

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.

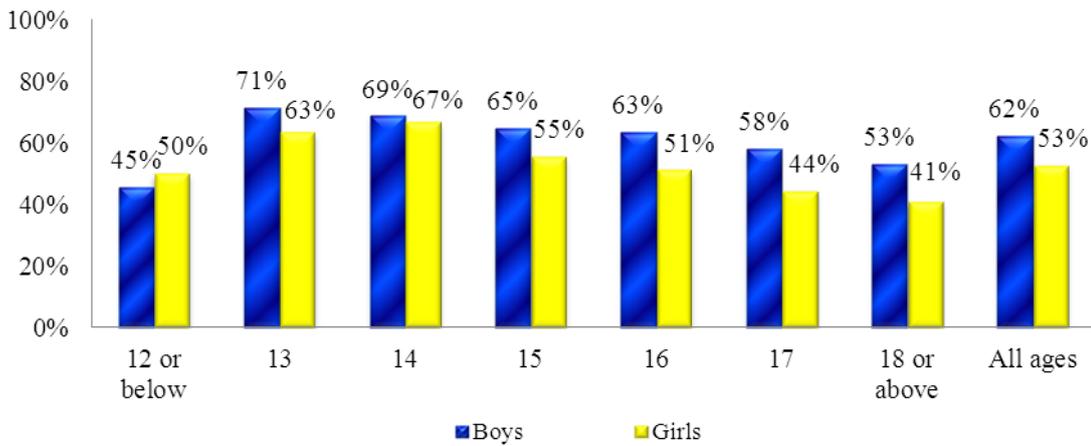
<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201006/28/P201006280169.htm> retrieved on 29 June 2010.

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.

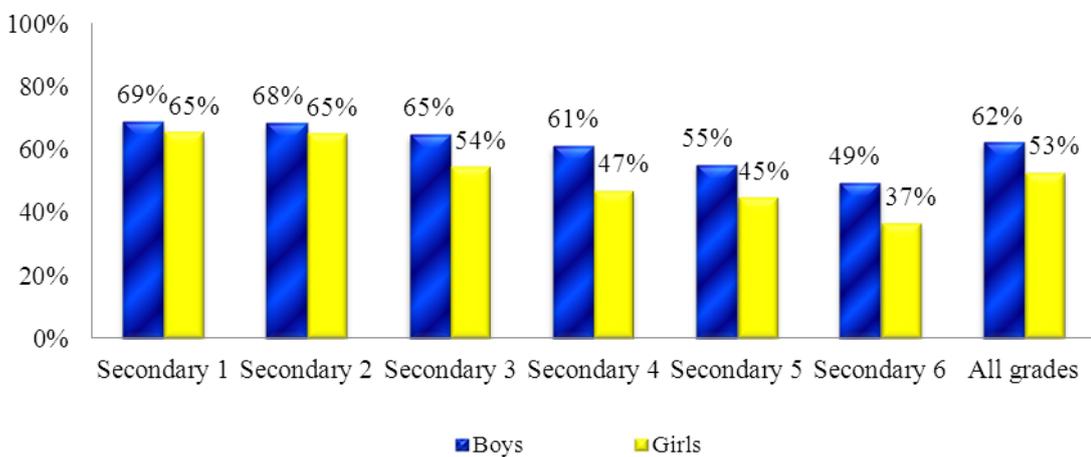
5.4 A higher proportion of boys (62%) participated in the Scheme as compared with girls (53%). Apart from those aged 12 or below, the participation rate fell steadily with age. For instance, 71% of boys and 63% of girls aged 13 participated in the Scheme, the percentage dropped to 53% (for boys) and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



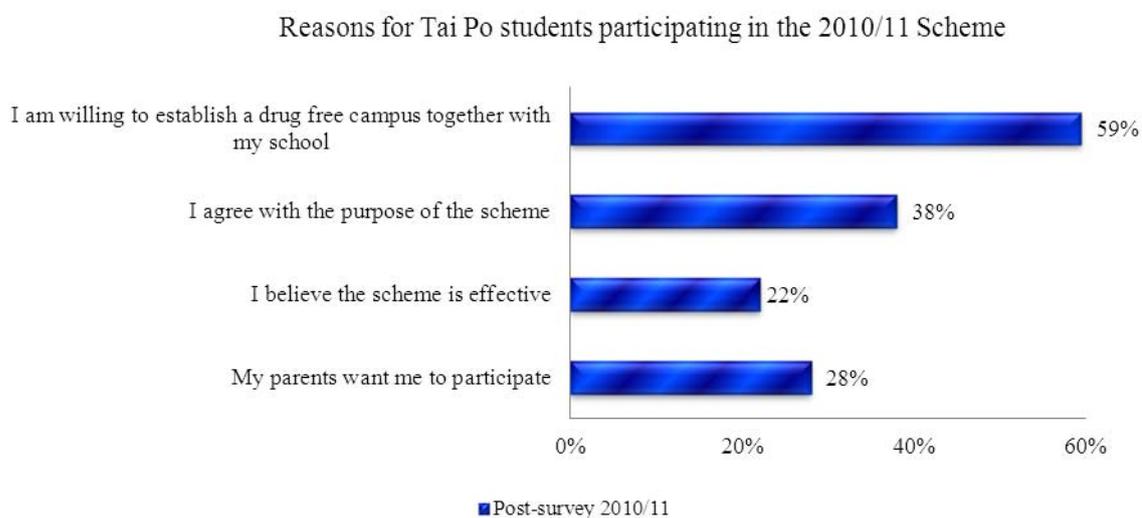
5.5 A similar trend was observed when the data were categorized by grades. The participation rate of Secondary 1 students was the highest (69% for boys, 65% for girls), while the participation rate of Secondary 6 students was the lowest (49% for boys, 37% for girls).

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



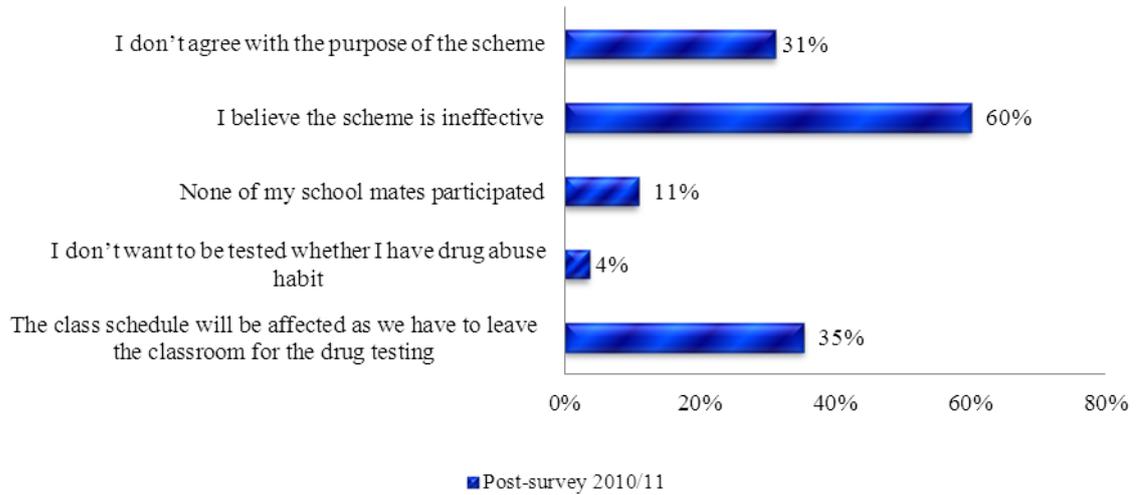
5.6 Information collected from in-depth interviews with principals of Tai Po secondary schools revealed that students at senior forms were less likely to participate in the Scheme because they were pre-occupied with preparations for public examinations. They were worried that their academic achievement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



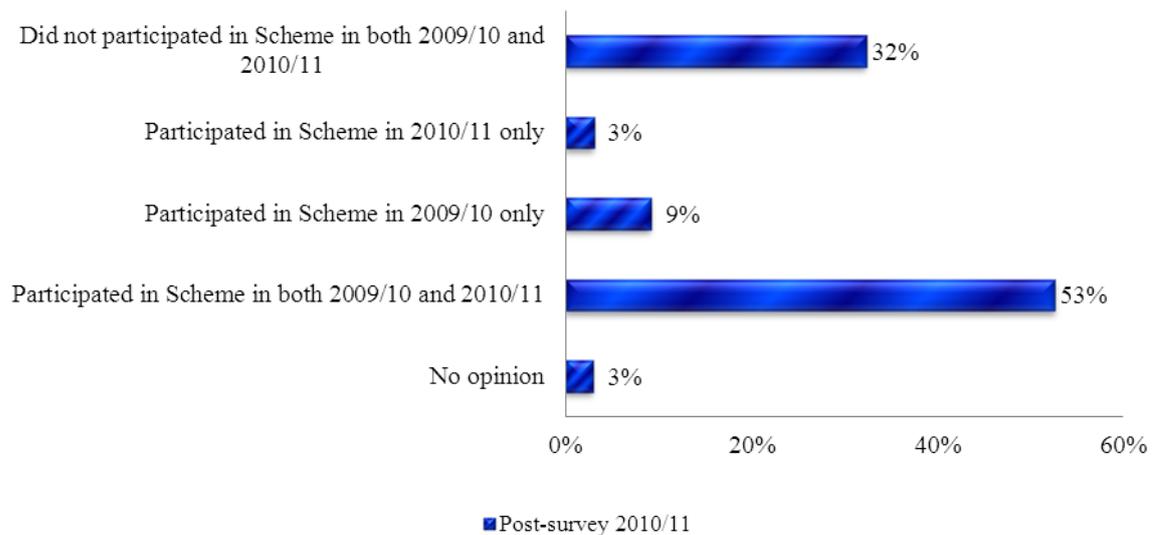
5.8 For those who had not participated in the 2010/11 Scheme, their main reasons for doing so were that “I believe the Scheme is ineffective” (accounting for 60% of students concerned), “I don’t agree with the purpose of the Scheme” (31%) and “the class schedule will be affected as we have to leave the 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

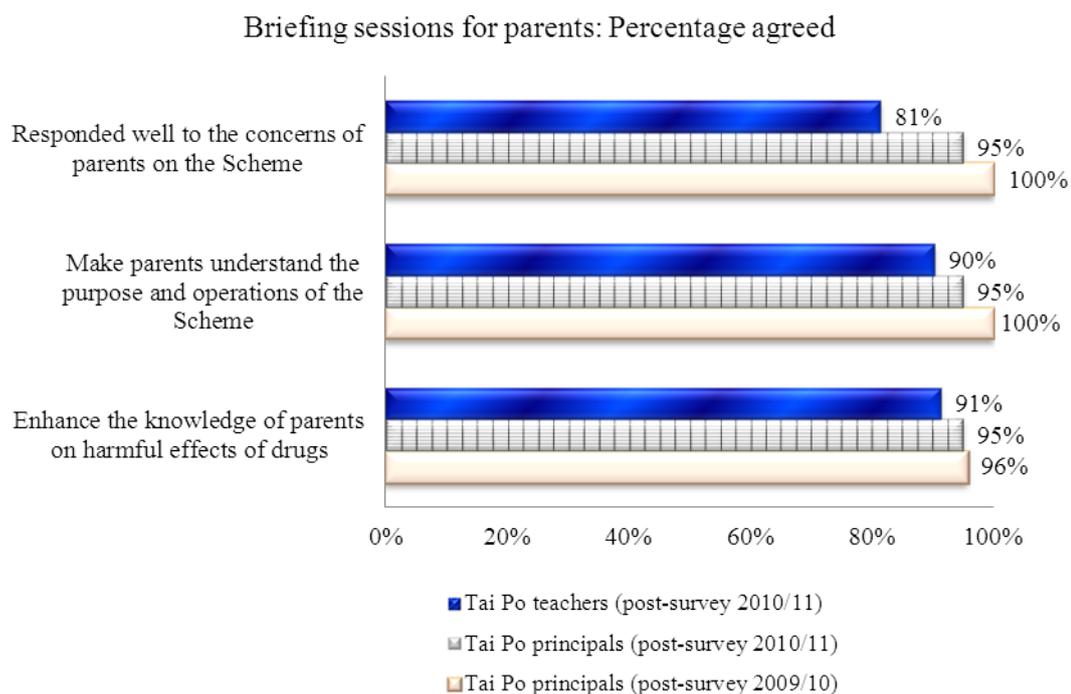
participate again this year. Partly due to the lack of publicity and promotion of the 2010/11 Scheme, as compared with the 2009/10 Scheme, some of those students who did not strongly oppose or support the Scheme had chosen not to participate in the 2010/11 Scheme. A number of school social workers also 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

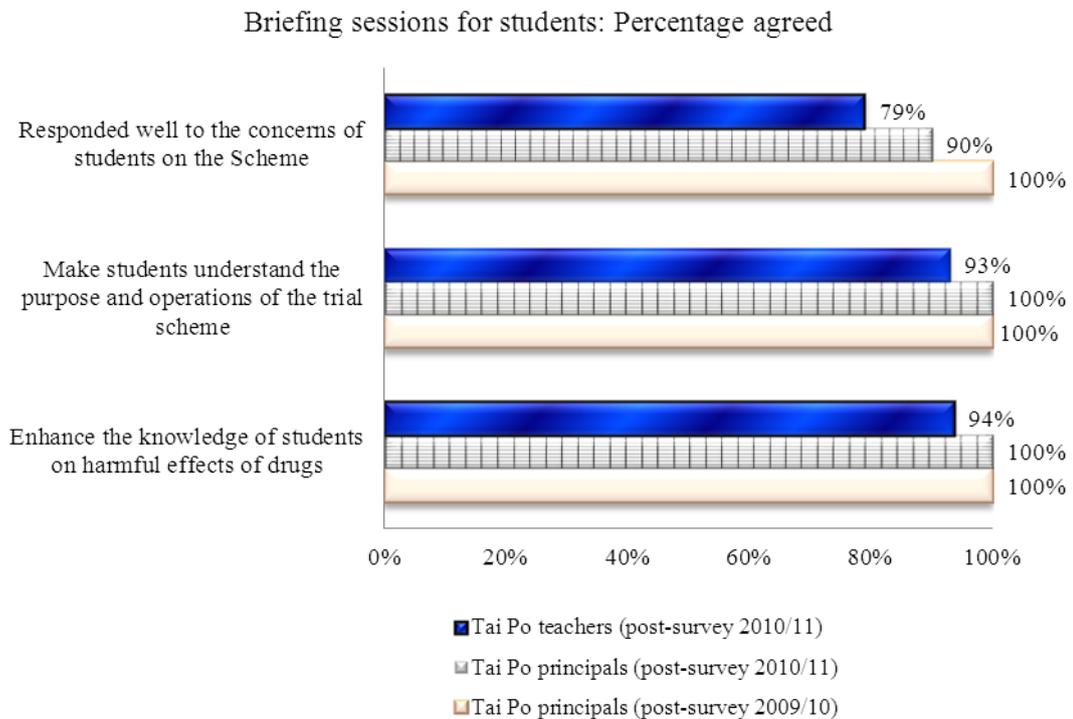
6.1 Before the launch of the Scheme, several briefing sessions were held for parents of Tai Po students. According to the June 2011 post-survey findings, the great majority of school principals and teachers were of the view that the briefings had enhanced the knowledge of parents on the harmful effects 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

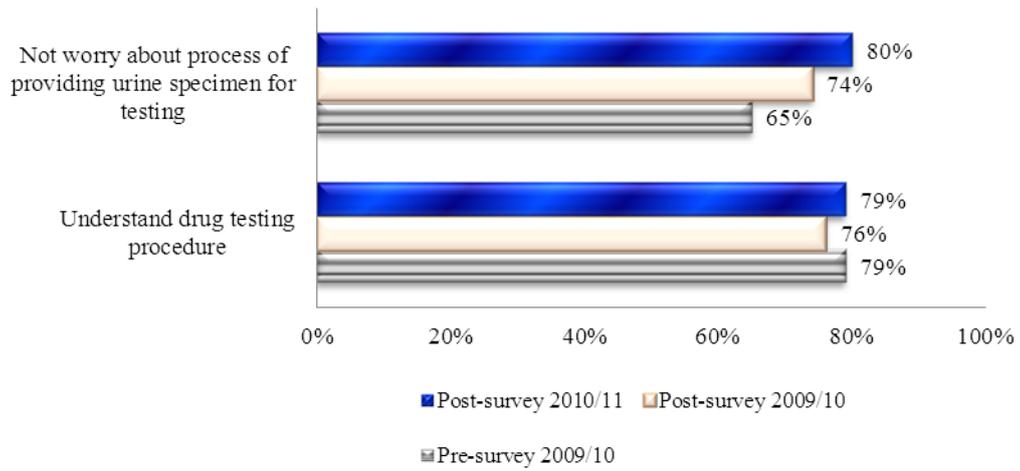
for students had enhanced students' knowledge of the harmful effects of drugs, made students understand the purposes and operations of the Scheme and responded adequately to concerns of students on the Scheme.



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.

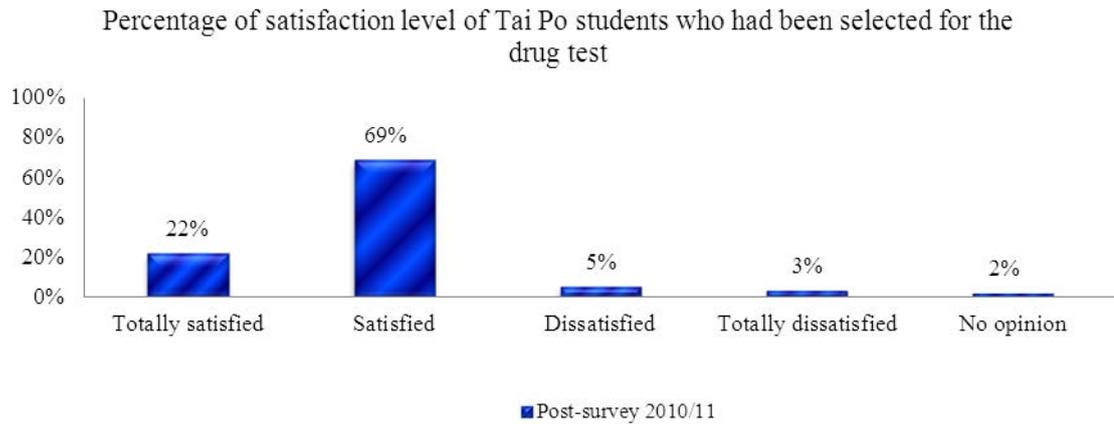
7.2 During discussion with the Project Officers of the Scheme, they pointed out that in conducting drug tests, utmost care had been taken to ensure that students’ personal data were protected, while proper records on the test results had to be kept. For example, in communications with schools, students 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.

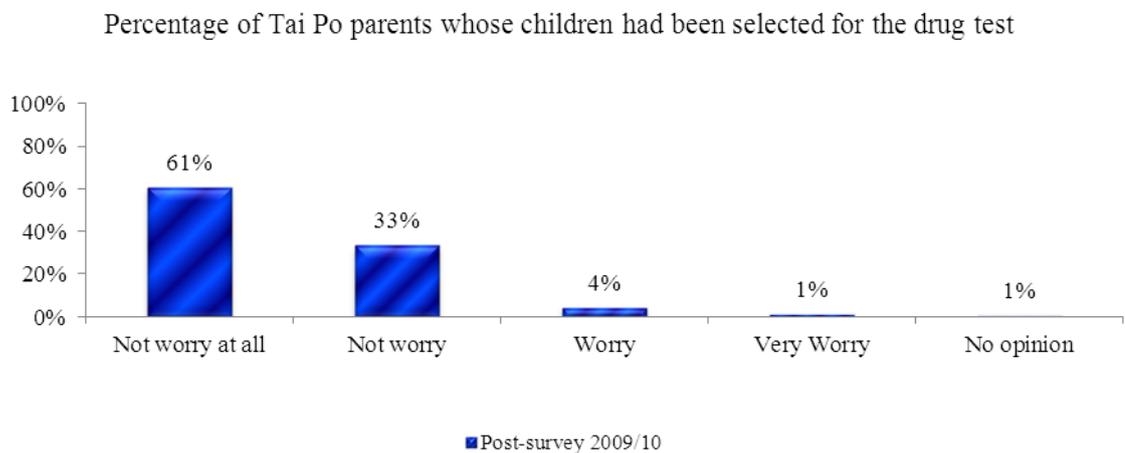
7.4 Qualitative data demonstrated that many of Tai Po school principals considered the Scheme was implemented very smoothly. School staff and school social workers concerned were familiar with the protocol and conducted drug testing smoothly. Students had also shown little resistance and worries towards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

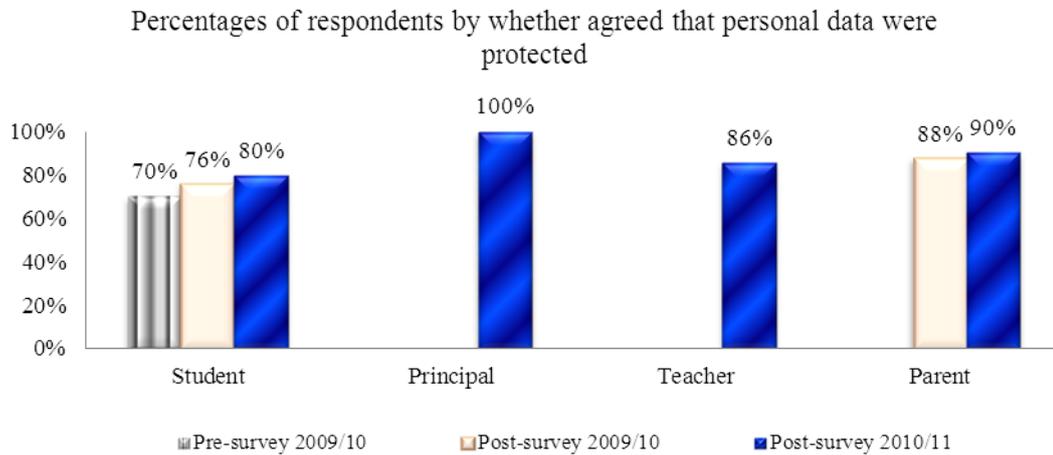


7.7 In addition, feedback from parents was also highly positive. According to the June 2011 post-survey, among parents whose children had been sampled to take the drug tests, the great majority (94%) of them were totally not worried or not worried that drug testing would have negative impact on their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