

**Trial Scheme on School Drug Testing
in Tai Po District
(School Year 2010/11)**

**Evaluation Research
Report**

December 2011

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I. Introduction

Chapter 1 Background

1.1 In October 2007, the Chief Executive in his Policy Address announced the appointment of the Secretary for Justice, the incumbent Deputy Chairman of the Fight Crime Committee (“FCC”), to lead a high level inter-departmental task force (“Task Force”) to tackle the youth drug abuse problem. The Task Force summed up its work and recommendations in its Report on Youth Drug Abuse (“Report”) in November 2008.

1.2 Considering the degree of seriousness of the youth drug abuse problem, and recognizing that proper school-based drug testing scheme may serve to deter and prevent drug abuse as well as facilitate early intervention of drug abusers so that they would be motivated and guided towards counselling or treatment at an early stage, the Task Force recommended that a research project be commissioned to devise possible school-based drug testing schemes for voluntary adoption by schools in Hong Kong.

1.3 In July 2009, the Chief Executive set out directions to tackle youth drug abuse problems. One of the key strategies is the carrying out of the Trial Scheme on School Drug Testing in Tai Po District in the school year 2009/10 (“2009/10 Scheme”), which was launched in December 2009.

1.4 The 2009/10 Scheme was completed smoothly in June 2010. More than 12,400 students joined the Scheme¹, representing some 61% of the student population. A total of 2,495 students were randomly selected for the

¹ According to the Protocol, the Trial Scheme includes drug testing and support programmes.

screening test. Of these, 1,975 students took the test and no confirmed positive case was found.

1.5 In view of the positive feedback of stakeholders, the absence of possible adverse implications, the apparent success of creating awareness to help arrest the trend of youth drug abuse, the Scheme was extended in Tai Po to the school year 2010/11 (“2010/11 Scheme”). This would reinforce the grounds gained last school year and sustain the overall momentum of school drug testing.²

² Security Bureau (Narcotics Division) and Education Bureau (November 2010), “School drug testing”, paper submitted to the Legislative Council Panel on Security (LC paper no. CB(2)197/10-11(01)).

Chapter 2 The 2010/11 Scheme

2.1 The Scheme is a joint initiative of the Government (led by the Narcotics Division (ND), Security Bureau (SB) and Education Bureau (EDB)) and 23 public sector secondary schools in the Tai Po District, supported by parties in the social welfare, healthcare and related sectors. Same as the 2009/10 Scheme, the development of the 2010/11 Scheme is guided by the following principles:

- a) Helping students in their best interest;
- b) Voluntary participation;
- c) Keeping personal information strictly confidential; and
- d) Professional testing and support services for students.

2.2 The purposes and imperatives of the 2010/11 Scheme, same as those of the 2009/10 Scheme, are as follows:

- a) For prevention – it will enhance the resolve of those students who have not taken any drugs to continue to stay away from drugs. They will be in a better position to say “no” to their peers when they are tempted to try drugs and this will help prevent the spread of drugs in schools; and
- b) For rendering assistance to students – the Scheme will trigger the motivation of those students abusing drugs to quit drugs and seek help, especially those who are trying drugs at an early stage. The Scheme will also provide appropriate support services to those students who wish to pull themselves out of the drug trap. The Scheme could also shed light on the effectiveness of cross-sector and multi-disciplinary downstream support service to student drug abusers.

2.3 Very often, young drug abusers have little motivation to seek help. Added to the hidden nature of psychotropic substance abuse, they may remain hidden from the usual help networks for quite some time until they are trawled by social workers or arrested by the police after they have abused drugs for a number of years when serious damage has already been done to their body and spirit. Apart from enhancing the resolve of those students who have not taken any drugs to continue to stay away from drugs, it is believed that by triggering the motivation of those students who have abused drugs to seek help, school drug testing would guide them towards counselling or treatment.

2.4 Each month, approximately 3% to 5% of participating students from a school would be randomly selected and tested by the Student Drug Testing (SDT) team. Each school was visited once or twice a month and some 24 to 40 students were randomly selected and tested during the visit(s). Students were not informed in advance of the date and time of visits.

2.5 For screened negative cases, the project officer would inform the results to the school principal via a school visit report and the principal would inform the parents or guardians of the students concerned.

2.6 For screened positive cases, the project officer would immediately inform the school principal and the school principal would notify the identified students' parents or guardians and invite them to a meeting on the day. The SDT team would provide on-the-spot counselling to the identified students. In addition, various counselling measures would be provided to the identified students, including:

- a) The school principal would notify the designated teachers for

- b) The SDT team would make immediate arrangements for the attendance of a school social worker and a case manager from the designated Counselling Centre for Psychotropic Substance Abusers (CCPSA), who would provide counselling services and necessary support to the identified students and their parents or guardians;
- c) The case manager, school social worker and/or designated teachers would discuss with the parents or guardians on matters related to the immediate welfare of the identified students and preliminary suggestions on appropriate support programmes.

2.7 The urine specimens concerned would be sent to the Government Laboratory for a confirmatory test and the result of which would be available in about 5 working days. The identified students and/or their parents or guardians could also request to have another test to be conducted by an independent laboratory.

2.8 When the cases were found to be false positive (i.e. when the result of the confirmatory test by the Government Laboratory or the independent laboratory was found to be negative), relevant parties would be informed. The case manager would abort the support services. In case the students or parents/guardians concerned had emotional distress, the case manager would provide necessary counselling services to them, and the school social worker would also provide necessary backup, if required.

2.9 For confirmed cases, according to the Protocol, the case manager would inform the students and their parents or guardians and continue to coordinate the support services. The project officer would inform the school

principal of the result and the school principal would release the result to the designated teacher and school social worker. The case manager would also convene a multi-disciplinary case conference to formulate a support programme for the identified students. For experimental or non-dependent regular abusers, various services would be provided to them, including:

- a) Counselling and assistance from school social workers and designated teachers at school;
- b) Community-based support services outside school, such as counselling sessions in the designated CCPSA, thematic therapeutic groups, community service programmes, family or interpersonal relationship training and psychiatric or psychological intervention; and
- c) Basic medical support;
- d) Subject to the agreement of the identified students and/or their parents or guardians, they would participate in a mentoring scheme and each of them would be matched with a mentor;
- e) Cases with psychiatric and other medical complications could be referred to the Psychological Medicine Clinic of Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital or Substance Abuse Clinic at Prince of Wales Hospital for specialist medical treatment.

2.10 Addicted (dependent) abusers requiring voluntary residential programmes could be admitted to the 40 drug treatment and rehabilitation centres run by seventeen non-governmental organizations (NGOs). After completion of the residential programme, the rehabilitated student could resume schooling in a mainstream or other school, with EDB providing placement assistance to facilitate social reintegration.

2.11 The support programme summarized above may last up to six months and would not go beyond 31 December 2011 upon completion of the Scheme. The identified students could continue to receive support services outside the Scheme from the designated CCPSA, school social workers, designated teachers, the mentoring scheme and related parties. Other services from relevant government departments (e.g. Integrated Family Service Centres of Social Welfare Department (SWD)) and NGOs would also be available to the identified students and/or their parents or guardians.

2.12 The 2010/11 Scheme was successfully completed in May 2011. Over 10,200 students had participated in the Scheme representing some 55% of the student population. A total of 2,668 students were randomly selected for the screening test. Of these, 1,977 students took the test and no confirmed positive case was found. Among the selected students, 622 students were assessed as being not suitable for the test in view of their physical condition or having taken medications. Sixty-six students could not provide a urine specimen for testing at the relevant time. Three students refused to take the test and the schools contacted their parents according to the protocol. There was one screened positive case and was confirmed as false-positive by the confirmatory test conducted by the Government Laboratory.

2.13 According to the Protocol issued by the Government in connection with the Scheme, the Scheme is defined to comprise drug testing and support programmes highlighted above.³ Nevertheless, drug testing should not be seen as a standalone panacea. It can be a key component of a comprehensive programme to implement a healthy school policy.⁴ Thus, apart from drug

3 Narcotics Division (2009), *Trial Scheme on School Drug Testing in Tai Po District, School Year 2009/10: Protocol*, p.2.

4 Narcotics Division, Security Bureau and Education Bureau (2010), "School drug testing", information paper submitted to the Legislative Council Panel on Security dated 11 November 2010 (LC paper no. CB(2)197/10-11(01), p. 4.

testing, a series of anti-drug educational and preventive activities and counseling services were organized by the CCPSA in Tai Po and the 9 NGOs providing school social work service to the 23 secondary schools in Tai Po. For the CCPSA in Tai Po, they had organized anti-drug talks and seminars for parents and students. Additional resources had also been provided to the 9 NGOs to enable them deploy extra school social workers to the 23 secondary schools in Tai Po. The additional social workers, together with the stationing school social workers at the 23 secondary schools, had arranged a variety of anti-drug educational preventive programmes and provided counseling and guidance services to students, especially those students who were at risk. Furthermore, additional financial provisions were made available to the 23 secondary schools in organizing anti-drug educational programmes for their students. These programmes and services were provided to all students in the 23 secondary schools, regardless of whether the students had participated in the Scheme or not. In other words, while the Scheme is consisted of drug testing and the support programmes for students tested positive, there are various anti-drug educational programmes and counseling services provided to students regardless of whether these students have or have not participated in the Scheme. These educational and counseling services will definitely have an impact on students in secondary schools in Tai Po. Accordingly, in the evaluation, the impact of the Scheme could not be separated from that of the various anti-drug educational programmes and counseling services, which were not considered to be part of the Scheme but were nevertheless simultaneously implemented in the 23 secondary schools in Tai Po.

Chapter 3 The Evaluation Research

3.1 Policy 21 Limited (“Project Team”) was commissioned to conduct an Evaluation Research for the 2009/10 Scheme (“2009/10 Research”), which lasted until June 2010. To make the most of the extended Scheme in Tai Po, the evaluation research was extended to cover the implementation of the Scheme in school year 2010/11 (“2010/11 Research”). A more robust approach was adopted to address the limitations in the research to date, to better assess the effectiveness of the Scheme over a longer period of time and to gather more data and experience for further development school drug testing in Hong Kong.

3.2 It may be noted that the 2009/10 Research is subjected to a number of inherent limitations. For example, no rigorous assessment of the awareness, attitude and behaviours of students before the launch of the Scheme in December was possible as the 2009/10 Research only started in January 2010. The time span of testing that the 2009/10 Research covered was too short to measure the impact to a significant extent. Nevertheless, the merits for further developing school drug testing in Hong Kong could be supported by positive research results to date despite such limitations.

3.3 The 2010/11 Research, which is a continuation of the 2009/10 Research, conducted in the school year 2010/11, is to address the previous research limitations, better assess the effectiveness over a longer period of time and gather more data and experience for further developing school drug testing in Hong Kong. The objectives of the present research are as follows:

- a) Building on the results of the 2009/10 Research to conduct comprehensive assessment of the Scheme in school year 2010/11 to evaluate its effectiveness, focusing on both the process and

outcomes;

- b) Based on the findings in (a) above, to make suitable recommendations that may revise or supplement those made in the Final Report of the Research for further developing school drug testing in Hong Kong.

3.4 This final report is based on findings obtained from the pre-test survey conducted between October and November 2010 (October 2010 pre-survey) and post-test survey conducted between May and June 2011 (June 2011 post-survey) on all 23 secondary schools in Tai Po and a random sample of secondary schools outside Tai Po, as well as in-depth interviews conducted with stakeholders of the 2010/11 Scheme.

II. Methodology

Chapter 4 Research methodology

Overview

4.1 Similar to the methodology adopted in the 2009/10 Research, both quantitative and qualitative information was collected in the 2010/11 Research. To assess the impact of the Scheme, quantitative information on students' awareness of drugs, attitude towards fighting drugs, drug taking behaviour and perceived effectiveness of the Scheme was collected. In addition, quantitative data were collected on the views of principals, teachers and parents on the Scheme. Qualitative information on views of relevant stakeholders on the Scheme and suggestions for possible improvements were also gathered.

4.2 As indicated in para.3.3 above, the 2010/11 Research builds on the results of the 2009/10 Research. Thus, attempts have been made in the 2010/11 Research to analyze the data obtained from both the 2009/10 Research and 2010/11 Research to ascertain, for example, if the Scheme has a sustained impact on students.

4.3 In this report, relevant findings of the 2009/10 Research are presented to show changes over time in the attitude and behaviour of students and views of school principals, teachers and parents. Detailed findings of the 2009/10 Research, however, will not be presented in this report. Readers interested in the findings of the 2009/10 Research may wish to refer to the Final Report of the 2009/10 Research.⁵

⁵ The Final Report of the Research is available in the website of the Narcotics Division

Quantitative surveys: the repeated measures design

4.4 To assess the impact of the Scheme, a *repeated measures design*⁶ was adopted by gathering quantitative information on the attitude and behaviour of students before and after implementation of the Scheme. Analysis was performed on a matched sample of students, in the pre-post design, such that information in respect of the same students enumerated in the October 2009 pre-survey and the June 2011 post-survey could be compared and analyzed.

4.5 It may be noted that in conducting the 2009/10 Research, a pre-post design was also adopted by comparing data on independent samples of students enumerated in the 2008/09 Survey of Drug Use among Students commissioned by the Narcotics Division, the December 2009 Survey of Students in Tai Po conducted by the Narcotics Division and the June 2010 Survey of Students conducted by the Project Team. However, the surveys, conducted by different parties, were not designed to facilitate the matching of students enumerated in different surveys. Hence, it is not possible, as in the case of the repeated measures design adopted in the 2010/11 Research, to control the variations in the characteristics of students in comparing changes in students' attitude and behaviour over time.

4.6 It should also be noted that the data obtained in the October 2010 pre-survey refer to the situation prior to the introduction of the 2010/11

(http://www.nd.gov.hk/en/school_drug_test_evaluation.htm)

⁶ A repeated measures design is characterized by taking two or more measurements (say in a pre-post design) on the same subject. This design offers greater explanatory power, for a given sample size, as the variability between samples of subjects tested in say a pre-post design could be controlled.

Scheme. Needless to say, apart from Secondary 1 Tai Po students⁷, other Tai Po students in Secondary 2 to 6 were affected by the 2009/10 Scheme as well. In other words, the attitudes and behaviour of Secondary 2 to 6 in November/October 2010 prior to implementation of the 2010/11 Scheme were influenced by the 2009/10 Scheme, even though it could still be argued that comparison between data obtained in the October 2010 pre-survey and those from the June 2011 post-survey reflect the impact of the 2010/11 Scheme and the sustained impact of the 2009/10 Scheme.

Sampling design for the quantitative surveys

October 2010 pre-survey

4.7 The October 2010 pre-survey covered Tai Po students and non-Tai Po students. All Tai Po students in the 23 secondary schools were invited to participate in the survey. For non-Tai Po students, a two-stage disproportionate stratified random sampling design was adopted. In the first stage, a stratified random sample of schools was selected with types of schools and districts as the stratification factors. A random sample of 169 secondary schools was selected for the survey. A total of 63 schools were enumerated in the survey, representing a 37% response rate. In the second stage, for each school sampled, one class was randomly selected from each grade and all students in the class sampled were invited to participate in the survey.

⁷ Tai Po student refers to Secondary 1 to 6 students who were studying in Tai Po.

	Number sampled		Number enumerated		Response rate (%)	
	Schools	Respondents ⁸	Schools	Respondents	Schools	Respondents
Tai Po	23	18,577	23	17,825	100	96
Other districts	169	14,481	63	13,363	37	92
Total	192	33,058	86	31,188	45	94

June 2011 post-survey

4.8 The June 2011 post-survey covered students, school principals, teachers and parents. For secondary schools in Tai Po, all school principals, teachers and students were invited to participate in the survey. A random sample of parents was selected, using a self-administered method. Twenty school principals, 933 teachers, 14,271 students and 3,014 parents were enumerated, representing a response rate of 87%, 82%, 93% and 74% respectively.

	Number sampled		Number enumerated		Response rate (%)	
	Schools	Respondents	Schools	Respondents	Schools	Respondents
Principals	23	23	20	20	86.9	86.9
Teachers	23	1,142	21	933	91.3	81.6
Students	23	15,333	21	14,271	91.3	93.0
Parents	23	4,055	21	3,014	91.3	74.3

4.9 Similar to the pre-survey, for secondary schools outside Tai Po, a

⁸ Students sampled in the schools enumerated in the 86 schools enumerated in the first stage.

two-stage disproportionate stratified random sampling design was adopted to recent non-Tai Po students to participate in the October 2010 pre-survey. A total of 83 schools were enumerated in the survey, representing a response rate of 49.1%.

Types of schools	Total number of schools⁹	Number sampled	Number enumerated	Response rate (%)
Government	30	11	9	81.1
Aided	347	130	62	47.7
Direct Subsidy Scheme	60	24	10	41.6
CAPUT	4	4	2	50.0
Total	441	169	83	49.1

4.10 All selected school principals and teachers were invited to participate in the post-survey, by completing a self-administered questionnaire. For students who participated in the October 2010 pre-survey were invited to participate in the post-survey. Parents were selected on a non-overlapping stratified random sampling design, with the stratification factor being grade. For each school sampled in the first stage, one class other than the class already sampled for students was randomly selected from each grade. The parents of all students in the class thus sampled were invited to participate in the survey. A total of 78 principals, 3,074 teachers, 11,275 students and 8,526 parents were enumerated in the post-survey.

⁹ Excluding the 23 secondary schools in Tai Po.

	Number sampled	Number enumerated	Response rate (%)
Principals	169	78	46.1
Teachers	4,466**	3,074	68.8**
Students	12,043*	11,275	93.6**
Parents	11,280*	8,526	75.5**

** for schools enumerated in the survey.

* estimated for schools enumerated in the survey

4.11 It may be noted that while the response rate for schools in Tai Po is very high, that for schools outside Tai Po is not satisfactory. Given that participation in the survey is voluntary, the project team has to accept the fact that schools might not be able to participate in the survey for a variety of reasons like they were very busy within the time frame when the survey was conducted. Readers are cautioned to note this in interpreting findings of the June 2011 survey for students of schools outside Tai Po and their parents. Nevertheless, it should be noted that for secondary schools in Tai Po, which are the main focus of the present research, the response rate of both the October 2010 pre-survey and June 2011 post-survey, is exceedingly high.

Questionnaire design

4.12 Anonymous questionnaires were administered for both the October 2010 pre-survey and June 2011 post-survey. Questions in the 2 surveys were largely the same and were shown in Appendix 1a. Three standardized scales were used to collect information on students' awareness of and attitude towards drugs as follows:

- a) The Beat Drug Fund Evaluation Question Set 2 on knowledge of drugs which comprises 10 items;
- b) The questionnaire on beliefs about drug abuse, adapted from the Beliefs About Cough Medicine Abuse Scale¹⁰ which comprises 24 items; and
- c) The Drug Avoidance Self-Efficacy Scale¹¹ which comprises 10 items.

4.13 In addition, for Tai Po students, their views were solicited anonymously in the June 2011 post-survey on their participation in the Scheme, the process of drug testing, impact of drug testing and expectations of and suggestions for future drug testing schemes. To facilitate comparison with data collected in the Research conducted for the 2009/10 Scheme, some questions used in the June 2010 survey were adopted in the June 2011 post-survey, which include the knowledge of drugs and attitude towards drugs.

Changes in knowledge of drugs

4.14 10 items were used to solicit students' views on their knowledge of drugs, using the Beat Drug Fund Evaluation Question Set 2. A 6-points likert scale has used, with "1" denoting "strongly disagree" and "6" denoting "strongly agree", and the intermediary values from "2" to "5" denoting "quite disagree", "a bit disagree", "a bit agree" and "quite agree", mean scores on knowledge of drugs were computed from the survey data.

10 Shek, Daniel T L and Lam, Ching Man (2008), "Beliefs about cough drug medicine abuse among Chinese young people in Hong Kong", in *Social Behavior and Personality*, 36(1): 135 – 144.

11 Garth W. Martin, D. Adrian Wilkinson, Constantine X. Poulos, The drug avoidance self-efficacy scale, *Journal of Substance Abuse*, Volume 7, Issue 2, 1995, pages 151-163.

Changes in attitude towards drugs

4.15 24 items were used to solicit students' attitude towards drugs. A 6-points Likert scale was used, with "1" denoting "strongly disagree" and "6" denoting "strongly agree", and the intermediary values from "2" to "5" denoting "quite disagree", "a bit disagree", "a bit agree" and "quite agree", mean scores on attitude towards drugs were computed from the survey data.

4.16 A number of questions used in the 2008/09 Survey of Drug Use among Students, the December 2009 Survey of Students in Tai Po and the June 2010 Survey of Students were included in the October 2010 pre-survey and June 2011 post-survey. This facilitated analysis of the changes in the attitude and behaviour of students during the survey reference periods of 2008/09, December 2009, June 2010, October 2010 and June 2011.

4.17 As noted by the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse, personal, school and family could be a protective factor as well as a risk factor on students' drug taking behaviour.¹² Therefore, performance at school, parental guidance and family relationship were also collected in the pre- and post-surveys. This would facilitate more in-depth analysis of the survey findings based on the characteristics of the students and the extent of parental anti-drug guidance and supervision.

4.18 To facilitate comparison across different groups of stakeholders, the questionnaire items included in the questionnaires for students, where applicable, were also included in the questionnaires for school principals, teachers and parents. In addition, views of school principals and teachers

¹² *Report of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse* (November 2008), Chapter 3.

were also sought on the arrangements for drug testing. To facilitate comparison with data collected in the 2009/10 Evaluation Research, some questions used in the June 2010 survey were adopted in the June 2011 post-survey.

4.19 The questionnaires for principals, teachers and parents used in the June 2010 post-survey are shown in Appendix 1b.

Data collection procedures

4.20 The October 2010 pre-survey and June 2011 post-survey were conducted in an anonymous manner. The names of respondents and names of schools were not shown on the questionnaires. The processing of the questionnaires and the analysis of the survey findings were conducted without identifying names of individual students and individual schools. The arrangement, on protecting the confidentiality of respondents, would help to encourage frank response.

4.21 Students were asked to complete a group administered questionnaire, which comprised the main questionnaire and a separate matching sheet collecting the background information of the students including date of birth, gender, grade and class. Both documents were printed with a unique bar code and were collected separately such that information could not be related to individual students manually. When the data were entered into a computer, the main questionnaire and the matching sheet were matched making use of the bar codes by a computer programme. The individual differences before and after the participation of the scheme could be compared.

4.22 Students sampled for the survey were assembled in the classrooms or school halls to complete the questionnaires, in the absence of teachers or other school personnel. Researchers from the Project Team were responsible for distributing and collecting the questionnaires, and were present throughout the data collection process to answer any questions students might have on the questionnaires. The students were also assured that information provided by individual students would not be revealed and the survey data would be analyzed at an aggregate level, without revealing the identity of individual schools or students.

4.23 For school principals, teachers and parents, they were invited to complete a self-administered questionnaire, and return the completed questionnaire in a sealed envelope. Personal identifiers were not collected. As such, information provided by teachers and parents was kept strictly confidential and was not known by other school personnel.

Gathering of qualitative information

4.24 Qualitative information required for the research was gathered from stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Scheme, including school principals, teachers, students and school social workers in the 23 secondary schools in Tai Po. For school principals and school social workers, in-depth interviews were conducted to solicit their views on the implementation of the Scheme and the impact of the Scheme on students. For teachers and students, focus group discussions were conducted. The Project Team also conducted focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with Tai Po students and their parents through NGOs. Their views on the implementation of Scheme and their perceived impact of the Scheme on students and anti-drug measures

taken by schools were solicited.

4.25 For stakeholders outside Tai Po, the Project Team believes that it would be useful to gather their views as well, especially on future rolling out of school-based drug testing to other schools in the territory. Thus, a number of in-depth interviews were conducted with principals of secondary schools in different districts. In addition, representatives of educational organizations, School Sponsoring Bodies (SSBs), parent-teacher associations were also consulted.

4.26 Other non-school stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in the Scheme were also covered in the consultation process. They were members of the SDT team, social workers from CCPSA, other NGOs in and outside Tai Po, as well as representatives from government agencies (e.g. SWD). In addition, stakeholders responsible for providing preventive, treatment and other follow-up services to students involved or potentially involved in drug use such as medical practitioners were also consulted. A list of organizations and individuals consulted in the research is given in Appendix 2 and the number of these organizations and individuals is summarized in the table below.

	Stakeholders involved**				
	In-depth interviews with Principals	Focus group discussions with teachers	Discussion meetings with students	In-depth interviews with social workers	In-depth interviews with other stakeholders
Tai Po District	20	20 schools	19 schools	10 NGOs	2 groups
Districts outside Tai Po	2	-	-	9*	16*

* Individuals and organizations

** Excluding government departments

Literature research

4.27 In conducting the 2009/10 research, an extensive literature was conducted covering relevant research studies conducted overseas. The latest research report that was reviewed in the 2009/10 research was the study published by the US Department of Education in July 2010. This study showed that students participating in mandatory random drug testing reported less substance use than students in schools without drug testing. The study was conducted in 2007-08 on more than 4,700 students in 36 high schools in southern USA, with half of the schools randomly assigned to the treatment group with drug testing and another half assigned to the control group without drug testing. Nevertheless, researchers noted that the study was conducted over a one-year period and did not confirm longer-term

effects of drug testing.¹³

4.28 For the 2010/11 research, another attempt was made by using the “360 Search and Webfeat” which gave lists of reference materials analyzed by topics. Using the keywords “random drug test”, “drug testing”, “school drug testing” and “drug detection”, the search engine returned 619, 3,874, 118 and 2,660 pieces of reference materials respectively that were published in 2010 and 2011. Attempts were made to further refine the search by selecting relevant topics listed by the search engines, namely “drug testing”, “drug abuse” and “illicit drugs”, and excluding topics that were not relevant such as “cancer”, “medicine”, “pain”, “virus”, “cell”, “HIV”, “disease”, “genetic”, “resistance”, etc. Based on this approach, 16 references were identified. A review of these 16 references was undertaken, the result of which showed that these 16 references were not directly relevant to the present research. Consequently, these references were not cited in the present report. Readers interested in research studies conducted in other countries may wish to refer to the report of the 2009/10 research.

Data analysis

4.29 Given that a mixed method was adopted in the research, in interpreting the research findings, the Project Team has attempted to triangulate findings obtained from different methods. As noted by researchers, triangulation, “across method” or “within method”, enabled a more holistic and contextual analysis of the phenomenon. By gathering and triangulating quantitative and qualitative information from different sources, it helped

¹³ James-Burdumy, Susanne, Brian Goesling, John Deke, and Eric Einspruch (2010), *The effectiveness of mandatory-random student drug testing*, US Department of Education.

increase the richness of and confidence in the information gathered.¹⁴

4.30 As the aim of the 2010/11 Research is to assess the impact of Scheme instead of comparing the attitude and behaviour of Tai Po students and those non-Tai Po students, the focus of data analysis was to estimate changes in the attitude and behaviour of students before and after the launch of the scheme, and to compare and contrasting such changes between Tai Po students who had participated in the Scheme and those who had not.

4.31 In analyzing the survey data, the Project Team is aware that many of the questions were ordinal in nature, which was very common in social research. Though strictly speaking, the usual measures of means and standard deviations and parametric tests are not applicable. Researchers were of the view that the strictest application of rules about the use of parametric statistics for scale data would leave many researchers ill-equipped to handle the multivariate nature of most problems existing in social, administrative and clinical sciences and considered it was safe to assume equality of intervals in the scale data.¹⁵

4.32 In addition, more sophisticated statistical tests such as t-tests and analysis of variance were performed where applicable to analyze the relationship between variables measured in the study. As demonstrated by researchers, by simulating results obtained from non-parametric methods, the validity of such tests does not require any assumption of normality on the underlying distribution, provided that the sample size is sufficiently large.¹⁶

For the purposes of the 2010/11 Research, given that the sample size of the

14 Casey, Dympna and Murphy, Kathy (2009), "Issues in using methodological triangulation in research", in *Nurse researcher*, 16(4): 40 – 55.

15 Desselle, Shane P (2005), "Construction, implementation and analysis of summated rating attitude scales", in *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 69: 1 – 5.

16 Lumley, Thomas, et al (2002), "The importance of normality assumption in large public datasets", in *Annual Review of Public Health*, 23: 151 – 169.

questionnaire surveys was large enough, parametric methods such as analysis of variance were used in the analysis.

4.33 In the present research, a number of questions were asked to collate information on students' knowledge of and attitude towards drugs, using standardized measurement scales mentioned above. Several composite measures, or the latent variables or underlying factors, were identified from the observed data using exploratory factor analysis.¹⁷ Based on the design of the study and the availability of data, the internal validity of the various underlying factors was assessed by examining the convergent and discriminant validity of these factors, their reliability assessed by using the split-half method and their internal consistency analyzed by computing the Cronbach alpha.^{18 19} In addition, inter-item correlation was conducted to determine the level of relatedness of items to each of the factors.^{20 21}

4.34 As pointed out by researchers, qualitative research does not seek to quantify data, with the selection of interviewees or focus group discussants not meant to cover a statistically representative sample of respondents.²² Thus, for qualitative information gathered in the research, it should be noted that the purpose of gathering qualitative information, which was based on a handful of interviewees and focus group participants, is not to establish new findings independent from the quantitative data collected of principals, teachers, students and parents. In the present research, qualitative data

17 Lu, Cheng Hsiung (2006), "Assessing Construct Validity: The Utility of Factor Analysis", in *Journal of educational measurement and statistics*, 15: 79 – 94.

18 DeCoster, Jamie (2000), *Scale construction note*, Department of Psychology, University of Alabama, assessed on 21 August 2010, www.stat-help.com/notes.html

19 Santos, J Reyinaldo A (1999), "Cronbach's Alpha: a tool for assessing the reliability of scales", in *Journal of Extension*, 37(2).

20 Shek, Daniel T L (2007), et al, "Convergence of subjective outcome and objective outcome evaluation findings: insights based on the Project P.A.T.H.S.", in *The Science World Journal*, 7: 258 – 267.

21 Faleye, Bamidele Abiodun (2008), "Reliability and factor analyses of a Teacher Efficacy Scale for Nigerian secondary school teachers", in *Journal of research in educational psychology*, 6(3): 823 – 846.

22 Pope, Catherine, et al (2000), "Qualitative research in health care: analyzing qualitative data", in *BMJ*, 320: 114 – 116.

gathered was used to supplement the findings revealed from the quantitative data. The classical content analysis was used in analyzing qualitative information gathered in the research, with qualitative information gathered broken into smaller chunks of data and then coded.²³ The computer software, Atlas.ti, which is commonly used by researchers in qualitative analysis, was used in the research in coding the qualitative information. Furthermore, it should also be noted that, as pointed out by researchers, there are limits to the extent to which qualitative information could be generalized. The questions asked and the answers given are not standardized, and may vary in different interview contexts. Thus, the usual expressions are “most”, “few” or “the majority” rather than concrete numbers.²⁴ Finally, the identity of interviewees or focus group discussions is not revealed in this report.

Hierarchy of evidence

4.35 The Project Team is acutely aware that there are strengths and weaknesses in the information gathered through different methods and has used and interpreted the information with care and due reference to the “hierarchy of evidence”. Researchers noted that in the hierarchy of evidence, systematic review (which represented a comprehensive accounting of all randomized controlled trials related to the problem area) and randomized controlled trials were traditionally placed higher in the hierarchy, followed by cohort study, case controlled study (in which “cases” with the condition under study were matched with cases without the condition, serving as “controls”, and a retrospective analysis conducted to examine the differences between the two groups), cross-sectional survey, case report(s), expert

23 Onwuegbuzie, Anthony J., et al. (2009), “A Qualitative Framework for Collecting and Analyzing Data in Focus Group Research” in *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(3): 1 – 21.

24 Vicsek, Lilla (2010), “Issues in the analysis of focus groups: generalizability, quantifiability, treatment of context and quotations”, in *The Qualitative Report*, 15(1): 122 – 141.

opinion and anecdote. Nevertheless, the hierarchy only focused on the internal validity, without taking into account external validity. External validity was concerned with whether a treatment found to be effective in a particular setting or group of persons be generalized to other settings or groups of persons.^{25 26}

4.36 In addition, researchers also noted that in the processes of randomized control trials, only a narrow spectrum of the target group under study might qualify for inclusion in the study, implying that the external validity of randomized control trials was low. There were also legal or ethical issues preventing the use of randomized control trials. On the other hand, non-randomized control studies like cohort study and case controlled study had higher external validity and were more firmly based on real world situations.^{27 28}

4.37 For the purposes of the present research, in the absence of random allocation of students into control and experimental groups, the project team has attempted to make the best use of quantitative data on the changes in students' attitudes and behaviour for a matched sample of students in secondary schools in Tai Po where the Scheme was implemented, based on a pre-post design, and compare the findings with data obtained from a representative sample of students in secondary schools outside Tai Po where the Scheme was not implemented. It might be argued that as students were not randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups, there might be selection bias. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that students

25 Bowe, Pete (2007), "Confronting the hierarchy of evidence", in *Healthcare counseling and psychotherapy Journal*, 7(2): 16 – 20.

26 Brighton, Brian, et al (2003), "Hierarchy of evidence: from case reports to randomized controlled trials", in *Clinical orthopaedics and related research*, 413: 19 – 24.

27 Evans, David (2003), "Hierarchy of evidence: a framework for ranking evidence evaluating healthcare interventions", in *Journal of clinical nursing*, 12:77 – 84.

28 Hoppe, Danniell J (2009), "Hierarchy of evidence: why observational studies fit it and why we need them", in *Journal of bone and joint survey*, 91(Supplement 3): 2 – 9.

were allocated to secondary schools through the Secondary 1 allocation system, taking into account students' preferences, the location of primary schools attended, academic performance and the random allocation process within a broad ability range, which is not related to school drug testing. Thus, while there is likely to be selection bias when comparing changes between students in Tai Po who have participated in the Scheme and other students, there is not likely to be significant selection bias, if any, in comparing changes between students in Tai Po as a whole and students outside Tai Po.

Evaluation paradigms

4.38 Finally, as noted by researchers, in assessing effectiveness and impact of social programs, the dominant evaluation paradigm adopted by researchers is based on the hypothetico-deductive methodology. Using experimental or quasi-experimental design, this method enables researchers to identify the causal relationship between certain outcomes and the “treatment”. However, in order to gain insight into, for instance, why and how a program works, it has been suggested that the interpretivist or constructivist paradigm should be adopted, focusing on answering questions about the process and implementation, and what the experiences have meant for those involved.²⁹

4.39 The hypothetico-deductive methodology, in its crudest form, depends on the conditions that the evidence supporting the hypothesis is true and the evidence is the logical outcome of the hypothesis.³⁰ This method is however not without limitations. For example, researchers pointed out that the method

29 W K Kellogg Foundation (2004), *Evaluation Handbook: philosophy and expectation*.

30 Grimes, Thomas R (1990), “True, content and the hypothetico-deductive method”, in *Philosophy of science*, 57: 514 – 522.

had problems in determining the relevance between evidence and hypothesis or theory. It could not distinguish and confirm or disconfirm a particular part of a theory.³¹

4.40 It may be noted that the two approaches reflect a researcher's belief about the nature of the world. The hypothetico-deductive methodology follows a positivist paradigm which maintains that the reality is fixed and the objective knowledge can be produced through rigorous methodology. An interpretivist researcher, on the other hand, maintains that knowledge is socially constructed and reality is ultimately subjective. Researchers also noted that the instruments used in positivist studies, especially those designed to quantify people's subjective feelings, were socially and culturally constructed.³²

4.41 The project team believes that in evaluating the Scheme, it is necessary to assess the impact of the Scheme, in a scientific manner, following as far as practically possible the positivist approach. In addition, given the issues highlighted above, the project team has gathered views of stakeholders and other qualitative information related to the Scheme, following the interpretivist approach. In particular, the project team believes that suggestions gathered from and experience shared by students, parents, principals, teachers, social workers and medical practitioners interviewed in the course of the research, especially those that were echoed by most of them and were in general agreement with the quantitative data, are valuable references, even though there are not yet any research findings to confirm their validity. It is worth exploring these suggestions further, rather than discarding them completely. Against, this background, the project team has

31 Rakover, Sam S (2002), "Reconstruction of past events from memory: an alternative to hypothetico-deductive method", in *Behaviour and philosophy*, 30: 101 – 122.

32 Broom, Alex and Willis, Evan (2007), "Competing paradigms and health research", in Saks, Mike and Allsop, Judith, *Researching health: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods*.

included suggestions that had had been put into practice and were considered effective in helping students stay away from drugs by interviewees and focus group discussants. Needless to say, such practices should be subjected to rigorous review and evaluation, similar to that for the Scheme.

Limitations of the research

Quasi-experimental design

4.42 It should be noted that participation in drug testing was based on decisions of students and parents while participation in the Scheme by schools was based on the joint decision of all schools in Tai Po. In other words, participation in the Scheme and in drug testing was not random. Hence, a randomized design was not possible.

4.43 Furthermore, the original intent is to recruit samples outside Tai Po as control group of the study in order to examine the impact of the implementation of the Scheme. In the course of conducting the research, the Project Team realized that this was not possible. Principals, teachers, students and parents were watching closely what was happening to drug testing in schools in Tai Po. The survey findings, for example, showed that the great majority of students, parents, teachers and principals of schools outside Tai Po had heard about the Scheme in Tai Po, and among them the majority knew something or a lot about the Scheme.

4.44 In short, the control group of students, parents, teachers and parents cannot in practice be “controlled”, as far as the impact of the Scheme is concerned. Given that school drug testing and the related publicity and

educational activities are largely educational in nature, such impact on the control group should be welcomed, even though it has diminished the usefulness of the control group in the research design.

III. School Drug Testing in Tai Po: the Input and the Process

Chapter 5 Coverage of the Scheme

5.1 More than 10,200 students³³ had participated in the Scheme.³⁴ The June 2011 post-survey showed that about 57% of students indicated that they had participated in the Scheme, 39% had not participated in the Scheme and the balance of 4% refused to answer the question. Among those who indicated that they had participated in the Scheme, more than half (59%) made the decision together with their parents; 30% made the decision on their own. About 10% of these students indicated that the decision to participate in the Scheme was solely made by their parents.

	Post-survey 2009/10 %	Post-survey 2010/11 %
Yes, who decide to participate in the	64.1	57.4
<i>My parents and I</i>	57.6	59.0
<i>Only I</i>	27.9	29.7
<i>Only my parents</i>	12.3	10.0
<i>Refuse to answer</i>	2.2	1.2
No, who decide not to participate in the	34.7	38.7
<i>My parents and I</i>	55.8	53.5
<i>Only I</i>	33.3	38.8
<i>Only my parents</i>	7.1	6.9
<i>Refuse to answer</i>	3.8	0.8
Refuse to answer	1.2	3.9

33 “Tai Po students” refers to those students who studied in Tai Po secondary schools whereas “non-Tai Po students” refers to those students who studied in secondary schools outside Tai Po.

34 Source: Narcotics Division, Security Bureau.

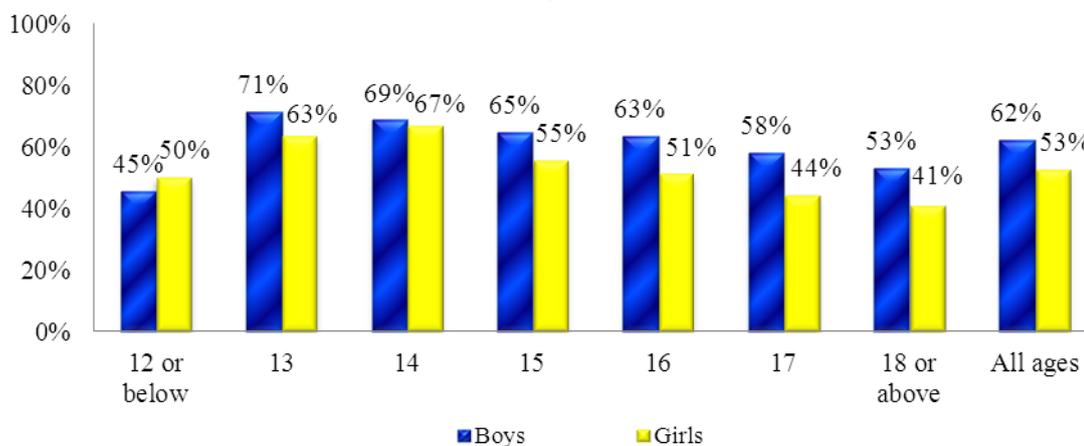
<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201006/28/P201006280169.htm> retrieved on 29 June 2010.

5.2 Similar pattern was observed for students who had not participated in the Scheme. More than half of these students (54%) made the decision together with their parents; 39% made the decision by they themselves. Only 7% of them indicated that the decision was made by their parents alone.

5.3 Compared to results of last year's survey (the 2009/10 Research), more students made the decision to participate in the Scheme on their own. While more than half of students decided whether or not to participate in the Scheme together with their parents, more than one-third of them made the decision on their own. Data collected from the in-depth interviews with Tai Po students revealed that the students believed they were able to determine what was good for them and to make the decision to participate or not in the Scheme on their own. If they decided not to participate, they believed that they could easily explain their decision to their parents and obtain their parents' consent. A few of them even remarked that their parents did not bother with their decision, and might not be fully aware of the existence or the rationale of the Scheme.

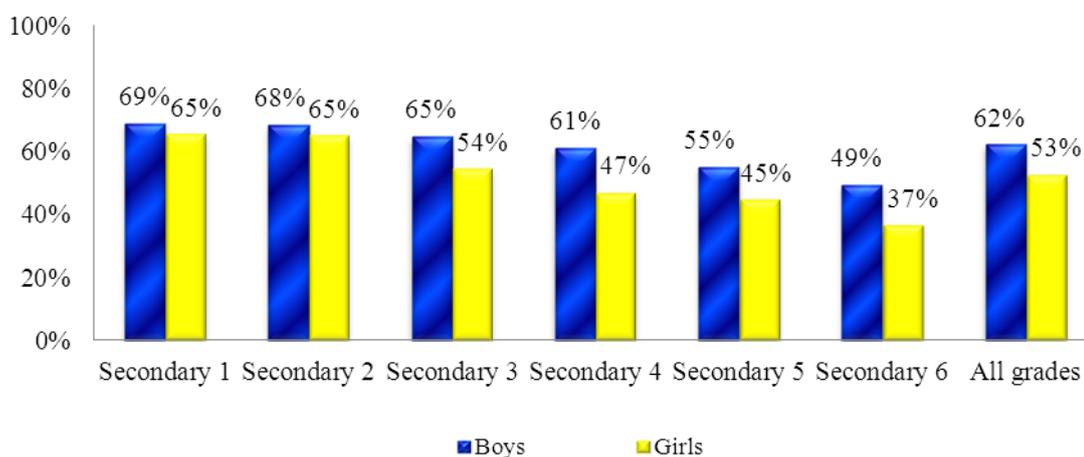
5.4 A higher proportion of boys (62%) participated in the Scheme as compared with girls (53%). Apart from those aged 12 or below, the participation rate fell steadily with age. For instance, 71% of boys and 63% of girls aged 13 participated in the Scheme, the percentage dropped to 53% (for boys) and 41% (for girls) of those at 18 years old or above.

Percentage of students participating in the 2010/11 Scheme by age and by sex



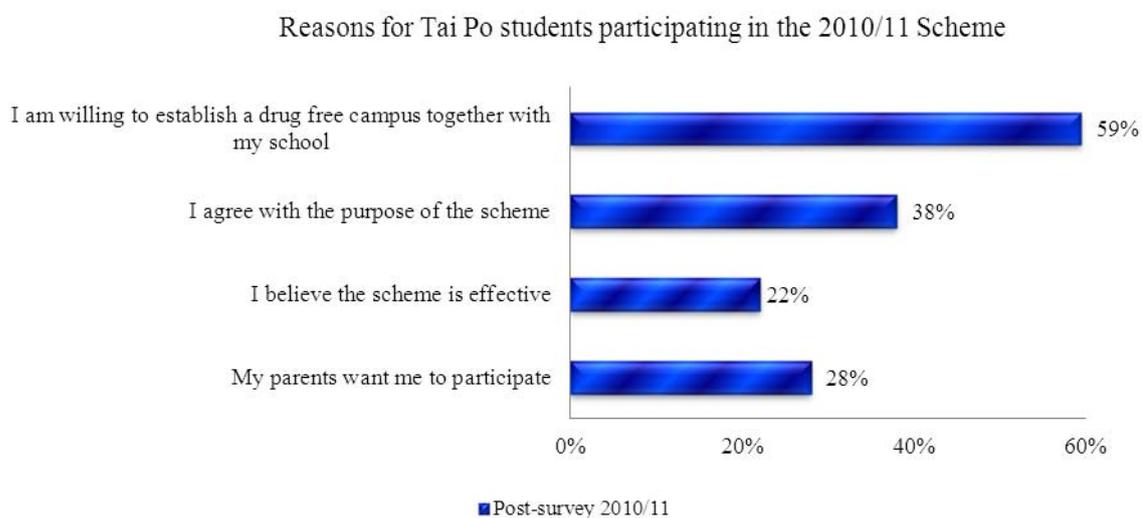
5.5 A similar trend was observed when the data were categorized by grades. The participation rate of Secondary 1 students was the highest (69% for boys, 65% for girls), while the participation rate of Secondary 6 students was the lowest (49% for boys, 37% for girls).

Percentage of students participating in the 2010/11 Scheme by grade and by sex



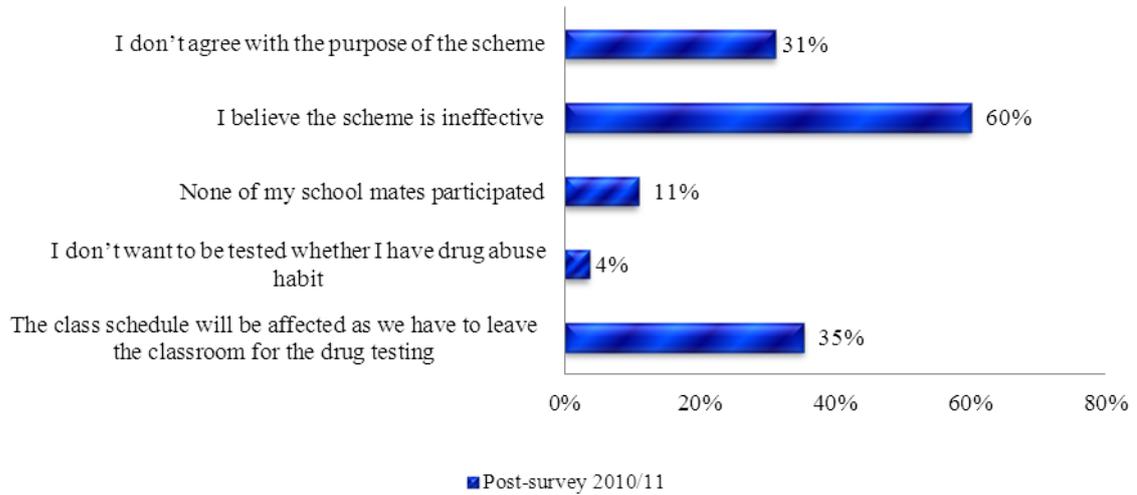
5.6 Information collected from in-depth interviews with principals of Tai Po secondary schools revealed that students at senior forms were less likely to participate in the Scheme because they were pre-occupied with preparations for public examinations. They were worried that their academic achievement would be affected if they were asked to leave the class for drug testing.

5.7 For those who had participated in the 2010/11 Scheme, their main reasons for doing so were that “I am willing to establish a drug free campus together with my school” (accounting for 59% of students concerned), “I agree with the purpose of the Scheme” (38%), “my parents want me to participate” (28%) and “I believe the Scheme is effective” (22%). Obviously, students participated in the Scheme mainly because they shared the objectives of the Scheme and considered the Scheme effective.



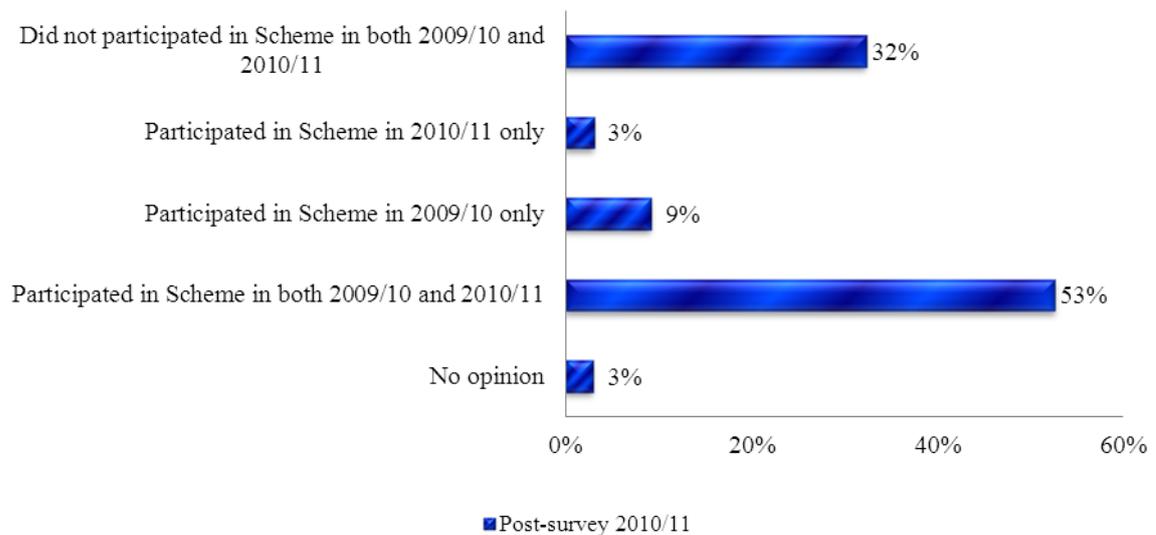
5.8 For those who had not participated in the 2010/11 Scheme, their main reasons for doing so were that “I believe the Scheme is ineffective” (accounting for 60% of students concerned), “I don’t agree with the purpose of the Scheme” (31%) and “the class schedule will be affected as we have to leave the classroom for the drug testing” (35%). Obviously, students did not participate in the Scheme mainly because they did not concur with the objectives of the Scheme and considered the Scheme ineffective.

Reasons for Tai Po students not participating in the 2010/11 Scheme



5.9 It may be of interest to note that most Tai Po students studying at Secondary 2 to 6 had a chance to participate in the 2009/10 Scheme. Most of those who participated in the 2009/10 Scheme had also participated in the 2010/11 Scheme. Only about 9% (or 3% out of 35%) did not participated in the 2009/10 Scheme but participated in the 2010/11 Scheme. On the other hand, about 15% (or 9% out of 62%) of those who had participated in the 2009/10 Scheme did not participated in the 2010/11 Scheme. About 85% (or 53% out of 62%) of those who had participated in the 2009/10 Scheme also participated in the 2010/11 Scheme. This partly explains why the participation rate in the 2010 Scheme is lower than of the 2009/10 Scheme.

Percentage of Tai Po students participating in the 2009/10 or 2010/11 Schemes (excluding secondary 1 students)



5.10 Commenting on the drop in the participation rate, a number of Tai Po school principals attributed this to the lack of publicity of the Scheme, as compared with the launch of the 2009/10 Scheme. This might partly be due to the fact that there was not much opposition and criticisms of the 2010/11 Scheme. A few principals remarked that briefing sessions organized for Secondary 1 students might not be interesting enough, if not boring, to encourage them to participate in the Scheme. If students thought that they did not need the services of social workers, they might not bother to listen to what they said.

5.11 As a result, according to views of school principals, students might not feel the urgency of the Scheme. They might have the impression that the community no longer had much concern over the issue and thus had not bothered to participate in the Scheme, especially for students who had not abused drugs. For students in upper forms, some of them did not participate in the Scheme for fear that this might affect their school work. For students who had never abused drugs, some of them might think that the Scheme was irrelevant to them, as they would not be tested positive in any drug test.

5.12 Furthermore, for students who participated in the 2009/10 Scheme out of curiosity, they might not participate again in the 2010/11 Scheme. Besides for some of those who had already participated in the 2009/10 Scheme, they thought that they had already shown their support of the Scheme and did not see an urgent need to participate again. From the perspectives of parents, some of them might not be willing to allow their children to participate. If they had trust in their children's behaviour, they might not see the justification for their children to participate in the Scheme.

5.13 In addition, several school principals observed that some of their students who were considered as being at risk had not participated in the Scheme. For other students, especially those in the upper forms, they had rationally analyzed the Scheme and decided not to participate because they believed unless participation in the Scheme was compulsory, it would not be effective from the perspective of early identification.

5.14 Even though only about half of the student population had participated in the Scheme, most Tai Po school principals considered the Scheme successful. For those who had participated, the Scheme could reinforce their resolve to stay away from drugs and give them an excuse to refuse drugs. For those who had not participated, there were other anti-drug activities organized, as part of the Scheme, for them. Besides, the Scheme had helped convey a strong message to students that their schools were determined to help students to stay away from drugs and to develop an anti-drug culture at schools. Furthermore, by asking students and their parents to jointly decide their participation in the Scheme, it offered another platform for students and their parents to discuss matters related to drugs. This would have education and preventive impact on students.

5.15 During discussions, a number of Tai Po teachers observed that students did not participate in the Scheme mainly because they did not see the need to do so and were concerned that if they were sampled for drug testing during class, it would affect their academic achievement. A few teachers remarked that students did not participate in the Scheme because they considered the Scheme not effective from the perspective of earlier identification. On other hand, some students, even though they did not consider the Scheme effective, still participated in the Scheme to show their support of schools' policy. Regardless of whether students had participated or not in the Scheme, and for whatever reasons, all of them got the message loud and clear that their schools were determined in conveying a strong anti-drug message to students and were ready to help students, especially those at risk, to stay away from drugs.

5.16 Some of Tai Po students indicated, during discussions with the Project Team, that the decision to participate or not rested with them, as their parents considered them mature enough to make such a decision. Some said that their parents did not discuss with them about the Scheme in great details. Their parents also allowed them to make the decision to participate or not, because their parents had trust in them. Some of their parents were of the view that students who had not abused drugs might still not participated in the Scheme. Regardless the views of students on the rationale for participating or not in the Scheme, most of them considered that the Scheme had an educational and preventive impact.

5.17 A number of school social workers observed that the Scheme had not aroused much discussion among students and parents. They were aware that some students who had participated in the 2009/10 Scheme did not

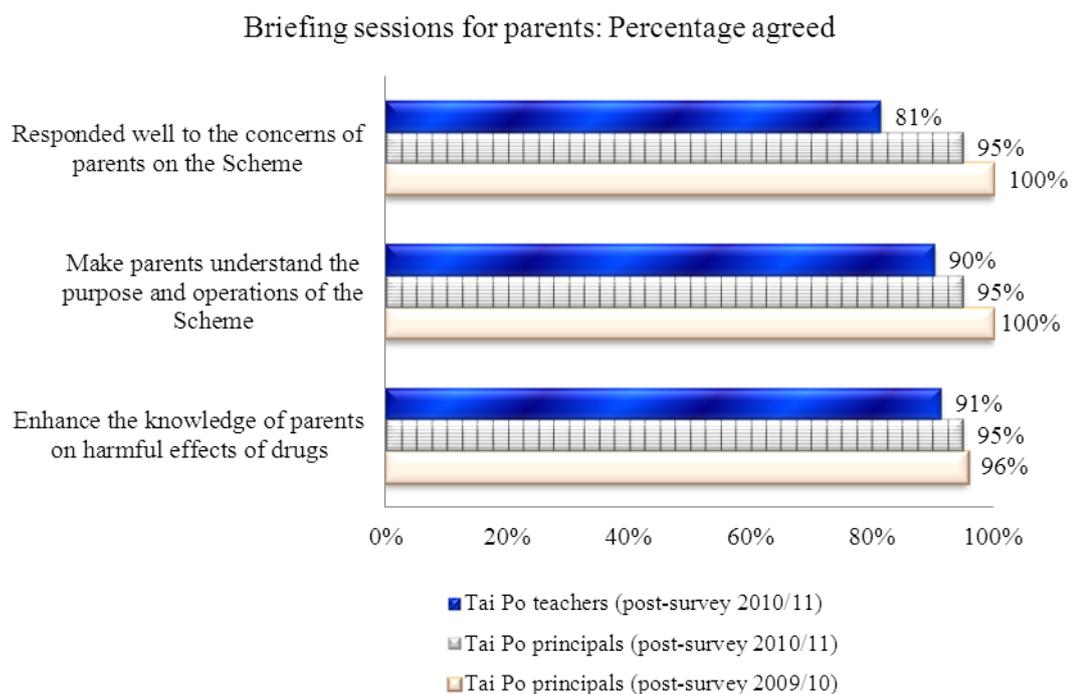
participate again this year. Partly due to the lack of publicity and promotion of the 2010/11 Scheme, as compared with the 2009/10 Scheme, some of those students who did not strongly oppose or support the Scheme had chosen not to participate in the 2010/11 Scheme. A number of school social workers also believed that students did not participate in the Scheme for a variety reasons and not necessarily because they had abused drugs. Despite the drop in participation, most school social workers considered the Scheme had a positive educational impact on students, including those who had or had not participated in the Scheme.

5.18 The project team believes that on the basis of the above discussion students participate or not in the Scheme for a variety of reasons. A lower participation rate does not necessarily mean that more students have abused drugs and hence do not participate in the Scheme. The project team nevertheless has reasons to believe if the Scheme is to be repeated again in future years, the participation rate will continue to drop, as attention given to the Scheme by students, parents and other stakeholders will inevitably be reduced. On the other hand, given that various anti-drug activities of the Scheme, apart from drug testing, are organized for all students, including those who have not participated in the Scheme, the participation rate may not be a good predictor of the effectiveness of the Scheme.

Chapter 6 Preparations for the Scheme

Briefing for parents

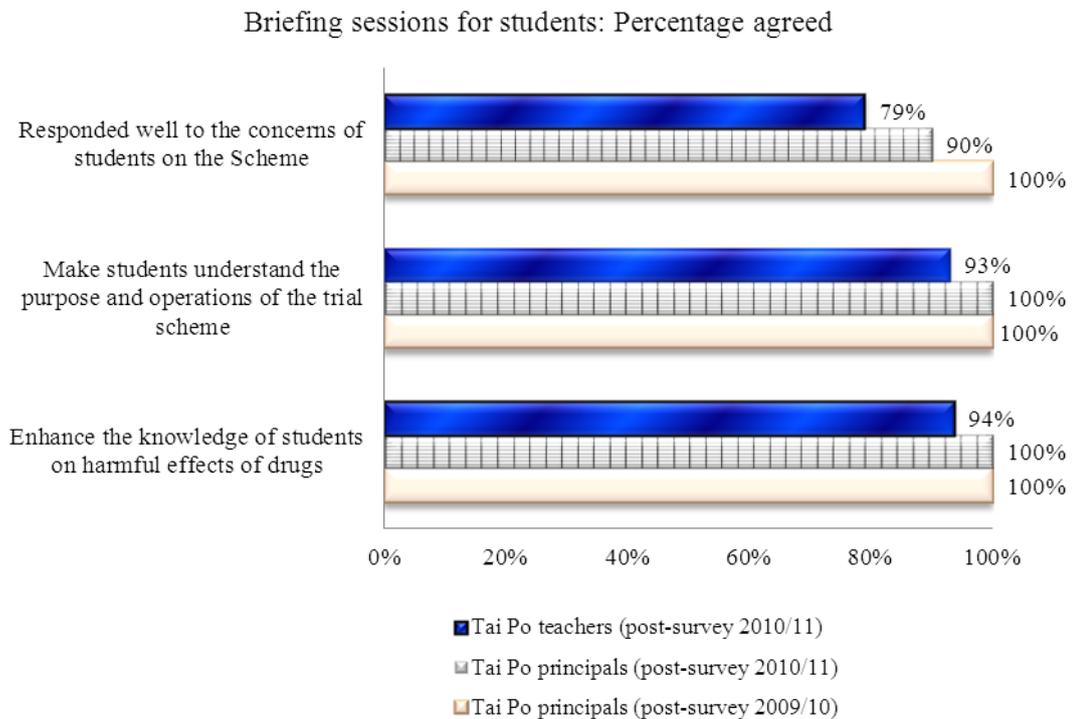
6.1 Before the launch of the Scheme, several briefing sessions were held for parents of Tai Po students. According to the June 2011 post-survey findings, the great majority of school principals and teachers were of the view that the briefings had enhanced the knowledge of parents on the harmful effects of drugs to students and their understanding of the purposes and operations of the Scheme. Parents' concerns on the Scheme were also adequately addressed.



Briefings for students

6.2 Briefing sessions were held for Secondary 1 students at each of the Tai Po secondary schools. The June 2011 post-survey showed that the majority of principals and teachers were of the view that the briefing sessions

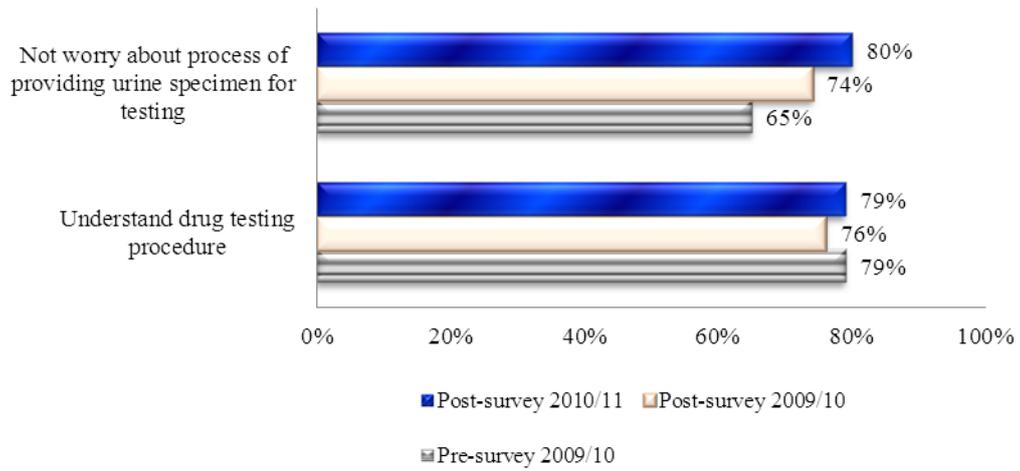
for students had enhanced students' knowledge of the harmful effects of drugs, made students understand the purposes and operations of the Scheme and responded adequately to concerns of students on the Scheme.



Students' understanding of the Scheme

6.3 Most students indicated that they understood the drug testing procedure (79%), they were aware that personal data were protected (80%) and they were not worried about the process of providing urine specimen for testing (80%). It is worth noting that the percentage was higher when compared to the results collected from the 2009/10 Research.

Percentage of Tai Po students who agreed with the statements



6.4 In short, the Scheme was well prepared and was smoothly implemented. It had achieved the intended objectives of ensuring that both parents and students had a good understanding of the Scheme.

Chapter 7 The drug testing process

7.1 Similar to the 2009/10 Scheme, a set of protocol on the Scheme was drawn up, spelling out clearly the objectives and guiding principles of the Scheme, the roles of concerned parties, procedures to be taken in conducting drug tests including the random selection of students, liaison between schools and the SDT team, collection of urine samples from students and notification of test results to parents, provision of support services to students tested positive, the handling of self-referrals, refusals and withdrawals of consent, and protection of personal data privacy. In designing the entire implementation procedure, the need to protect confidentiality of personal information was accorded very high priority. The Government seconded two experienced executive officers, who were designated as “Project Officer” under the Scheme, to the Home Affairs Department to oversee the implementation of the Scheme and to advise schools on matters related to protection of confidential information and personal data.

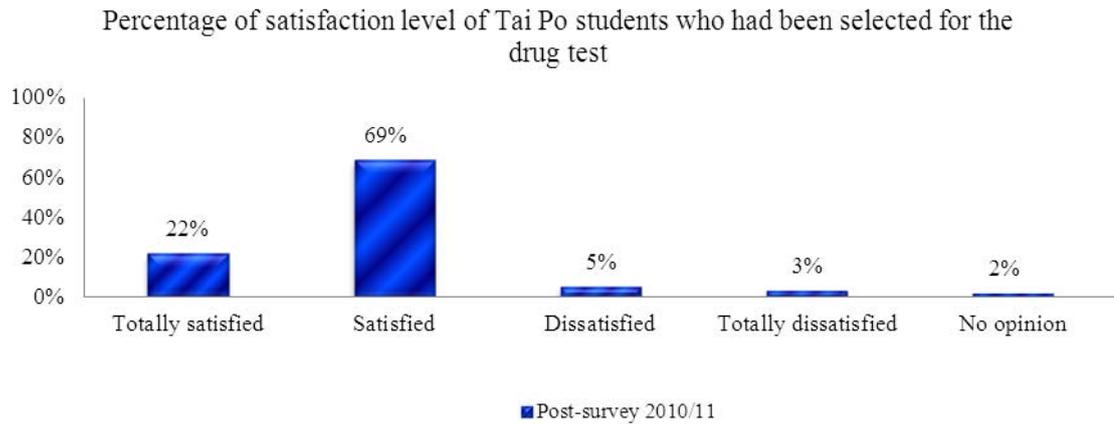
7.2 During discussion with the Project Officers of the Scheme, they pointed out that in conducting drug tests, utmost care had been taken to ensure that students’ personal data were protected, while proper records on the test results had to be kept. For example, in communications with schools, students were identified through the use of unique student codes and were counter-checked by schools to ensure that the students sampled for drug testing were correctly identified before summoning them to drug testing. Before providing urine specimen for testing, students were briefed on the purposes of the drug test, the procedures involved and the right to withdraw from the test and the Scheme. Every effort had been made to ensure that the students felt comfortable with the entire drug testing process.

7.3 On average, it took about 15 minutes to conduct the drug testing on one student. Care had been taken by schools and the SDT Team to minimize any inconvenience caused to students in taking the drug tests. For each school, about 3 – 5% of the participating students were sampled for drug testing. According to them, participating students were positive about the Scheme and co-operative in drug testing.

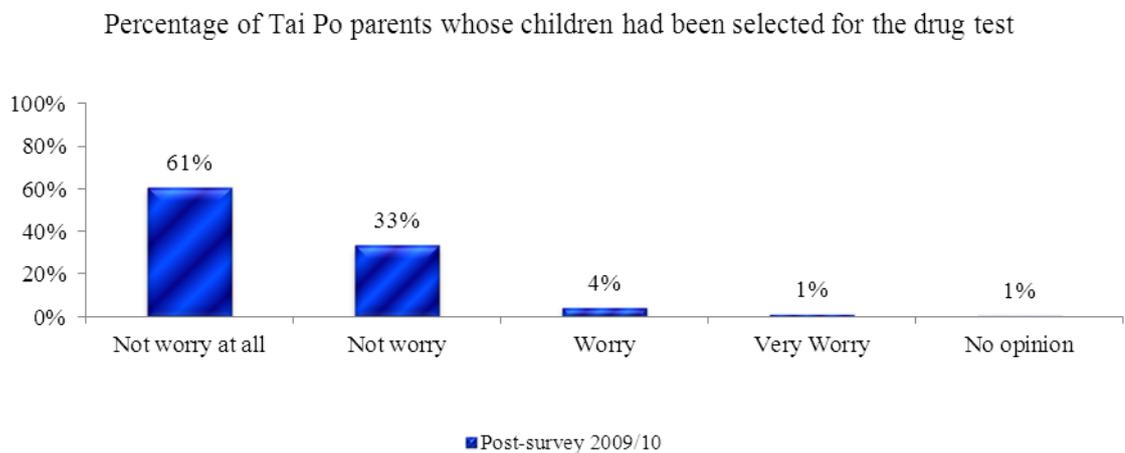
7.4 Qualitative data demonstrated that many of Tai Po school principals considered the Scheme was implemented very smoothly. School staff and school social workers concerned were familiar with the protocol and conducted drug testing smoothly. Students had also shown little resistance and worries towards drug testing.

7.5 Feedback from students was also very positive. During discussions with them, most indicated that they understood the drug testing procedure and considered it appropriate. They did not consider drug testing had affected their class. They also believed that their privacy was protected. Only a few considered the drug testing process troublesome. Partly because drug testing was conducted in an efficient manner, causing minimal disruption to school activities, most teachers and students interviewed by the Project Team indicated that they did not even notice that the SDT team had visited their schools and conducted the drug tests.

7.6 The June 2011 post-survey findings also showed that among the 23% of students who had been randomly sampled for and had taken the drug tests, the great majority (91%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the drug testing arrangement.

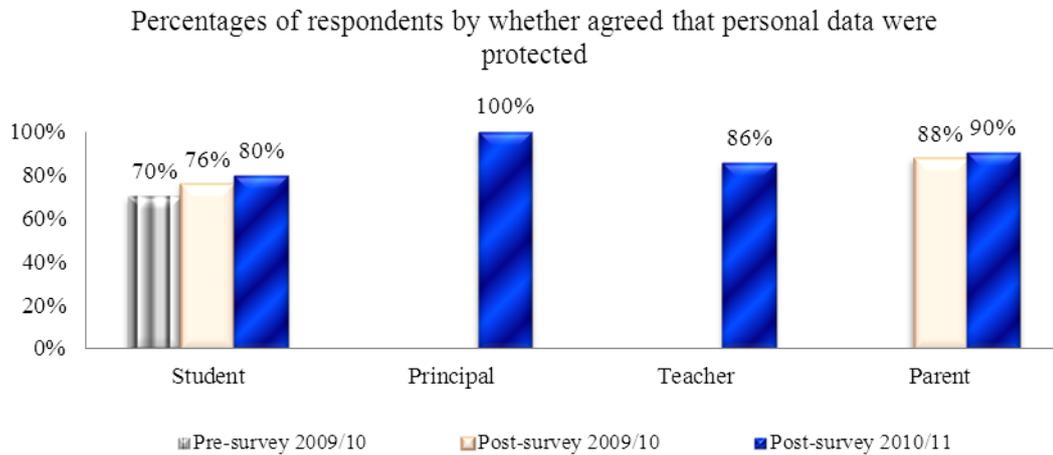


7.7 In addition, feedback from parents was also highly positive. According to the June 2011 post-survey, among parents whose children had been sampled to take the drug tests, the great majority (94%) of them were totally not worried or not worried that drug testing would have negative impact on their children.



7.8 The June 2011 post-survey also showed that all school principals and the majority of teachers (86%), students (80%) and their parents (90%) believed that the personal data of students were protected. In particular, the percentage of students and their parents who believed that the personal data of students were protected were higher in June 2011, as compared with the corresponding percentage in June 2010 and for students in December 2009.

In other words, both students and their parents had more confidence in the drug testing arrangement as regards protection of personal data, as the Scheme was continued for another year in 2010/11.



7.9 Most social workers interviewed in the course of the research considered that the drug testing process was very smooth. No student had emotional problem when asked to take the drug test. They also commented that drug testing had become acceptable to students, including those who had been sampled for drug testing. This was partly because the students considered drug testing had no labeling effects on students.

7.10 In short, based on views of students, parents, school principals, teachers and social workers, the project team is of the view that the Scheme has been implemented very smoothly, with utmost care and professionalism. As a result, students and their parents are not worried. Indeed most of them have accepted drug testing being part of their normal school activities.

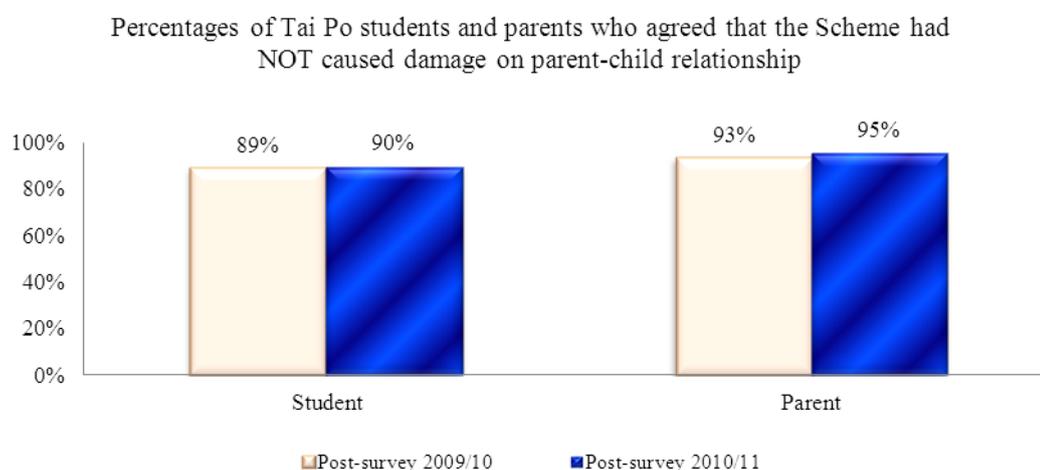
IV. School Drug Testing in Tai Po: Outcomes

Chapter 8 Impact on families and schools

Impact on families

8.1 Concerns have been raised on the possible adverse impact of drug testing on family relationship. In the course of discussions with students and parents, the project team was given to understand that nearly all students and parents did not think that the Scheme had affected relationship between the students and their families. All parents interviewed also considered that the Scheme had not adversely affected parents' trust in schools.

8.2 Findings of the June 2011 post-survey showed that the great majority of students (90%) and their parents (95%) considered that the Scheme had not damaged parent-child relationship. The percentage was slightly higher than the corresponding percentages in June 2010, at 89% and 93% respectively. The findings indicated that both students and parents had more confidence that the Scheme would not have any adverse impact on their families in June 2011 in respect of the 2010/11 Scheme, as compared with June 2010 in respect of the 2009/10 Scheme.

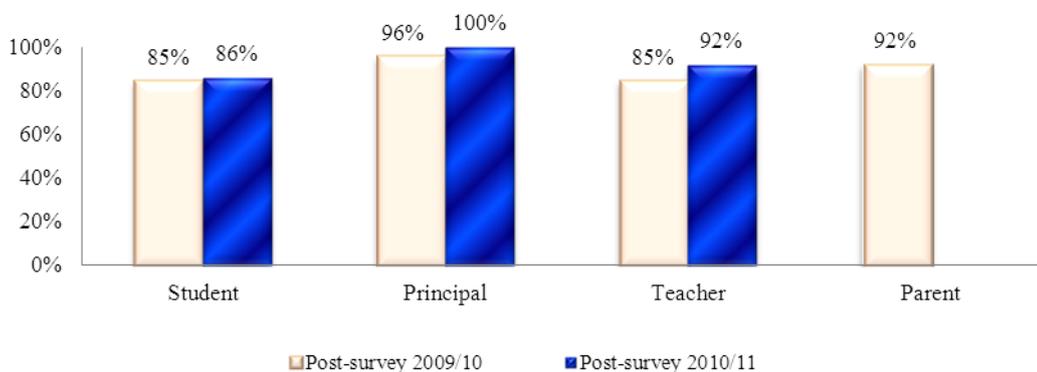


Impact on schools

8.3 One of the main criticisms directed against school drug testing was the possible undermining of trust between school personnel and students, in an educational setting, to the extent that it would adversely affect other aspects of students' education, including anti-drug education. It was argued that the perceived "policing" role of teachers might possibly create an environment of resentment, distrust and suspicion leading to loss of school connectedness. It might possibly aggravate truant behaviour, making it more difficult to reach out to students who had abused drugs.

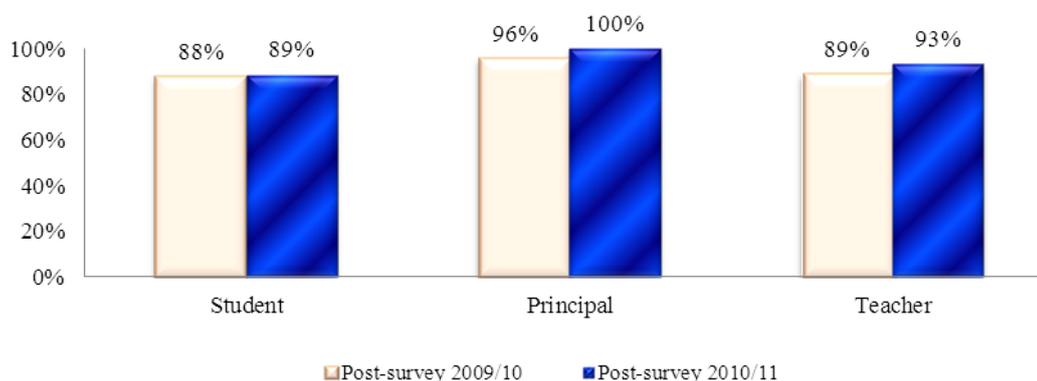
8.4 During discussions with school principals, teachers, students and parents in the course of conducting the research, none of them indicated that the Scheme had affected the mutual trust between schools and students. Findings of the June 2011 post-survey also showed that all school principals (100%) and the great majority of Tai Po teachers (92%) and students (86%) considered that the Scheme had not adversely affected students' trust in their schools. The percentage of school principals, teachers and students holding such a view was higher than the corresponding percentages in June 2010, at 96%, 85% and 85% respectively, indicating that school drug testing is becoming increasingly acceptable by teachers and students. Furthermore, the great majority of Tai Po parents (93% in June 2010 and 94% in June 2011) considered that the Scheme had not ruined teacher-parent relationship.

Percentages of Tai Po respondents who agreed that the Scheme had NOT damaged students' trust in their school



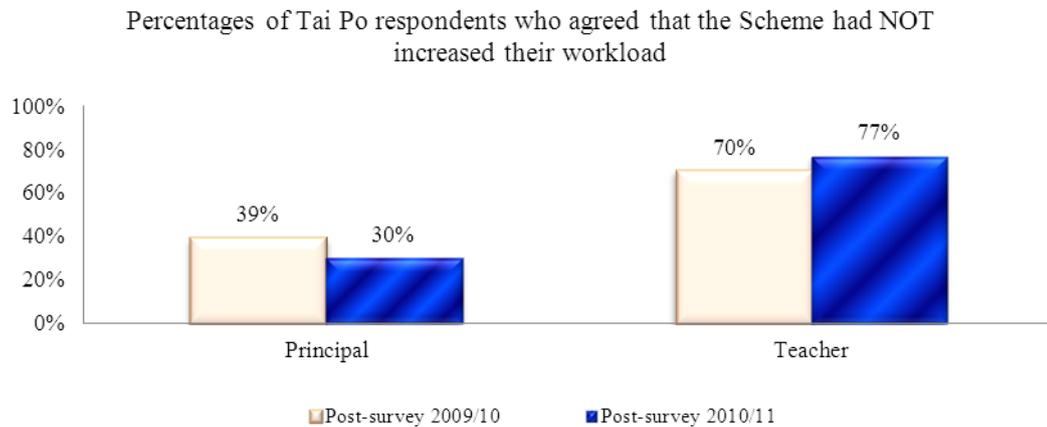
8.5 In addition, all school principals and the great majority of Tai Po teachers (93%) and students (89%) considered that the Scheme had not adversely affected student-teacher relationship in their schools. The percentage of school principals, teachers and students holding such a view was higher than the corresponding percentages in June 2010, at 96%, 89% and 88% respectively, indicating again that school drug testing is becoming increasingly acceptable by teachers and students.

Percentages of Tai Po respondents who agreed that the Scheme had NOT damaged teacher-student relationship in their school



8.6 Given that teachers' involvement in the Scheme was not significant, more than half of Tai Po teachers (77%) agreed that the Scheme had not increased their workload, and the percentage was higher than the corresponding percentage in June 2010 (70%). Most school principals (90%)

also considered that the Scheme had not increased the workload of teachers.

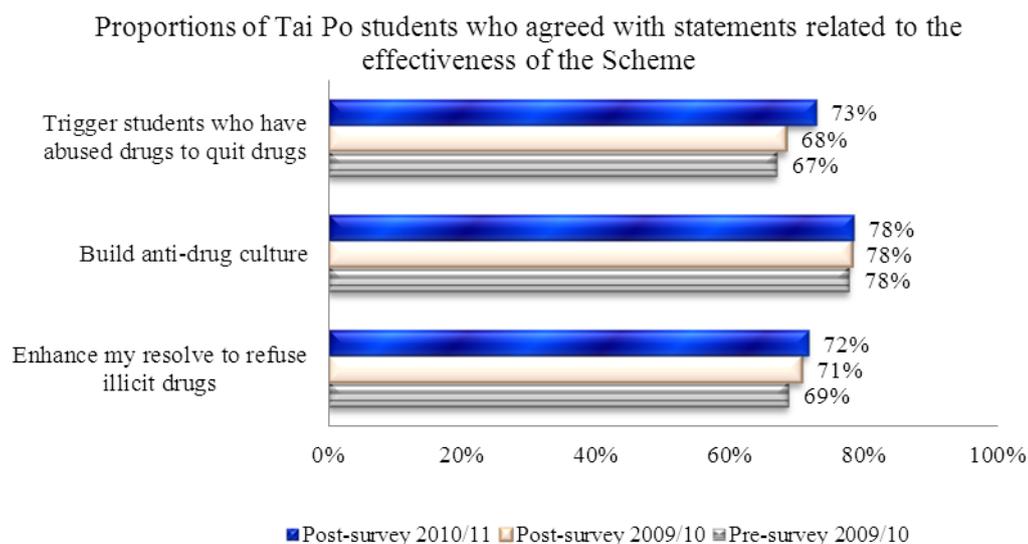


8.7 On the other hand, from discussions with Tai Po school principals, it transpired that they had to devote a significant amount of their time in preparing for the launch of the Scheme and in overseeing its implementation. They had to personally attend to the day-to-day operations of the Scheme because information related to students' participation in the Scheme was considered highly confidential. Indeed, as shown in the chart above, only 30% of principals considered that the Scheme had not increased their workload, which was lower than the corresponding percentage, at 39%, in June 2010.

Chapter 9 Outcomes: Perceived effectiveness

Views of students

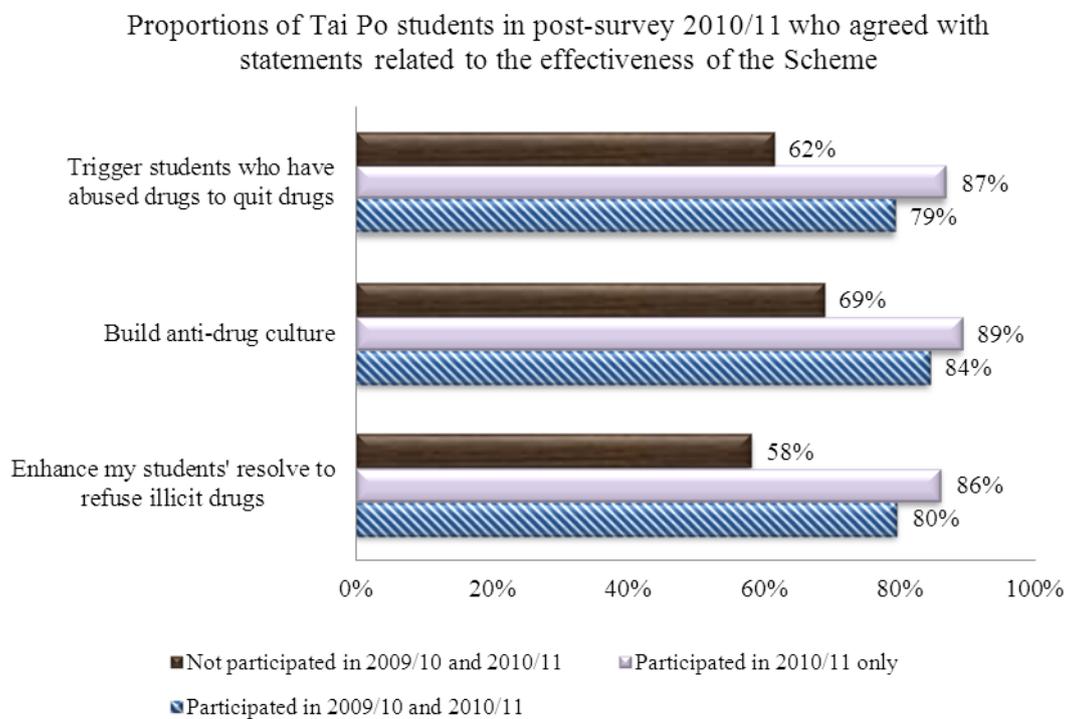
9.1 In the quantitative surveys of students conducted in December 2009, June 2010 and June 2011, views of students were sought on their perceived effectiveness of the Scheme. As shown in the chart below, in June 2011, the majority of students considered that the Scheme had enhanced their resolve to refuse illicit drugs (72%), helped build an anti-drug culture (78%) and triggered motivation of those students who had abused drugs to quit drugs (73%).



9.2 It is worth noting that the proportion of students who considered that the Scheme had enhanced their resolve to refuse illicit drugs and triggered motivation of those students who had abused drugs to quit drugs was higher in June 2011, after the launch of the 2010/11 Scheme, as compared with December 2009, before the launch of the 2009/10 Scheme and June 2010, before the launch of the 2010/11 Scheme. In other words, more students are

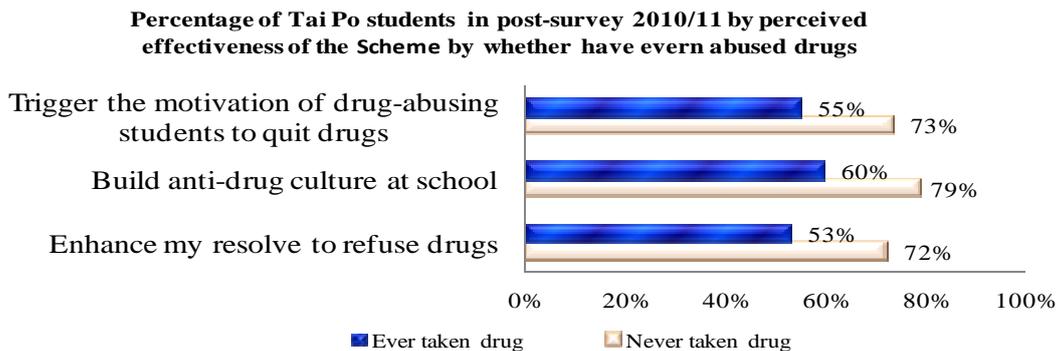
becoming convinced that the Scheme is effective, as the Scheme is continued to be conducted for another year in 2010/11.

9.3 In particular, for students who had participated in both the 2009/10 and 2010/11 Schemes, about 80% of them agreed that the Scheme had enhanced their resolve to refuse illicit drugs (80%), helped build an anti-drug culture (84%) and triggered motivation of those students who had abused drugs to quit drugs (79%). Even for those students who had not participated in both the 2009/10 and 2010/11 Schemes, more than half of them considered that the Scheme was effective in enhancing their resolve to refuse illicit drugs (58%), helped build an anti-drug culture (69%) and triggered motivation of those students who had abused drugs to quit drugs (62%). In other words, students in general, regardless of whether they had participated or not in the Scheme, considered the Scheme effective.

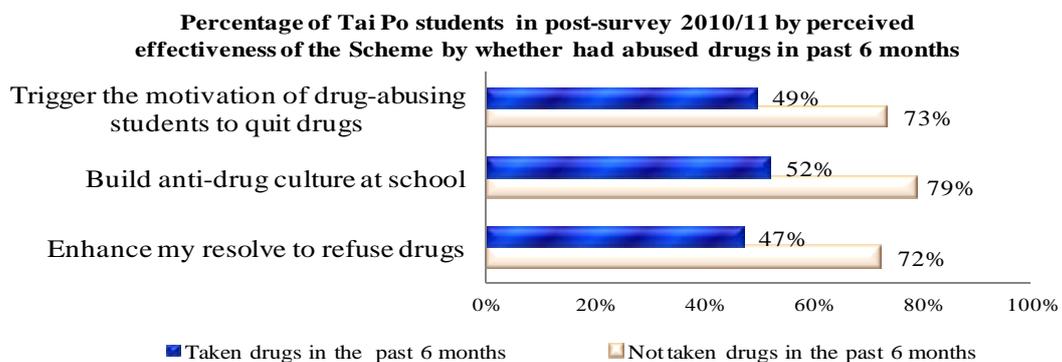


9.4 It may also be worth noting that for those students who admitted to

have ever abused drugs, more than half of them agreed that the Scheme had enhanced their resolve to refuse illicit drugs (53%), helped build an anti-drug culture (60%) and triggered motivation of those students who had abused drugs to quit drugs (55%).

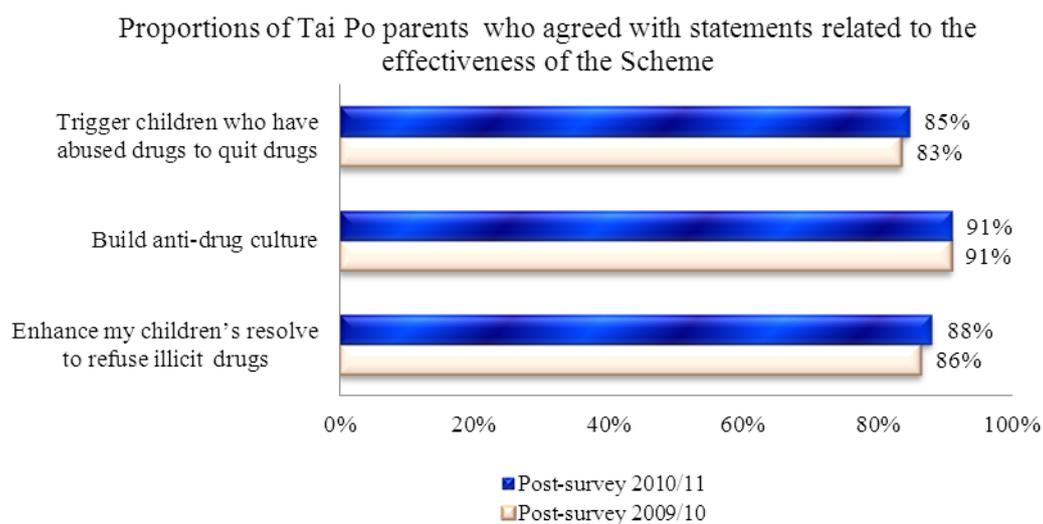


9.5 Similar trend was observed for those students who admitted to have ever abused drugs recently in the past 6 months, about half of them agreed that the Scheme had enhanced their resolve to refuse illicit drugs (47%), helped build an anti-drug culture (52%) and triggered motivation of those students who had abused drugs to quit drugs (49%). It may thus be inferred from the survey findings that the Scheme had helped trigger motivation to seek help, as admitted by students who had abused drugs.



Views of parents

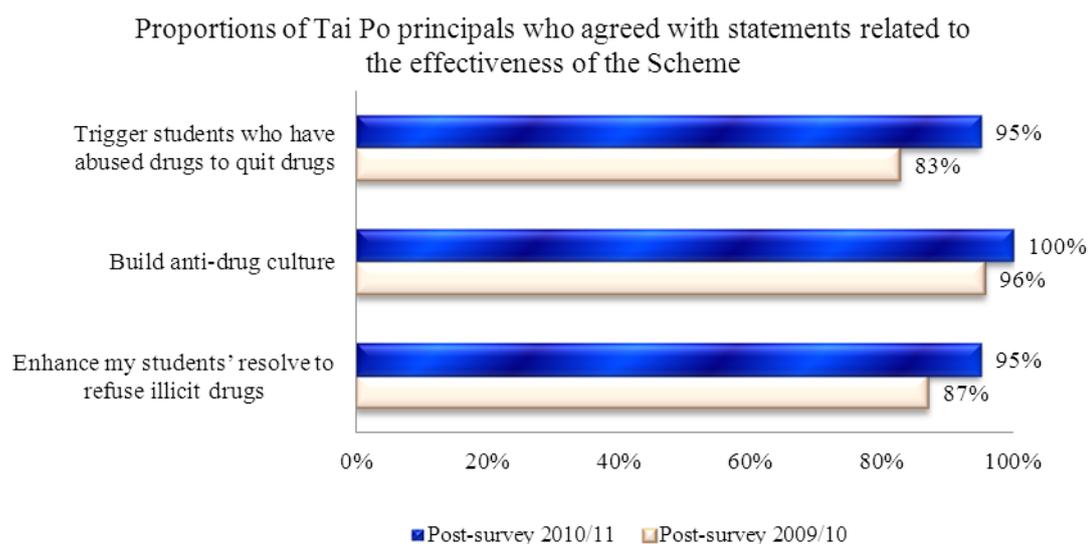
9.6 In the quantitative surveys conducted in June 2010 and June 2011, views of parents of Tai Po students were sought on their perceived effectiveness of the Scheme. As shown in the chart below, in June 2011, the great majority of parents considered that the Scheme had enhanced students' resolve to refuse illicit drugs (83%), helped build an anti-drug culture (91%) and triggered motivation of those students who had abused drugs to quit drugs (86%).



9.7 It is worth noting that the proportion of parents who considered that the Scheme had enhanced students' resolve to refuse illicit drugs and triggered motivation of those students who had abused drugs to quit drugs was higher in June 2011, as compared with June 2010. The percentage was higher than the corresponding percentage for students. In other words, more parents are becoming convinced that the Scheme is effective, as the Scheme is continued to be conducted for another year in 2010/11. The parents are also more supportive of the Scheme than students.

Views of principals

9.8 In the quantitative surveys conducted in June 2010 and June 2011, views of Tai Po principals were sought on their perceived effectiveness of the Scheme. As shown in the chart below, in June 2011, the great majority of school principals considered that the Scheme had enhanced students' resolve to refuse illicit drugs (95%), helped build an anti-drug culture (100%) and triggered motivation of those students who had abused drugs to quit drugs (95%).

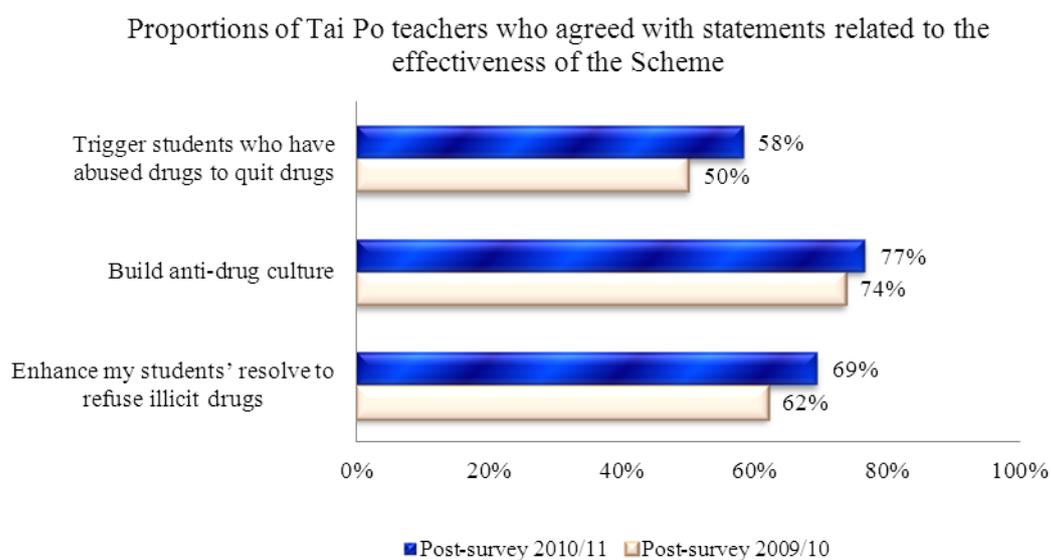


9.9 It is worth noting that the proportion of school principals who considered that the Scheme had enhanced students' resolve to refuse illicit drugs, helped build an anti-drug culture and triggered motivation of those students who had abused drugs to quit drugs was much higher in June 2011, as compared with June 2010. The percentage was much higher than the corresponding percentage for students. In other words, school principals are becoming very much convinced that the Scheme is effective, as the Scheme is continued to be conducted for another year in 2010/11. They are also more

supportive of the Scheme than students.

Views of teachers

9.10 In the quantitative surveys conducted in June 2010 and June 2011, views of Tai Po teachers were sought on their perceived effectiveness of the Scheme. As shown in the chart below, in June 2011, more than half of teachers considered that the Scheme had enhanced students' resolve to refuse illicit drugs (68%), helped build an anti-drug culture (77%) and triggered motivation of those students who had abused drugs to quit drugs (58%).



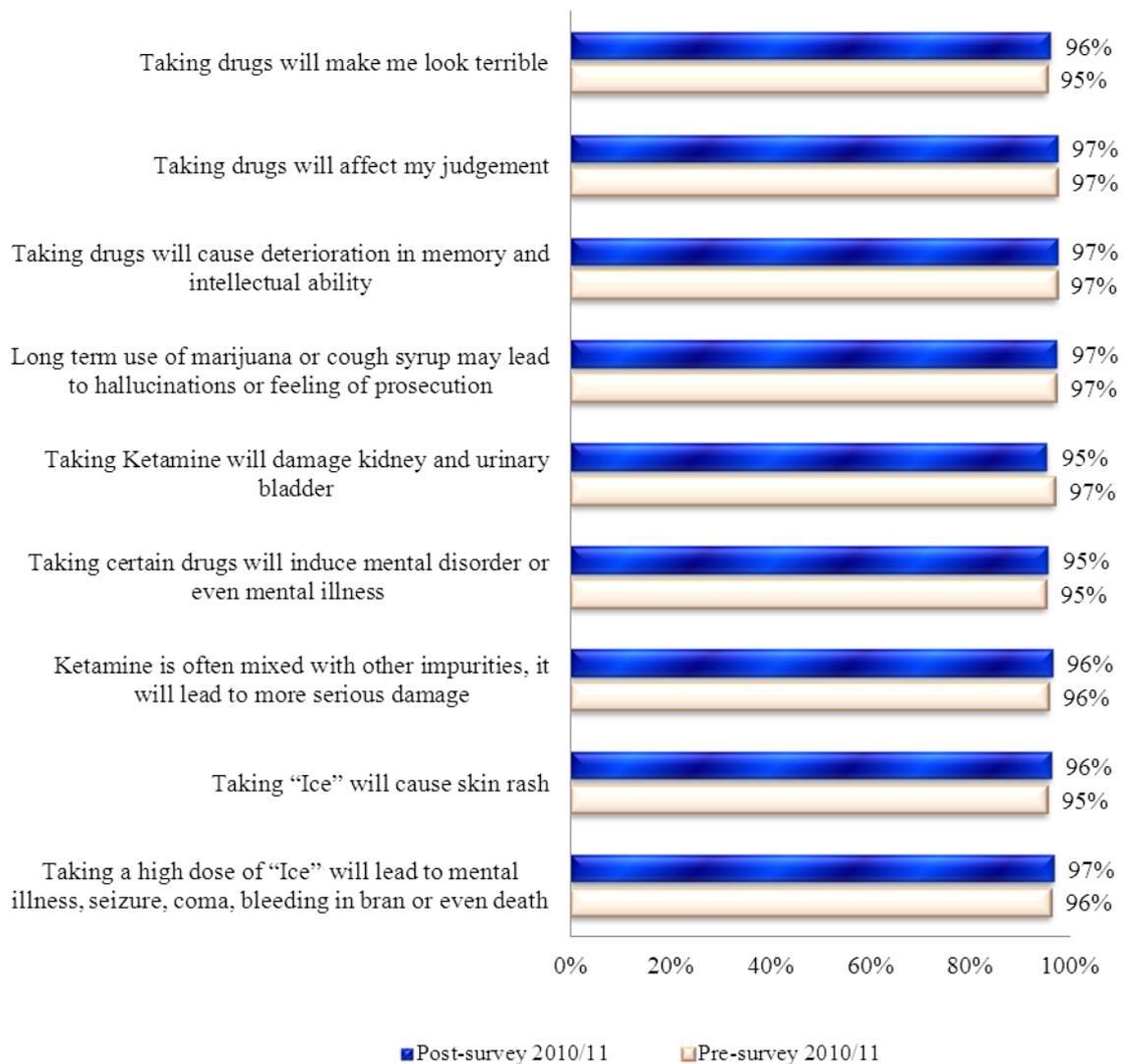
9.11 It is worth noting that the proportion of teachers who considered that the Scheme had enhanced students' resolve to refuse illicit drugs, helped build an anti-drug culture and triggered motivation of those students who had abused drugs to quit drugs was much higher in June 2011, as compared June 2010. In other words, more teachers are becoming convinced that the Scheme is effective, as the Scheme is continued to be conducted for another year in 2010/11.

9.12 Some of Tai Po teachers opined that the Scheme was not very effective as students who had abused drugs would not participate in the Scheme. For those who had participated, they could also avoid the drug tests through various means (e.g. saying that they had taken medications). On other hand, other teachers believed that the Scheme was effective in reminding students the need to stay away from drugs. It also showed schools' commitment to fight drugs, especially when all schools in Tai Po were implementing drug tests. For students who were on the margin of abusing drugs, the Scheme would have a preventive impact. After all, drug testing only constituted one of the many anti-drug activities organized under the Scheme.

Chapter 10 Outcomes: Changes in knowledge of drugs

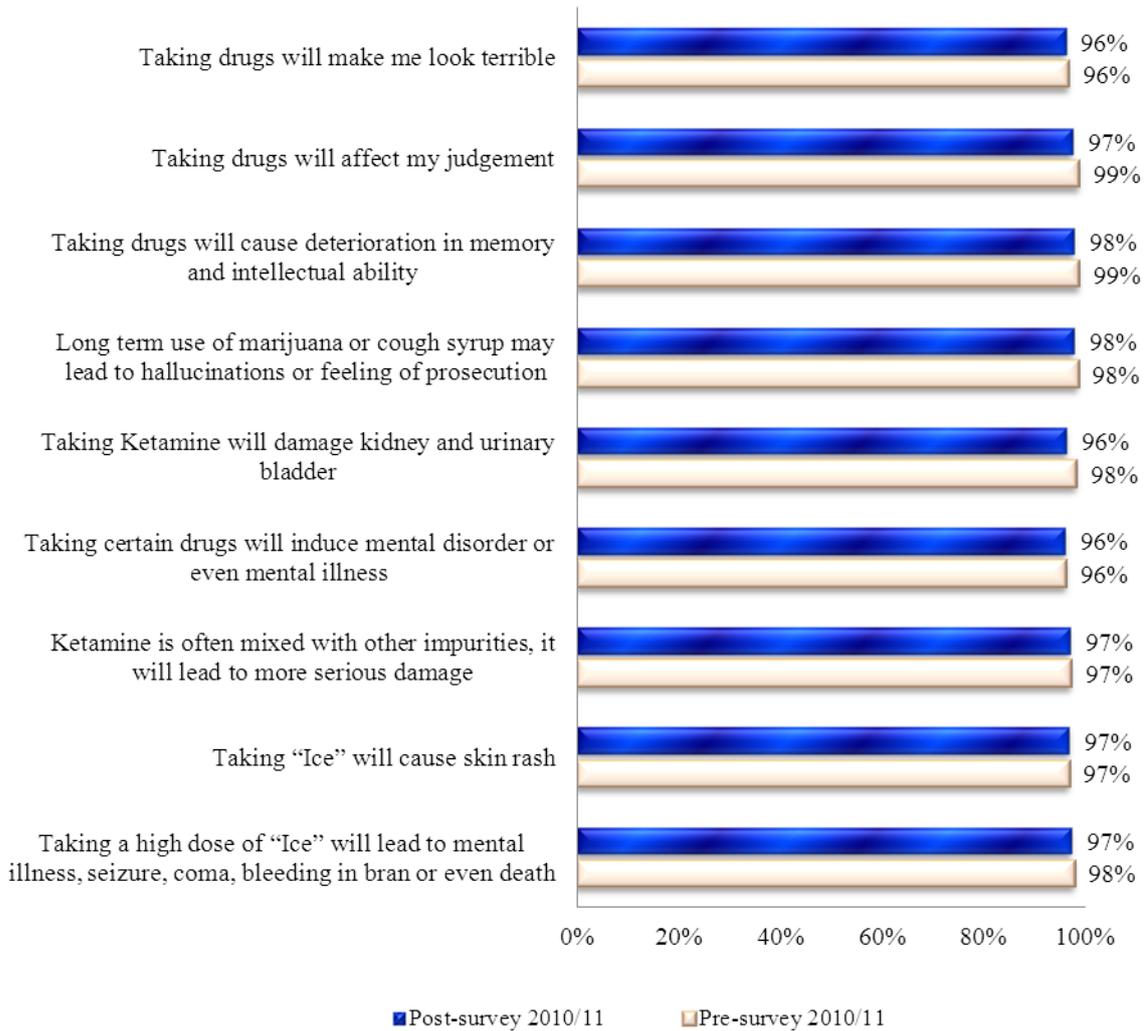
10.1 9 out of the 10 items were found to represent students' knowledge of drugs. The survey findings in respect of these 9 items on knowledge of drugs are given in the chart below for Tai Po students in both October 2010 and June 2011. It may be noted that the great majority of Tai Po students were aware of the harmful effects of drugs. Compared with October 2010, the percentage of students in Tai Po who were aware of the harmful effects of drugs in June 2011 was slightly higher for most aspects on the harmful effects of drugs, indicating that students in Tai Po have become more aware, albeit by a very small margin, of the harmful effects of drugs after the launch of the 2010/11 Scheme. Detailed analysis is given in Appendix 3.

Harmful on health: percentage agreed for Tai Po students

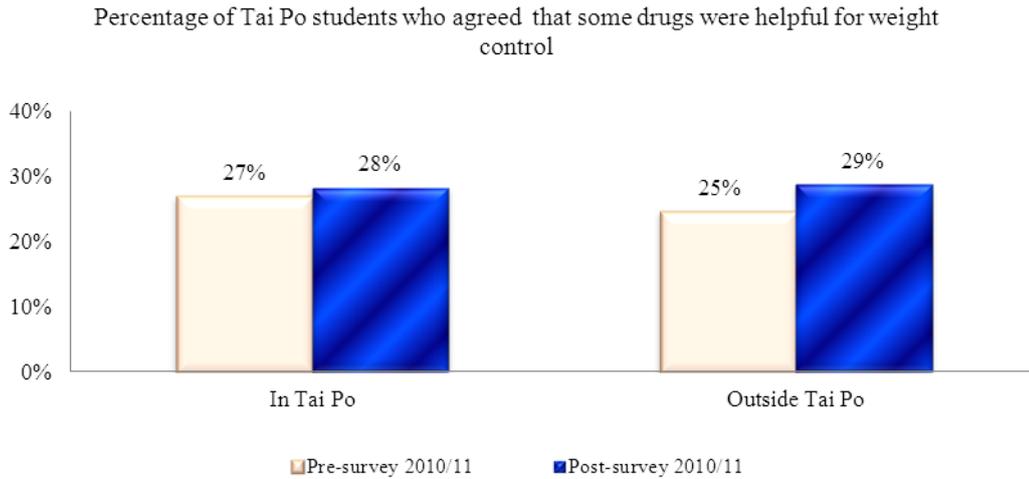


10.2 For non-Tai Po students, the survey findings in both October 2010 and June 2011 are shown in the chart below. It may be noted that the great majority of non-Tai Po students were aware of the harmful effects of drugs. Nevertheless, compared with October 2010, the percentage of non-Tai Po students who were aware of the harmful effects of drugs in June 2011 was slightly lower for a number of aspects on the harmful effect of drugs, indicating that non-Tai Po students had become less aware, albeit by a very small margin, of the harmful effects of drugs in June 2011, as compared with October 2010.

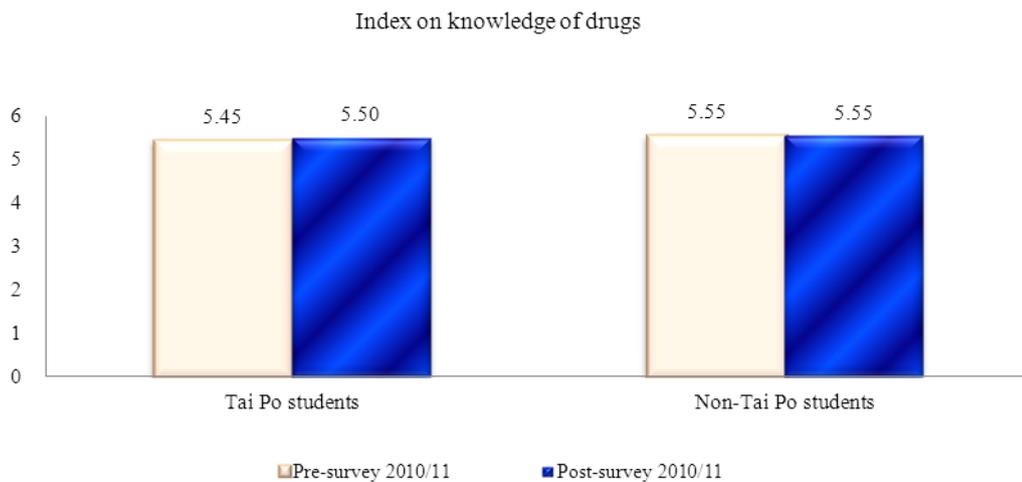
Harmful on health: percentage agreed for non-Tai Po students



10.3 As regards the item on weight control, the survey findings for Tai Po students and non-Tai Po students are shown in chart. It may be seen that in June 2011 about 30% students believed that some drugs were helpful for weight control. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the percentage who believed in the weight control effects of drugs was higher in June 2011, as compared with that in October 2010, for both Tai Po students and non-Tai Po students. It is desirable that educational and promotional efforts be stepped up to correct misconception on the part of students on this seemingly desirable effect of drugs.



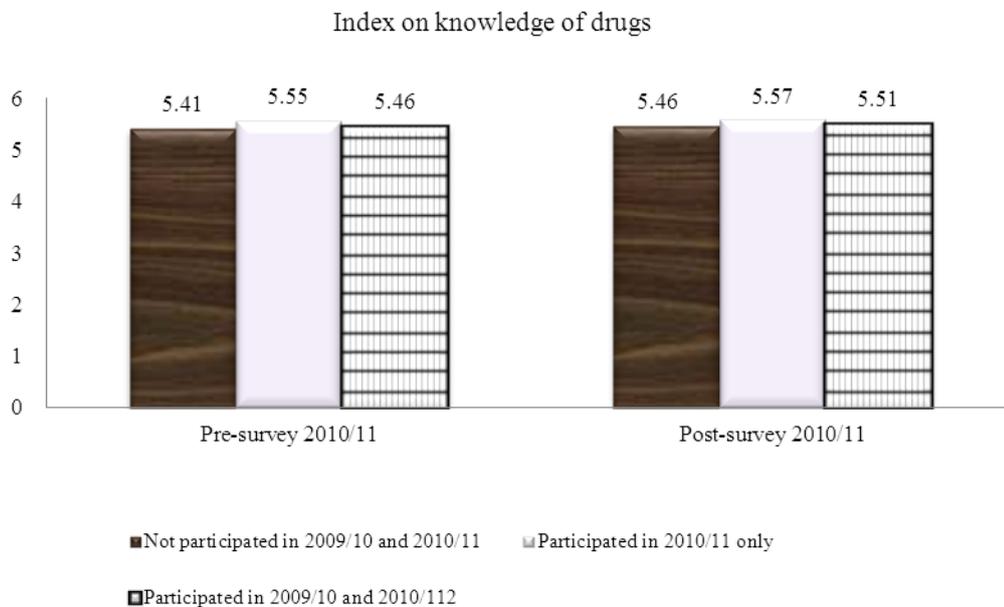
10.4 The data obtained from students participating in the October 2010 pre-survey and June 2011 post-survey were matched to identify survey data in respect of the same students using identifiers including date of birth, sex, class and school attended. By end June 2011, survey questionnaires in respect of nearly 17,000 students were matched, accounting for 74% of the total number of students participating in the June 2011 post-survey. An index on knowledge of drugs is computed from survey data and shown in the chart below.



10.5 Based on the matched sample of nearly 17,000 students, the indexes on knowledge of drugs for Tai Po students and non-Tai Po students, in

October 2010 and June 2011, are shown in the chart above. It may be seen that for students in Tai Po, the index was slightly higher in June 2011 (at 5.50), as compared with that in October 2010 (5.45). As regards non-Tai Po students, the index was more or less the same in June 2011 (5.55), as compared with that in October 2010 (5.55).

10.6 For students who had participated in both the 2009/10 and 2010/11 Schemes, it may be seen from the chart below that their index on knowledge of drugs had increased from 5.46 in October 2010 to 5.51 in June 2011. The index on knowledge of drugs for students who had not participated in both the 2009/10 and 2010/11 Schemes as well as for students who had participated in the 2010/11 Scheme had also increased. This indicates that the Scheme, through its anti-drug educational and promotional activities, had helped raise the knowledge of drugs among Tai Po students, regardless of whether they had participated in the Scheme or not.

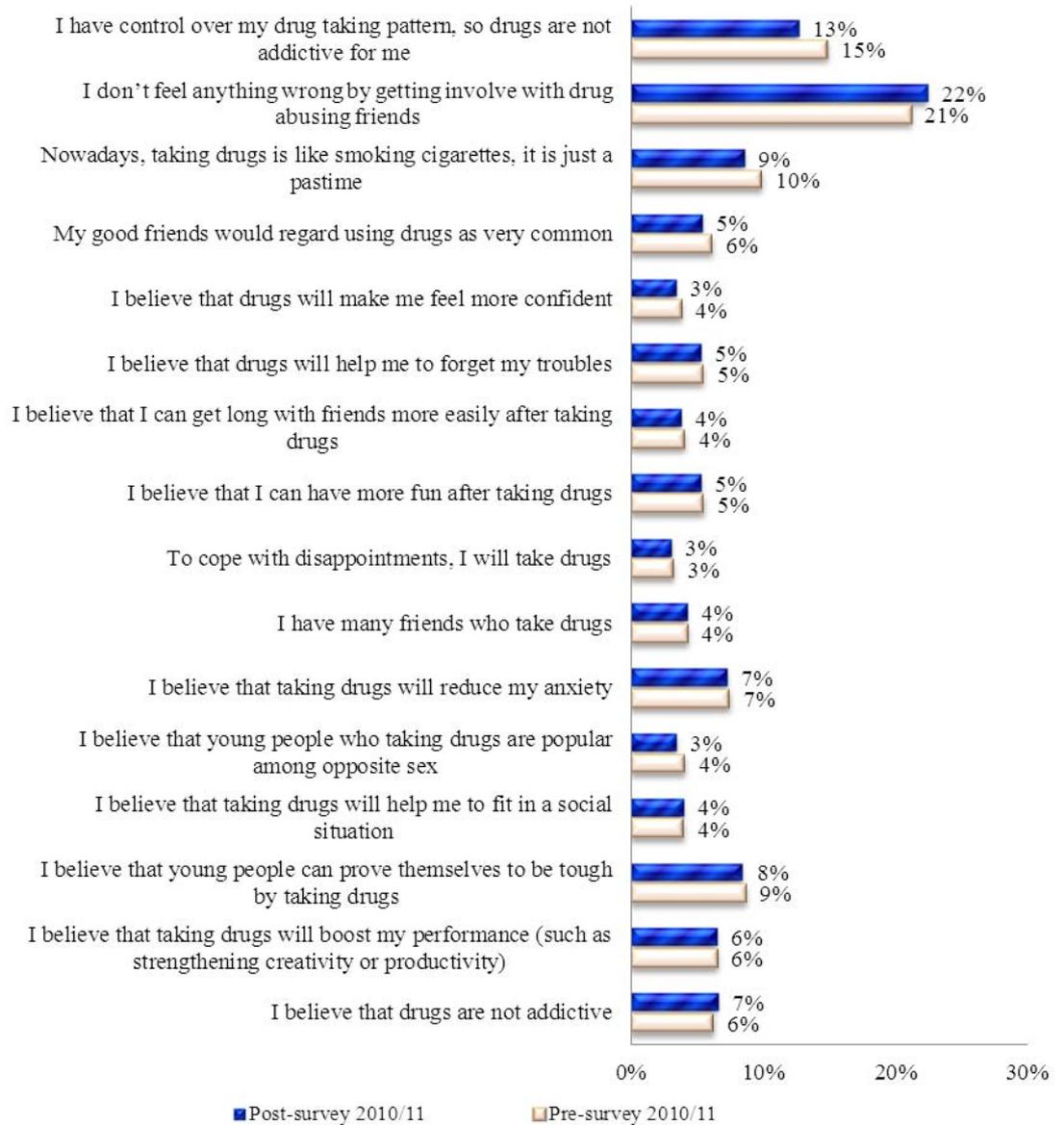


Chapter 11 Outcomes: Changes in attitude towards drugs

Misconception about drugs

11.1 16 of the 24 items were found to measure the underlying factor on misconception about drugs. Findings obtained in the October 2010 pre-survey and June 2011 post-survey in respect of these 16 items are summarized in the chart below for Tai Po students. It may be seen that the proportion of students who agreed with 14 of the statements was rather small, at 10% or below. In other words, about 10% or less of students had misconceptions about drugs as far as these statements were concerned.

Percentage of Tai Po students who agreed



11.2 Nevertheless, 21% - 22% of students were of the view that “I do not feel anything wrong getting involved with drug abusing friends”. Given that “peer influence has always remained the most popular reason for current drug abuse, as attributed by 58.2% to 68.2% of young drug abusers”³⁵, these 21% - 22% of students might get involved with drug abusing friends. Furthermore,

³⁵ Report of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse (November 2008), p.24.

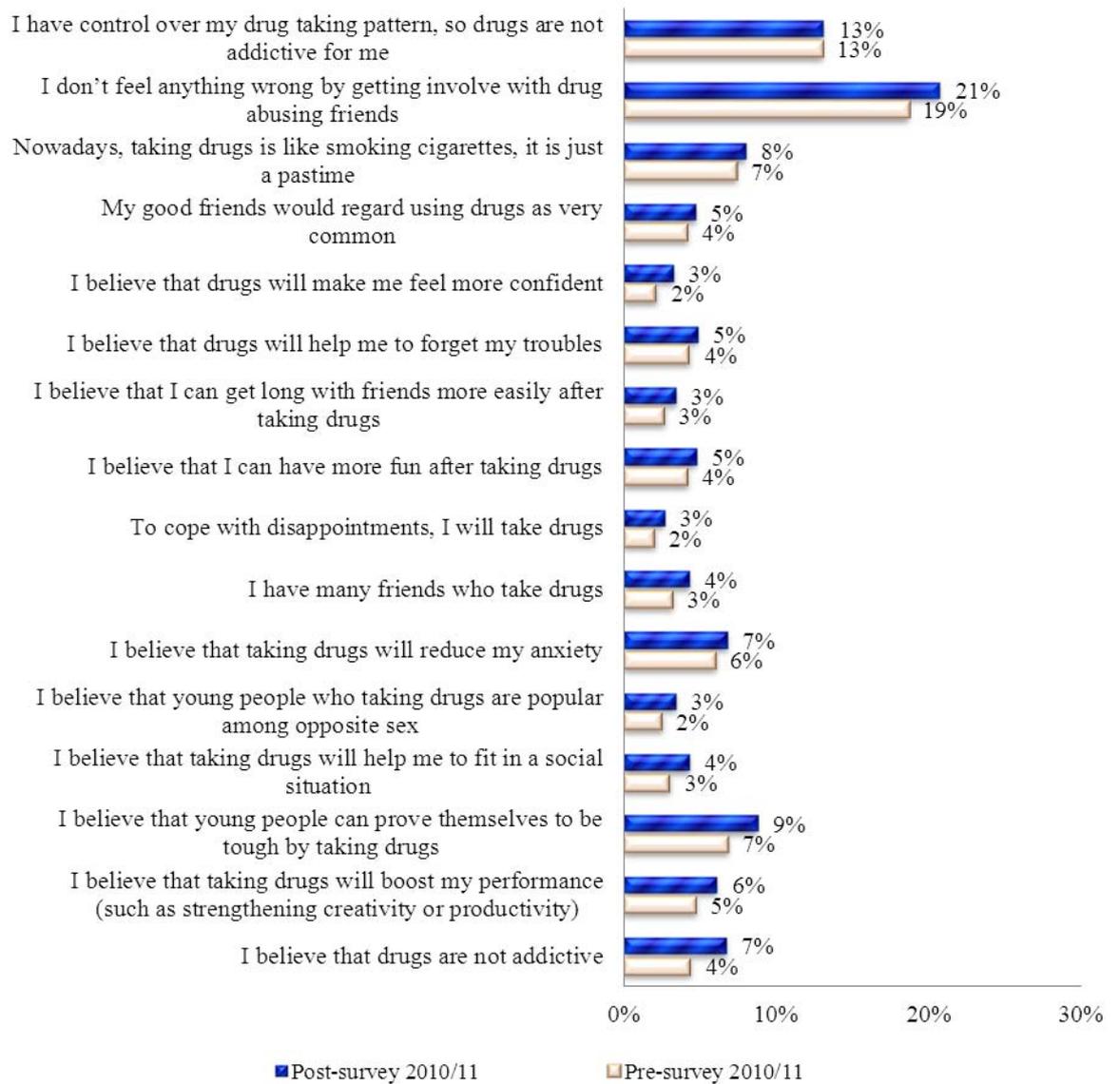
the project team worried that the percentage of students holding these views was slightly higher in June 2011, as compared with October 2010.

11.3 In addition, about 13% - 15% of students had the misconception that they had control over their drug taking pattern and that drugs were not addictive for them. Apparently, this group of students were not aware that, as pointed out by the Task Group, “psychotropic substances are potentially addictive in nature, causing both physical dependence and psychological dependence.”³⁶ Similar to the other items discussed above, the percentage of students having such a misconception was higher in June 2011, albeit by a very small margin, as compared with October 2010.

11.4 For non-Tai Po students, the pattern is similar. As shown in the chart below, the proportion of students who agreed with the 14 statements was rather small, at 10% or below. In other words, about 10% or less of students had misconceptions about drugs as far as these statements were concerned.

³⁶ *Report of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse* (November 2008), p.18.

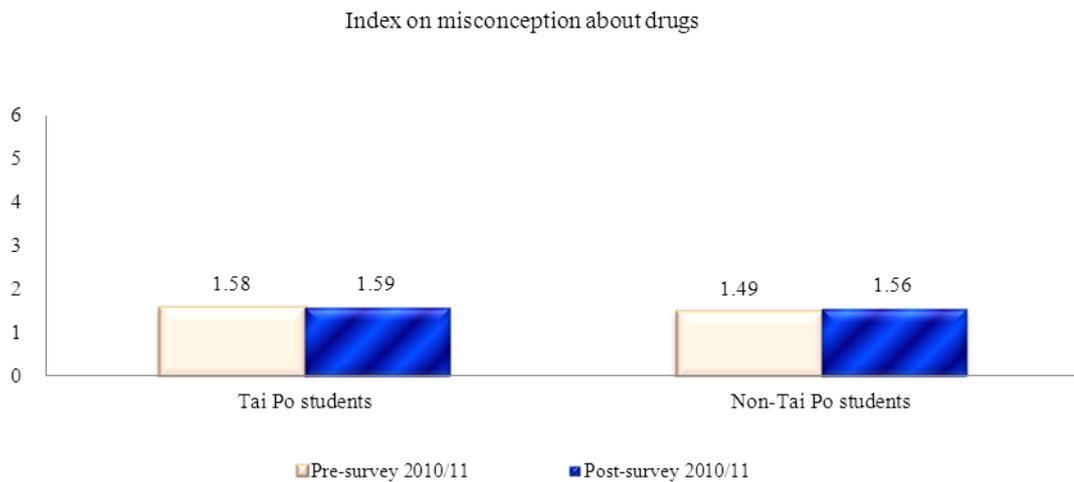
Percentage of non-Tai Po students who agreed



11.5 Similar to Tai Po students, a higher proportion of students were of the view that “I do not feel anything wrong getting involved with drug abusing friends” (19% - 21%) and “I have control over my drug taking pattern, so drugs are not addictive for me” (13%). Besides, the project team worried that the percentage of students having such a misconception was higher in June 2011, albeit by a very small margin, as compared with October 2010.

11.6 Based on the matched sample of nearly 17,000 students, the indexes

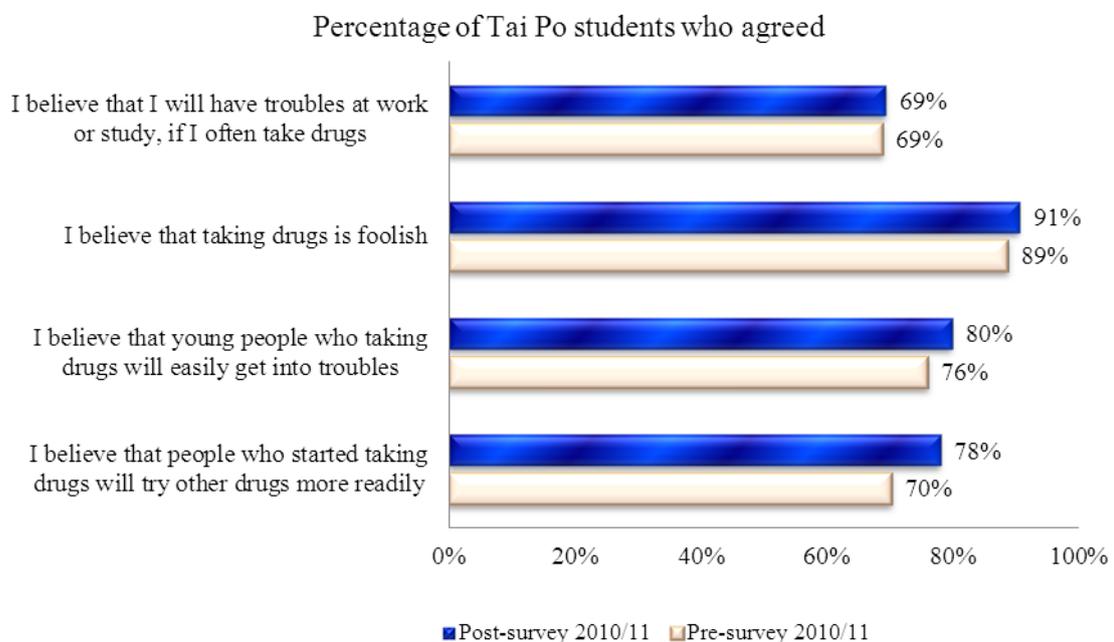
on misconception about drugs for Tai Po students and non-Tai Po students, in October 2010 and June 2011, are shown in the chart above. It may be seen that for students in Tai Po, the index was slightly higher in June 2011 (at 1.59), as compared with that in October 2010 (1.58). As regards non-Tai Po students, the index was also slightly higher in June 2011 (1.56), as compared with that in October 2010 (1.49). The findings indicated that for both Tai Po students and non-Tai Po students, their misconception about drugs has become more serious in June 2011, as compared with October 2010, and the extent of deterioration is greater for non-Tai Po students.



11.7 For Tai Po students who admitted to have ever abused drugs, with an index on misconception of drugs being 2.68, had a more serious misconception about drugs, as compared with those who had never abused drugs, with a much lower index on misconception of drugs (at 1.60). In addition, for students in Tai Po who admitted to have recently abused drugs in the past 6 months, with an index on misconception of drugs being 3.00, their misconception was even more serious.

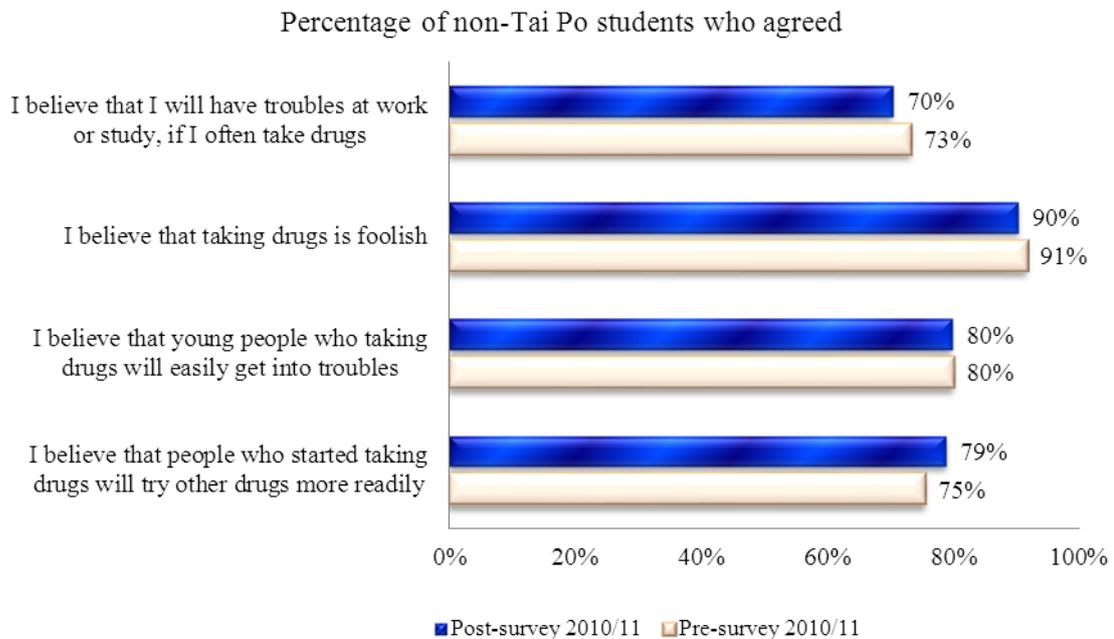
Undesirable features of drugs

11.8 Four items were found to measure the underlying factor on undesirable features of drugs. Findings obtained in the October 2010 pre-survey and June 2011 post-survey in respect of these 4 items are summarized in the chart below for Tai Po students. It may be seen that more than half of students in Tai Po were of the view that “I believe that I will have troubles at work or study, if I often take drugs” (69%), “I believe taking drugs is foolish” (89% - 91%), “I believe that young people who taking drugs will easily get into troubles” (75% - 80%) and “ I believe that people who started taking drugs will try other drugs more readily” (70% - 78%). What is heartening to note is that a higher proportion of students in June 2011 were aware of the undesirable features of drugs, as compared with that in October 2010.



11.9 For non-Tai Po students, it may also be seen from the chart below the majority of students were of the view that “I believe that I will have troubles at work or study, if I often take drugs” (70% - 73%), “I believe taking drugs is

foolish” (90% - 91%), “I believe that young people who taking drugs will easily get into troubles” (80%) and “ I believe that people who started taking drugs will try other drugs more readily” (75% - 79%).



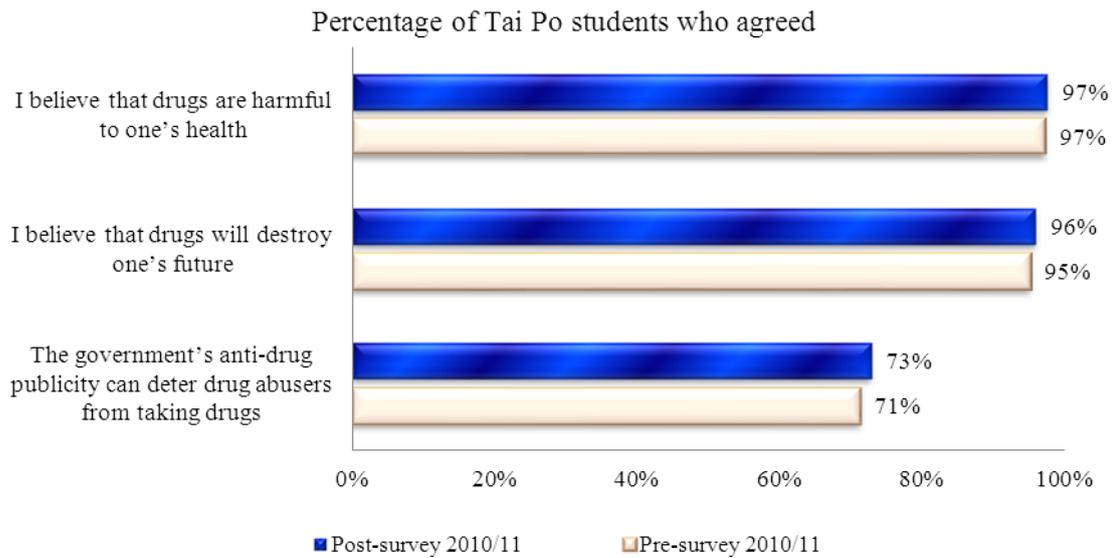
11.10 It may nevertheless be noted that while a higher proportion of students in June 2011 considered that “I believe that people who started taking drugs will try other drugs more readily”, as compared with that in October 2010, and a lower proportion of students were of the view that “I believe that I will have troubles at work or study, if I often take drugs” and “I believe taking drugs is foolish” in June 2011 as compared with October 2010. In other words, for non-Tai Po students, the proportion of them who were aware of some of the undesirable features of drugs had decreased slightly in June 2011, as compared with October 2010.

11.11 For undesirable features of drugs, an index may be compiled from the 4 items which purported to measure this underlying factor. However, an analysis of the extent of relatedness between individual items and this

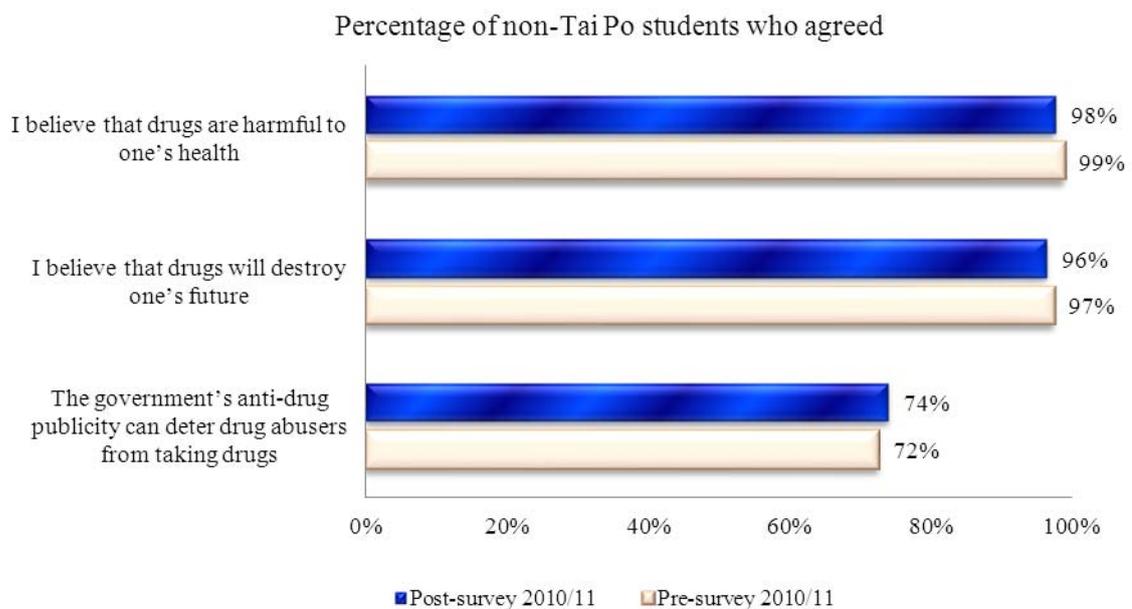
underlying factor (namely undesirable features of drugs) shows that item-total correlations, in the range of 0.29 to 0.49, were very low. Besides, the Cronbach's Alpha, as an indication of the internal consistency of the data, was in the range of 0.58 to 0.63, and was very low. In addition, estimates of convergent validity, with correlations being in range of 0.19 to 0.49, were also very low. In the circumstances, it is not advisable to compute the index on undesirable features of drugs based on the 4 items discussed above.

Adverse impact of drugs

11.12 Three items were found to measure the underlying factor on adverse impact of drugs. Findings obtained in the October 2010 pre-survey and June 2011 post-survey in respect of these 3 items are summarized in the chart below for Tai Po students. It may be seen that the great majority of students in Tai Po were of the view that "I believe drugs are harmful to one's health" (97%) and "I believe that drugs will destroy one's future" (95% - 96%). What is heartening to note is that a higher proportion of students in June 2011 were aware of these adverse impact of drugs, as compared with that in October 2010. In addition, the majority of students believed that "the government's anti-drug publicity can deter drug abusers from taking drugs" (71% - 73%). The percentage was also higher in June 2011 as compared with October 2010.



11.13 For non-Tai Po students, it may also be seen from the chart below that the great majority of them were also of the view that “I believe drugs are harmful to one’s health” (98% - 99%) and “I believe that drugs will destroy one’s future” (96% - 97%). In addition, the majority of students believed that “the government’s anti-drug publicity can deter drug abusers from taking drugs” (72% - 74%).



11.14 It may nevertheless be noted that while a slightly lower proportion of non-Tai Po students in June 2011 considered that “I believe drugs are harmful to one’s health”, as compared with that in October 2010. In addition, compared with Tai Po students, a slightly higher proportion of non-Tai Po students believed that “the government’s anti-drug publicity can deter drug abusers from taking drugs”.

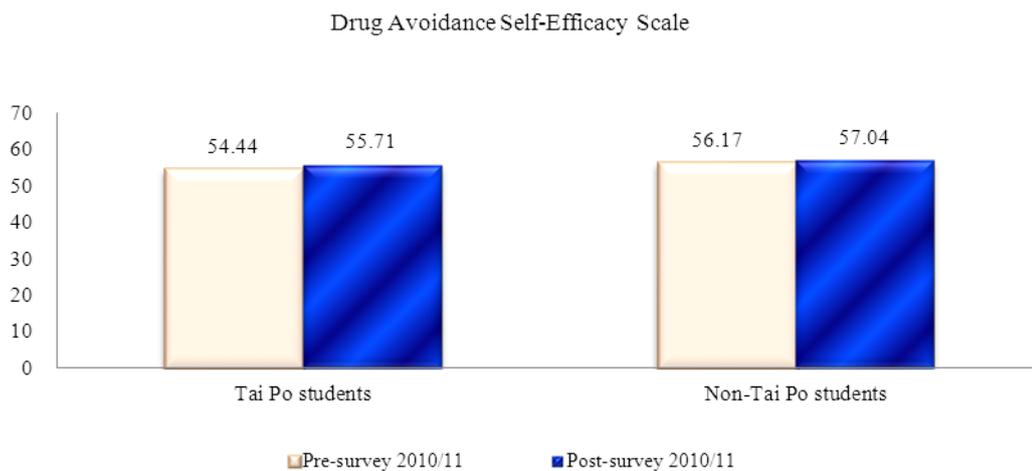
Drug avoidance self-efficacy

11.15 In the October 2010 pre-survey and the June 2011 post-survey, 10 items were used to assess students’ self-efficacy in avoiding drugs. The 10 items were based on the Beat Drug Fund Evaluation Question Set 3 or the Drug Avoidance Self-Efficacy (DASE) Scale. For each item in the Scale, the students were asked to imagine themselves in a particular situation and to rate their level of confidence (self-efficacy) to resist drug use in that situation. The Scale covers a broad range of levels of confidence and has been shown to be sensitive to changes in self-efficacy associated with treatment as well as to post-treatment adaptation to the natural environment following inpatient treatment.

11.16 The Scale has been developed for use with young drug abusers and provides a measure of treatment progress with regard to coping with risk situations. The DASES is useful as an outcome measure because it has demonstrated predictive validity; that is, scores on the scale have been shown to predict subsequent substance use behavior. Self-efficacy assessed at the completion of treatment was a significant predictor of drug use. There is also evidence supporting the general validity and reliability of the scale, although its use has been restricted to young multiple drug users. Detailed analysis of

the data is given in [Appendix 3](#) and a summary of the main findings is presented below.

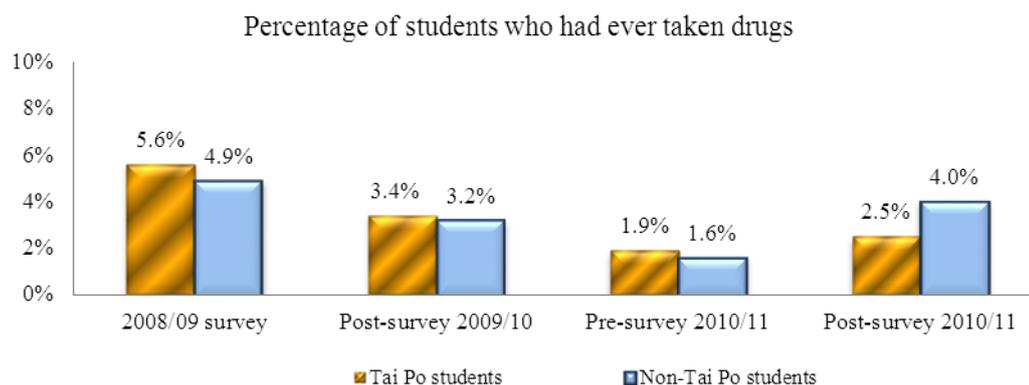
11.17 For the Scale, a summary score may be compiled from the 10 items which purport to measure this underlying factor on drug avoidance self-efficacy, with a higher score indicating a higher level of self-efficacy to avoid drugs. Based on the matched sample of nearly 17,000 students, the overall score on drug avoidance self-efficacy is compiled for Tai Po students and non-Tai Po students, in October 2010 and June 2011, and shown in the chart below. It may be seen that for Tai Po students, the score was slightly higher in June 2011 (at 55.7), as compared with that in October 2010 (54.4). As regards non-Tai Po students, the index was also slightly higher in June 2011 (57.0), as compared with that in October 2010 (56.2). The findings indicated that for both Tai Po students and non-Tai Po students, their drug avoid self-efficacy has increased in June 2011, as compared with October 2010, and the extent of improvement is greater for Tai Po students.



Chapter 12 Outcomes: Drug taking behaviour

Drug taking behaviour

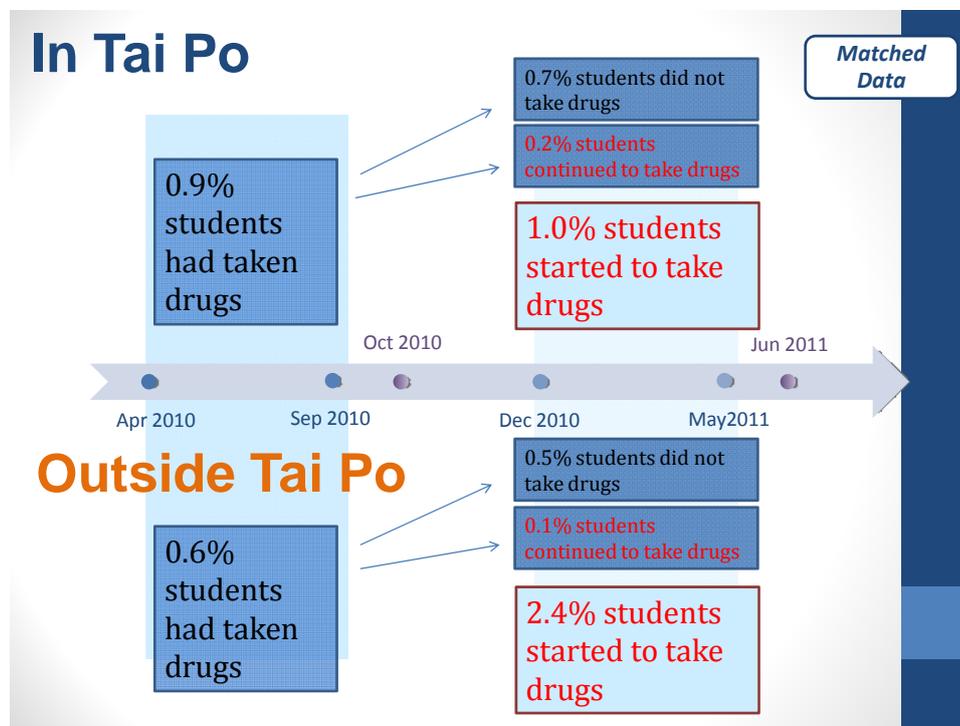
12.1 Apart from gathering data on students' knowledge of and attitude towards drugs and their drug avoidance self-efficacy, information was also obtained from students on their drug taking behaviour. In the chart below, time series data on the proportion of students who admitted that they had taken drugs previously are presented for Tai Po students and non-Tai Po students, based on the 2008/09 School Survey, June 2010 survey, October 2010 pre-survey and June 2011 post-survey.



12.2 For Tai Po students, it may be seen from the chart below that the percentage who admitted to have abused drugs has decreased steadily from 5.6% in 2008/09 to 3.4% in June 2010, 1.9% in October 2010 and slightly increased to 2.5% in June 2011. For non-Tai Po students, however, the percentage who admitted to have abused drugs increased significantly from 1.6% in October 2010 to 4% in June 2011, after decreasing steadily from 4.9% in 2008/09 to 3.2% in June 2010 and 1.6% in October 2010.

12.3 An analysis of the changes in drug taking behaviour between October

2010 and June 2011 for Tai Po students and non-Tai Po students is depicted in the chart below. It may be of interest to note that, based on students' self-reports on their drug taking behaviour during the 6 months prior to the survey period (i.e. October 2010 and June 2011), while only 1% of Tai Po students admitted to have started taking drugs during the 6 months before June 2011, 2.4% of non-Tai Po students admitted to have started taking drugs during the 6 months before June 2011. Apparently, the Scheme might have a deterrent effect on the drug abuse behaviour of Tai Po students.



12.4 The increase in the percentage of students who admitted to have abused drugs in June 2011 as compared with that in October 2010 is indeed a cause for concern, even though the rate of increase is much lower for Tai Po students, as compared with non-Tai Po students. A few of Tai Po school principals in Tai Po cautioned that although the number of students seeking help from the CCPSA in Tai Po had decreased, this might not mean that the drug abuse situation had become less serious. As far as they knew, some students who had previously abused drugs continued to do so, not openly in

schools or on the streets, but in their homes or places not visited by social workers. Drug abuse was not only talked about among some students, but had also become a trend frequently discussed online. A few of Tai Po teachers reckoned that drug abuse by students was still quite serious. The actual number of students abusing drugs might be greater than what was known to teachers.

12.5 Social workers interviewed in the course of the study also shared similar views. A number of them pointed out that anti-drug measures taken by Government, including the Police, were effective in changing the drug abuse patterns of students. Students had refrained from abusing drugs in popular spots like party places and public areas like parks or even schools. Unlike in the past few years, it was currently difficult to find young people hanging around in public areas like parks talking about or even abusing drugs.

12.6 However, this did not mean that the drug abuse situations had improved a lot. Several social workers were of the view that from their contacts with students who had or suspected to have unruly and delinquent behaviour, many of them were still abusing drugs. These students could have access to drugs easily through various channels other than previously popular places like Shenzhen. Students were now taking drugs at home or in hidden places like vacant flats in housing estates.

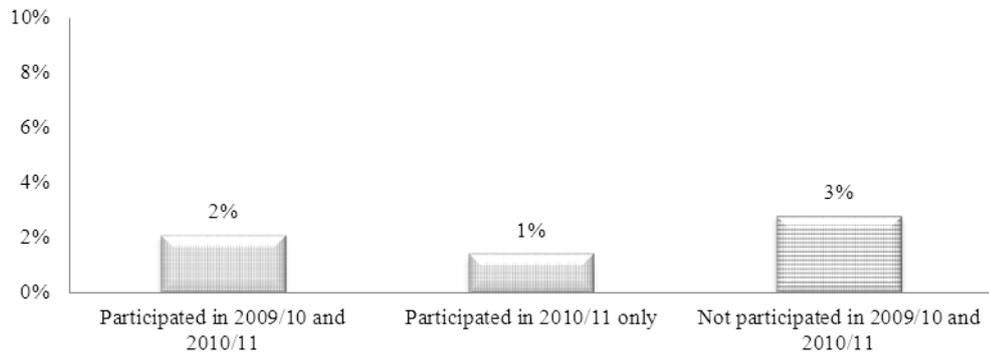
12.7 Several social workers of CCPSA outside Tai Po also remarked that their case load had not decreased even though the number of CCPSA was increased, besides, with increased publicity, more students were aware that drug abuse was illegal. Some of these students were as a result less willing to disclose their drug abuse behaviour to social workers, or discussed this

openly with classmates and friends, for fear that the case would be reported to schools or the police. In case they had health problems, they might choose to attend private clinics, rather than going to public hospitals, on the belief the private doctors would not report their cases to the police. As a result, the number of student drug abusers discovered and referred to social workers by say schools had decreased.

12.8 Several stakeholders including Tai Po students and their parents, medical practitioners and educationalists interviewed in course of the study also shared the views of social workers. They believed that the drug abuse pattern of youth had changed, partly in response to anti-drug measures of the Government, especially the Police. For example, young drug abusers would only take drugs in private places (e.g. at home or friends' home when their parents were out at work) rather than in public areas. Given the huge profit generated from the selling drugs, drug traffickers would try different means to contact youth, especially those who were at risk, and supply them with drugs. It was also difficult for students to resist peer pressure when offered drugs. Youth, including students, usually abused drugs during school holidays. Unless they abused drugs for a long time and in large quantities, their drug abuse behaviour would not be easily noticed by their parents.

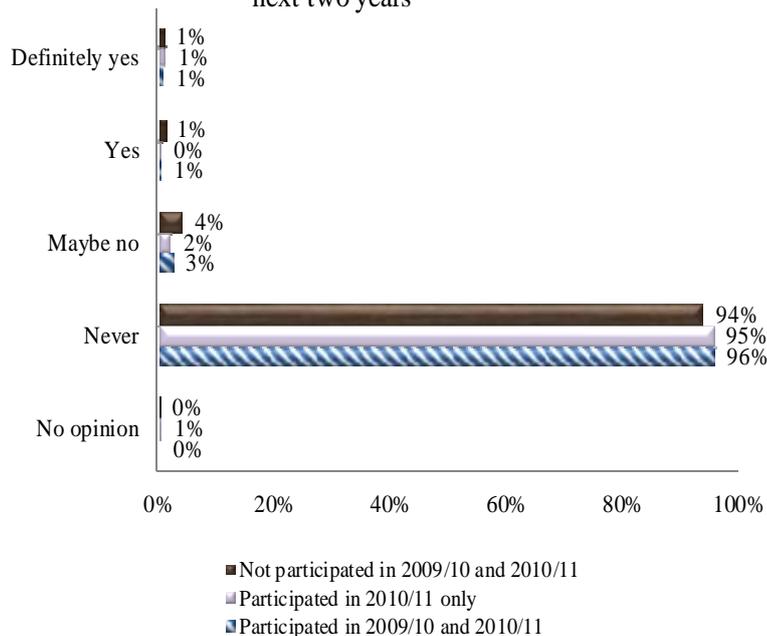
12.9 For students who had participated in both the 2009/10 and 2010/11 Schemes, it may be seen from the chart below that 2% admitted that they had abused drugs. For those who had not participated in both the 2009/10 and 2010/11 Schemes, on the other hand, the percentage who had abused drugs was higher, at 3%.

Percentage of Tai Po students who had ever taken drugs



12.10 In addition, for students who had participated in both the 2009/10 and 2010/11 Schemes, 96% indicated that they would never abuse drugs in the coming 2 years. The corresponding percentage for those who had participated in the 2010/11 Scheme only was 95%. However, for those who had not participated in both the 2009/10 and 2010/11 Schemes, the percentage who indicated that they would never abuse drugs in the coming 2 years was lower at 94%.

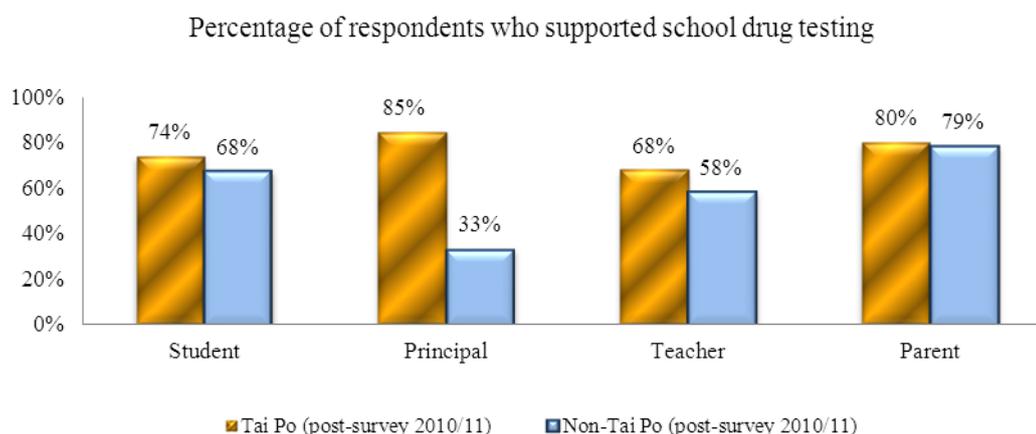
Percentage distribution of students by whether taking drugs in the next two years



V. School Drug Testing: The Way Forward

Chapter 13 Support of school drug testing

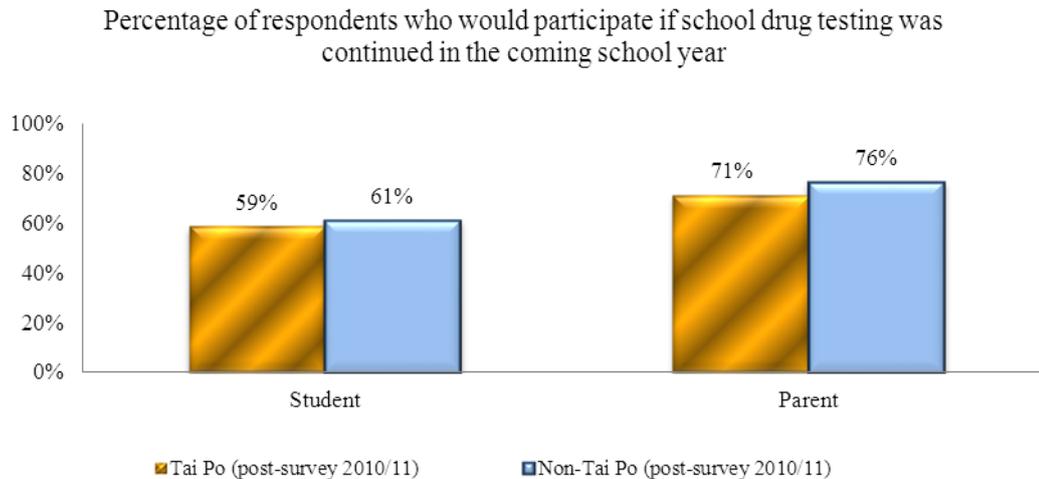
13.1 According to findings of the June 2011 post-survey, the majority of Tai Po students and their parents, and principals supported the continuation of school drug testing in the coming school year. For students attending secondary schools in Tai Po and those outside, as high as 74% and 68% respectively supported the continuation of school drug testing. For their parents, the percentage supporting school drug testing was even higher.



13.2 While 85% of Tai Po principals supported the continuation of school drug testing in the coming school year, only 33% of non-Tai Po principals indicated their support. As regards Tai Po teachers and non-Tai Po teachers, more than half of them supported the continuation of school drug testing. In short, most school stakeholders of secondary schools, including principals (other than non-Tai Po principals), teachers, students and parents supported the continuation of school drug testing.

13.3 If school drug testing continued to be implemented in the coming

school year, 59% of Tai Po students and 61% of non-Tai Po students indicated that they would participate. For their parents, 71% of Tai Po parents and 76% of non-Tai Po parents indicated that they would allow their children to participate in school drug testing if it was implemented in the coming school year.



13.4 Most of Tai Po teachers voiced support of the continuation of the present Scheme. They considered that the Scheme neither had not increased teacher workload nor affected learning and teaching at schools. To reinforce the impact of the Scheme, some teachers suggested that students should be asked to make a pledge of not abusing drugs. Besides, efforts should be made to encourage students to participate in the Scheme, with teachers assuming a more active role in promoting the Scheme and winning the support of students.

13.5 A number of teachers also suggested that the Scheme should be extended to schools in other districts and not just confined to schools in Tai Po. Nevertheless, some teachers considered that resources devoted to the Scheme were not proportional to the impact of the Scheme. A few teachers even remarked they did not much expectation of the Scheme. Most teachers considered that the Scheme had the support of parents. Though a few parents

might not fully understand details of Scheme, they believed the Scheme would help bring a correct, anti-drug message to students.

13.6 A number of Tai Po students indicated that they supported the Scheme. The reasons were that they believed the Scheme had strengthened the resolve of students who had abused drugs to quit drugs. They explained that students often abused drugs because of peer pressure. The Scheme would have a deterrent effect on these students, helping them to resist such peer pressure. They suggested that more anti-drug talks be organized to deliver positive messages to students.

13.7 During discussions with social workers, several of them opined that drug testing was not in line with the principles cherished by social workers. They suggested that more resources should be devoted to providing counselling services to students, by say providing additional social worker support to schools. They believed that social workers would not like to be involved in drug testing. They also expressed concern over the resource implications and whether resources similar to those provided to schools in Tai Po under the Scheme would be available to schools if the Scheme was extended to more schools in districts outside Tai Po.

Chapter 14 Implementation modalities

Anti-drug educational and promotional activities

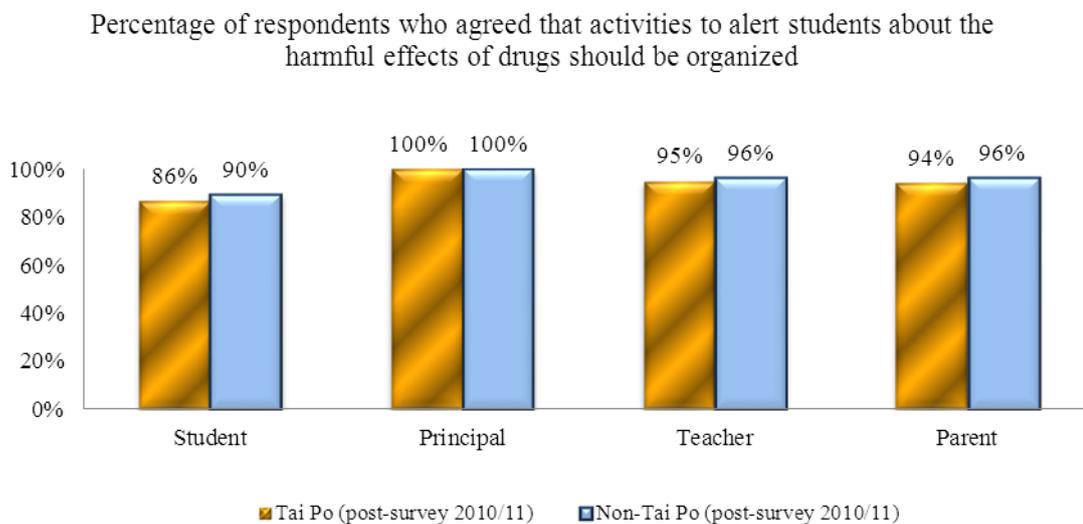
14.1 As pointed out in the earlier part of the report, apart from the 2009/10 and 2010/11 Schemes implemented in secondary schools in Tai Po which comprised drug testing and the various support programmes, there were also a host of educational and promotional anti-drug activities. In particular, the 2010/11 Scheme was implemented in Tai Po schools as part of the healthy school policy aimed at instilling positive values on students, helping them develop healthy lifestyles, in addition to anti-drug education.

14.2 There are already a number of programmes organised by different organisations which aim at helping students develop positive attitude and healthy lifestyle and to strengthen students' resolve to refuse drugs for schools with or without drug testing. For example, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust had supported a seven-year project known as 'P.A.T.H.S. (Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social programmes) to Adulthood: A Jockey Club Youth Enhancement Scheme'. This project "is pioneering and groundbreaking in Hong Kong and other Chinese contexts in many aspects" to promote the holistic development of adolescents in Hong Kong.³⁷

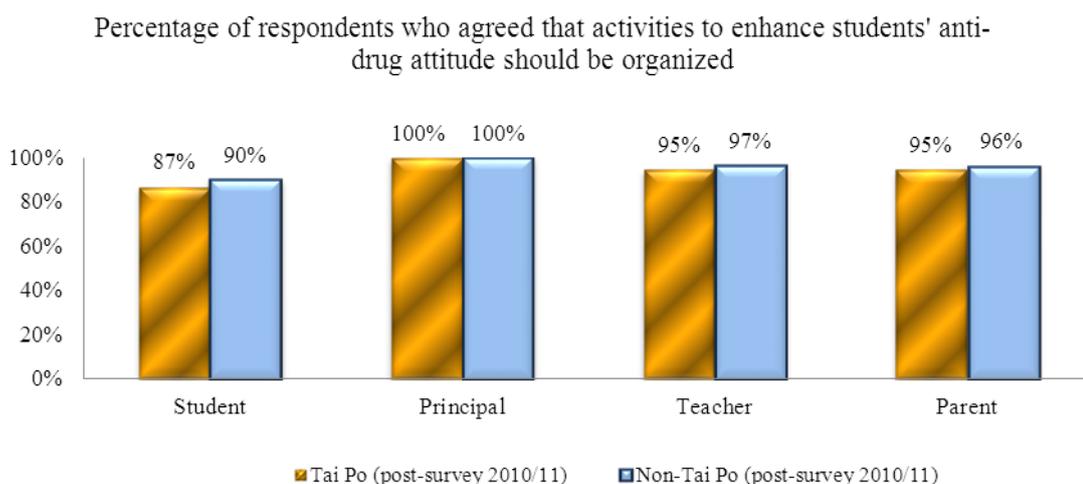
14.3 Findings of the June 2011 post-survey showed that the great majority of Tai Po students (86%) and non-Tai Po students (90%), Tai Po parents (94%) and non-Tai Po parents (96%), Tai Po teachers (95%) and non-Tai Po teachers (96%) as well as Tai Po principals (100%) and non-Tai Po principals (100%) agreed that activities designed to alert students about the harmful

³⁷ Shek, Daniel T L (2008), "Evaluation of Project P.A.T.H.S. in Hong Kong: triangulation of findings based on different evaluation strategies", in *The Science World Journal*, 8: 1- 3.

effects of drugs should be organized.

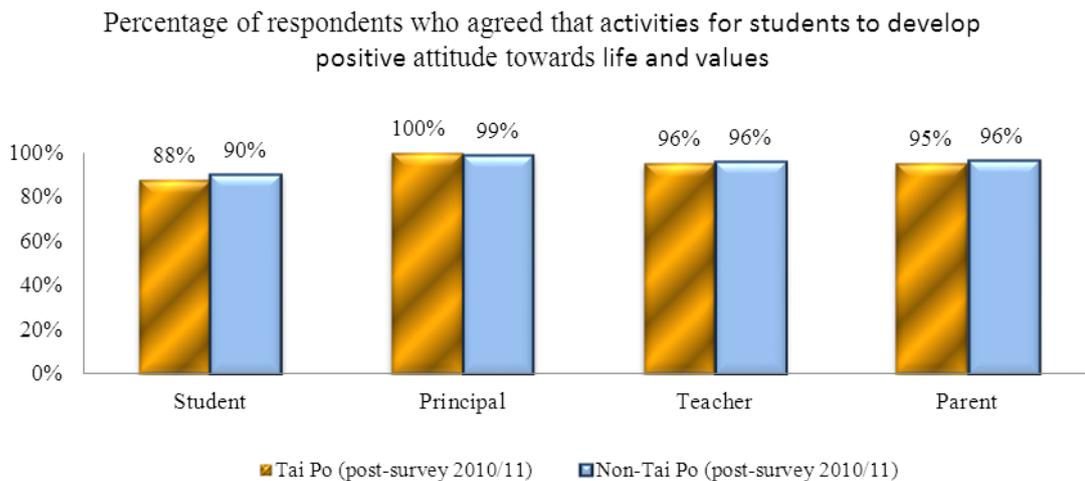


14.4 In addition, the great majority of Tai Po students (87%) and non-Tai Po students (90%), Tai Po parents (95%) and non-Tai Po parents (96%), Tai Po teachers (95%) and non-Tai Po teachers (97%) as well as Tai Po principals (100%) and non-Tai Po principals (100%) agreed that activities to enhance students' anti-drug attitude should be organized.



14.5 Apart from enhancing students' anti-drug attitude and their awareness of the harmful effects of drugs, it is also desirable to help students develop

positive values and healthy lifestyle. Findings of the June 2011 post-survey showed the great majority of students (88% for schools in Tai Po and 90% for schools outside Tai Po), school principals (100% and 99% respectively), teachers (96% and 96%) and parents (95% and 96%) agreed that activities should be organized for students to help them develop positive attitude towards life and value.



14.6 All of Tai Po principals pointed out that drug testing was only one of the component of the Scheme. The focus of the Scheme was to help students develop healthy lifestyles and positive life values. The Scheme also aimed at raising anti-drug awareness among students and their parents, and in the community. Indeed, in both the 2009/10 and 2010/11 Schemes, schools had organized a variety of anti-drug activities including talks, workshops, drama, games and other interest groups as well as other out-of-school activities to help students raise their awareness of the harmful effects of drugs, strengthen their resolve to refuse drugs and develop healthy lifestyles and positive life values. In organizing such activities, teachers and other professionals such as social workers were also involved. These anti-drug activities were part of activities organized under their healthy school programmes.

14.7 A number of Tai Po teachers commented that publicity through posters and anti-drug leaflets were not quite effective. Students did not pay much attention to these printed publicity materials. They also cautioned that too much anti-drug publicity would be counter-productive. Group activities organized by social workers, on the other hand, were considered more useful. They suggested more educational and preventive activities could be arranged through morning assemblies and sharing sessions. A number of them suggested that Government should step up moral education and deploy more social workers to help students. In addition, anti-drug activities should be organized for students at risk in order to raise their self-esteem and self-concept, strengthening their resolve to refuse drugs. More resources should be provided to social workers in providing counselling and support services to students.

14.8 Some of the Tai Po students also remarked that there were already many anti-drug publicity activities to the extent that these activities were boring and had become less effective. They pointed out that the publicity materials were not quite useful as they seldom read them.

14.9 In addition, according to social workers interviewed in the course of the research, anti-drug activities were organized by the CCPSA in Tai Po including lunch time activities where students were asked to make a pledge to stay away from drugs, experience sharing, watching of anti-drug movies, etc. Small group activities were also organized for students at risk who were referred to the CCPSA by teachers or school social workers. Such activities were considered as an effective means to engage students.

14.10 Most social workers interviewed also opined that with additional social workers provided to schools that had participated in the Scheme, more

anti-drug activities could be organized for students. The stationing school social workers could then spend more time and establish rapport with students. The anti-drug culture at schools had strengthened and there were more discussions among students on drug-related issues.

14.11 Nevertheless, it was cautioned by social workers that most students did not like to join activities that were labelled as "anti-drug", especially for schools where the drug situation was not serious. Students were bored by so many anti-drug activities that were organized over the past few years. Besides, social workers also found it difficult to approach and engage students if the social workers were identified with anti-drug programmes. Students, on the other hand, were more receptive to activities that were designed to help them develop healthy lifestyles and positive values.

14.12 Looking ahead, most of Tai Po principals suggested that the Scheme should be continued, because they believed that the Scheme had helped schools develop anti-drug culture and helped students stay away from drugs. There should be a sustained effort to help students stay away from drugs. Besides, the Scheme had little impact on the day-to-day operations of schools. They suggested that the emphasis should be shifted from drug testing to cultivating an anti-drug culture in schools. Efforts to promote anti-drug attitude and culture among students should be sustained. A few principals suggested that the Scheme should be extended to schools in other districts, and not just confined to those in Tai Po. In addition, as part of the Scheme, a number of school principals suggested that students should be asked to make a pledge to stay away from drugs.

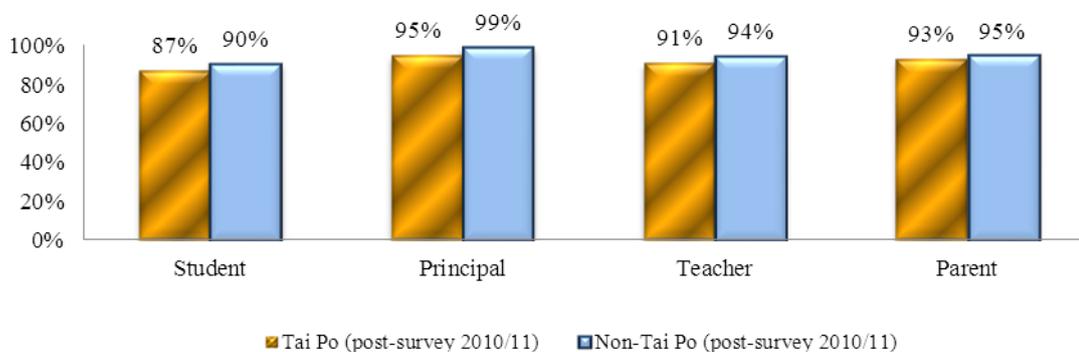
Early identification and intervention

Physical fitness tests

14.13 Apart from educational and promotional anti-drugs, a number of schools visited by the project team have introduced measures that facilitate early identification of students who have abused drugs or at risk of abusing drugs and provided timely intervention and assistance. In some schools, physical fitness tests and mental health screening are conducted by a team of medical professionals and social workers. Through these tests and screening, students with physical health, emotional and drug abuse problems are identified and timely intervention and assistance are provided to these students. During discussions with the social workers and nursing staff concerned, they pointed out that this approach was more acceptable to students, with little labelling effects, if any, on them. Needless to say, given the hidden nature of drug abuse, not all students who have abused drugs could be identified by teachers and social workers. Several school principals, teachers and social workers commented that some students who have abused drugs performed equally well as other students who had not in these physical fitness tests.

14.14 Findings of the June 2011 post-survey showed that the great majority of Tai Po students (87%) and non-Tai Po students (90%), Tai Po parents (93%) and non-Tai Po parents (95%), Tai Po teachers (91%) and non-Tai Po teachers (94%) as well as Tai Po principals (95%) and non-Tai Po principals (99%) agreed that activities like physical fitness test designed to trigger students' motivation to quit drugs should be organized. It is worth noting that the proportion of non-Tai Po students, parents and teachers holding such a view was slightly higher than those in Tai Po.

Percentage of respondents who agreed that activities like physical fitness tests should be organized to trigger motivation to quite refuse drugs



14.15 A number of Tai Po principals agreed that physical fitness tests currently adopted by a number of schools in Hong Kong could be used as a means to engage students. They suggested that the Scheme should be modified and strengthened, with a view to encourage participation by students. Physical fitness tests could be used as one of the means to engage students and increase participation.

14.16 Besides, for those who had abused drugs, they should be asked to undergo regular health checks to assess the impact of drugs on their health. Nevertheless, a few principals cautioned that physical fitness tests alone might not be able to help identify students who had abused drugs, especially those who were occasional drug abusers and had not abused drugs for a long time. Furthermore, for students who had health problems, they might not be suitable to undergo physical fitness tests.

14.17 Several non-Tai Po principals also supported the arrangement of physical fitness tests currently adopted in a number of schools in Hong Kong. They were of the view that schools should in any case pay attention to students' health problems, apart from drug abuse behaviour. It was also

suggested that consideration should be given to providing schools with nursing support services such that advice and guidance could be given to students on a whole range of problems related to physical and mental health.

14.18 A number of Tai Po teachers interviewed in the course of the study voiced their support of physical fitness tests as a means of engaging students. In fact, some schools had conducted simple physical fitness tests for their students. A few teachers nevertheless commented that activities like physical fitness tests could not replace drug testing as a means of identifying students who had abused drugs. They also cautioned that there would be a lot of follow up actions on students' health, after physical fitness tests, which might not be drug related.

14.19 Sharing their experience in conducting physical fitness tests with students, several social workers commented that this approach was quite successful in identifying students at risk, including those who had abused drugs. Students were asked to undergo different types of health checks and psychological tests. During individual interviews with social workers on the results of the health checks, a number of students admitted that they had abused drugs and were willing to accept treatment. The names of students so identified were not disclosed to their schools and hence the students were not afraid that they would be expelled from schools. The social workers reckoned that information obtained during the interviews from students was very useful in designing follow up counselling services to the students concerned, and was more valuable than drug test results.

14.20 Indeed, many social workers interviewed in the course of the research agreed that the use of physical fitness tests, preferably by medical personnel, was useful in engaging students and alerting them of the adverse impact of

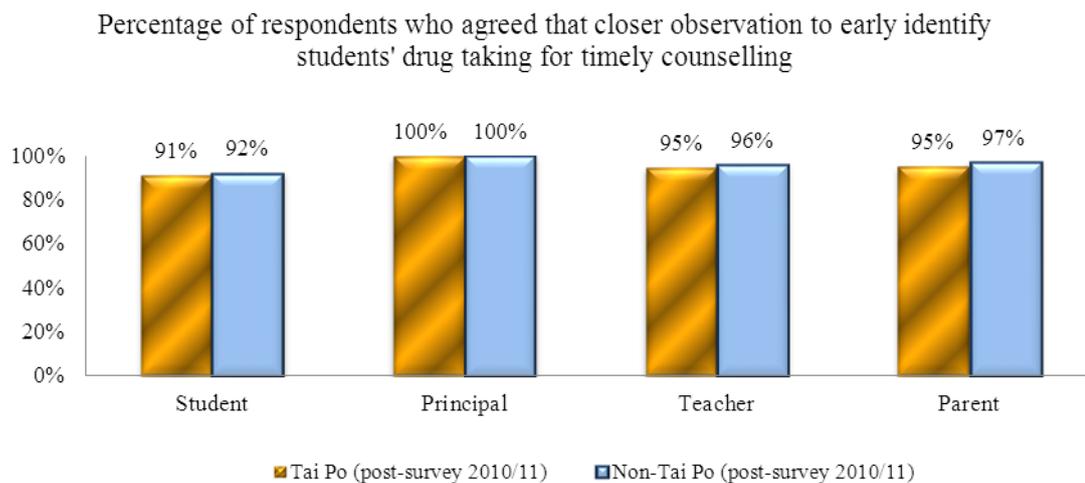
drugs on their health. Physical fitness tests, as part of the healthy school programme, could also increase students' awareness of their health status. Care should be taken to avoid any labelling effects on students identified to have abused drugs. Several social workers also cautioned that some student drug abusers might not easily identified through a simple physical fitness test. A few social workers added that for some schools conducting physical fitness tests for their students, the school principals did not mind if the test results including the names of students identified to be at risk or to have taken drugs, were not disclosed to the schools, as long as timely counselling and treatment were provided to the students concerned.

14.21 Sharing their experience on conducting physical fitness tests on youth, including students, at risk, several medical practitioners interviewed in the course of conducting the research opined that in conducting the tests, the care and attention given to youth, including students, by medical practitioners and social workers were an important factor facilitating subsequent engagement of the students concerned. If the students felt that other cared about their wellbeing, they would more willing to receive counselling and treatment. The medical practitioners emphasized that early identification and timely intervention were important. For those identified to have abused drugs through the tests, follow up counselling by social workers was required to help them quit drugs. The identity of students identified should not be disclosed to schools.

Other means of early identification and timely intervention

14.22 Findings of the June 2011 post-survey showed that the great majority of Tai Po students (91%) and non-Tai Po students (92%), Tai Po parents

(95%) and non-Tai Po parents (97%), Tai Po teachers (95%) and non-Tai Po teachers (96%) as well as all Tai Po principals and non-Tai Po principals agreed that steps should be taken to closely observe indication of drug taking by students for the purposes of early identification and timely counselling. It is worth noting that the proportion of non-Tai Po students, parents and teachers holding such a view was slightly higher than those in Tai Po.



14.23 In some schools visited in the course of the research, additional social workers are deployed to proactively engage students, especially those who have emotional or behavioural problems and considered to be at risk by teachers or school social workers. A number of school principals and social workers commented that it was not too difficult for experienced teachers and social workers to detect changes in students' behaviour that could be related to drug use. Once rapport was established with and trust obtained from the students concerned, it would not be too difficult to engage the students, finding out from them whether they had abused drugs and persuading them to receive assistance and treatment. Needless to say, given the hidden nature of drug abuse, not all students who have abused drugs could be identified by teachers and social workers.

14.24 During discussions with social workers, several of them stressed that the Scheme was only effective as a preventive tool. In order to provide timely assistance to students who had abused drugs, school social workers, social workers of outreach teams and those of CCPSA should step up efforts to early identify students who had abused drugs or at risk of doing so and provide timely intervention and assistance. The use of hair drug testing, for example, which had a longer detection window than urine drug testing, should also be explored.

14.25 Several social workers remarked that after spending sufficiently long time with students, they could identify those who were at risk, including risk factors might not be drug related. Through different group activities or individual counselling, social workers could build up good relationship with students and win their trust. For students concerned, many of them would voluntarily disclose their behavioural problems, including drug abuse, to social workers. With the consent of the students who had abused drugs, the social workers would refer them to CCPSA for further counselling and treatment. It should also be noted that students who were at risk were not confined to or necessarily those who performed less well at schools. Some students who seemed to be behaving well could also be at risk.

14.26 Many social workers pointed out that most secondary school students were aware of the harmful effects of drugs. However, they did not feel the impact of drugs on their health when they started or occasionally abused drugs. From their experience, students would seek help from them only when they had serious health problems due to the effects of drugs. However, by that time it was too late, although it was better than not seeking help. While recognizing the desirability for early identification and timely intervention, several social workers cautioned that the resources required for early

identification and timely intervention was quite significant and should not be under-estimated. Effective intervention required sustained efforts for a fairly long period of time. After successful treatment, some students might relapse to taking drugs, when they faced difficulties or had emotional problems.

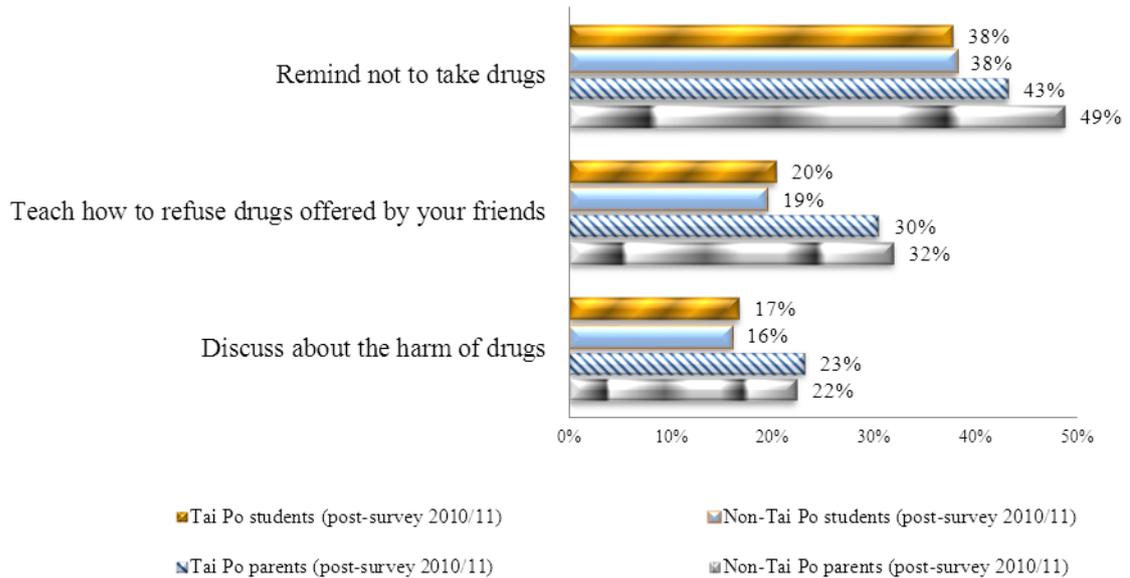
14.27 Several social workers outside Tai Po shared their experience of providing nursing service to schools. A nurse from their organization would visit schools for a few days in a month, offering counselling services to students on a whole range of health related issues, including health problems arising from abusing drugs. Such service was welcome by students, though concern was raised by a few other social workers that this might have significant resource implications. Other social workers also shared their experienced of involving medical doctors to provide treatment services to students who had abused drugs during lunch hours. Such arrangement was also welcome by the students. As some student drug abusers preferred to go to private clinics rather than public hospitals on drug related health problems, it was suggested that medical practitioners in private practices should be encouraged to work closely with social workers to provide timely counselling and assistance to student drug abusers.

Support to parents

14.28 Parental involvement in anti-drug education of their children is weak as revealed in the June 2010 survey and June 2011 post-survey. For example, less than half of the parents (43% for schools in Tai Po and 49% for schools outside Tai Po) reminded their children that they should not take drugs. Less than one third of the parents (30% and 32%) often taught their children how to refuse drugs offered by friends. Less than one quarter of the parents (23%

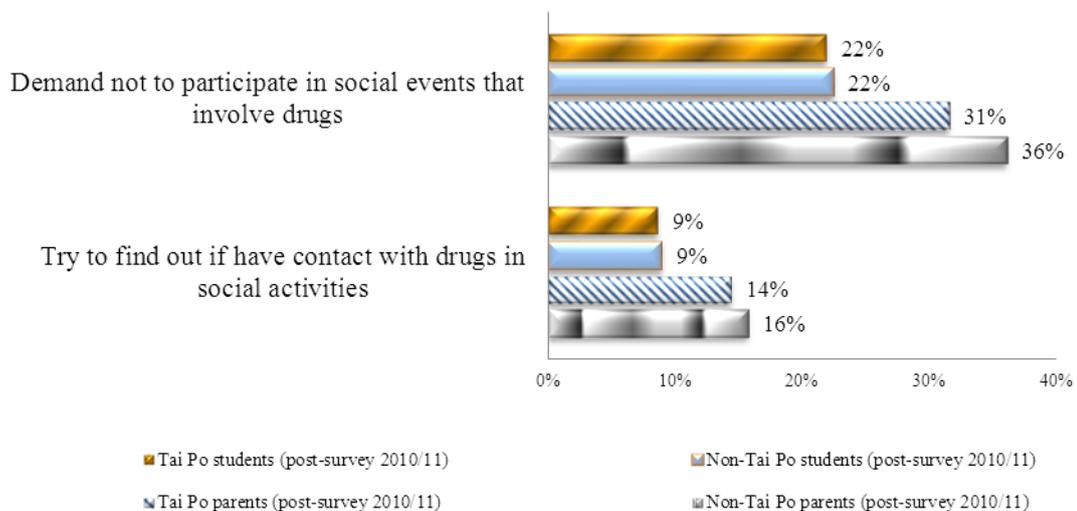
and 22%) discussed with their children about the harmful effects of drugs.

Percentage of respondents by whether parent often used the following means to help student stay away from drugs

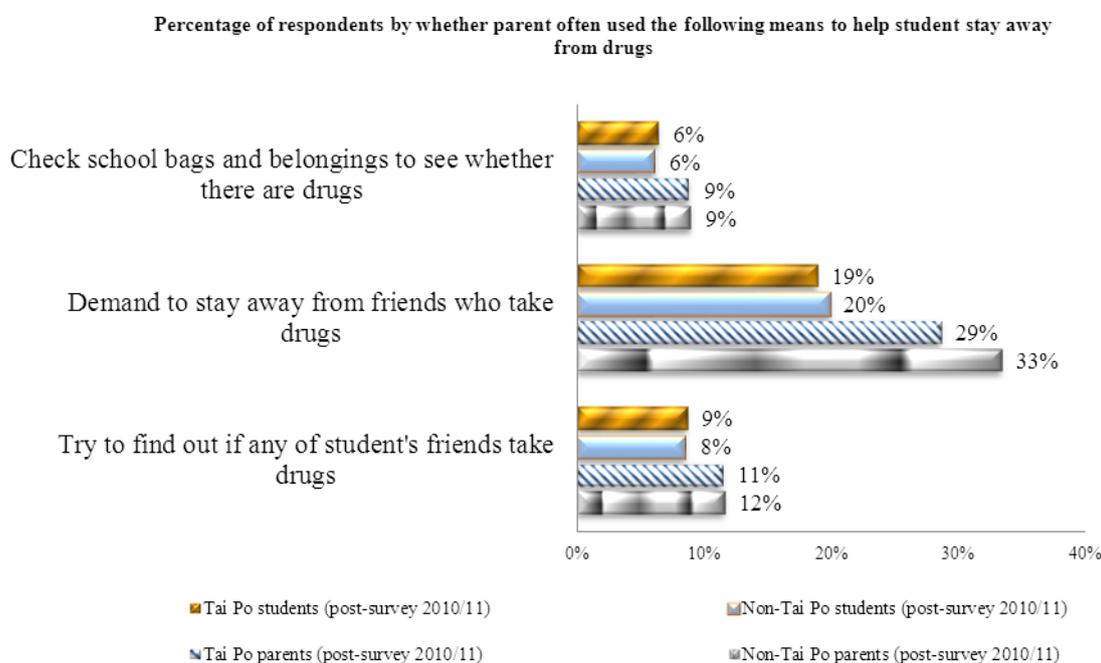


14.29 Furthermore, only about one third of the parents (31% and 36%) often requested their children not to participate in any social activities which would expose them to drugs. As low as 14% of the Tai Po parents and 16% of non-Tai Po parents often tried to find out whether any of their social activities would expose them to drugs.

Percentage of respondents by whether parent often used the following means to help student stay away from drugs



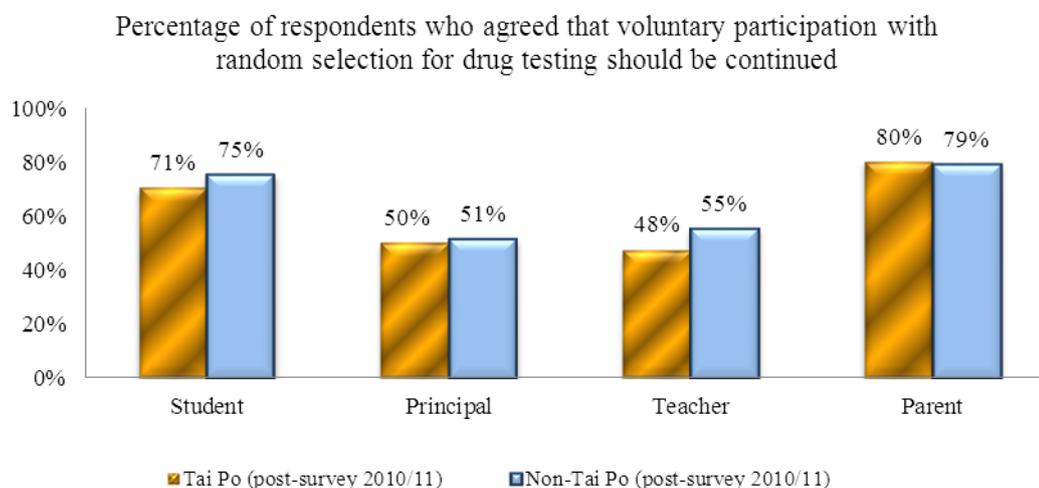
14.30 In addition, only about 29% of Tai Po parents and 33% of non-Tai Po parents often requested their children to stay away from their friends who had taken drugs, Slightly more than one tenth of the parents (11% for Tai Po parents and 12% for non-Tai Po parents) often tried to find out if any of their children’s friends had taken drugs. Less than one tenth of the parents (9% and 9%) searched their children’s school bags or other belongings to check if there was any drug.



14.31 The research findings presented above point to the need for providing support to parents in helping them to deal with drug-related problems of their children. In connection with the Scheme, parents could also play a more active role in encouraging their children to participate in the Scheme, and in various anti-drug education activities organized by schools.

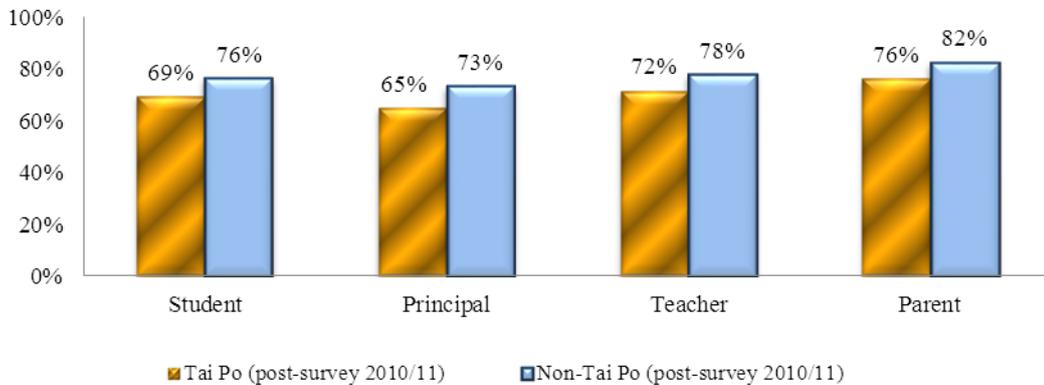
School drug testing: voluntary or compulsory

14.32 For the Scheme in Tai Po, participation is voluntary and written consent from both parents and students is required. As discussed above, students participate or not in drug testing for a variety of reasons not related to whether or not they have abused drugs. Findings of the June 2011 post-survey showed that the majority of Tai Po students (71%) and non-Tai Po students (75%) and Tai Po parents (80%) and non-Tai Po parents (79%) supported voluntary participation with random selection of students for drug testing, same as the Scheme in Tai Po. However, slightly less than half of Tai Po teachers (48%) and principals (50%) supported this arrangement, and slightly more than half of non-Tai Po teachers (55%) and principals (51%) of secondary schools supported this approach.



14.33 On the other hand, most of Tai Po students (69%) and non-Tai Po students (76%) and Tai po parents (76%) and non-Tai Po parents (82%), Tai Po teachers (72%) and non-Tai Po teachers (78%) and Tai Po principals (65%) and non-Tai Po principals (73%) supported compulsory. In particular, the proportion of students, parents, teachers and school principals in favour of compulsory drug testing was higher than the corresponding percentage for those in favour of voluntary drug testing.

Percentage of respondents who supported compulsory drug testing either by random selection OR based on reasonable suspicion



14.34 Most of Tai Po principals were of the view that school drug testing should be compulsory. They believed that teachers, parents and other school stakeholders (e.g. school management committees) would also support compulsory drug testing. A few school principals commented that if participation in the Scheme was voluntary, or if students who had participated were allowed not to undergo drug testing if sampled to do so, the Scheme would be less effective. Several principals added that if abusing drugs was illegal and had serious adverse impact on students, students should not be given a choice not to participate in drug testing which was designed to help them stay away from drugs.

14.35 While they were aware that compulsory drug testing was not allowed under current laws, most principals hoped that this would be changed through amending existing legislation. With legal backing, schools could either random sample or select with reasonable suspicion students for drug testing. Drawing an analogy between drug testing and other school regulations such as wearing of school uniforms, several school principals were of the view that making school drug testing compulsory should be acceptable to students and their parents.

14.36 School principals were not worried that students would drop out from schools if drug testing became compulsory. Students dropped out from schools for a variety of reasons. On the contrary, many students hoped to remain in schools and this was also the wish of their parents even though they had misbehaved. This explained why students and their parents did not want their drug taking behaviour known to schools for fear that schools would try to expel them from schools.

14.37 If students did drop out of schools, teachers and social workers would try out to find out why the students dropped out and offered whatever assistance required. After all, one of the tasks of schools was to cultivate a caring and inviting school environment such that students wanted to remain in schools and experienced the joy of learning. Trying not to find out delinquent and unruly behaviour of students and to provide timely assistance, for fear that students would be alienated and drop out from schools, was obviously not a correct approach if protection of students' interests was one of schools' priorities.

14.38 Nearly all of non-Tai Po principals were of the view that school drug testing should be made compulsory. A few of them believed that if the Scheme was voluntary, it would not be effective. This was because for students who had abused drugs, they could choose not to participate in the Scheme. Even though they had participated in the Scheme and selected for drug testing, they could choose not to produce their urine samples for drug testing.

14.39 Most school principals expected that the Scheme should aim at early identification and timely intervention as one of its objectives, which could only be effectively achieved through compulsory drug testing. With

compulsory drug testing, it also helped remove labelling effects, if any, on schools that had implemented drug testing. Random selection of students for compulsory drug testing was probably the best approach, as it had no labeling effect on students. While selection of students for compulsory drug testing based on reasonable suspicion was likely to be more cost effective, it might result in unnecessary argument on the basis of reasonable suspicion, between teachers on the one hand and students and their parents on the other.

14.40 A few of Tai Po principals and non-Tai Po principals cautioned that there might be opposition from some members of the community against compulsory drug testing. Besides, if compulsory drug testing was allowed through legislation, this should not be confined to students at schools. Thus, they recognized that currently it was not the right time to introduce compulsory drug testing as there had not been sufficient discussions over the issue. However, they hoped the government should start thinking about this and engage relevant stakeholders and the community in a series of meaningful discussions.

14.41 Parents and educationalists interviewed in the course of the study also suggested that Government should consider amending the law to allow compulsory drug testing. Students could be randomly selected or selected based on reasonable suspicion for drug tests, though some parents were not in favour of the latter as this might give rise to arguments between schools on the one hand and students and their parents on the other. It was also essential that schools should inform students that they would not expel from schools students identified to have abused drugs. Schools should provide counselling and support services to the students concerned to help them quit drugs. To avoid labelling effects on schools, the Scheme should be extended to all schools in Hong Kong. Several parents anticipated that some students might

drop out from schools to avoid compulsory drug tests. However, they reckoned that those students at risk would drop out from schools for other reasons, or later when drugs had seriously impaired their health.

14.42 Several students interviewed in the course of conducting the study, on the other hand, did not think that students would drop out from schools simply to avoid compulsory drug testing. Students dropped out probably for other reasons like lack of interest in schooling. Several students interviewed considered it acceptable to introduce compulsory drug testing, which they considered as more effective. This would have a greater deterrent effect on students. For students who had not abused drugs, this would give them an opportunity to prove they had not abused drugs. For those who had abused drugs, it would strengthen their resolve to quit drugs. These students should not object to compulsory drug testing because the purpose was to help them stay away from drugs. Most students would not discriminate against those who had taken drugs, because they knew that students abused drugs due to bad peer pressure. They believed students abused drugs in order to relieve pressure, and Government should address this problem.

14.43 On the other hand, a few students interviewed in the course of the research indicated that they opposed to compulsory drug testing because it would not be welcome by students. They feared that some students might not attend schools in order to avoid drug testing. A few also raised the concern that this might result in an invasion of the privacy of students if students were compelled to take drug tests.

14.44 Most of Tai Po teachers expressed support of compulsory drug testing. They also believed that most students and parents would support compulsory drug testing. They considered such an arrangement would be fair to all

students. Without compulsion, the Scheme would not be effective in serving the purposes of early identification and timely intervention for students who were at risk. They also suggested that adequate resources should be made available to provide counselling and treatment to students identified to have abused drugs. While noting that the present voluntary approach was not effective as students could through various means avoid drug testing, the Scheme was still useful in promoting a drug-free culture at school. Nevertheless, several teachers admitted that if students were unwilling to participate in the Scheme, it was very difficult to compel them to do so. They also cautioned that some members of the community might not support compulsory drug testing.

14.45 During discussions with social workers, several of them pointed out that they noticed some students who had abused drugs did not participate in the Scheme. These students admitted to social workers that they had various means to convince their parents that it was not necessary to participate in the Scheme. Some students even signed the consent documents not to participate on behalf of their parents. If students insisted not to participate in the Scheme, their parents would usually not force the students to participate. For this group of students, given the voluntary nature of drug testing, the Scheme was not effective at all.

14.46 Most social workers opined that from their experience student drug abusers usually did not seek help voluntarily. This was partly because, unlike adult drug abusers, the health conditions of student drug abusers had not yet deteriorated to the extent that would prompt them to seek help. Students took drugs, in particularly for the first time, mainly out of curiosity and/or under peer pressure. Many of them knew about the harmful effects of drugs, but had no time to think about it when they were offered drugs. In general, student

drug abusers sought help from social workers mainly when their drug taking behaviour was found out by their parents, schools or other friends and were forced to seek help.

14.47 In the circumstances, most social workers admitted with compulsory drug testing would be more effective. A few remarked that if the purpose of the Scheme was mainly educational and promotional, then whether drug testing was compulsory or not was immaterial. It should be clearly understood by all concerned that voluntary drug testing would not be effective for the purposes of early identification. A few social workers suggested that the Government should make up their mind about the purpose(s) of the Scheme, whether it was for prevention or early identification, or both.

14.48 Several social workers voiced support of compulsory drug testing. As students at risk, including those who had abused drugs, would usually not seek help voluntarily, compulsory drug testing would facilitate early identification and timely intervention. This was in the best interest of students. It would not be desirable for students who had abused drugs to wait until their health had been adversely damaged by drugs to seek help. Nevertheless, a few social workers, while agreeing that compulsory drug testing would be more effective, feared that there might be great resistance from students. If students identified to have abused drugs through compulsory drug testing were not willing to accept treatment, it would be more difficult for social workers to engage these students and provide assistance to them. There should be adequate follow up services and sufficient resources to cope with students identified through compulsory drug testing, including those required to tackle more difficult cases arising from students who were not willing to receive treatment after having been identified to have abused drugs or who dropped

out from schools in order to avoid drug testing.

14.49 Other social workers interviewed in the course of conducting the study explained that while they did not support compulsory drug testing, they were not against it. Their main concern was whether sufficient support services were available to deal with problems arising from compulsory drug testing, including counselling and treatment services to students identified to have abused drugs. Schools and NGOs should be adequately prepared to deal with students identified to have abused through compulsory drug test, including those who were reluctant to receive counselling and treatment, especially if the number of students so identified was not small. There should also be adequate medical support services.

14.50 However, a number of them feared that if drug testing became compulsory, some students might choose not to attend schools. Thus, it was essential that support services should be available to deal with such or other related problems arising compulsory drug testing. Schools in cooperation with NGO should be prepared to provide adequate support services to students who had abused drugs, while allowing these students to maintain their linkage with schools and continue their schooling. To reduce resistance to compulsory drug testing from parents and students, consideration could be given to not disclosing to schools the names of students identified to have abused drugs through drug testing. There should be sufficient safeguards to ensure the students identified would not be expelled from schools.

14.51 A few social workers cautioned that compulsory drug testing was quite controversial and might have a negative impact on students. Some members of the community might find it unacceptable. There should be sufficient justifications to support the introduction of compulsory drug testing.

They appreciated the concerns of principals, teachers and parents and their wish that students who had abused drugs should be identified at an early stage and provided timely counselling and treatment. However, some students, especially those who had not abused drugs, might not accept compulsory drug testing. Obviously, situations in different schools were different and it was difficult to generalize. Most social workers interviewed that it was the right moment to discuss about these issues, including issues related to legal aspects of compulsory drug testing.

14.52 There were social workers interviewed in the course of the research, on the other hand, who were against compulsory drug testing. In their opinion, compulsory drug testing would ruin relationship between schools and students, and between social workers and students. As a result, it would be difficult for schools and social workers to engage students and effectively provide counseling and assistance to them. If students dropped out from schools, social workers would have to devote more time to locate and contact these students and to offer assistance.

14.53 These social workers were of the view that there were methods other than drug testing that could help students quit and stay away from drugs. Social workers should have little difficulties identifying students at risk, including those who had abused drugs. For these students, counselling and treatment services could be provided to them, individually and/or in small groups. Once mutual trust was established between social workers and the students concerned, social workers would be in a position to help them.

Chapter 15 Observations

Effectiveness of the Scheme

15.1 This is an extended research to evaluate the 2010/11 Scheme. The Project Team found that the 2010/11 Scheme is effective as a preventive measure to enhance the resolve of most students to stay away from drugs. It has enhanced their resolve to refuse illicit drugs, helped build an anti-drug culture in schools and triggered the motivation of those students who had abused drugs to quit drugs. Even among students who had not participated in the Scheme, more than half of them shared similar view.

15.2 Apart from the subjective perspective of stakeholders, there are also objective indicators suggesting that the Scheme has been effective. The Scheme is found to be effective in raising the knowledge of drugs for Tai Po students, regardless of whether or not the students have participated in the Scheme, while the impact is not significant for non-Tai Po students (please see para. 10.4 – 10.6). The self-efficacy for drug avoidance has increased for both Tai Po and non-Tai Po students after the completion of the 2010/11 Scheme, but the extent of improvement is greater for Tai Po students (please see para. 11.17). Nevertheless, it is also noted that students' misconception about drugs has worsened (please see para. 11.6).

15.3 In addition, based on the self-reports of students, while the percentage of Tai Po students who admitted to have abused drugs in June 2010 was higher than that for non-Tai Po students, the corresponding percentage in June 2011 was lower for Tai Po students, as compared with that for non-Tai Po students. In June 2011, the percentage of non-Tai Po students who admitted to have started taking drugs during the previous 6 months was more

than double the corresponding percentage for Tai Po students. The findings serve as an indication that the Scheme has played an effective role in preventing students from starting drugs taking.

15.4 Based on views obtained through in-depth interviews, social workers were of a view that school drug testing was effective as a deterrent measure for students participating, especially for those who had abused drugs out of curiosity and whose resolve in refusing drugs was less strong. On the whole, most Tai Po social workers were of the view that although the Scheme had not identified any drug taking students, the Scheme had achieved its intended educational effects. With increased level of awareness of the harmful effects of drugs and more frequent discussions among students themselves and between students and teachers or social workers, students would try to stay away from drugs, or at least reduce the frequency of abusing drugs, according to the views of several social workers interviewed.

15.5 Several social workers also noted that the Scheme had conveyed a firm and clear anti-drug message to students. Some students had, as a result, reduced the frequency of or avoided completely going out with peer groups to activities that might involve drugs taking. From the perspective of anti-drug prevention and education, many social workers noted that it was better to continue implementing the Scheme rather than discontinuing it. Several social workers were of the view that implementing voluntary drug testing in schools in other districts was worth trying. Students should also be informed of the positive outcomes of the Scheme.

15.6 Parents and educationalists interviewed in the course of the research also agreed that the Scheme was effective from a preventive and educational perspective. Parents had also benefitted from the anti-drug activities

organized for them. They suggested that the Scheme should be extended to schools in other districts, in order to achieve its intended preventive and educational impact.

15.7 In short, Tai Po principals, teachers, students and parents opined that the Scheme was effective, as evidenced by the significant improvements in students' knowledge of drugs, efficacy to avoid drug and drug taking situation as compared with those outside Tai Po. Findings of the research also indicated that most of Tai Po principals, teachers, students and parents supported the continuation of voluntary school drug testing in the coming school year. For non-Tai Po teachers, students and parents, the majority of them also shared similar view.

Acceptability of drug testing

15.8 Findings of the research showed that most students were not worried about the process of drug testing. Most school principals, teachers, students and parents believe that personal data of students were protected. Most students and parents were also satisfied with drug testing. In particular, increasing proportions of school principals, teachers, students and parents had a positive view of drug testing.

15.9 Furthermore, the great majority of students and parents believed that drug testing does not have a negative impact on family relationship, students' trust in schools and teacher-student relationship. The percentage holding such a view is higher for the 2010/11 Scheme, as compared with that for the 2009/10 Scheme.

15.10 In short, thanks to efforts of schools, the SDT team and government departments concerned, the Scheme was implemented smoothly, to the satisfaction of students and parents concerned. In the words of most Tai Po principals, drug testing had become part of school life with minimal disruption to other aspects of the school operation.

15.11 Admittedly, school drug testing in Tai Po has come a long way in overcoming opposition and dispelling misconception, before it was accepted by students and their parents. Tremendous success has been achieved by Tai Po schools in allaying concerns over privacy and students' rights, ensuring that voluntary participation in drug testing by students and minimizing embarrassment to students selected for drug testing and disturbances to school work. For schools outside Tai Po that plan to implement drug testing, they will inevitably have to tackle similar issues and make adjustments to the drug testing procedures in response to feedback from students, parents, teachers and social workers. The experience of drug testing in schools in Tai Po will offer valuable references. The Project Team believes that as long as drug testing is implemented with care and caution, taking into account the specific circumstances of schools and needs of students, schools outside Tai Po planning to introduce drug testing should have little difficulty winning the support of students, parents, teachers and social workers.

Enhancing the effectiveness of the Scheme

Preventive education and counseling services

15.12 A number of suggestions were put forward by school social workers on further refinements to the operational arrangement of the Scheme. For

example, in the 2010/11 Scheme, school social workers were informed of seven days in advance the date selected for drug testing. This had affected scheduling of activities organised by school social workers. In the Scheme, anti-drug education and promotional activities were conducted by the SDT team while school social workers provided separately anti-drug preventive education and counseling to students. Due to the need to protect privacy of students, there was little communication between the SDT team and school social workers on the needs of individual students.

15.13 A number of school social workers suggested that there should be a closer collaboration between the SDT team and school social workers in providing preventive education and counseling services to students, especially those who are likely to be identified in the course of drug testing. Several social workers suggested that schools should establish a comprehensive drug policy, including measures to protect students and deal with students identified to have abused drugs. Such policy should be drawn up with participation of parents and NGO involved.

Support to parents

15.14 As noted by the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse, “the importance of parents in preventing youth drug abuse cannot be over-emphasised. The Task Force fully supports enhancement of preventive education programmes for parents through different channels and means.” A variety of anti-drug activities for parents, including workshops and seminars have been organised by ND, SWD, EDB, Parent-Teacher Associations and NGOs.³⁸

³⁸ Report of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse (November 2008), p.38.

15.15 Findings from the June 2010 survey and June 2011 post-survey showed that for students who had discussed with their parents about their participation in the Scheme, a higher proportion of them had eventually participated in the Scheme, as compared with those who had not discussed with their parents. It follows that parental involvement in anti-drug education of their children would lead to a more positive attitude towards the Scheme and participation.

15.16 However, parents were not keen to get involved in anti-drug education of their children. For example, less than half of the parents reminded their children that they should not take drugs and less than one quarter of the parents discussed with their children about the harmful effects of drugs. Furthermore, only about one-third of the parents often requested their children not to participate in social activities that might expose them to drugs. As low as 14% of the Tai Po parents and 16% of the non-Tai Po parents often tried to find out whether any of their children's social activities might expose them to drugs. Slightly more than one-tenth of the parents (11% for Tai Po parents and 12% for non-Tai Po parents) often tried to find out if any of their children's friends had taken drugs.

15.17 If parents did not cooperate with schools in helping students stay away from drugs, as remarked by a number of school principals, the effectiveness of schools' efforts would be much reduced. It was also noted that there was not much discussion between students and their parents on the Scheme, even though most parents should be aware of it. Some parents simply did not have time for such discussions with their children. Several principals were also of the view that based on their observations and interactions with parents, when students were suspected to have abused drugs, some of their parents were unable to handle the problem properly and to offer

the much needed help to the students concerned. Some parents might even be reluctant to seek help from schools for fear that doing so would jeopardise the schooling of their children.

15.18 As suggested by principals, specific support should be provided to parents helping them to strengthen family relationship and encourage them to seek help if required. If resources permit, as suggested by teachers and social workers, more activities should be organised targeting families. Some students abused drugs because of problems arising from their family relationship. It would be helpful if more efforts be directed towards poor family relationship and other family situations, in particular for families with students at risk.

15.19 It was noted that a number of programmes funded by BDF had been organised by NGO in cooperation with schools, to provide anti-drug education to parents and to equip parents with the necessary knowledge and skills to help their children understand the harmful effects of drugs, strengthen their children's resolve and guide them how to refuse drugs and to identify at an early stage their children who were at risk of drug abuse. Through a parent support network, parents are empowered not only to protect their children from drugs but also to offer help to other parents in need. If such programmes are implemented in conjunction with school drug testing, it would help parents to play a more active role in encouraging students to participate in drug testing, and better prepare parents to deal with situations when their children refuse to undergo drug testing or when their children were identified to have abused drugs.

Support to teachers

15.20 While students are at schools, teachers are in frequent contact with them. As pointed out by the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications, apart from learning and teaching, teachers have to handle a wide range of responsibilities essential to the whole-person development of students, including moral, social and civic education, guidance and counseling.³⁹

15.21 Teachers' involvement in the Scheme was minimal. They were mainly responsible for collecting consent forms from students, which did not significantly increase teachers' workload. Nevertheless, teachers are responsible for the actual delivery of anti-drug education to students. For example, in delivering life education classes, teachers would discuss with students about the harmful effects of drugs. Teachers also work closely with social workers to identify signs of delinquent and unruly behaviour of students, including drug abuse, and take immediate, remedial actions where appropriate. In case a student sampled for drug testing refuse to undergo drug testing, either the school principals or teachers responsible will have to inform the students' parents.

15.22 In connection with providing assistance to students who have abused drugs, findings of both the June 2010 survey and June 2011 post-survey showed that the majority of school principals (June 2010: 83%; June 2011: 85%) and teachers (June 2010: 83%; June 2011: 84%) of Tai Po considered that teachers should follow up with students who were found to have abused drugs to offer help and advice.

39 Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (2003), *Towards a Learning Profession*, p.9.

15.23 As pointed out by the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse, “many teachers are not that well-equipped with knowledge and skills in delivering drug education to students and handling drug cases effectively.”⁴⁰ A number of measures are now in place to help teachers, including training courses and resource kits. As recommended by the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse, structured professional training for teachers should be enhanced to reinforce teachers’ competence and knowledge in delivering drug education and in handling at-risk students.⁴¹

15.24 During discussions with social workers, a number of them pointed out that teachers, through their day-to-day contact with students, would be able to identify students who were at risk. They could refer these students to social workers for follow up counselling and treatment. Drug abuse was related to or caused by other behavioural problems, which could be identified, without much difficulty by teachers or social workers. It was suggested that more training should be provided to teachers on how to deal with students suspected to have abused drugs.

15.25 For schools implementing the Scheme, it provides a unique opportunity for teachers to engage students, in meaningful discussions over drug testing, the harmful effects of drugs as well as ways and means of resisting bad peer influence and refusing drugs when offered. As pointed out in the research finding presented above, some students may have misconception about drugs. Some parents’ involvement in the Scheme and anti-drug education is weak or almost non-existent. Through interactions with parents and by observing students’ attitudes and behaviour and their changes during the year, as the Scheme and the various anti-drug education programmes are implemented, teachers would be in a better position to

40 *Report of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse* (November 2008), p.46.

41 *Report of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse* (November 2008), p.54.

identify students, including those who have and have not participated in the Scheme, likely to be at risk or in need of advisory and counseling services from teachers and social workers, and take early remedial actions. Needless to say, extreme care has to be exercised by teachers in engaging students on matters related to the Scheme, to ensure that participation in the Scheme by students is entirely voluntary. Care should also be taken to avoid any labeling effects on students for their participation or non-participation in the Scheme. For schools implementing drug testing, apart from briefing provided to teachers on the Scheme, additional training to teachers on drug related issues would definitely be helpful.

Support to students

15.26 It is observed that the misconception about drugs, though at a low level, has increased between October 2010 and June 2011 for Tai Po students as well as non-Tai Po students, and the extent of deterioration is worse for non-Tai Po students. Furthermore, the percentage of students who have abused drugs was higher in June 2011, as compared with October 2010.

15.27 There is thus an urgent need to help students, especially those at risk, to correct their misconception about drugs. It is noted that as part of the Scheme, more anti-drug preventive educational activities have been arranged for students, through the provision of additional social workers by additional funding to schools. Activities involving small groups or individual students identified to be at risk have also been arranged, which are considered as more effective in helping students at risk to stay away from drugs.

15.28 This research showed that the Scheme is effective through its

educational and deterrent effect. It also helps foster and nurture schools' anti-drug culture. In particular, given the voluntary nature of the Scheme, opportunity should be taken to further strengthen its effectiveness by stepping up anti-drug education and counseling services targeting students at risk. In short, with the implementation of drug testing conveying a loud and clear message to all students on schools' anti-drug commitment, sensitising students on issues related drugs, anti-drug programmes targeting students at risk will likely to enhance the effectiveness of the Scheme.

Increasing drug testing effectiveness

15.29 It is noted that the purpose of the Scheme in general, and school drug testing in particular, is for preventive and educational purposes. However, teachers, students and parents expressed the wish that the deterrent effect of school drug testing should be strengthened. Several school social workers also pointed out that some students might be able to escape from drug testing by saying that they had taken medications. It is also noted that with the present urine testing method using Point of Collection Test (POCT), the detection window is quite short. For students who have taken drugs a few days before the test, they might not be identified through drug testing. Thus, consideration could be given to enhance drug testing effectiveness. For instance, students who claim to have taken medications may still be required to produce their urine samples which will then be taken to the laboratory for drug testing. The use of other bodily samples, such as hair, which has a longer detection window, should be considered for future drug testing schemes.

15.30 Findings from the June 2011 post-survey showed that the great majority of students (Tai Po 88%; non-Tai Po 89%), school principals (85%

and 95% respectively), teachers (90% and 90%) and parents (92% and 93%) agreed that other drug testing methods, such as hair drug testing, could also be considered. As discussed above, a number of drug testing methods are available. For instance, urine samples collected from students can be tested in the laboratory instead of on the spot using POCT. Alternatively, hair samples instead of urine samples may be used.

15.31 Several Tai Po school principals opined that they had no objection to the use of hair to conduct drug testing in principle. However, they cautioned that students should be informed the amount of hair required for drug testing and its potential impact on their appearances. They suggested the students should be consulted when conducting the use of hair drug testing.

15.32 Several parents interviewed in the course of the study shared principals' views. All Tai Po students interviewed also indicated that it would not be acceptable to them if a large amount of hair was required for hair drug testing.

15.33 By following a simple instruction guide, staff with basic training would have little difficulty collecting hair samples from students. With hair drug testing, a longer detection window of several days to several months is possible, as compared with one to several days for urine drug testing. The cost of conducting drug tests using hair sample can be reduced considerably if more NGOs or schools adopt hair drug testing allowing economies of scale in conducting laboratory tests.

15.34 Admittedly, there are pros and cons for the use of different drug testing methods such as urine and hair drug testing. For example, urine screening test using POCT is cheaper and easier to administer. Students being

tested could be informed almost immediately the results of the preliminary test. However, urine drug test using POCT is less reliable compared with laboratory testing and has a short detection window. For hair drug test, which has to be conducted in the laboratory, is reliable and has a longer detection window compared with urine drug test. However, it is more expensive and the students have to wait for a few days before they are informed of the test results.

15.35 It is noted that drug testing in the Scheme is part of a whole range of preventive and educational measures aimed at deterring students from abusing drugs and giving them a reason to refuse drugs when persuaded by peers. Thus, apart from sensitivity and specificity of drug testing in the Scheme, it is also necessary to consider other factors such as the need to minimise disruptions to school activities, to secure acceptance of drug testing by students and to keep resources devoted to drug testing to an absolute minimum thus freeing resources for other preventive and counseling work. Besides, it should not be forgotten that there is arrangement in place to avoid any false-positive case through a follow-up confirmatory laboratory test. Naturally, circumstances differ from schools to schools, and a school-based approach is probably the best way forward.

Encouraging participation - teachers' involvement

15.36 Though the percentage of students participating in the 2010/11 Scheme, at around 57% based on the findings of the June 2011 post-survey, is not low, it is lower than that for the 2009/10 Scheme, at around 64% based on the June 2010 survey. Furthermore, research findings showed that about 15% of students who had participated in the 2009/10 Scheme did not participate in

the 2010/11 Scheme. For students who had not participated in the 2009/10 Scheme, only 9% participated in the 2010/11 Scheme. A number of Tai Po school principals anticipated that if the Scheme continued to be implemented in 2011/12 following largely similar format, the participation rate would likely to be lower.

15.37 Findings suggested that the Scheme has a beneficial impact on students regardless of whether the students participate or not in the Scheme especially for those who have participated in the Scheme. Realising the beneficial impact of the Scheme and the importance of creating an atmosphere conducive to nurturing an anti-drug culture, a number of schools indicated that they will take active steps to encourage students participate in the Scheme. For example, proper recognitions were given to classes with higher participation rates. Proactive steps had also been taken to consult stakeholders including members of student organisations to solicit their support on school drug testing. These students would in turn help promote school drug testing to other students.

15.38 Tai Po school principals suggested that publicity of the Scheme should be stepped up. Briefing sessions should be organised for all students and their parents, and should not be confined to Secondary 1 students. The purpose was to ensure that both students and their parents got the message that schools still regarded anti-drug activities as always been one of their priorities, and to raise students' and their parents' concern on the gravity of drug abuse.

15.39 In both the 2009/10 and 2010/11 Schemes, teachers did not have an active role to play. Teachers revealed that since participation in drug testing was voluntary, they would only discuss with students on their participation if

students approached them for advice. However, only about 16% of students in 2009/10 and 11% students in 2010/11 noted that they had proactively discussed with teachers about the Scheme.

15.40 The Project Team believes that teachers who know their students well could, during their day-to-day contacts with students, provide advice and assistance to students to ensure that students are making an informed decision on their participation. Findings from both 2009/10 and 2010/11 showed that the majority of Tai Po school principals (83% - 95%) and Tai Po teachers (69% - 71%) were of the view that teachers should proactively discuss with students on any questions they might have on the Scheme. It may be worth noting that the percentage of school principals and teachers supporting this was higher in 2010/11 Research as compared with that in 2009/11 Research.

15.41 A number of Tai Po school principals commented that the participation rate was influenced to a certain extent by how teachers promoted the Scheme to their students. For most schools, they did not have any specific requirements on how teachers should promote the Scheme. But several principals believed that if the class teachers discussed the Scheme with students and encouraged them to consider participating in the Scheme, the participation rate might be affected.

15.42 It was suggested that schools should carefully conduct consultation with students to understand their concern, to listen to students' suggestions on how drug testing should be conducted and to solicit their support. Some students did not support drug testing because there was no mutual trust between students and schools. Once students realised that schools cared for their wellbeing and were doing whatever possible, including conducting drug tests, to help them, especially students at risk, and protect their interests, they

would be more willing to go along with this school policy.

Students' perception on privacy

15.43 In addition, findings of the June 2011 post-survey showed that the majority of Tai Po students did not mind if their schools knew whether they were selected for drug testing (82%) and did not mind if their classmates knew that they had participated in the Scheme (84%), and the percentage was much higher than the corresponding percentage in June 2010 (68% and 74% respectively). Indeed, most students did not think that participation in the Scheme or not had any labeling effect on them, as revealed from focus group discussions with students.

15.44 Some of Tai Po students pointed out that when a student was asked to leave the classroom, they would be able to guess that the student concerned had been sampled to undergo drug testing. Many students were aware that the SDT team had come to their schools to carry out drug tests, because they could notice changes that had taken place in their schools (e.g. partitioning off certain parts of schools that were close to students) in preparation for drug testing. Some of them also indicated that although their decision to participate or not in the Scheme would not be influenced by classmates, they would let some of their classmates know about their decision. They also did not mind sharing their drug test experience with their classmates and did not consider this was an invasion of their privacy.

15.45 Several social workers interviewed in the course of the study also commented that schools had taken every measure to protect the confidentiality of students sampled for drug testing and had ensured that drug

testing was conducted without being noticed by students.

15.46 Needless to say, every step should be taken to ensure that students' participation in school drug testing is entirely voluntary and their decision to participate or not in school drug testing is respected. Indeed, based on findings of the June 2011 post-survey, only a small proportion of school principals (35%) and about 55% of teachers agreed that teachers should proactively look into the concerns or misunderstanding of students who had not participated in the Scheme and offered help or advice if necessary.

15.47 Tai Po teachers opined that students knew among themselves which students had participated in the Scheme and/or sampled for drug testing. Most students did not mind letting their classmates know about their participation in the Scheme. Due to the fact that the names of students participating or not in the Scheme were not known to teachers and teachers were advised not to discuss with students about their participation, there was little teachers could do in helping students make an informed decision, taking into account the different needs of students. They considered those opposing the Scheme had given too much weight to children's rights and privacy to the neglect of other rights of children (e.g. protection of children's interests).

15.48 Several teachers indicated that they would provide guidance to students suspected of abusing drugs, and if required, refer these students to social workers. For students in general, they would incorporate anti-drug messages in learning and teaching. They considered that their present role was appropriate and were not afraid that this would ruin teacher-student relationship. On the other hand, a few teachers opined that they would like to use the Scheme as a means of engaging students, encouraging students to participate in the Scheme or clarify any misunderstanding students might

have on the Scheme. However, most teachers had not done so and tried not to assume an active role in the Scheme in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding.

15.49 A few social workers pointed out that one of the weaknesses of the Scheme was the inability to provide counselling services to students who had not participated in the Scheme, to understand why they did not participate in the Scheme and to provide assistance, if required, to those in need.

15.50 Nevertheless, during discussions with school principals, teachers and social workers, they were worried that targeting students who had not participated in the Scheme by teachers in offering help and advice might be misunderstood by students that teachers were exerting pressure on students to persuade them to participate in the Scheme. Most of them were of the view that any promotional efforts by teachers should be directed to all students, regardless of whether these students had participated or not in the Scheme.

Test results

15.51 Many of Tai Po school principals were of the view that schools should be informed of the test results so that school staff including teachers could provide assistance to the students who were tested positive, in collaboration with social workers. Schools also had to provide support to the students' families. A few principals added that they had very good relationship with students. Students would without hesitation seek the help of teachers if they had encountered any problems. Teachers and other students were all willing to offer a helping hand. If schools were not informed of the test results, the participation rate might be increased. However, schools

would not be in a position to help students who were tested positive and their families.

15.52 On the other hand, most of Tai Po students and their parents preferred not to inform schools the names of students identified to have abused drugs through drug tests. They feared that schools might try various means to expel these students from schools. Social workers might be informed such that they could provide counselling and support services to the students concerned. Nevertheless, several parents agreed that there should be close cooperation and better communications between parents and schools on matters related to the wellbeing of students.

15.53 Several social workers interviewed in the course of the study also voiced their concern that if schools were informed of the drug test results, they might exert pressures on students who were tested positive discouraging them from continuing their studies in their schools. They were aware that students who had abused drugs would likely to have other unruly and delinquent behaviour and that their academic performance was likely to be rather poor. Thus, schools could find a host of reasons other than drug abuse to penalise these students and discourage them from attending schools. Nevertheless, from discussions with social workers of schools in Tai Po and those outside, the project team has the impression that the level of trust between social workers and schools implementing drug testing is in general higher than that for schools not implementing drug testing. Apparently by working together in implementing the Scheme, schools and social workers have had a better understanding of others' approach adopted in helping students who have abused drugs.

15.54 It may be worth noting that while most school principals still insisted

that they should be informed of the drug test results, a few school principals indicated that they were prepared to accept the arrangement whereby only the social workers were informed of the drug test results. They were of the view that as long as drug abusing students were provided necessary assistance by social workers, they would not insist on having access to the drug test results.

15.55 Findings of the June 2011 post-survey showed that only about one-third of school principals (30% for schools in Tai Po and 33% for schools outside Tai Po) and teachers (37% and 33% respectively) supported the arrangement that whether schools were informed of the drug test results should be left to the decision of students and parents. On the other hand, more than half of the students (69% and 61% respectively) and their parents (64% and 60% respectively) considered that whether schools were informed of the drug test results should be decided by them. Based on views expressed by social workers, students and parents during discussions, the project team is of the view that if schools were not informed of the drug testing results, the participation rate could be higher.

Fostering anti-drug culture

15.56 The 2009/10 and 2010/11 Schemes in Tai Po comprise a variety of anti-drug activities in addition to drug testing. Feedback from school principals, teachers, students and parents showed that the great majority hoped that such anti-drug activities should be continued to remind students about the harmful effects of drugs. In fact, the 2010/11 Scheme was implemented in Tai Po schools as part of the healthy school policy aimed at instilling positive values in students, helping them develop healthy lifestyles, in addition to anti-drug education.

15.57 Most of school principals, teachers, students and parents were of the view that other efforts should be made to facilitate early identification of students at risk and provide timely assistance to them. Indeed for a number of schools outside Tai Po which have not implemented school drug testing have introduced a number of measures such as physical fitness test to help schools or social workers to early identify students at risk. In a number of schools outside Tai Po, additional social workers were deployed to proactively engage students, especially those who have emotional or behavioural problems and considered to be at risk by teachers or school social workers.

15.58 Research findings also showed that a great majority of school principals, teachers, students and parents agreed that activities like physical fitness test designed to trigger students' motivation to quit drugs should be organised. Majority of them also agreed that steps should be taken to closely observe indications of drug taking by students for the purposes of early identification and timely counselling.

15.59 Several of social workers outside Tai Po pointed out that in organising anti-drug activities for students, they would usually give such activities a more positive name like beauty class, leadership training camps. Small group activities, rather than talks given to a large number of students, were considered more effective, as the latter was largely one-way communication with social workers giving anti-messages without knowing how much students had received and understood. Through such activities, they would take the opportunity to convey messages on the harmful effects of drugs on one's appearance and health. Sharing sessions with previous drug abusers would also be arranged.

15.60 Several social workers stressed that anti-drug activities had to be sustained and organised in a variety of formats catering the different interests and needs of students. One or two programs conducted in an ad hoc manner would not be effective. Different activities had to be organised to help students develop healthy lifestyles and positive values, learn how to care for their community and to love their families. Some of them noted that currently there were many NGOs involved in anti-drug work. If they approached schools to organise anti-drug activities at the same time, schools and students concerned might not be able to cope with. Such anti-activities had to be organised in a systematic, coordinated and sustained manner.

15.61 It is noted that different anti-drug activities are organised by schools without drug testing. Feedback from school principals, teachers, social workers and medical practitioners are highly positive. Through such activities, social workers are able to engage the students, establish mutual trust with the students and identify students at risk. Students who voluntarily disclose their drug abuse behaviour are more likely to be willing to receive counseling and treatment from social workers and medical practitioners. The educational and deterrent effects of school drug testing will be greatly enhanced if various anti-drug activities designed to engage students at risk including physical fitness tests are organised in conjunction with drug testing. Those students who do not participate in drug testing, for example, could still be engaged through those activities. In short, a package of anti-drug activities and drug testing should be able to cater for the different and diverse needs of students, helping them to stay away drugs. It may be worth noting that the above observations echo the recommendations of the government in its submission to the Legislative Council Panel on Security in November 2010.⁴²

42 Narcotics Division, Security Bureau and Education Bureau (2010), "School drug testing", information paper submitted to the Legislative Council Panel on Security dated 11 November 2010 (LC paper no. CB(2)197/10-11(01), p. 4.

Further research on the effectiveness of the Scheme

15.62 In view of the effectiveness of the Scheme, implemented by all secondary schools in Tai Po, as revealed from the research findings, the Scheme will likely to be implemented in 2011/12 and subsequent years by schools in and outside Tai Po. In order to encourage more participation by students, to enhance the effectiveness of the Scheme and to engage students at risk, the Scheme will be modified and adapted by schools, taking into account the different circumstances facing schools. The participation rate by students in different schools adopting different versions of the Scheme may vary significantly between schools.

15.63 While the effectiveness of the Scheme, as it is implemented by all secondary schools in Tai Po, has been confirmed, the effectiveness of a modified Scheme, implemented by a few or even one school in districts outside Tai Po, with different levels of participation by students, has yet to be verified. In particular, as pointed out by researchers interviewed by the project team in the course of the research, although feedback from stakeholders on a number of anti-drug programmes like physical fitness test is positive, the effectiveness of these programmes has not been confirmed in a scientific manner. Not only is public money involved, much time and efforts are devoted by school principals, teachers, students, parents and social workers in preparing for and implementing the Scheme. If a modified Scheme is not as effective as the Tai Po Scheme, it should be further modified to enhance its effectiveness; and if a modified Scheme is found to be more effective, it should be promoted and its experience shared by other schools, as the interests of students are at stake.

Chapter 16 Recommendations

Continuation of the Scheme

16.1 As discussed above, subjective and objective indicators compiled from the research findings showed that the Scheme is effective. Most Tai Po principals, teachers, students and parents supported the continuation of the Scheme in the coming school year. The majority of non-Tai Po teachers, students and parents also shared similar views.

16.2 In addition, drug testing is increasingly accepted by students and their parents. Majority of them believe that drug testing does not have a negative impact on family relationship, students' trust in schools and teacher-student relationship. They are also satisfied with the drug testing process. From the perspectives of Tai Po school principals, drug testing has become part of normal activities, creating minimal disruption to school work and unease among students.

16.3 It is recommended that the Scheme in Tai Po should be continued to help students stay away from drugs. It is also recommended that the government should continue to support and fund initiatives of schools outside Tai Po to introduce the Scheme.

Enhancing the effectiveness of the Scheme

Support to students: preventive education and counseling services

16.4 The Scheme comprises not just drug testing, but also preventive

education and counseling services provided by social workers of the CCPSA in Tai Po, the SDT team and school social workers. As discussed above, it is desirable that there is close cooperation between social workers of the SDT and CCPSA on the one hand and school social workers on the other, especially in providing timely assistance and intervention to students likely to be at risk. For example, with the consent of students concerned, those students identified by the SDT team to be in need of anti-drug education and counseling services could be referred to the school social workers for follow up action.

16.5 Research findings showed that students' misconception of drugs, though at a low level, has increased between October 2010 and June 2011. There is thus an urgent need to help students, especially those at risk, to correct their misconception of drugs. Given that the focus of the Scheme is on education and prevention, it is desirable that more resources be devoted to anti-drug preventive and education programmes, as well as counselling and treatment services, to foster or further strengthen an anti-drug culture at school. It might not be a bad idea if the Scheme could be re-named, removing any emphasis on "drug testing", by using a more neutral term.

16.6 It is recommended that schools implementing the Scheme should enhance the preventive anti-drug education and counseling component of the Scheme, targeting in particular, students likely to be at risk, and encourage closer cooperation between the SDT team and school social workers, underpinned by a comprehensive drug policy to be drawn up by schools, in consultation with teachers and social workers.

Support to parents

16.7 While findings of the research showed that parental involvement in the anti-drug education of their children would encourage their children to participate in the Scheme, the research findings also showed that parents were not keen to get involved in anti-drug education of their children. It is noted that parental involvement is important, in addition to schools' efforts, in helping students stay away from drugs. Furthermore, if students are suspected to have abused drugs, parents should be able to handle problem properly and seek help from schools and social workers. Feedback from school principals and teachers indicates that some parents are not adequately prepared to help their children stay away from drugs.

16.8 It is recommended that as part of the Scheme, resources should be provided to enhance anti-drug education and support services to parents, in order to enable parents play a useful role in providing anti-drug education and guidance to students, and in encouraging their children to participate in the Scheme.

Support to teachers

16.9 Through their frequent contact with students, teachers are in a good position to identify students likely to be at risk and offer timely guidance and assistance to these students. In fact, teachers are already involved in providing anti-drug education to students, as part of the learning and teaching process in helping students develop healthy lifestyle and positive life values.

16.10 Findings of the research showed that majority of Tai Po school

principals and teachers considered that teachers should follow up with students who were found to have abused drugs to offer help and advice. In particular, the implementation of drug testing in schools offers a unique opportunity for teachers to engage students, in meaningful discussions over drug testing, the harmful effects of drugs as well as ways and means of resisting bad peer influence and refusing drugs when offered. Nevertheless, not all teachers are adequately prepared in delivering anti-drug education, as noted by the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse.⁴³

16.11 It is recommended as part of the Scheme resources should be provided to support teachers, in terms of say training, to help them deliver anti-drug education and guidance to students, especially those who are likely to be at risk.

Increasing drug testing effectiveness

16.12 It is desirable that the deterrent effect of school drug testing be enhanced in order to strengthen the preventive element of drug testing. Apart from the present urine testing method using POCT, the detection window of which is quite short, a number of drug testing methods are available. For instance, urine samples collected from students can be tested in the laboratory instead of on the spot using POCT. Drug tests using hair samples, which have a longer detection window, may also be considered.

16.13 Furthermore, under the present arrangement of the Scheme, students sampled for drug testing would not be asked to take the drug test if they indicated that they had taken medications. If other methods of drug testing,

⁴³ Report of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse (November 2008), p.46.

such as drug tests by the laboratory instead of using POCT or drug tests using hair samples, are used, students who claimed to have taken medications could still be tested. Indeed, the research findings showed that most school principals, teachers, students and their parents agreed that other drug testing methods, such as hair drug testing, should also be used.

16.14 To increase the effectiveness of drug testing, it is recommended that the present arrangement should be modified such that those students who claim to have taken medications should still be tested with their urine samples taken to the laboratory for screening and confirmatory tests. Furthermore, other methods of drug testing such as the use of hair sample should be explored and adopted in future, having considered the unique situation of each school.

Encouraging participation

16.15 Though the percentage of students participating in the 2010/11 Scheme, at around 57% based on the findings of the June 2011 post-survey, is not low, it is lower than that for the 2009/10 Scheme, at around 64% based on the June 2010 survey. Since the research findings showed that the Scheme has a beneficial impact on students, especially for those who have participated in the Scheme, the Project Team concerned the decrease in the participation rate.

16.16 As discussed above, from feedback of principals, it transpires that students' participation in the Scheme is to a certain extent influenced by how the Scheme is promoted to students. Some teachers also indicated that they would like to use the Scheme as a means of engaging students, encouraging

them to participate in the Scheme or clarify any misunderstanding they might have on the Scheme. Research findings also showed that majority of the school principals and more than half of the Tai Po teachers were of the view that teachers should proactively discuss with the students any questions they might have on the Scheme. A number of social workers also pointed out that one of the weaknesses of the Scheme was the inability to provide counselling services to students who had not participated in the Scheme, to understand why they did not participate in the Scheme and to provide assistance, if required, to those in need.

16.17 It is recommended that, following a school-based approach, teachers and social workers should be encouraged to assume a more active role in providing advice and counseling services to students on matters relating to the Scheme, with a view to encouraging students participate in the Scheme, while maintaining the voluntary nature of drug testing.

16.18 As discussed above, while most school principals were of the view that schools should be informed of the test results, most students and their parents interviewed in the course of research preferred not to inform schools the names of students identified to have abused drugs through drug tests. Findings of the research showed that more than half of students and their parents considered that whether schools were informed of the drug test results should be decided by them.

16.19 It is recommended that schools implementing the Scheme may review the arrangement on whether schools should be informed of the drug test results, in consultation with teachers, parents and students.

Fostering anti-drug culture

16.20 The 2009/10 and 2010/11 Schemes in Tai Po comprise a variety of anti-drug activities in addition to drug testing. Feedback from school principals, teachers, students and parents showed that the great majority hoped that such anti-drug activities should be continued to alert students about the harmful effects of drugs. In fact, the 2010/11 Scheme was implemented in Tai Po schools as part of the healthy school policy aimed at instilling positive values in students, helping them develop healthy lifestyles, in addition to anti-drug education.

16.21 Findings of the research also showed that the great majority of school principals, teachers, students and parents agreed that activities designed to trigger students' motivation to quit drugs should be organised. The great majority of them also agreed that steps should be taken to closely observe indications of drug taking by students for the purposes of early identification and timely counselling.

16.22 It is recommended that as part of the Scheme, different anti-drug activities designed to engage students at risk should be organized for all students, including those who have or have not participated in the Scheme, with a view to facilitate early identification and timely intervention.

Study on the implementation of the Scheme

16.23 The Scheme will likely to be implemented in 2011/12 and subsequent years by schools in and outside Tai Po. Some schools may introduce modifications to the Scheme, with a view to encouraging participation from

students, to enhance the effectiveness of the Scheme and to engage students at risk. While the effectiveness of the Scheme, as it is implemented by all secondary schools in Tai Po, has been confirmed, the effectiveness of modified schemes, implemented by a few or even one school in districts outside Tai Po, with different levels of participation by students, need to be closely monitored. Not only is public money involved, much time and efforts are devoted by school principals, teachers, students, parents and social workers in preparing for and implementing the different modified schemes. It would be desirable if the implementation of the modified scheme(s) could continue to be monitored, such that the more successful schemes could be shared and replicated, while the less successful ones could be further reviewed and enhanced.

16.24 It is recommended that study / monitor should be conducted on the modified Scheme(s) to be implemented by school(s) in 2011/12.