choices and explanation of child's behavioural changes, a qualitative approach is considered desirable because it is capable of dealing with "the complexities of human decision-making and behaviour" (Johnson, 1994:7). The case study method (Johnson, 1994:20-24), making use of qualitative research, and supported by quantitative aggregated data, is discussed in this chapter.

The Case Study Research Method

This chapter describes the case study methodology and provides a justification for the methodology in this research. This is followed by a description of the case study procedures to obtain quantitative and qualitative data to answer the four research questions.

Case studies are familiar to both educators and students for their value as a teaching device as they emotionally involve students in the learning process of analysis of real and complex situations (Christensen and Hansen, 1987). Besides being used as a training tool, case study is one of the main broad approaches to social and educational research, as described by the following researchers.

“A case study is an enquiry which uses multiple source of evidence. It investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” (Johnson, 1994:20)

“The case study researcher typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit, such as a school or community. The purpose of such an observation is to probe deeply and to analyze intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalizations about the wider population to which that unit belongs.” (Cohen and Manion, 1994:106)

These authors have established the broad definitions of case study as a research methodology. The application of the case research method on individual units was described by Yin (1994).

“An individual person is the case being studied, and the individual is the primary unit of analysis. Information about each relevant individual, would be collected and several such individuals or ‘case’ might be included in a multiple case study.” (Yin, 1994:137)

Alternatively the unit of analysis can also be an institution such as a school where the study is being conducted (Yin, 1994:137-138). This study uses a case study methodology to explain

the construct ‘parental choice’ in a Chinese environment. The following sections discuss the theoretical paradigm, including case study, justify the methodology and explain the intended process of conducting interviews following the questionnaire survey as well as how data will be analyzed. The chapter concludes with comments on the limitations of case study research and a description of steps which will be taken to counter the limitations of the methodology and ethical considerations as they relate to this research.

Extending from a single case study to three case studies

The advantages of being an insider researcher

The researcher undertook this research through case study methods using her advantages as an insider researcher, when themes or patterns of the answers to the research questions, as discussed by Johnson (1994:9-11), are “issues” which are “on your doorstep” and are familiar to the researcher. In addition, it requires no additional travelling time during data collection.

Guarding against insider researcher bias by extending the study to three case schools

Despite the advantages that an inside researcher obtains, Johnson (1994:10-11) reminds insider researchers of the need to take the role as a “detached enquirer” and to “guard against making your envisaged solution” when there is a possibility that “preconceptions rather than research findings will dominate your analysis”. Cohen and Manion (1994:282) also remind researchers of the need to minimize “the tendency for the interviewer to seek answers that support her preconceived notions”. Miles and Huberman (1984:231) point out that people as information seekers and processors are “far more likely to see confirming instances of original beliefs or perceptions than to see disconfirming instances, even when disconfirming instances are more frequent”.

To minimize the insider research bias in this study, the researcher replicated the study three

times, in three independent sample schools, first in NY and CK Schools and then in SC School, instead of drawing conclusions only from SC School where her research interest emerged. Triangulating and converging data from NY School, CK School and SC School function to validate findings to check that they do not contradict with each other (Miles and Huberman, 1984:234). Repeated verification (Miles and Huberman, 1984:234), using three independent respondent groups in the three case schools, with the same research tools, minimizes the insider researcher effects and strengthens the data. Prioritizing the researcher's own institution, SC School, to be the last to respond in the survey and the interview further ensures that insider researcher's "taken-for-granted" version (Miles and Huberman, 1984:233) will not affect or override the versions from NY and CK Schools. This means that parents of SC School were invited to participate in the survey and the follow-up interviews after data had been collected from NY and CK Schools.

Confounds to the insider researcher effects can be minimized by providing answers to the respondents' initial queries before collecting data from them. Miles and Huberman (1984:233) recommended to let respondents figure out who the researcher is, why the researcher is there, and what the researcher might do with the information collected. The researcher in this study dealt with the three issues at the outset of the survey, in the preface, by giving a written explanation on the purpose of the research, her role as a school principal, and the use of the data for professionals in the field. Since no sensitive issues are elicited from the survey questionnaires and the interview, respondents do not find it necessary to "craft their responses in such a way as to be amenable to the researcher and to protect their self interests" (Miles and Huberman, 1984:233). The insider researcher effect is considered not applicable in this study. Responses on the parental perception of their children's behavioural changes after enrolment in private primary schools might, to a certain extent, inhibit genuine responses of parents from SC School when the Principal took the role of an

insider researcher in her own institution. Avoiding bias stemming from insider researcher effect, for respondents of SC School, was to take “a lower profile”, to remind respondents to be “attentive to” the insider researcher influence, and to conduct the interviews “off site” (Miles and Huberman, 1984:233). The researcher conducted the interviews on the phone and requested SC parent respondents to be “attentive to” the insider researcher influence prior to providing answers. The insider researcher confounds were dealt with mainly by triangulating three sets of survey and interview data obtained from three case schools, to ensure that the finding is not misled by only one set of data. One other strategy, as claimed by Miles and Huberman (1984:234), was to show the researcher’s field notes to a second outside reader and the researcher found that the threat from insider researcher effects was decreased to the minimum with the assistance of an outside reader throughout the research process.

Background to Methodology

The quantitative versus the qualitative paradigms

Cohen and Manion (1994:6) identified two approaches for looking at social reality by “examining the explicit and implicit assumptions underpinning them”. They are the objective quantitative approach and the subjective qualitative approach. They demand different research methods. The quantitative approach treats the world as “being hard, real and external to the individual” (Cohen and Manion, 1994:7) by using methods such as surveys and experiments. The qualitative approach treats the world as “being a much softer, personal and humanly-created kind” (Cohen and Manion, 1994:7) by using methods such as interviews, participant observation and personal construct, for example.

The paradigms adapted from previous research

The research questions generated in Chapter I require a multiple case study research

methodology across different school sites. Both the quantitative and qualitative approaches were considered with reference to the paradigms adopted by Smreker (1996), Buttrum (1994), Sauter (1994) and Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998), in order to draw on positivist and interpretive traditions.

In the study of Smreker (1996), a multiple case study using only a qualitative paradigm was adopted to examine the influence of choice on public and non-public sectors. It was a comparative or multiple case design on the degree of school organizational process on family-school interactions. A catholic school and magnet school were selected. A public, neighborhood school (non-choice school) served as the comparative model to contrast the conditions of school choice. The data collection strategy for this study involved a series of in-depth interviews with at least 10 families from each of the three elementary schools. Documentary analysis included letters, newsletters, handbooks, budget reports, meeting minutes, and other school documents. The purpose of Smreker's study was to enhance understanding of parents' motivations, experiences and expectations. It did not attempt to test hypotheses.

The qualitative paradigm was also used by Sauter (1994) on parental perceptions regarding public schools of choice. The population in the study was the parents of public school students located in the Twin Cities Metropolitan area in Minnesota. Non-probabilistic sampling was used in this ethnographic study. Thirty parents were interviewed by the researcher using an in-depth interview schedule. Interview data were reported in the form of direct quotations.

On the other hand, the quantitative paradigm was used in Buttrum's (1994) study which revealed factors influencing parental decisions to enroll students in selected private schools in

Arkansas during the past three years. The study sought to identify and examine the relationship, if any, which exists between the criteria which parents use in choosing to send their child to a private school and the demographic characteristics of those parents and students involved. The population of the study is limited to those parents of students who enrolled in selected private schools in Arkansas for the first time. Survey questionnaires were distributed by mail to the target population. Chi-square was used to determine independence among variables and to analyze correlations of variables related to demographics of respondents.

The longitudinal investigation of Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998) used both the qualitative and the quantitative paradigms, to report on the impact of the radical reforms that have taken place within the school system in England and Wales in the 1990s. The research focuses on “the competitive and market-like environments within which schools have been obliged to operate in the last ten years or so, e.g. LMS, pupil-led funding, open enrolment, parental choice, diversity of schooling, more ‘consumer’ information” (Jones, 1998:532). Three case study areas are used for gauging the interaction between secondary schools and their prospective parent populations. A total of 109 interviews with semi-structured questions were conducted with school managers and senior teachers, followed by documentation from the schools and background statistics such as annual school intake, to identify the impact of policies. School responsiveness to parents was examined by 6,000 completed questionnaires, followed by 128 interviews with samples of parent respondents (Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998).

The bi-paradigm approach for this study

In the light of the previous research, the current study employs a bi-paradigm approach incorporating both the qualitative and quantitative methods by using a multiple case

methodology. Qualitative data were collected from respondents by in-depth interviews after conducting a questionnaire survey on 1,379 respondents (excluding the 25 pilot respondents) and the data were triangulated by documentary analyses. Three private schools were selected based on their popularity. Respondents were parents with children studying in the three schools. Survey questionnaires were distributed and collected through the schools. Respondents of the questionnaire survey could indicate in the return questionnaire whether or not they wished to participate in a follow-up interview. Fifty-nine respondents were selected through random sampling and interviewed by telephone.

Justification of the Research Paradigm

A research paradigm has been defined as a ‘basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:105-117) and can be distinguished in three ways:

- 1. The Philosophical Level - where it reflects basic beliefs about the world;
- 2. The Social Level - where it provides the researcher with guidelines for conduct of research studies; and
- 3. The Technical Level - where it specifies the methods and techniques which should guide the research.

Table 3.1 identifies the key features of two different sets of research paradigms.

1.	Quantitative	Researcher should focus on facts, research should be on causality and fundamental law, formulation and testing of hypothesis, concepts to be operationized for testing and measurement.
	Qualitative	Researcher should focus on meaning and understand what is happening, ideas are developed through induction from data, usage of multiple methods to establish different views of phenomena, small samples investigated indepth.
2.	Objective	Concern for precise facts about social phenomena.
	Subjective	Emphasis on the importance of understanding different views and projection of human imagination.

(Source : Modified from Easterby-Smith et al. (1995).)

Table 3.1
Key Features of Two Main Sets of Paradigms

In practice, research methodologies tend to be somewhat on a continuum between two extremes as in figure 3.1 below:

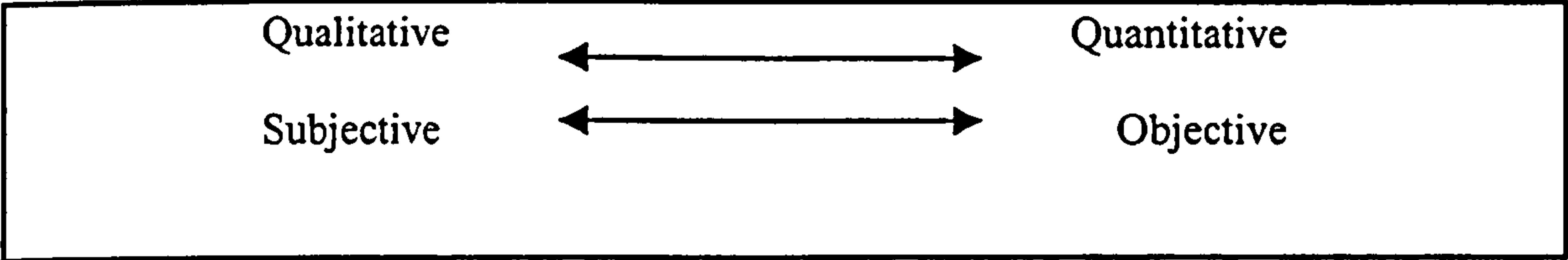


Figure 3.1 **Research Methodology Paradigms Presented as a Continuum**

Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1 also illustrate the differences between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. The quantitative paradigm focuses on efforts to verify or falsify a priori hypothesis expressed in mathematical propositions which can be converted into formulas expressing functional relationships (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Despite the objective nature of the quantitative paradigm, the focus on the verification of a specific priori hypothesis may result in a superficial study which ignores the sources of those hypotheses usually arrived at through a discovery process (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The qualitative

paradigm on the other hand can “describe, decode, translate certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (Van Maanen, 1983:9). Easterby-Smith et al. (1994:83) describe the qualitative method as having the ability to “look at change processes over time, to understand people’s meaning and to adjust to the evolution of new theories”.

Parkhe (1993:235-237), suggests an important difference between quantitative and qualitative research paradigms. Qualitative researchers consider words rather than numbers as the major element of data, include subjective information collected from interviews, tend to be more “inductive” than “deductive” and emphasise theory building rather than hypothesis testing.

The case study in a qualitative methodology is included in a range of qualitative approaches such as histories, archival analysis and ethnographies and allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events (Yin, 1989). Referring back to Figure 3.1, Yin’s (1994) description of a case study methodology is closest to the qualitative end of the research methodology continuum. The research paradigm in this study involves examination of the history of three schools, analysis of their documents and investigation of the contributing ethnographic factors in the parental school choice decision. Adopting a qualitative paradigm with interviews (Appendix C), one open-ended semi-structured question in the survey (Appendix B, Question 4.2) and documentary analysis allows the researcher to generate rich meanings in words that explain parental choice behaviours.

On the other hand, quantitative data collected from surveys (Appendix B) in this study keep the researcher “analytically honest, protecting against bias” (Miles & Huberman, 1984:215) and thus keeps a balance between the two extreme ends of the continuum in Figure 3.1. Miles and Huberman (1984:215-216) also make several other remarks about counting

numbers in qualitative research. They are “more economical and manipulable”, “consistency judgements are based on counting” and that “doing qualitative analysis of all the data with the aid of numbers is a good way of seeing how robust our insights are”.

Justification of Methodology

In this study, both the quantitative approach, using “frequency counts” by a questionnaire survey, and the qualitative approach, using probing telephone interviews, have been adopted, in order to elicit a comprehensive picture of the parental school choice factors in private primary education.

There are advantages and disadvantages in using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Two of the drawbacks of qualitative research are the lack of scientific rigour (Johnson, 1994:22) and the difficulty of generalization (Nisbet and Watt, 1984). Coldeway (1989:2) suggests that descriptive statistics by quantitative methods have the ability “to describe a mass of numbers in terms of general trends, to tabulate data, and to present data in graphic form”. A large scale questionnaire survey was therefore conducted to identify respondents for the qualitative interviews and to collect quantitative supporting data. By using the multiple case studies, instead of a single one, surveys help to generate sufficient data for the generalization of findings (Johnson, 1994; Yin, 1994). The questionnaire survey provides frequency counts of parental respondents’ reasons for their choice and their explanation of the choices was quantified to identify and analyze related factors. Three sets of data collected from three sample schools are assumed to be capable of providing inferential statistics for generalizing the research findings to the non-profit Christian primary school population at large. Parents from three private primary schools were approached to complete a questionnaire, in order to collect data from large-scale samples. Since the purpose of presenting data is “to make it easy for your reader or audience to see the trends in your results” (Coldeway, 1949:14),

frequency distribution bar graphs, and tables that present discrete data on parental choice factors, are used to demonstrate the relative strength of each factor.

The weakness of quantitative research is the difficulty of exploring a topic in depth (Johnson, 1994:18). It does not have the flexibility to deal with complexities of human decision-making and behaviour and to tackle sensitive issues (Johnson, 1994:7,18). This may be the case in this study where meanings are socially constructed and linked to the social value of the society (Easterby-Smith et al. 1994). Van Maanen (1983:9) defines qualitative methods as “an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meanings, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world”. Qualitative methods also “provide a way of gathering data which is seen as natural rather than artificial” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1994:83). The in-depth interview used in a case study provides greater insight than a survey and also provides “well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in local contexts” (Miles & Huberman, 1984:15). Qualitative data are claimed to be “far more convincing to a reader – another researcher, a policy-maker, a practitioner – than pages of numbers” (Miles & Huberman, 1984:15). Qualitative findings from this study are considered more appealing to educational administrators. The in-depth interviews in this study are therefore used as a basis for further empirical study of the four research questions and to address the criticisms of the quantitative methods described above.

A case study method is considered appropriate for the research problem being addressed in this study. Johnson (1994:22) appreciates the “descriptive data”, “broad sources of evidence” and the “lifelike picture” that a case study approach provides. The problem, parental school choice, involves the examination of contemporary phenomena within a dynamically changing real-life context. The boundaries between the phenomenon, parental

school choice, and different demographic characteristics of parents are not clear-cut. Therefore multiple sources of evidence and three cases are used to discover the meaning of school choice in the context of different parental groups (Yin, 1994).

Questionnaire survey research for quantitative data

Use of survey research

Survey research is “the most commonly used descriptive method in educational research” (Cohen & Manion, 1994:83). Surveys vary in complexity from those which provide “simple frequency counts” to those which present “relational analysis” in order to describe the nature or identify the standard of an existing condition (Cohen & Manion, 1994:83; Coldeway, 1989:13-24; Sekaran, 1992:264-265). Cohen and Manion (1994:83) suggest that the gathering of data typically involves “structured or semi-structured interviews, self-completion or postal questionnaires, standardized tests of attainment or performance, and attitude scales”. Sekaran (1992:189) indicates that data-collection methods can be in the form of interviewing, questionnaires, observational studies or projective test.

One important consideration in conducting a survey is specification of the population to which the enquiry is addressed, as an inappropriate choice of samples would limit the validity of the data. Identifying a realistic sample size is also a key success factor when conducting a survey, when demands on the survey-related budget can be very high. Examples of these include travelling time and expense, printing and mailing costs, etc. (Cohen & Manion, 1994:85-105; Sekaran, 1992:223-227).

The population for this study has been identified to be parents of children enrolled in a private primary school in Hong Kong. Sekaran (1992:254) defines “sample” as a subset of the population which comprises “some members selected from the population”. In this study,

1,379 subjects (excluding 25 pilot respondents) were selected from the entire population of 43,776 (Hong Kong Statistics Department, 1999).

Advantages of survey research

(i) Wide coverage, fast and economical

Johnson (1994:17-18) indicates that, through survey research, it is usually possible to “approach a relatively large number of respondents”, capable of “generalisability/ comparability” and “producing a large amount of factual information”. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1994:83) suggest that quantitative methods “can provide wide coverage of the range of situations; they can be fast and economical; and, particularly when statistics are aggregated from large samples, they may be of considerable relevance to policy decisions”. Sekaran (1992:201) points out that “the main advantage of a mail questionnaire is that a wide geographical area can be covered in the survey”. Sekaran (1992:189) says that “questionnaires have the advantage of obtaining data more efficiently in terms of researcher time, energy, and costs”. She considers “administering questionnaires to large numbers of individuals simultaneously is less expensive and less time consuming than interviewing; it also requires fewer skills to administer the questionnaire than to conduct interviews” (Sekaran, 1992:201). She also suggests that respondents can complete the questionnaires “at their own convenience, in their homes, and at their own pace” (Sekaran:1992:201). For the data obtained from 1,379 sample parents in this study (excluding 25 pilot respondents), a questionnaire survey is a realistic tool that is capable of meeting the research purpose and it is also at an appropriate scale for a single-handed researcher.

(ii) Simple to use and analyze

Survey questionnaires are considered by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1995:119) to be “simple to use and analyse” even though the design is “by no means simple”. Sekaran

(1992:200) stresses the advantage of obtaining information electronically by computer indexing and data retrieval when the questionnaire survey method is used. In this study, it will not be difficult to read the data about parents' reasons for school choice and preference if the appropriate types of questions have been included in a layout that is comprehensible to each respondent. Sekaran (1992:200) claims that the questionnaire survey method is "an efficient data-collection mechanism when the researcher knows exactly what is required and how to measure the variables of interest". For visual understanding and analysis, discrete data in this study are converted into bar graphs.

Limitations of survey research by questionnaires

(i) Inflexible and artificial

Questionnaire survey methods tend to be "rather inflexible and artificial", "not very effective in understanding processes or the significance that people attach to actions", and "not very helpful in generating theories" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1994:83). It would then be difficult to elicit the entire picture of parental choice behaviour in this study, if only the survey method is used. Peripheral factors that influence parents' choice of a school cannot be easily detected. The follow-up telephone interviews are therefore necessary to help minimize bias caused by the inflexible and artificial format of surveys.

(ii) Leads to faulty interpretations and fails to predict future behaviours

Hoinville and Jowell (1978:183) point out that survey methods often lead to faulty interpretations due to "the tendency to demand too much of surveys". Sekaran (1992:201) says that the low return rate of mail questionnaires makes it "difficult to establish the representativeness of the sample...". Hoinville and Jowell (1978:183) report that surveys are more problematic for interpreting attitudinal data when compared to interpreting behavioural data, since most people can describe what they do rather than what their values

are. Even if surveys are used for interpreting behavioural data, wrong conclusions can also be drawn “if insufficient account is taken of the factors governing behaviour and their relationship with the survey purpose” (Hoinville and Jowell, 1978:183). They suggest that “interpretation becomes still more problematic in surveys that attempt to collect data about intended or future behaviour”. Survey response, according to Hoinville and Jowell (1978:184), can only “provide clues about the future”. This means that the future school choice behaviour of parents is not likely to be predicted accurately with reference to a single survey research tool. The findings can only provide some clues to educators in Hong Kong about the school choice behaviours of parents in private primary schools.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1994:83) also state that quantitative methods “focus on what is, or what has been recently, they make it hard for the policy-maker to infer what changes and actions should take place in the future”. For these reasons, the researcher decided not to rely on a single quantitative research tool to draw responses from parents in regard to their future school choice behaviour. Another tool using the semi-structured interview was used to validate the research findings while documentary analysis was used to assess whether or not the three case schools implement policies and activities that are in line with the parents’ expressed preferences.

Hoinville and Jowell (1978:184) further point out that questions which elicit respondents’ experience and knowledge/background are often not taken into account in surveys even though these data directly or indirectly lead to the response variations. They recommend that researchers interpret attitudinal data “in the context of social and environmental conditions that can substantially alter people’s outlooks....” (Hoinville and Jowell, 1978:185). The researcher, therefore, has incorporated a section on the demographics of respondents in order to check on the relationships between the social and environmental conditions of

respondents and their school choice behaviours and values.

(iii) Bias caused by early/late returns or failure to return the questionnaire and item non-response

Hoinville and Jowell (1978:186) point out that the resistance to postal survey, in particular, is very great and “if the research subject matter is related in any way to the characteristics associated with non-response the results will contain some element of bias”. Sekaran (1992:201) also suggests that “the return rates of mail questionnaires are typically not as high as might be desired; sometimes they are very low”. She also claims that failure to return the questionnaire or item non-response is likely to be associated with “...any doubts the respondents might have that cannot be clarified” or when “...the researcher has to reach subjects with very little education” (Sekaran, 1992:201). Hoinville and Jowell (1978:186) further indicate that early returns and late returns of survey replies also yield slightly different responses, with more positive answers among early returns. Compared to late returns, non-response “is suspected of having a particularly damaging effect on the validity of the findings of a postal survey...” (Hoinville and Jowell, 1978:186). Sekaran (1992:201) also states that “...those who responded to the survey may be totally different from the population they were intended to represent”. To minimise research bias due to early/late returns or non-response, the researcher arranged for questionnaires to be collected by class-teachers of the sample schools, and the researcher provided a contact telephone number for parents to raise questions should they find any misleading items in the questionnaire. The overall response rate from the author’s survey was 84%.

(iv) Bias caused by the survey question wording

One other limitation of the survey method, as observed by Davis (1971:20), is the impact of the survey question wording. He states, “It is well known that the distributions of answers

on attitude and opinion questions will vary by 15 or 20 per cent with apparently slight changes in question wording". Sekaran (1992:202) highlights the impact of the questionnaire wording on research outcomes. Her principles of wording refer to such factors as:

1. the appropriateness of the content of the questions;
2. how questions are worded and the level of sophistication of the language used;
3. the type and form of questions asked;
4. the sequencing of the questions in the questionnaire, and ;
5. the personal data sought from the respondents. (Sekaran, 1992:202)

Conducting a pilot test, in this study of parental choice of school, is therefore considered essential in minimizing bias caused by inappropriate question wordings.

Use of demographic data for analysis of parental school choice behaviour

Demographic characteristics of respondents were collected to examine if there is any relationship between parental school choice behaviour and their background. These include the number of children in their family, the sex of their child currently studying in the private school, the academic grade level of their child at the time of the research and at the time of school choice, family income and education level of parent respondents. It is assumed that a pattern will emerge with data obtained from the three sample schools.

Individual demographic factors may have different weightings on parental choice of private primary schools. This study will find out whether or not a single-child family is more likely to send their child to a fee-paying school compared to a family with two or more children. The cultural and economical factors are exemplified by the Chinese traditional tendency to enrol the male child in a private primary school leaving the female child to study in the non-

paying public school when the family can afford to keep only one child in the fee-paying system. This assumption will be evaluated in this research. Whether or not parents are making their private school choice decision when their child is starting grade one will also be examined and discussed. The more direct influence on private school choice is, of course, related to family income which determines how much money the family can afford to spend on the child in addition to family expenditures. The income levels of families will then be categorized into five groups, to identify which financial group is most representative of the majority families and to assess whether or not only families with high income are willing to send their child to a private primary school. The education levels of parent or guardian are also assessed, to identify the general education background of these parents. Findings in this aspect are capable of locating which group of parents is more likely to send their child to a private primary school. Whether the father or the mother completed the survey questionnaire will give the researcher some insights on who may be the decision-maker in school choice. Impacts of the various demographic characteristics on parental choice of private primary schools for their children are analyzed in Chapter IV, V and VI, and contrasted in Chapter VII and VIII.

Telephone interviews for qualitative data

Advantages of telephone interviews

A telephone interview using open-ended questions may be used for probing explanation of objective choices provided in a survey questionnaire. Fidler (1994:283) quotes Frey's (1989) comment on the growth in interest in using telephone interview for general surveys. He says that "the extent of telephone coverage has undoubtedly been an influential factor in increasing the use of the telephone to the extent that it is now the dominant and most popular survey technique". He also perceives its speed as an important advantage in addition to its ability to "control quality throughout the interview process" (Fidler,1994:284). Sekaran (1992:197)

also appreciates the speed of telephone interviews and the large number of respondents that the researcher can reach within a short period of time and when the sample respondents are spread over a wide geographical area (Sekaran, 1992:220). She also claims that telephone interviews would “eliminate any discomfort that respondents might feel in facing the interviewer” especially when disclosing personal information. Follow-up telephone interviews, after the quantitative questionnaire survey conducted in this study, served to provide a comprehensive picture of parental school choice behaviours by locating the inner meanings of respondents’ choice factors.

Limitations of telephone interviews

A main disadvantage of telephone interview is that “the respondent could unilaterally terminate the interview without warning or explanation by hanging up the phone” (Sekaran, 1992:197) or blocking a call (Sekaran, 1992:220). Another disadvantage is that “the researcher will not be able to see the respondent to read the nonverbal communication” (Sekaran, 1992:197). Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1994:83) suggest that data collection using telephone interviews “can take up a great deal of time and resources, and the analysis and interpretation of data may be very difficult”. They further indicate that the low credibility that decision-makers give to qualitative studies based on a phenomenological approach also leads to opposition to using this method. Its slightly lower response rates, 5% lower when compared to face-to-face interviews (Fidler, 1994:284), and its restriction to “verbal and paralingual utterances” (Fidler, 1994:284) also lead to reservations about telephone interviews.

To compensate for the weaknesses of telephone interviews, a large-scale quantitative questionnaire survey was conducted prior to the gathering of qualitative data. The survey research also helped to locate samples for the in-depth interviews.

Documentary Analysis

Use of documentary analysis

“Documentary research relies primarily on the use of available printed data as a source of evidence” (Johnson, 1994:25). It is commonly referred to as content analysis which use written data “whether this be a book, newspaper or magazine, notice, letter or whatever, although the term is sometimes extended to include non-written documents such as films and television programmes, pictures, drawings and photographs” (Robson, 1993:237). Bogdan and Biklen (1992:132) have included such items as “autobiographies, personal letters, diaries, memos, minutes from meetings, newsletters, policy documents, proposals, codes of ethics, statements of philosophy, yearbooks, news releases, scrapbooks, letters to the editors newspaper articles, personnel files, and students’ case records and folders”.

The documents in this current study are school circulars, newsletters, annual reports, school anniversary memorial bulletins and school information leaflets. These serve to assess whether or not the three sample schools implement policies or carry out activities that are in line with parents’ expressed preferences.

Although documentary analysis is qualitative in nature, counting frequency numbers of the summarized themes or patterns related to the research questions is necessary in order to weigh “important” or “significant” or “recurrent” items (Miles & Huberman, 1984:215). For the purpose of the counting exercise, themes or patterns that illuminate parents’ expressed preferences were classified into semantic units (Robson, 1993:238) or categories, to infer the existence of the preferences such as Chinese cultural values, strong discipline or academic competence, etc. These can be a page unit, an article unit, a section unit, or a picture unit that represents a theme or a pattern related to the matters under investigation.

Advantages of documentary analysis

Robson (1994:243) indicates one advantage of documentary analysis as an “unobtrusive measure” since the researcher “can ‘observe’ without interruption”. Also, the data, which “provide a ‘low cost’ form of longitudinal analysis when a ‘run’ or series of documents of a particular type is available”, are subject to re-analysis, allowing “reliability checks and replication studies” (Robson, 1994:243). Anniversary memorial bulletins of the three sample schools provide the researcher with longitudinal data about school characteristics. Newsletters produced at quarterly or bi-annual intervals allow the researcher to uncover progressive changes in the schools that may relate to parental choice and child’s behavioural changes. The existence or weighting of these elements can also be located in the different issues of the newsletters over a particular period.

Although documentary sources are valuable for scrutinizing the existing status of parental preferences, Scott (1990:112-113) indicates that access to “closed” or “inadvertent” sources is not always possible. He suggests using “published” documents which are also enlightening for providing both “witting” and “unwitting” evidence (Duffy, 1987; Robson, 1993:273) which a researcher may use to identify the existing and future orientations of the research samples. It suggests that unwitting evidence may come from any underlying assumptions unintentionally revealed by the author of the document. For the reasons suggested by Scott (1990:112), only “published documents” were used in this study.

Disadvantages of documentary analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1992:133) also claim that documents available for analysis may be “limited or partial” and that documents are very often written “for some purpose other than for the research”. They stress the need to “understand the writer’s purpose in producing the

document” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992:135) when engaging in content analysis, since “the motivation will affect the content of the document”. These have led Robson (1994:243) to conclude that it is “very difficult to assess causal relationships”. For these reasons, documentary analysis is used in this study mainly to assess whether or not parents’ expressed preferences in school choice can be located in the three case schools.

Cases study procedures

Planning for the research

The study has been conducted with close reference to the eleven essential research stages suggested by Johnson (1984 and 1994). The eleven stages are: establishing the focus of the study, identifying the specific objectives of the study, selecting the research method, arranging research access, developing the research instrument, piloting the data collection, collecting the data, pulling out of the investigative phase, ordering the data, analyzing the data, writing up and enabling dissemination.

Establishing the focus and identifying the specific objectives of the study

Johnson (1984) claims that it is important to identify a focused title that can be expressed in one sentence and can reflect the specific interests of the researcher. The focus of this study is the factors that affect the choice of a private primary school. It is likely that the choice of a primary school, for children at the age of 5, depends solely on parents’ decisions since young children are not able to access any choices without these being arranged by parents. The scope of this study, therefore, is parental choice, though the degree of child influence is also investigated.

All the data, except the demographics of respondents, were collected to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the factors affecting Chinese parental decisions to enrol their children in private primary schools?
2. What are the parental perceptions of changes since their children's enrolment in private primary schools?
3. What are the explanations responsible for the parents' selection and their children's behavioural changes after enrolment in private primary schools?
4. What is the influence of Chinese cultural values on child development and parental choice?

Selecting the research method, locating appropriate samples and size

The case study method has been selected to provide data on the school choice behaviours of parents in three private primary schools which are NY, CK and SC. The sample population identified are parents who were willing to provide data on their school choice behaviours. Instead of sampling a wide population of parents throughout Hong Kong, the current research focuses on a group of parents who have these characteristics. They have at least one child currently studying in a private school, motivated to provide data to the researcher voluntarily and to provide in-depth and rich data to the researcher in an interview.

Parents in the three private schools were drawn by convenience sampling (Sekaran, 1992:235) when members of the population are conveniently available to provide the required information through the researcher's contacts with the three schools. Although the three schools are located in Kowloon, parents of their students represent the population in all parts

of the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories, since over 60% of their students travel to school from different parts of these areas. Other than being a private non-profit Christian primary school, they were selected also because of their degree of popularity. The total student population of the three schools at the time of the research in 1998 was 1,404 which is around 3.2% of the total private primary school population and 1.9% of the total primary school population in Hong Kong. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) simplify the sample size decision by providing “a generalized scientific guideline that ensures a good decision model”. According to their model, a population size of 75,000 would require a sample size of 382 which is equivalent to approximately 0.5% of the total population. In this particular study, if the findings are to be generalized to the entire primary school population of 75,000 in Hong Kong, it would need only 382 samples in the study. Then a sample size of 1,379 (excluding 25 pilot respondents) taken from a population of 75,000 should be considered a lot more than adequate “to establish the desired level of precision and confidence.....to allow findings to be generalized to the population” (Sekaran, 1992:252). If the population is further restricted to parents with children enrolled in a private primary school, the population size will be reduced to approximately 43,776 (Hong Kong Statistics Department, 1996). The samples in this study would then represent 3.2% of the total student population in the private primary schools and the sample size required by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) would be only 223 parent respondents. The current sample size of 1,379 (excluding 25 pilot respondents) parents therefore ensures that the level of precision and confidence has been guaranteed.

Further increase in sample size is unnecessary and unrealistic because of the limitation in manpower to carry out the in-depth interview by a single researcher.

Arranging research access

Johnson (1994) suggests that respondents need to be convinced of four aspects of the study:

(i) the research is a worthwhile investigation, (ii) the researcher is a competent person to carry it out, (iii) the reason for approaching the respondents, and (iv) the use of the research findings. To demonstrate that the current research is a worthwhile investigation, through the covering letter, parents included in this study were informed of their significant role in education and that their children would benefit directly or indirectly from the research findings. By telling parents that the researcher is currently in the position of a school principal, she has conveyed the message that she should be a competent person to carry out the research. Since parental choice of school is the key area of the study, the researcher has demonstrated clearly to the respondents the reason for approaching them. Parents were also told that their role in education is significant in that their input or participation in the study contributes to the enhancement of education.

Sekaran (1992:33) points out that the background information of the target organization has to be studied “before even conducting the first interview with the officials of the institution” so that appropriate issues may be raised during the subsequent interviews. The initial personnel that the researcher had to access were the principals of the three target primary schools, and these principals had to be convinced of the value of the study.

To convince respondents of the value of this particular study, as suggested by Johnson (1994), the researcher enclosed a covering letter which sets out the following:

1. the purpose of the study,
2. the researcher’s current position as a school principal,
3. the significance of parents’ input,
4. the potential contribution of the research findings to the existing education system.

The researcher began with the statement, in the covering letter (see Appendix B), that only 30 minutes would have to be spent on the questionnaire. Parents’ use of their precious time was

greatly appreciated, in order to increase their incentive to complete the questionnaire. Cohen and Manion (1994:99) also highlight the need to select an appropriate kind of incentive that “should be as neutral as possible” so as not to affect the data validity. The incentive given by the researcher, in this study, was the indirect contribution of parents to the Hong Kong education system by responding to the researcher’s questionnaire.

In addition to the researcher herself, as a school principal, three other principals were initially contacted, to seek their consent for conducting the questionnaire survey and the interviews with parents of their students. One declined to participate in the research and two others accepted the invitation.

Developing a survey questionnaire and an interview schedule, determining what kind of documents to examine

The research instruments for this study include a questionnaire and an interview schedule. A survey questionnaire in Chinese was developed by the researcher based on that of Buttrum (1994) and Sauter (1994) and linked to the specific research questions in this current study. Cohen and Manion (1994) quote Davidson’s definition of the properties of an ideal questionnaire as follows:

It is clear, unambiguous and uniformly workable. Its design must minimize potential errors from respondents and coders. And since people’s participation in surveys is voluntary, a questionnaire has to help in engaging their interest, encouraging their co-operation, and eliciting answers as close as possible to the truth. (Cohen and Manion, 1994:92-93)

In the light of the questionnaire properties listed above, the survey questionnaire was

compiled by simple statements with concise multiple answers for the choice of respondents who need to put in only check marks without lengthy writing.

Cohen and Manion (1994:96-97) recommend placing questions that are “simple and of high interest value” at the beginning, in order to encourage participation. Parent respondents, in this study, were therefore invited to provide demographic data on the first page of the questionnaire. Questions that require more thought and are capable of contributing key data to the study had to be placed in the middle section of the questionnaire (Cohen and Manion,1994:96-97). These were the eighteen potential school choice factors derived from the analyses of Smedley (1995) and Harvey (1996) as well as from the experience of the researcher working in private primary schools. One open-ended factor for the free input of parents was attached to the last school choice factor, in order not to miss any key factor unpredicted by the researcher. The subletting questions (e.g.2.1.1, 2.1.2, and 3.1.1, etc.) were used as a technique for “making the questionnaire look smaller than it actually is” and for “grouping together questions” (Cohen and Manion,1994:97) that examine reasons for a school choice as well as to analyze students’ academic and behavioural change. Questions in the last section (i.e.4.1, 4.2, etc.) serve to probe Chinese cultural influences in child education and are considered by the researcher as attractive to respondents (Cohen and Manion,1994:97) (Refer to Appendix B).

An interview schedule was developed based on the type of qualitative data required for the study. Explanations on the school choice factors and the perceived reasons of child’s behavioural changes were drawn from the seven questions in the schedule. Five of these questions are the extension of the questionnaire survey. Two other questions are new additions. These referred to parents’ preferred medium of instruction in their child’s selected secondary schools and their perspective on the level of school fees (Appendix C,

section 2, question 3 and 4).

Documents capable of providing primary sources of data (Cohen and Manion, 1994:50) are examined, to locate evidence related to parents' expressed preferences in their school choice decisions. These include newsletters, annual reports, anniversary memorial bulletins, school circulars and information leaflets that are distributed to parents.

Piloting

Piloting is considered to be essential (Cohen and Manion, 1994:84,96) to ensure clarity of the research design, whether or not the questionnaire looks easy and attractive to respondents, and that the intended meaning of the research instrument (the survey questionnaire and the interview schedule) is understood by recipients. The questionnaire was first tested on 3 parents selected by the researcher, based on convenience sampling, and then on 25 parents of one class in SC School. Modifications were made to the questionnaire twice after the two pilot tests on respondents, to eliminate ambiguous questions, and to change the questionnaire layout for production of the final version. The above procedures help to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

Findings from the pilot survey and pilot interviews were found to be similar to those obtained in the major survey and the major telephone interviews conducted with the sample respondents of NY, CK and SC.

A total of 15 questionnaires were returned out of the 25 distributed to the pilot respondents, a returned rate of 60%. One-child families constituted 60% while two-child families constituted 40%. The ratio of male to female children is 2:1. The 1-5 ratings on the factors influencing choice of schools by respondents in the questionnaire were weighted before

ranking. The weighted ratings can give a more accurate measure of the importance of factors affecting choice of a particular school. The weighting was calculated using the following rule.

1.

Very Important

Weighting of 5
2.

Important

Weighting of 4
3.

Fairly Important

Weighting of 3
4.

Not Important

Weighting of 2
5.

Unimportant

Weighting of 1

Rankings were assigned based on the weighted rating assigned to each of the selection criteria by the respondents. The weighted rankings for parental choice of the Pilot School are listed as follows:

Question Number	Factors influencing parental choice of the current school	Weighted Rating	Weighted Ranking
2.1.8	Good discipline	51	1
2.1.1	Quality of academic standard	50	2
2.1.6	Teachers are friendly and sincere	40	3
2.1.2	Greater access to extra-curricular activities	35	4
2.1.9	Good physical environment	35	4
2.1.10	Good parent-teacher/school relationship	30	6
2.1.4	Linked with a well-known secondary school	19	7
2.1.5	Excellent record of secondary school place allocation	19	7

(N = 15)

Table 3.2
Weighted rankings for parental choice of the Pilot School

The pilot survey respondents ranked “discipline”, “academic performance” and “teacher attitudes” most important in their school choice factors. The majority of pilot respondents also perceived positive child changes after enrolment in private education.

Pilot interviewees were parents, selected from among the pilot questionnaire respondents, who could be reached by the researcher easily without having to make appointments. Five face-to-face interviews were conducted at the school campus of SC. The seven questions

(Appendix C) were asked to find out whether or not the wording of the questions was capable of drawing appropriate responses from the respondents.

In the pilot interviews, only two respondents were not satisfied with their child's behavioural changes in two areas. One commented that there was too much homework after her child's enrolment in SC School. One indicated that her child seems too tired after school because of the intensive programmes provided. These two respondents were satisfied with their children's behavioural changes in all other areas. Four out of the five pilot interviewees have linked their children's positive changes to "teacher attitudes" and the influences from "Chinese cultural values" during the face-to-face interviews. Two out of the five reported that they enrolled their children in private primary schools because of the unfavourable public school places allocated to their children in primary one.

Ambiguous statements or missing items found after the pilot study are listed as follows:

- a) In Question 1.3, "your child's current grade" was changed to "your child's grade level in 97/98". "Your child's grade level when started in this current school" was found to be too lengthy and was simplified to "grade level when first entered this school" (Appendix A and B, Question 1.3);
- b) In Question 2.1, there were only fifteen school choice factors listed in the pilot questionnaire. Pilot respondents' answers to the open-ended choice factor introduced three themes which were then incorporated into this section as additional choice factors. These include: 2.1.13 "siblings of my child studying in the same school", 2.1.15 "school adopts an open policy and is willing to accept parents' opinions and make appropriate changes", and 2.1.16 "school can meet the particular needs of my child" (Appendix B, Question 2.1);
- c) Question 3.1 (which asked child's length of studies in private education) in the pilot

questionnaire was a repetition of Question 1.3 and was therefore deleted in the finalized version (Appendix A, Question 3.1);

- d) Question 3.3 in the pilot questionnaire requested respondents to enter reasons for child's behavioural changes in words (Appendix A, question 3.3), but the researcher decided to change the expected responses into numbers (Appendix B, Question 3.2) when pilot respondents demonstrated their reluctance to provide responses in written form;
- e) Question 4.3 in the final version of the questionnaire (Appendix B) was an addition to the pilot questionnaire since the researcher's pilot interviewees were chosen by convenience sampling.

Collecting the data

The finalized questionnaires were distributed to the parents (through their children) and returned to the researcher via the respective schools. The questionnaire also indicated a request for an in-depth interview either by phone or face-to-face. Respondents were requested to indicate whether they were willing to take part in a follow up interview by the researcher. The researcher had provided for either a home visit or a telephone interview in the survey questionnaire. However, all the respondents indicated the preference of a telephone interview rather than a home visit. The researcher attributed this response to the Chinese tradition of not allowing strangers to visit their families. Hence a telephone interview schedule was developed. The interview schedule employed open ended questions to solicit responses from the interviewees. To interview all the 234 parents who were willing to be interviewed would require 234 hours, assuming each interview takes 60 minutes to complete. Because of the limitations of time for a single researcher, a 25% systematic sample was taken. A total of 59 interviews were conducted and the interviewees were selected based on a random number assigned to each participant in the survey process. The first and every subsequent fourth respondent were interviewed.

Validity and reliability of the research

Cohen and Manion (1994:99), and Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1995:41,121), indicate that the validity of questionnaires can be seen from the accuracy of responses and the non-response rate. With two pilot tests for the survey, misleading items have been discarded and responses can be validated by comparing the rankings of parental choice factors among the three schools. With the return rate of 84% from NY, 87% from CK and 81% from SC, the validity of the survey is high. The error from non-return influence is reduced to the minimal.

Cohen and Manion (1994:281) also indicate that validity in interviews is often based on “face validity”. The type of “systematic error” they identify would not be applicable to the interviews in this study since the seven questions (Appendix C) tackled only parental school choice factors and their perception of child’s changes. Both are considered to be not sensitive issues that need to draw inferences through asking indirect questions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1995:121). Potential sources of bias brought by the characteristics of the interviewer (Cohen and Manion, 1994:281) have been reduced by random sampling of interviewees, the “careful formulation of questions” (Cohen and Manion, 1994:282) and by validating findings with those obtained from the survey (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1995:121).

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1995:41) define reliability of quantitative study to be the same results yielded on different occasions. The researcher conducted the same survey in three different schools in order to find out the consistency of reliability among the sample schools. Having three sets of survey data from three sample schools, the degree of reliability can be compared and evaluated.

Findings from the interview responses and documentary analysis of the three sample schools also allow the researcher to evaluate whether or not the qualitative findings of the study are reliable. Even though all interviews and documentary analysis were conducted by one single researcher in this study, the three separate case schools provide the opportunity for the researcher to evaluate the reliability of parental school choice factors and their perception of child's changes prior to and after enrolment in private education.

Pulling out of the investigative phase, ordering & analyzing the Data

Data collected from the questionnaire survey were edited, to identify and eliminate errors made by respondents (Cohen and Manion, 1994:101). Completeness, accuracy and uniformity of the responses were checked to enhance the validity of data (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 101). Graphs and tables were created for visual comparisons and analyses of the background of students and their parents, the weighting of parental school choice factors, and parental perception of their child's performance prior to and after attending a private primary school.

For the responses to closed questions (yes-no answers), percentages were used to summarize the percentage of respondents selecting a particular choice. Ranking was assigned based on the percentage figure of respondents. Other than providing objective figures to answer the four research questions, the quantitative data from the survey are also used to substantiate or verify the findings from the qualitative data collected from the telephone interviews, to ensure high levels of validity and reliability.

Parents' perspectives on the role of cultural influences in education were also presented both in graphs and in quotations. Responses from the interview schedule were largely presented in quotations, or in figures for visual analyses, and were categorized according to the order of

the seven questions in the interview schedule (Appendix C), for illuminating the themes identified at the outset of the research with reference to the analyzing framework.

Writing up and enabling dissemination

The research has been disseminated through the preparation of this thesis. In addition, abstracts and summaries of the research findings will be disseminated to primary school principals and educational administrators so that they can be aware of parental perceptions of school choice.

Research Ethics

Berger and Patchner (1994) state that “the ethical codes governing research involving human subjects all require that the participation of individuals be completely voluntary”. Parents who participated in this study were introduced to the researcher through their school principals whom they trust and are confident that no harmful effects of the research would emerge. Since the real names of the sample schools are not revealed, and that no names of the sample parents are collected, confidentiality is preserved. This study is also unrelated to other ethical issues that involve benefits, coercion, deception or stress (Sekaran, 1992). Only primary sources of documents (Cohen and Manion, 1994:50) of the three schools are used for content analysis and respondents are accessed through the school authority.

Summary

To ensure that a comprehensive survey of parental choice factors of private primary education can be completed as scheduled, the author followed Sekaran’s recommended research process (Sekaran, 1992:41). The focus of this particular study is on parental choice. The problem definition is to locate factors that contribute to parental choice of private primary education

for their children. The variables in the study include age, income and education level of parent respondents, factors of school choice, explanation of the choice factors and cultural aspects in the choice factors. The sample includes 1,379 parents (excluding 25 pilot respondents) who participated in the questionnaire survey, with 59 of them also taking part in the follow-up telephone interview. Sample documents were collected from the three sample schools which represent non-profit Christian private primary schools in Kowloon, where a high percentage of private primary schools are located. Data analysis is based on frequency counts of parental choice factors and qualitative explanation of the choice factors.

This chapter describes the methodology of this grounded research. A bi-paradigm case study method was employed through the quantitative analysis of survey data and the qualitative analysis of interview data. Documentary records were used to assess whether or not the three schools implement policies or carry out activities that are in line with parents' expressed preferences, as indicated in the quantitative and qualitative responses. The data from the survey questionnaires and telephone interviews were analysed to give a holistic view of parental choice in the three case study schools.

Chapter IV

Findings of Case Study One: NY School

Background of NY School

NY is a Christian primary school where parents are prepared to allow their children receive education with a religious background. A kindergarten section is attached to NY School and a large proportion of the kindergarten graduates are promoted directly to the primary school section. The School Management Committee of the school is also responsible for managing a secondary school in the public sector.

NY School is located in a Kowloon district where there is a total of ten private primary schools. It provides half-day education with morning and afternoon sections because of its limited number of classrooms. Both sections are administered as one school by the same body. The primary school is affiliated with a secondary school in the public sector under the feeder scheme system which allows primary six graduates to be promoted directly to the feeder secondary school, if students have been assessed to be band one to band three standards at the annual Secondary School Place Allocation Aptitude Test (Education Department, 1998a). There is a total of eighteen primary classes, with an enrolment of 561 students. Science and English Language subjects are taught in English, and Cantonese is used as the medium of instruction in other subjects. The school is well known for its good academic standard, discipline and Christian spirit. Religious activities are well organized, with regular fellowship for staff, students and parents.

Procedure and problems encountered in the data collection process

Research access

The researcher initiated the research process by first contacting the School Supervisor of NY School and informed him of her intention to conduct an investigation in his School and that she would seek consent from the Principal. The researcher moved on to contact the Principal of NY School by phone, followed by a formal letter of request.

A sample copy of the questionnaire with a covering letter addressed specifically to parents of NY School was then forwarded to the Principal for inspection and consent. Minor changes were made upon request. These include addition of the school name “NY School & Kindergarten” at the letter head as well as deletion of the researcher’s contact address displayed in the middle part of the covering letter. To substantiate the values of the study, the purpose and usefulness of the research were mentioned in the covering letter.

Preparation, distribution and return of the questionnaires

As soon as the draft of the questionnaire was approved by the Principal, the researcher requested to have the exact number of students in each class so that the printed questionnaires could be sorted out in class order and according to the exact number of students in each class. Sorting out the questionnaires and having them delivered in good order are important to avoid imposing additional workload on the teachers concerned. It was hoped that little disturbance would be brought to NY School so that teachers’ resistance to distributing and collecting questionnaires would be minimized. Questionnaires were then distributed to parents through their children on 24 April 1998 and were requested to be returned to the class teachers on 4 May. The researcher managed to obtain unanimous support from the teaching and administrative staff throughout the distribution and collection processes.

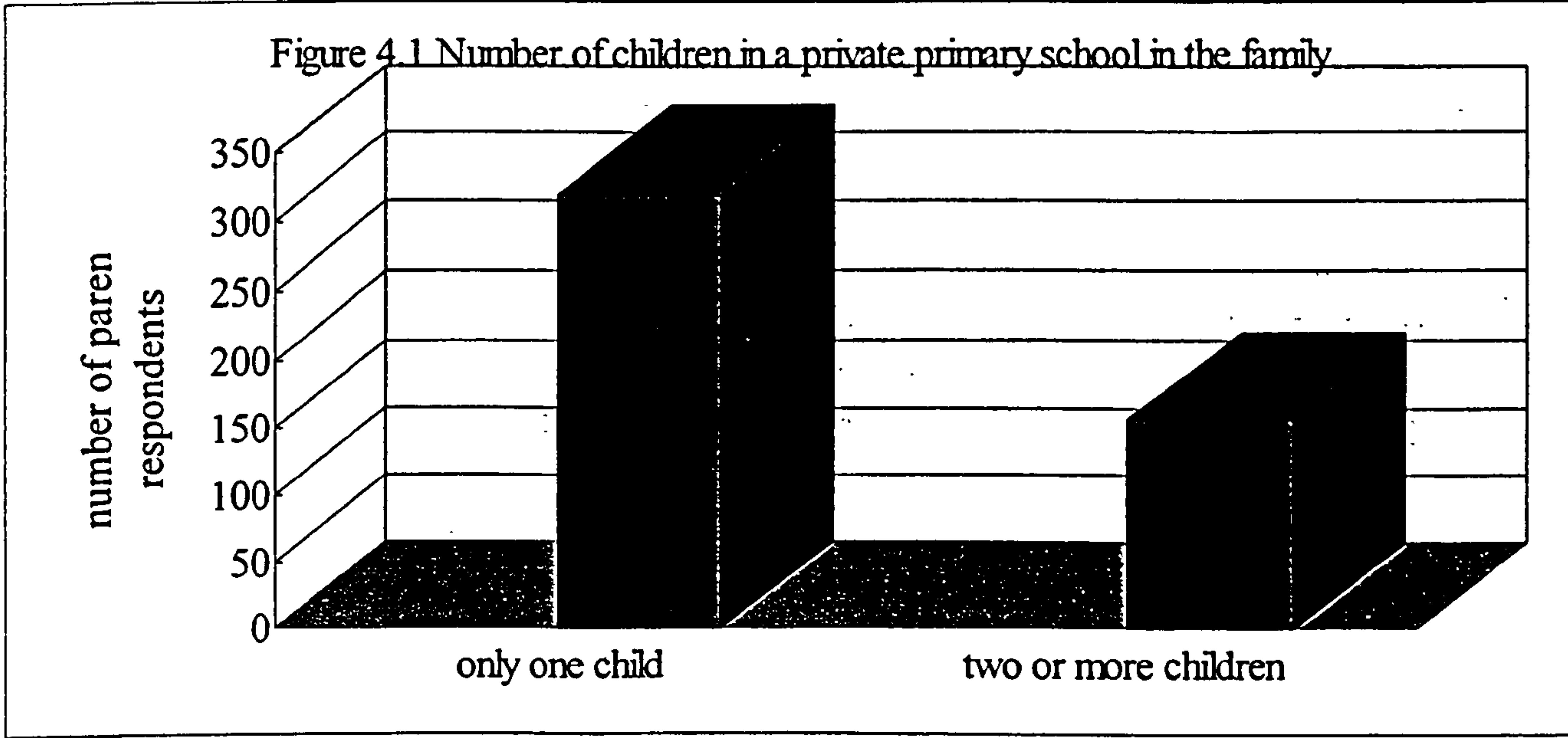
Number of returned questionnaires from the survey

A total of 561 questionnaires were distributed to students of NY School in the survey, in order to obtain contacts for subsequent interviews. 472 completed questionnaires were returned. The return rate was 84% which is considered to be high. Bias in surveys caused by non-response (Johnson, 1994:135) was reduced to the minimum.

Demographic data collected from the questionnaire survey

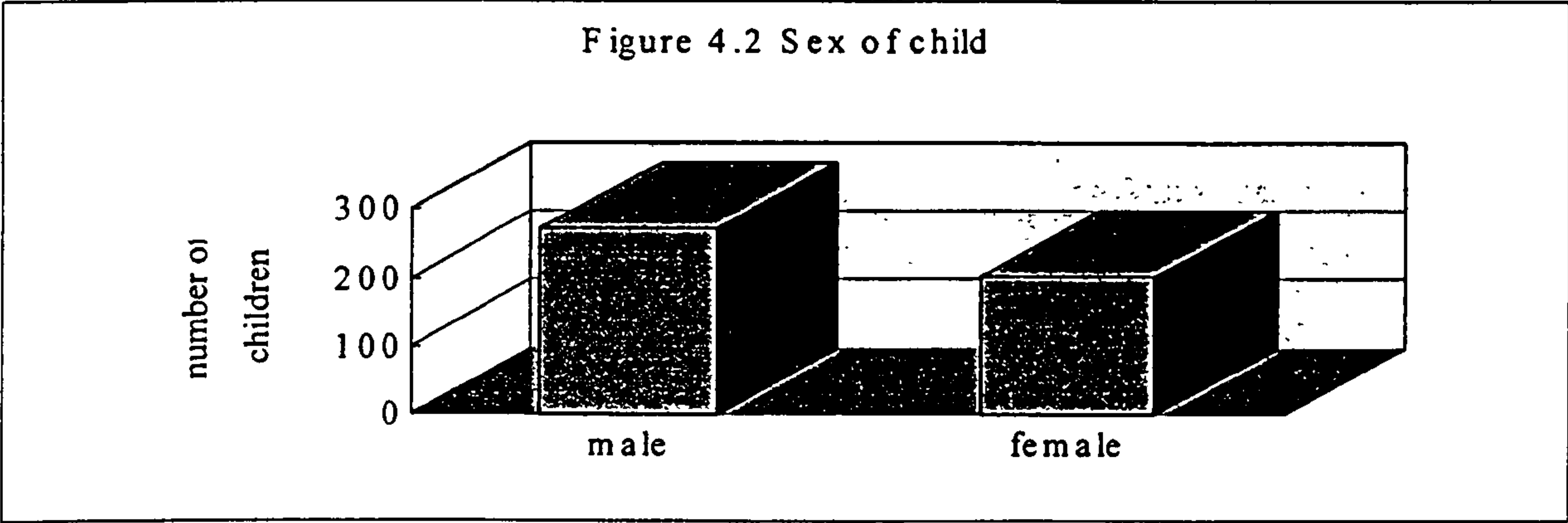
Background information of students

320 parents (68%) indicated that they have only one child who is currently studying in a private primary school and 152 (32%) said that they have two children in private primary schools (Figure 4.1).



Sex of child

There was a total of 271 boys (57%) and 201 girls (43%) in NY School (Figure 4.2). However, the Hong Kong statistical figures indicate that the ratio of male and female children at the age range of 0 to 14 is 1.07:1 (Hong Kong Statistics Department, 1999). This suggests that a much larger percentage of boys is being put in private primary education compared to girls. The larger percentage of male students enrolled in private primary education is likely to be

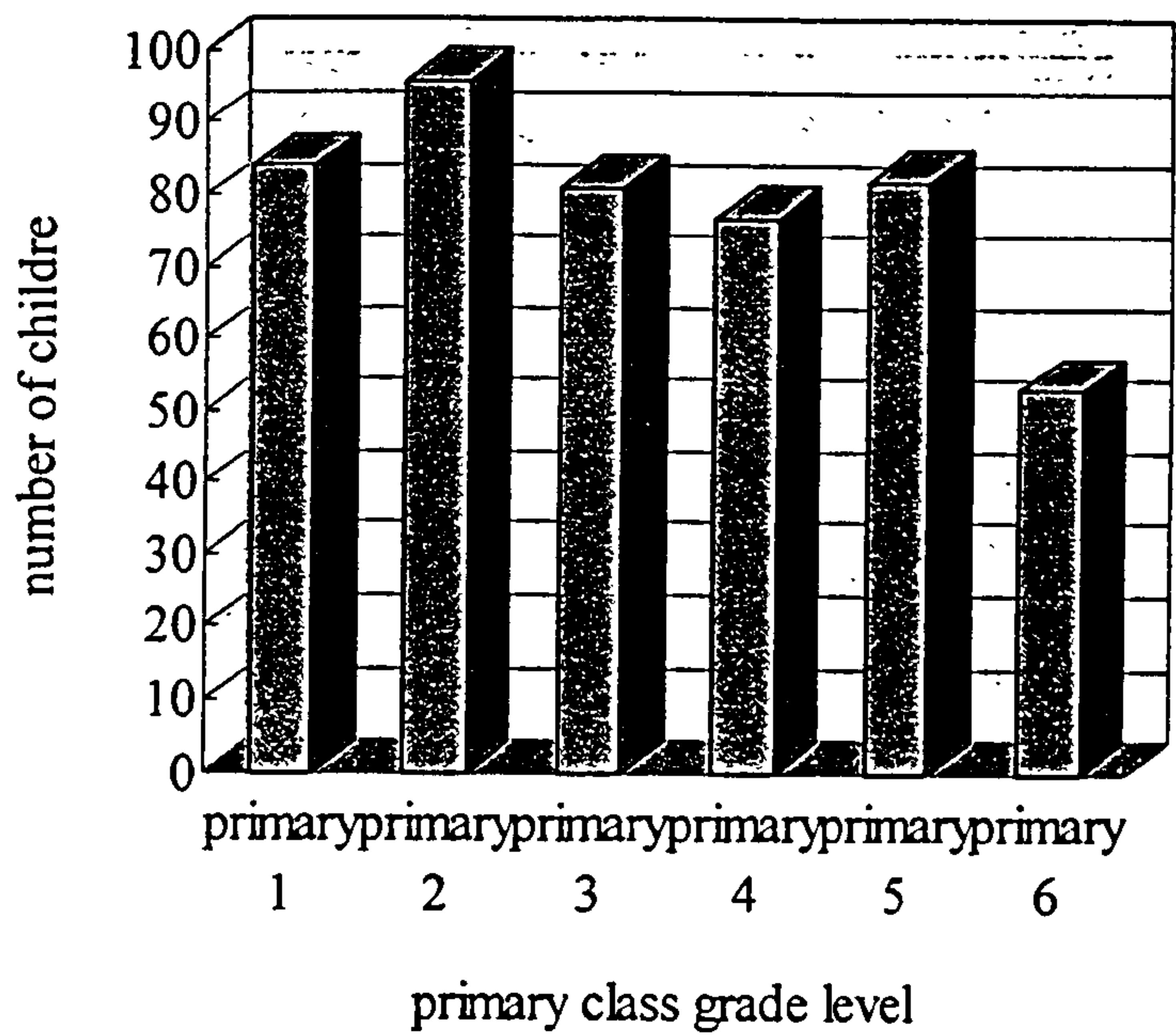


influenced by the Chinese tradition which considers education investment on male to be more worthwhile than on female descendents.

Academic grade level of students in the current school

The number of students from grade 1 to 6 are evenly distributed (Figure 4.3 and Table 4.1) and this will lead to an even distribution of samples (Cohen and Manion, 1994:90-91) drawn from parents of the various grades. 330 students (70%) are enrolled in a private primary school from grade 1. Table 4.2 and Figure 4.4 indicate that parents tend to make a school choice in the first year of their child’s primary school education.

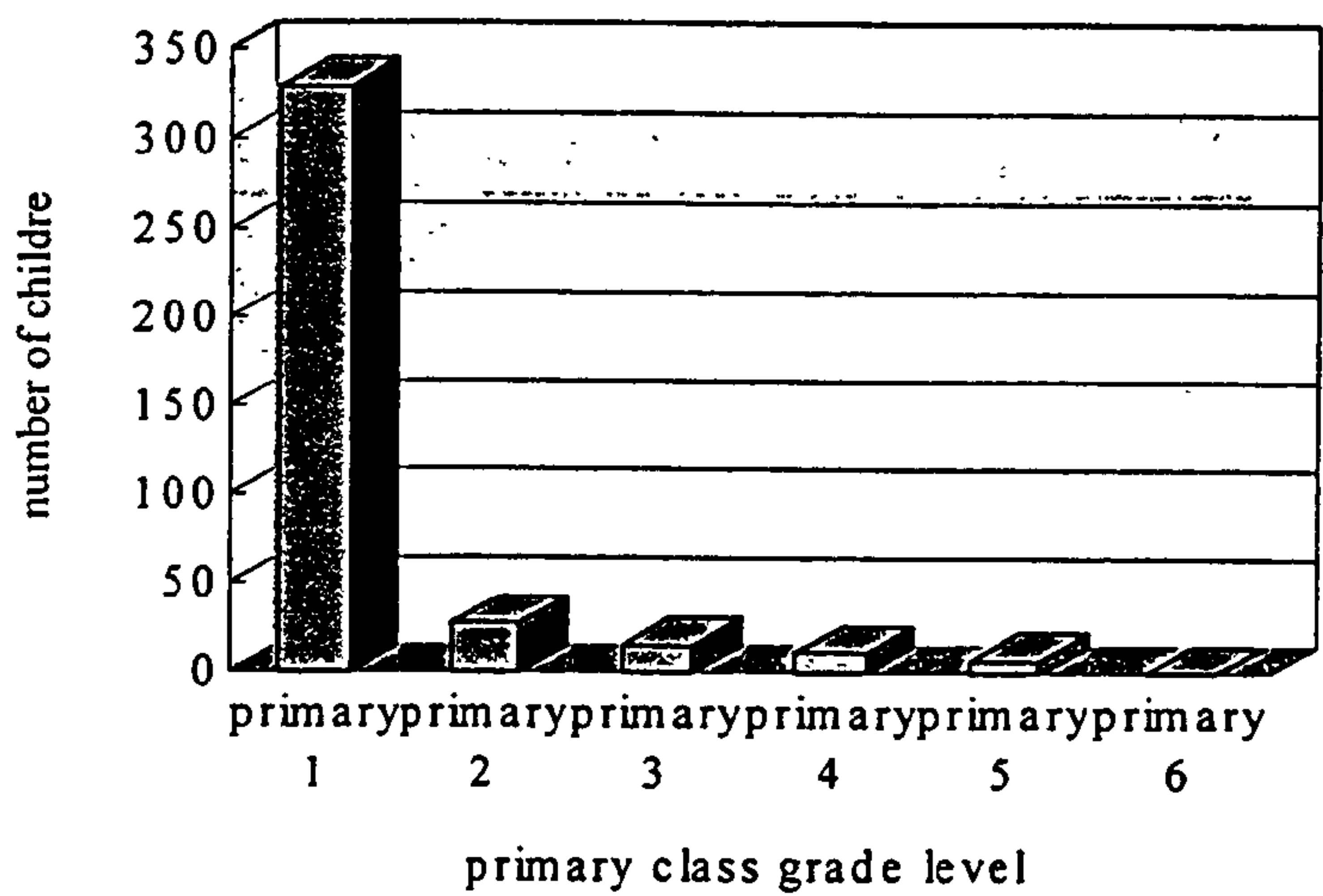
Figure 4.3 Child's grade level in the current school in 1997/98



grade level in 97/98	Number	Percentage
primary 1	84	18%
primary 2	96	20%
primary 3	81	17%
primary 4	77	16%
primary 5	82	17%
primary 6	53	11%

Table 4.1
Child's grade level in the current school in 1997/98

Figure 4.4 Child's grade level when first entering this current school

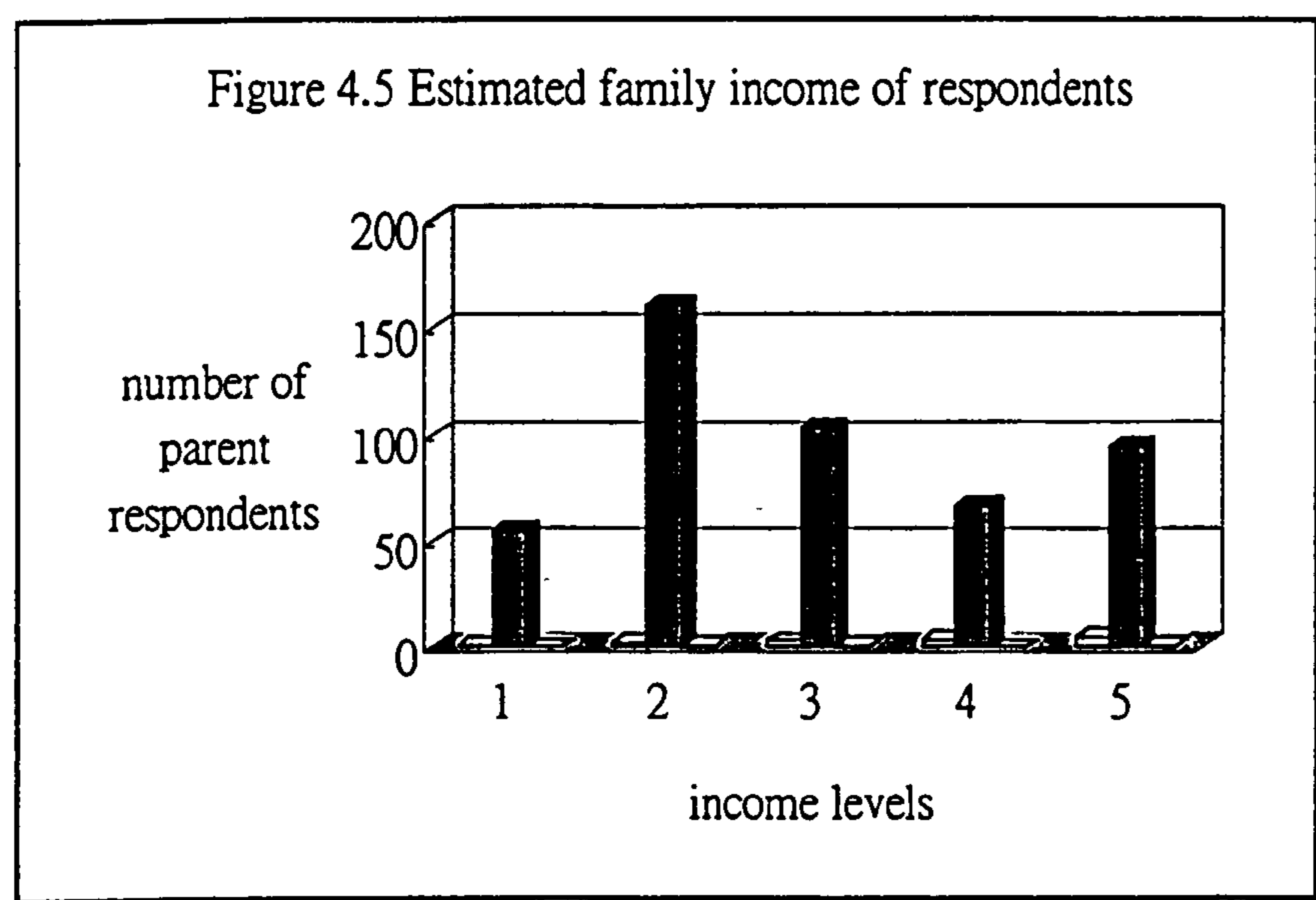


First entered into this school	Number	Percentage
primary 1	330	70%
primary 2	27	6%
primary 3	15	3%
primary 4	11	2%
primary 5	7	1%
primary 6	0	0%

Table 4.2
Child's grade level when first entering this current school

Estimated family income of parents

Family income plays an important role in private education since parents need to pay a monthly fee of not less than HK \$1000 per month while schools in the public sector are free of charge. The investigation (Figure 4.5 and Table 4.3) indicates that the largest group is the 161 respondents (34%) who have a family income of approximately HK \$16,667 - HK \$33,333 per month.

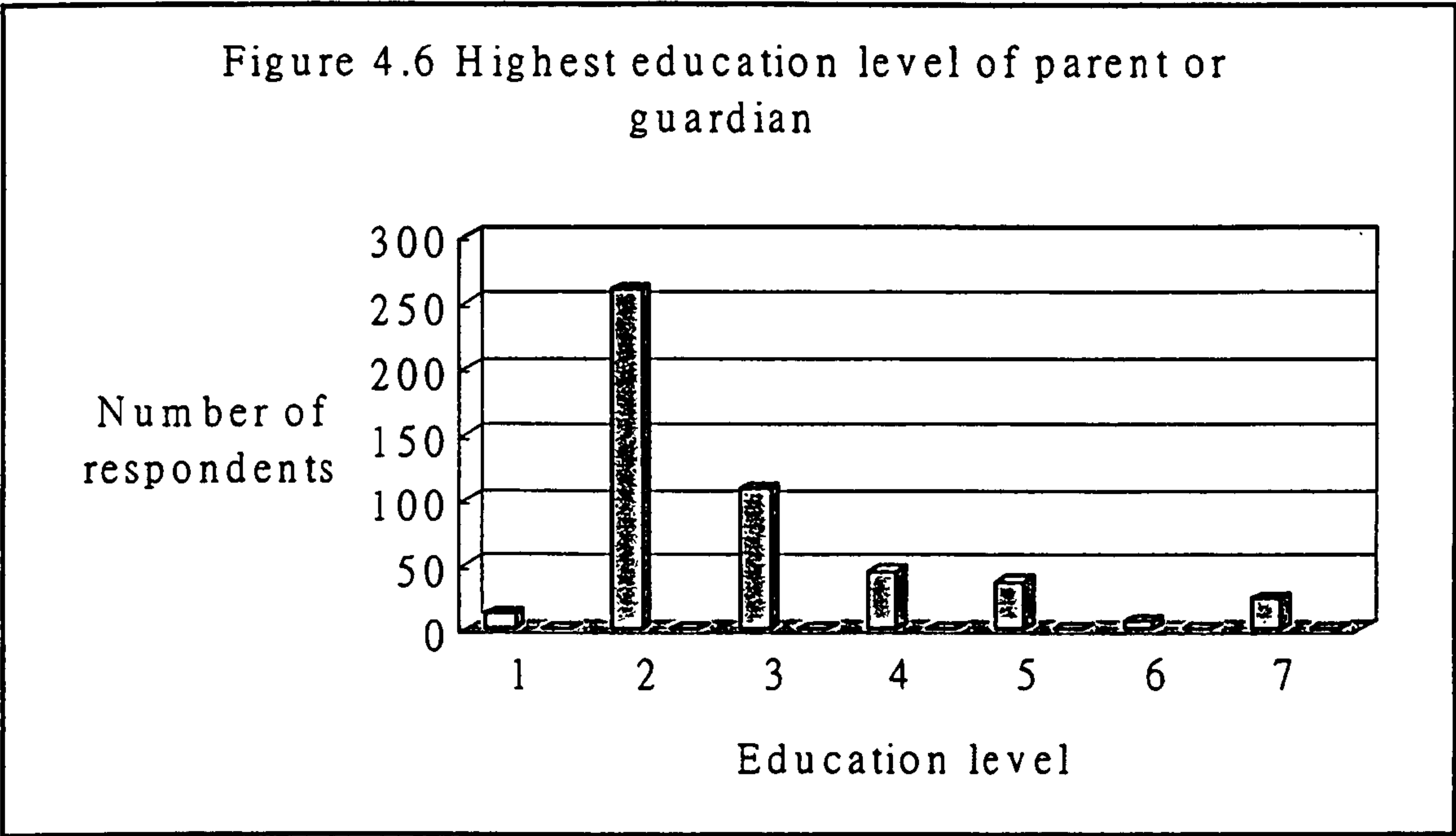


Income Levels of respondents		Number of respondents	%
1	= average of approximately \$16,667 or under per month	55	12%
2	= average of approximately \$16,667 - \$ 33,333 per month	161	34%
3	= average of approximately \$ 33,333 - \$ 50,000 per month	104	22%
4	= average of approximately \$ 50,000 - \$ 66,667 per month	67	14%
5	= average of approximately \$ 66,667 and above per month	95	20%

Table 4.3
Estimated family income of respondents

Highest education level of parent or guardian

Family income is also closely related to the education level of parents. The group that ranks top is the 260 respondents (55%) who have reached secondary school level (Figure 4.6 and Table 4.4). The next largest group is the 109 respondents (23%) who have reached post-secondary education.

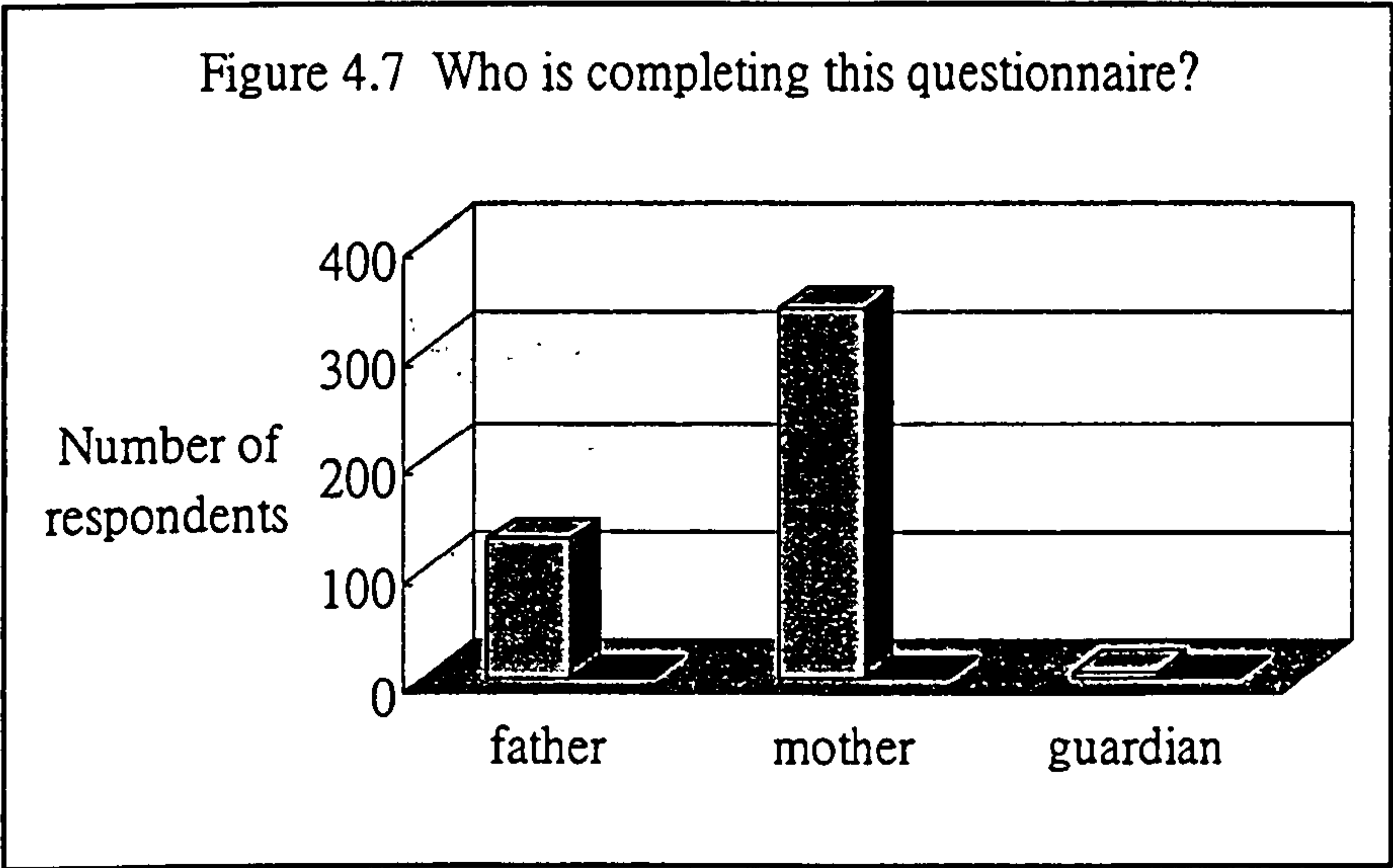


Highest education level of respondents	Number of respondents	%
1 = primary school level	12	3%
2 = secondary school level	260	55%
3 = post-secondary level	109	23%
4 = university level	45	10%
5 = masters degree level	37	8%
6 = doctorate degree level	7	1%
7 = professional level	24	5%

Table 4.4
Highest education level of parent or guardian

Who is completing the questionnaire

339 respondents (72%) were mothers, 127 (27%) were fathers and 6 respondents (1%) were guardians (Figure 4.7 and Table 4.5). This suggests that mothers are more likely to be responsible for checking homework or reading circulars from the school of their child. Whether or not more mothers make a school choice for the child will be discussed in the later sections.



	<u>Number of respondents</u>	<u>%</u>
father	127	27%
mother	339	72%
guardian	6	1%

Table 4.5
Who is completing this questionnaire?

Research question: What are the factors affecting private school choice?

Ranking of parental choice of school

The responses to this research question are shown in Table 4.6. Respondents could select from a list of 18 factors influencing their choice of school.

Question Number	Factors influencing parental choice of the current school	Weighted Rating	Weighted Ranking
2.1.8	Good discipline	1842	1
2.1.6	Teachers are friendly and sincere	1689	2
2.1.1	Quality of academic standard	1551	3
2.1.10	Good parent-teacher/school relationship	1170	4
2.1.5	Excellent record of secondary school place allocation	977	5
2.1.15	School adopts an open policy and is willing to accept parental opinions and make appropriate changes	875	6
2.1.9	Good physical environment	761	7
2.1.7	Same religious belief as parents	690	8
2.1.2	Greater access to extra-curricular activities	684	9
	Linked with a well-known secondary school	668	10
2.1.3	Live close to the school	522	11
2.1.17	Highly recommended by friends	426	12
2.1.16	School can meet the particular needs of my child	409	13
2.1.13	Siblings of my child studying in the same school	390	14
2.1.11	Special programmes not available in other schools	222	15
2.1.12	Peer groups of my child studying in the same school	208	16
2.1.14	Father or mother studied in the same school before	146	17
2.1.18	Other reasons	121	18

(N = 472) **Table 4.6 Weighted ranking of parental choice of NY school.**

Table 4.6 shows the ranking of the 18 perceived reasons for school choice. The most frequently chosen reason is “good discipline”, followed by “friendly and sincere teachers” and “quality of academic standard”. The respondents are less concerned with the “availability of special programmes”, ‘availability of child’s peer group in the school” and “father’s or mother’s historical link with the school”.

Research question: Parental perceptions of changes since enrolment.

The responses to this research question are tabulated in Tables 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9. Respondents could select from a list of 11 changes of their child after enrolment in NY. They could select a number of changes appropriate to their own situation.

Parental perception of behavioural improvement since enrolment

Question Number	Parental perception of behavioural improvement since enrolment	Number of Selection	Percentage	Ranking
3.1.7	Better relationship with friends in school	309	65	1
3.1.1	Better self motivation in learning	302	64	2
3.1.2	More interested in going to school	302	64	2
3.1.8	Increased participation and interest in extra-curricular activities	297	63	4
3.1.4	Improved academic performance	293	62	5
3.1.5	Better behaviour in school	288	61	6
3.1.6	Increased sense of responsibility	273	58	7
3.1.10	With stimulating educational aspirations	243	51	8
3.1.3	Time required in studying	219	46	9
3.1.9	Better relationship with parents and siblings	216	46	10
3.1.11	With stimulating career aspirations	177	38	11
	Overall perception of improvement	2919	56%	

(N=472) **Table 4.7 Parental perception of behavioural improvement since enrolment**

Table 4.7 shows the ranking of the 11 perceived types of behavioural improvement of the students after enrolment in the private school. The most noticeable improvement is “ better relationship with friends in school” which was chosen by 309 respondents (65%). This was followed by “better self motivation” and “interest to go to school” which were both chosen by 64% of the respondents. The top three rankings indicate that parents seem to be greatly concerned about the peer influence of their child in school. They see that their child’s learning will be greatly affected if their personal or social aspect is unfavourable. Whether or not their child is interested in schooling determines their success in academic performance which they ranked highly in the school choice factor. In fact, other types of behavioural improvement that were ranked next to the top three are also closely related to their child’s learning in school and

the percentages of parental choice were therefore relatively high. The overall perception of improvement constitutes a total of 56% of all responses.

Parental perception of no behavioural change since enrolment

The list of no change of behaviour after enrolment in NY School is tabulated in Table 4.8 below:

Question Number	Parental perception of no behavioural change since enrolment	Number of Responses	Percentage	Ranking
3.1.11	No change in career aspirations	230	49	1
3.1.9	No change when relating to parents and siblings	210	44	2
3.1.3	No change in time required in studying	182	39	3
3.1.10	No change in educational aspirations	173	37	4
3.1.6	No change in sense of responsibility	158	33	5
3.1.2	No change in interest in going to school	142	30	6
3.1.5	No change in behaviours in school	140	30	7
3.1.1	No change in learning interest (motivation)	137	29	8
3.1.8	No change in attitude towards extra-curricular activities	134	28	9
3.1.7	No change when relating to friends in school	129	27	10
3.1.4	No change in academic performance	128	27	11
	Overall perception of no change	1763	34%	

(N=472) Table 4.8 Parental perception of no behavioural change since enrolment

Table 4.8 shows the ranking of the 11 types of behaviour that are perceived to be unchanged by the parents. The overall perception of “no change” constitutes 34% of all responses. In general, the differences in the absolute number of responses among the 11 questions were low. The most noticeable perceived unchanged behaviour is “career aspirations”, which has the highest ranking. This is followed by “relationship with parents and siblings” which has a ranking of 2. Children studying in primary schools are too young to be able to relate their studies to “career aspirations”. The high percentage of parents perceiving no change in this aspect is probably because the schools do not initiate to design activities that assimilate career development and so parents will not be able to locate any prominent behavioural improvement in this area. Children’s interaction with their parents and siblings will be affected by their

attitude and behaviour if they are negatively or positively influenced by peers in school. The second ranking in this area indicates that no prominent influence was found. The high percentage of parents perceiving improvement in peer relationship, as indicated in Table 4.7, agrees with parents’ low percentage perceiving “no change” when relating to friends in school in Table 4.8.

Parental perception of deteriorated behaviour since enrolment

The number of parents who perceived deteriorated behaviours in child after enrolment in NY School is very small. It constitutes only 1.48% of all responses. The list of these behaviours is tabulated in Table 4.9 below.

Question Number	Parental perception of deteriorated behaviour since enrolment	Number of Responses	Percentage	Ranking
3.1.3	Time required in studying has worsened	28	6.0	1
3.1.4	Worse academic performance	14	3.0	2
3.1.1	Worse self motivation in learning	6	1.3	3
3.1.10	Less educational aspirations	6	1.3	3
3.1.9	Worse relationship with parents and siblings	5	1.0	4
3.1.5	Worse behaviour in school	5	1.0	4
3.1.6	Decreased sense of responsibility	4	0.8	5
3.1.8	Decreased participation and interest in extra-curricular activities	3	0.6	6
3.1.11	Less career aspirations	3	0.6	6
3.1.7	Worse relationship with friends in school	2	0.4	7
3.1.2	Less interest in going to school	1	0.2	8
	Overall perception of deterioration	77	1.48%	

(N=472) Table 4.9 Parental perception of deteriorated behaviour since enrolment

Table 4.9 shows the ranking of the 11 possible types of deteriorated behaviour perceived by the parents. The most noticeable deteriorated behaviour is the increase in “time required in studying” which has the highest ranking with the greatest number of respondents. This is followed by the drop in “academic performance” which has the second highest ranking. The other nine types of deteriorated behaviour have a substantially lower percentage relative to the two mentioned above. The additional time that children need after their enrolment in private primary schools is brought by the general parental preference for more intensive academic

training in Hong Kong (Sing Tao Yat Po, 1999a). The flexibility that private schools have encourages policy makers to meet parental expectations by increasing students' academic workload. Children who are unable to cope with the additional homework and extended syllabus will find themselves academically incompetent. In addition to their academic deterioration, their learning motivation might be weakened as well. Behaviours that are perceived to have improved, as listed in Table 4.7, rank low in Table 4.9. They are therefore not in conflict with one another.

Figures from the three sets of data indicate that parents generally perceive more productive outputs from their children since enrolment in a private primary school.

The order of importance of the five reasons behind their child's changes as listed in Table 4.7.

Table 4.8 and Table 4.9

Most of the respondents did not explain the reasons that they have assumed related to their child's changes after enrolling in a private primary school. Those who listed the order of importance behind such changes suggested a wide variety of reasons, including the impacts from children's learning motivation, their academic performance and sense of responsibility. No specific reasons could stand out as the major manipulating factor for the changes.

Parents perceiving improvement, perceiving no change, and perceiving deterioration in child's behaviour

A precise quantitative measure of the percentage of parents who perceive improvement, no change or deterioration in their child's behaviour after enrolment in a private school is presented in Table 4.10 below. 56% of parents perceived behavioural improvement in child, 34% perceived no behavioural change in child, and only 1.48% perceived behavioural deterioration in child. Parental perception of areas of improvement in child's behaviours seems to agree with

the ranking of parental choice factors, as listed in Table 4.6. “Relationship with friends in school” was perceived to have the greatest improvement in Table 4.7, when “good discipline” was ranked top among all parental choice factors. Since the personal and social aspects of children’s school life are closely linked to “discipline”, findings from the two tables are therefore supporting each other. “Motivation in learning” and “interest in going to school” were ranked second among all improved behaviours in Table 4.7 while “friendly and sincere teachers” and “quality of academic standard” were perceived to be the second and third most important criteria in school choice in Table 4.6. As pointed out by Cheng (1994), children’s learning motivation and academic performance are largely influenced by teachers’ leadership style. Having teachers with “friendly and sincere” attitudes should therefore be a major contributing factor to stimulate children’s “motivation in learning”, to help increase children’s “interest in going to school” and to ensure children’s “academic success”. Based on these analyses, we can assume that the various sets of findings are supporting each other.

In Table 4.7, “relationship with friends in school” and “academic performance” were perceived to have substantial improvement, and they were ranked last in the unchanged behaviours (Table 4.8). Compared to perceived deteriorated behaviours, “relationship with friends in school” and “interest in going to school” were also ranked last and perceived to be least deteriorated (Table 4.9). All these figures are also supporting each other.

Question number	Parental perception of child’s changes after enrolment in private primary schools	Percentage of parents perceiving improvement	Percentage of parents perceiving no change	Percentage of parents perceiving deterioration
3.1.2	Interest in going to school	64%	30%	0.2%
3.1.7	Relationship with friends in school	65%	27%	0.4%
3.1.8	Participation and interest in extra-curricular activities	63%	28%	0.6%
3.1.5	Behaviour in school	61%	30%	1%
3.1.1	Motivation in learning	64%	29%	1.3%
3.1.4	Academic performance	62%	27%	3%

3.1.6	Sense of responsibility	58%	33%	0.8%
3.1.11	Stimulating career aspirations	38%	49%	0.6%
3.1.9	Relationship with parents and siblings	46%	44%	1%
3.1.10	Stimulating educational aspirations	51%	37%	1.3%
3.1.3	Time required in studying	46%	39%	6%
	Overall perception of changes	56%	34%	1.48%

(N=472) **Table 4.10 Parents perceiving improvement, no change and deterioration in child’s behaviours since enrolment in NY School**

Parental perception of child’s behaviours in relation to discipline, academic performance and teacher influence since enrolment

Table 4.6 shows that “good discipline” has the top ranking in parental choice of NY. Table 4.7 also shows that 288 respondents (61%) have perceived behavioural improvement in discipline since their child’s enrolment in NY. Table 4.8 shows that 140 respondents (30%) have perceived no behavioural change in their child’s discipline. Table 4.9 shows that only 5 respondents (1%) have perceived deteriorated behavioural changes in their child’s discipline development. Based on the above figures, it is highly likely that parents’ expressed preference for “good discipline” is met in NY after enrolment of their child in the school.

Table 4.6 shows that the “quality of academic standard” has the third highest ranking in parental choice of NY. Table 4.7 also shows that 293 respondents (62%) have perceived improved academic performance in their child since enrolment in NY. Table 4.8 shows that 128 respondents (27%) have perceived no change in their child’s academic performance. Table 4.9 shows that only 14 respondents (3%) have perceived deteriorated academic performance in their child. Based on the above figures, it is assumed that parents’ expressed preference for “academic performance” is met in NY after enrolment of their child in the school.

Table 4.6 shows that “friendly and sincere teachers”, interpreted to be “teacher quality”, has the second highest ranking in parental choice of NY. Including “behaviour in school” and

“academic performance”, all other nine areas as listed in Table 4.10 are in one way or another related to “teacher influence” or “teacher quality”. Those most closely related areas are “interest in going to school”, “motivation in learning”, “sense of responsibility” and “educational aspirations”. Parental perceptions of child’s behaviour in these areas are mostly positive (Table 4.7) with only a small percentage of parents perceiving deterioration (Table 4.9), and we assume that parents’ expressed preference for “teacher quality” is met in NY after enrolment of their child in the school.

Research question: Explanations responsible for the parental selection and their children’s behavioural changes after enrolment in a private school.

The interview schedule

Data for this research question were obtained through follow-up telephone interviews with the respondents. 100% of the 72 willing respondents chose to be interviewed by telephone and no one wanted face-to-face interviews. They were contacted within two months based on the responses they provided on the questionnaire. Because of the high percentage of favourable responses (72 respondents provided contact telephone numbers for the interview), only a 25% systematic sample (Cohen and Manion, 1994) was used. One respondent out of these eighteen could not be contacted because of the inaccurate telephone number provided and was then replaced by the next willing respondent. Because of time constraints, only seven questions were asked. The questions were:

1. Why did you choose private education for your child?
2. What is your perception of educational effectiveness in private schools?
3. What kind of secondary school do you prefer your child to go when you consider the medium of instruction? English or Chinese? Why?
4. Does school fee of a private primary school affect your choice?
5. Why do you think your first three school choice factors are significant? (with

reference to question 2.1)

6. Why do you think your child had those listed substantial changes after his/her enrolment in a private primary school? Why did you list those five reasons as most important? (with reference to question 3.1 and 3.2)
7. Why do you think your listed Chinese cultural values affect the development of your child? (with reference to question 4.2)

Apart from questions 3 and 4 which ask respondents about their preferred medium of instruction in their child's secondary school choice, and their perceptions of school fee, all other five questions are extensions of the major survey questions. The medium of instruction used in secondary schools, whether it be English or Chinese, has been a controversial issue in Hong Kong since the political hand-over to the sovereignty of Mainland China in July 1997. Question 3 in Section 2 of the Interview Schedule (Appendix C) was purposely incorporated in order that the impact of this factor in school choice can be evaluated and compared with other criteria. This factor had initially been left out of the survey questionnaire. The rate of school fee in Question 4 (Appendix C) was another addition which serves to look for an answer related to school choice and consumer behaviour.

The purpose of the seven questions is to find detailed explanations and additional insights in relation to the four research questions in regard to the ranking of parental choice factors as deduced from the questionnaire survey. The findings of the three research questions are reported qualitatively by direct quotes from the respondents. The quotes illustrate the main themes arising from the interviews.

Why choose private education? (Appendix C, Question 1 of Section 2)

Fourteen reasons were identified from the responses to the above research question,

through the telephone interviews. These reasons are tabulated in order of importance, according to the qualitative weightings as provided by respondents, in Table 4.11 below.

Order of importance	Parental reasons for choosing private education for his/her child	Number of responses
1	More caring teachers who are willing to communicate with parents.	9
2	Religious schools are better.	4
3	Services should be better because of the fee we pay.	3
4	Smaller class size.	3
5	Word-of-mouth recommendation from other parents or teachers.	2
6	Unsatisfactory allocation of primary one place in the public school sector.	2
7	Able to meet parental needs because of the flexibility	2
8	More programmes or subject matters	1
9	Students' ability is more even and standardized.	1
10	Lesser government control enables efficiencies	1
11	Siblings are in the same school.	1
12	Close proximity and convenience.	1
13	Physical environment of school.	1
14	Fresh air.	1

Table 4.11
Parental reasons for choosing private education offered in NY: Interview Responses

The most common reasons linked to the question, as reported by nine respondents, were “teachers are more caring” and “teachers are willing to communicate with parents”. Respondents emphasized that teachers’ quality is the major reason for enrolling their children in private schools, even though there are other reasons for the choice. They considered the caring attitude of teachers being most influential, whether it be a public or private school. Two of these responses are quoted below.

“Teachers in private schools are more sincere and caring.” (Respondent NY50)

“Teachers in private schools are more willing to contact parents and show care/concern for children.” (Respondent NY414)

The second most common reason reported by the respondents was “private religious schools are better than public schools”.

“Christian education allows children to follow appropriate life goals.”
(Respondent NY438)

“Religious education is important. It is even more important than the influence of Chinese culture on personality development.” (Respondent NY163)

The third most important reason reported by the respondents was “private schools should be better than public schools. Parents pay school fee for the better services.”

“More facilities are provided by private schools because of the fee we pay.”
(Respondent NY280)

The other eleven reasons reported by parents include “smaller class size”, “word-of-mouth from other parents or teachers”, “unsatisfactory allocation of primary one place in the public school sector”, “private schools can meet parental needs”, “students can learn more in a private school”, “students’ ability are more even and standardized”, “private schools do not have to adhere closely to government rules and can offer more flexible services to students”, “siblings are in the same school”, “convenience”, “school environment”, and “fresh air”.

Findings in the previous section establish the basic parental choice behaviours for private schooling. Their personal motivations are related to the teaching attitudes, religion, fee/service value, word-of-mouth recommendation, ease of communication and flexibility.

Perception of educational effectiveness in private schools (Appendix C. Question 2 of Section 2)

All respondents considered “flexibility” as the key factor of educational effectiveness in private schools. “Flexibility” ensures the school success in three major areas: enhanced academic standards, increased variety in programmes and facilities, and positive staff attitudes. Two other types of interpretation of educational effectiveness were also located. One respondent reported that she did not find any special feature in relation to educational effectiveness. The responses are tabulated in Table 4.12 below.

Order of importance	Parental perception of educational effectiveness in private schools	Number of responses
1	Flexibility helps to enhance academic standards	6
2	Flexibility permits more programmes that meet parental needs and allows additional facilities	5
3	Flexibility ensures positive staff attitudes	4
4	Flexibility helps standardize peer group quality	1
5	Flexibility guarantees disciplined children	1
6	Respondent perceived no special feature in relation to educational effectiveness	1

Table 4.12
Parental perception of educational effectiveness in private schools

All respondents considered private schools to have a higher degree of educational effectiveness when compared to schools in the public sector because of the

availability of “flexibility”.

The most important reason for the higher degree of educational effectiveness, as perceived by six respondents, is that the less bureaucratic school environment allows the School to set higher academic standards by allocating more time and attention to students’ work.

“Private schools have the flexibility to set higher standards, allow more homework and set higher goals for students.” (Respondents NY414 and 109)

The second most important reason of educational effectiveness as identified by five respondents is the provision of more programme variety, teaching content or facilities when the private schools have the “flexibility” to make school-based decisions.

“Private schools have lesser government control and hence better utilization of resources to meet the requirement of students.” (Respondent NY280)

“There are more things to learn in a private school. I expect the education quality to be higher for the fee we pay for our child.” (Respondent NY187)

The third type of educational effectiveness made possible by “flexibility” is positive staff attitudes, as reported by four respondents.

“Teachers in private schools are more considerate and willing to pay special attention to my child even though she is academically disadvantaged.”

“Flexibility” in private school operation also leads to two other types of educational effectiveness. These include the control of peer group quality and the ability to maintain good discipline. The underlying meanings of respondents in these two types of effectiveness will be discussed in Chapter VII. One respondent indicated that she did not notice any explicit type of effectiveness in NY.

Parental preference of the language of instruction in their child's secondary school
(Appendix C. Question 3 of Section 2)

Parental preference of the language instruction in their child's secondary school is tabulated in Table 4.13 below.

Order of parental preference of language instruction in their child's secondary school	Number of selection
English	10
Depends on child's own choice and interest	4
Depends on child's ability	2
Both English and Chinese are good	1
No preference	1
Chinese	0

Table 4.13
Parental preference of language instruction in their child's secondary school
Ten respondents responded that they preferred English as the medium of instruction in their child's secondary school.

“English language education is better. All parents in Hong Kong are thinking that way.” (Respondent NY280)

“It is too risky to have my child to learn Chinese alone. Learning English is the trend in the future.” (Respondent NY301)

Four respondents left the choice of language instruction to their child’s own decision, in order not to give them extra pressure in their learning process. They indicated that happiness of the child is an essential factor for the choice. Another two respondents reported that they would make the decision depending on the ability of the child but that they would prefer English to Chinese.

Does the school fee of a private primary school affect parental choice? (Appendix C, Question 4 of Section 2)

Private schooling is expensive when compared with free education in the public sector. Thirteen respondents indicated that they would not mind how much they have to pay as long as they can afford to pay the tuition fee if the education quality is good. Five reported that their choice of a private primary school will be affected if the tuition fee is too high. These figures are shown in Table 4.14.

Whether or not tuition fee affects school choice	Number of responses
Willing to pay as much as they can afford if the quality is good	13
Their decision to enrol in private schools will be affected if the fee is too high	5

Table 4.14 Influence of school fee in school choice

An example of each type of response is listed below:

“We will pay whatever amount if we can afford to provide good education to our child.” (Respondent NY247)

“We are willing to pay a school fee if the school is really good and if the fee is affordable to us.” (Respondent NY378)

Explanation of the selection of the top three most important school choice factors (Appendix C, Question 5 of Section 2)

The top three most important factors of choice for NY respondents, as indicated in Table 4.15, are “friendly and sincere teachers”, “good discipline” and “academic standard”.

Five reasons were identified from respondents when they explained their choice. They are ranked in order of importance, as listed in Table 4.15 below:

Order of importance	Reasons of choice for the top three most important factors	Number of responses
1	Friendly teachers have the positive attitude to teach children. / Teachers are caring. / Teachers are willing to communicate with parents. / Background support from dedicated teachers is important in child development.	18
2	Good discipline has positive influence on children. / Positive peer pressure comes from good discipline in a school. / Good behaviour is more important than academic standard.	10
3	Good academic standards lay a good foundation for children’s future success.	4
4	Christian education is the cornerstone of good behaviour	2
5	Convenience due to close proximity to the school location.	1

Table 4.15 Reasons of choice for the top three important factors

Findings in the previous section have established that parents considered teachers more caring and supportive in private schools. This factor is top of their priority list when they considered whether or not to enrol their child in a private school (Table 4.15). Eighteen respondents indicated that teachers’ positive attitudes are essential in nurturing children and helping them to succeed in personality development and in learning. Examples of these responses are quoted below:

“The care and concern of teachers (together with good discipline and Christian education) lay the foundation and background for good academic results.”

(Respondent NY187)

“Friendly teachers (patient and willing to teach) are important to help less able children to get ahead.” (Respondent NY6)

“Nice teachers are conducive to learning.” (Respondent NY414)

“The role models of teachers can influence the healthy development of children.” (Respondent NY163)

Even though “discipline” has been identified by NY parent respondents to be most important in school choice, in-depth interviews suggested that most parents relate “good discipline” to “caring teachers” whom they believe contribute to the positive changes of children in school. Examples of their perception of good discipline education, as reported by ten respondents, are quoted below.

“Discipline is important in a school since children can influence each other easily. Well behaved children can be teased by children who do not follow school rules.” (Respondent NY6)

“Discipline is more important than academic achievement.”

(Respondent NY50)

“Discipline is conducive to good learning.” (Respondent NY280)

When respondents recalled their selection of “academic standard” in school choice, they immediately related their concerns to the allocation of “popular school places” in secondary schools. Respondents also have the perception that private schooling can lead to good academic achievements.

“Academic standard of a private school is important to help our child obtain a place in a well-known secondary school.” (Respondent NY301)

One respondent mentioned her great concern about the availability of Christian education in NY since it affects the spiritual development of the child. One respondent was concerned about the proximity of the school to where she lives, when she considered lengthy travelling time too exhausting for a primary school student.

Background reasons for the substantial behavioural changes after enrolment in a private school (Appendix C. Question 6 of Section 2)

The substantial changes of children have been found to be mostly positive (Table 4.7).

The most noticeable changes are:

- (i) better relationships with schoolmates,
- (ii) better learning motivation and
- (iii) more interest in schooling.

Respondents have attributed their children’s positive changes to the high quality of private schooling, as reported in Tables 4.11, 4.12 and 4.15. Table 4.16 below has listed the responsible causes of positive changes of children.

Order of importance	Background reasons that stimulate substantial changes of children	Number of responses
1	Good educational quality in the form of teacher attitudes and care demonstrated.	8
2	More learning opportunities and more programmes in private education	3
3	Positive teacher attitudes and more learning opportunities	2
4	Religious influence from School	1
5	Not much pressure under the private education system	1
6	The changes are not related to the school education	1

Table 4.16 Background reasons for the substantial changes of children

Most respondents related the background reasons for the substantial changes of children to “teacher attitudes” and “care demonstrated”. Teachers’ positive and caring influences are quoted below.

“My child is more interested in learning. He is able to establish good relationship with family members.” (Respondent NY135)

“He has better peer groups in school. Teachers in the school used creative activities to stimulate children’s positive change in school.” (Respondent NY50)

“My child showed more interest in learning. There are more activities in private school, giving children the opportunities to develop their talents.” (Respondent NY301)

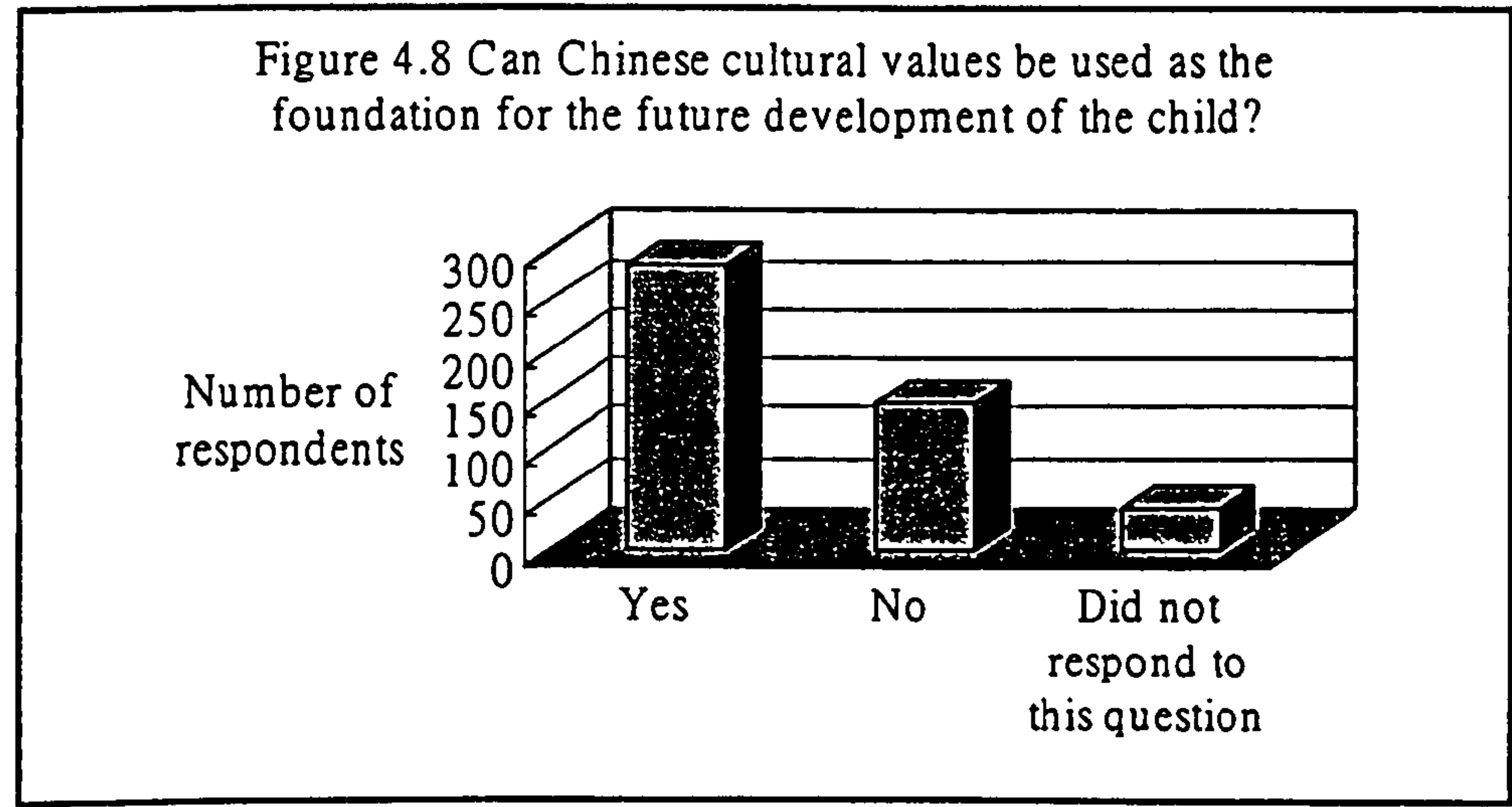
“There have been a lot of changes with my child. The possibility of changes depends on the effectiveness of the school, but not private or public.” (Respondent NY280)

Two respondents reported that they did not perceive any substantial changes in their children and were therefore unable to provide any comments on the responsible reasons for the change.

Influence of Chinese cultural values on child development and parental choice (Appendix B, Question 4.1, 4.2 and Appendix C, Question 7 of Section 2)

Findings from the questionnaire survey

Findings from Question 4.1 of the questionnaire survey (Appendix B) indicated that 287 respondents (61%) believe cultural values are capable of laying the foundation for the future development of their children. 145 respondents (31%) suggested that cultural values are unable to help in laying the foundation and 40 respondents (8%) did not answer this question (Figure 4.8).



In Question 4.2 of the questionnaire survey (Appendix B), respondents were asked to enter their perceived Chinese cultural values that are capable of affecting child development. Because of its open-ended nature, respondents put in theoretical teachings such as “Hau (filial piety)”, “Yan (Kindness)”, “Yi (Gratefulness)”, “Lai (Politeness)” and “Kan (Persistence)” that Confucius (551 – 479 B.C.) established and recorded by his students in the Four Books (722-481 B.C.).

Findings from the telephone interviews

In the discussion of the impact of Chinese cultural values during telephone interviews, ten respondents reported that Chinese cultural values are important in child development, four indicated that the influence is implicit, two reported that religious education is more influential, and two said that these values are not important and play no role at all in child development. The frequency count of responses is listed in Table 4.17 below.

Order of importance	Impact of Chinese cultural values in child development	Number of responses
1	Perceived strong impact from Chinese cultural values on child development	10
2	Perceived implicit influence from Chinese cultural values.	4
3	Perceived no influence from Chinese cultural values	2
4	Perceived religious education more influential in child development.	2

Table 4.17 The impact of Chinese cultural values in child development

Chinese cultural values, as reported by ten respondents, have been considered to be useful and influential in child development.

“Chinese cultural values can help to develop better personalities and positive character.” (Respondent NY485)

“After the children have acquired the Chinese cultural values, parents have to be role models for them to follow. The values are important for the development of children with the right mentality and personality.”
(Respondent NY467)

Four respondents considered children can be guided to develop a positive attitude in life and career, by acquiring certain Chinese cultural values in school.

“Chinese cultural values are a form of implicit teaching.”

(Respondent NY75)

“The values can be passed on to children implicitly. My own development has been affected by the Chinese culture. Hence, I expect my child to develop under the same influence.” (Respondent NY414)

“In most cases, Chinese cultural values are passed from parents to their children, through a modelling process. The parents can act as role models to pass the cultural values on to their children. The values of family caring and intra-family relationship are the bases for development.” (Respondent NY400)

Two respondents, on the other hand, considered that Chinese cultural values are not part of the academic curriculum. They considered that these values are acquired automatically through family members. Hence, cultural values do not have a lot of educational values.

“Because parents are Chinese themselves, they can pass the values on to their children automatically.” (Respondent NY301)

Two respondents (a minority group) considered that Chinese cultural values have less influence on child development than religious belief. They considered that Chinese

cultural values are not important in child development.

“Chinese culture is not important. Religious education is even more important.” (Respondent NY163)

“Chinese cultural values are not applicable in education.”

(Respondent NY6)

Documentary Analysis

The following documents were collected from NY School and analyzed to assess whether or not NY School implement policies or carry out activities that are in line with parents’ expressed preferences in their school choice decision:

- (a) 35th Anniversary Bulletin (1995)
- (b) 1999 Annual Report
- (c) circular to parents

The sampling method is to collect a variety of documents and to focus on selected aspects of NY that are related to parental choice. The counts of “a semantic unit” (Robson, 1993:238) in the 35th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin will be the number of pages that infer the existence of each category of school choice factors under investigation. The recording unit in the Annual Report (Issue No.2) will be the number of pictures and the number of articles that are related to school choice factors. In the circulars for parents, the recording unit will be the frequency counts of each school choice category that appears. The school choice factors are extended to the following categories for content analysis:

1. education effectiveness,
2. chance of being admitted to popular secondary schools,
3. academic performance of students,
4. student behaviour as influenced by school culture and discipline,
5. availability of extra-curricular activities,
6. teacher attitudes and relationship with parents,
7. religious goals,
8. other factors as listed in the survey questionnaire (Appendix B Section 2),
9. aspects related to Chinese cultural values and child development.

The semantic unit will be further divided into “manifest items” which are physically present and “latent items” which are derived from inference or interpretation (Robson, 1993:239). For analysis of data reliability in this particular study, “the subject matter” and “the values”, as suggested by Holsti (1969), can be derived from “the manifest items” and “the latent items”. “The subject matter” is referred to as the parental school choice factors as reported by parent respondents and “the values” are those inferred by the researcher during the analyzing process.

Table 4.18 has shown the frequency counts of the different measuring units, as appeared in the 35th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin, the School Annual Report (Issue No.2) as well as in the school circulars to parents (15 issues). The frequency counts were grouped under nine categories, as listed in the previous section.

Ranked order	Aspects considered essential by NY School to be relating to parental choice: order of significance (by quantity of content weightings)	35 th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin N=124		The School Annual Report (Issue No.2) N=65		school circulars to parents (15 issues) N=7		Total weighting
		Page unit	%	Picture / article unit	%	Semantic Unit	%	%
1	Availability of extra-curricular activities	27	21.8%	49	75.4%	2	28.6%	41.9%
2	Academic performance of students	7	5.6%			3	42.9%	16.17%
3	Religious goals	51	41.1%	4	6.2%			15.77%
4	Teacher attitudes and relationship with parents	14	11.3%	10	15.4%	1	14.3%	13.7%
5	Other factors as listed in the major questionnaire survey	10	8.0%	1	1.5%	1	14.3%	7.9%
6	Student behaviour as influenced by school culture and discipline	7	5.6%					1.87%
7	Education effectiveness	5	4.0%					1.33%
8	Aspects as related to Chinese cultural values and child development	1	0.8%	1	1.5%			0.77%
9	Chance of being admitted to popular secondary schools	2	1.6%					0.53%

Table 4.18 Assessment of aspects considered essential by NY School to be relating to parental choice through content analysis of 3 types of documents

The content analysis generates the following findings. With 51 units (41.1%) in the “religious category” of the 35th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin, the school is putting substantial emphasis on religious education. “Extra-curricular activities” ranked second, with 27 page units (21.8%), followed by “positive teacher attitudes and relationship with parents”, as represented by 14 page units (11.3%). Aspects related to “school environment and emphasis on English language” constituted 10 page units (8%). Both “academic performance” and “positive behaviours” of students had equal weighting. Each of them is represented by 7 page units (5.6%).

Findings in the Annual Report (Issue No.2) are slightly different. The “extra-curricular activities” category ranked top, with 49 picture/article units (75.4%).

The second important category of “relationship with parents and positive teacher attitude” covers 10 picture/article units (15.4%). The category of “religious theme” covers 4 picture/article units (6.2%). The other categories are insignificant (Table 4.12) in terms of their relatively low frequency counts in the School Annual Report.

In the 15 circulars to parents, very limited data related to the nine categories of school choice factors are found. The category of “student academic performance” constitutes 3 semantic units (42.9%), and the category of “extra-curricular activities” constitutes 2 semantic units (28.6%). The categories of “teacher attitudes and relationship with parents” and “other factors as listed in the major questionnaire survey” constitute only 1 semantic unit each (14.3%).

The nine categories of school choice (Table 4.18) relate to the “values” of parents as expressed in the survey and in interviews. The researcher linked these categories to the “subject matters” located in the three kinds of documents during the content analysis.

The total weighting of the three kinds of documents indicate that the category of “extra-curricular activities” ranked top, with 41.9%. This category is considered “the latent item” since it is often used as a means to promote the image of an organization. Its high percentage in this study suggests that NY seeks to promote itself to appeal to parental preferences. Consistent with the purpose of most schools in Hong Kong and in worldwide organizations, public documents such as the 35th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin and the School Annual Report of NY are used to inform the public and potential parents that members of the School manage to excel in all areas. Students’ performance in extra-curricular activities is comparatively easier

to present to the public while other qualitative characteristics of the School, such as teacher quality, student behaviours and academic performance, are more difficult to be expressed in writing or in picture forms.

The second most important category in the total weighting is the “academic performance of students”. It constitutes 16.17% of the total. The category of “religious goals” ranked third, with 15.77% while the category of “teacher attitudes and relationship with parents” ranked fourth, with 13.7%. Other categories are relatively insignificant in terms of their frequency counts in the documentary analysis.

Summary

Research findings are presented in this chapter with reference to NY. The findings from both the survey and the interviews suggest that three major aspects are considered essential by NY School to be relating to parental choice. They are “good discipline”, “teacher quality” and “quality of academic standard”. The majority of parents perceived behavioural improvement in child after enrolment in NY in the survey. In the in-depth interviews, parent respondents related their children’s improvements in “better relationship with friends in school” and “self motivation in learning” (Table 4.7) to “more caring teachers” and the influence of “religious education” available in NY. Deteriorated changes of students have been perceived to be trivial, and the most noticeable perceived deteriorated behaviour is related to the efforts of NY to enhance students’ academic standard and so academically weaker students have to spend more time studying. A large percentage of the respondents reported the positive influence of Chinese cultural values in child development even though it is not taught as an independent subject in school (Figure 4.8 and Table 4.17). Parents perceived that the effectiveness of NY is due to its high degree of flexibility in

private education. Most parents preferred their children to study in a secondary school that uses English as the medium of instruction and they do not mind paying tuition fees for quality education if it is unavailable in the public school place allocated to their child. Documentary analysis of NY documents also shows that NY placed a heavy emphasis on student academic performance and religious goals, and also highly valued teacher attitudes and relationships with parents (Table 4.18). These findings will be compared with those of the other two sample schools in Chapter VII before conclusions are drawn.

Chapter V

Findings of Case Study Two: CK School

Background of CK School

CK is a primary school with a historical culture that strongly adheres to Christianity and Chinese cultures. A kindergarten section is attached to CK and most of its kindergarten graduates are promoted directly to the primary school section. The same school Principal is responsible for the management and operation of the kindergarten, the primary school section and the secondary school section. The kindergarten and the primary school section are privately run and the secondary school section is fully subsidized by the government. The school was established by a missionary in the 1870s and was relocated twice before it moved to its current location in the Kowloon district.

CK is a non-profit primary school which provides whole-day education with only 12 primary classes because of its limited number of classrooms. There are 474 students in 1998. The school is adopting the mother-language policy and uses Cantonese as the medium of instruction in its kindergarten, primary and secondary school sections. The school is well-known for its good academic standard, discipline, high Christian spirit and its dedication to the development of Chinese culture. Girl students in its secondary school section are required to wear “cheung-sham” as their school uniform. “Cheung-sham” is traditionally a symbol of dignity, elegance and conformity to tradition. A variety of religious activities are organized for students. (CK 125th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin, 1997; CK School Information Leaflet, 2000)

Procedure and problems encountered in the data collection process

Research access

The researcher first sought permission from the Principal of CK and informed her of the intention to conduct an investigation in its primary school section. The researcher then contacted the headteacher and arranged for the examination and delivery of the questionnaires to be sent to parents of CK.

A sample copy of the questionnaire with a covering letter addressed specifically to parents of CK was then forwarded to the Principal for inspection and consent. Minor additions and changes were made upon request. These include addition of the school name “CK Secondary & Primary School” at the letter head and official words of thanks to the School Authority in the covering letter. The Principal also suggested to itemize parents’ educational qualifications in the questionnaire in a different order and to delete a question that asked for similar information.

Preparation, distribution and return of the questionnaires

The procedure for the distribution and return of the questionnaire was conducted in the same way as NY. Questionnaires were distributed to parents through their students on 24 April 1998 and were requested to be returned to the class teachers in the following week. The researcher obtained support from the teaching and administrative staff throughout the distribution and collection process.

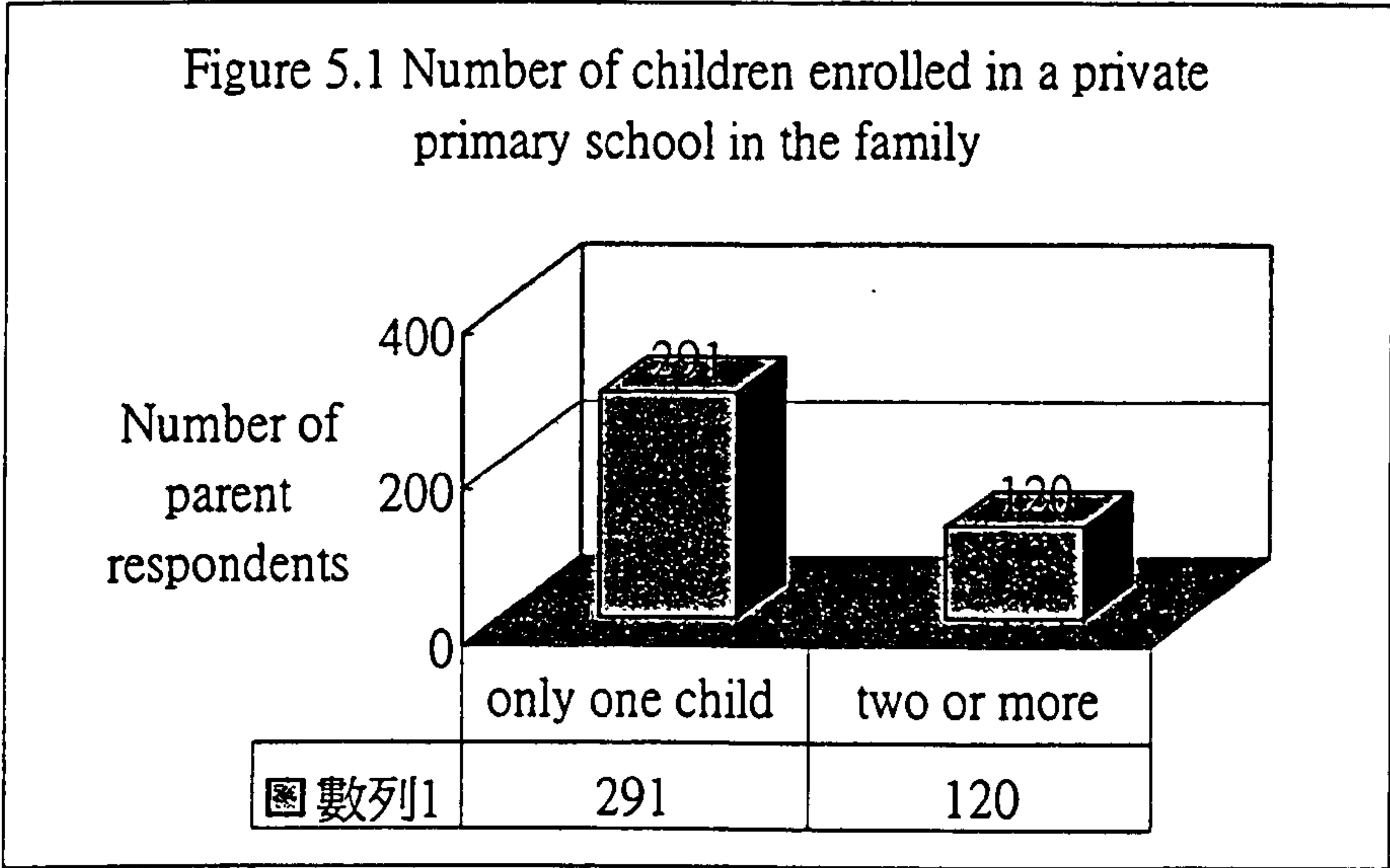
Number of returned questionnaires from the survey

A total of 474 questionnaires were distributed to students of CK School in the survey. 412 completed questionnaires were returned. The return rate was 87% which is considered to be high. Bias in surveys caused by non-response (Johnson, 1994:135) was reduced to the minimum.

Demographic data collected from the questionnaire survey

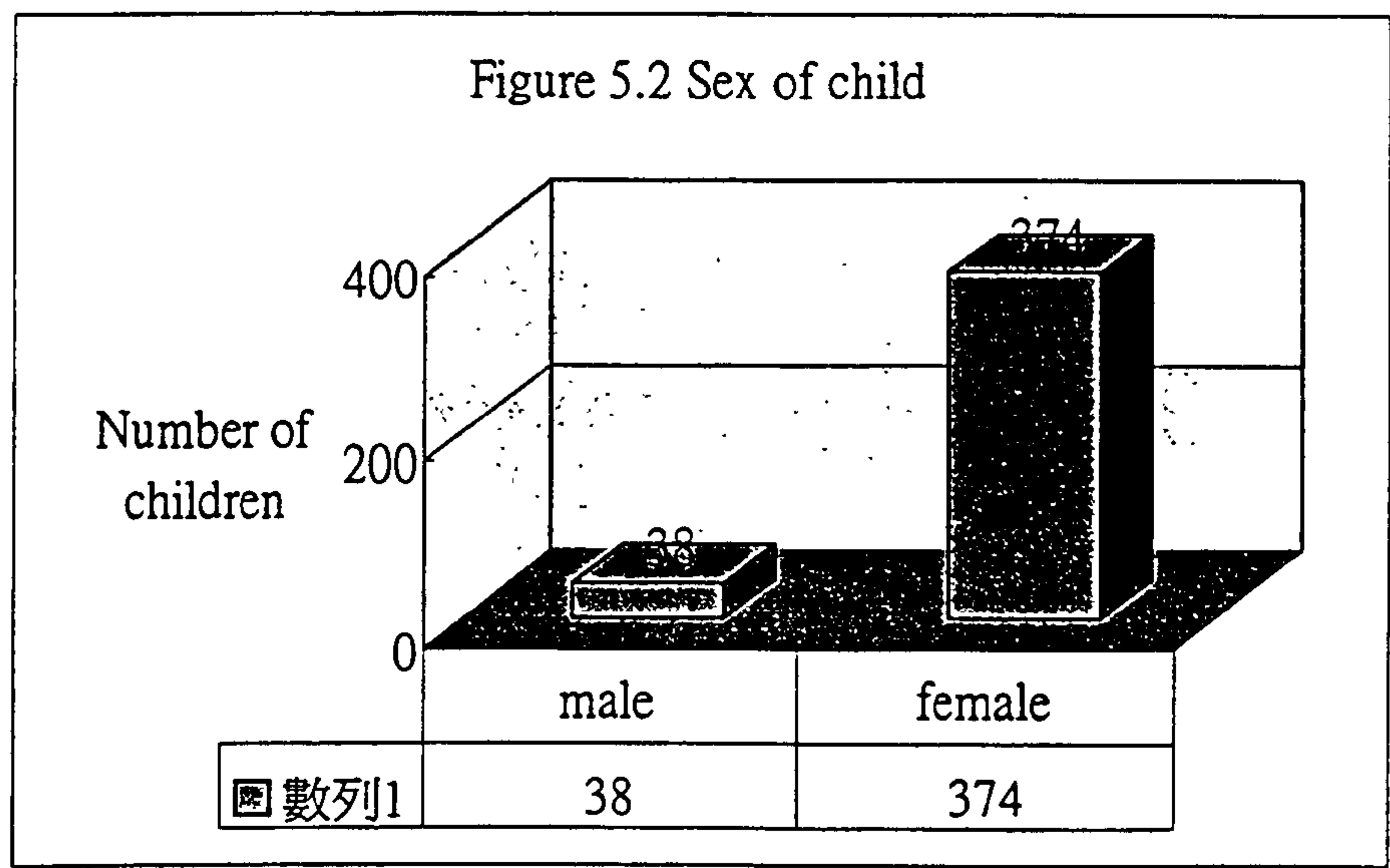
Background information of students

291 parents (71%) indicated that they have only one child who is currently studying in a private primary school and 120 (29%) said that they have two children in private primary schools (Figure 5.1).



Sex of child

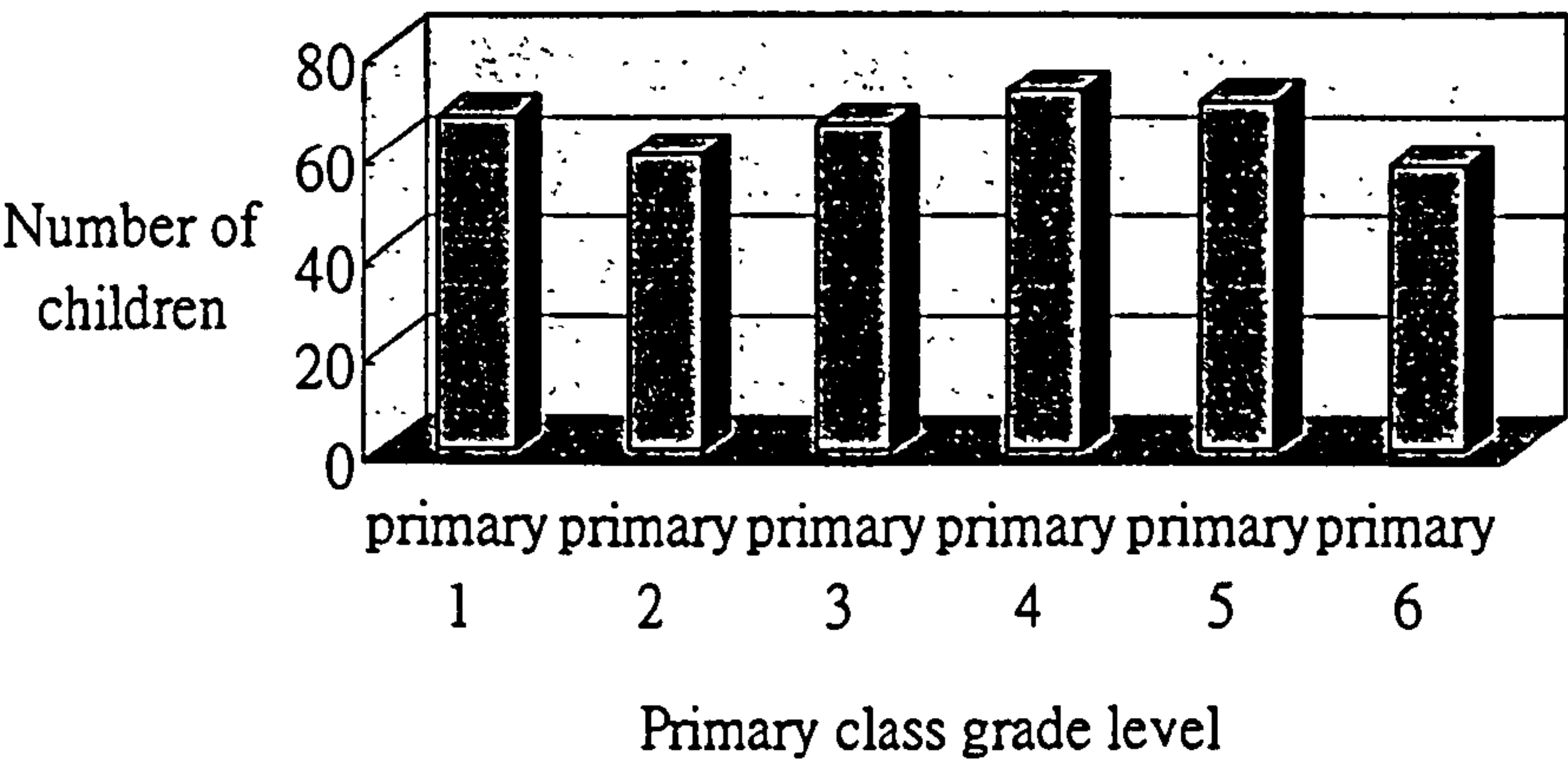
Although CK provides co-educational primary education, there is a total of only 38 boys (9%) but 374 girls (91%) (Figure 5.2). This is directly related to the existence of a feeder scheme system between its primary school and its secondary school that admits only girl students.



Academic grade level of students in the current school

The number of students from grade 1 to 6 are evenly distributed (Figure 5.3 and Table 5.1) and this will lead to an even distribution of samples (Cohen and Manion, 1994:90-91) drawn from parents of the various grades. With 306 students (74%) enrolled in a private primary school from grade 1, Figure 5.4 and Table 5.2 indicate that parents tend to make a school choice in the first year of their child’s primary school education.

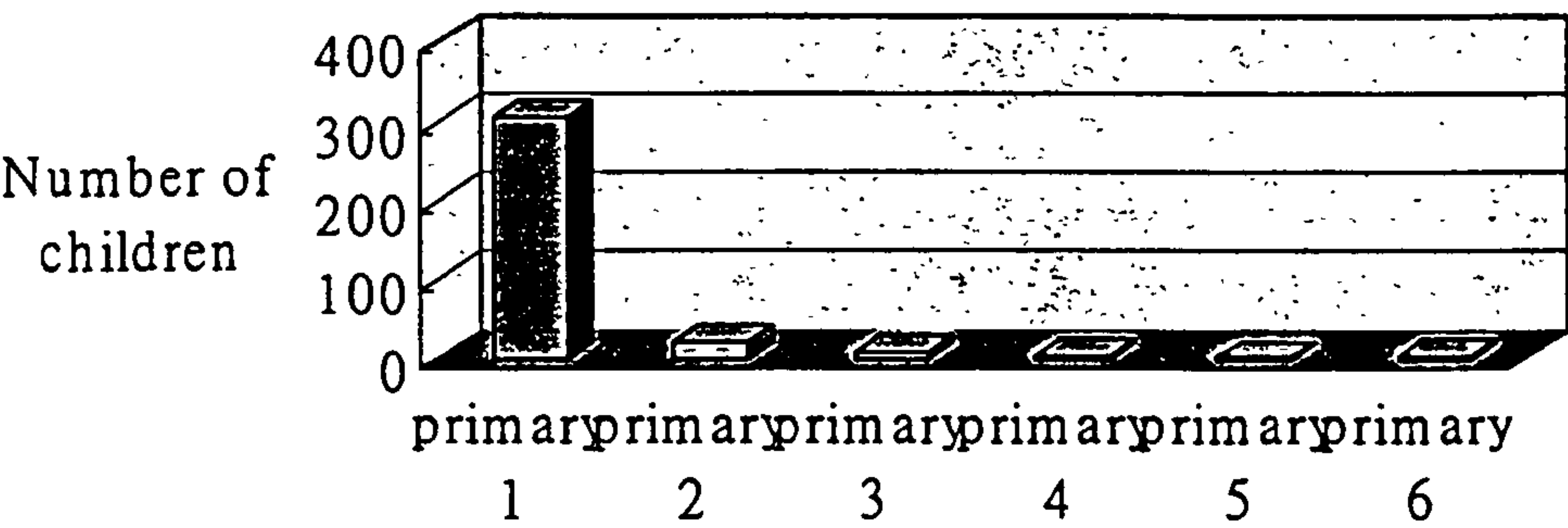
Figure 5.3 Child's grade level in the current school in 1997/98



Grade level in 97/98	Number of students	Percentage
primary 1	67	16%
primary 2	59	14%
primary 3	65	16%
primary 4	72	17%
primary 5	70	17%
primary 6	57	14%

Table 5.1
Child’s grade level in the current school in 1997/98

Figure 5.4 Child's grade level when first entering this current school

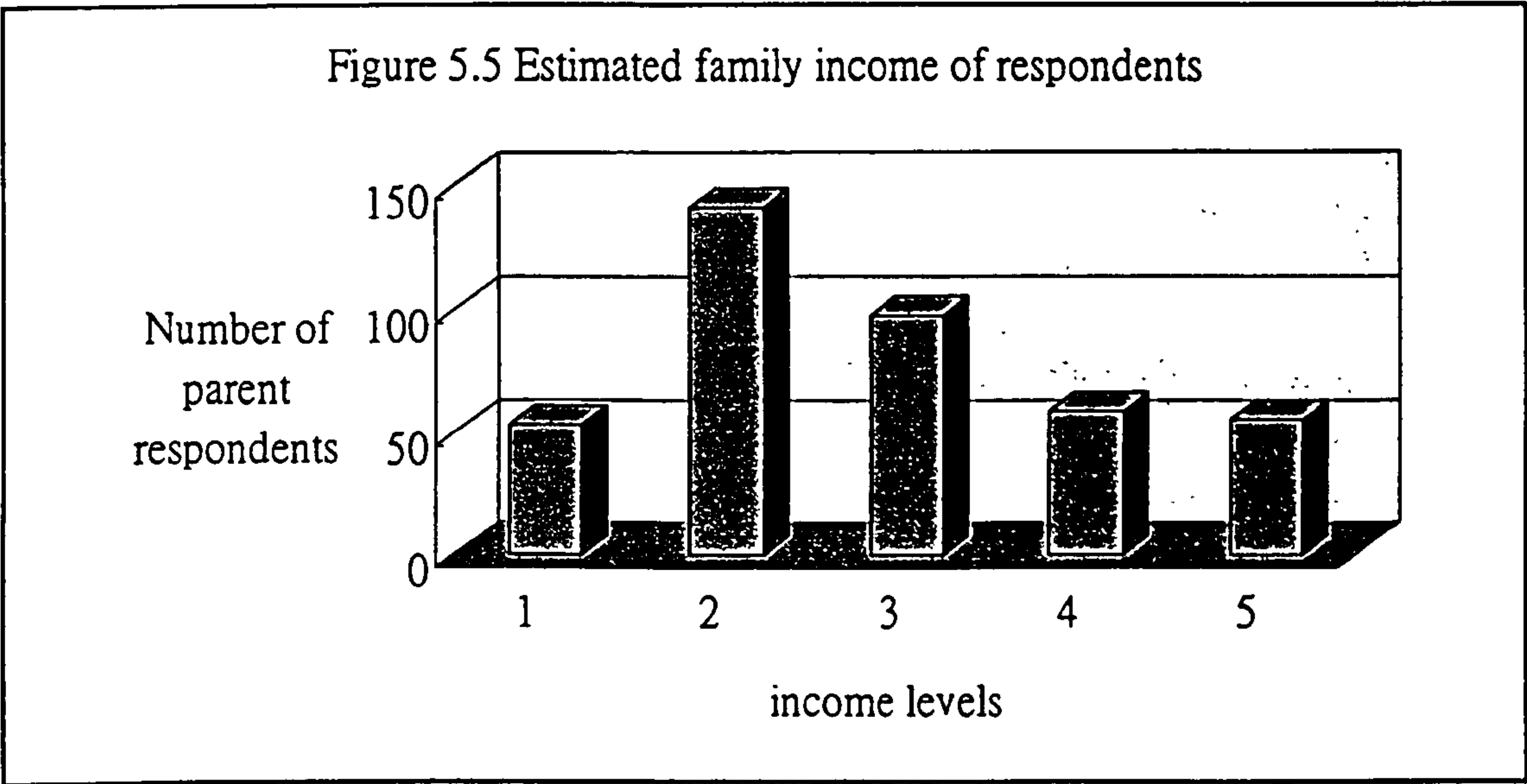


First entered into this school	Number	Percentage
primary 1	306	74%
primary 2	21	5%
primary 3	8	2%
primary 4	4	1%
primary 5	2	0.5%
primary 6	4	1%

Table 5.2
Child’s grade level when first entering this current school

Estimated family income of parents

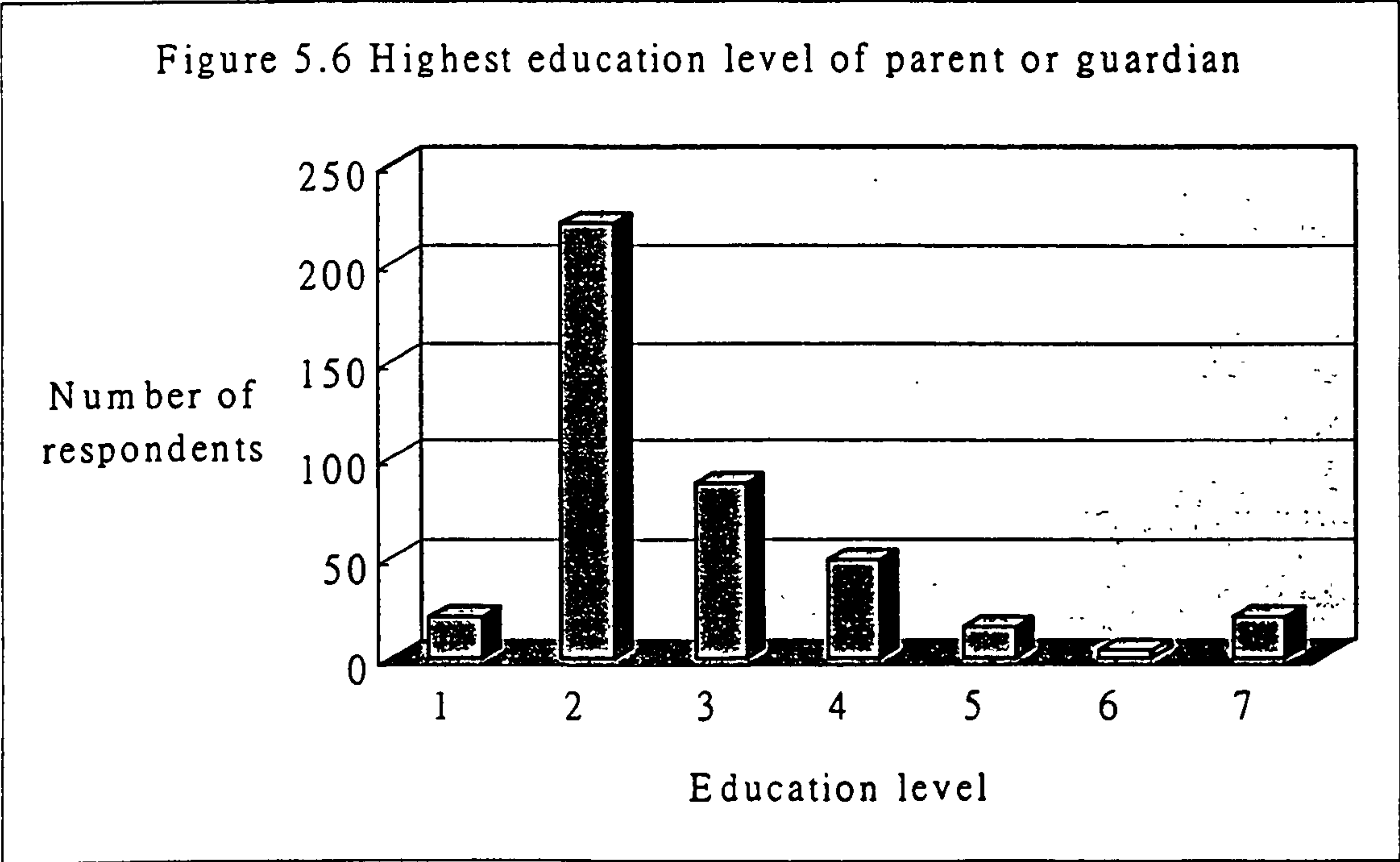
Family income plays an important role in private education since parents need to pay a monthly fee of not less than HK \$1000 per month while schools in the public sector are free of charge. The investigation (Figure 5.5 and Table 5.3) indicates that the largest group is the 141 respondents (34%) who have a family income of approximately HK \$16,667 - \$33,333 per month.



Income levels of respondents		Number of respondents	Percentage
1	= average of approximately \$16,667 per month	53	13%
2	= average of approximately \$16,667 - \$ 33,333 per month	141	34%
3	= average of approximately \$ 33,333 - \$ 50,000 per month	98	24%
4	= average of approximately \$ 50,000 - \$ 66,667 per month	59	14%
5	= average of approximately \$ 66,667 and above per month	56	14%

Table 5.3
Estimated family income of respondents

Highest education level of parent or guardian



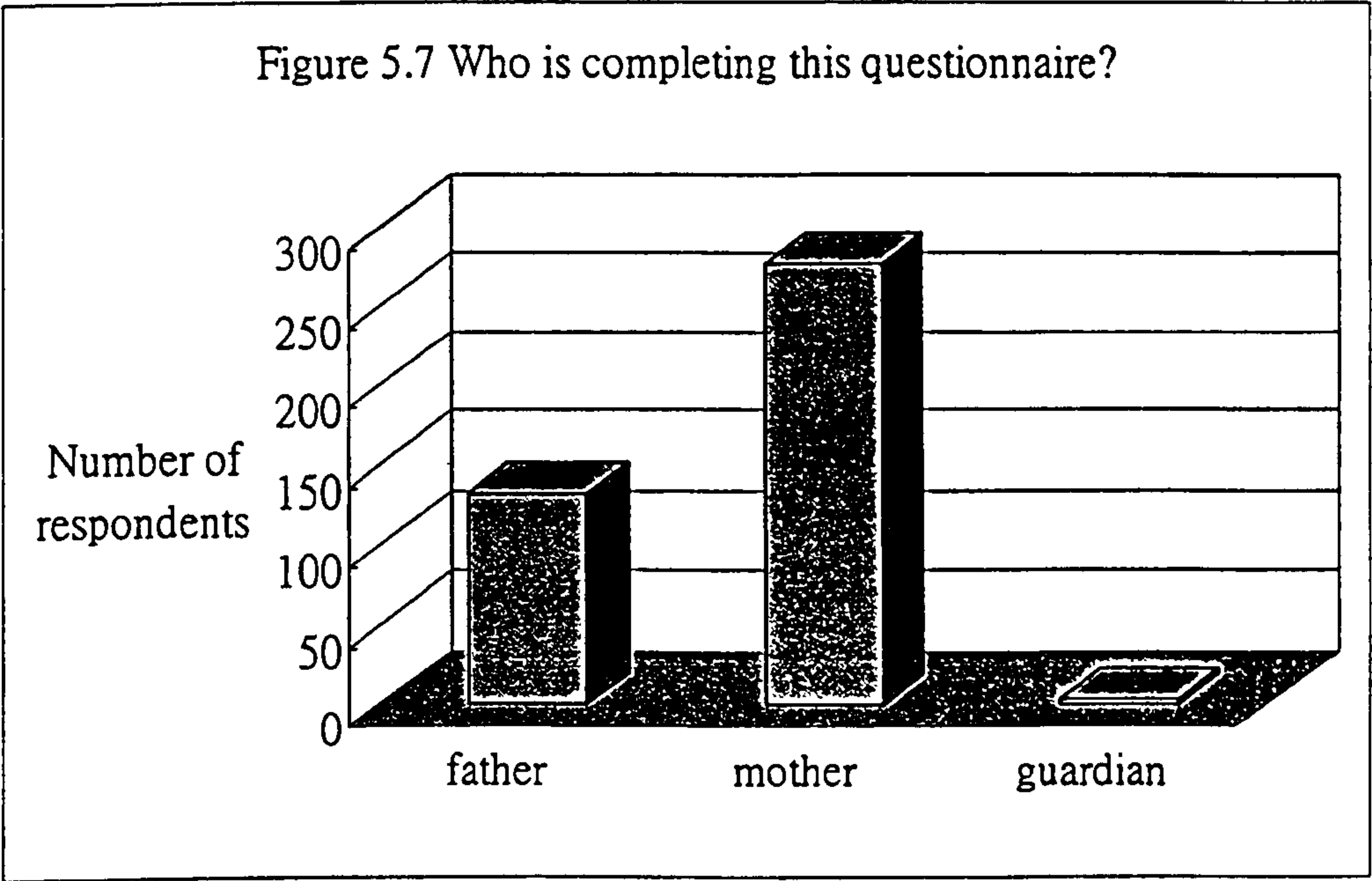
	Highest education level of parent or guardian	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1 =	primary school level	20	5%
2 =	secondary school level	220	53%
3 =	post-secondary level	87	21%
4 =	university level	49	12%
5 =	masters degree level	15	4%
6 =	doctorate degree level	4	1%
7 =	professional level	21	5%

Table 5.4
Highest education level of parent or guardian

The findings indicate that 220 respondents (53%), which is the highest category, have received secondary school education (Figure 5.6 and Table 5.4). The group that ranks second is the 87 respondents (21%) who have received post-secondary education.

Who is completing the questionnaire

277 respondents (67%) who completed the questionnaires were mothers, 131 were fathers and (32%) and 4 respondents (1%) were guardians (Figure 5.7 and Table 5.5). Hence, the result of this study is more reflective of the opinions of the female parents.



	Number of respondents	Percentage
father	131	32%
mother	277	67%
guardian	4	1%

Table 5.5
Who is completing this questionnaire?

Research question: What are the factors affecting private school choice?

Ranking of parental choice of CK School

The responses to this research question are shown in Table 5.6. Respondents could select from a list of 18 factors influencing their choice of school. Their 1 – 5 ratings on the factors were weighted before ranking. The weighting was calculated using the following rule, as indicated in Chapter III.

1. Very important

Weighting of 5
2. Important

Weighting of 4
3. Fairly important

Weighting of 3
4. Not important

Weighting of 2
5. Unimportant

Weighting of 1

Question Number	Factors influencing parental choice of the current school	Weighted Rating	Weighted Ranking
2.1.8	Good discipline	1750	1
2.1.1	Quality of academic standard	1460	2
2.1.6	Teachers are friendly and sincere	1074	3
2.1.4	Linked with a well-known secondary school	969	4
2.1.5	Excellent record of secondary school place allocation	878	5
2.1.10	Good parent-teacher/school relationship	759	6
2.1.15	School adopts an open policy and is willing to accept parents opinions and make appropriate changes	523	7
2.1.9	Good physical environment	473	8
2.1.3	Live close to the school	464	9
2.1.2	Greater access to extra-curricular activities	442	10
2.1.7	Same religious belief as parents	341	11
2.1.13	Siblings of my child studying in the same school	320	12
2.1.17	Highly recommended by friends	281	13
2.1.16	School can meet the particular needs of my child	236	14
2.1.11	Special programmes not available in other schools	191	15
2.1.12	Peer groups of my child studying in the same school	190	16
2.1.14	Father or mother studied in the same school before	132	17
2.1.18	Other reasons	108	18

(N = 412)

Table 5.6

Weighted ranking of parental choice of CK School

Table 5.6 shows the ranking of the 18 perceived reasons for the selection of the current school. The highest ranking is “good discipline”, followed by “quality of academic standard” and then “teachers who are friendly and sincere”. The respondents are less concerned with whether or not “father or mother studied in the same school before” or “with peer groups of my child studying in the same school”.

Research question: Parental perceptions of changes since enrolment.

The responses to this research question are tabulated in Tables 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9. Respondents could select from a list of 11 changes of their children after enrolment in CK. They could select either “shown improvement”, “unchanged”, or “has worsened” for the different behaviours demonstrated by their children.

Parental perception of behavioural improvement since enrolment

Question Number	Parental perception of behavioural improvement since enrolment	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Ranking
3.1.6	Increased sense of responsibility	231	56%	1
3.1.5	Better behaviour in school	228	55%	2
3.1.7	Better relationship with friends in school	225	55%	3
3.1.1	Better self motivation in learning	208	51%	4
3.1.4	Improved academic performance	195	47%	5
3.1.8	Increased participation and interest in extra-curricular activities	194	47%	6
3.1.2	More interested in going to school	193	47%	7
3.1.10	With stimulating educational aspirations	155	38%	8
3.1.3	Time required in studying	149	36%	9
3.1.9	Better relationship with parents and Siblings	140	34%	10
3.1.11	With stimulating career aspirations	122	30%	11
	Overall perception of improvement	2040	45%	

(N=412) **Table 5.7 Parental perception of behavioural improvement since enrolment**

Table 5.7 shows the ranking of the 11 perceived types of behavioural improvement of the students after enrolment in CK. The most frequently chosen behavioural improvement observed by 231 respondents (56.1%) was “increased sense of responsibility”, followed by “better behaviour in school” which was chosen by 228 respondents (55.3%) and “better relationship with friends in school” which was selected by 225 respondents (54.6%). The differences between the absolute number of choices for the first three rankings were small. This suggests that the three types of behavioural improvement are equally important. The top three rankings indicate that parents’ concerns are drawn to their child’s moral and social

development which they considered are contributing factors to good behaviours. CK parents’ top ranking of “good discipline” among all school choice criteria in Table 5.6 suggests that their concerns on child’s moral and social development in Table 5.7 are consistent with each other. “Learning motivation” and “academic performance” which were ranked after moral and social development in Table 5.7 also agree with the ranking of parental choice factor in Table 5.6 with “the quality of academic standard” being ranked second. The overall perception of improvement constitutes a total of 45% of all responses.

Parental perception of no behavioural change since enrolment

The list of no change of behaviour after enrolment in CK is tabulated in Table 5.8 below:

Question Number	Parental perception of no behavioural change since enrolment	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Ranking
3.1.9	No change when relating to parents and siblings	207	50	1
3.1.11	No change in career aspirations	204	50	2
3.1.3	No change in time required in studying	180	44	3
3.1.2	No change in interest in going to school	177	43	4
3.1.10	No change in educational aspirations	174	42	5
3.1.4	No change in academic performance	160	39	6
3.1.8	No change in attitude towards extra-curricular activities	156	38	7
3.1.5	No change in behaviours in school	141	34	8
3.1.7	No change when relating to friends in school	134	33	9
3.1.6	No change in sense of responsibility	132	32	10
3.1.1	No change in learning interest (motivation)	60	15	11
	Overall perception of no change	1725	38%	

(N=412) Table 5.8 Parental perception of no behavioural change since enrolment

Table 5.8 shows the ranking of the 11 types of behaviour perceived to have no change by parents. The overall perception of “no change” constitutes 38% of all responses. The “relationship with parents and siblings” has the highest ranking, chosen by 207 respondents (50.2%). This is followed by “career aspirations”, chosen by 204 respondents (49.5%), and then by “time required in studying”, chosen by 180 respondents (43.7%). CK parents perceived no change in

their children’s behaviour when relating to parents and siblings after their enrolment in CK. This suggests that peer influence from private primary education plays no role in affecting the relationship with parents and siblings. This finding also agrees with the top three ranking in Table 5.7. When the children have improved sense of responsibility, better behaviour and relationship with friends in school, they also manage to establish excellent relationship with their parents and siblings at home. The high percentage of perceived unchanged behaviour in “career aspirations” is validated by the lack of career-related activities provided by CK School which places more emphasis on children’s discipline and academic enhancement. “Time required for studying” is relatively insignificant compared to the family relationship and career aspirations (Table 5.8).

Parental perception of deteriorated behaviours since enrolment

The list of deteriorated behaviours perceived by parents after enrolment in CK is tabulated in Table 5.9. When compared with the improved and unchanged behaviours, parental perception of deteriorated behaviours is insignificant when the overall perception constitutes only 2.2% of all responses.

Question Number	Parental perception of deteriorated behaviours since enrolment	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Ranking
3.1.3	Time required in studying has worsened	31	7.5	1
3.1.4	Worse academic performance	19	4.6	2
3.1.10	Less educational aspirations	9	2.2	3
3.1.8	Decreased participation and interest in extra-curricular activities	8	2.0	4
3.1.9	Worse relationship with parents and Siblings	8	2.0	4
3.1.6	Decreased sense of responsibility	7	1.7	6
3.1.1	Worse self motivation in learning	6	1.4	7
3.1.11	Less career aspirations	5	1.2	8
3.1.5	Worse behaviour in school	3	0.7	9
3.1.7	Worse relationship with friends in school	3	0.7	9
3.1.2	Less interest in going to school	2	0.5	11
	Overall perception of deterioration	101	2.2%	

(N=412) Table 5.9 Parental perception of deteriorated behaviour since enrolment

Table 5.9 shows the ranking of the 11 types of deteriorated behaviour perceived by CK parents. The most noticeable deteriorated behaviour is “time required in studying” which has the highest ranking, with responses from 31 respondents (7.5%). This is followed by the drop in “academic performance” which was chosen by 19 respondents (4.6%). The other 10 changes have a substantially lower percentage relative to the two changes mentioned above. Parental preference of intensive academic training in Hong Kong has driven CK School to increase students’ academic workload. CK students are obliged to put in more time studying after they have enrolled in the school. Their “worse academic performance” is closely related to their extra “time required in studying” when some students are unable to cope with the heavy academic workload. Other deteriorated behaviours are relatively insignificant.

Findings in Tables 5.7 and 5.8 show that parents perceived great behavioural improvements when compared to unchanged or deteriorated behaviours. Fewer than 8 % of CK respondents considered that studying took a longer time. Fewer than 5 % of respondents considered that the academic performance of their child has deteriorated. Behaviours that are perceived to have improved, as listed in Table 5.7, are considered not deteriorated in Table 5.9. Their level of consistency is therefore maintained.

Parents perceiving improvement, perceiving no change, and perceiving deterioration in child’s behaviour

A quantitative measure of the percentage of parents who perceive improvement, no change or deterioration in their child’s behaviour after enrolment in CK School is presented in Table 5.10 below. 45% of parents perceived behavioural improvement in child, 38% perceived no behavioural change in child and only 2.2% perceived behavioural deterioration in child. Parental perception of areas of improvement in child’s behaviours corresponds with the ranking of parental choice factors, as listed in

Table 5.6. “Sense of responsibility” and “behaviour in school” were ranked first and second in Table 5.7, when “good discipline” was prioritized as the top criteria in parental choice of CK School (Table 5.6). “Motivation in learning” and “academic performance” were ranked fourth and fifth compared to all other types of improvement in Table 5.7, when “quality of academic standard” was ranked second in the parental choice criteria.

The four aspects that were perceived to have substantially improved, as listed in Table 5.7, including “sense of responsibility”, “behaviour in school”, “relationship with friends in school” and “motivation in learning”, were ranked last when compared to all areas that are perceived to have no change. The two sets of finding are therefore supporting each other.

Among all perceived deteriorated behaviours, as listed in Table 5.9, “time required in studying” and “academic performance” are the two most noticeable negative changes. As illustrated in the previous section, CK parents’ concern on “quality of academic standard” (Table 5.6) has prompted them to attend to their child’s academic work. Children who are unable to cope with the intensive academic training in CK are perceived to have deteriorated in their studies and also need additional time in studying (Table 5.9). The finding also corresponds with the parental choice criteria in Table 5.6.

Based on the above analysis, comparative figures listed in Table 5.10 below are confirmed to be supporting one another.

question number	Parental perception of child's changes after enrolment in private primary schools	Percentage of parents perceiving improvement	Percentage of parents perceiving no change	Percentage of parents perceiving deterioration e
3.1.2	Interest in going to school	47%	43%	0.5%
3.1.7	Relationship with friends in school	55%	33%	0.7%
3.1.5	Behaviour in school	55%	34%	0.7%
3.1.1	Motivation in learning	51%	15%	1.4%
3.1.6	Sense of responsibility	56%	32%	1.7%
3.1.11	Stimulating career aspirations	30%	50%	1.2%
3.1.8	Participation and interest in extra-curricular activities	47%	38%	2.0%
3.1.10	Stimulating educational aspirations	38%	42%	2.2%
3.1.9	Relationship with parents and siblings	34%	50%	2.0%
3.1.4	Academic performance	47%	39%	4.6%
3.1.3	Time required in studying	36%	44%	7.5%
	Overall perception of changes	45%	38%	2.2%

(N=412) **Table 5.10 Parents perceiving improvement, no change and deterioration in child's behaviour since enrolment in CK School**

Parental perception of child's behaviours in relation to discipline, academic performance and teacher influence since enrolment

Table 5.6 shows that “good discipline” has the top ranking in parental choice of CK. Table 5.7 also shows that 228 respondents (55%) have perceived behavioural improvement in their child's discipline since enrolment in CK. Table 5.8 shows that 141 respondents (34%) have perceived no behavioural change in their child's discipline. Table 5.9 shows that only 3 respondents (0.7%) have perceived deteriorated changes in their child's discipline. Based on the above findings, it is assumed that parents' expressed preference for “good discipline” is met in CK after enrolment of their child in the school.

Table 5.6 shows that the “quality of academic standard” has the second highest ranking in parental choice of CK. Table 5.7 also shows that 195 respondents (47%) have perceived improved academic performance in their child since enrolment in CK. Table 5.8 shows that 160 respondents (39%) have perceived no change in their child's academic performance. Table

5.9 shows that only 19 respondents (4.6%) have perceived deteriorated academic performance in their child since enrolment. Based on the above figures, it is assumed that parents' expressed preference for favourable "academic performance" is met in CK after enrolment of their child in the school.

Table 5.6 shows that "friendly and sincere teachers", interpreted to be "teacher quality", was ranked the third most important criteria of parental choice of CK School. Including "behaviour in school" and "academic performance", all other nine areas as listed in Table 5.10 are in one way or another related to "teacher influence". The most closely related areas are "interest in going to school", "motivation in learning", "sense of responsibility" and "educational aspirations". Parental perceptions of child's behaviour in these areas are mostly positive, and we assume that parents' expressed preference for "teacher quality" is met in CK after enrolment of their child in the school.

Research question: Explanations responsible for the parents selection and their children's behavioural changes after enrolment in a private school.

The interview schedule

Data for this research question were obtained through follow-up telephone interviews with the respondents. 100% of the 82 willing respondents chose to be interviewed by telephone and no one wanted face-to-face interviews. Because of the high percentage of favourable responses (82 respondents provided contact telephone numbers for the interview), a 25% systematic sample (Cohen and Manion, 1994) was used. The same interview procedure was conducted as for Case Study One with the same set of questions (Appendix C). The findings of the four research questions are again reported qualitatively by direct quotes from the respondents. The quotes illustrate the main themes arising from the interviews.

Why choose private education? (Appendix C. Question 1 of Section 2)

Twelve reasons were identified from the responses to the above research question, through the telephone interviews. The three most important reasons reported by the respondents were linked to “good discipline”, “unsatisfactory allocation of primary one place in the public school sector”, and “positive peer group influence”, as shown in Table 5.11 below.

Order of importance	Parental reasons for choosing private education for his/her child	Number of responses
1	Excellent discipline education provided by the school	13
2	Unsatisfactory allocation of primary one place in the public school sector.	7
3	Positive peer group influence	6
4	More caring and positive teachers who are willing to communicate with parents.	4
5	More attention to students	2
6	Students’ ability is more even and standardized.	2
7	Services should be better because of the fee we pay.	1
8	Word-of-mouth recommendation from other parents or teachers.	1
9	Able to meet parental needs because of the flexibility	1
10	Whole-day schooling is essential for the working parents	1
11	Father of the child is a bus-driver of CK	1
12	Close proximity and convenience.	1

Table 5.11 Parental reasons for choosing private education offered in CK: Interview Responses

All the 21 respondents in the in-depth interviews mentioned that “good discipline” played an important role in school choice, even though only 13 of them reported that they chose CK because of its “good discipline”. The qualitative findings correspond to the quantitative findings obtained from the questionnaire survey which also reported that “good discipline” has the highest ranking among the 18 perceived reasons for choosing the current school.

When thirteen parents responded that “excellent discipline” in CK is most attractive to

them, they also indicated that teachers' positive and caring attitudes are conducive to the discipline education available in CK. The concurrent reason for choosing private education is also linked to the unsatisfactory allocation of a primary one place in the public sector. An example of this category is listed below.

“We chose CK because our child was allocated to an unfavorable public school. We know CK is a very disciplined school.” (Respondent CK 202)

Peer group influence is the second most important concern of parents in their school choice behaviours. Six respondents related this category to their reasons of choosing private education. Two of these indicated their worry over the negative influence from children of immigrant families. Their responses are quoted below.

“Our child was not allocated to a good public school. We do not like our child to mix with immigrant peer groups in public schools. The quality of private schools is better than ordinary public schools. “ (Respondent CK 159)

“Private schools can provide better quality education for students. We do not wish our child to mix with immigrant peer groups whom I think usually have lower educational standards.” (Respondent CK 117)

Two respondents chose private education because of the comparatively more standardized student abilities and backgrounds. An example is quoted below.

“We wish our child to have peer groups with similar family backgrounds. Children’s behaviours are influenced by their peer groups.” (Respondent CK 139)

The other reasons for parental choice of private education are comparatively insignificant in terms of their low frequency counts (Table 5.11).

Unfavourable public school place allocation appears to be the major initial cause for choosing private education for children. The above findings have two implications for parental school choice behaviours. First, parents are not satisfied with the perceived quality of discipline education in the public school place allocated to their child. Second, they are not satisfied with the “mixed social backgrounds” and “mixed academic abilities” of students in public schools. They are looking for a quality school with well disciplined peer groups.

Perception of educational effectiveness in private schools (Appendix C. Question 2 of Section 2)

Order of importance	Parental perception of educational effectiveness in private schools	Number of responses
1	Positive staff attitudes and excellent home-school communication	11
2	Discipline education well managed	10
3	Flexibility permits more activities that meet the needs of students and parents	4
4	No pressure from homework	1
5	Religious goal achieved	1

Table 5.12
Parental perception of educational effectiveness in private schools

The effectiveness of CK was most outstanding in two functions: “positive staff attitudes and home-school communication” and “discipline” (Table 5.12). Among

the 21 interviewees, only two did not agree that CK is an effective school. 11 respondents rated CK teachers as kind, friendly, helpful, patient, caring and responsive to needs:

“The teachers in CK are excellent. They are willing to help students”

(Respondent CK 86)

“The teachers are really kind, and the Principal is also caring.”

(Respondent CK 339)

10 respondents highly commended the discipline education to be effective and well-managed. Most of them related the success to the positive attitudes of teachers who did not use punishment to push for behavioural changes:

“Teachers do not use punishment to bring about changes. They use coaching and counselling to help students to develop.” (Respondent CK 80)

“The school is well-organized and discipline is good.” (Respondent CK 304)

Four respondents indicated that flexibility of private education in CK permits more variety in subject content and school activities. Though supporting that the School is effective, one of these respondents pointed out that the lack of resources can be one of the factors limiting the effectiveness of the School. Two other respondents did not agree that the School is effective because of its shortage of facilities and the excessive homework given to students. On the other hand, one respondent reported that the amount of homework is reasonable when her child did not feel any pressure from the

allocated assignment:

“CK is an excellent school but the resources are limited.” (Respondent CK 80)

“The teachers are excellent but the School is lacking resources.” (Respondent CK 177)

It is likely that the resource shortage as perceived by parents of CK is due to the relatively low school fee of less than HK\$1,500 per month, compared to a monthly tuition fee of over HK\$2,000 that NY and SC are currently charging.

To conclude, a total of five reasons have been identified to be responsible for the effectiveness of CK. Frequency counts of the common themes as illustrated above are listed in Table 5.12 above.

Parental preference of the language of instruction in their child's secondary school (Appendix C, Question 3 of Section 2)

Parental preference of the language instruction in their child's secondary school is tabulated in Table 5.13 below.

Order of parental preference of language instruction in their child's secondary school	Number of selection
English	10
Depends on child's own choice and interest	5
Chinese	3
No preference, both English and Chinese are good	2
Depends on child's ability	1

Table 5.13
Parental preference of language instruction in their child's secondary school

Ten interviewees (47.6%) who indicated their preference in EMI considered this type of language instruction to be useful to their child's future studies and capable of

providing their child with more opportunities in career development.

“We prefer EMI because of the practical needs of the society. English is more useful than Chinese.” (Respondent CK 397)

Eight interviewees (38.1%) among the CK respondents did not have a special preference. Three of them said that the choice depends on child’s own interest, two did not indicate any preference, and one said that the decision would depend on the child’s ability. Three interviewees (14.3%) preferred CMI to EMI.

“We prefer CMI because our child can absorb knowledge easily. There is no additional language pressure on the child compared to using EMI in teaching.” (Respondent CK 370)

“We let our child choose EMI or CMI. We are more concerned whether or not the child loves CK.” (Respondent CK 339)

Findings indicated in Table 5.13 suggest that the majority of respondents preferred EMI to CMI in their child’s secondary school selection even though CK is a school well-known for its dedication to using Chinese as the medium of instruction.

Does the school fee of a private primary school affect parental choice? (Appendix C, Question 4 of Section 2)

Whether or not tuition fee affects school choice	Number of responses
Willing to pay as much as they can afford if the quality is good	17
Their decision to enrol in private schools will be affected if the fee is too high	4

Table 5.14 Influence of school fee in school choice

Seventeen respondents indicated that they would not mind how much they have to pay, as long as they can afford to pay the tuition fee, if the education quality is good (Table 5.14).

“Paying tuition fee is not a problem if we consider that the school is effective.”
(Respondent CK 202)

“I wouldn’t mind paying high tuition fee as long as the school quality is good and is capable of helping my child to get ahead.” (Respondent CK 370)

Four reported that their choice of a private primary school will be affected if the tuition fee is too high.

“We might not be able to continue enrolling in the school if the tuition fee is too high.” (Respondent CK 233)

Two main themes have been drawn from the comments of the respondents in relation to the financial impact on private school choice. The figures, as shown in Table 5.14, suggest that most respondents consider that high quality of education would convince them of paying high tuition fee, and only a minority would choose an alternative of not allowing their child to study in a private school if the fee is too high.

Explanation of the selection of the top three most important school choice factors (Appendix C, Question 5 of Section 2)

The top three most important factors of choice for CK respondents, as indicated in

Table 5.6, are “good discipline”, “quality of academic standard” and “friendly and sincere teachers”.

Ten different reasons were identified from respondents when they explained their choice. They are ranked in order of importance, as listed in Table 5.15.

Order of importance	Reasons of choice for the top three most important factors	Number of responses
1	Good discipline has a positive influence on children. / Positive peer pressure comes from good discipline in a school. / Good behaviour is more important than academic standard	20
2	Good academic standards lay a good foundation for children’s future success.	19
3	Friendly teachers have the positive attitude to teach children. / Teachers are caring. / Teachers are willing to communicate with parents. / Background support from dedicated teachers is important in child development.	14
4	Convenience due to close proximity to the school location.	2
4	Word-of-mouth from other parents	2
4	Meeting child’s needs	2
7	Christian education is the corner stone of good behaviour	1
7	Sibling studying in the same school	1
7	Physical environment of school is good	1
7	Extra-curricular activities are attractive to the child	1

Table 5.15 Reasons of choice for the top three important factors

20 respondents expressed their strong support for prioritizing “discipline” education which they considered would have a life-long impact on child development. They also related the outcome of excellent discipline education to the quality of teachers’ attitudes which at the same time influence the academic achievements of children.

“The influence of school discipline on the child is macro and life long. The influence of teachers is micro and the degree of effectiveness depends on individual teachers.” (Respondent CK 442)

“Good school discipline can result in disciplined children which in turn can lead to good academic results. Positive and friendly teachers can also help students to obtain good academic achievements.” (Respondent CK 65)

“School discipline affects studies and life goals. Academic achievements can be affected by discipline.” (Respondent CK 202)

As indicated in the previous paragraphs, respondents found that the quality of discipline education is closely related to teacher quality which also affects children’s academic achievement. 19 respondents expressed their great concern on “academic standards” of their children, and 14 considered “teacher attitudes” significant. Although “teacher attitudes” ranked third in their priority order, all respondents indicated that “teacher attitude” is the major contributing factor to the school success in “discipline education” and “academic standards”.

“Good Secondary School Place Allocation result is important. However, teacher qualities determine my child’s academic achievements.” (Respondent CK65)

“Sincere and caring teachers can help children to progress effectively in academic work.” (Respondent CK177)

“Good parent-teacher relationship ensures that children’s needs can be met through effective communication.” (Respondent CK233)

Other listed reasons of choice (Table 5.15) are insignificant because of their

comparatively low frequency counts.

Background reasons for the substantial behavioural changes after enrolment in a private school (Appendix C. Question 6 of Section 2)

The substantial changes of children, which have been found to be mostly positive, are all conduct-related (Table 5.7). The most noticeable changes are:

- (i) Increased sense of responsibility,
- (ii) better behaviour in school and
- (iii) better relationship with friends in school.

Respondents gave either one or two reasons in support of their perceived causes of their children’s positive changes after enrolment in private education. They attributed the changes to the high quality of private schooling, as reported in Tables 5.11, 5.12 and 5.15. Table 5.16 below has listed the responsible causes of positive changes of children as perceived by parents of CK.

Order of importance	Background reasons that stimulate substantial changes of children	Number of responses
1	Good educational quality in the form of positive teacher attitudes and care demonstrated.	12
2	School success in maintaining good discipline	8
3	Quality peer group influence	4
4	Religious influence from School	1

Table 5.16 Background reasons for the substantial changes of children

Twelve respondents reported that positive teacher attitudes and care shown to students are the main reasons for the substantial changes of their children. Teachers were found to be willing to initiate the changes of students. Eight respondents found that the CK’s success in maintaining the school culture that emphasizes discipline is the crucial cause of students’ positive changes. Four respondents considered “peer group influence” significant in bringing about their children’s positive changes.

Only one respondent reported that “religious influence” is responsible for her child’s changes. One respondent (Respondent CK202) said that he was unable to locate any obvious positive change in his daughter, since he was always engaged at work and did not spend a lot of time with his daughter.

Quotes that highlighted the significance of “teacher quality and attitudes” are reported below:

“The positive changes in academic performance and confidence are due to ‘lots of encouragement’ by teachers.” (Respondent CK 32)

“My child is willing to admit mistakes. This might be due to good teachers and quality peer groups. Instead of penalizing poor academic performance, the teachers encourage students to achieve higher grades.” (Respondent CK 86)

Representative quotes in relation to “discipline education” are listed below.

“The positive changes are due to the excellent school discipline.” (Respondent CK 139)

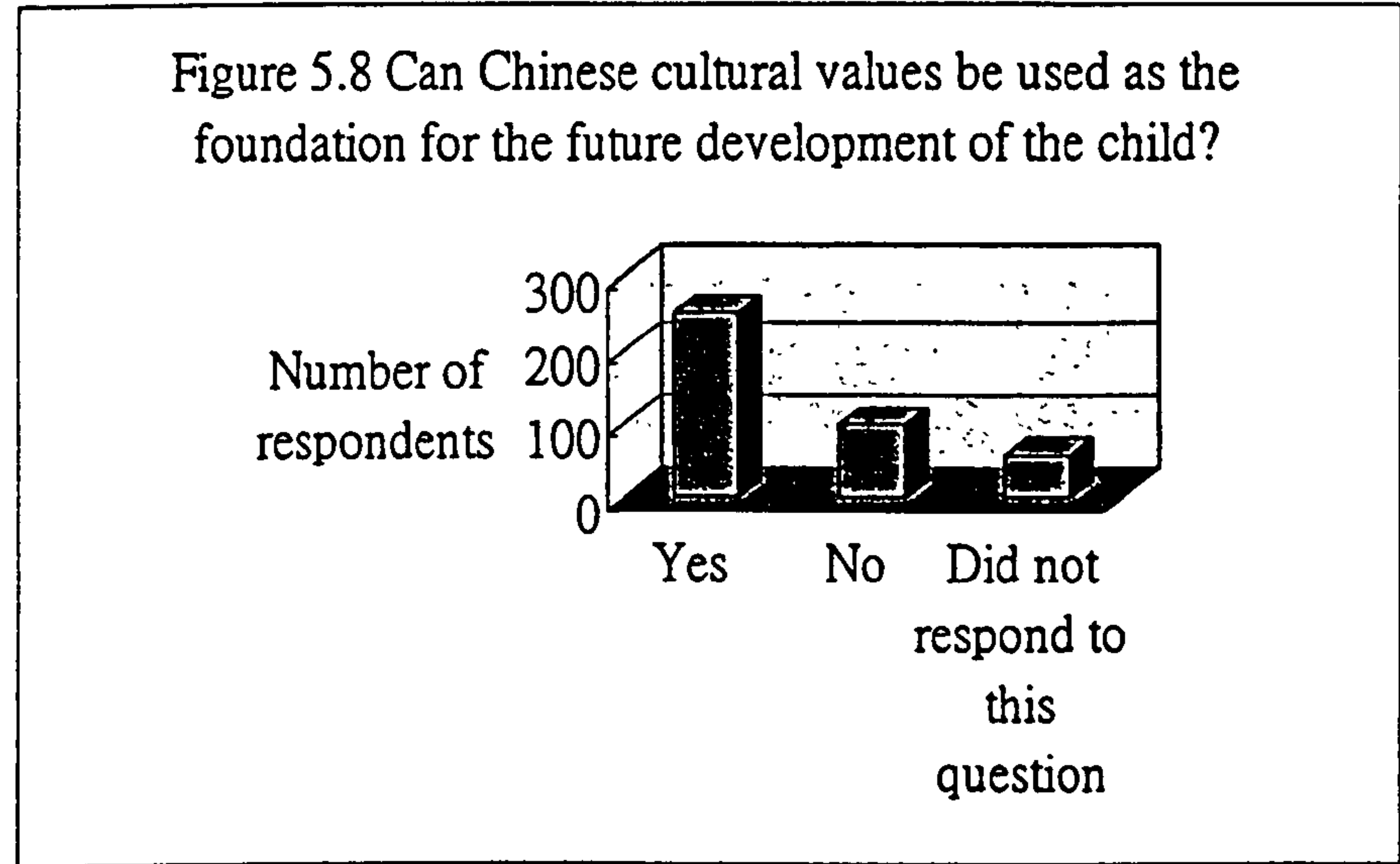
“The positive aspects are brought by my child’s improved ability in organizing her studies.” (Respondent CK 397)

A representative quote that supported the positive impact from “peer group influence” is shown below.

“The positive changes of our child is due to the good peer group influence. CK has successfully convinced children of the need to lower their materialistic desires.” (Respondent CK 117)

Influence of Chinese cultural values on child development and parental choice (Appendix B, Question 4.1, 4.2 and Appendix C, Question 7 of Section 2)

Findings from the questionnaire survey



Findings from Question 4.1 of the questionnaire survey (Appendix B) indicate that 252 respondents (61%) believe cultural values are capable of laying the foundation for the future development of their children. 100 respondents (24%) suggested that cultural values are unable to help laying the foundation and 60 respondents (15%) did not answer this question (Figure 5.8).

In Question 4.2 of the questionnaire survey (Appendix B), respondents were asked to enter the perceived Chinese cultural values that are capable of affecting child development. Its open-ended nature allowed respondents to put in theoretical teachings such as “Hau (filial piety)”, “Yan (Kindness)”, “Yi (Gratefulness)”, “Lai (Politeness)” and “Kan (Persistence)” that were also reported by the respondents of NY.

Findings from the telephone interviews

In the discussion of the impact of Chinese cultural values during telephone interviews, respondents provided explanations for their responses to the questions related to the impact of Chinese culture on child development (Question 4.1 and 4.2 in Appendix B).

Order of importance	Impact of Chinese cultural values on child development	Number of responses
1	Perceived strong impact from Chinese cultural values on child development	11
2	Perceived equal weighting from religious education influence and from the influence of Chinese cultural values.	6
3	Perceived religious education influence more powerful than the influence from Chinese cultural values	4
4	Perceived implicit influence from Chinese cultural values.	1
5	Perceived no influence from Chinese cultural values	1

Table 5.17 The impact of Chinese cultural values on child development

As shown in Table 5.17, eleven respondents agreed that Chinese cultural values are important in child development. Six respondents said that the degree of influence from religious education and Chinese cultural values is equal. Four respondents perceived religious education to be more influential than Chinese cultural values. Although only one perceived implicit influence from Chinese cultural values, a total of sixteen respondents indicated that the impact of Chinese cultural values through role-modeling of parents and teachers is influential in child development.

An example of the respondents who supported the strong impact of Chinese cultural values on child development is listed below.

“Chinese cultural values are passed on to children from both parents and teachers. Hence the impact is more powerful than Christian education.”
(Respondent CK 304)

Those who placed equal weighting on the influence of Chinese cultural values and religious education in child development are illustrated below:

“Chinese cultural values can be passed on to child through role-modeling of parents and teachers. Teachers in CK are very conventional and adhere to Chinese cultures which affect students to a great extent. Child is affected equally by both Chinese cultural values and Christian education.”
(Respondent CK 194)

The four respondents who emphasized the importance of religious education in child development are represented by the following quote.

“Cultural values are passed on to children through the role-modeling of parents and teachers. However, the influence of religious education is a lot more powerful than the influence from Chinese cultural values.” (Respondent CK 159)

Documentary Analysis

The following documents were collected and analyzed to examine the aspects which are considered essential by CK School to be relating to parental choice:

(a) 125th Anniversary Bulletin (1997)

(b) School Information Leaflet (2000)

(c) CK Newsletters, Issue No.15,16,17,18 (1999; 2000)

The sampling method is to collect a variety of documents and to focus on selected aspects of CK that are related to parental choice. The counts of “a semantic unit” (Robson, 1993:238) in the 125th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin (1997) will be the number of pages that infer the existence of each category of school choice factors under investigation. The recording unit in the School Information Leaflet (2000) will be the number of sections and the number of items that are related to school choice factors. In the CK Newsletters, Issues No.15,16,17,18 (1999; 2000), the recording unit will be the frequency counts of each picture or category unit that is related to the school choice factors. The school choice factors are extended to the nine following categories for content analysis:

1. educational effectiveness (Appendix C Question 2)
2. chance of being admitted to popular secondary schools (Appendix B Question 2.1.4 & 2.1.5; Appendix C Question 3),
3. academic performance of students (Appendix B Question 2.1.1, 3.1.4),
4. student behaviour as influenced by school culture and discipline (Appendix B Question 2.1.8, 3.1.5, 3.1.6, 3.1.7, 3.1.9),
5. availability of extra-curricular activities (Appendix B Question 2.1.2, 3.1.8),
6. teacher attitudes and relationship with parents (Appendix B Question 2.1.6, 2.1.10, 2.1.15),
7. religious goals (Appendix B Question 2.1.7)
8. other factors as listed in the survey questionnaire (Appendix B 2.1),
9. aspects related to Chinese cultural values and child development (Appendix B Question 4.1, 4.2; Appendix C Question 7).

The semantic unit will also be divided into “the manifest items” and “the latent items” for analyses that are comparable to the data of NY School.

Table 5.18 below has shown the frequency counts of the different measuring units, as appeared in the 125th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin (1997), the School Information Leaflet (2000) as well as the CK Newsletters, Issues No.15,16,17,18 (1999; 2000). The frequency counts were grouped under nine categories, consistent with Table 4.18 of the NY School documents in Chapter IV.

Ranked order	Aspects considered essential by CK School to be relating to parental choice : order of significance (by quantity of content weightings)	125 th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin N=54		The School Information Leaflet (2000)			CK Newsletters, Issue No.15,16, 17,18 (1999; 2000) N=75		Total Weighting
		Page unit count	%	Section unit count N=19	item unit count N=63	%	Picture or category unit count	%	%
1	Availability of extra-curricular activities	17	31.5%	1	5	6.6%	34	45.3 %	27.8%
2	Religious goals	13	24.1%	5	16	25.85 %	10	13.3 %	21.08%
3	Student behaviour as influenced by school culture and discipline	9	16.7%	4	23	28.75 %	7	9.3%	18.25%
4	Academic performance of students	6	11.1%	1	4	5.8%	14	18.6 %	11.83%
5	Aspects related to Chinese cultural values and child development	2	3.7%	4	10	18.45 %	5	6.7%	9.6%
6	Teacher attitudes and relationship with parents	2	3.7%	3	4	11.1%	4	5.3%	6.7%
7	Other factors as listed in the major questionnaire survey	*5	9.2%						
8	Educational effectiveness			1	1	3.45%	1	1.3%	
9	Chance of being admitted to popular secondary schools								

* 1 page related to “the physical environment of CK School” and

4 pages related to “the history of CK School”

Table 5.18
Assessment of aspects considered essential by CK School to be relating to parental choice through content analysis of 3 types of documents

The content analysis generates the following findings. In the 125th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin (1997), there is a total of 148 pages, excluding the cover and back pages. The total count as listed in Table 5.12 is 54 page units. A large number of the pages are not counted, since they are not related to the parental school choice factors of the research under investigation. These include the pages on photographs of the School Management Board, class photographs, subject descriptions, student articles, art work and paintings, advertisements and name list of donors. The findings showed that the highest ranking is “availability of extra-curricular activities”. This is represented by 17 page units (31.5%) page units, followed by “religious goals” which is represented by 13 page units (24.1%) page units, and then by “student behaviour as influenced by school culture and discipline” which is represented by 9 page units (16.7%).

In the School Information Leaflet (2000), there is a total of 19 section unit counts and 63 item unit counts for analysis (Table 5.18). In the section unit, some school choice factors appear more than once in one section unit. In the item unit, items related to the eleven school choice factors are counted to validate the accuracy of the section unit. In the section unit count, the findings indicate that the highest ranking is “religious goals” which is represented by five section units. The next highest ranking is “student behaviour as influenced by school culture and discipline” and “aspects related to Chinese cultural values and child development” which are both represented by four section units. In the item unit count, the findings reported that “student behaviour as influenced by school culture and discipline” ranked top, as represented by 23 item units. This is followed by “religious goals”, as represented by 16 item units, and then by “aspects as related to Chinese cultural values and child development” which is represented by 10 item units.

The total average percentage count of section and item units indicates that “student behaviour as influenced by school culture and discipline” ranks the highest. It constitutes 28.75% of total choice factors, followed by “religious goals” with 25.85% and then by “aspects as related to Chinese cultural values and child development” which constitutes 18.45% of the reasons for choosing CK.

The frequency count of CK Newsletters, Issue No.15,16,17,18 (1999; 2000), indicates that “availability of extra-curricular activities” ranks first, with 34 picture/category units (45.3%) of total counts. “Academic performance of students” ranks second, with 14 picture/category units (18.6%) of total counts, followed by “religious goals” which constitutes 10 picture/category units (13.3%) of total counts of school choice factors.

The nine categories of school choice (Table 5.18) relate to the “values” of parents expressed in the survey and in interviews. The researcher linked these categories to the “subject matters” located in the three kinds of documents during the content analysis process.

The total weighting of the three kinds of documents indicates that the category of “extra-curricular activities” ranked top, with 45.3%. This category is considered “the latent item” since it is often used as a means to promote the image of a school. Its high percentage in this study suggests that CK might seek to promote itself to appeal to parental preferences and to inform the public and potential parents of their educational success. Extra-curricular activities are used as a tool to present school performance to the public.

The second most important category in the total weighting is “religious goals” which constitutes 21.08% of the total. The category of “student behaviour as influenced by school culture and discipline” ranked third with 18.25%, while the category of “academic performance of students” ranked fourth with 11.83%. “Teacher attitudes and relationship with parents” ranked fifth. Other categories are relatively unimportant in terms of their frequency counts in the documentary analysis.

An overview of the analysis of the three types of document showed that student behaviour and academic performance are “the manifest items” which CK expects the public to be aware of. The highest ranking in “religious goals” indicates the existence of “the latent items” that are reflective of CK’s effort in preaching the gospel, despite the fact that “religious education” is not a major factor of choice for most parents. The low ranking of “teacher attitudes and relationship with parents” is probably because of the difficulty of quantifying or describing this item in word or picture forms. The prioritized order of student behaviours, academic performance, and teacher qualities in the documentary analysis corresponds with the findings from in-depth interviews which also suggest that discipline ranked top, followed by academic performance and teacher attitudes (Table 5.15). These findings are also congruent with the parental ranking of the top three most important factors of choice in the questionnaire survey (Table 5.6).

Summary

Research findings to the research questions are presented in this chapter with reference to CK. The findings from both the survey and the interviews suggest that three major factors are considered essential by CK School to be relating to parental

choice of CK. They include “good discipline”, “quality of academic standard”, and “teacher quality”. The majority of parents perceived behavioural improvement in child after enrolment in CK in the survey. In the in-depth interviews, parent respondents related their children’s improvement in “sense of responsibility”, “behaviour in school”, and “relationship with friends in school” to “positive and caring teachers” and the influence of well-managed “discipline education” available in CK. Deterioration of behaviours have been perceived to be trivial, and the most noticeable perceived deteriorated behaviour is related to the efforts of CK to enhance students’ academic standard. The majority of the respondents supported the positive influence of Chinese cultural values on child development while some considered religious influences more powerful. Parents perceived the effectiveness of CK being expressed in the form of positive teacher attitudes and excellent discipline education. Most parents preferred their children to study in a secondary school that uses English as the medium of instruction although some of them do not have any specific preference. These parents are likely to allow their children to choose their own language of instruction in their secondary school choice. The majority of parents would be willing to pay tuition fees for quality education if it is unavailable in the public school place allocated to their child. Chinese cultural values are considered by most respondents to be effective in helping children to develop positive characteristics even though a small percentage of respondents consider religious education more influential in child development. Documentary analysis of CK documents also supports the view that CK placed a heavier emphasis on religious education and student behaviour. These findings will be contrasted with those of the other two case study schools in Chapter VII before conclusions are drawn.

Chapter VI

Findings of Case Study Three: SC School

Background of SC School

SC was established in 1897 by a Swiss missionary. Education was considered a luxury at that time and SC was built to provide free Christian education to the poor who could not afford to pay. The number of classes was increasing in the 1970s in order to meet the increasing demand for primary education, with a minimal fee collected to cover operating expenses. In late 1990s, the availability of excessive free places in the public sector has diverted SC to move towards private quality education which requires tuition fee payment at the higher end of the market. Large scale enhancement and development in human resources, facilities, information technology and academic upgrading were implemented from 1997 to meet the specific needs of students and their parents.

SC is located in a Kowloon district where there is a total of ten private primary schools. It provides whole-day education with twelve primary classes and eleven kindergarten classes. There were 369 primary school students and 161 kindergarten students in April 1998, at the time of the research. The school has increased to eighteen primary classes and eighteen kindergarten classes in September 2000, with a total of 968 students. Both the primary school and the kindergarten sections are administered as one school, headed by the same Principal and the same School Management Committee, which also manages two secondary schools in the public sector. The school syllabus gives priority to English with English textbooks for Science and Mathematics and more English readers for students in all grades. The school is well known for its history, good moral education and academic standard, with high Christian spirit. Religious activities are well organized, with regular fellowship for staff, students and parents. There is no

feeder-scheme affiliation between SC Primary School and its secondary schools. However, preference of admission is given to primary 6 graduates who pass the admission test of the secondary schools.

Procedure and problems encountered in the data collection process

Research access

The researcher first sought approval from the Supervisor of SC. This was followed by informing the teaching staff of the researcher's intention to conduct an investigation in SC. The teachers were very supportive of the research.

One class of 25 parents was contacted for the pilot test. Amendments were made to finalize the survey questionnaire and the telephone interview protocol. The findings were reported in Chapter III.

Preparation, distribution and return of the questionnaires

The finalized questionnaires were distributed to parents through their children on 24 April 1998 and were requested to be returned to the class teachers in the following week. The researcher informed the teaching staff that parent respondents were invited to participate in the survey on a voluntary basis.

Number of returned questionnaires from the survey

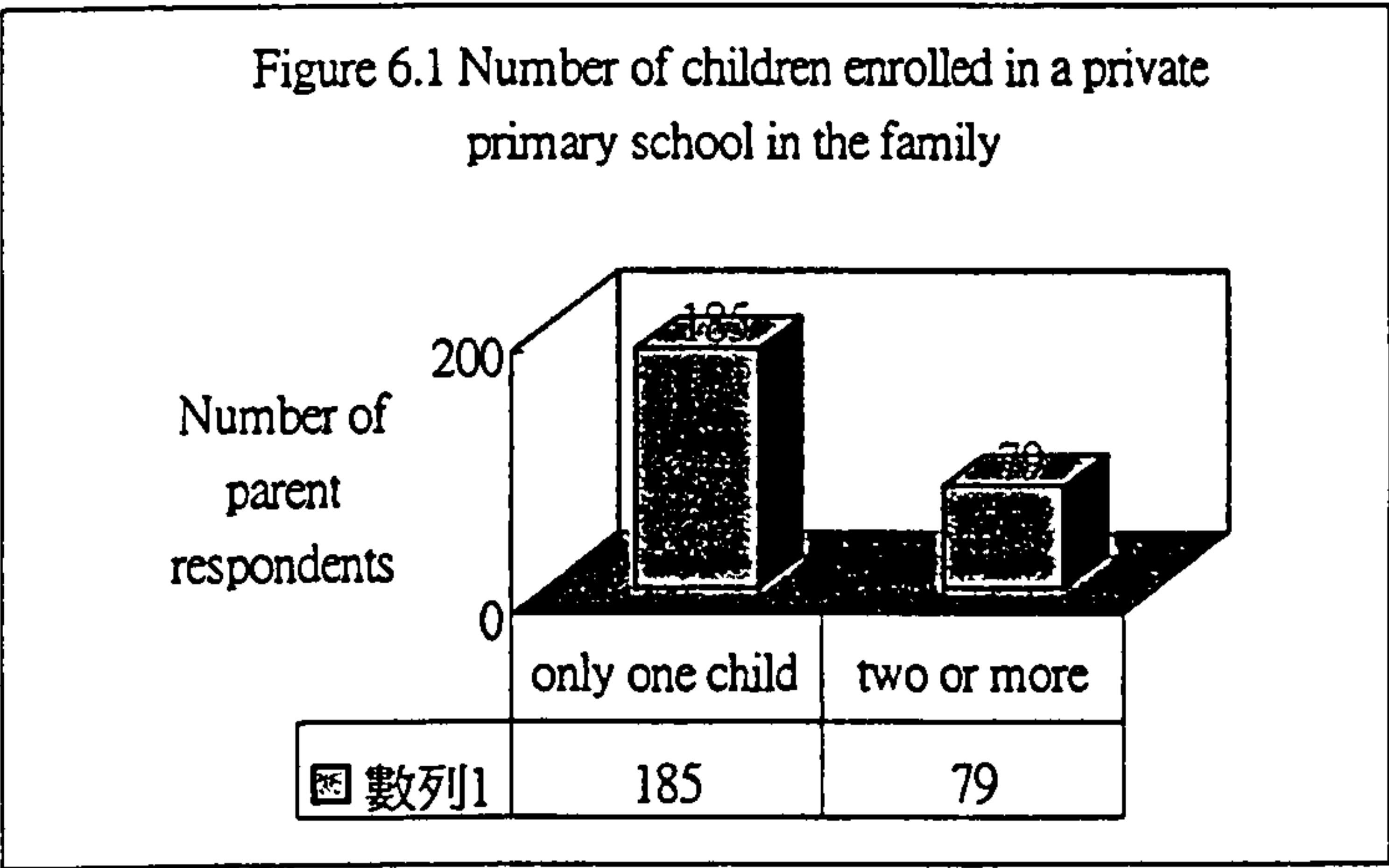
Since 25 pilot questionnaires were distributed to the pilot respondents in SC, they were excluded from the samples in the major survey. This means that a total of 344 questionnaires were distributed to SC students whose parents did not participate in the pilot survey. Some of these respondents were contacted for the subsequent interviews. 280 completed questionnaires were returned. The return rate was 81% which is considered to be high.

Demographic data collected from the questionnaire survey

Background information of students

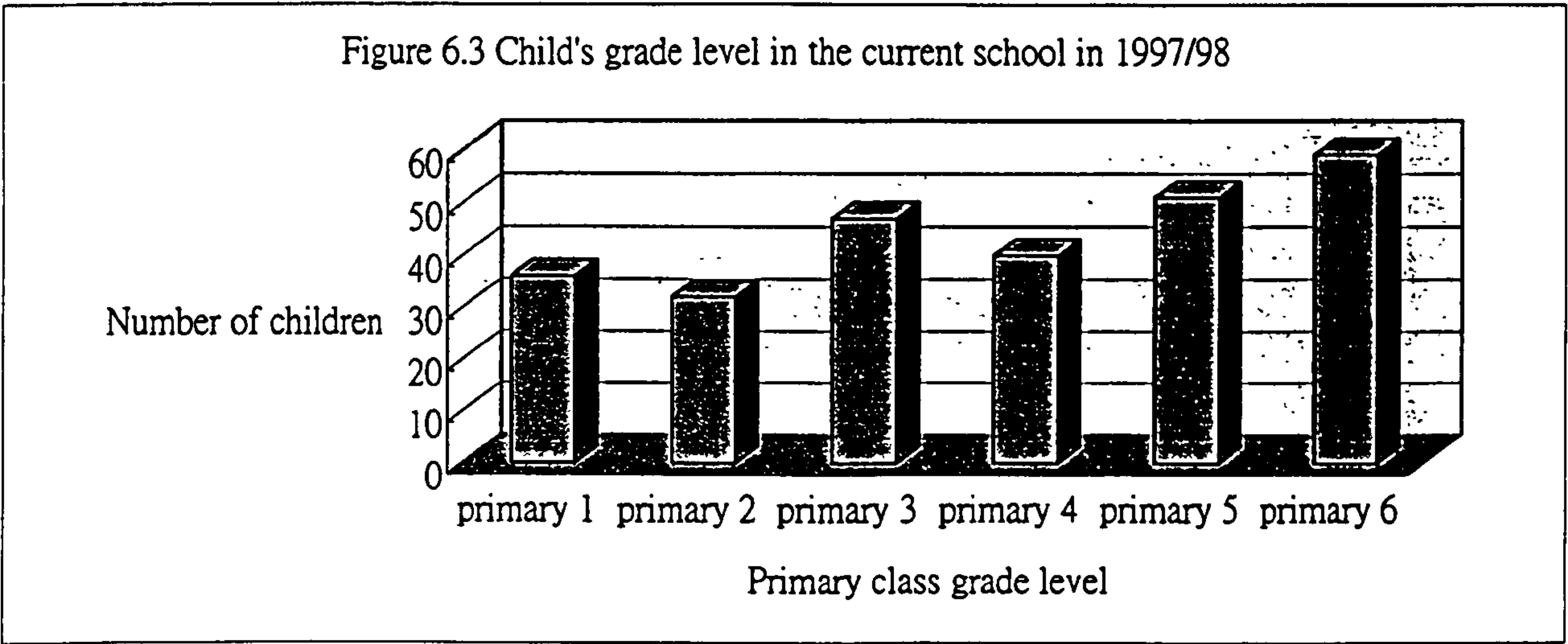
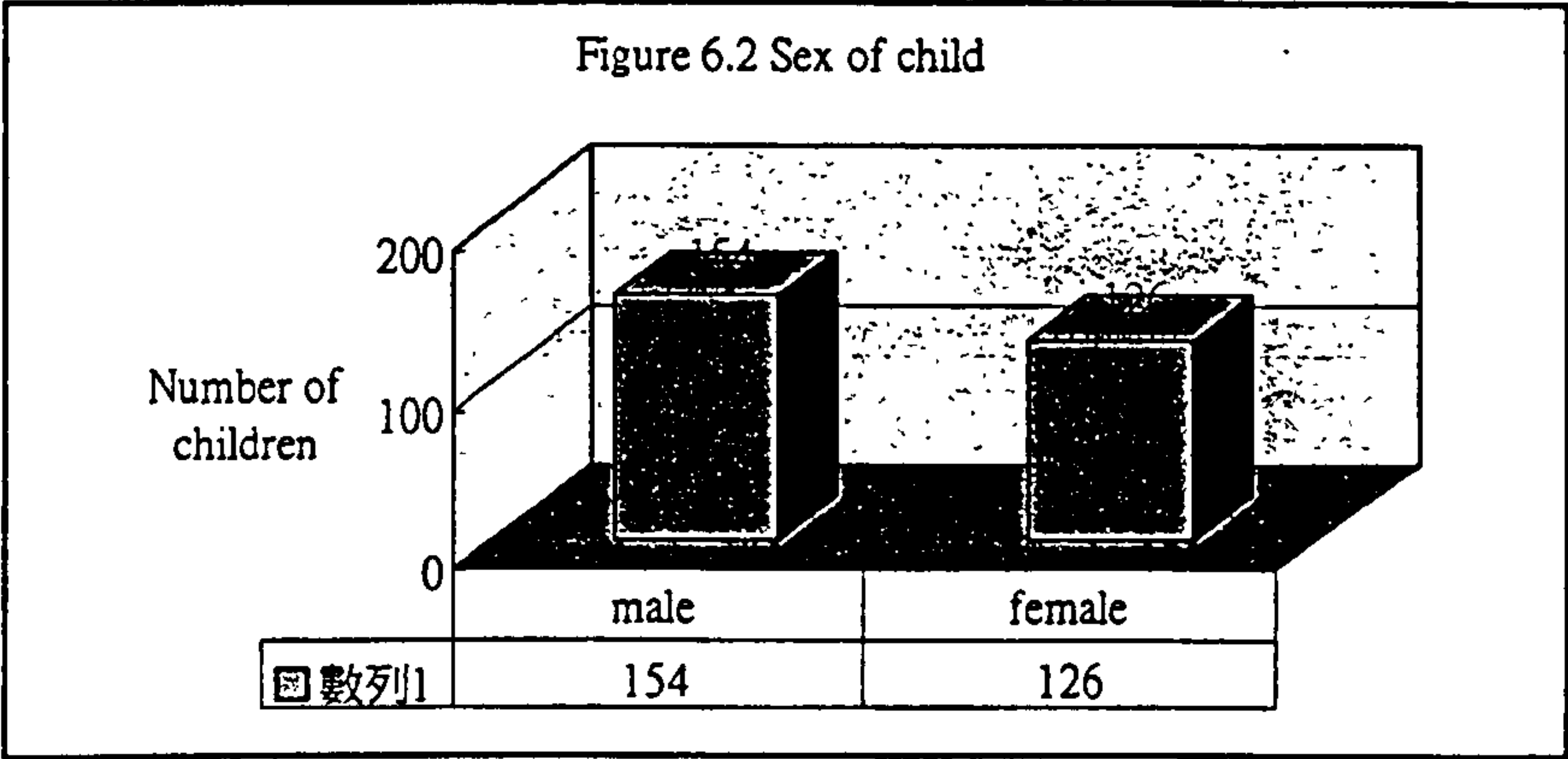
185 parents (66%) indicated that they have only one child currently studying in a private primary school and 95 (34%) said that they have two children in private primary schools (Figure 6.1).

Since the ratio of one child to two children at the age range of 0 to 14 in Hong Kong families is 1:1.64 (Hong Kong Statistics Department, 1999), the findings suggest that there are more single child families in SC compared to a higher ratio of two-child families in the primary schools of the public sector.



Sex of child

There was a total of 154 boys (55%) boys and 126 girls (45%) girls in SC School (Figure 6.2). The data suggest that a slightly larger percentage of boys is being educated in SC compared to girls.



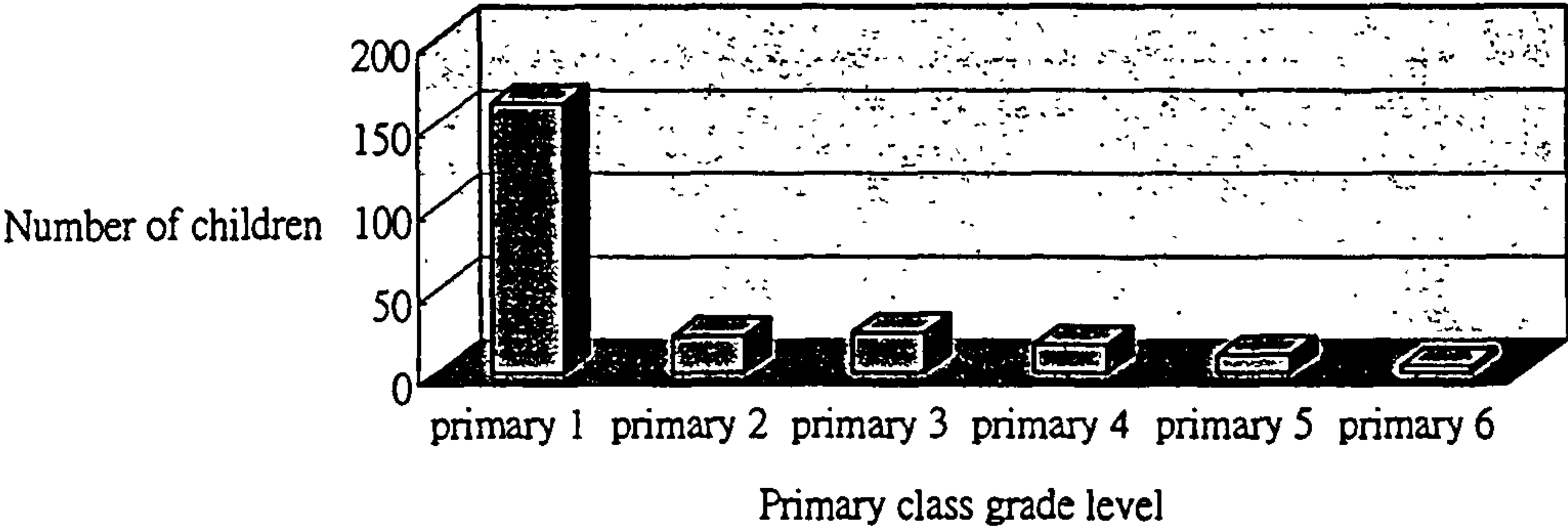
Academic grade level of students in the current school

The number of students from primary 1 to 6 is almost even, with a comparatively larger percentage of samples from primary 3, 5 and 6 (Figure 6.3 and Table 6.1). With 162 students (58%) students enrolled in a private primary school from primary 1, Figure 6.4 and Table 6.2 indicate that most parents tend to make a school choice in the first year of their child’s primary school education.

Grade level in 97/98	Number	Percentage
Primary 1	36	13%
Primary 2	32	11%
Primary 3	47	17%
Primary 4	40	14%
Primary 5	51	18%
Primary 6	59	21%

Table 6.1
Child’s grade level in the current school year in 1997/98

Figure 6.4 Child's grade level when first entering this current school

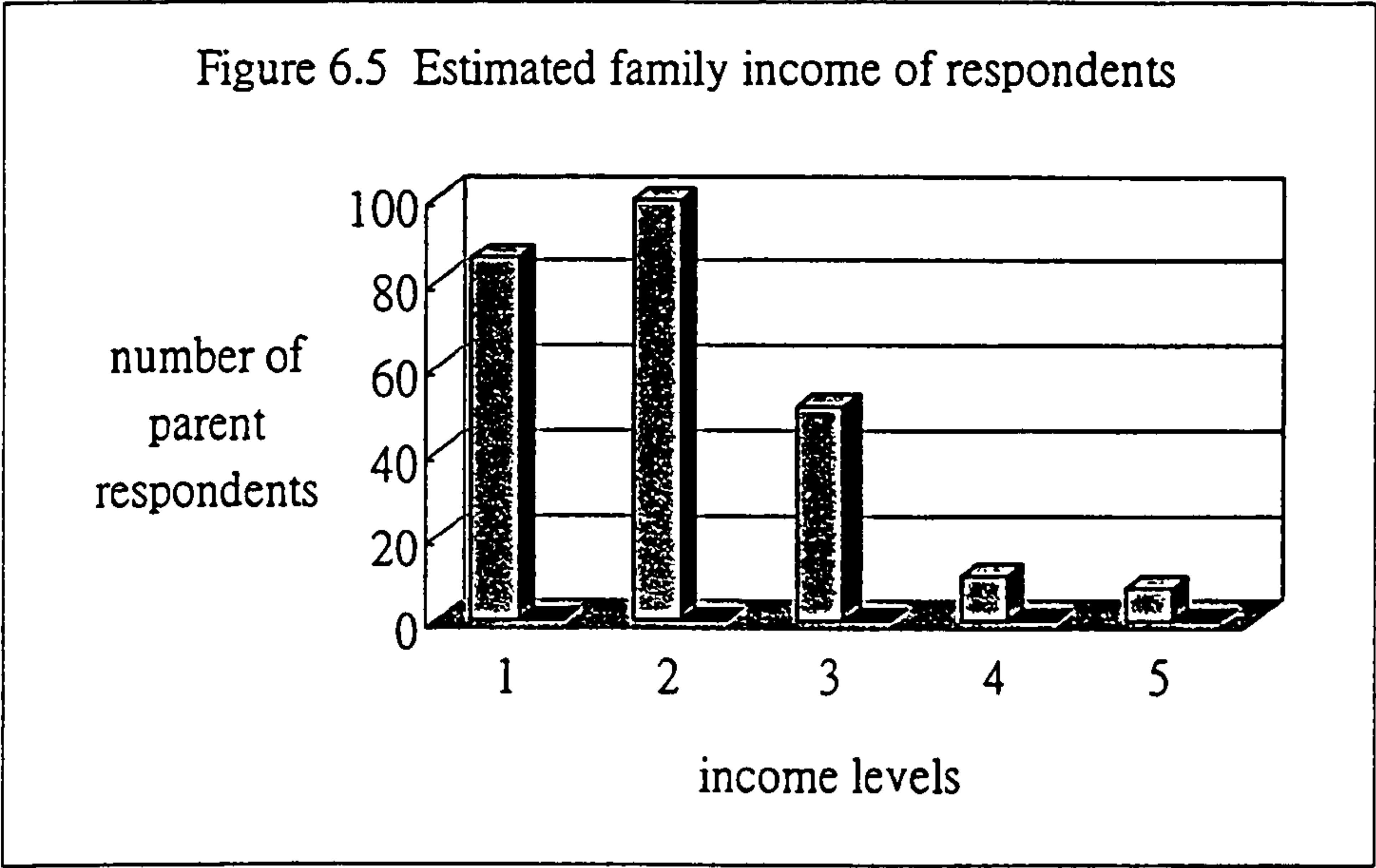


Grade level when first entered this school	Number	Percentage
Primary 1	162	58%
Primary 2	22	8%
Primary 3	24	9%
Primary 4	17	6%
Primary 5	11	4%
Primary 6	4	1%

Table 6.2
Child’s grade level when first entering this current school

Estimated family income

Figure 6.5 and Table 6.3 indicate that the largest income group is the 99 respondents (35%) who have a family income of between HK \$16,667 and \$33,333 per month. Since SC charged a school fee of HK \$ 1,550 per month at the time of the research in 1998, the data show that monthly expenditure on school fee is 6.2% of their average family income.

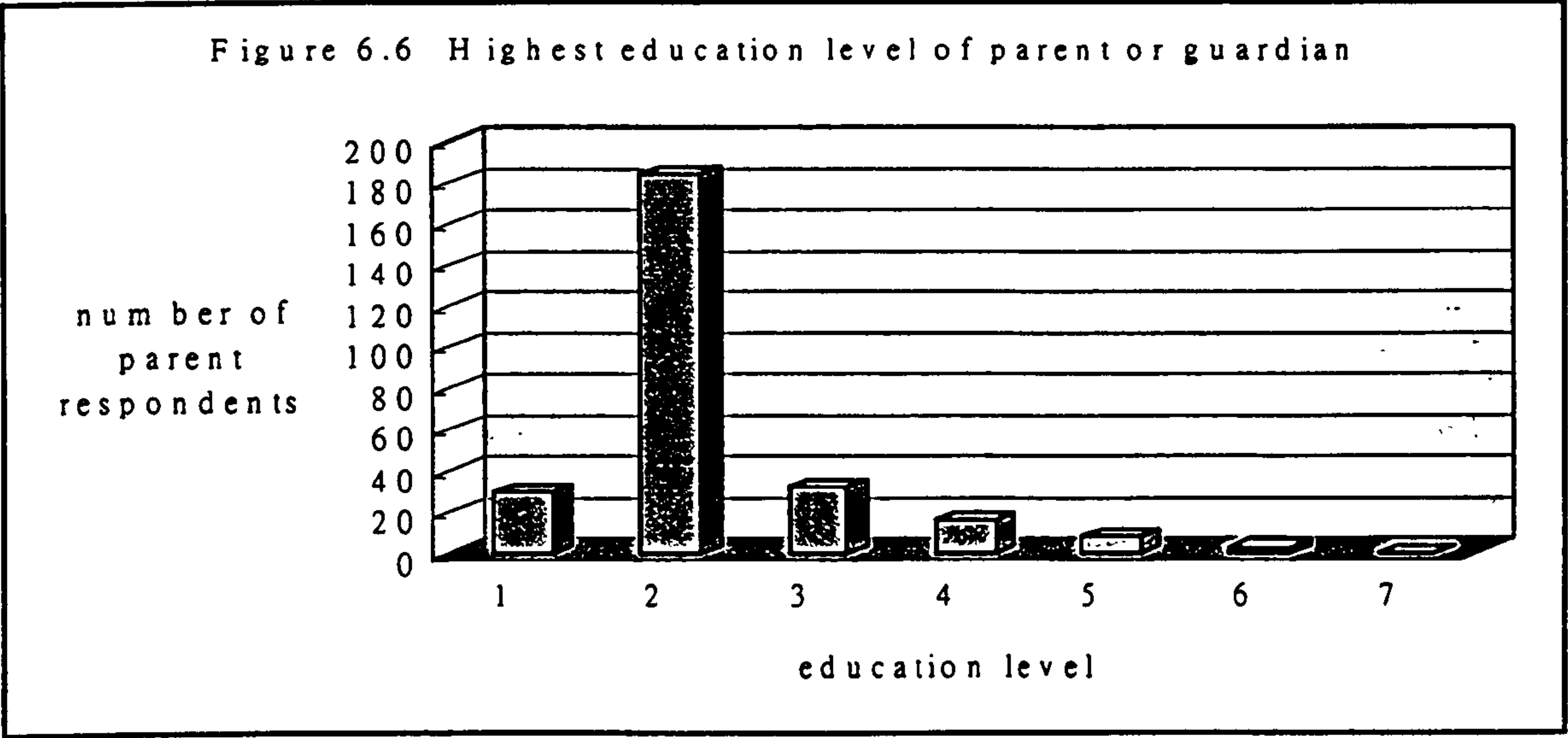


	<u>Income levels of respondents</u>	<u>Number of respondents</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1 =	average of approx. \$16,667 or under per month	86	31
2 =	average of approx. \$16,667 - \$ 33,333 per month	99	35
3 =	average of approx. \$ 33,333 - \$ 50,000 per month	51	18
4 =	average of approx. \$ 50,000 - \$ 66,667 per month	11	4
5 =	average of approx. \$ 66,667 and above per month	8	3

Table 6.3
Estimated family income of respondents

Highest education level of parent or guardian

The findings indicate that 184 respondents (66%) of the respondents have received secondary school education (Figure 6.6 and Table 6.4). In line with the finding in Figure 6.7, most respondents are mothers who have received secondary school education.

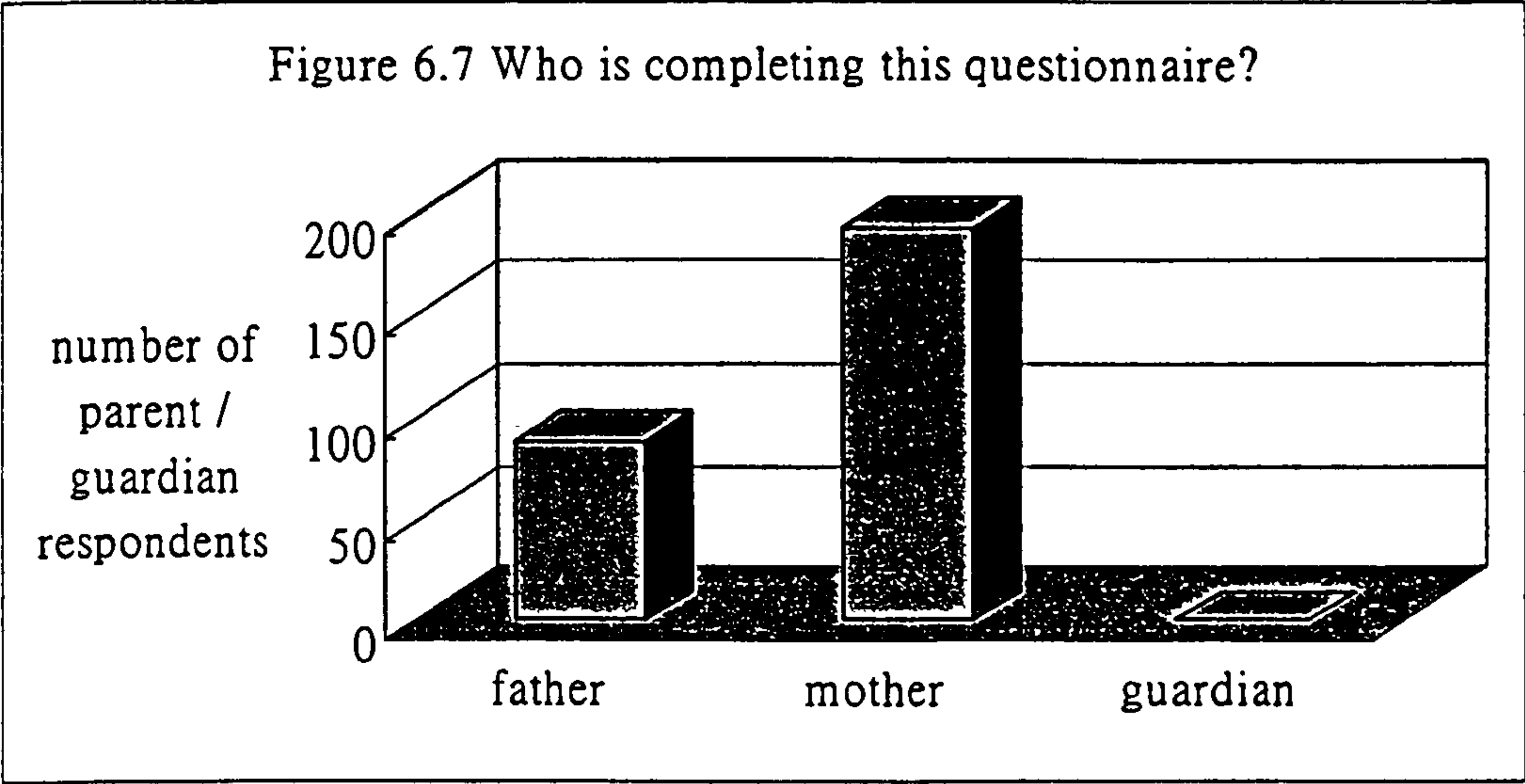


	Highest education level of parent or guardia	Number of respondent	Percentage
1 =	Primary school level	30	11
2 =	Secondary school level	184	66
3 =	post-secondary level	32	11
4 =	University level	16	6
5 =	Masters degree level	8	3
6 =	Doctorate degree level	3	1
7 =	Professional level	0	0

Table 6.4
Highest education level of parent or guardian

Who is completing the questionnaire

192 respondents (69%) were mothers, 88 (31%) were fathers and there was no guardian among the respondents (Figure 6.7 and Table 6.5). The findings of this current study represent mostly the opinions of the female genders of the family.



Type of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage
Father	88	31
Mother	192	69
Guardian	0	0

Table 6.5
Who is completing this questionnaire?

Research question: What are the factors affecting private school choice?

Ranking of parental choice of current school

The responses to this research question are shown in Table 6.6. Respondents could select from a list of 18 factors influencing their choice of school. The data were ranked by weighted ratings of the choices. The weighting was calculated using the following rule, as indicated in Chapter III.

- 1. Very important Weighting of 5
- 2. Important Weighting of 4
- 3. Fairly important Weighting of 3
- 4. Not important Weighting of 2
- 5. Unimportant Weighting of 1

Question Number	Factors influencing parental choice of the current school	Weighted Rating	Weighted Ranking
2.1.1	Quality of academic standard	929	1
2.1.10	Good parent-teacher/school relationship	867	2
2.1.8	Good discipline	850	3
2.1.6	Teachers are friendly and sincere	730	4
2.1.9	Good physical environment	662	5
2.1.5	Excellent record of secondary school place allocation	564	6
2.1.3	Live close to the school	507	7
2.1.15	School adopts an open policy and is willing to accept parental opinions and make appropriate changes	453	8
2.1.4	Linked with a well-known secondary school	441	9
2.1.2	Greater access to extra-curricular activities	411	10
2.1.16	School can meet the particular needs of my child	308	11
2.1.7	Same religious belief as parents	276	12
2.1.13	Siblings of my child studying in the same school	258	13
2.1.11	Special programmes not available in other schools	254	14
2.1.17	Highly recommended by friends	214	15
2.1.12	Peer groups of my child studying in the same school	169	16
2.1.14	Father or mother studied in the same school before	169	16
2.1.18	Other reasons	94	18

(N = 280) **Table 6.6**
Weighted rankings for parental choice of SC School

Table 6.6 shows the ranking of the 18 perceived reasons for the selection of the current school. The highest ranking is “quality of academic standard” followed by “good parent-teacher/school relationship” and “good discipline”. “Teachers are friendly and sincere” ranked fourth. The respondents were less concerned with “peer group of my child studying in the same school” or “father or mother studied in the same school before”.

Research question: Parental perceptions of changes since enrolment.

The responses to this research question are tabulated in Tables 6.7, 6.8 and 6.9. Respondents could select from a list of 11 changes of their children after enrolment in SC. They could select either “shown improvement”, “unchanged” or “has worsened”.

Parental perception of behavioural improvement since enrolment

Question Number	Parental perception of behavioural improvement since enrolment	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Ranking Order
3.1.5	Better behaviour in school	176	63%	1
3.1.4	Improved academic performance	175	62%	2
3.1.1	Better self motivation in learning	171	61%	3
3.1.8	Increased participation and interest in extra-curricular activities	167	60%	4
3.1.7	Better relationship with friends in school	159	57%	5
3.1.6	Increased sense of responsibility	157	56%	6
3.1.2	More interested in going to school	150	54%	7
3.1.10	With stimulating educational aspirations	132	47%	8
3.1.3	Time required in studying	123	44%	9
3.1.9	Better relationship with parents and siblings	111	40%	10
3.1.11	With stimulating career aspirations	107	38%	11
	Overall perception of improvement	1628	53%	

(N=280) **Table 6.7 Parental perception of behavioural improvement since enrolment**

Table 6.7 shows the ranking of the 11 perceived types of behavioural improvement of the students after enrolment in the private school. The most noticeable improvement was “better behaviour in school” which was chosen by 176 respondents (63%). This was followed by “improved academic performance” and “better motivation in learning”. The differences between the absolute number of choice for the first four rankings were small. The top three rankings indicate that parents’ attention is mostly drawn to the learning aspects of their children. Participation and interest in extra-curricular activities are ranked after learning-related aspects. The personal, moral and social aspects are relatively not as significant as studies, when “relationship with friends in school” and “sense of responsibility” ranked fifth and sixth in Table 6.7. Other aspects such as “relationship

with parents and siblings” and “career aspirations” seem insignificant when they were ranked last. The overall perception of improvement constitutes a total of 53% of all responses.

Parental perception of no behavioural change since enrolment

The list of unchanged behaviours after enrolment in SC School is ranked in Table 6.8:

Question Number	Parental perception of no behavioural change since enrolment	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Ranking
3.1.9	No change when relating to parents and siblings	131	47%	1
3.1.11	No change in career aspirations	119	43%	2
3.1.10	No change in educational aspirations	115	41%	3
3.1.3	No change in time required in studying	108	39%	4
3.1.2	No change in interest in going to school	101	36%	5
3.1.6	No change in sense of responsibility	98	35%	6
3.1.7	No change when relating to friends in school	88	31%	7
3.1.8	No change in attitude towards extra-curricular activities	87	31%	7
3.1.1	No change in learning interest (motivation)	81	29%	9
3.1.4	No change in academic performance	73	28%	10
3.1.5	No change in behaviour in school	72	26%	11
	Overall perception of no change	1073	35%	

(N=280)

Table 6.8
Parental perception of no behavioural change since enrolment

Table 6.8 shows the ranking of the 11 types of unchanged behaviours perceived by the parents. The overall perception of “no change” constitutes 35% of all responses. The relationship with parents and siblings has the top ranking. This is followed by both “career” and “educational aspirations”. The findings support that SC students manage to maintain good relationship with parents and siblings after their enrolment in SC. Since “career aspirations” and “educational aspirations” cannot be enhanced without the initiative role of SC School, the unchanged status of students’ behaviours in these two areas is applicable.

Parental perception of deteriorated behaviours since enrolment

The list of perceived deteriorated behaviours after enrolment in SC is ranked in Table 6.9 below. When compared with the responses to the perceived improved behaviours and those which remain unchanged after enrolment, perceived deteriorated behaviours are less important as the overall perception constitutes only 1.9% of all responses.

Question Number	Parental perception of deteriorated behaviours since enrolment	Number of Responses	Percentage	Ranking
3.1.3	Time required in studying has worsened	13	5.3%	1
3.1.4	Worse academic performance	12	4.6%	2
3.1.9	Worse relationship with parents and Siblings	6	2.4%	3
3.1.5	Worse behaviour in school	6	2.3%	4
3.1.1	Worse self motivation in learning	5	2.0%	5
3.1.2	Less interest in going to school	4	1.6%	6
3.1.7	Worse relationship with friends in school	3	1.2%	7
3.1.8	Decreased participation and interest in extra-curricular activities	3	1.2%	7
3.1.10	Less educational aspirations	3	1.2%	7
3.1.11	Less career aspirations	3	1.2%	7
3.1.6	Decreased sense of responsibility	1	1.4%	11
	Overall perception of deterioration	59	1.9%	

(N=280)

Table 6.9
Parental perception of deteriorated behaviour since enrolment

Table 6.9 shows the ranking of the 11 types of perceived deteriorated behaviours by the respondents. The most noticeable deteriorated behaviour is the increase in “time required in studying”. This was followed by the drop in “academic performance”. The other nine changes have a substantially lower percentage relative to the first two. The general parental expectation on child’s academic success has prompted SC School to provide more intensive academic training to students who therefore need more time for studying after enrolment in SC. For those who are unable to cope with the heavy workload, their academic performance will deteriorate. However, the percentage of students who are perceived by parents to be unable to cope with the academic workload is very small and seems to be insignificant in terms of its overall impact on students (Table 6.9).

Findings in Tables 6.7 and 6.8 show that parents perceived more improvements than unchanged or deteriorated behaviour. Less than 6 % of SC respondents considered that it took longer time in studying. Less than 5 % of SC respondents considered that academic performance, the most important reason for sending their children to the current school, has deteriorated.

The above findings are similar to those obtained from NY (Table 4.9) and those collected from CK (Table 5.9). Respondents from the three schools have a perception of behavioural improvements. This was followed by unchanged behaviours since enrolment in private education.

Parents perceiving improvement, perceiving no change, and perceiving deterioration in child's behaviour

A comparison of the percentage of parents who perceive improvement, no change or deterioration in their child's behaviour after enrolment in a private school is presented in Table 6.10 below. 53% of parents perceived behavioural improvement in child, 35% perceived no behavioural change in child and only 1.9% perceived behavioural deterioration in child. Parental perception of areas of improvement in child's behaviours seems to be consistent with the ranking of parental choice factors, as listed in Table 6.6. A relatively higher percentage of improvement has been found in "behaviour in school", "academic performance" and "motivation in learning" (Table 6.7) when "good discipline", "quality of academic standard", "good parent-teacher/school relationship" and "friendly and sincere teachers" also rank top (Table 6.6), being the four most influential parental choice factors. "Behaviour in school" is related to "good discipline". "Academic performance" is related to "quality of academic standard". "Motivation in learning" is affected by "good parent-teacher/school relationship" and "friendly and sincere teachers".

"Behaviour in school", "academic performance" and "motivation in learning" are perceived to be

most improved in Table 6.7. They were ranked last (Table 6.8) among all other unchanged behaviours which means that they are perceived to have improved. This assumption corresponds with their high ranking in Table 6.7.

Among all perceived deteriorated behaviours, as listed in Table 6.9, “time required in studying” and “academic performance” are the two most noticeable negative changes. As illustrated in the previous section, SC parents’ top priority on “quality of academic standard” (Table 6.6), in addition to the intensive academic workload in private schools, helps to explain why some parent respondents perceived deterioration in child’s “academic performance” and “more time required in studying” (Table 6.9).

Based on the above analysis, comparative figures listed in Table 6.10 below are confirmed to be supporting one another.

question number	Parental perception of child’s changes after enrolment in private primary schools	Percentage of parents perceiving improvement	Percentage of parents perceiving no change	Percentage of parents perceiving deterioration
3.1.8	Participation and interest in extra-curricular activities	60%	31%	1.2%
3.1.7	Relationship with friends in school	57%	31%	1.2%
3.1.6	Sense of responsibility	56%	35%	1.4%
3.1.10	Stimulating educational aspirations	47%	41%	1.2%
3.1.2	Interest in going to school	54%	36%	1.6%
3.1.11	Stimulating career aspirations	38%	43%	1.2%
3.1.1	Motivation in learning	61%	29%	2.0%
3.1.5	Behaviour in school	63%	26%	2.3%
3.1.9	Relationship with parents and siblings	40%	47%	2.4%
3.1.4	Academic performance	62%	28%	4.6%
3.1.3	Time required in studying	44%	39%	5.3%
	Overall perception of changes	53%	35%	1.9%

(N=280) **Table 6.10**
Parents perceiving improvement, no change and deterioration
in child’s behaviour since enrolment in SC School

Parental perception of child's behaviours in relation to academic performance and teacher influence since enrolment

Table 6.6 shows that “quality of academic standard” has the top ranking in parental choice of SC. Table 6.7 shows that 175 respondents (62%) have perceived “academic improvement” in their child since enrolment in SC. Table 6.8 shows that 73 respondents (28%) have perceived no change in their child’s “academic performance”. Table 6.9 shows that only 12 respondents (4.6%) have perceived deterioration in their child’s “academic performance”. Based on the above figures, it is assumed that parents’ expressed preference for “quality of academic standard” is met in SC after enrolment of their child in the school.

Table 6.6 shows that “good discipline” has the third highest ranking in parental choice of SC. Table 6.7 also shows that parents have perceived improvement in child’s “behaviour in school” with 176 respondents (63%). Table 6.8 shows that 72 respondents (26%) have perceived no change in their child’s “school behaviour”. Table 6.9 shows that only 6 respondents (2.3%) have perceived deterioration in their child’s “school behaviour”. Based on the above figures, it is assumed that parents’ expressed preference for “good discipline” is met in SC after enrolment of their child in the school.

Table 6.6 shows that “friendly and sincere teachers”, interpreted to be “teacher quality”, was ranked fourth in parental choice of SC. Including “behaviour in school” and “academic performance”, all other nine areas as listed in Table 6.10 are in one way or another related to “teacher influence” or “teacher quality”. Those most closely related areas are “interest in going to school”, “motivation in learning”, “sense of responsibility” and “educational aspirations”. Parental perception of child’s behaviour in these areas are mostly positive, and we assume that parents’ expressed preference for “teacher quality” is met in SC after enrolment of their child in the school.

Research question: Explanations responsible for the parents' selection and their children's behavioural changes after enrolment in a private school.

The interview schedule

Data for this research question were obtained through follow-up telephone interviews with the respondents. All the 80 potential interviewees preferred to be interviewed by telephone. Nobody wanted face-to-face interviews. The same procedure as NY and CK Schools was adopted to select samples for in-depth interviews, using the same interview schedule. Because of the high percentage of favourable responses (80 respondents provided contact telephone numbers for the interviews), a 25% systematic sampling (Cohen and Manion, 1994) was used. The same interview procedure was conducted as for the other two case studies with the same set of questions (Appendix C). The findings of the four research questions are again reported qualitatively by direct quotes from the respondents. The quotes illustrate the main themes arising from the interviews.

Why choose private education? (Appendix C, Question 1 of Section 2)

Twelve reasons were identified from the responses to the above research question through telephone interviews with the twenty parents. These reasons are tabulated in order of importance, according to the qualitative weightings as provided by respondents, in Table 6.11.

Order of importance	Parental reasons for choosing private education for his/her child	Number of responses
1	Unsatisfactory allocation of primary one place in the public school sector.	6
2	Whole-day schooling is essential for the working parents	5
3	More caring and positive teachers who are willing to communicate with parents.	3
3	Able to meet parental needs because of the flexibility	3
3	Close proximity and convenience.	3
3	Prefer child to study in an English primary school	3
7	Excellent discipline education provided by the school	2
7	Services should be better because of the fee we pay.	2
7	Physical environment of school is excellent	2
10	Religious schools are better	1
10	Positive peer group influence	1
10	Siblings are in the same school	1

Table 6.11
Parental reasons for choosing private education offered in SC:
Interview responses

Respondents gave either one or two reasons for their choice of private education for their children. The most common response to this open-ended question, for the selection of private education for their child, as given by 6 respondents, was the unavailability of perceived quality public school places that meet parental needs.

“If the child was allocated to a place in a good public school, then there is no need to study in a private school.” (Respondent SC 177)

The second most frequently expressed reason, as reported by 5 interviewees, was the preference for a “whole-day school” that is capable of matching the schedule of working parents.

“Whole-day education is better to meet the busy schedule of mother.”
(Respondent SC 173)

“The time-table and school schedules have to match the work hours of parents. This is important because we are working full time.” (Respondent SC 19)

Four reasons, as provided by twelve respondents, ranked equal. They are “caring and positive teachers”, “able to meet parental needs”, “close proximity and convenience”, and “being an English school”.

“Teachers’ attitudes in private schools are more positive. They are more willing to provide assistance to children.” (Respondent SC25)

“Private schools are less bureaucratic. It is easier to communicate with teachers” (Respondent SC 62)

“Close proximity is important because it helps the child to reserve a lot of energy for studies.” (Respondent SC157)

“Science and Maths subjects are taught in English in SC. This can help to expose the child to more opportunities to learn English.” (Respondent SC 217)

Other reasons listed in Table 6.11 above are relatively unimportant as they are provided by one or two respondents only.

Findings from the responses to this question have established that SC parents chose private schooling basically because of the unavailability of favourable public school places and that a substantial percentage of parents had to look for whole-day schooling

for their children in order to match their busy schedule. They are attracted to private education also because of the positive attitudes of teachers, travel convenience and the use of more English for instruction in SC.

Perceptions of educational effectiveness in private schools (Appendix C. Question 2 of Section 2)

Among the 20 interviewees, 19 reported that they perceived educational effectiveness in SC and only 1 reported that she did not perceive educational effectiveness in SC because of the unfavourable secondary school place allocated to her child at the completion of primary six. The eight common themes of the perception of educational effectiveness in private schools, with reference to SC, are illustrated in Table 6.12.

Order of importance	Parental perception of educational effectiveness in private schools	Number of responses
1	Positive staff attitudes and excellent home-school communication	11
2	Flexibility permits more activities and facilities that meet the needs of students and parents	7
3	Standardized peer group quality	3
3	Discipline education well managed	3
5	Religious goals achieved	2
6	Children’s academic standards are enhanced	1
6	Low teacher-student ratio	1
6	Children are more confident and initiative	1

Table 6.12
Parental perception of educational effectiveness in private schools

The effectiveness of SC was most outstanding in two areas: “positive staff and excellent home-school communication” and having “comprehensive services and facilities”, as mentioned by 11 and seven respondents respectively.

“The effectiveness of SC is attributed to the efforts of a group of young teachers who are sincere and caring. The low teacher/student ratio enables teachers to show more care and concern to each child.” (Respondent SC 124)

“Teachers’ positive attitudes enable them to initiate changes.” (Respondent SC 177)

“There is a wider variety of subjects such as Bible study and information technology in private schools.” (Respondent SC 253)

“There are more comprehensive services and facilities available in a private school.” (Respondent SC 113)

Three respondents indicated that private education permits “more standardized peer group quality” which affects the personality development of children. Three indicated that discipline education is well managed, and two perceived the religious goals being met in SC. The other three types of effectiveness were mentioned by only one respondent.

Parental preference of the language of instruction in their child’s secondary school (Appendix C, Question 3 of Section 2)

Parental preference of the language instruction in their child’s secondary school is tabulated in Table 6.13.

Order of parental preference of language instruction in their child’s secondary school	Number of selection
English	14
Depends on child’s own choice and interest	4
Chinese	2

Table 6.13
Parental preference of language instruction in their child’s secondary school

14 interviewees (70%) who indicated their preference in EMI considered this type of language instruction to be effective in learning:

“It is good to have English as the medium of instruction, because of its international status. However, it is also good to learn Chinese.” (Respondent SC 55)

“The use of English medium as instruction in school can create better job career opportunities in future.” (Respondent SC 62)

Four respondents would allow their children to choose the medium of language instruction in their selected secondary schools so that they are happy:

“I wouldn’t mind if the medium of instruction is English or Chinese. It is more important that my child is happy in the school. I would leave the decision to him.” (Respondent SC113)

The choice of Chinese as the medium of instruction in their children’s selected secondary school is represented by the following quote.

“Chinese is better because mother language permits direct understanding without any barrier.” (Respondent SC173)

These quotes indicate that the majority of SC parents preferred English as the medium of instruction in their children’s secondary schools because of its instrumental use in study and job opportunities. Those who allowed their children to choose the language of instruction and those who preferred Chinese are concerned about the happiness of their children in their learning process.

Does the school fee of a private primary school affect parental choice? (Appendix C. Question 4 of Section 2)

Whether or not tuition fee affects school choice	Number of responses
Willing to pay as much as they can afford if the quality is good	13
Their decision to enrol in private schools will be affected if the fee is too high	7

Table 6.14 Influence of school fee in school choice

Thirteen respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay a high tuition fee if the education quality is good (Table 6.14).

“The rate of school fee is lesser in importance compared to education quality. When I choose a school for my child, I would be more interested to examine its quality.” (Respondent SC78)

“I am more concerned about the academic standard and discipline of the selected school rather than the rate of school fee. I really don’t mind paying more for a quality school.” (Respondent SC124)

Seven respondents said that their decision to enrol the child in a private school might be changed if the rate of school fee is too high.

“We will be obliged to give up enrolling our child in a private school if the fee is too high. A tuition fee at the medium range is more acceptable. We need to calculate how much we can afford.” (Respondent SC257)

The figures in Table 6.14 suggest that most respondents (65%) considered the quality of education more important and that they would be willing to pay a higher tuition fee for better quality. A smaller percentage (35%) of parents would be affected if the rate of

school fee is very high.

Explanation of the selection of the top three most important school choice factors (Appendix C, Question 5 of Section 2)

The top three most important factors of choice for SC respondents, as indicated in Table 6.6, are “quality of academic standard”, “good parent-teacher/school relationship”, and “good discipline”. “Teachers are friendly and sincere” ranked fourth.

Eleven different reasons were identified from the responses to the open-ended question (Appendix C, Question 5 of Section 2) which asked for their explanation of their choices. They are ranked in order of importance, as listed in Table 6.15 below:

Order of importance	Reasons of choice for the top three most important factors	Number of responses
1	Good discipline has positive influence on children. / Positive peer pressure comes from good discipline in a school. / Good behaviour is more important than academic standard	16
2	Friendly teachers have the positive attitude to teach children. / Teachers are caring. / Teachers are willing to communicate with parents. / Background support from dedicated teachers is important in child development.	11
3	Good academic standards lay a good foundation for children’s future success.	9
4	Good physical environment of school enhances learning	7
5	Convenience due to close proximity to the school location.	4
6	Meeting child’s needs	3
7	Welcome parents’ opinions	2
7	Wholeday education	2
9	Christian education is the corner stone of good behaviour	1
9	Extra-curricular activities are attractive to the child	1
9	Parent was the graduate of SC	1

Table 6.15 Reasons of choice for the top three important factors

16 respondents indicated that they highly regarded the importance of “discipline” education which they considered would influence the child’s personality development as well as their academic performance in school.

“Since moral standard is low in Hong Kong, it is important to have strict discipline in school, to help children establish correct concepts while young.”

(Respondent SC25)

“School discipline affects the learning attitude of children. In fact, children’s academic development is second in importance compared to behaviours and attitudes.” (Respondent SC242)

The second highest ranking is “teacher qualities” which 11 respondents reported to be very important in ensuring a caring and supportive environment for healthy child development.

“Good communication with my child’s school is important. Maintaining good relationships with teachers is an effective means to it.” (Respondent SC195)

“Teachers have to consider the opinions of parents. Effective teacher-parent communication helps to maintain the emotional well-being of my child.” (Respondent SC177)

The third highest ranking is “good academic standards” as mentioned by nine respondents. All of these respondents related “good academic standards” to “good discipline” and “caring teachers”. They would not consider that “academic standards” can be independent of “good discipline” and “caring teachers”.

“Friendly teachers and academic development are equally important. These two factors are affecting each other.” (Respondent SC276)

Seven respondents said that the excellent physical environment of a school is conducive to learning. Other factors of choice as listed in Table 6.15 above are relatively unimportant in terms of their low frequency counts.

Background reasons for the substantial behavioural changes after enrolment in a private school (Appendix C. Question 6 of Section 2)

Interviewees have reported positive behavioural changes of their children in Table 6.7.

The most noticeable changes are:

- (i) better behaviour in school;
- (ii) better academic performance;
- (iii) better learning motivation.

Respondents have attributed their children’s positive changes to the quality of educational effectiveness in SC, as listed in Tables 6.11, 6.12 and 6.13. Table 6.16 lists the causes of positive changes in children. Some respondents provided more than one reason.

Order of importance	Background reasons that stimulate substantial changes of children	Number of responses
1	Good educational quality in the form of positive teacher attitudes and care demonstrated.	9
2	Child is happy in school where he/she has a strong sense of belonging	4
3	More learning opportunities and more programmes in private education	3
4	Religious influence from School	2
4	Quality peer group influence	2
4	Parent did not perceive any substantial changes in child	2

Table 6.16 Background reasons for the substantial changes of children

The most frequently mentioned cause of children’s positive changes is related to “teacher quality”. Teachers of SC were found to be caring and willing to communicate

with parents. Nine respondents reported that “positive and caring teachers” are the main factors responsible for the substantial positive changes of their children.

“The positive changes are contributed by friendly teachers and a sense of belonging to the school.” (Respondent SC124)

“The positive changes are brought by the positive attitudes of teachers and the principal. A suitable amount of homework is also important. Excessive quantity of homework can affect the emotional well-being of children.” (Respondent SC177)

The second most important cause is “child’s sense of belonging to SC” where they are happy. Responses related to “child’s happiness and sense of belonging” are represented by the following quote.

“My child’s strong sense of belonging to SC helps him to do well in everything.” (Respondent SC124)

Influence from “religious education” and “quality peer group” are also contributory factors in the substantial positive changes in the children of SC, as highlighted by two respondents each.

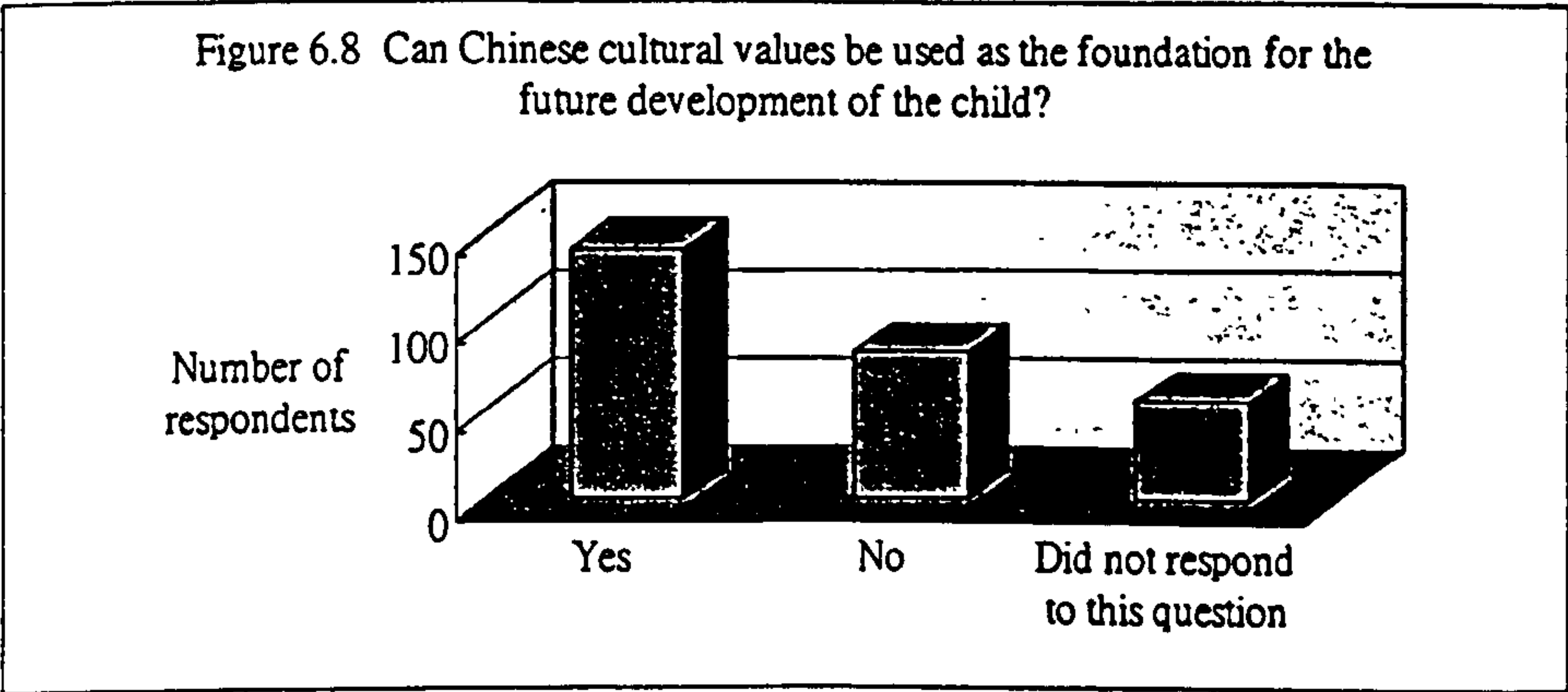
“The positive changes are due to the attachment of peer groups who are more disciplined. The quality of children is better in private schools.” (Respondent SC253)

One busy mother had no time to communicate with her child, and she found no positive or negative change in her child after enrolment in SC (Table 6.16). Hence, she was not aware of the changes. One other respondent who could not locate any positive change in her child indicated that she was not pleased with the discipline education in SC where she perceived that school rules are too lenient. She reported that there were negative changes in her child’s behaviour after enrolment.

“The teachers in SC are too kind and the rules are too loose. As a result, the behaviour of my child has worsened.” (Respondent SC276)

Responses to Question 6 of Section 2 (Appendix C) have established that “teacher attitudes” are responsible for the majority of children’s positive changes. SC children’s strong sense of belonging to the school encourages them to make improvement in different areas. The comprehensive activities and programmes available in SC are also incentives for children to initiate positive changes.

Influence of Chinese cultural values on child development and parental choice (Appendix B, Question 4.1, 4.2; and Appendix C, Question 7 of Section 2)



Findings from the questionnaire survey

Findings from Question 4.1 of the questionnaire survey (Appendix B) indicate that 141 respondents (50%) reported the positive influences of Chinese cultural values on the development of the children. 83 respondents (30%) reported no influence. The other 56 respondents (20%) could not provide an answer.

In Question 4.2 of the questionnaire survey (Appendix B), respondents were asked to indicate their perceived Chinese cultural values that are contributing to positive child development. Some respondents left this section blank while some put in theoretical teachings of Confucius (551-479 B.C.), including “Hau (filial piety)” and “Yan (Kindness)”, etc.

Findings from the telephone interviews

Parent respondents’ perceived effect of Chinese cultural values on child development was further explored during in-depth telephone interviews. They were asked to explain why they considered Chinese cultural influences to be significant or insignificant in relation to their responses to Question 4.1 and 4.2 (Appendix B). Some respondents provided answers to more than one category, as listed in Table 6.17.

Order of importance	Impact of Chinese cultural values in child development	Number of responses
1	Perceived strong impact from Chinese cultural values on child development	11
2	Perceived religious education influence more powerful than the influence from Chinese cultural values	6
3	Perceived implicit influence from Chinese cultural values.	4
4	Perceived no influence from Chinese cultural values	1

Table 6.17 The impact of Chinese cultural values in child development

As shown in Table 6.17, 11 respondents agreed that Chinese cultural values are influential in child development.

“Chinese cultural values are passed on to children through parents when they are young, through teachers when they are older, through friends when they become teenagers.” (Respondent SC124)

Six respondents said that the influence from religious education is more powerful than the impact of Chinese cultural values. This finding also supports the reason for the choice of religious education by parents:

“Chinese culture is difficult to interpret and understand. The impacts from family and school are the same. Christian education is more effective than Chinese culture in child development.” (Respondent SC253)

Four respondents perceived implicit influence from Chinese cultural values, while all respondents said that role-modeling from parents is operating effectively in the child’s daily interaction with family members.

“Chinese cultural values are passed on to children through parental implicit teaching in the form of role-modeling in life.” (Respondent SC204)

The above qualitative responses have established that most respondents perceived the impact of Chinese cultural values on child development although some considered the influence of religious education more powerful.

Documentary Analysis

The following documents were collected from SC and analyzed to compare the views of SC School with those of their parents, to find out whether or not the implemented policies or activities are in line with the expressed parental school choice preferences:

- (a) 90th Anniversary Bulletin (1987)
- (b) 100th Anniversary Bulletin (1997)
- (c) SC Quarterly Newsletters (1999;2000), 4 issues
- (d) SC Parent-teacher Association Quarterly Newsletters (1998; 1999; 2000), 10 issues

The sampling method is to collect a variety of documents and to focus on selected aspects of SC that are related to parental choice. The counts of “a semantic unit” (Robson, 1993:238) in the 90th and 100th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin (1987; 1997) will be the number of pages that infer the existence of each category of school choice factors under investigation. The recording unit in the SC Quarterly Newsletters (1999; 2000) and SC Parent-teacher Association Quarterly Newsletters (1998; 1999; 2000) will be the number of articles that are related to the school choice factors. The school choice factors are extended to the following categories for content analysis.

1. education effectiveness (Appendix C Question 2),
2. chance of being admitted to popular secondary schools (Appendix B Question 2.1.4 & 2.1.5; Appendix C Question 3),
3. academic performance of students (Appendix B Question 2.1.1, 3.1.4),
4. student behaviour as influenced by school culture and discipline (Appendix B Question 2.1.8, 3.1.5, 3.1.6, 3.1.7, 3.1.9),
5. availability of extra-curricular activities (Appendix B Question 2.1.2, 3.1.8),
6. teacher attitudes and relationship with parents (Appendix B Question 2.1.6, 2.1.10, 2.1.15),

- 7. religious goals (Appendix B Question 2.1.7)
- 8. other factors as listed in the survey questionnaire (Appendix B 2.1),
- 9. aspects related to Chinese cultural values and child development (Appendix B Question 4.1, 4.2; Appendix C Question 7).

The semantic unit will again be divided into “the manifest items” and “the latent items” for analyses that are comparable to the data obtained from the documents of NY and SC.

Table 6.18 shows the frequency counts of the different measuring units, as they appeared in the 90th and 100th Anniversary Memorial Bulletins, the SC School Quarterly Newsletters, and the SC Parent-teacher Association Quarterly Newsletters. The frequency counts were grouped under nine categories, consistent with Table 4.18 of the NY School documents in Chapter IV and Table 5.18 of the CK School documents in Chapter V.

Ranked order	Aspects considered essential by SC School to be relating to parental choice: order of significance (by quantity of content weightings)	SC 90 th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin N=26		SC 100 th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin N=38		SC School Quarterly Newsletters N=141		SC Parent-teacher Association Quarterly Newsletters N=79		Total Weighting
		Page unit	%	Page unit	%	Article unit	%	Article unit	%	
1	Availability of extra-curricular activities	8	30.8	6	15.9	6	4.3	30	37.9	22.3
2	Teacher attitudes and relationship with parents			10	26.3	47	33.3	23	29.1	22.2
3	Other factors as listed in the major questionnaire survey	*6	23.1	#6	15.9	+43	30.5	@9	11.4	20.2
4	Religious goals	6	23.1	8	21.1	22	15.6	7	8.9	17.1
5	Student behaviour as influenced by school culture and discipline	2	7.7	1	2.6	15	10.6	4	5.1	6.4
6	Academic performance of students	2	7.7	3	7.9	6	4.3	--	--	5.0
7	Education effectiveness	--		3	7.9	2	1.4	6	7.6	4.2
8	Chance of being admitted to popular secondary schools	2	7.7	1	2.6	--	--	--	--	2.6
9	Aspects as related to Chinese cultural values and child development					--	--			0

Table 6.18
Assessment of aspects considered essential by SC School to be relating to parental choice through content analysis of 4 types of documents

* with 6 page units on “history of SC”

including 2 page units on services available, 3 page units on physical environment,

1 page unit on history of SC

+ with 43 article units on “physical environment and facilities”

@ with 9 article units on “physical environment and facilities”

The content analysis generates the following findings. In the SC 90th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin, the total page unit count is only 26 even though there are 112 pages which have excluded the cover and back pages. Irrelevant page units were not counted. These include the sections on advertisements, content page, photographs of the School Management Board Members, photographs of teachers and students, records of important events, subject descriptions, articles and paintings of teachers and students. “Availability of extra-curricular activities” ranks first, occupying 8 page units (30.8%) of total relevant page units of 26. “Religious goals” and “history of SC” both rank second and constitute 6 page units (23.1%) of total. The other three factors are not prominent since each of them constitutes only 2 page units (7.7%).

In the SC 100th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin, there is a total of only 38 relevant page units out of the 96 pages which have excluded the cover and back pages. Irrelevant page units, consistent with the SC 90th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin, were again not counted. “Teacher attitudes and relationship with parents” ranks the highest, with 10 page units (26.3%). It was followed by “religious goals” with 8 page units (21.1%). “Availability of extra-curricular activities” and “other factors as listed in the major questionnaire survey” rank third with 6 page units each (15.9%). These “other factors” with 15.9% weighting have included “services available”, “physical environment” and “history of SC” (Table 6.12). The weighting of other unit categories are much lower and are considered less important.

In the SC Quarterly Newsletters (1999;2000), the total article count is 141. Two school choice factors stand out as important ones. They are “teacher attitudes and relationship with parents” and “physical environment”. The former constitutes 47 article unit counts (33.3%), and the latter constitutes 43 article counts (30.5%). The third most

important category related to school choice is “religious goals” which occupies 22 article units (15.6%). “Student behaviour as influenced by school culture and discipline” constitutes 15 article units (10.6%) and thus ranks fourth. Other category units are insignificant since the percentage is very low compared to the previous four.

The total article unit count in the SC Parent-teacher Association Quarterly Newsletters (1998; 1999; 2000) is 79. “Availability of extra-curricular activities” ranks the highest, with 30 article units (37.9%). However, “extra-curricular activities” mentioned in these articles are those for parents, students and their teachers since they were organized for enhancing parent-teacher relationships. “Teacher attitude and relationship with parents” ranks second, with 23 article unit counts (29.1%). The third highest percentage is “physical environment”, with 9 article units (11.4%).

Findings from the 100th Anniversary Bulletin (1997), the SC Quarterly Newsletters (1999;2000) and the SC Parent-teacher Association Quarterly Newsletters (1998; 1999; 2000) are similar. A close examination of the nature of each category under investigation indicates that some of the elements in the documents are “manifest items” while some are “latent items” only. An example of a “manifest item” would be the use of the SC motto to achieve “religious goals”. Another example of a “manifest item” is the announcement of SC’s Secondary School Place Allocation result in the documents which inform the public of its efforts on students’ academic performance. Consistent with the findings from NY and CK, “extra-curricular activities” are “latent items” in the SC documents which SC used to promote itself to attract parental choice.

Disregarding the overall top ranking by “availability of extra-curricular activities” (constitutes 22.2 % of total) for the reason mentioned above, “teacher attitude and

relationship with parents” ranks the highest (Table 6.18). This finding is consistent with the qualitative findings from telephone interviews in relation to parental choice of private education for their children (Tables 6.6, 6.11, 6.12, 6.15 and 6.16). Parent respondents rated highly the importance of having “friendly and caring teachers” and related their children’s academic success and positive behavioural changes to their positive attitudes. Table 6.12 has shown that the majority of respondents defined “educational effectiveness” with reference to “teacher attitudes”.

“Physical environment” is the next most important element after “teacher attitudes and relationship with parents” (Table 6.18). This finding is also closely related to the qualitative finding as shown in Table 6.15 where this factor ranked fourth among all other reasons for parental choice of SC. Achieving “religious goals” was not the major reason of choice for parents. However, SC attempted to make use of its published documents to meet this objective. The comparatively high ranking of “religious aspects” in SC documents (ranked fourth) has reflected its effort to make effective use of “latent items” for its school mission of preaching the gospel to the parents and the public.

It was also noted that the focused elements, as observed from the SC 90th Anniversary Memorial Bulletin (1987), are different from the other three types of SC documents which are products of four consecutive years from 1997 to 2000. The deviation might be attributed to the influence of two different management styles in the two different periods.

An overview of the documentary analysis suggests that the findings are consistent with those collected from the quantitative questionnaire survey and the qualitative telephone

interviews. The school choice decision of SC parents still rests with their perception of SC's ability in enhancing students' "academic standards" through "quality teachers" and by the efficient management of "discipline education", as indicated in Table 6.6

Summary

The findings to the research questions are presented in this chapter with reference to SC. The findings suggest that five major factors are considered essential by SC School to be relating to parental choice of SC. They include "quality of academic standard", "good parent-teacher/school relationship", "good discipline", "friendly and sincere teachers", and "good physical environment". The majority of parents perceived behavioural improvement in child after enrolment in SC in the survey. In the in-depth interviews, parent respondents related their child's "better behaviour in school", "improved academic performance", and "better motivation in learning" to "good discipline" and "positive and caring teachers" available in SC. Deteriorated changes in students have been perceived to be trivial, and the most noticeable deterioration is related to the efforts of SC to enhance students' academic standard. The majority of the respondents supported the positive influence of Chinese cultural values in child development while some considered religious influence more powerful. Parents perceived the effectiveness of SC being expressed in the form of positive teacher attitudes and the availability of comprehensive activities and facilities. Most parents preferred their children to study in a secondary school that uses English as the medium of instruction although some of them would leave the decision to their child to ensure that they are happy in school. The majority of parents would be willing to pay a tuition fee for quality education if it is unavailable in the public school place allocated to their child. Chinese cultural values are considered by most respondents to be effective in helping children to develop positive characteristics even though some of them consider

religious education more influential in child development. Documentary analysis of SC documents also shows that SC placed a heavy emphasis on religious education to achieve its religious goals. These findings will be contrasted with those from the other two case studies in Chapter VII before conclusions are drawn.

Chapter VII

Analysis

Introduction

Respondents were contacted through surveys from February to April 1998, and some of these respondents were interviewed for in-depth explanation of their response in the following six months. Data obtained from the surveys and the interviews were analysed and presented with close reference to the four research questions listed in Chapter I. This chapter presents a comparative analysis of the three case schools linked to previous empirical research.

Research Question : What are the factors that affect Chinese parental decisions to enrol their children in private primary schools? Why are these factors important in influencing parental choice?

Unique qualities in NY, CK and SC

Rofes (1992:503) considered that “choice” means different things to different people. The Education Commission Report No.7 (1997:46) pointed out that “choice” is related to a number of factors including funding sources or religious backgrounds. For parents of NY, CK and SC, “choice” is referred to as their decision to select a primary school that falls into the category of “private”, “non-profit”, and “Christian”. When parents were asked for the explanation of their school choice factors, they expressed their preference for the “flexibility” in private schools and the “religious impacts” they wish to have on their child (Tables 4.11,5.11,6.11). Hirschhoff (1986:42-43) also claimed varieties of instructional methods and “religious beliefs” available in private schools to be attractive to parents. Raywid (1995:309) and Wong (1997:85) linked

“choice” to a combination of school qualities such as “curriculum” or “organizational features”, etc. In the context of NY, CK and SC, each of these three schools has its own characteristics which lead to differences or similarities that ultimately help to form a school culture which attracts the choice of a particular parent group.

Private education as an alternative for dissatisfaction with the “meritocracy” and “parentocracy” in the public allocation system

The findings of the current study differ from the “cream-skimming hypothesis” of Smith and Meier (1995) to a certain extent. Their “cream-skimming hypothesis” states that, as private schools take the students with the best chance of academic success, public school performance suffers. The results of Smith and Meier (1995) also indicate that private schools attract parents by offering religious services and racial segregation. Results of the current study show that private schools take students who cannot obtain a place in a perceived high quality public school. They “skim” less popular public schools and provide an alternative for parents who are dissatisfied with the public school allocation system. To attract this group of dissatisfied parents, private schools offer a distinctive school culture with good discipline, caring teachers and high academic standards.

The similarities and variations between the findings of Smith and Meier (1995) and the current study are both cultural and organizational. Even though parental perceptions of private education are universal, with the general focus on child’s discipline education and academic performance, Chinese parents tend to be influenced by their cultural values (Tables 4.17, 5.17 and 6.17). While some parents who send their children to private schools in Hong Kong look for religious education, others intend to segregate their children from those who come from financially

disadvantaged families or immigrant families who cannot afford to pay a tuition fee in private schools.

Lauder and Hughes (1999:29) indicate that school choice pushes to create “a mechanism of exclusion that shifts from “meritocracy” to “parentocracy”. With the implementation of the primary one admission policies in public primary schools in Hong Kong (Education Department, 1998b:6), the government policy permits only 35% of the discretionary primary one places in a given public school to be given to applicant children residing beyond the school catchment area. A large proportion of parents were not given the right to choose a school located outside their residential catchment area because of the limited number of primary one places in popular primary schools. Some of the students of NY, CK and SC who were admitted to these private schools in primary one were inevitably losers in the public allocation system. Having been allocated a primary one place in a school not of their choice, their parents have opted to exercise the right of choosing a school not located within their residential area by paying a tuition fee. “Unsatisfactory allocation of primary one place in the public school sector” was considered a major reason of parents for choosing private education for their children. It was ranked fifth in NY, second in CK and first in SC in their order of importance (Tables 4.11, 5.11 and 6.11). While either “meritocracy” or “parentocracy” permits some Hong Kong children to be admitted to their schools of choice in the public system, some parents secure a public place for their child by using “pseudo-accommodation” (Gorard, 1999:29) in their preferred catchment area. Those NY, CK and SC students who are unable to depend on “meritocracy” or “parentocracy” to secure a public place in the allocation system have to turn to private education. Gorard (1999:29) perceives such exclusion practice in the public system to be “educational inequalities”, since they exclude

children whose families do not have the social or cultural background to secure a place through “meritocracy” or “parentocracy”. Even though students of NY, CK and SC did not succeed in securing a public place through “meritocracy” or “parentocracy” in the system, their parents managed to find a substitute school in the private sector which requires financial commitment. “Educational inequalities” continue to exist among students whose parents do not have the finance to pay for private education.

The choice of course content, teaching methods and teacher types

Wong (1997:85) extends “choice” to further detailed characteristics of a school such as course content, teaching methods or teacher types. As far as course content and language of instruction are concerned, NY and SC choose to use both Chinese and English textbooks for their Mathematic subject, use English textbooks for their Science subject, and hire native speakers of English for their oral lessons. Findings from the interviews reported that the majority of parent respondents expressed their preference for their child to be admitted to a secondary school that uses English as the medium of instruction. 10 out of 18 from NY, 10 out of 21 from CK and 14 out of 20 from SC reported their preference. Both NY and SC Schools adopt a bi-lingual approach in their medium of instruction in their own schools. On the other hand, CK has the historic practice of using Chinese as their medium of instruction in all subjects since the School strongly emphasizes the mother language approach in all subjects. Despite CK’s emphasis on Chinese, the majority of parents prefer their child to be admitted to a secondary school that uses English as the medium of instruction. The survey findings suggest that “special programmes not available in other schools”, “school policies” and “teacher qualities” are also attractions to parents (Tables 4.6, 5.6, 6.6). Findings from the follow-up interviews also demonstrate that parents are

attracted to “smaller class size”, “more programmes”, “religious components”, as postulated by Hirschhoff (1986) or “subject matters that meet children’s needs”, as postulated by West (1994) (Tables 4.11, 5.11, 6.11, 4.12, 5.12, 6.12, 4.15, 5.15, 6.15). Little was mentioned about course content or teaching methods in the content analysis of documents from NY, CK and SC. Marketing of these two characteristics in their school prospectuses may therefore be useful, when course content, teaching methods and teacher types are parents’ expressed concerns.

“Choice” for obtaining positive peer influence

On the other hand, “choice” is defined by Smith and Meier (1995), Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998), Gewirtz et al. (1995) as a strategy to discriminate against ‘the less able’, ‘the less motivated’ and ‘the working class’ through the “cream-skimming hypothesis”. In the survey, parental perception of their child’s substantial behavioural improvement was explicit (Tables 4.7, 5.7, 6.7) when their attention is drawn to peer influence. “Better relationship with friends in school” was ranked top in NY, third in CK and fifth in SC when compared to all other areas of improvement. Its high ranking in the survey is consistent with its high ranking in the interviews (Tables 4.15, 5.15, 6.15) where parents emphasized that “better behaviour in school” was linked to positive peer influence. Though the issue of “cream-skimming” was not explicitly mentioned in the interviews of the three case schools, parents’ concern about “peer influence” consistently emerged from their responses (Tables 4.15, 5.15, 6.15, 4.16, 5.16 and 6.16). “Peer influence and discipline related factors” was ranked second in order of importance in NY and most important in both CK and SC (Tables 4.15, 5.15, 6.15). The issue of “peer influence” is, in one way or another, connected to the family “socio-economic status” when support provided by “middle class” or “privileged” parents (Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998:116) is likely to be more than

those provided by “working class” or “frustrated” and “disconnected” groups (Gorard, 1997:52-53). Parental preference for segregation, whether in ‘student ability’ or in ‘social class’, is likely to be a contributing factor in school choice decision for admission to fee paying schools such as NY, CK and SC.

“Choice” for matching with the needs of children

The common theme of “choice”, as suggested by Johnson (1990:95); Sauter (1994:32); Smedley (1995:97), Forbes (1996:25) and the Education Commission Report No.7 (Education Department, 1997a:46), indicates that the needs of children are crucial to “choice” and their needs determine the nature of parental choice factors. West-Burnham (1992a), Harvey and Busher (1996), West (1994), Horine (1995), Schargel (1997), Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998) also consider “needs” to be an important school choice factor. West-Burnham (1992a:34) indicates that meeting parents’ expectation is “the hallmark of quality”. His discourse on “quality” (1994:171) is linked to “meeting stated needs, requirements and standards”. Arnold and Fisher (1996:118-133) state that “sensitively serving and satisfying human needs” is an important concept in marketing. Harvey and Busher (1996:29) highlight the necessity to identify the different needs and wants of children and their parents “to attract and keep clients”. They also emphasize the “commitment to meeting the needs of parents and students with a high quality product”. West (1994:116) also considers meeting the child’s needs/desires to be important in parental school choice behaviours. Horine (1995:174) has highly valued the satisfaction level of parents towards “quality” of the school. Schargel (1997:210) reports that needs in the form of “parental involvement” helps to have a positive turnaround in a New York School. Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:650) consider meeting a child’s needs to be a driving force that encourages schools to be more responsive to parental

preferences. They also suggest meeting consumer needs and preferences to help encourage schools to perform better.

Major needs of parents and their children are found to be including “child’s academic competence”, “discipline” and “positive staff attitude” (Tables 4.6, 5.6, 6.6), when parents consider these elements capable of helping their children to succeed. They were ranked top. “Needs” was frequently mentioned by parent respondents to be important in the in-depth interviews (Tables 4.11, 4.12, 5.11, 5.12, 6.11, 6.12). The factor “meeting the particular needs of my child” was referring to individualized elements but not the key ones that affect children in general. It was ranked 13th in NY, 14th in CK, and 11th in SC on the school choice list in the survey (Tables 4.6, 5.6, 6.6). The discrepancy between “major needs” and “particular needs” was obviously due to the detailed breakdown of the needs of parents and their children in the survey when there are eighteen types of needs which are also school choice factors. In the in-depth interviews, the major parental needs remain to be including “child’s academic competence”, “discipline” and “positive staff attitude” (Tables 4.11, 5.11, 6.11, 4.12, 5.12, 6.12) and were again ranked top. Unspecified needs are generalized into one item under the category of “parental needs” or “needs of students” in Tables 4.11, 5.11, 6.11, 4.12, 5.12, 6.12 and the absolute number of responses under this category was also low. Figures from the survey and the interviews are supporting each other.

School missions of NY, CK and SC in religion, academic competence and good discipline

Pardey (1991), Chubb (1995), and Harvey and Busher (1996) suggest that the mission of educational organizations shape their goals and directions which affect every aspect

of their performance, including teachers' qualities and students' achievements. In this sense, the variations in organizational missions lead to the emergence of different school types or school cultures that put different weightings on various aspects of school behaviour. These can be classified into the more specific "instrumental-academic" and "intrinsic-personal/social value perspective" aspects suggested by Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998). Parental choice desires in this study have been found to be reflective of their search for their child's "instrumental-academic" and behavioural outcomes, which also mirror the school cultures of NY, CK and SC.

One common goal among NY, CK and SC is the promotion of the religious ethos as well as their common interest in enhancing students' behavioural and academic performance. Although "religious belief" (Appendix B, Question 2.1.7) did not stand out as a dominating choice factor in the survey (ranked 8th, 11th and 12th in order of importance), it was mentioned in the interviews by a number of parent respondents to be a factor of consideration (Tables 4.11, 6.11, 5.12, 6.12, 4.15, 5.15, 6.15, 4.16, 5.16, 6.16). The comparatively low ranking of religious ethos, by parents of NY, CK and SC, in the survey and the interviews, are consistent with each other. Content analysis that is used to assess whether the performance and implementations of NY, CK and SC Schools are in line with parents' expressed preferences indicates that the three case schools placed heavier emphasis on "religious goals". It was ranked second in CK, third in NY and fourth in SC as far as their order of significance by quantity of weighting is concerned (Tables 4.18, 5.18 and 6.18). The high ranking of religious ethos in the documents, despite its low ranking in the survey and the interviews, suggests that NY, CK and SC are proactive in their evangelistic mission even though parents did not express their strong preference towards religious education.

The school mission of enhancing students' "academic performance" could also be located in the study. This aspect was ranked first by parent respondents in SC, second in CK and third in NY (Tables 6.6, 5.6 and 4.6) in the survey. In the follow-up interviews, it was ranked second in CK and third in NY and SC, when parent respondents were asked to name the top three reasons of choosing these schools. The slight variations in the ranking of "academic performance" demonstrate that findings from the survey and the interviews are generally consistent. The semantic unit frequency count on "academic performance of students", in the documentary analysis, was ranked second in NY, fourth in CK and sixth in SC (Tables 4.18, 5.18 and 6.18). These discrepancies, between the findings from the survey/interviews and the findings from the documentary analysis, suggest that NY, CK and SC might need to promote their effectiveness in "academic performance" in their future publication of school prospectuses or promotion publications, in order to meet with parental expressed preferences. Despite these discrepancies, "academic performance" has been found to be one major component in the school mission of the three schools.

The mission of NY, CK and SC to maintain good discipline is supported by the high ranking of "good discipline" in Tables 4.6, 5.6 and 6.6. This aspect was ranked first in NY and CK and third in SC in the survey. In the interviews, it was ranked second in NY and first in both CK and SC (Tables 4.15, 5.15, 6.15) when parents were asked to name the top three reasons for their choice of NY, CK and SC. The majority of respondents indicated that "discipline" which they considered closely associated with "peer influence" was a key factor of choice. Findings from the survey and interviews are supporting each other. The semantic unit frequency count on "student behaviours as influenced by school culture and discipline", in the documentary

analysis, was ranked sixth in NY, third in CK and fifth in SC. The discrepancies between findings from the survey/interview and findings from the documentary analysis again suggest that NY, CK and SC might need to highlight their success in discipline education when parents have explicitly indicated their preference for excellence in student behaviours.

Chinese cultural influence in NY, CK and SC

The teachings of Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.) and the findings of Shek (1996), Shek and Chan (1999) have demonstrated the significant role of Chinese cultures in educational choices among Chinese people. In the survey, 61% of parent respondents in both NY and CK and 50% in SC indicated that they believed Chinese cultural values are capable of laying the foundation for the future development of their children. In the interviews, 10 interviewees out of 18 in NY, 11 out of 21 in CK, and 11 out of 20 in SC reported that they perceived strong impact from Chinese cultural values on child development. Findings from the survey and interviews are consistent, with the majority of respondents stating that Chinese cultural influence plays an important role in child development. In the documentary analysis, the semantic unit frequency count on “aspects as related to Chinese cultural values and child development” in CK (ranked fifth in Table 5.18) is comparatively much higher than in NY and SC (ranked eighth and ninth in Tables 4.18 and 6.18). The dedication of CK to the enhancement of Chinese culture in child development is distinguishable from the other two case studies.

The relationship between family demographics and private school choice

Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:111) indicate that the consequences of devolution and choice for effectiveness, efficiency and equity in the school system have led to

changes “in the student composition” and “in the nature of provision on offer” which are moving towards “marketized” and “privatized” forms. Lauder and Hughes (1999:31) claim that children with similar backgrounds are capable of being admitted to popular schools. Gorard and Fitz (1998:365) investigated the relationship between school choice and the “social” and “cultural” capital that are unfairly distributed in society. There is a general consensus among these researchers that student admission that is tied to “social class, gender and ethnicity” brings about inequalities. Since NY, CK and SC are fee-paying schools where “devolution” and “choice” are inevitable, it is assumed that the demographic characteristics of parent respondents have led to the student composition that comes from more affluent families.

The survey findings from the three case schools suggest that the majority of parent respondents have a family income of approximately between HK \$16,667 and HK \$33,333 per month which is only slightly higher than the average family income of the Hong Kong population (Hong Kong Statistics Department, 1999). The largest group of these parent respondents has reached only secondary school level. “Privileged” “middle class” (Gewirtz and Ball, 1995, quoted in Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998:116-117), who are capable of making the schools appear successful by providing their children with greater financial and cultural support (Lauder and Hughes, 1999:121-128), are unlikely to be applicable to parents of NY, CK and SC. Parental decision to enrol their child in a private fee-paying school is largely due to their dissatisfaction of the Primary One Admission allocation result (Education Department, 1998b) when 70% of NY students, 74% of CK students, and 58% of SC students were admitted to a private school at their primary one level (Figures 4.4, 5.4, 6.4). One other reason for the choice of a fee-paying school is probably prompted by their love towards their single child in the family. Parents are more likely to spend educational

investment on their single child, when findings report that there are greater numbers of single child in the families of NY, CK and SC students than the average Hong Kong families. 68%, 71%, 66% of parents have a single child in their families (Figures 4.1, 5.1, 6.1). The Chinese tradition of placing more educational investment on male descendents is assumed to be one other major reason for sending their children to a fee-paying school, when the number of boys in NY and SC is much larger than the number of girls (57% and 55% in Figures 4.2 and 6.2). The ratio of boys and girls in CK cannot be used for analysis in this study since very few parents are willing to send their sons to a primary school that is linked to a feeder secondary school which admits only girl students (Figure 5.2).

Major choice factors in relation to private education effectiveness, reasons of choice and impact on behavioural changes

Significant research has been conducted to find out about parental views on schools (Cheung, 1993; Buttrum, 1994; Sauter, 1994; Fung, 1996; Tsang, 1998; Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998). Parental choice factors can be related to a variety of school backgrounds, cultures, behaviour or performance. The different backgrounds of NY, CK and SC explain the differences in the ranking of the school choice factors in this study.

“Academic performance” has been considered to be one major school choice factor in the studies of Cheung (1993), Buttrum (1994), Sauter (1994), West (1994), Horine (1995), Fung (1996), Harvey (1996), Smedley (1997), Tsang (1998), Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998). The seven Ps in marketing education to students and their parents named “product” and “physical evidence” as two of the ingredients in the “marketing mix” (McCarthy, 1981; Rushton and Carson, 1985; Doyle, 1994; Borden,

1965; Harvey and Busher, 1996). In this study, “academic performance” of students is considered the “product” of a school. Students’ scores in public examinations or school allocation results are considered “physical evidence” that demonstrates success of a school. For centuries in the olden days of China, academic excellence was the only requirement to win a government post of high rank. “Academic performance” is also perceived by parents of the three case schools to be a major choice factor in both the survey and the interviews. Slight variance in their preference order is probably due to different background reasons. Both NY and CK are affiliated with a feeder secondary school in the public sector. Primary six graduates who have reached the academic banding of one to three (out of the five bands) in the Secondary School Place Allocation Aptitude Test (Education Department, 1998a) could be promoted directly to their feeder secondary schools. Since almost 100% of the NY and CK students are eligible for the feeder secondary school places, parents of NY and CK are not faced with the uncertainty of unsatisfactory secondary school place allocation of their children. It is possible that parents of NY and CK become more focused on discipline education of their children (parents of both NY and CK ranked “good discipline” as the most important school choice factor) when they do not have to spend extra effort in the search for a satisfactory secondary school place. For graduates of SC, they are not guaranteed any satisfactory secondary school place allocation because of the absence of a feeder scheme system. Parents of SC are therefore comparatively more concerned with the academic standard of their children. It is highly likely that parents of SC ranked “the quality of academic standard” at the top of their school choice priority list, in the survey, because of their concern about the secondary school place allocation result. In the interviews, when asked about the top three reasons for the choice of CK, 19 out of 21 parent respondents named “academic performance” being one of the three most important factors (Table 5.15).

Both NY and SC also named this factor being one of the three key reasons for the choice (Tables 4.15, 6.15). Findings from the survey and the interviews in relation to “academic performance” agree with each other.

“Discipline” is another major school choice factor in the studies of Cheung (1993), Buttrum (1994), Sauter (1994), West (1994), Fung (1996), Tsang (1998), Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998). In the seven Ps of the “marketing mix” (McCarthy, 1981; Rushton and Carson, 1985; Doyle, 1994; Borden, 1965; Harvey and Busher, 1996), the behavioural changes of students after attending a school for a reasonably long period of time are considered to be the “products” or “physical evidence” of the education outcome. Behavioural changes are the “products” of “discipline” which was ranked top in the survey, in both NY and CK (Tables 4.6, 5.6). It was ranked third in SC (Table 6.6). When CK parents were asked, in the interviews, why they chose private education for their children, they placed “discipline” on the top of their list again. This aspect was linked to “private education effectiveness” in Tables 4.12, 5.12 and 6.12 and were on the top three. As indicated earlier, both CK and SC respondents ranked “discipline” being the most important factor in school choice when they were asked to name three reasons (Tables 4.15, 5.15, 6.15). “Discipline” was perceived to be closely associated with “peer influence” when respondents discussed this aspect with the researcher. There were no discrepancies between findings from the survey and the interviews as far as “discipline” is concerned.

“Friendly and sincere teachers” is perceived to be capable of influencing a child’s learning attitude, behaviours as well as emotional well-being in the research conducted by Buttrum (1994), Sauter (1994), Fung (1996), Tsang (1998), Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998). Cowell (1984) postulates that “people” and “process” are

the two Ps out of the three key elements in the “marketing mix”. In this study, “teachers” should fall into the category of “people” and the way they relate to students should fall into the category of “process”. Fung (1996:45) reported that “teacher quality” and “teacher-student relation” are decisive criteria of school choice. Tsang (1998:51,96,117,121) also states that “teacher-student relation” is one major contributing school choice factor. The “intrinsic-personal/social value perspective” of Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:650) claimed that the quality of affective support provided to the child would be influenced by the child-teacher interactions. In the survey and the interviews, parents of NY, CK and SC considered this factor almost equally important when compared to “academic performance” and “discipline”. It was ranked second in importance in NY, among all parental choice factors, third in CK and fourth in SC, in the survey. In the interviews, the largest portion of NY parent respondents (9 out of 18 interviewees) named “positive teacher attitude” being most important when they were asked why they chose private education for their children (Table 4.11). It was third in importance in SC and fourth in CK as far as the number of responses that referred to this factor are calculated. When referring to “education effectiveness”, parent respondents of both CK and SC ranked “positive teacher attitudes” at the top of the list (with 11 responses from both CK and SC, as indicated in Tables 5.12, 6.12). The same finding was again located when respondents were asked to name the top three reasons for choosing NY, CK and SC. The majority of respondents name “positive teacher attitude” being most important (Tables 4.15, 5.15, 6.15). Child’s behavioural improvements were also related to this aspect when parent respondents were asked about the background reasons for the substantial changes of children (Table 4.16, 5.16, 6.16). Findings from both the survey and the interviews are supporting each other.

The following findings indicate the order of the major concerns of all sample parents, in the survey, before enrolling their children in the current school. The weighted rankings of the factors from the survey, as indicated in Chapter III, are prioritized in Table 7.1.

Question No.	Summary of Factors	Weighted Rankings		
		NY	CK	SC
2.1.8	Good discipline	1	1	3
2.1.1	Quality of academic standard	3	2	1
2.1.6	Friendly and sincere teachers	2	3	4
2.1.10	Good relationship with school and teachers	4	6	2
2.1.5	Track record in secondary school place allocation	5	5	6
2.1.9	Good physical environment	7	8	5
2.1.4	Linked to a well-known secondary school	10	4	9

Table 7.1 Weighted Rankings of Factors Influencing Parental Choice of Current School

(Note : The highest ranking is 1, followed by the next highest ranking 2,etc.)
(Remark on “Weighted Ranking” Very important factor = weighting of 5
Important factor = weighting of 4
Fairly important factor = weighting of 3
Not important factor = weighting of 2
Unimportant factor = weighting of 1)

As listed in Table 7.1, parents were more concerned with school discipline, academic standard and attitudes of teachers (sincerity and caring) than other factors in their school choice decision.

School fee and socio-economic segregation in relation to choice

Using the seven Ps concept in the education market (McCarthy, 1981; Doyle, 1994), “price” is referred to as the pricing of school fee. Harvey and Busher (1996:17, 27) consider that “price” affects choice but a lower rate might not be attractive to customers. They further point out that pricing can be used by parents for social segregation in a school setting. NY, CK and SC have chosen to establish a tuition

fee scale that is in the middle range since they are all non profit making schools, and their Christian mission does not encourage social segregation by a fee scale on the high end. Even if school fee is not applicable in the state-run institutions, research on school choice indicates that social segregation still exists in the over-subscribed schools. Lauder and Hughes (1999:37-43) comment that social and educational inequalities exist to the advantage of “those more privileged”. Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:47,111) state that devolution and choice in education are closely linked to “equity” and “social justice”. Gorard (1999:29) indicates that over-subscribed schools tended to admit students with higher mean socio-economic status and higher levels of attainment. It is prominent that pricing of school fee and a school’s degree of popularity are associated with the socio-economic status of families. It is probably because the school fee pricing of NY, CK and SC is not on the high end and all of the three schools are over-subscribed, the majority of parent respondents indicate that they were willing to pay a tuition fee at a rate as much as they can afford (13 out of 18 respondents from NY, 17 out of 21 from CK, and 13 out of 20 from NY, as indicated in Figures 4.14 5.14, 6.14), even though the survey demographic figures indicate that their average monthly family income was only HK \$16,667- \$33,333. Only 5 parent respondents from NY, 4 from CK, and 7 in SC reported that their decision to enrol their child in a private primary school would be affected if the pricing was too high. This suggests that the pricing of school fee is capable of segregating the socio-economic backgrounds of students even if the school authority or sponsoring body does not intend to do so. Parent respondents’ concern was consistently drawn to peer group influence and the quality of education but not the pricing.

Physical location of the school campus and travelling expense in relation to choice and equity

The seven Ps concept in the education market (McCarthy, 1981; Doyle, 1994) also includes “place” and is referred to as the location and facilities of a school. Research on school choice has identified “proximity” to be one of the significant choice factors (Buttrum, 1994; Sauter, 1994; Glatter et al., 1995; Smedley, 1995:97; Harvey, 1996:36; Rouse, 1998:61; Report on Primary One Admission, 1998:8). Travelling expense for access to a preferred “place” was considered one major factor in school choice as far as equity is concerned (Lauder and Hughes, 1999:43,53; Gorard, 1999:28).

Buttrum’s (1994:49,144) study reported the need for a safer environment. Harvey (1996:36) identified the importance of “proximity to home” and “ease of access”. Rouse (1998:61) and the Hong Kong Education Department (1998b:6) claimed that the physical location of a school is a criterion of choice. “Convenience of travel” was incorporated into the parental choice criteria in the study of Woods, Bagley and Glatter (Jones, 1998:532). They have also discussed parents’ concern of ensuring that children are “comfortable and safe in the big school” (Woods, Bagley & Glatter, 1998:650-676). The favourable location of NY and CK in an area beyond the busy streets of Kowloon, and the availability of a good physical environment in SC are important factors affecting parental choice, when most schools in Hong Kong are situated in densely populated districts. Qualitative interviews in NY showed that one parent chose NY because of her child’s need to attend a school in an area where there is fresh air for helping the child to maintain good health. Documentary analysis of SC indicates that a total of 30.5% (43 article units) of the SC School Quarterly Newsletters and 11.4% (9 article units) of the SC Parent-teacher Association Quarterly Newsletters were related to the attraction by “physical environment and facilities”.

The most frequently occurring semantic unit in all of the SC documents under examination was related to the favourable “physical environment” of the School.

As far as travelling expense is concerned, Lauder and Hughes (1999:43) comment that “the costs of travel” is one of the barriers for the low income working class children to access schools outside the catchment areas. School choice has been perceived to be a privilege for people who are familiar with the school intake convention and for those who have the background or finance to pay for education related expenses (Gorard, 1999:28; Lauder and Hughes, 1999:53). On the other hand, Rouse (1998:61) and Rofes (1992:504) suggest that the freedom of parents to move wherever they want in order to attend a particular school or to travel to schools that are not located within their residential district fulfills parents’ desire to choose a preferred school.

“Proximity to school” was also one of the choice factors in the survey of this study (Tables 4.6, 5.6, 6.6) even though it was ranked 11th in NY, 9th in CK and 7th in SC. In the in-depth interviews, this factor was again ranked low when compared to the major choice factors (Tables 4.11, 5.11, 6.11, 4.15, 5.15, 6.15). Its consistent low ranking in the two research tools probably explains why principals of these schools reported that most students came from areas outside their geographical catchment areas. By referring to the Gewirtz model, quoted in Gorard (1997:52-53), students of NY, CK and SC are considered the “privileged” group with parents who are able to exercise their choice option only because they have the finance to pay for travelling expense when the school choice location is away from their residential catchment areas. Lauder and Hughes (1999:42-62) consider “school choice” which is made possible by parents’ ability to pay for school-related expenses being a reflection of inequality. The substantial number of students who travel on school buses for

schooling in NY, CK and SC has demonstrated parents' desire to exercise their right to choose by paying tuition fee and travelling expense.

Though the average socio-economic backgrounds of parents of NY, CK and SC are not on the high end, parents are willing to bear the additional expense for travelling to NY, CK and SC when the major school choice factors are attractive to parents. The issue of equity as claimed by Lauder and Hughes (1999) is still in existence in NY, CK and SC when the working class parents are unable to enrol their children in schools that require fee payment.

Promotion and marketing in relation to school choice

"Promotion" is one of the seven Ps in the "marketing mix" concept (McCarthy, 1981; Doyle, 1994). While some researchers were hostile towards the rationale of marketing (Wragg, 1993, quoted in Harvey and Busher, 1996:26), some indicate that marketing functions to "persuade" and at the same time "serve and satisfy human needs" (Arnold and Fisher, 1996). All of the three case schools have published memorial bulletins and school prospectuses or leaflets which are capable of promoting the schools to the public awareness. While findings from the survey and interviews are generally in line with each other and have revealed the school "image" or "visual identity" (Coleman, 1997:27) that parents have perceived through their interaction with staff and students of NY, CK and SC, documentary analyses that function to examine the aspects related to parental choice of schools reflect that NY, CK and SC are probably unaware of the need to promote themselves in their publications with reference to parents' expressed preferences. Substantial number of pages or articles have been found to be related to school extra-curricular activities which were ranked top in the documents of all of the three schools (Tables 4.18, 5.18, 6.18). Students'

“academic performance”, which was one of parents’ top three concerns, was ranked only second in NY, fourth in CK and sixth in SC. “Discipline” and “teacher quality” which were the two other major choice factors, as expressed by parents in the survey and interviews, were also ranked low in the documents of the three case schools. “Discipline” was ranked only sixth in NY, third in CK and fifth in SC. “Teacher quality” was ranked only fourth in NY, sixth in CK and second in SC. On the other hand, “religious aspect”, which was a factor chosen by a minority of respondents in the survey and interviews, was ranked high in the documents. It was third in NY, second in CK and fourth in SC. Its high ranking is considered an evidence that NY, CK and SC maintain their autonomy in their evangelistic mission by promoting their schools not based on the expressed preferences of parents.

Coleman (1997:9) has suggested “to identify the needs and wants of students, pupils and their parents” when marketing education, and Smedley (1995:96) also claims that the needs and wants of parents and students are crucial constituents in marketing education. Should NY, CK and SC wish to increase their attractiveness to parents and students through public documents, they need to scan their needs and wants prior to conducting marketing activities. Content analyses of the NY, CK and SC documents indicate that these schools did not market education through their publications. Should the documents be marketing media, they function only as niche marketing tools that are directed towards prospective “customers” (West-Burnham, 1992a) who are in search of Christian education for their children. Nevertheless, Smedley (1995:96) considers niche marketing effective. Harvey and Busher (1996:29-30) suggest to identify “parent niches” in the market by “descriptors”. NY’s success in enhancing students’ academic competence could probably be their marketing focus, CK’s distinctiveness in maintaining Chinese culture could be ranked

top, and SC's advantage in its physical environment could be broadly promoted to the public.

Coleman (1997:26-27) reminds administrators to be aware of competition, to build up an image, and to establish public relations with the media. NY, CK and SC are actively engaging themselves in meeting the demands of parents and their students, ensuring students' academic competence and behavioural excellence with the help of comprehensive network support from quality teachers. To establish a religious image for NY, CK and SC, these schools select Christian teachers for enhancing religious education and to publicize their unique emphasis to parents who consider this factor significant in school choice decision.

Stott and Parr (1992:22) recommend to minimize the gap between "the supposed institutional image" and "the desired one" when marketing a school. Whether or not NY, CK and SC consider the gap acceptable depends on their choice between attracting more applicants or establishing their religious image.

Relationship between the major school choice factors and 'class' issues

The enrolment of children in NY, CK and SC has demonstrated the ability of their parents to exercise choice by paying fees. As far as "school discipline" and "academic standard" are concerned, parental choice of a fee-paying private school is likely to be related to 'class' issues which are linked to the socio-economic status and education levels of parents. In the in-depth interviews, parents of NY, CK and SC have indicated their concern about the student composition of their selected school. Lauder and Hughes (1999:83) and Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:111) point out that student composition can determine a school's performance. NY, CK and SC

parents' ability to exercise choice will motivate them to become more involved in their children's education. Their relatively higher economic status also enables them to bear the additional extra-curricular training cost that supplements their children's learning. Their relatively higher educational level associated with the "economic, cultural and social capital" (Apple, 2000:315-318) enable them to provide direct support to their children in both discipline education and academic learning.

Lauder and Hughes (1999:128) claim that children attending a high socio-economic status school were found to score significantly higher in both mathematics and reading, when markets in education "polarize" school performance. The assumption is that parents of NY, CK and SC play an active role in helping to discipline their children at home and to assist their children in academic work. Relevant support provided by NY, CK and SC parents with higher socio-economic status gives their children greater chances to succeed and ultimately brings success to the schools (Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998:117). The issue raised by Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:111-125) in regard to choice is the matter of "equity" in education, as far as the relationship between student composition and school effectiveness is concerned. Students enrolled in NY, CK and SC are considered to be the "advantaged groups" whose parents have the "economic, cultural and social capitals (Apple, 2000:315-318) to help their children to succeed. School choice with reference to "school discipline" and "academic standard" is therefore, in one way or another, related to 'class issues'. This is confirmed by Lauder et al. (1995:53) who state that "socio-economic status....appear to influence school selection"

Integrating the top three most important factors of choice with previous research

Sauter (1994:148) demonstrates that parents considered "good academic programmes

and standards” to be the most important criterion for public school choice, followed by “competent and superior teaching staff” and “good discipline programme”. His findings suggest that parents will send their children to a private school if they discover that the public schools where their children are studying cannot meet the basic qualities of a good school. Parents of NY, CK and SC also turned to a private school when their child was allocated to a public school with comparatively inferior quality. In the in-depth interviews, 2 NY parents, 7 CK parents and 6 SC parents reported that they chose private education for their child only because of the unsatisfactory allocation of primary one place in the public school sector (Tables 4.11, 5.11, 6.11).

Buttrum’s (1994:144) investigation of parental choice in private schools named “school discipline or safe environment” to be most important, followed by “positive attitude of staff and students” and then “better quality of instruction” and “quality of academic course offerings”. The “positive attitude of staff and students” is equivalent to “friendly and sincere teachers” while “instruction and course offerings” falls into the category of “academic standards” in this study.

The findings of both Buttrum and Sauter pinpoint that parents have universal concerns on school discipline during early childhood education and are in line with the findings of this study. They suggest that such concerns may change when their children are receiving secondary or tertiary education. Academic concerns, discipline and staff qualities, which are the top three school choice factors in the studies of Buttrum and Sauter, are also the top three factors for parents of NY, CK and SC.

Smedley (1995:97) named “academic standards” to be one of the six important factors

of choice. “Discipline” and “friendly and sincere teachers” could not be located on his list. However, his indication of “whether schools meet individual needs” is capable of representing these two categories. The study of Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:650-676) also indicate that “academic matters are by and large the most widely accepted currency of ‘good schooling’ in the climate of enhanced emphasis on choice”. They group parental choice influencing factors into “academic-centered” and “child-centered” in order to identify the underlying themes. Their “child-centered” factors encompass the “personal, social, and pastoral aspect of schooling” which is consistent with “discipline” and “friendly and sincere teachers” in this study. Their analysis did not negate the significance of discipline education and the importance of recruiting friendly and sincere teachers for the personal, social and pastoral well-being of students, even though they comment that these are often not highly valued as significant components in a competitive school market. Parents of NY, CK and SC also placed equal emphasis on “academic-centered” and “child-centered” aspects when they want their child to maintain good academic scores and at the same time lead a happy life in school.

In the context of secondary school choice in Hong Kong, Cheung (1993:97) indicates that “good discipline”, “good academic performance”, and “admission of students with good academic performance” are the three most decisive criteria of school choice. His findings on “good discipline” correspond with the findings of this factor in the current study. The second and the third factors can be categorized under “academic standards”. Having included only two of the top three choice factors of this study, Cheung (1993) did not highly rate “friendly and sincere teachers”. Fung (1996:73-75) says that “teachers’ quality”, “students’ discipline outside campus” and “teacher-student relations” are the three essential criteria of choice. His criteria of “teachers’

quality” and “teacher-student relations” can be categorized under “friendly and sincere teachers”. “Students’ discipline outside campus” is directed to “good discipline”. “Academic standards” is not on his priority list.

Tsang’s (1998) interpretation of the parental choice factors is also consistent with Cheung’s and Fung’s, even though the terms used are slightly different. He finds that “school culture”, “whether or not the medium of instruction is English”, and “teacher-student relations” are the top three important factors of choice. His discussion on “school culture” suggests that this factor is closely related to “school discipline”. “The medium of instruction” has the implication of whether or not the school has “good academic standards”, since schools using “English as a medium of instruction” have been widely accepted as the schools with high academic standards (Eugene International Limited, 1999). Tsang’s findings (1998) on the three most important factors of choice, though collected from the study of secondary school choice, are generally consistent with the findings of this study on primary school choice.

Findings from the United States, the United Kingdom and Hong Kong are consistent with each other. The listed school choice factors, which mirror findings in this study, in fact reinforce each other to the extent that they are capable of reflecting a worldwide view despite the minimal variations brought about by cultural impacts and environmental influence.

Categorizing the top seven choice factors

The top seven school selection criteria listed in Table 7.1 are not only closely linked to the needs of children and their parents in NY, CK and SC, they are also the parental

choice indicators in the United States, the United Kingdom, and in Hong Kong secondary schools (Sauter, 1994; Buttrum, 1994; Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998; Cheung, 1993; Fung, 1996; Tsang, 1998). These seven choice factors can be analyzed under two major categories, with reference to the “academic centred” or “instrumental-academic perspective” and the “child centred” or “intrinsic-personal/social value perspective” discussed by Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:650-676). The “instrumental-academic perspective” is directed to the “quality of academic standard”, “track record in secondary school place allocation” and “link to a well-known secondary school”. These factors are instrumental in that good performance in these areas ensures that parents will highly rate the school ability of securing popular secondary school places. They are closely related to providing better opportunity for a primary school graduate to receive quality secondary school education. The “intrinsic-personal/social value perspective” is linked to “good discipline”, “friendly and sincere teachers”, “good relationship with school and teachers”, as well as “good physical environment”. The first two criteria have direct impact on helping to develop children’s personal growth, and the latter two serve as background support ensuring that children feel accepted by school staff and feel safe and comfortable in the school campus where they spend half of their daily time. The focus of these factors is on personal and physical development as well as on the emotional well-being and bodily safety of the child.

The interconnecting roles of “discipline”, “friendly and sincere teachers”, “quality of academic standards” and other factors in NY, CK and SC

Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:650-676) state that “parental concerns and interests are complex and interconnecting” and their analysis suggests that school choice factors can be aggregated to identify meanings. From Table 7.1 above, both NY

and CK parents were found to value “discipline” most important in their questionnaire survey response and SC parents ranked “quality of academic standard” most important. However, qualitative data from in-depth interviews with these respondents indicates that parents in all of these three schools highly valued “friendly and sincere teachers” who they considered were capable of determining whether or not the child behaves well or achieves high academic standards. Though NY parents rated “good discipline” and “friendly and sincere teachers” highly, the qualitative data suggest that they would exit the school if the “quality of academic standards” is not satisfactory. Parents in CK also considered the linkage with a well-known sister secondary school important. This linkage enables their children to have easy access to a good secondary school. They valued “good discipline” highly but they were also attracted to CK because of the established linkage with a feeder secondary school. Other than “quality of academic standard”, “good relationship with school and teachers”, and “good discipline”, qualitative interview data disclosed that some SC parents were attracted to the School because of its lengthy school hours which have replaced the need to hire a full time baby-sitter or a domestic helper. Consistent with the discussion of Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:650-676), each school choice factor identified in this study is not mutually exclusive.

Core and auxiliary benefits of choice factors

In terms of importance, “good discipline”, “quality of academic standard”, and “friendly and sincere teachers” can be classified as core benefits which are essential to every school. They are considered to be important for parents of the three schools. The other four factors, including “track record in secondary school place allocation”, “good relationship with school and teachers”, “good physical environment” and “link to a well-known secondary school” are auxiliary benefits which can supplement the

core benefits.

Customer satisfaction in NY, CK and SC

West-Burnham (1992a:28-42) stresses the need to ensure “customer satisfaction”. Harvey and Busher (1996:31) also find it necessary to enhance levels of “customer satisfaction”. Coleman, Bush and Glover (1994:33,46) point out the importance of being accountable to “customers”. The strategy to achieve these goals is to be responsive to customer needs and by “listening to customers”. Responses from the questionnaire survey, the in-depth telephone interviews indicate that staff of NY, CK and SC are able to communicate closely with parents who have opportunities to voice their opinions to the School Management. Parents of these three schools reported in the telephone interviews that they were pleased with the opportunity to communicate with the School when parents with children studying in public schools were often deprived of this right. Some parent respondents of SC reported that they were attracted to the School because of the existence of the Parent-teacher Association which provides them with a formal channel to communicate with the School.

Parental values of private education

Stevans and Sessions (2000) claim that private education is often perceived to have a higher social status because of the demand for a tuition fee. Parents of NY, CK and SC consider private education to be capable of providing a better service and offering better value, and the “products” should be of higher quality compared to those from public schools. The quality can be in the form of academic standards, teacher attitudes, student behaviours and class-size. The results of this study show that Chinese parents in Hong Kong are concerned with the quality of teacher attitudes and their child’s behaviours in addition to academic quality of the School. They also

demand Christian education which affects the long term spiritual development of their children.

Parental perception of private education: Hong Kong and international perspectives

The similarities of the key success factors in the United States, the United Kingdom and Hong Kong have two implications. Firstly, the key success factors of private education have worldwide applications. Despite the differences in social and cultural backgrounds in these places, parental perceptions of private education remain the same. Secondly, these universal factors are applicable in Hong Kong today. This finding strongly suggests that the key success factors of private education remain stable over time and across Western and Chinese cultures.

Research Question: What are the changes perceived by parents since enrolment in private schools

The academic and behavioural changes of NY, CK and SC students

Consistent with the findings of this research, the studies of Buttrum (1994), Sauter (1994), Fung (1996), Tsang (1998), Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998) also indicate that “discipline”, “academic standards” and “teacher quality” are important factors which affect parental choice. To identify the pattern of parental perceptions of choice, Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998) grouped the key choice factors into two categories: the “academic-centred” and the “child-centred” factors. Findings from the three schools in this study can be classified with reference to their study. Ranking of the seven important positive changes perceived by the parents of NY, CK and SC since enrolment in private education are listed in Table 7.2 below.

Positive changes in behaviours	Rankings		
	NY	CK	SC
Better relationship with schoolmates	1	3	5
Better learning motivation	2	4	3
More interest in schooling	2	7	7
More interest to participate in extra-curricular activities	4	6	4
Improved academic performance	5	5	1
Better behaviours in school	6	2	2
Increased sense of responsibility	7	1	6

(Note : The highest ranking is 1, followed by the next highest ranking 2,etc.)

Table 7.2
Ranking of parental perceptions of positive changes since enrolment in private education

Weightings on the “academic-centred” aspects and the “child-centred” aspects

Changes related to the “academic-centred” (Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998) aspects are “better learning motivation”, “more interest in schooling”, and “improved academic performance”. Changes related to the “child-centred” aspects are “better relationship with schoolmates”, “more interest to participate in extra-curricular activities”, “better behaviour in school” and “increased sense of responsibilities”.

The three most explicit positive changes in NY students have included two “academic-centred” factors and one “child-centred” factor. It is likely that NY placed heavier weighting on the “academic-centred” aspects. Qualitative interviews of NY parents also indicate that some parents were attracted to NY because of its high academic standards. For CK, the three most improved positive changes are “child-centred” and the School’s emphasis on “child-centred” aspects can be verified by its comparatively high documentary semantic unit frequency counts in “student behaviour as influenced by school culture and discipline” (Tables 5.7 and 5.18). Two out of the three most improved positive changes in SC students are “academic-

centred” (Table 6.7). In-depth qualitative interviews, however, indicate that parents are greatly concerned with students’ social and behavioural well-being other than just academic. The “child-centred” aspects were also decisive factors in their choice of school. It is assumed that the interconnecting relationship of the key choice factors are dominant.

The interdependent relationship of choice factors

Johnson (1990:28), Smedley (1995:97) and Harvey (1996:35) list a range of school choice factors, including “religious education”, “educational standards” and “child-focused concerns”. These were ranked in different orders in the three studies. Common choice factors considered by Chinese parents of secondary schools in Hong Kong, as pointed out by Cheung (1993:97), Fung (1996:73-75) and Tsang (1998:51,96,117,121), were also ranked differently in their studies. These variations reflect differences in the school emphases of the choice factors. The above researchers also indicate the interdependent relationships of the choice factors in parents’ choice of a secondary school for their child.

The different ranking of choice factors in NY, CK and SC schools also suggests that parents have variations in their perceptions of the positive changes of their children since enrolment. This outcome again reflects the indirect bearing on the different emphases of the schools. The positive changes in NY students are related to peer group relationships and learning. The changes in CK students are closely related to personality developments such as behaviour, relationships and responsibility. The changes in SC are related to academic performance and motivation in learning in addition to behaviour. The “academic-centred” aspects and “child-centred” aspects are also interdependent. With a stronger motivation in learning, it is natural that the

students can achieve better academic performance. The “better relationship with schoolmates” can help enhance NY students’ “learning motivation and interest in schooling” (Table 7.2). Parents of CK need not worry about their children’s “academic performance” when they have “a sense of responsibility”, show “good behaviour” and relate well to schoolmates. The same theory applies to students of SC (Table 7.2).

Environmental impact on intrinsic changes

Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:650-676) indicate that education professionals acknowledge the importance of a supportive learning environment that looks after the personal, social and pastoral aspects of a child. Cheng (1994:54-55) points out “the growing evidence of the importance of learning environment” created by teachers’ leadership style at a classroom level which leads to improvement in student performance. Tsang (1998) claims that “school culture” contributes to the quality of a child’s learning environment. Parental perception of children’s changes in this study is influenced by a number of environmental reasons. Firstly, the different school cultures can induce the parents to perceive more changes on their child in particular areas. For example, all three schools have substantial extra-curricular activities and intrinsic changes in different areas are likely to be induced through participation in activities. CK’s emphasis on personality development helps parents and their children to appreciate and target at the same attributes. Secondly, the different school cultures may help nurture the students in different ways. The numerous religious activities found in NY, CK and SC guide children to respect and develop Christian beliefs. The school culture of CK has a strong emphasis on Chinese tradition. The “physical” requirement of its secondary school students to put on “cheung sham” (i.e. Chinese gown) induces students’ “intrinsic” emphasis on

personality development compared to learning motivation and academic performance which have a heavier weighting in NY. SC's strong emphasis on discipline education encourages children to improve their behaviour.

American versus Chinese cultural influences on intrinsic personal development

Buttrum's (1994:145) study shows that the five most improved changes in a private school were "the amount of time spent on studying", "motivation in learning", "self-confidence", "satisfaction with teachers" and "satisfaction with own learning". These changes are related to self-improvement in learning and are focused on personal satisfaction. Children's achievements are usually in the form of time management and self-confidence.

The five most improved changes in the case studies of NY, CK and SC are "better relationship with schoolmates", "better learning motivation", "better behaviour in school", "improved academic performance", and "more interest to participate in extra-curricular activities". These changes are related to both internal self-improvement as well as external social relationships with others which encourage the qualities of harmony, tolerance of others, courtesy and humility in addition to the focus on academic enhancement. These qualities ultimately help to bring about better relationships with schoolmates and peers. In-depth interviews reveal Chinese parents' concern regarding their child's interpersonal skills. Parents reported that they were greatly concerned about "peer influence". Its impact on discipline education, school effectiveness and child behavioural changes was considered substantial (Tables 4.12, 5.12, 6.12, 4.15, 5.15, 6.15, 4.16, 5.16, 6.16).

The differences in the findings of the two projects can be both cultural and social.

Pan et al (1994:24) compared traditional Chinese and American cultural values and found that “individual personality” was dominant in American culture which “places primary faith in rationalism” and “orients toward the future”. Chinese parents’ tendency to examine their child’s changes in external social relationships with others originates from the strong Chinese culture of maintaining good interpersonal relationships with others (Confucius, 551-479 B.C.E.; Fan, 2000:3-10). The teaching of harmony in maintenance of interpersonal relationships and social orientation has its roots in the teaching of Confucius. Under the strong influence of Confucianism, Chinese children are taught by teachers to seek harmony with schoolmates, siblings and peers, prizing their interpersonal relationships with others (Fan, 2000:3-10).

The interviews with respondents also supported the importance of culture in the development of childhood (Tables 4.17,5.17,6.17). Parents are role models for the child, teachers provide them with knowledge through teaching from Chinese literature which helped to mould the teachers when they received their own education, while the society sets norms, traditions, and rituals. The interconnecting relationships of Chinese cultural values, family and school education are found to exist in NY, CK and SC.

Parental perceptions of unchanged behaviours

The common parental criteria of school choice have been found to be related to child’s needs, school location and environment, academic standards, religious ethos, word-of-mouth reports, discipline, teacher attitudes and school cultures (Johnson, 1990; Buttrum, 1994; Sauter, 1994; Smedley, 1995; Harvey, 1996; Cheung, 1993; Fung, 1996; Tsang, 1998). Parents’ concern about child’s “career aspirations” and “relationships with parents and siblings”, as influenced by school education, were

perceived by parents of NY, CK and SC to be insignificant and to have remained unchanged since their enrolment in a private school.

Unchanged Behaviours	Rankings		
	NY	CK	SC
Career aspirations	1	2	2
Relationship with parents and siblings	2	1	1
Time required for studying	3	3	4
Educational aspirations	4	5	3
Sense of responsibility	5	10	6
Interest in going to school	6	4	5

(Note : The highest ranking is 1, followed by the next highest ranking 2,etc.)

Table 7.3
Ranking of parental perceptions of unchanged
behaviour since enrolment
in private education

Data in Table 7.3 indicate the six major parental perceptions of unchanged behaviours since their child’s enrolment in private education. The findings in both Tables 7.2 and 7.3 support each other. Behaviours which have a high ranking in Table 7.2 scored a low ranking in Table 7.3.

Though Shek and Chan (1999:291-302) found that “good parent-child relations” is one of the important attributes of an ideal child, parents perceive it as helpful only to the development of a support network for the child. Consistent with the findings of other researchers in Hong Kong (Cheung, 1993; Fung, 1996; Tsang, 1998), Shek and Chan found parents rank the “academic-related attributes” highly and consider scholastic success the most important personal characteristic expected of their child. Parents of NY, CK and SC perceive unchanged behaviours in their child’s “relationship with parents and siblings” for the same reason. They consider “relations with parents and siblings” secondary to “educational aspirations” which are “academic-related attributes” including “better learning motivation”, “more interest in

schooling” and “improved academic performance” that are reflective of a child’s future career success (Confucius, 551-479 B.C.E.; Fan, 2000). “Career aspirations”, on the other hand, are not perceived by parents to be observed easily in a primary school student and are therefore perceived to be unchanged before and after their child’s enrolment in a primary school.

Parental perceptions of negative behaviours

The determining parental criterion for secondary school choice in Hong Kong (University of Hong Kong, 2000) was tied to students’ academic achievements. 25.7% of parents reported that they would choose a secondary school with scholastic success. The other nine criteria of choice are comparatively insignificant as they range from 13.6% to 0.3% only. The Education Commission Report Number 7 (Education Department, 1997a:10) recommends launching educational reforms that “provide students with an all-round education” instead of focusing only on “academic achievements”. The Education Commission Report Number 6 (Education Department, 1995b:2) also report that the “over-emphasis on prescribed texts; imbalance between reading and writing on the one hand, and listening and speaking on the other” was one major barrier to effective language learning and recommend reviewing such excessive academic emphases in the Hong Kong education system. It is therefore not surprising that students of NY, CK and SC need “longer time for studying” after enrolment in private education. For the academically less able students, their “worsened academic performance” after enrolment in private education was due to a more demanding “academic oriented curriculum” which parents perceive to be superior. Since academic excellence is the key school choice factor in the existing education system, NY, CK and SC allocate more time for academic upgrading to improve students’ scholastic success. Data in Table 7.4 show the seven

major parental perceptions of worsened behaviours since enrolment in private education.

Worsened Behaviour	Rankings		
	NY	CK	SC
Longer time for studying	1	1	1
Worsened academic performance	2	2	2
Less educational aspirations	3	3	7
Worsened behavior in school	4	8	4
Less sense of responsibility	5	5	8
Worsen relationship with parents and siblings	4	4	3
Less motivation in learning	3	6	5

(Note : The highest ranking is 1, followed by the next highest ranking 2,etc.)

Table 7.4
Ranking of parental perceptions of worsened behaviours since enrolment in private education

The findings in the three schools reinforce each other. The most adverse behaviour is “the longer time required in studying.” This is followed by “worsened academic performance.” The other perceived negative changes have a lower percentage and absolute number of responses when compared with the first two. The consistent perceived negative changes across the three schools, as listed in Table 7.4, are commonly found among students of private schools since additional time is always required to handle the additional assignments given. For those who cannot handle the additional homework, their parents will think that their academic performance has worsened. Those who cannot meet the new requirements in NY, CK and SC will have to exit the system.

Research Question : Explanations responsible for the parents' school choice and their children's behavioural changes after enrolment in a private school

Parents' perceived "quality"

"Quality" was defined by both Marsh (1992) and West-Burnham (1994:168) as the positive experience of "the customers". Coleman, Bush and Glover (1994:49) introduce the concept that parents are "customers" who are involved in defining "quality". The nature of "quality" would then be factors that parents of NY, CK and SC consider unavailable in the public schools and led to their choice of a private primary school. "Quality" education found in the three schools is the positive experience of children and their parents through interacting with the "caring teachers" and benefiting from the perceived excellent management of student discipline education and academic achievements. Other characteristics of "quality" education in the three case study schools are the positive influence of peer groups in NY, the implicit nurture of CK students by CK's emphasis on Chinese culture in personality development, and the good parent-teacher relationship and favourable physical environment available in SC. Stott and Parr (1992:22) also name school facilities, academic emphasis, teacher qualities, student achievements, and a warm and friendly atmosphere as crucial qualities in school choice.

"Quality" satisfies parental expectation of higher value returns from private education

The study by Ogawa and Dutton (1997) suggests that US parents who are more likely to use vouchers for private education are more willing to invest in educational quality, but are also less satisfied. Parents of NY, CK and SC are also willing to invest in their children's education by paying tuition fees for private schools when public

places are available to them at no cost. 73% of the respondents in the qualitative interviews (Tables 4.14, 5.14 and 6.14) indicated that they were willing to pay as much as they could afford for education with high quality (Appendix C, Question 4 in Section 2). Consistent with the finding of Ogawa and Dutton (1997), the educational expectations of NY, CK and SC parents are also high. In the qualitative interviews, 100 percent of the respondents indicated that they expected a higher value return in the form of “better quality” from private education. In short, educational “quality” ensures parental selection of NY, CK and SC and are also responsible for parents’ perception of child’s behavioural changes after their enrolment.

Research Question : What is the influence of Chinese cultural values on child development and parental choice?

“Chinese cultural values” defined and their impact on NY, CK and SC parents

The traditional values of Chinese cultures, with the deeply-rooted Confucian beliefs (Confucius, 551-479 B.C.), have convinced a large proportion of Chinese parents that the family-related attributes and the conduct-related attributes are essential in child development and in school choice. Shek and Chan (1999:561-569) also report that these attributes are two of the four major components of an ideal child. Cheung (1993), Fung (1996) and Tsang (1998) found that “good discipline” is one of the top three concerns of parents. Their concern is consistent with the key elements of Chinese culture as reported in Confucius (551-479 B.C.). The findings of this particular study suggest that certain Chinese cultural values can influence parental choice behaviour and the perceived changes of their children after enrolment in private schools. 61% (287) of survey respondents in NY, 61% (252) of survey respondents in CK, and 50% (141) of survey respondents in SC indicate that Chinese cultural values are capable of affecting child development. The interview responses

confirm that most parents (56% in NY, 52% in CK and 55% in SC) strongly believe in the role of Chinese culture in child development.

Integrating Chinese cultural values through parental and teacher influence

Confucius (551-479 B.C.) and Shek and Chan (1999) indicate the important role of family attributes in relation to child development. Stevans and Sessions (2000) also demonstrate that parental inputs can influence the performance of students. Given that Asian students traditionally reside with their parents, they are able to play a dominant role in the educational process, through role-modeling of Chinese cultural values. The findings in this current study reinforce that of Stevans and Sessions (2000). Chinese cultural values can be passed on to students from teachers proactively, through the school culture. Parents and teachers can also serve as role-models to demonstrate the application of Chinese cultural values in the personal development of children.

Influence of Chinese cultural values on parental definition of educational values

The Chinese tradition of placing a strong emphasis on child's education, though perceived to be universal across cultures, is supported by the research of Fan (2000) and Garrott (1991). The rankings of the positive changes in NY, CK and SC students, as perceived by their parents, reflect their educational values. Even though the top three areas of concern are similar, the number one factor in the three case schools is different. NY parents rated "peer relationship" highly, CK parents were concerned with "sense of responsibility", and SC parents ranked top "academic performance". These number one prioritized factors in the three schools are not in conflict with the key elements of Chinese cultural values since they can all be located in the components of Chinese cultural values as discussed earlier (Confucius, 551-479

B.C., Shek and Chan, 1999:291-302). The slight variation in the ranking order is due to the differences in the weighting of the components in the three schools. We can assume that their definition of educational values is related to the teachings of Confucius (551-479 B.C.) and other affiliated theories (Shek and Chan, 1999).

Under the macro influence of the importance of educational values, parents look for alternatives to meet their goal of providing quality education for their children. Often the degrees of satisfaction and dissatisfaction are subjective rather than objective judgments of the parents.

Influence of Chinese cultural values on parental definition of teachers' degree of sincerity

The second level of influence relates to parents' expectations of teacher quality. "Sincerity", as a personal trait, is often highly regarded by Chinese as a cultural value (Fan, 2000:3-10). "Sincerity" encompasses a range of teacher qualities in their interaction with students. Cheng (1994:54-71) reports that teachers' leadership style is found to be "strongly related to social climate and student affective performance" in classrooms. He highlights the importance of developing an effective learning environment by class-teachers through positive teacher-student social interactions, for improving student performance. His consideration refers to the provision of "friendship, mutual trust, respect, warmth and interest in the relationship between the leader (the teacher) and members of the group (the students)" (Cheng, 1994:54-71). Teachers' attribute of "sincerity" is also associated with teachers' "power" to provide or withhold rewards or punishment to students. Cheng (1994) comments that "teachers' leadership role seems to be critically important in forming a learning environment and facilitating students' affective development". This is consistent

with the author's findings which show that parents ranked the attitudes of teachers (being sincere and friendly) as one of the three most important factors affecting their choice. All of NY, CK and SC parents reported that their children's academic and behavioural achievements are the result of teachers' efforts in facilitating their development. In fact, most of them indicated that a sincere attitude is considered to be even more important than knowledge which, on the other hand, as illustrated in the Education Commission Reports No.7 (Education Department, 1997a: appendix B:7), is defined to be the ownership of academic and professional qualifications and training.

Influence of Chinese cultural values on parental definition of satisfactory personality traits of child

The importance of school discipline affecting parental choice reflects Confucius' teaching of Wu-lun (human relationships), social structures, virtuous behaviour and work ethics (Fan, 2000). In Confucianism, rules are spelled out for the social behaviour of every individual. By following school rules and systems, children can develop personality traits (such as courtesy, respect) which are the basic foundations for their future development. This social norm is typified by a closed world culture view, prizing stability and harmony. "Discipline" encompasses Confucius teaching of Wu-lun which is defined to be the interpersonal relations, including peer group and sibling relationship. Being implicitly embedded in parents' perception of a quality school, the existence of Chinese culture can be one of the important school choice factors.

Under the influence of Confucius teaching and Chinese cultural values, the most

apparent positive changes by students of NY, CK and SC are better interpersonal relations, better motivation in learning and a sense of responsibility. The Chinese cultural values which initiate these positive changes are micro in nature and are influenced by school cultures and teachers' role modeling. These values, having direct impact on individuals, include attributes such as harmony with others, tolerance of others, self-cultivation, trustworthiness and obligations to family or nation (Fan, 2000:3-10).

Relationship of Chinese cultural values and parental perceptions of changes

The influence of Chinese cultural values on parental perceptions of positive changes is tested by chi-square. The null hypothesis would specify that there is no difference in the parental perceptions of positive changes, independent of whether or not the respondent believes in the effectiveness of Chinese cultural values on child development. The alternate hypothesis would state "preference exists". Those respondents who believe in the effectiveness of Chinese cultural values in child development have different perceptions of the positive changes of private education.

Data to answer the above question were obtained from questions 3 and 4 (Appendix B Question 3.1, etc. and 4.1, etc.). Question 3 shows the parental perceptions of positive changed behaviour since enrolment. Question 4 shows the parental perceptions on the effectiveness of Chinese cultural values in education. Data from these case studies in NY, CK and SC are presented in Table 7.5.

Chinese Cultural values \ Number of responses	Parental perceptions of the numbers of Positive changes			Total
	9-11 changes	5-8 changes	0-4 changes	
Parental perception: Useful in education	224 (200)	221 (216)	200 (229)	645
Parental perception: not useful in education	79 (101)	104 (109)	142 (116)	325
No opinion	41 (42.6)	45 (45.8)	51 (48.6)	137
	344	370	393	1107

Table 7.5

Chi-square test on the relationships between parental perceptions of Chinese cultural values and positive changes of children

() Expected figure

Chi-square $X^2 = \sum \frac{(o-e)^2}{e} = 17.7$

Critical value of X^2 is 9.49 at 5% Confidence level and 4df

The calculated Chi-square value is larger than the critical value and we reject the null hypothesis. In other words, parents with a higher perceived effectiveness of Chinese cultural values have different perceived positive changes from those parents rejecting the effectiveness of Chinese cultural values.

The above finding has not been reported in previous studies on the influence of cultural factors on parental perceptions.

The integration of Chinese cultural values into school culture

Findings from the current study confirm that school discipline, as part of the school culture, is the top consideration in school choice. Parental choice behaviour related to this aspect is more explicit in CK, compared to NY and SC, which is possibly due to its nature of targeting girl students and with a feeder secondary school that admits only girl students. Women in China are expected to have a very high moral standard.

Findings from the quantitative and qualitative data of the three cases indicate that academic achievement is of secondary importance when compared with personal traits and interpersonal relationships in school selection behaviours.

When school management is planning to implement changes or to build up a school culture, Chinese cultural values which can support the development of personality traits should be incorporated. Parents' response to the open-ended question in the survey (Appendix B, Question 4.2) indicate that these Chinese cultural values include harmony with others, tolerance of others, humility, kindness, propriety, sincerity, self-cultivation and other qualities which have an impact on child development (Fan, 2000:9). Findings from the documentary analyses which function to assess whether NY, CK and SC implement policies that are in line with parents' expressed preferences on cultural emphasis show that school publications and products that highlight these personality traits have already been used to integrate into their established school culture. Several of these qualities are featured in the NY, CK and SC anniversary memorial bulletins, school annual reports, religious activities, school uniforms and school information leaflets.

Previous research (Garrott,1991; Harvey,1996) indicates the importance of school culture on student behaviour. The current study also reports the importance of cultural values on teachers' attitudes which can directly influence the learning behaviour of students (Cheng, 1994). 32 out of the 59 (54%) parent respondents in the interviews reported that they perceived strong impact from Chinese cultural values on child development. The end result is the improvement of student performance. Findings from NY, CK and SC show the importance of using a positive forward looking school culture to enhance the caring and friendly attitudes of teachers. The

school culture of NY suggests a harmonious relationship among peers and close contact between teachers and parents (Table 4.2 and 4.5). The school culture of CK is biased towards traditional Chinese cultural values which can be disclosed in their various aspects such as excellent conduct-related attributes of students and even teachers' clothing which are perceived by parents to be conventional. (Table 5.2 and 5.5). The school culture of SC is the positive behavioural attributes of students and the teachers' relationship with parents (Table 6.2 and 6.5).

Influence of Chinese cultural values and religion on child development

Twelve out of the 59 (20%) interview respondents reported that they perceived influence from religious education being more powerful than influence from Chinese cultural values. The emphasis of NY, CK and SC on recruiting teachers who have a Christian commitment in educating the youngsters also helps to lay the foundation of a school culture based strongly on Christianity in education.

The qualitative findings of the interviews in the three schools show differences in their responses towards the effectiveness of Chinese cultural values. Parents of CK considered Chinese cultural values more effective than religion in child development. Parents of NY and SC considered the religious influence to be stronger than Chinese cultural values (Tables 4.17, 5.17, 6.17).

Documentary analyses of the three schools show certain differences. CK has a strong Chinese cultural tradition in terms of teacher attitudes and their teaching and pastoral strategies. These qualities are embedded in the school culture. Though the school promotes Christianity through Biblical teaching and religious activities, the weighting is much less than that of Chinese culture. Teachers in CK also serve as

role-models in the education process to reinforce Chinese cultural values in child development.

Summary

This chapter analyses the findings from the three cases. The data are analyzed holistically to determine the themes of parental choice for private education. The motivation to select a private school links to the dissatisfaction with the quality of the public school place allocated to their children. Dissatisfied parents then looked for private schools with the perceived qualities capable of meeting their personal needs. After enrolment of their children, the majority of parent respondents perceived positive academic performance of their children. On a micro-scale, the positive school culture (including teachers' attitudes, school discipline and academic standards) can affect the change. On a macro-scale, the Chinese cultural values of being hardworking and the commitment of time to study by students reinforces the school culture to achieve higher examination results. A chi-square test showed a clear relationship between parents with perceived effectiveness of Chinese cultural values and positive changes of their children. This suggests that parents who believe in the usefulness of Chinese cultural values are more likely to have perceived positive child changes. Chinese cultural values and religion were shown to have a positive impact on behaviour.

Chapter VIII

Conclusion

Overview of findings

Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study was to identify the reasons parents use in determining whether or not and why they enrol their children in a private primary school in Hong Kong. The types of perceived change in child's behaviours prior to and after enrolment in the private primary school were explored. Choice related factors including Chinese cultural values on child's education were investigated. Public documents of the three case schools were then examined to assess whether or not they are in line with parents' expressed school choice preferences in this study.

Four specific research questions were considered in the study:

- (1) What are the factors that affect Chinese parental decisions to enrol their children in private primary schools? How are these factors ranked by the parents?
- (2) What are the changes perceived by parents since their child's enrolment in private primary schools?
- (3) What are the explanations for research questions (1) and (2) above?
- (4) What is the influence of Chinese cultural values on child development and parental choice?

Framework of the findings

Consistent with findings from previous research (Buttrum, 1994; Sauter, 1994; Tsang, 1998), there are external and internal factors leading to the choice decision prior to enrolment. Family demographics, identified needs of children, positive peer influence and dissatisfaction with the public allocation system have prompted parents of NY, CK and SC students to enrol their children in these private primary schools. Though niche marketing in education

(Coleman, 1997:5-11) affects school choice, analyses of public documents of NY, CK and SC indicate that these schools did not promote themselves with reference to parents' expressed preferences. Instead, they reveal the intention of these schools to shape their religious goals through their publications in addition to meeting parental preferences. The marketing of organizational mission has been identified by Pardey (1991) and Chubb (1995:299) in their studies. Chinese cultural values (Confucius, 551-479 B.C.E.; Weidong, 1999:11-18; Fan, 2000:3-10) which include beliefs in conduct-related attributes of "politeness", "righteousness", "integrity" and "fear of shame", and family-related attributes of "being grateful to parents" and "filial piety" have been found to be an internal factor that influences parental choice of schools.

Findings from the surveys and the interviews suggest that the three determining aspects that parents examine for choice consideration are teacher attitudes, school discipline and the academic performance of students. These three aspects correspond with the findings of Buttrum (1994), Sauter (1994), Tsang (1998), Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998). Parental values of education, as affected by the Chinese cultural background, contribute to their perception of their child's academic and behavioural performance and the perceived qualities of the school.

The types of positive behavioural changes found in NY, CK and SC children since enrolment in private schools are related to peer group relationships, learning attitude, learning interest, academic performance, participation in extra-curricular activities and sense of responsibility. Unchanged and worsened behaviours in the above areas are minimal. Findings in the studies of Buttrum (1994), Sauter (1994), Cheung (1993), Fung (1996) and Tsang (1998) also indicate that students' academic learning and behavioural development in school are closely associated with these aptitudes. Parent respondents attributed the substantial positive

behavioural changes of children to the good education quality available in NY, CK and SC, in the form of positive teacher attitudes, good discipline and superior academic performance of students. Again, these three major constituents are found to be the three decisive criteria of school choice in the research listed above although their order of importance is slightly different from one another.

Parent respondents appreciated the distinctive home-school communication between parents and teachers which is considered one aspect of school effectiveness. Both Chubb (1995:297-301) and Johnson (1990:11) also relate school choice to school effectiveness. NY, CK and SC parents' appreciation of home-school communication is supported by the supplier-customer relationships model of West-Burnham (1992a:28-42) who demonstrates the need to "listen to customers" and to ensure "customer satisfaction" by being responsive to "children, community and the full range of stake-holders in education". The large-scale study of Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998:650-676) also found that some changes which emerged in the education system are the result of "school responsiveness to parents". Coleman, Bush and Glover (1994:33,46) point out that the management of external relations is linked to educational choice by parents and their children.

Parent respondents in this study have attributed their child's success in academic performance and behavioural changes to the affective support provided by caring teachers in the three case schools. Cheng (1994) and Woods et al. (1998) also consider the teacher leadership style and child-teacher interactions to be significant in student learning. Child's happiness is a concern for most respondents during the in-depth interviews, when parents indicated that their school choice decision is also based on their child's degree of happiness as far as peer group influence and language of instruction are concerned. Smedley (1995:99), Coldron and Boulton (1991:169-178), Hunter (1991:169-178) have concluded that parents value highly

their child's happiness during their school selection process. The role of child's happiness in school choice is also supported by Woods et al. (1998:650-676) and Coleman (1997:26).

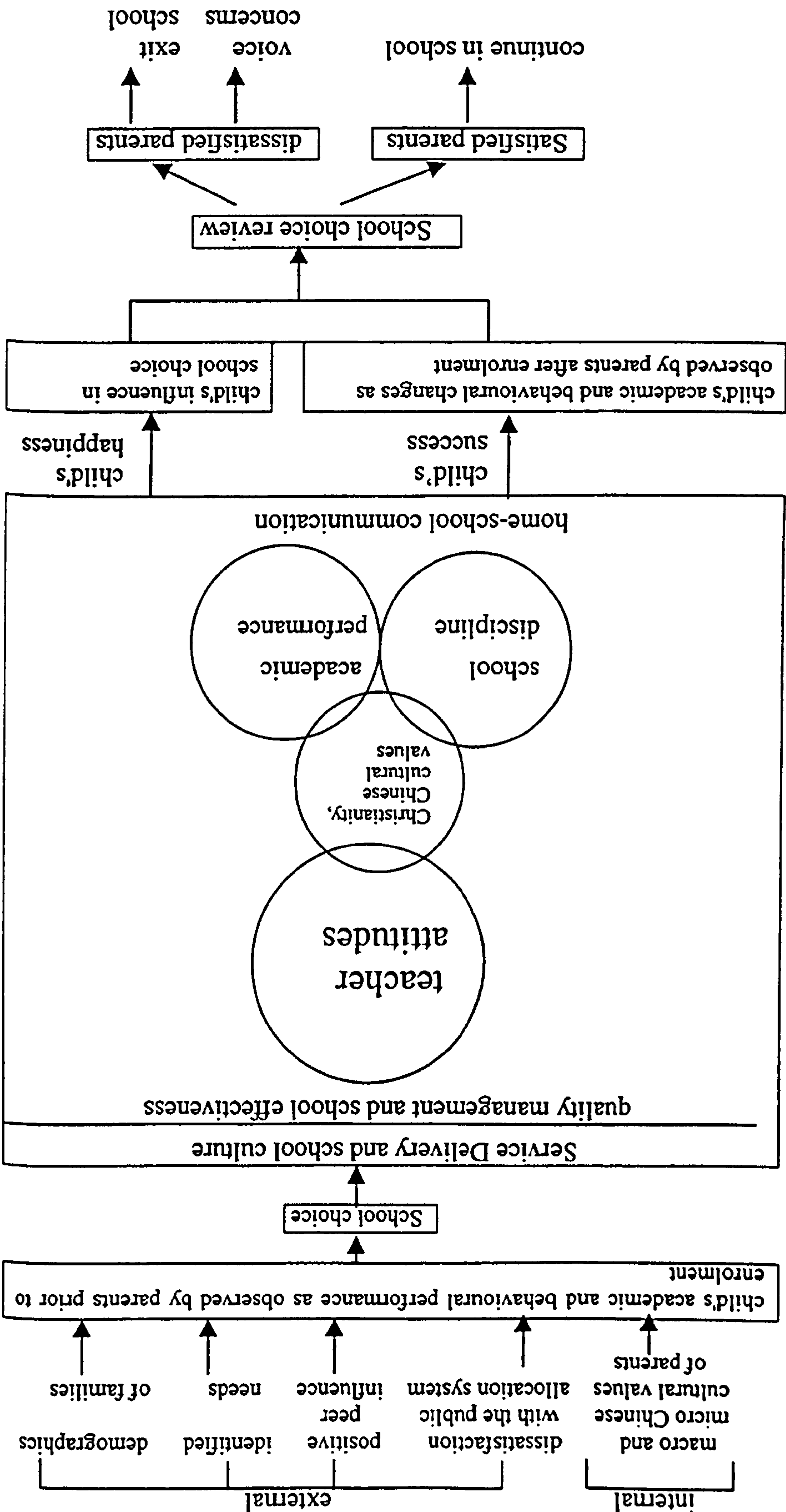
Chinese cultural values have been found to influence parental choice of schools, according to the findings from both the surveys and interviews. NY, CK and SC parents believe that cultural values are capable of laying the foundation for the future development of their children. They have also expressed their preference for schools that promote Chinese cultural values. Positive child behavioural changes were attributed to the positive attitudes of teachers and peer influence. Parents also reported that Chinese cultural values are passed on to their children through the role-modelling of their parents and teachers. Such finding could be located from the teachings and research of Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.), Mam Chi (690-630 B.C.), Weidong (1999) and Fan (2000). On the other hand, some parental respondents perceived religious education as being more influential than Chinese cultural values in bringing about child's positive changes.

A model of private school choice

Figure 8.1 below shows the interactions among parents, teachers, students and the school management in a private school context.

Private School Choice Framework

Figure 8.1



There are four external and one internal factors which are found to be important in affecting parental choice of private primary schools. The external factors are the demographics of families, the identified needs of children and their parents, positive peer influence and parents' dissatisfaction with the public allocation system. The internal factor originates from the macro and micro Chinese cultural values of parents and they contribute to parental school choice decision in different respects.

External factor one: demographics of families

The questionnaire survey data identified three demographic aspects that contribute to parental choice of private education in NY, CK and SC: family income, number of children in the family and sex of child.

The above average income level has enabled NY, CK and SC parents to pay for private school tuition fee. Lauder and Hughes (1999), Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998), Gorard and Fitz (1998), and Gorard (1999) consider the link between the "socio-economic status" and "school admission" an issue of "social stratification in education". It was found that the largest proportion of respondents spent an average of 6% of their family income on their child's school fees, and these parents are mostly willing to invest in education for the benefit of their children. The motive of some parents has been found to be linked to their awareness of "social stratification". The study of Gorard and Fitz (1998:365) also raises the issue of equity in relation to "social stratification" and school admission. It suggests that the higher socio-economic status of families enables them to have the "social" or "cultural" capital to seek admission to their school of choice. For the families of NY, CK and SC, those who have not reached a particular income level may be excluded from the system, or the families have to sacrifice other expenditure to allow their children to study in private schools. The study of Sauter (1994:299) also shows that parents expressed concern about the demographic changes in school when they are making a choice decision.

There are more one-child families than two-child families in the three sample schools. Since the ratio of one-child to two-child in Hong Kong families is 1:1.64 (Hong Kong Statistics Department, 1999), the data indicate that families with one-child are more likely to put their children in private schools.

The findings also reported more boys than girls being put in the private education system. The ratio of boys to girls is 271:201 in NY, 38:374 in CK (a girl school), and 154:126 in SC. However, the ratio of male and female children in Hong Kong at the age range of 0 to 14 is 1.07:1 (Hong Kong Statistics Department, 1999). Parental decisions to enrol their children in private education is likely to be influenced by the Chinese cultural practice of investing more in their male descendents (Weidong, 1999; Fan, 2000). School choice is found to be made predominantly in the first year of their child's primary education.

External factor two: identified needs

Parents' various needs including the search of specific programmes, language of instruction with the emphasis on English language and the provision of religious education have prompted them to apply for admission to NY, CK and SC schools where parents' preferences can be met due to the high degree of flexibility in private-run schools. Parents also reported their need to ensure "child's happiness" in relation to the selection of the medium of instruction in school. Child's happiness is one kind of need that parents wish to locate. A small number of parent respondents found the need of matching their work schedule with the time-table of the selected schools. Research on the variety of "needs" of parents and their children are located in the studies of Johnson (1990:95), Rofes (1992:503), Sauter (1994:32), McGroarty (1994:94), Smedley (1995:97), Smrekar (1996:8), Harvey (1996:35), Forbes (1996:25), Wong (1997:85), Education Commission Report No.7 (1997:46), Report on Primary One Admission (1998:6) and Rouse (1998:61).

Identified needs have been highly valued in parental choice in the studies of many researchers (Johnson, 1990:95; West-Burnham, 1992a:31; Sauter, 1994:32; Smedley, 1995:96-97; Forbes, 1996:25; Harvey and Busher, 1996:29; Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998:650; Harvey, 1996:35; Education Commission Report No.7, 1997:46) and parents of NY, CK and SC also reported a large variety of needs, in the in-depth interviews, according to their child's preferences and their own situations.

External factor three: positive peer influence

Some respondents specified their concern on "peer group influence" and have expressed their need of locating disciplined peers for the positive impact on their children. Parents' perception of positive behavioural change was drawn to "better relationship with friends in school" which has a consistent high ranking across the three case schools in both the surveys and the interviews. Since the socio-economic status of families contributes to the degree of academic and discipline education support provided to children, some parent respondents of NY, CK and SC considered private education capable of predicting the peer group quality.

Social segregation, as discussed by Lauder and Hughes (1999), Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998), Gorard and Fitz (1998), and Gorard (1999), has been found to be used by some parents of NY, CK and SC. They intend to screen out negative impact from children of the working class, by enrolling their children in fee-paying private schools where positive peer influence can be located (Tables 4.15, 5.15, 6.15). Studies of the above researchers reflect that parental view on the relationship between "socio-economic status" and "peer group influence" is consistent across Western and Chinese cultures.

The tuition fee requirement of NY, CK and SC, therefore, has indirectly prompted parents to enrol their children in these private primary schools where positive peer influence is more likely to be

located. As peer segregation for positive influence is linked to the socio-economic status of families, the search of a peer group based on socio-economic background has been criticized by Gorard (1999:29) to be a “class issue”.

External factor four: dissatisfaction with the public allocation system

For many of the respondents, one significant background reason for parental choice of NY, CK and SC prior to their child’s admission to primary one level is because of the unsatisfactory allocation of primary one place in the public sector. Research on public school choice has also found that some children are excluded from desired schools because of the exclusion mechanism of “meritocracy” and “parentocracy” in the public allocation system (Lauder and Hughes, 1999:29). The Milwaukee private school choice experiment (Rouse, 1998) enabled parents to send their children to study in private schools through the voucher system because of parents’ dissatisfaction with the public education. Hirschhoff (1986) reports that parents turned to private schools either because desired public schools are unavailable or because private schools may be offering something that cannot be obtained in the public schools.

Most NY, CK and SC parents who sent their children to a private primary school are those who are dissatisfied with the primary one public place allocated to their child under the free education system. In the absence of parents’ perceived quality in their child’s allocated place in the public system, private schools are perceived to offer better value services and a peer group of similar social background because of the school fee. The “better value” can be the physical environment. Aspects related to this include “location of the school campus”, “school’s close proximity and convenience”, “facilities”, “teaching resources” and even “fresh air”, as highlighted by respondents when providing their open-ended responses during telephone interviews. The “better services”, as perceived by respondents, include the additional programmes/activities and the emphasis on the use of English language as a medium of instruction as described earlier.

Internal factor: The macro and micro Chinese cultural values of parents

The cultural values of parents are considered to be important internal factors that build up the value system (Pan et al, 1994:20) of parents and their value system affects their school choice decision. While parents are concerned with the quality of education in the form of teacher attitudes, school discipline, and academic standards, their perceived quality standard is determined by their values as influenced by Chinese cultures. The macro influence from Chinese cultural values is rooted from the teachings of Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.) which emphasized “Hau” (filial piety) and “Yan” (Kindness), etc. The macro influence comes from “a set of core values that underlies social interaction among the ordinary Chinese people and remains relatively stable over a long period of time” (Fan, 2000:4). The macro influence is considered to be the collective values commonly accepted among the Chinese population. Such aptitudes have led parents to select schools that are capable of enhancing children’s “national traits”, “family/social orientation”, “work attitude” and “business philosophy” (Fan, 2000:9). The micro influence from Chinese cultural values is rooted from the parental role-modeling in the daily interactions among family members and from the role-modeling of teachers, characterized by various “dominance-obedience relationships” and “clearly defined roles and responsibilities” (Pan et al., 1994:21). The micro influence of Chinese cultural values is prominent in child’s personality development. Such aptitudes have guided parents to select schools that emphasize children’s development in “interpersonal relations” and “personal traits” (Fan, 2000:9). The macro and micro elements that influence parental choice of a school were elicited from parent respondents in Question 4.2 which is a semi-open question in the survey.

The external and internal parental choice factors as defined by the seven “Ps”

Parents’ internal and external school choice factors are influenced by their perceived “quality”, as defined by the four “Ps”, which are marketing terms commonly used in business and education. The four “Ps” are “product”, “price”, “promotion” and “place”, as used by McCarthy (1981), Doyle (1994) and many others. They can be linked to “a given school type”, “cost of school fees”, “techniques in

marketing education to parents” and “the location and facilities of a school”. These constitute the characteristics of a school type that parents of NY, CK and SC would like to select. Parental perception of school effectiveness, which contributed to parental choice of NY, CK and SC, would need the “promotion” strategies of the school even if the “quality” characteristics are in existence.

The type of language instruction, whether Chinese or English, can be linked to the “product” type. Even though parents of CK School are attracted to CK because of its promotion of Chinese cultures and values, most of these parents prefer to choose “English language as the medium of instruction” in their child’s secondary school in the in-depth interviews. From the interviews of the parent respondents of the three case schools, they suggest that the use of English is one of the characteristics of parents’ perceived “quality”.

The high percentage of parents who are willing to pay a school fee as high as they can afford suggests that parents’ economic background and their perceived “quality” may influence the fee scale. Before applying for admission to NY, CK and SC, parents are likely to compare the school type (whether private or public, whole-day or half-day, etc.), the range of fees, the physical environment and facilities of these schools. After scanning the three “Ps” (“product”, “price” and “place”), their school choice decision is influenced by the fourth “P” (“promotion”) which can be niche marketing techniques. Should NY, CK and SC wish to launch promotion, these techniques can be expressed in the form of seminars, bulletins, newsletters or relevant publications.

Other “quality” indicators (West-Burnham, 1994:171; Anderson, 1995:245-246), as perceived by parents, are “people”, “process” and “physical evidence”, which are the three “Ps” added by Cowell (1984). They are found to be dominating school choice factors in the three case studies of NY, CK and SC. All parents in these three schools highly ranked “people”, which is linked to “teacher quality”, and the teaching “process” is associated with the manner they deliver educational service to students. “Physical evidence” should be referred to as the perceivable achievements of their students in the form of academic competence and positive behavioural changes.

The “experience of the customers”, as discussed by West-Burnham (1994:71), helps to define the “quality” available in NY, CK and SC. Feedback from students and parents of these three schools reflect on parental perception of the seven “Ps”, and these perceived values determine whether or not parents select NY, CK and SC. Nevertheless, the three “intangible” “Ps” (Cowell, 1984), “teacher qualities”, “teachers’ work attitudes” and “student achievements”, have been found to be dominating school choice criteria in the three case studies.

Three major factors that affect Chinese parental decisions to enrol their child in private primary schools

Among the three dominating factors of private school choice, in terms of ranking, “good discipline” is considered the top priority. It has been found to be one of the most commonly selected factors in school choice, not only for Chinese parents in Hong Kong (Cheung, 1993; Fung, 1996; Tsang, 1998) and as indicated in this study, but also for parents in western cultures (Sauter, 1994; Buttrum, 1994; Woods et al.). In the United States, “good discipline” can mean a “safer environment” for the children (Buttrum, 1994:59, 144). In the United Kingdom, “good discipline” can be a matter of social order (Dale, 1997:451-468) or “welfare issues – particularly on matters such as bullying” (Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998:650-676). In Hong Kong, “good discipline” refers to personality development and the provision of a conducive environment for learning (Cheung, 1993; Fung, 1996; Tsang, 1998). Parental respondents of NY, CK and SC have linked “good discipline” to all these components.

The second most frequently selected factor of school choice is “student academic performance”. This factor is also found to be historically and universally important (Confucius, 551-479 B.C.; Cheung, 1993; Johnson, 1990; Buttrum, 1994; Sauter, 1994; Smedley, 1995; Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998). Consistent with the findings of Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998), parental respondents of the three case study schools considered “student academic performance”

instrumental to their child's future success but they would not value it as the total entity of education.

The third most important factor of school choice in this study is "positive teacher attitudes" which parental respondents considered as an effective medium that helps their child to achieve "good discipline" and "favourable academic performance" (Figure 8.1). In the studies of Sauter (1994:148), Buttrum (1994:49,144), Cheng (1994:54-71), Fung (1996:73-75) and Tsang (1998:51), "positive attitudes of staff" was ranked second or third compared to all other factors of school choice. The findings of these studies correspond with the findings in NY, CK and SC. Western and Chinese parents found that "teacher attitudes" contribute to how well they take care of their child and communicate with them.

Having "good discipline" in school, and with support from a group of "caring teachers", parental respondents perceived that their child's academic performance has improved. In the private school choice framework, as indicated in Figure 8.1, "quality management" and "productive home-school communication" are considered to be conducive to "school effectiveness" which forms a school culture with the components of "positive teacher attitudes", "good discipline" and "good academic performance".

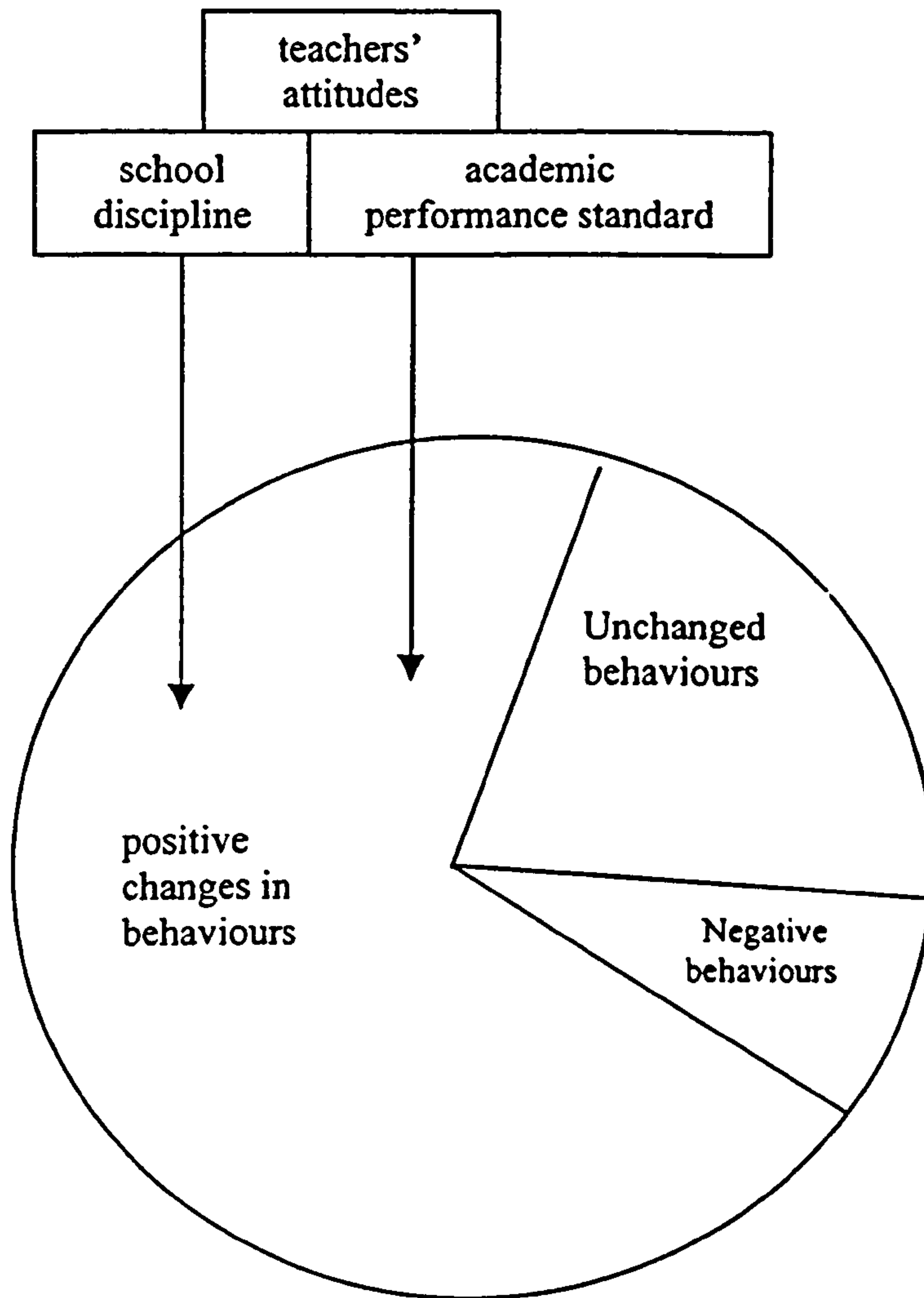
"Quality management" contributes to school effectiveness (West-Burnham, 1992a; Anderson, 1995) and the degree of effectiveness is expressed through the day-to-day service delivery which is closely linked to the school's ability in recruiting a team of teachers with positive attitudes and in meeting the needs of children and their parents. These needs criteria in school choice are consistently found in the studies of Chubb (1995), Winborne (1995), Coleman (1995), Tannenbaum (1995) and Forbes (19996). The findings of these research report that teachers' attitudes, being influenced by Christian beliefs and Chinese cultural values, contribute to students' performance in discipline and academic achievement. For a private school choice, since parents have to pay a tuition fee, they expect a much higher return of

“value” than in a public school. This “value”, in this study, is perceived by parents in different forms, including “more frequent home-school communication”, “quality pastoral care”, “better discipline”, “higher academic standards” or “better learning environment”.

Child’s academic and behavioural changes as observed by parents since enrolment in private schools

The findings show that parents perceived substantial behavioural improvements since their child’s enrolment in a private school. These improvements include “better peer relationships”, “better behaviour in school”, and “increased sense of responsibility”. Parental respondents attribute these improvements to “positive teacher attitudes” and “care demonstrated to the child”. Cheng (1994:54-71) also claims that “the provision of friendship, mutual trust, respect, warmth and interest in the relationship” by teachers is effective for “developing positive classroom climate and improving student performance”. These attributes of teachers are perceived by parents to be “school values”. This finding is supporting the three major choice factors where “good discipline”, “academic performance” and “teacher attitudes/parent-teacher relationship” are interconnecting elements that contribute to their school choice decision. The perception of improvement since enrolment depends on the status of these school values as observed by parents. Child’s changes observed by parents since enrolment in private schools are summarized in Figure 8.2 below.

Choice factors of
NY, CK, SC



Parental
perception of
changes

Figure 8.2 Parental school choice factors and their influence on the parental perceptions of child’s behavioural changes

Figure 8.2 shows the influence of the three major choice factors -- teachers’ attitudes, school discipline and academic progress, as indicated in the questionnaire survey and the in-depth interviews. Teachers with desirable qualities such as friendly and sincere attitudes are perceived to be capable of bringing about improvement in students’ personalities which in turn are perceived to be leading to better discipline and academic performance.

The 4-tiers of changes are illustrated in Figure 8.3.

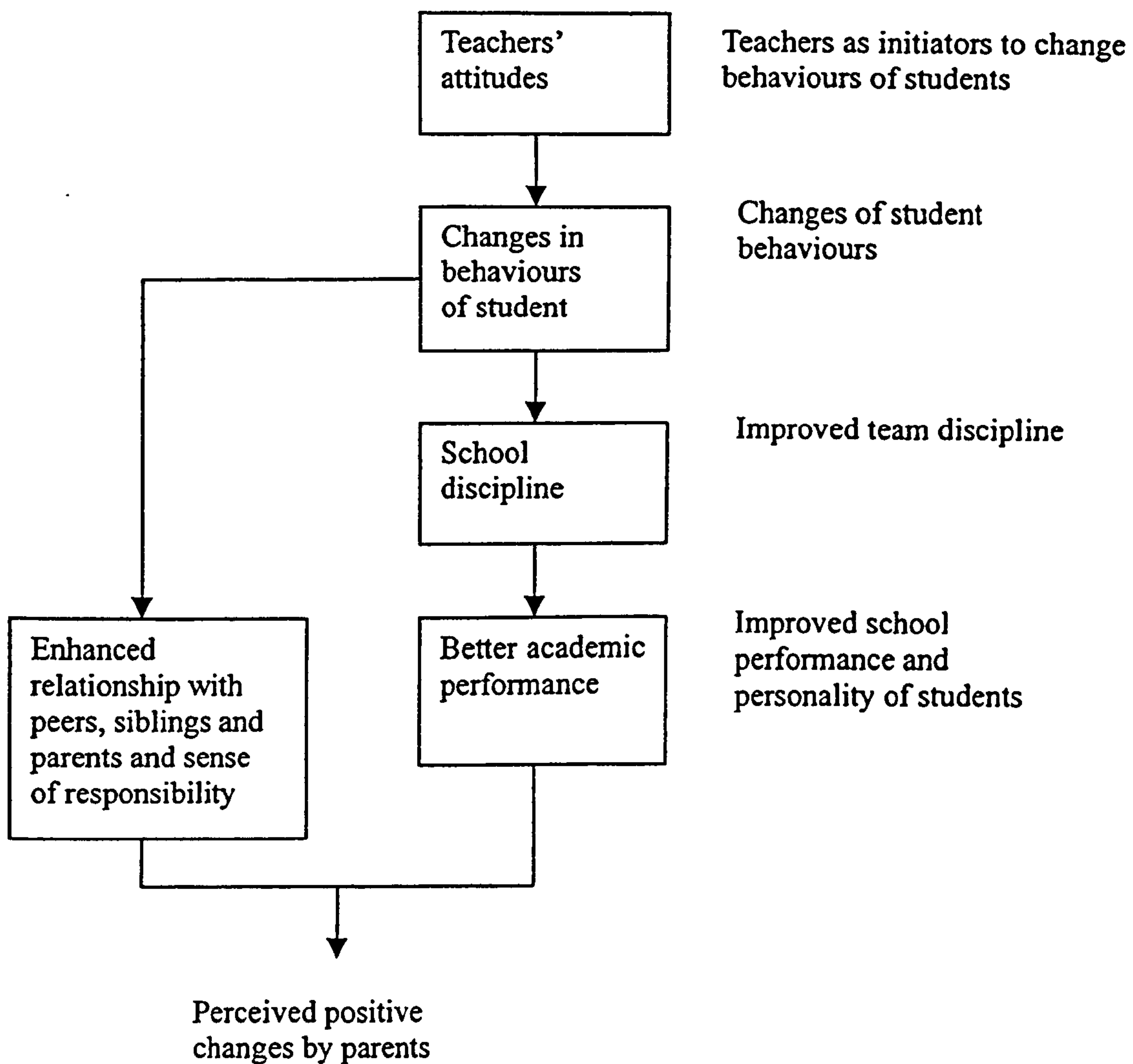


Figure 8.3 The 4-tiers of changes in child's behaviours and academic performance

Figure 8.3 shows that a child's behavioural improvements, as perceived by parents, are initiated with the help of teachers whose positive attitude is the catalyst for the improvements. Under the influence of positive teachers in school, a culture with team discipline provides a conducive learning environment that enhances academic performance. At home, the positive behavioural changes of the child help him or her to relate well to their peers, siblings and parents. The child's sense of responsibility can also be enhanced with the influence of teachers. The favourable relationship of the child with other people in school and at home, and their academic improvements as affected by the learning atmosphere, are perceived by their parents as positive changes.

Explanations responsible for the parental school choice and for the child's behavioural changes after enrolment

Despite the impact from the cultures and social backgrounds of the west (Buttrum, 1994; Sauter, 1994) and the east (Shek and Chan, 1999; Fan, 2000) on private education, there are common positive changes perceived by parents – such as “better motivation in learning” (Buttrum, 1994) and “positive behavioural changes”. Other than the three major choice factors, the current study indicates that parental perception of child's higher learning motivation and behavioural improvements after enrolment in private schools can also be attributed to the smaller class size, the religious impact, the Chinese cultural values, and the direct accountability to parents. Impact of the direct accountability to parents is also sustained in the discourse of West-Burnham (1994:71), Bush (1995:57) and Horine (1995:174) who highlight the need for responding to customers and maintaining their level of satisfaction. The lower teacher-student ratio, as reported by a few parent respondents in the in-depth interviews, allows more frequent and intimate contacts between teachers and students. The religious mission of the three schools is likely to be capable of reminding teachers of the need to nurture children with positive attitudes. The Chinese cultural values (Confucius, 551-479 B.C.E.; Shek and Chan, 1999; Fan, 2000) set the norms that are expected to be followed by children in their learning attitude and character building. The direct accountability to parents is assessed to be functional in reminding teaching staff of the need to be caring and demonstrate concern for the needs of their children.

Consistent with the findings of Cheng (1994:54-71), Fung (1996:73-75), and Tsang (1998:51, 96, 117, 121), “positive staff attitudes” or “good teacher-parent relationship” is found to be most attractive for parental choice of NY, CK and SC. The three case study schools were attractive to parents because of their effectiveness in recruiting a team of positive staff who are willing to communicate with parents and demonstrate care to their children. Findings of Sauter (1994),

Buttrum (1994), Cheung (1993), Fung (1996), and Woods et al. (1998) also support that the effective management of discipline is another strength of an attractive school of choice. Other reasons for parental choice of a school, as reported by parents of NY, CK and SC, are the “positive peer group influence”, “religious education”, and “more programme types that meet child and parental needs”. The qualitative findings from telephone interviews in relation to the top three important school choice factors are consistent across the three sample schools with “friendly teachers”, “good discipline” and “good academic standards” being ranked top.

The role of child's happiness in school choice

The study indicates that child's happiness also contributes to parental choice of a school when parents value highly their child's emotional well-being. The same finding can also be located in the studies of Smedley (1995:99), Coldron and Boulton (1991:169-178), Hunter (1991:31-41), Bussell (1998:135-147), and Woods et al. (1998). In this study, the child's happiness was found to be influenced by a number of factors such as “teacher attitudes”, “school discipline”, “the physical learning environment”, “peer group influence”, “programme types”, “extra-curricular activities” and “sense of belonging”. The child's success in acquiring positive changes in academic performance and behaviour after enrolment in private education was attributed to “positive teacher attitudes” and “care demonstrated” across the three sample schools.

Review of the private school choice framework

The findings of this research suggest that Chinese parental decisions to enrol their child in private primary schools is a continuous process influenced by different factors at the different stages. At the initial stage, the external and internal factors of choice, as discussed in the previous section, are incentives leading to parental consideration of a particular school prior to enrolment (Figure 8.1).

At the second stage, after enrolment, three elements are crucial factors of determining whether or

not parents will continue to enrol their child in the school. These elements, characterized by “teacher attitudes”, “school discipline” and “academic performance”, are closely knitted together by the influence of Christianity and Chinese cultural values. The spirit of Christian education and the values of Chinese cultures are integrated into the school culture through teachers’ attitudes and the way they apply these aspects in the education process.

The third stage of parental choice of a private primary school is influenced by the child’s academic success and his/her behavioural changes after enrolment in a particular school. The child’s improvements in academic performance and behaviours will convince his/her parents to continue enrolling the child in the selected school. On the other hand, the child’s emotional well-being also determines whether or not his/her parents will choose to exit or to stay in the school. This school choice factor is influenced by the quality of school life that a child experiences after enrolment. Parents review their school choice decision from time to time with close reference to the above factors at the different stages. Ogawa and Dutton (1997:333-353) indicate that satisfied parents will allow their child to continue in the school while dissatisfied parents are likely to voice their concerns to the school management or to exit the school. Such assumption was linked to the model in Figure 8.1.

Significance of the Research

The role of discipline education and the academic success of the child in parental school choice decisions, and the relevant behavioural changes of children

“Discipline” has been defined to mean “a safer environment” (Buttrum, 1994:59, 144) or “social order” (Dale, 1997:451-468) or “welfare issues” (Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998:650-676) or “personality development and the provision of a conducive environment for learning” (Cheung, 1993; Fung, 1996; Tsang, 1998). The findings of this study support the theory that the quality of “discipline education” and “academic performance” of students are two interconnecting determining factors that affect the school choice decision of Chinese parents of private primary

schools in Hong Kong. Discipline education has been broadly recognized as a significant aspect that affects child development (Buttrum, 1994; Cheung, 1993; Fung, 1996; Tsang, 1998; Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998), even though “academic matters are by and large the most widely accepted currency of good ‘schooling’ in the climate of enhanced emphasis on choice” (Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998:650-676). Confirmed by the findings of Cheng (1994:54-71), the three case studies in this research indicate that effective discipline education by sincere and friendly teachers is conducive to the favourable academic performance of children. This means that parents are aware of the interconnecting relationship between their child’s academic competence and the quality of discipline education that their child receives. This finding is significant in that discipline education has been perceived by Chinese parents of Hong Kong to be a determining factor in a child’s scholastic success. The majority of parent respondents agree that discipline education has a strong impact in child development.

On the other hand, the ultimate target of these parents in their choice decision is to locate a school that is capable of ensuring their child’s scholastic success, even though they ranked “discipline education” as more important than “academic performance”. This particular research shows that parents wish to choose a school which is capable of creating a culture that guides students to excel in both areas.

The role of teacher attitudes in parental school choice decision and the relevant behavioural changes of children

The findings of this study support the theory that the attitude of teachers affects Chinese parental decisions to enrol their children in private primary schools in Hong Kong. Positive teacher attitudes are found to be conducive to children’s emotional well-being. Although teacher attitudes are not directly linked to students’ scholastic success, the findings from this study indicate that positive teacher attitudes promote constructive changes in child behaviour (Johnson, 1990; Sauter, 1994; Smedley, 1995; Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998) which helps to form a school culture of

successful discipline education. Quality teacher attitudes and discipline education form a chain that provides a positive learning environment which enhances a child's academic performance. Linking a child's emotional well-being and the quality of discipline education to a child's academic achievements, the findings of this study support the view that the attitude of teachers is one major factor in parental choice of school.

The impact of Chinese cultural values on parental choice decision and on parental perception of child's changes

The findings of this study support the theory that traditional Chinese cultural values are "principles" which are internalized into one's "roles and conception" of social practices and govern interactions among people at various levels and, to a certain extent, influence parental school choice decision. These values are "crystallized in Confucianism" and are "not just ideas", as pointed out by Pan et al. (1994:21) who have identified the influential roles of traditional Chinese cultural values. It is assumed that parents' internalized macro Chinese cultural values of education have contributed to their pursuit of a high quality school to be allocated to their child. Driven by their perceived higher values of education in the private sector and their failure in locating a desirable place free of charge in the public sector, parents of NY, CK and SC have opted to pay up to 6% of their family income for private education. The micro Chinese cultural values also affect their subsequent evaluations of their child's changes resulting from educational influences. The child's personality traits and achievements are perceived to be in the areas of interpersonal relations and scholastic success, with better learning motivation, increased sense of responsibility and higher academic performance.

Limitations and implications for further research

This study has several limitations, resulting from the time constraints for a single researcher who had to collect all quantitative and qualitative data on her own. Despite these limitations, the findings suggest that future research into various areas would be worthwhile.

Firstly, the sample size of this current study should be enlarged to include parents from different types of private schools. This can generate more accurate data on the relationship between the demographic data of family and their school choice behaviours. The findings show that school choice decisions of families with above average family income are largely not affected by the school fee payments. Further research may be extended to inquire whether or not families with below average income also respond to school fees payment in the same manner.

Secondly, the current study is limited to parents with children in three private schools. Though the sample size is large enough for the generalization of findings, it would also be valuable to study the parental choice behaviours in different types of private schools, such as comparing Catholic schools with other Christian schools, and other non-religious independent schools. The study can generate findings on the relative importance of social factors (such as religion) on parental choice behaviours.

Thirdly, the current study is limited to parents with existing children studying in a private school. Their school choice behaviours will be different from those parents with children currently studying in public schools. A study on the school choice behaviours of a cross-section of public schools in Hong Kong, including Christian public schools, Catholic public schools, independent public schools and voluntary body public schools, would provide additional insights on the school choice behaviours of these groups of parents.

Recommendations

Ensuring “positive attitudes” among all staff members

As discussed in the previous sections, “teacher attitudes” contribute to the overall school performance with direct impact on school discipline and the academic achievements of students.

Education quality cannot be assured in the absence of teachers with positive attitudes. It is therefore important for school principals to screen out teachers who do not have these qualities in the recruitment process. The Education Commission Report No.7 (Education Department, 1997a) has announced the government plan to provide a significant budget for enhancing teachers' professional qualifications in order to help improve students' performance, but the key contributing factor to students' academic success and positive behavioural outputs has been ignored. Enhanced academic qualifications in the form of benchmark assessment indicators are helpful reminders for qualified teachers but these academic assessments and qualifications are not likely to be guarantors of ensuring student success in areas that parents value highly. School administrators have to locate effective strategies that are able to ensure the existence of "positive teacher attitudes" in each staff member.

Implementing school discipline policies to ensure quality education

The universal parental concern about school discipline (Buttrum, 1994; Sauter, 1994; Fung, 1996; Tsang, 1998; Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998) should be carefully considered by principals and headteachers. Even though most private schools have a mission and highly regard school discipline, they rarely highlight their success in "discipline education". Instead, "student academic achievements" are broadly marketed to the public to reflect the strength of the schools. The researcher of the current study proposes that private schools include the following aspect in their mission statement:

"Our school aims at promoting good discipline, ensuring quality student behaviours and teacher/student relationships that are conducive to maximizing students' learning potential."

As a school discipline policy, the discipline structure should be reviewed annually, after identifying any criticisms. Private school parents can serve as a catalyst for the change of school discipline

policy. Involving teaching staff in the planning of discipline policy ensures that the new policy can be implemented with the full support of frontline staff who need to handle disciplinary problems on a day-to-day basis.

Provision of a more flexible curriculum

The findings from the three case schools indicate that one of the reasons that private primary school parents choose to pay tuition fees for their child's education is the availability of programmes that cannot be found in the public sector. The Education Commission Report No.7 (Education Department, 1997a:46) also suggests that "parents should be able to choose the type of education best suited to their children" and that the needs of our younger generation should be entertained by providing "more diversity and choices to meet the different educational needs". To cope with the global changing needs of society, schools in Hong Kong need to equip students with the necessary survival skills by providing them with a number of distinct curricula which parents consider relevant and useful. The seven Ps (McCarthy, 1981; Doyle, 1994; Borden, 1965; Harvey and Busher, 1996; Rushton and Carson, 1985; Cowell, 1984), as discussed in Chapter II, indicate the importance of including an attractive course content and a range of services that are highly valued by parents.

Responsibilities of the Parent Vocal Group or the Parent-Teacher Association

West-Burnham (1994:71) claims that "customer satisfaction" defines quality. To meet parents' satisfaction in order to "delight customers", school management should scan parental views and add values continuously. Parents can act as accelerators in a cycle of satisfaction and dissatisfaction until their roles are replaced by a new group. The parental satisfaction and dissatisfaction cycle has its root in "consumer responsiveness" (Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998). According to Woods, Bagley and Glatter, if a school system is to be more responsive to those it serves, there is a need for consumer responsiveness both by schools and by public authorities. The need for effective scanning of consumer views is particularly true for private schools, when "schools have to compete for pupils and

their income is tied closely to their level of recruitment” (Bush, 1995:34). School administrators will find it helpful and informative to scan parental views from time to time. A systematic scanning of parental views by questionnaires and seminars, with the assistance of a vocal group of volunteer parents or the Parent-Teacher Association, is recommended. As increased parental involvement in school activities enhances their degree of commitment and loyalty to the school of choice (Ogawa and Dutton, 1997), parents are more likely to use “voice” instead of “exit” to help initiate changes in their chosen school. The Education Commission Report No.7 (Education Department, 1997a) indicates its strong support for establishing a Parent-Teacher Association where parents may communicate effectively with the school of their children. The increasing responsibilities of the Parent-Teacher Association in the new era remind parents and teachers to take active roles in school management by continuously contributing ideas and feedback to the school management committee, in order to ensure the provision of quality education for the new generation.

The need to provide an opportunity for parents to voice their concern

The findings from this study are significant in that they have revealed parents’ need to voice their concerns and that they should be given the opportunity to do so when they are dissatisfied with their child’s present school so that positive changes can be initiated. Drawing on the educational choice reasoning of Hirschman (1970), and that of Ogawa and Dutton (1997), parents who value highly their child’s education would be more likely to seek alternatives if they are dissatisfied with their child’s present school. If the school is slow to respond to parents’ dissatisfaction, those parents who are most dissatisfied, or have found consistent negative behavioural changes in their child, are likely to exit first.

Compared to public school parents, private school parents are more likely to voice their concerns for positive changes. This assertion is supported by the findings of Ogawa and Dutton (1997:333). They claim that parents who are more likely to use a private school voucher “have more opportunities to exercise voice and invest in educational quality, but they are also less satisfied”.

The author of this study assumes that private school parents use two mechanisms, exit and voice, to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the quality of education provided. It is therefore essential for schools to retain a “vocal” group of parents, to allow parents to register their complaints with the school so that they do not opt for “exit” (Ogawa and Dutton, 1997:334).

Integrating Chinese cultural values with religious education

Chinese cultural values and religious education are valuable elements to be incorporated into the school curricula when some parental respondents considered them to be powerful in establishing moral standards for children to follow in this study. Chinese cultural values have been found to be influencing parental choice of private primary schools and parents’ perception of child’s changes after enrolment. As reported by some parent, these values are passed on to children through the role-modeling behaviour of parents and teachers whom children respect. On the other hand, religious ethics taught in religious schools such as NY, CK and SC are also integrated into their hidden curriculum. The joint impact of Chinese cultural values and religious education on children can be significant in personality building and integrating these two elements into the curricula of religious schools is highly recommended to enhance the education quality. Further research on ways to promote Chinese cultural and religious education in schools with a religious mission is considered desirable and worthwhile.

The possible role of niche marketing as an external factor for parental choice of school

Since many parents make school choices for their children without perfect knowledge of the selected school (Johnson 1990:27-28), marketing functions to explain to potential parents about the services they are about to purchase (Harvey and Busher, 1996:27). Though niche marketing (Coleman, 1997:26) was not used by NY, CK and SC Schools to attract parental choice, its role of informing or promoting the types of educational services to parents is acknowledged by Coleman (1997:26), Smedley (1995:96), and Harvey and Busher (1996:29-30). The marketing strategy of

NY, CK and SC is directed to the target group who can afford to pay tuition fees for the education of their child. Since most parents are not prepared to pay a tuition fee for the primary school education of their child, when it is provided free in the public sector, it would be viable for the three sample schools to implement marketing plans with close reference to the expressed preferences of parents. Kotler (1987:8) states, "...the interesting thing about marketing is that all organizations do it whether they know it or not...". The non-profit status of NY, CK and SC Schools should not preclude their need to launch niche marketing, in order to increase public awareness of the educational services available. The marketing outputs of NY, CK and SC can be in the form of published documents that are accessible to potential parent groups whose family income falls into the relevant category. The integration of niche marketing through the audit, the construction of priorities and targets, implementation and evaluation is considered by Coleman (1997:5-11) to be essential in the school development planning cycle.

Summary

Whether or not parents in Hong Kong choose a private primary school for their child is dependent on the demographic characteristics of parents, their identified needs, and the availability of positive peer influence. Their initial enrolment is mostly due to dissatisfaction with the public allocation result in their child's primary one admission. Their decision is also influenced by their macro and micro Chinese cultural values. Niche marketing has not been found to be used by the three case schools for promoting their services to prospective students and their parents according to parental preferences, when student academic performance, discipline education and teacher attitudes were not ranked top in the documentary analyses. However, it was definitely used to sustain the religious goals of NY, CK and SC when their religious outputs ranked top in the content analyses of their public documents.

The three major school choice factors are "friendly and sincere teachers", "good discipline" and

“the quality of academic performance”. The Chinese cultural values of parents induced them to look for their child’s positive behavioural changes in the area of interpersonal relationships while religious influence was perceived by a few parent respondents to be important in child development. Parental perception of improvements, no change or deterioration in child’s behaviours contribute to parents’ school choice decision.

Based on the findings of this study, the author considers it necessary to value “teacher attitudes” and to explore the possibility of including this aspect in the Hong Kong Education Department’s Quality Indicators (Education Department, 1997a) which are used to evaluate and assess educational outputs. Although there are technical problems in measuring this aspect in concrete terms, it is worthwhile investigating whether or not such an assessment can be implemented successfully.

“Attitudes of teachers”, “school discipline”, and “student academic performance” are major elements that parents look for and consider in their choice of a private primary school for their child. Other less important but contributing factors of school choice are “environment of the school”, “school location”, “school proximity to the child’s residence”, “convenience of the parents”, “facilities” or “space available”.

In short, school leaders need to be concerned with the competitive factors in the private primary school choice market where parents highly value “teacher attitudes”, “school discipline” and “student academic performance”. Extreme attachment to any one of these factors, on the other hand, might direct school leaders to lose track of their professional beliefs and the distinct culture of their school in the increasing “market-like” (Glatter and Woods, 1995:155) parental choice environment.

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Appendix A
Pilot Test
Survey Questionnaire

February 17, 1998.

Dear Parents,

Please kindly spend approximately 30 minutes to complete the attached questionnaire. Your data and opinions will be anonymous and treated confidential. The information will be used for investigating parents' standpoints on private primary education. It is hoped that your child will benefit directly or indirectly from the related research. Please also be informed that the data will be analyzed and incorporated into the doctorate degree educational management thesis which I compile under the supervision of Leicester University. *This thesis will be useful in that it reflects on the role of parents in primary education.* Your support is greatly appreciated.

I would appreciate if you return the completed questionnaire to the class-teacher of your child on or before February 23 (next Monday). Should there be any queries, please contact me at 27XX-XXX9. Thank you for your precious time!

Yours sincerely,
TAM, Woon-ling Cindy
Principal

Please put a ✓ in the ☐ of your choice:

- 1.1 In the past 3 years, how many children have you enrolled in a private primary school?
☐ **only one** → please continue with this survey.
☐ **two or more** → please respond in respect of your oldest child who has enrolled in a private primary school.
- 1.2 Sex of your child: ☐ male ☐ female
- 1.3
- | | Your child's current level | Your child's level joining this school |
|-----------|----------------------------|--|
| Primary 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Primary 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Primary 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Primary 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Primary 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Primary 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
- 1.4 Your estimated annual family income
☐ under \$ 200,000 (average of under \$ 16,667 per month)
☐ \$ 200,001 - \$ 400,000 (average of \$16,667 - \$ 33,333 per month)
☐ \$ 400,001 - \$ 600,000 (average of \$ 33,333 - \$ 50,000 per month)
☐ \$ 600,001 - \$ 800,000 (average of \$ 50,000 - \$ 66,667 per month)
☐ \$ 800,001 and above (average of \$ 66,667 and above per month)
- 1.5 Highest education level of parent or guardian (either father or mother or guardian)
 (please ✓ one box only)
☐ primary school level
☐ secondary school level
☐ technical college level
☐ university level
☐ post-graduate level
☐ professional level
☐ doctorate level
- 1.6 Who is completing this questionnaire? (✓ one box only)
☐ father, age _____
☐ mother, age _____
☐ guardian, age _____
- 2.1 (i) Please ✓ ALL the reasons that you choose to send your child to the current school.
 (ii) Of all the reasons you ✓, please rank the five most important ones

- (1 = most important 2 = second most important
 3 = third most important 4 = fourth most important
 5 = fifth most important)

(i) reasons that apply to you (ii) ranking of the 5 most important reasons (1,2,3,4,5)

- | | | | |
|--------|--|--------------------------|-------|
| 2.1.1 | Quality of academic standard | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.2 | Greater access to extra-curricular Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.3 | Live close to the school | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.4 | Linked with a well-known secondary school | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.5 | Excellent secondary school place allocation | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.6 | Teachers are friendly and sincere | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.7 | Same religious belief as parents | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.8 | Good discipline | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.9 | Good physical environment (beautiful campus) | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.10 | Good parent-teacher/school relationship | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.11 | Special programmes not available in other schools (please specify:_____) | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.12 | Peer groups of my child studying in the same school | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.13 | Father or mother studied in the same school before | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.14 | Highly recommended by friends | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.15 | Other reasons (please specify:_____) | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |

3.1 Period which your child has enrolled in a private school:

- ☐less than 1 year
☐less than 2 years
☐less than 3 years
☐less than 4 years
☐over 4 years

3.2 What kind of changes have you found since your child's enrolment in a private school?

	has improved	unchanged	has worsen
	1	2	3
3.2.1 (1) learning interest (motivation)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.2 (2) general interest in going to school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.3 (3) time required in studying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.4 (4) academic performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.5 (5) behaviour in school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.6 (6) sense of responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.7 (7) relationship with friends in school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.8 (8) participation in extra-curricular activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.9 (9) relationship with parents and siblings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.10 (10) stimulating educational aspirations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2.11 (11) stimulating career aspirations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.3 Please list in order of importance the 5 reasons behind such changes: (1 being most Important; 2 being second most important,; etc.

- 3.3.1 1. _____
- 3.3.2 2. _____
- 3.3.3 3. _____
- 3.3.4 4. _____
- 3.3.5 5. _____

4.1 Can Chinese cultural values be used as the foundation for the future development of your child?

☐ YES → please answer 4.2

☐ NO → please discontinue and return the questionnaire to the class teacher of your child. Thank you.

4.2 Please list the most important Chinese cultural values affecting the development of your child:

- 4.2.1 1. _____
- 4.2.2 2. _____
- 4.2.3 3. _____
- 4.2.4 4. _____
- 4.2.5 5. _____

- 4.3 If you are willing to be interviewed for approximately 30 minutes (please ✓ telephone interview ☐ or home visit ☐) please kindly leave your name and contact telephone number. To express my gratitude to parents who are being interviewed during home visits, a gift will be delivered.

Name of Parent willing to be interviewed: _____ Contact tel.no.: _____

Please return the questionnaire to the class teacher of your child. Thank you.

Appendix BNY School & Kindergarten

April 24, 1998.

Dear Parents,

I am currently working as a School Principal in SC School & Kindergarten. I am grateful to NY School and Kindergarten for giving me the opportunity to contact you and am here to express my gratitude to the School. Please kindly spend approximately 30 minutes to complete the attached questionnaire. Your data and opinions will be anonymous and treated confidential. The information will be used for investigating parents' standpoints on private primary education. It is hoped that your child will benefit directly or indirectly from the related research. Please also be informed that the data will be analyzed and incorporated into the doctorate degree educational management thesis which I compile under the supervision of Leicester University. This thesis will be useful in that it reflects on the role of parents in primary education. Your support is greatly appreciated.

I would appreciate if you return the completed questionnaire to the class-teacher of your child on or before May 4 (Monday). Should there be any queries, please contact me at your convenience (Tel.: 27XX-XXX9). Thank you for your precious time!

Yours sincerely,
TAM, Woon-ling Cindy
Principal

Please put a ✓ in the ☐ of your choice:

1.1 In the past 3 years, how many children have you enrolled in a private primary school?

☐ only one → please continue with this survey.

☐ two or more → please respond in respect of your oldest child who has enrolled in a private primary school.

1.2 Sex of your child: ☐ male ☐ female

1.3 Your child's grade level in the current school:

	grade in 97/98	grade when first entered this school
primary 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
primary 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
primary 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
primary 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
primary 5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
primary 6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.4 Your estimated annual family income

☐ under \$ 200,000 (average of approximately \$ 16,667 per month)

☐ \$ 200,001 - \$ 400,000 (average of approximately \$16,667 - \$ 33,333 per month)

☐ \$ 400,001 - \$ 600,000 (average of approximately \$ 33,333 - \$ 50,000 per month)

☐ \$ 600,001 - \$ 800,000 (average of approximately \$ 50,000 - \$ 66,667 per month)

☐ \$ 800,001 and above (average of approximately \$ 66,667 and above per month)

1.5 Highest education level of parent or guardian (either father or mother or guardian)

(please ✓ one box only)

☐ primary school level

☐ secondary school level

☐ post-secondary level

☐ university level

☐ masters degree level

☐ doctorate degree level

☐ professional level

1.6 Who is completing this questionnaire? (✓ one box only)

- ☐ father, age _____
- ☐ mother, age _____
- ☐ guardian, age _____

2.1 (i) Please ✓ ALL the reasons that you choose to send your child to the current school.

(ii) Of all the reasons you ✓, please rank the five most important ones

(1 = most important

2 = second most important

3 = third most important

4 = fourth most important

5 = fifth most important)

(i) reasons that apply to you (ii) ranking of the 5 most important reasons (1,2,3,4,5)

- | | | | |
|--------|---|--------------------------|-------|
| 2.1.1 | Quality of academic standard | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.2 | Greater access to extra-curricular Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.3 | Live close to the school | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.4 | Linked with a well-known secondary school | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.5 | Excellent record of secondary school place allocation | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.6 | Teachers are friendly and sincere | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.7 | same religious belief as parents | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.8 | good discipline | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.9 | good physical environment (beautiful campus) | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.10 | good parent-teacher/school relationship | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.11 | special programmes not available in other schools (please specify: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.12 | peer groups of my child studying in the same school | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.13 | siblings of my child studying in the same school | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.14 | father or mother studied in the same school before | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.1.15 | school adopts an open policy and is willing to accept parents' opinions and | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |

make appropriate changes

- 2.1.16 school can meet the particular needs of my ☐ _____
 child (please specify: _____)
- 2.1.17 highly recommended by friends ☐ _____
- 2.1.18 other reasons (please specify: _____) ☐ _____

3.1 What kind of changes have you found since your child's enrolment in a private school?

	has improved	unchanged	has worsen
	1	2	3
3.1.1 (1) learning interest (motivation)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.2 (2) general interest in going to school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.3 (3) time required in studying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.4 (4) academic performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.5 (5) behaviour in school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.6 (6) sense of responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.7 (7) relationship with friends in school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.8 (8) participation in extra-curricular activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.9 (9) relationship with parents and siblings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.10 (10) stimulating educational aspirations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1.11 (11) stimulating career aspirations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.2 Please list in order of importance the 5 reasons behind such changes: (please choose from the numbers in the brackets --- 1. Listed below being most important; 2. being second most important,; etc.)

- 3.2.1 1. _____
- 3.2.2 2. _____
- 3.2.3 3. _____
- 3.2.4 4. _____
- 3.2.5 5. _____

4.1 Can Chinese cultural values be used as the foundation for the future development of your child?

☐ YES → please answer 4.2

☐ NO → please discontinue and return the questionnaire to the class teacher of your child. Thank you.

- 4.2 Please list the most important Chinese cultural values affecting the development of your child (such as 'filial piety' and 'Yi'):

4.2.1 1. _____

4.2.2 2. _____

4.2.3 3. _____

4.2.4 4. _____

4.2.5 5. _____

- 4.3 If you are willing to be interviewed for approximately 30 minutes (please ✓ telephone interview ☐ or home visit ☐) please kindly leave your name and contact telephone number. To express my gratitude to parents who are being interviewed during home visits, a gift will be delivered.

Name of Parent willing to be interviewed: _____ Contact tel.no.: _____

Please return the questionnaire to the class teacher of your child. Thank you.

Appendix C

Interview Schedule

Open-ended questions

Section 1

Opening remarks

Thanks a lot for the questionnaire you have filled out. Could I spend about 15 minutes with you and ask you some more questions related to what you have filled out in the questionnaire?

Section 2

Open-ended questions

1. Why did you choose private education for your child?
2. What is your perception of education effectiveness in private schools?
3. What kind of secondary school do you prefer your child to go when you consider the medium of instruction? English or Chinese? Why?
4. Does school fee of a private primary school affect your choice?
5. Why do you think your first three school choice factors are significant? (with reference to question 2.1)
6. Why do you think your child had those listed substantial changes after his/her enrolment in a private primary school? Why did you list those five reasons as most important? (with reference to question 3.1 and 3.2)
7. Why do you think your listed Chinese cultural values affect the development of your child? (with reference to question 4.2)

Section 3

Closing up questions

1. What would you like to ask me?
2. Thanks a lot for your precious time.

1.	Quantitative	Researcher should focus on facts, research should be on causality and fundamental law, formulation and testing of hypothesis, concepts to be operationized for testing and measurement.
	Qualitative	Researcher should focus on meaning and understand what is happening, ideas are developed through induction from data, usage of multiple methods to establish different views of phenomena, small samples investigated indepth.
2.	Objective	Concern for precise facts about social phenomena.
	Subjective	Emphasis on the importance of understanding different views and projection of human imagination.

(Source : Modified from Easterby-Smith et al. (1995).)

Table 3.1
Key Features of Two Main Sets of Paradigms

In practice, research methodologies tend to be somewhat on a continuum between two extremes as in figure 3.1 below:

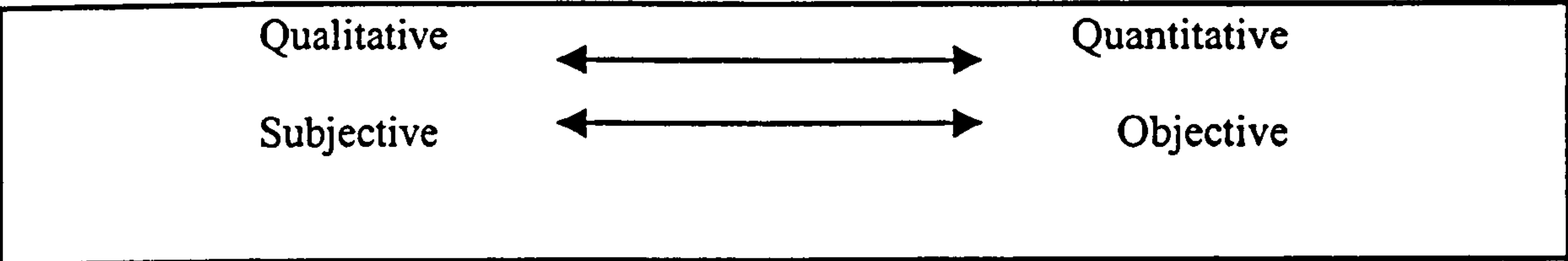


Figure 3.1 Research Methodology Paradigms Presented as a Continuum

Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1 also illustrate the differences between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. The quantitative paradigm focuses on efforts to verify or falsify a priori hypothesis expressed in mathematical propositions which can be converted into formulas expressing functional relationships (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Despite the objective nature of the quantitative paradigm, the focus on the verification of a specific priori hypothesis may result in a superficial study which ignores the sources of those hypotheses usually arrived at through a discovery process (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The qualitative