

# A whole-school approach to guidance: Hong Kong teachers' perceptions

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**ABSTRACT** *This qualitative study involving 30 teachers, followed by a survey of 895 teachers, investigated Hong Kong teachers' perception of a whole-school approach to guidance and its practice. Findings revealed that teachers perceived a whole-school approach as fostering student development and as a system of management. Teacher dedication, communication, and team spirit were considered as facilitating factors for its implementation. Findings also revealed an overall mismatch between teachers' beliefs about a whole-school approach and their perceived school reality, and that a whole-school approach was not seen as practised in the majority of schools. There was a close relationship between schools' guidance focus and their implementation of a whole-school approach. Schools implementing a whole-school approach were considered to have both a preventive and developmental guidance focus and practice. Implications for the implementation of guidance are discussed.*

## Introduction

In the United Kingdom, the term 'pastoral care' is used to refer to the structures which schools adopt to help teachers promote students' personal and social development (DES, 1989). Best (1995) considered 'pastoral care' as a comprehensive concept, within which guidance and counselling are specific aspects. However, 'pastoral care' is distinctively a British notion, which is not commonly used in other countries. Elsewhere, for example in the USA (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000) and Canada (Young, 1994), the term 'guidance' is frequently used to refer to programmes and activities directed to students' personal, social, vocational and affective development. In the UK, Watkins (1998) has suggested that the term 'guidance' refers to 'any planned process which helps students learn more about themselves, about life opportunities and their optimisation' (p. 170).

'Guidance' and 'counselling' are two distinctly different concepts, though the written Chinese and spoken Cantonese translation of the two terms is the same, both romanised in Hong Kong as 'fuh-douh', meaning to 'assist and guide'. In Hong Kong, guidance aims at helping students in their whole-person development, whereas counselling aims at helping students to cope with distress and confusion

(Hui, 1994; Milner, 1980). Teachers may employ counselling skills in guiding and interacting with students. As McGuinness (1998) points out, counselling skills are fundamental and necessary in helping teachers to be effective professionals. However, the use of counselling skills by teachers is distinct from 'counselling', which should be offered by specialists with appropriate training and specific roles (Lang, 1999). The term 'guidance' is used as a generic term in all Hong Kong education documents to refer to schools' pastoral systems, programmes and activities (Hong Kong Education Department, 1986, 1993, 1995). This article adopts this generic interpretation of guidance.

The literature on school guidance suggests that the goals of guidance are remedial, preventive and developmental (Lang, 1995; Young, 1994). Remedial guidance, or what Best (1999) called 'responsive pastoral case work', aims to meet the immediate needs of students with personal, social and learning problems (Gysbers & Henderson, 1997). Although counselling is given by specialists with professional training and skills, teachers are involved in detecting and monitoring students at risk, supporting them in facing their difficulties, and co-ordinating support for them within and outside the school.

Preventive guidance is more proactive, focusing on anticipating the 'critical incidents' which students may experience, and teaching them effective coping strategies (Best, 1999). Such preventive guidance usually takes the form of group guidance activities and presentations in form assemblies and class-teacher periods. Musgrave's (1999) research on conflict resolution and peer mediation is an illustration of a training programme in schools which develops students' self-confidence and trust in the group, so that they can resolve conflicts positively.

Developmental guidance, on the other hand, aims to help students develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and character formation (Shertzer & Stone, 1981; Wu, 1993). It has an educative function (Hui, 1994; McLaughlin, 1993), and is a form of affective education. In fostering students' whole-person development, schools need to provide a healthier environment for their emotional growth, an environment where their needs are understood and responded to with care and respect (Moore, 1999). In his model of pastoral care, Best (1999) refers to 'developmental pastoral curricula' as one of the five pastoral tasks in schools. In the USA, a developmental guidance curriculum is included as one of the essential components in Gysbers and Henderson's (2000) comprehensive guidance programme model.

As guidance has taken on a broader application to include student development, prevention and remediation, there has been a growing emphasis on guidance as a whole-school responsibility, which demands the involvement of all teachers, rather than just specialists (Arnott, 1994; Ganie, 1997; Salim & Chua, 1994; Schmidt, 1993). In line with these developments, the notion of 'a whole-school approach' has emerged in the literature on guidance and pastoral care (McGuinness, 1989; Watkins, 1994, 1998). In initiating the 'Circle time' project to promote students' self-esteem and team building, Mosley (1999), for example, points out the need to incorporate the project into a whole-school approach, so that all members of the school community can be involved in providing consistency and boundaries for all students. Furthermore, the implementation of guidance requires a 'team approach' (Gysbers &

Henderson, 2000), which involves the co-operation of administrators, teachers, specialists, students and parents.

However, a review of the literature reveals that the concept of a whole-school approach to guidance is rather complex. On the one hand, the term may refer to the involvement of all the teachers in guidance. It may, however, mean the provision of guidance for all students rather than just for students with problems (Hui, 1991). On the other hand, the notion of a whole-school approach to guidance as the development of a whole-school *policy* in guidance was suggested by Hui (1994), who argued that such a policy needs to cover the aims, purposes and focus of guidance, as well as implementation strategies. In this case the implementation of a whole-school approach to guidance would tie in with the school mission and with its system of management in guidance. Viewing a whole-school approach of guidance from a management perspective, Hui further contended that taking a whole-school approach to guidance is a matter of running an effective school and of creating a positive ethos.

McGuinness (1989) looked at a whole-school approach to guidance from the perspective of curriculum integration. He proposed the infusion of guidance themes into the academic curriculum as a way of achieving a whole-school approach which involves all teachers and all students.

From a different perspective, Watkins (1994) saw a whole-school approach to guidance as total school guidance, stressing the importance of adopting a whole-curriculum view which addresses the personal and social development of students. Referring to the characteristics of a whole-school approach, he suggested that it has to be 'comprehensive in its clientele', 'developmental in mission', and 'distributed in mode of delivery' (Watkins, 1998, p. 170). The involvement of all teachers is essential, though their contribution to a whole-school approach need not be uniform (Watkins & Wagner, 1992). Furthermore, a whole-school approach to guidance demands the recognition, clarification, communication, and co-ordination of guidance at the school organisation level, the classroom level, and the individual student level in order to promote students' self-development (Watkins, 1994).

In Hong Kong, a whole-school approach to guidance was first introduced as an educational policy in 1990 (Hong Kong Education Commission, 1990). The concept was defined as the involvement of all teachers in identifying students with problems and offering assistance. Schools were to provide school-based developmental programmes to facilitate students' adjustment to school and their personal and social development. Guidance was formally endorsed as the responsibility of all teachers, rather than the sole responsibility of the guidance teachers.

The concept of a whole-school approach to guidance in our official documents is, however, quite vague. The focus is more on all teachers' involvement in helping students with problems. It therefore has a strong remedial overtone (Hui, 1991). In its further elaboration of the concept, the Hong Kong Education Department (1993) suggested that guidance should not solely take a remedial 'casework approach', but should emphasise the cultivation of positive behaviour in students. The focus was on the implementation of a whole-school behaviour programme, and the prevention of problem behaviour. However, the concept as defined in these government documents

was seen by Hui (1994) as too narrow and simplistic. For example, it focussed mainly on teachers' involvement in the implementation of whole-school programmes or programmes across the whole school, whereas a whole-school approach to guidance is a rather more complex concept. Thus, insufficient reference was made to the involvement of students, parents and peers, all of whom are essential parties in the concept of the whole school. Furthermore, the notion of a whole-school approach to guidance as the implementation of whole-school behaviour programmes, with no suggestion of the integration of guidance themes into the school formal curriculum, was described by Hui (1994) as having defects similar to the so-called 'supplementary vitamin model' criticised by McGuinness (1989). The idea of a whole-school approach to guidance as related to school ethos and school mission for the whole-person development of all students only emerged in the second part of the official guidelines (Hong Kong Education Department, 1995). Not much attention was given to a developmental guidance curriculum: personal, social and affective education.

Research now suggests, however, that since the initial introduction of the notion of a whole-school approach to guidance, the focus and practice of guidance in our schools has been moving from a remedial 'casework' approach to a greater emphasis on prevention. A study investigating guidance focus and practice in Hong Kong schools revealed a tendency for schools to engage more in preventive and developmental guidance (Hui, 1998a). Some of the schools studied, for example, claimed their guidance focus to be both preventive and remedial, reflecting the effect of the implementation of a whole-school approach to guidance. Findings from a number of case studies (Hui, R, 1997; Hui & Lo, 1997; Lam, 1994; Yu, 1995) further revealed that the implementation of a whole-school approach to guidance was mainly in the area of developmental guidance, which is a form of personal, social, and affective education. As factors which facilitate the implementation of a whole-school approach to guidance, these studies identified teachers' acceptance of their role in guidance, co-operation amongst teachers, communication and co-ordination amongst the school's functional teams, support of the school principals, the role of the guidance team as a catalyst, a caring and inviting school ethos, and a well-defined school policy.

As shown earlier, the concept of a whole-school approach to guidance is complex. In the Hong Kong setting, as revealed in our official documents and recent research findings, there have been changes in its meaning. However, few studies have been conducted, either locally or elsewhere, to investigate teachers' perceptions of the concept of 'a whole-school approach to guidance', and their views on its implementation in schools. As teachers are in the front line in providing guidance, their perceptions of the concept of a whole-school approach to guidance are likely to have significant implications for guidance focus, practice and policy.

An earlier study showed that that our schools' guidance focus has moved from remediation to prevention. This study, however, was small-scale, involving only 30 schools (Hui, 1998a). School guidance is not something static but changes according to the development of guidance in the school community. Furthermore, the guidance approach claimed by a school need not necessarily reflect the beliefs about guidance

held by teachers. Hence, a more extensive study was needed to investigate guidance practice in Hong Kong schools.

Against this background, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

- How do teachers perceive the notion of a whole-school approach to guidance and the factors which are crucial to its success?
- What is the actual practice of a whole-school approach to guidance in their school as perceived by the teachers?
- To what extent is there a match between teachers' personal beliefs about whole-school approach to guidance and their perception of what actually happens in schools?
- What is the approach to guidance practised in Hong Kong schools?

## **Method**

This study consisted of two phases. In phase one, a preliminary study used a qualitative approach to explore teachers' perceptions of a whole-school approach to guidance and the factors facilitating its implementation. In phase two, a survey was used to investigate schools' approach to guidance and its practice, and the match or mismatch between teachers' views of a whole-school approach to guidance and their perceptions of the schools' reality.

### *Phase one*

Teachers in charge of guidance teams in 30 secondary schools participated voluntarily in this study. Individual interviews were conducted using an interview guide. Each respondent was asked (a) what do you understand by a whole-school approach to guidance, and (b) what are the factors which facilitate its implementation? The interview was conducted in Cantonese (spoken language), and was later transcribed verbatim into Chinese. Following the steps proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), the data were subjected to thematic analysis. Transcribed data were coded to allow an analysable unit to be organised, retrieved or clustered. Pattern coding was used to draw small units of clusters together under a category.

### *Phase two*

*Participants.* A total of 895 teachers (male: 280; female: 615), from 222 secondary schools, took part in this study. A total of 38% of the sample had teaching experience of 10 years or over, 32% had taught for 6–10 years, and 30% had 5 years or less of teaching experience. Among the respondents, 222 were heads of their school's guidance team, and 673 of them were members of the team.

*Instruments.* A survey questionnaire was devised, based both on the data collected in the preliminary study and on research findings on a whole-school approach to guidance (Hui & Lo, 1997; Yu, 1995). The questionnaire comprised three sections.

In section one, respondents were asked to indicate their biographical details (gender, years of teaching experience, and position held in schools), and their school's guidance focus. The five categories of guidance focus, derived from a previous study (Hui, 1998a), were: (i) only handling casework; (ii) mainly handling casework, with some preventive/developmental guidance work; (iii) equal emphasis on casework and preventive/developmental guidance work; (iv) mainly preventive/developmental guidance work, with some casework; and (v) preventive/developmental guidance work only. Section two was divided into two parts. Part one covered teachers' *personal beliefs* about the concept of a whole-school approach (WSA) to guidance. Respondents were asked to indicate their *personal views* on (1) the definition of WSA; and (2) the factors which facilitate the implementation of WSA measured on a five point Likert scale, 5 being 'strongly agree', 1 being 'strongly disagree'. Part two asked the respondents about their *schools' actual practice*. Respondents were to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale (1) their school's guidance practice (i.e. remediation, prevention, student development); (2) the views held by other teachers on the definition of WSA; (3) the factors which helped their schools to engage in WSA; and (4) whether their schools were implementing WSA.

Questionnaires were sent by post to all 453 secondary schools in Hong Kong. The teachers in the guidance team of each school were asked to complete the questionnaire. A total of 222 schools responded to the survey by returning the questionnaires, giving a response rate of 48%. Among the returned questionnaires, 895 fully completed questionnaires were used for analysis.

## Results

### *The meaning of a whole-school approach: teachers' personal beliefs*

The qualitative data revealed that most respondents saw WSA as the involvement of all teachers in guidance. As one teacher remarked:

'A whole-school approach to guidance is about involving the school head, all the teachers and supporting staff in helping students to face problems.'

Most respondents also perceived WSA as all teachers sharing common guidance goals, and functional teams (i.e. the guidance team, the discipline team, academic panels) engaging in collaboration and communication. They also considered WSA as related to the school ethos. As one teacher revealed:

'... Through the participation of all the teachers in guidance, the school can generate a happy and caring environment for all students.'

A few teachers referred to WSA as whole-school guidance programmes. They felt that the purpose of WSA was the prevention of students' problems, and helping students in personal development and values formation. Teachers' remarks included the following:

‘A whole-school approach to guidance focuses on students’ emotional and character development . . . It means that our focus in guidance should not just be remediation and case referral . . . Through these programmes, all students learn to respect each other. Our “Sunflower Guidance Programme,” for example, aims to form students’ values, teaching them ways of handling their emotions.’

However, the meaning of WSA was not just confined to ‘whole-school guidance programmes’. A teacher suggested that ‘it is about infusing guidance themes into the academic curriculum, for example, introducing themes like self-understanding and values into Chinese and English language lessons’.

The quantitative data provided further illustrations of teachers’ views. For example, over 90% of the respondents referred to WSA as co-operation and communication among teachers, providing students with a positive learning

TABLE 1. Meaning of WSA: teachers’ beliefs and their perceptions of other teachers’ views

Meaning of WSA	%	Teachers’	%	Other teachers’
		beliefs Mean (SD)		views Mean (SD)
1. A whole-school guidance programme	92.2	4.25 (0.66)	54.2	3.51 (0.82)
2. All teachers’ participation in activities organised by guidance team	83.0	4.03 (0.85)	27.4	2.98 (0.87)
3. All teachers having a common goal in guidance	84.4	4.10 (0.78)	25.0	3.02 (0.80)
4. Co-operation and communication among school’s functional teams	95.5	4.37 (0.65)	60.1	3.53 (0.88)
5. School having a consistent guidance policy	89.5	4.20 (0.69)	46.6	3.38 (0.82)
6. A kind of values education	86.0	4.11 (0.74)	64.2	3.69 (0.71)
7. Integrating guidance themes in subject teaching	75.5	3.93 (0.77)	25.1	3.11 (0.71)
8. Related to school ethos and school mission	87.8	4.16 (0.67)	49.1	3.48 (0.73)
9. Providing students with a positive learning environment	94.6	4.37 (0.62)	74.8	3.84 (0.70)
10. Co-operation among teachers to identify problem students and to provide guidance	89.3	4.21 (0.70)	35.1	3.19 (0.83)
11. Strengthening students’ personal and social development	91.6	4.19 (0.61)	57.8	3.57 (0.69)
12. All students are targets for guidance services	84.6	4.13 (0.82)	43.8	3.34 (0.90)
13. Implementing guidance through class-teacher periods	88.0	4.14 (0.72)	56.9	3.54 (0.87)

Note: % including the rating for strongly agree and agree.

environment, a whole-school guidance programme, and as strengthening students' personal and social development. Only 75.5% indicated WSA as meaning the integration of guidance themes into subject teaching (see Table 1).

It was of interest to find out whether teachers' views on the definition of WSA could be grouped into categories. This was done by a principal components analysis, which reduces a large number of variables into a smaller set (Bryman & Cramer, 1990), thus facilitating the identification of factor structures. A principal components analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the thirteen items that defined WSA. Factors with eigenvalues equal to or greater than one were extracted, following Kaiser's criterion. To enhance the interpretability of the factors, only items with factor loading  $> 0.45$  were included in their respective factors. Results yielded two factors, accounting for 46% of the total variance (see Table 2). The first factor, labelled *fostering student development*, consisted of items describing WSA as the participation of all teachers in guidance programmes,

TABLE 2. Two-factor structure of the meaning of WSA

Items	Factor 1 loading	Factor 2 loading
<i>Factor 1. Fostering student development</i>		
2. All teachers' participation in activities organised by guidance team	0.64	0.11
13. Implementing guidance through class teacher periods	0.65	0.04
7. Integrating guidance themes in subject teaching	0.64	0.13
11. Strengthening students' personal and social development	0.63	0.26
6. A kind of values education	0.60	0.17
10. Co-operation among teachers to identify problem students and to provide guidance	0.57	0.32
1. A whole-school guidance programme	0.56	0.30
*9. Providing students with a positive learning environment	0.50	0.49
12. All students are targets for guidance services	0.49	0.19
<i>Factor 2. System of management</i>		
5. School having a consistent guidance policy	0.13	0.82
4. Co-operation and communication between school's functional teams	0.09	0.81
3. All teachers having a common goal in guidance	0.29	0.66
8. Related to school ethos and school mission	0.41	0.59
*9. Providing students with a positive learning environment	0.50	0.49
Eigenvalue	4.75	1.24
% of variance explained	36.5	9.5
Cronbach's alpha	0.81	0.76

Notes: Only items with loading above 0.45 are selected for the respective factor. Item \*9 is shared by both factors.

whether on a whole-school level or integrated into class–teacher periods or subject lessons, with the aim of strengthening students’ personal and social development. The second factor, labelled *system of management*, included items defining a whole-school approach to guidance as the school having common guidance goals, a consistent guidance policy, a positive school ethos, and co-operation and communication among teachers.

*Factors facilitating a whole-school approach: teachers’ personal beliefs*

Results from the interviews suggested that teachers perceived the support of the school head, the leadership of the guidance team, and the sharing of common guidance goals by school management as facilitating factors. Other factors included co-operation between the guidance team and other functional teams, and the involvement of teachers in policy making. As one teacher remarked,

‘Senior management needs to have a clear concept of guidance, a common goal, and provide a direction . . . If the school head supports guidance, he will get the teachers and the functional teams to co-operate.’

A few respondents referred to the importance of team spirit, the dedication of the teachers, and a trusting and harmonious collegial relationship among them. As one teacher suggested:

‘Teachers’ consensus in guidance . . . the attitudes and relationships among teachers are important. If they feel that whole-school involvement in guidance is for the good of all students, they will be willing to participate.’

Other facilitating factors were increasing resources through financial support and reduction of teacher workload, training teachers in guidance skills, and involving parents in guidance, possibly through the parent–teacher association.

The quantitative data provide corroborative support and further illustration. As factors which facilitate the implementation of WSA, over 90% of teachers referred to the leadership of the school head; clarity of vision on the part of the guidance team; co-ordination and co-operation between the guidance team and other functional teams; and commitment, harmonious relationships among teachers. Highly rated also were communication among teachers (89.7%) and an inviting school ethos (89.5%). Only 70% of respondents, however, agreed to parents’ participation in guidance as a facilitating factor (see Table 3).

To examine further whether these facilitating factors could also be grouped into categories, a principal components analysis with varimax rotation was applied to the fourteen items. Only one factor with an eigenvalue greater than one emerged, accounting for 57.9% of the total variance. The factor loadings ranged from 0.64 to 0.84.

TABLE 3. Facilitating factors for WSA: teachers' beliefs and their perceptions of school practice

Facilitating factors	Teachers' beliefs		School practice	
	%	Mean (SD)	%	Mean (SD)
1. Guidance team having a clear concept in guidance	94.2	4.27 (0.60)	61.6	3.61 (0.75)
2. Support of school head for guidance	93.9	4.40 (0.62)	71.3	3.78 (0.79)
3. Team spirit among teachers	87.4	4.26 (0.76)	33.7	3.10 (0.91)
4. There exists a venue of communication among teachers	89.7	4.21 (0.69)	46.8	3.33 (0.84)
5. School having a group of committed teachers	91.9	4.35 (0.67)	62.4	3.62 (0.82)
6. School having an inviting school ethos	89.5	4.24 (0.70)	46.2	3.35 (0.85)
7. Co-ordination in policy making between guidance and discipline team	90.1	4.23 (0.72)	49.1	3.36 (0.89)
8. Co-operation exists between guidance team and other functional teams	91.4	4.19 (0.65)	51.1	3.41 (0.81)
9. School management and teachers share common goals	86.7	4.19 (0.73)	31.2	3.11 (0.85)
10. Teacher participation in deciding guidance policy	85.2	4.08 (0.72)	38.1	3.17 (0.86)
11. Harmonious relationship among teachers	90.5	4.22 (0.68)	57.1	3.52 (0.78)
12. Having sufficient resources for guidance work	83.1	4.12 (0.83)	37.0	3.15 (0.87)
13. School organising courses to strengthen teachers' guidance skills	82.6	4.01 (0.86)	34.4	2.98 (0.97)
14. Parents' participation in student guidance	70.2	3.82 (0.92)	16.6	2.67 (0.92)

Note: % including the rating for strongly agree and agree.

#### *Whole-school approach to guidance: schools' actual practice as perceived by teachers*

To discover how teachers perceived the actual practice of WSA in their schools, respondents were asked to indicate (i) how other teachers in their schools perceived the meaning of WSA and (ii) whether their schools possessed the facilitating factors listed. Tables 1 and 3 show their ratings. Between 60 and 75% of the respondents indicated that other teachers in their school perceived WSA as providing students with a positive learning environment, as a form of values education, and as co-operation and communication between the school's functional teams. Only about 50% indicated that their colleagues perceived WSA as whole-school programmes, guidance programmes implemented through class-teacher periods, or strengthening

students' personal and social development. A much lower percentage reported that their colleagues considered WSA to mean all teachers having a common guidance goal (25%), taking part in guidance activities (27.4%) and integrating guidance themes into subject teaching (25.1%) (see Table 1).

Asked whether their school possessed the factors which facilitate WSA, 60–70% of the respondents indicated that their schools had the support of the school head, a group of committed teachers, and that the guidance team had a clear guidance concept. Between 30 and 40% of them reported their schools possessing facilitating factors such as team spirit among teachers, teacher participation in formulating the guidance policy, school management and teachers sharing a common vision, provision of sufficient resources and teacher training. Only 16.1% reported parental involvement in guidance (see Table 3).

#### *Comparison of teachers' personal beliefs with their perceived school reality*

To examine the issue of match or mismatch between teachers' personal beliefs and their perceived school reality, Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed ranks tests were applied to compare (1) respondents' personal beliefs on the meaning of WSA with their ratings on the views held by other teachers in their schools and (2) their personal beliefs on factors which facilitate WSA and their ratings on whether their schools possessed such factors. Findings revealed a significant difference in all items on the meaning of WSA ( $z = -13.2$  to  $-20.05$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and on all items on the factors which facilitate the implementation of WSA ( $z = -16.64$  to  $-20.86$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Similar results were found when the comparison was made separately on the Guidance Team Head sample (meaning of WSA:  $z = -6.04$  to  $-10.60$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; factors facilitating WSA:  $z = -7.95$  to  $-10.36$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the Guidance Team Member sample (meaning of WSA:  $z = -11.71$  to  $-17.37$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; factors facilitating WSA:  $z = -14.63$  to  $-18.11$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In general, respondents did not find the school reality similar to the beliefs they held.

A mismatch between respondents' personal beliefs and their perceived school reality was further illustrated in the respondents' ratings on whether they considered their school was implementing WSA. Only 55% of the Guidance Team Heads ( $N = 113$ ) indicated agreement, 26% ( $N = 54$ ) indicated uncertainty, and 20% ( $N = 39$ ) indicated disagreement. When the responses of both the Guidance Team Heads and the Guidance Team Members were considered, the ratings were even less favourable. Only 39% ( $N = 308$ ) of all the respondents indicated agreement, 37% ( $N = 290$ ) were uncertain, and 24% ( $N = 192$ ) indicated disagreement. In short, only a minority was confident that their schools were implementing WSA.

#### *School guidance focus and the practice and implementation of a whole-school approach to guidance*

The study also aimed to examine the guidance focus and practice in Hong Kong schools, as a follow-up to a previous study (Hui, 1998a). Assessment of the school guidance focus was based on the responses of the Guidance Team Heads, who were

responsible for guidance policy and implementation. The majority (70.6%,  $N = 156$ ) indicated that their schools focused on both remediation and preventive/developmental work, i.e. giving equal emphasis to handling student case referrals and organising preventive and developmental programmes. A total of 24.4% ( $N = 54$ ) indicated that their schools were mainly preventive, with handling casework as their second priority. Only 4.5% ( $N = 10$ ) considered their schools' guidance focus as mainly remedial, giving preventive and developmental programmes a lower priority. No Guidance Team Head suggested that the school focused solely on remedial casework. Only one respondent reported that the school focused solely on organising preventive and developmental programmes.

Further, the majority of the Guidance Team Heads indicated that their schools' guidance practice included remediation: supporting students with learning, emotional and behavioural problems (78.2%,  $N = 167$ ); prevention: early identification of students with problems and equipping students with coping skills (81.9%,  $N = 181$ ); and student development: helping students in whole-person development (77.8%,  $N = 169$ ). Hence, the findings are consistent with their previous rating that their schools focused on both remediation and prevention/student development.

It was of interest to explore whether the school guidance focus and practices were related to the school's implementation of WSA. Table 4 shows that a significant relationship between the implementation of WSA and school guidance focus (SGF) was found only in the Guidance Team Head sample (chi-square 6.28,  $p < 0.05$ ). Among the Guidance Team Heads who indicated that their schools were implementing WSA, only 2.7% ( $N = 3$ ) rated their school's guidance focus as mainly remedial. A total of 75.2% ( $N = 85$ ) rated their school guidance focus as both remedial & preventive/developmental. In contrast, among the Guidance Team Heads who

TABLE 4. Implementation of WSA and school guidance focus

	Guidance Team Heads WSA		Guidance Team Members WSA	
	YES ( $N = 113$ ) %	NO ( $N = 38$ ) %	YES ( $N = 193$ ) %	NO ( $N = 153$ ) %
SR	0	0	0.5	2
MR	2.7	13.2	9.3	16.3
BRP	75.2	65.8	67.9	58.5
MP	22.1	21.1	20.7	21.6
SP	0	0	1.6	1.3
Chi-square	6.28		6.07	
Pearson (df = 4)			$p < 0.05$	
			ns	

Note: SGF = school guidance focus; SR = solely remedial; MR = mainly remedial; BRP = both remedial & preventive/developmental; MP = mainly preventive/developmental; SP = solely preventive/developmental.

indicated that their schools were not implementing WSA, 13.2% ( $N = 5$ ) rated their school guidance focus as mainly remedial, and 65.8% ( $N = 25$ ) rated their school guidance focus as both remedial & preventive/developmental. A similar pattern was found in the ratings of the Guidance Team Members though a chi-square test did not show a significant relationship.

Table 5 shows the relationship between the school's implementation of WSA and its guidance practice. Within the Guidance Team Head sample, a significant relationship was revealed only in their rating of student development as guidance practice. Within the Guidance Team Member sample, however, a significant relationship was found in all three guidance practices. Among the Guidance Team Members who considered their schools to be implementing WSA, 90.6% ( $N = 174$ ) rated their guidance practice as prevention, 87.9% ( $N = 167$ ) as student development, and 76.8% ( $N = 146$ ) as remediation. On the other hand, among the Guidance Team Members who regarded their schools as not implementing WSA,

TABLE 5. Implementation of WSA and school guidance practice

Guidance practice	Guidance Team Heads WSA		Guidance Team Members WSA	
	YES ( $N = 113$ ) %	NO ( $N = 38$ ) %	YES ( $N = 193$ ) %	NO ( $N = 153$ ) %
<i>Remediation</i>				
Agree	78.2	83.8	76.8	59.9
Uncertain	12.7	5.4	19.1	13.7
Disagree	9.1	10.8	9.5	21.1
Chi-square	1.58		12.7	
Pearson (df = 2)	ns		$p < 0.005$	
<i>Prevention</i>				
Agree	87.6	71.8	90.6	59.2
Uncertain	11.5	25.6	6.8	29.2
Disagree	0.9	2.6	2.6	11.2
Chi-square	5.3		46.9	
Pearson (df = 2)	ns		$p < 0.001$	
<i>Student development</i>				
Agree	84.7	64.1	87.9	48.4
Uncertain	14.4	33.3	12.1	37.9
Disagree	0.9	2.6	0.0	13.7
Chi-square	7.48		68.8	
Pearson (df = 2)	$p < 0.05$		$p < 0.001$	

59.2% ( $N = 90$ ) perceived their guidance practice as prevention, and 59.9% ( $N = 91$ ) as remediation. Only 48.4% ( $N = 74$ ) regarded their guidance practice as student development.

In short, respondents who considered their schools to be implementing WSA also tended to perceive prevention and student development as their school's guidance focus and guidance practice.

## Discussion

### *The whole-school approach to guidance as a theoretical concept*

This study has shown that the notion of a whole-school approach in the field of guidance has developed beyond an initial set of vague and undefined ideas into a coherent set of concepts, comprising two distinct elements. WSA as *fostering student development* focuses on the content and focus of school guidance. In associating WSA with preventive and developmental guidance for the whole-person development of all students, the findings suggest that the teachers' beliefs on WSA tie in with their belief that student guidance is proactive and developmental (Hui, 1998b), and that guidance, in both its principle and its approach, is comprehensive for all students (Miller *et al.*, 1978; Watkins, 1998). Further, WSA as a form of guidance curriculum for the personal, social and affective development of students is not only the practice in a number of Hong Kong schools (Hui, 1997; Hui & Lo, 1997; Lam, 1994; Yu, 1995), but has become a belief among Hong Kong teachers.

The second element, WSA as *a system of management*, looks to the delivery of guidance at the whole-school level. This reference to WSA as school guidance goals and policy, co-operation and communication among teachers, and school ethos and mission, suggests that the teachers' interpretation of WSA has gone beyond merely the involvement of all teachers in guidance to a more sophisticated level, involving whole-school planning, administration and a positive school climate. This interpretation also points to the importance of system support and team approach in the delivery of guidance (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). In associating WSA with the system of management, this further illustrates that WSA is about the effective management of guidance.

As Watkins (1998) pointed out, the teachers' sense of responsibility to contribute to guidance, and the role of the guidance specialist as leader, co-ordinator and supporter, are important factors in developing a whole-school approach. This study has confirmed leadership, teachers' commitment and dedication, and communication and co-ordination as factors in facilitating schools' implementation of WSA. Similarly, these factors are those identified by Stoll and Mortimore (1995) as crucial factors in building effective schools. Hence, promoting a whole-school approach to guidance is consonant with running an effective school (Hui, 1994).

### *Teachers' personal beliefs and their perceived school reality: match or mismatch*

This study has revealed that the majority of teachers in the sample did not regard their schools as practising WSA. Specifically, WSA as all teacher involvement in

guidance activities, as teachers having a common guidance goal, and as integration of guidance themes into subject teaching, were not perceived as a shared view of other teachers. Crucial factors such as team spirit, communication, an inviting school ethos, and teacher involvement in policy making were perceived as less apparent in their schools. These findings also point to an overall mismatch between teachers' personal beliefs about WSA and their perceived school reality. The extent of the mismatch as indicated in this study, however, varied in magnitude. For example, on WSA as providing students with a positive learning environment, as a form of values education, and as co-operation and communication among school functional teams, there was less divergence between teachers' personal beliefs and their perceived school reality. Similarly, factors such as leadership and teacher dedication were perceived by the majority of the teachers as a reality in their schools.

#### *Prevention as schools' guidance focus and practice*

The present study provides further research evidence that Hong Kong schools have moved away from a solely remedial casework model. Though a majority of schools engaged both in remedial and preventive/developmental guidance, there was a stronger emphasis on prevention than remediation, a finding which differs from the previous study (Hui, 1998a). There was an increased emphasis on student development as guidance practice, though it was not as common as prevention. In addition, a close relationship was found between the implementation of WSA and prevention and student development as schools' guidance focus and practice. This association is understandable since a whole-school approach to guidance as an educational policy was launched as a move away from the remedial 'casework approach' (Hong Kong Education Department, 1993, 1995), and its purpose was for prevention of students' problems (Hong Kong Education Commission, 1990; Hong Kong Education Department, 1993).

#### *Implications for school guidance*

The findings have the following implications for the implementation of guidance in schools. First, the divergence between the personal beliefs of teachers about WSA and their perceived school reality suggests that the successful implementation of WSA cannot rely solely on the conviction of the guidance teams, though their leadership role is significant. The participation of all teachers in guidance activities may not necessarily generate a whole-school approach if teachers do not share a similar belief or are not even aware of the belief itself. To facilitate the concept of WSA becoming a shared belief of all teachers, schools should provide venues for sharing ideas and communication.

Second, implementing a whole-school approach is a sophisticated process, which involves not only the participation and co-operation of various school personnel, but also their attitudes towards guidance and the roles of different school members in guidance. Our teachers' reservations about parental involvement in guidance suggest a resistance to working with parents as partners. However, as

parents are part of an ecological system which interacts with the 'teacher' system directly and indirectly to bring about the whole-person development of students, further effort needs to be made to incorporate parents into the schools' implementation of WSA.

Third, while developmental guidance is a significant element in WSA, it still needs further promotion as a guidance practice and focus. As argued elsewhere (Hui, 2000), there is an urgent need to enhance the guidance curriculum, whether formal or informal, so that guidance can be delivered at the whole-school level for all students. It is only in this way that a school guidance ethos can be generated.

Finally, the lack of consensus among teachers on WSA as the integration of guidance themes into subject teaching suggests that attention should be given to the way in which a developmental guidance curriculum is introduced in schools. Though the integration of guidance themes into the academic curriculum is feasible (Hui & Lo, 1997), its success depends on teachers' attitudes and on their skill in effecting this integration. To promote such initiatives, training, support and the provision of resources for teachers are necessary. On the other hand, integrating guidance across the curriculum is only one element in a school's implementation of a whole-school approach. Hence, it is important to adopt a broader view such as that proposed by Watkins (1994): schools should adopt a 'whole curriculum view of guidance', identifying and co-ordinating contributions from various aspects of the school, instead of merely focusing on the contribution of subjects in the delivery of guidance. This has implications for schools' policy and management of guidance.

Although the results of this study serve to enhance our understanding about Hong Kong teachers' notion of a whole-school approach to guidance, caution must be exercised as the findings are limited to the sample of teachers with specific guidance responsibilities. This study only included guidance teachers, as they are responsible for the implementation of guidance. They were in a better position to offer an assessment of the school guidance focus and practice, and their beliefs on a whole-school approach to guidance would have implications for its implementation. While achieving this purpose, this study was not able to explore directly the views of other teachers on a whole-school approach to guidance. Further investigation into other school personnel's conception and evaluation of the implementation of a whole-school approach may be warranted.

To conclude, in the field of guidance and pastoral care, a whole-school approach to guidance which is for the purpose of student development has become a belief among Hong Kong teachers with guidance responsibilities. However, a whole-school approach to guidance as a practice is still in its initial stages. Further development of a whole-school approach to guidance would demand building awareness among all teachers as well as the school management, and the delivery of guidance throughout the whole-school curriculum. It would also demand strengthening developmental guidance along with preventive guidance. As fostering a whole-school approach is a way of making schools more effective in management of guidance, the present study has implications for schools other than those in Hong Kong which are concerned to make school a guidance community for the whole-person development of all students.

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