

Performance Measurements of Community-Friendly Schools in Hong Kong

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The Asian Conference on Education 2024
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

This research evaluates the performance of community-friendly schools in Hong Kong, a new educational model introduced by CCC Tam Lee Lai Fun Memorial Secondary School since 2016. Community-friendly schools, though few in number, aim to balance resource utilization while fulfilling both educational and social needs. The study adopts a descriptive mixed research method, utilizing questionnaires and interviews as data gathering instruments. The sample consists of 86 students, 19 teachers, and 30 community stakeholders for the questionnaires, while interviews were conducted with a total of 38 participants, including students, teachers, and community stakeholders. The performance of these schools is assessed in terms of their impact on school reputation, students' learning attitudes, academic performance, and community engagement. These aspects are evaluated through three levels of activities - community learning activities, the activities cooperated with community organizations and community services organized by the school. Data analysis includes descriptive statistics, Analyses of Variance, and linear regression models, showcasing the significant effects of these institutions. The study examines changes in students' behavior before and after enrollment, revealing positive correlations between student engagement in community activities and improvements in academic performance, community awareness, and willingness to serve the community. This comprehensive evaluation framework aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of community-friendly schools in achieving educational and social objectives, and their overall reputation within the Hong Kong community.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Despite various educational reforms, Hong Kong's education system remains dominated by an examination-driven culture, with a strong emphasis on public examinations like the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination. The New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum aimed to ease examination pressure by consolidating public exams and incorporating school-based assessments. However, research by Fok and Yu (2014, 2018) and Lam, Yu & Li (2019) shows that students, parents, and schools continue to prioritize examination results, often at the expense of non-academic learning experiences. This focus has shaped teaching methods, with traditional exam-centric strategies remaining prevalent (Lam, Ho, & Tsang, 2020). Dou and Shek (2022) also found that schools often allocate excessive time to core subjects, limiting opportunities for diverse and enriching learning experiences. These challenges highlight the need for a shift toward more inclusive educational practices that address the varied growth needs of students. At the same time, the reforms open up opportunities to adopt creative teaching approaches, such as community-friendly schools, which integrate learning with local environments and communities to promote holistic student development beyond traditional academics.

Table 1: Hierarchy of Community-Friendly Schools

Level	Focus	Determinants	Level of Engagement
First Level: Community-Based Learning Activities (About the Community)	Connection between students' life environment and learning	The school: 1) includes community elements in the curriculum. 2) identifies suitable topics and resources during curriculum design. 3) organizes learning activities within the local community.	Teacher Level
Second Level: Learning Activities in Collaboration with External Organizations (In the Community)	Partnership between schools and external organizations	The school: 1) collaborates with external organizations to organize learning activities. 2) jointly participate in designing curriculum and activities with external organizations. 3) opens its campus to external organizations for community activities.	Subject/Committee Level
Third Level: Community Services/Activities Organized by the School (For the Community)	Interaction and mutual benefit between schools and the broader community, using school facilities as a community hub	The school: 1) organizes activities for community residents. 2) invites community residents to participate continuously in school activities. 3) receives support from community residents for its activities. 4) provides solutions or contributes efforts to address social needs or problems in the community	Whole-School Engagement

Community-friendly schools represent an innovative educational model that seeks to integrate academic objectives with societal development. In Hong Kong, schools face increasing pressure to address diverse stakeholder demands, including academic excellence,

student well-being, and community engagement. However, traditional educational frameworks often overlook the potential for schools to serve as hubs of community interaction and development. As illustrated in Table 1: Hierarchy of Community-Friendly Schools, this model is characterized by a progressive engagement structure. The first level, Community-Based Learning Activities (About the Community), focuses on connecting students' life environments with their learning experiences. At this level, schools integrate community elements into the curriculum, select appropriate topics and resources, and organize learning activities within the local community, primarily engaging at the teacher level. The second level, Learning Activities in Collaboration with External Organizations (In the Community), emphasizes partnerships between schools and external entities. Schools collaborate with organizations to co-design curriculum and activities, host joint initiatives, and open their campuses for community-related programs, reflecting engagement at the subject or committee level. The third level, Community Services/Activities Organized by the School (For the Community), fosters interaction and mutual benefit between schools and the broader community. Schools actively organize activities for local residents, invite their participation, receive their support, and address social challenges, representing whole-school engagement. By adopting this hierarchical approach, community-friendly schools not only achieve educational objectives but also enhance societal well-being, serving as pivotal platforms for collaboration and mutual growth (Lau, 2024a).

While prior studies have highlighted the benefits of experiential learning and community-based education, limited research exists on the systematic performance evaluation of community-friendly schools in fostering educational and social outcomes. This research gap underscores the need for a comprehensive framework to assess the dual impacts on students and schools, as well as the broader implications for school development and stakeholder relationships.

The objectives of this study are presented in a complete paragraph to provide clarity and direction. This study aims to evaluate the educational and social performance of community-friendly schools, focusing on how these institutions enhance student engagement, learning motivation, personal growth, and community understanding. Additionally, it seeks to analyze the broader impacts of community-friendly initiatives on schools' roles in education and their relationships with stakeholders, including their reputation and connection with the community. By addressing these objectives, the study provides valuable insights for educators and policymakers to optimize community-friendly school practices.

1.2. Problem Statement

The evolving educational landscape in Hong Kong presents numerous challenges for schools. Stakeholders demand accountability not only in academic performance but also in addressing societal needs. Despite the potential of community-friendly schools to bridge this gap, their effectiveness remains underexplored. Questions persist about how these initiatives impact student development, how engagement in community activities translates into measurable outcomes, and how schools can position themselves as both educational and community leaders. Without a clear understanding of these dynamics, schools may struggle to implement effective strategies that balance educational goals with community contributions.

1.3. Significance of the Study

This study holds significant academic and practical value. Academically, it contributes to the growing body of literature on community-based education by providing a comprehensive evaluation framework for community-friendly schools. The findings offer insights into how experiential and community-based learning activities influence student outcomes and school performance. Practically, the study equips educators, policymakers, and stakeholders with evidence-based strategies to design and implement community-friendly initiatives. By highlighting the dual benefits for students and communities, the study underscores the potential of these schools to transform the educational landscape in Hong Kong and beyond.

1.4. Research Questions

1. How do community-friendly school programs influence students' learning motivation, personal growth, and understanding of their local community?
2. What is the relationship between students' levels of engagement in community activities and their developmental outcomes in terms of motivation, community understanding, and personal growth?
3. How do community-friendly school initiative affects schools' roles in education and their communities, their connections with the community, and their reputation among stakeholders?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design and Participants

This exploratory study seeks to fill gaps in understanding schools' performance in educational and social accountability. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis. According to Creswell and colleagues (2003), mixed-method research involves collecting and analyzing both data types, either concurrently or sequentially, with one often prioritized. This method mitigates the limitations of using only one approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The research began with a quantitative survey, followed by qualitative interviews with a randomly selected subset of participants to enrich the initial findings. Three paper-and-pencil questionnaires were distributed to students, teachers, and community stakeholders. Comparative analysis highlighted mean differences across these groups, while correlation analysis examined relationships between variables, such as students' involvement in community-school programs and their understanding of and willingness to serve their community.

Semi-structured interviews offered in-depth insights into students' and teachers' experiences with community learning activities, despite the time-intensive nature of data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Using a convergent parallel mixed methods approach, the study separately analyzed quantitative and qualitative data before integrating the findings to achieve a comprehensive understanding.

2.2. Population and Sampling

The study targeted three distinct stakeholder groups to ensure diverse perspectives on the performance of community-friendly schools. A total of 86 students from various grade levels were selected through purposive sampling to quantitatively capture a range of experiences with community-friendly initiatives. The teacher sample comprised 19 educators from multiple disciplines, chosen to provide insights into instructional practices and school operations. Additionally, 32 community stakeholders were recruited using stratified sampling to ensure balanced representation of different community roles and levels of engagement with the schools. This sampling strategy facilitated a comprehensive evaluation of the schools' impact from multiple vantage points. Quantitative data were collected through surveys administered to all participants. The surveys assessed the impact of community-friendly schools on student engagement, motivation, community understanding, and personal growth, as well as the schools' role in education, their connection with the community, and their reputation among stakeholders.

To complement the quantitative findings, qualitative data were gathered through interviews with a subset of 28 students, 5 teachers, and 5 community participants. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes, offering deeper insights into the lived experiences of stakeholders engaged in community-friendly school activities. This mixed-method approach provided a robust and comprehensive evaluation of the schools' multifaceted impact.

2.3. Data Collection Instruments

The study employed two primary instruments for data collection: structured surveys and semi-structured interview guides. The surveys were designed to measure both student and school impacts. For students, the survey incorporated 18 items across four dimensions: engagement (5 items), learning motivation (5 items), community understanding (4 items), and personal growth (4 items), with scores ranging from 1 to 5 (5 indicating the greatest impact, 1 indicating the least impact). For school-level impacts, separate questionnaire items were developed for each stakeholder group to capture their unique perspectives. Teachers assessed the school's role in education (5 items), its connection to the community (4 items), and the school's reputation (4 items). Likert scale responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). These quantitative measures provided a broad understanding of the impacts on both students and the school as a whole, enabling to identify key trends and patterns.

The qualitative component of the study utilized semi-structured interviews to delve deeper into the experiences and perceptions of various stakeholders. Interview guides were tailored to each group, allowing for a detailed exploration of the impacts of community-friendly school initiatives. Students were asked about how specific activities influenced their engagement, learning motivation, personal growth, and understanding of community issues, often sharing personal anecdotes or moments that stood out. Teachers reflected on the school's role in fostering educational innovation, connecting with the community, and the observed changes in student attitudes and behaviors. Community members and parents provided insights into the perceived benefits of the school's initiatives on the community, its contributions to local well-being, and its influence on the school's reputation. This qualitative data offered nuanced perspectives that enriched the quantitative findings, providing a holistic understanding of the initiatives' impacts.

2.4. Data Processing and Analysis

Quantitative data from the surveys were systematically analyzed using statistical software to ensure precision and reliability in the results. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, provided an overview of stakeholder perceptions across dimensions such as engagement, learning motivation, community understanding, and personal growth. Advanced statistical methods, such as multiple regression analyses, were employed to explore the relationships between community-friendly school activities and specific student and school-level outcomes. For instance, the analysis identified how specific activities influenced factors like engagement and learning motivation. Reliability testing was conducted to validate the internal consistency of survey scales, ensuring robustness and accuracy in the measurements.

Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using a rigorous thematic analysis approach. This process involved an initial coding phase, where meaningful segments of text were labeled, followed by the identification of recurring themes and patterns. Key themes such as "enhanced community understanding," "improved student confidence," and "strengthened school-community relationships" emerged. To ensure credibility and dependability, the thematic analysis incorporated peer debriefing, where findings were reviewed by colleagues to confirm consistency and relevance. Triangulation was employed by comparing qualitative insights with the quantitative findings, allowing for cross-validation and ensuring validity while reducing potential biases.

The integration of data synthesis further enriched the analysis by combining perspectives from different stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents, and community members. This synthesis facilitated a deeper understanding of the community-friendly school model's multifaceted impacts, providing a comprehensive narrative that captured both measurable outcomes and lived experiences. The mixed-method approach ensured a holistic exploration of the research questions, highlighting the dynamic interplay between theoretical principles and real-world application within community-friendly schools.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Impacts on Students

This section presents and discusses the results of the study, focusing on the perceptions of students and teachers toward community-based learning activities, collaborative activities with external organizations, and school-organized community services. Key aspects such as engagement, learning motivation, community understanding, and personal growth are analyzed.

Table 2: Overall Scores of Community Learning Activities on Students' Engagement, Learning Motivation, Community Understanding, and Personal Growth

	Community-based learning activities		Learning activities cooperated with external organizations		Community services/ activities organized by the school		Combined	
	Students N=86	Teachers N=19	Students N=86	Teachers N=19	Students N=86	Teachers N=19	Students N=86	Teachers N=19
Engagement and satisfaction	3.88	4.18	3.87	4.08	3.81	4.05	3.87	4.11
Learning motivation and attitude	3.71	4.09	3.76	4.02	3.81	4.07	3.76	4.06
Community understanding and engagement	3.79	4.23	3.84	4.23	3.79	4.12	3.81	4.19
Personal growth	3.78	4.16	3.88	4.26	3.78	4.13	3.81	4.19

3.1.1. Engagement and Satisfaction

Table 2 illustrates that all three types of activities significantly contribute to engagement and satisfaction, with average ratings of 3.87 for students and 4.11 for teachers. Among the activities, teachers rated community-based learning activities the highest (M=4.18), indicating a strong belief in their effectiveness in fostering engagement. Students showed a slightly higher engagement with activities organized in cooperation with external organizations (M=3.87), which suggests that exposure to external expertise and resources may be particularly stimulating for them.

A Secondary 5 student reflecting on economics learning activities in the community:

Through the economics learning activities in our community, I gained a deeper understanding of issues like negative externalities. At Hung Kiu Bus Stop, I observed how crowded traffic creates problems such as noise and air pollution, which affect the well-being of nearby residents.

A Secondary 5 student highlights how learning in the community bridges theory and practice in economics:

Exploring market structures and addressing air pollution in Hung Kiu sparked our interest in economics. These hands-on experiences revealed how deeply economics is embedded in everyday life—something we rarely get to witness firsthand. No textbook, no matter how detailed, can compare to the insights gained through real-world application.

Teachers frequently noted the transformative impact of these experiences on students. As Teacher T1 stated:

Activities like the food guide in Hung Kiu allow students to explore the community actively, enabling deeper engagement beyond daily interactions.

3.1.2. Learning Motivation and Attitude

Learning activities also positively influenced students' motivation and attitudes toward learning, with students' ratings averaging 3.76 and teachers' ratings 4.06. School-organized activities received the highest score from students (M=3.81), suggesting that familiar settings with structured guidance from schools can encourage positive learning attitudes. Teachers, however, rated external collaborations more favorably (M=4.02), reflecting their appreciation of the broader perspectives these partnerships bring to educational experiences.

A secondary 5 student emphasizes the importance of experiential learning on motivation:

Experiencing it personally is better than just learning from books. Learning on the spot brings more reflection, emotions, and meaningful experiences.

A Secondary 5 student underscores the value of applying economics to everyday life to foster enthusiasm for learning:

By applying economics knowledge to real-life situations, we gained a better understanding of our surroundings, seamlessly integrated what we learned into daily life, and developed a greater enthusiasm for studying the subject.

3.1.3 Community Understanding and Engagement

Both students and teachers highlighted the role of community learning activities in improving understanding of community dynamics and stakeholders. Teachers gave consistently high ratings across all activities, averaging 4.19, with community-based and externally supported activities receiving identical ratings of 4.23. Students also rated externally supported activities the highest (M=3.84), underscoring their effectiveness in exposing learners to diverse perspectives.

Student S2 reflected on the value of such activities:

Visiting the elderly increased my confidence in communicating with people I wouldn't normally interact with, enhancing my understanding of community life.

A secondary 2 student demonstrates her willingness to serve her community and contribute to its betterment:

Some elderly people have issues in their home, so we would talk to the social workers in the community. Then our volunteer team has a home maintenance class. We've gone out to help the elderly with repairs, so there are some activities like that. Participating in the environmental activities let me know that we need to protect the environment where we live better.

As Secondary Five student S3 remarked after participating in beach clean-ups:

These activities increased my awareness of environmental issues, motivating me to adopt sustainable practices in daily life.

Student S4 noted how their perspective shifted after engaging in community service:

I realized there are many areas in the community that need improvement, inspiring me to contribute more to society in the future.

3.1.4. Personal Growth

Personal growth emerged as a key outcome of the activities, with mean ratings of 3.81 for students and 4.19 for teachers. Teachers perceived activities involving external organizations as the most impactful (M=4.26), while students valued these activities equally with school-organized services (M=3.78). The findings suggest that engagement with community stakeholders and real-world challenges fosters self-awareness and confidence in students.

A secondary 5 student reveals his improvement attitudes toward personal growth:

At this school, we care for the elderly and learn from them, such as Chinese painting and calligraphy. Seeing how spirited and optimistic they are has inspired me to overcome my own negativity.

A secondary 5 student also reveals his improvement attitudes toward interpersonal skills:

Through various activities, I have greatly enhanced my interpersonal skills. For instance, volunteering to assist the elderly during community events taught me how to communicate with respect and empathy. Organizing arts workshops as part of a team also helped me develop collaboration skills and the ability to value diverse perspectives. These experiences have boosted my confidence and enabled me to build stronger, more meaningful relationships with others.

A teacher echoes these activities contribute to facilitating students' personal growth:

Initially, some students might be hesitant or shy to engage. However, after participating in volunteer work or small tasks a few times, they gradually take on leadership roles and become more proactive. They may go from simple visits to leading activities at community centres, demonstrating initiative and responsibility. Even though they're not directly involved in organizing, some activities allow them to shine and showcase their talents.

Overall, the results indicate that the combined impact of all three activity types is highly favorable, with teachers rating them at 4.19 on average and students at 3.81. Teachers' consistently higher ratings reflect their broader appreciation of the strategic goals and outcomes of community learning initiatives. For students, the variation in scores suggests that while activities effectively promote engagement and understanding, there is room to enhance their motivation and willingness to serve the community. The findings reaffirm the effectiveness of community-friendly school model in enriching students' learning experiences and strengthening their connection to the community. Learning activities, especially those

involving external organizations, play a crucial role in fostering personal growth and promoting civic engagement. Future initiatives should aim to expand such collaborations and design activities that further inspire students' willingness to contribute actively to their communities.

3.2. The Relationship Between Students' Engagement and Its Impacts

Table 2 illustrates the relationship between students' involvement in different community activities and their understanding of the community. Three key areas were examined: learning activities within the community, learning activities in cooperation with external organizations, and community services organized by the school. The analysis of students' engagement in community activities reveals significant relationships with their developmental outcomes.

Table 3: The Relationship Between Students' Engagement and Its Impacts

	Multiple R	R Square	t Stat	P-value
First tier: Community-based learning activities				
Learning motivation and attitude	0.8944	0.8001	4.3391	0.0000396**
Community understanding and engagement	0.8389	0.7037	2.9694	0.00389**
Personal growth	0.8345	0.6964	2.99688	0.00390**
Secondary tier: Learning activities cooperated with external organizations				
Learning motivation and attitude	0.8843	0.7820	4.5160	0.00002**
Community understanding and engagement	0.9003	0.8107	3.281	0.0015**
Personal growth	0.9018	0.8132	1.9121	0.0592
Third tier: Community services/activities organized by the school				
Learning motivation and attitude	0.8688	0.7548	3.34911	0.0012**
Community understanding and engagement	0.8867	0.7863	3.2622	0.0016**
Personal growth	0.8913	0.7944	3.2060	0.0019**

Note. Statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level indicated by * and $p < 0.01$ level indicated by **

The analysis of students' engagement in community activities reveals significant relationships with their developmental outcomes. Community-based learning activities demonstrated the highest influence, with a Multiple R value of 0.8944 and an R Square value of 0.8001, indicating that 80.01% of the variance in learning motivation could be attributed to these activities. Similarly, these activities had a strong correlation with community understanding ($R = 0.8389$, $R^2 = 0.7037$) and personal growth ($R = 0.8345$, $R^2 = 0.6964$), both statistically significant at $p < 0.01$. Learning activities with external organizations also showed positive effects on learning motivation ($R = 0.8843$, $R^2 = 0.7820$, $p < 0.01$) and community understanding ($R = 0.9003$, $R^2 = 0.8107$, $p < 0.01$). However, the impact of learning activities with external organizations on personal growth ($R = 0.9018$, $R^2 = 0.8132$, $p = 0.0592$) is not statistically significant since the p-value exceeds 0.05. However, it shows a positive trend, suggesting further investigation may be warranted. Community services organized by schools further highlighted substantial contributions to learning motivation ($R = 0.8688$, $R^2 = 0.7548$, $p < 0.01$), community understanding ($R = 0.8867$, $R^2 = 0.7863$, $p < 0.01$), and personal growth ($R = 0.8913$, $R^2 = 0.7944$, $p < 0.01$). The statistical insignificance observed in the external organization's activities' impact on personal growth suggests variability in how these programs influence student development.

This analysis underscores the critical role of engagement in community activities, demonstrating that greater participation fosters motivation, understanding, and growth. Moreover, the findings highlight the potential for refining external collaborative efforts to ensure consistent benefits across all developmental dimensions.

3.3 Impacts on Schools

The role of community-friendly schools extends beyond the confines of traditional education, serving as vital bridges between academic environments and the broader community. By organizing community services and fostering active collaboration with stakeholders, these schools aim to create a twofold impact: enhancing the educational experience while addressing social needs. This section examines how community-friendly schools influence key areas such as educational roles and responsibilities, their ability to strengthen community connections, and their reputation among stakeholders. Drawing from quantitative and qualitative analyses, the findings highlight the multifaceted contributions these schools make to societal development and the perceptions of students, teachers, and community members.

3.3.1 Roles in Education and Communities

Table 4: Perceptions of Students, Teachers, and Community Stakeholders on the Purpose and Impact of Community Services and Activities Organized by the School

Survey Items	Students (N=86)		Teachers (N=19)		Community Stakeholders (N=32)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
The community services/activities organized by the school are for educational purposes.	3.91	0.94	4.21	1.03	4.44	0.88
The community services/activities organized by the school create positive impacts on both students and community.	3.97	0.94	4.26	0.99	4.47	0.84
The school has responsibilities to serve the community.	3.83	1.05	4.05	1.18	3.88	0.98
The community services/activities organized by the school are unique from the services from other organizations in the community.					4.19	0.90
The community services/activities organized by the school make my life more fulfilling.					4.00	0.92

A community stakeholder emphasizes the uniqueness of these activities:

The school's programs are different from other community services because they bring a fresh perspective. For example, having students monitor air quality and discuss their findings with the community not only educates the students but also empowers local residents to think about their environment differently.

A student highlights the dual benefits of the activities:

I didn't realize how much I could learn by helping others. At first, I thought it was just about volunteering, but I've gained new skills and even found ways to apply what I've learned in class to real-life situations.

Table 4 underscores the perceptions of students, teachers, and community stakeholders regarding the dual purpose of community services and activities organized by the school in addressing educational and community needs. Teachers rated the educational significance of this initiative the highest (M = 4.21, SD = 1.03), closely followed by community stakeholders (M = 4.44, SD = 0.88), while students rated them slightly lower (M = 3.91, SD = 0.94). Similarly, the positive impacts on both students and the community were acknowledged across all groups, with community stakeholders providing the highest mean score (M = 4.47, SD = 0.84), followed by teachers (M = 4.26, SD = 0.99), and students (M = 3.97, SD = 0.94). These findings suggest that although all groups recognize the value of these activities, students may benefit from a deeper understanding of their broader impact. Additionally, stakeholders emphasized the unique nature of the school's programs, which not only enhances learning but also empowers the community. As one student reflected, these activities provide opportunities to apply classroom knowledge in real-life contexts, fostering both skill development and a sense of fulfillment.

3.3.2 Connection With Communities

Table 5: Perceptions of Students, Teachers, and Community Stakeholders on How Community Services and Activities Strengthen Connections With the Community

Survey Items	Students (N=86)		Teachers (N=19)		Community Stakeholders (N=32)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
The community services/activities improves the school's ties with the community.	3.84	0.97	4.37	1.01	4.38	0.87
Participating community services/activities organized by the school help me to understand more about teenagers.					4.03	0.90
The community services/activities improved my understanding on the school.					4.06	0.95
Participating in community services/activities organized by the school broadens my social network.					4.03	0.90

A teacher discusses how these activities build stronger ties with the community:

These services allow the school to act as a bridge. By involving local residents in events or discussions, we've seen a mutual understanding grow. Community members start seeing the school not just as a place of learning but as an active part of their lives.

A community stakeholder notes the broadening impact of school-organized activities:

Before participating in these programs, I didn't know much about the younger generation or what schools were doing. Now, I feel more connected, and I've even made friends through these activities. It's a win-win for everyone involved.

Table 5 highlights the significant role of school-organized activities in strengthening connections with the community. Teachers (M = 4.37, SD = 1.01) and community stakeholders (M = 4.38, SD = 0.87) rated these efforts highly, underscoring their positive impact. However, students provided a comparatively lower mean score of 3.84 (SD = 0.97), suggesting room for improvement in engaging students with the community-oriented objectives of these activities. Community stakeholders also reported that participating in this initiative enhanced their understanding of the school (M = 4.06, SD = 0.95) and expanded their social networks (M = 4.03, SD = 0.90). These findings emphasize the school's role as a bridge between students and the community, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration. As one teacher observed, these activities position the school as an integral part of the community by creating opportunities for interaction and shared learning. A community stakeholder further noted how these programs not only deepen their connection with the younger generation but also provide platforms for building meaningful relationships, making the initiative mutually beneficial. While the school's efforts are highly effective among external stakeholders, there is potential to enhance students' appreciation and engagement with the community-building initiative.

3.3.3 Reputation Among Stakeholders

Table 6: Perceptions of Students, Teachers, and Community Stakeholders on the Impact of Community Services and Activities on the School's Reputation

Survey Items	Students (N=86)		Teachers (N=19)		Community Stakeholders (N=32)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
The community services/activities makes the school differentiates it from other schools.	3.91	0.98	4.11	1.05	4.09	0.96
The community services/activities improves reputation in the community.	3.88	0.94	4.37	0.90	4.19	0.93
I will recommend the community-friendly schools to other people I know.					4.19	0.86
More schools should work as community-friendly schools.					4.22	0.91

A community stakeholder shares their confidence in recommending the school:

I've spoken with friends and family about the school's programs, and they're always impressed. I tell them it's not just about academics here; it's about preparing the next generation to make a real difference.

A student comments on the school's unique approach:

Our school is different because it doesn't just focus on tests and grades. It's about how we can contribute to the community and learn from it too. It's something I'm proud of, and I think other schools should try it too.

Table 6 illustrates the positive impact of community-friendly schools on their reputation among various stakeholders. Teachers rated the school's ability to differentiate itself from others with a mean score of 4.11 (SD = 1.05), followed closely by community stakeholders (M = 4.09, SD = 0.96) and students (M = 3.91, SD = 0.98). Regarding the school's reputation within the community, teachers provided the highest rating (M = 4.37, SD = 0.90), with community stakeholders giving a similarly strong score (M = 4.19, SD = 0.93), while students offered a lower rating of 3.88 (SD = 0.94). Community stakeholders also showed strong confidence in recommending community-friendly schools to others (M = 4.19, SD = 0.86) and advocated for the expansion of this educational model (M = 4.22, SD = 0.91). These findings highlight how teachers and community stakeholders, in particular, recognize the school's efforts to build social relationships and improve standing in a competitive environment, significantly enhancing its reputation and social capital (Lau, 2024b). As noted by one stakeholder, the school's focus extends beyond academics to preparing students to contribute meaningfully to the community, a quality they are proud to share with others. Similarly, a student expressed pride in the school's unique approach, emphasizing the integration of community engagement with learning. While the school's reputation is highly regarded by teachers and stakeholders, there is an opportunity to further enhance students' awareness and appreciation of the initiative.

4. Conclusions

The study highlights the effectiveness of community-friendly school initiative in enhancing educational outcomes and societal contributions. These programs enrich students' learning experiences, foster personal growth, and strengthen schools' roles as community hubs. By addressing diverse stakeholder needs, these schools have the potential to redefine education in Hong Kong and beyond.

4.1. Key Findings

Community-friendly school activities significantly enhance all-round development in students, equipping them with essential skills to cope with future challenges while boosting engagement, learning motivation, community understanding, and personal growth. The initiative aligns with experiential learning theories like Kolb's Learning Cycle, emphasizing active participation in real-world contexts for deeper learning and skill development (Kolb & Kolb, 2017; Kong, 2021). By fostering holistic development, they help students build resilience, adaptability, and problem-solving skills, preparing them to navigate complex, uncertain environments. Activities involving external organizations broaden students' perspectives, fostering critical thinking, self-reflection, and flexibility in learning, as Eyler and Giles (2002) argue that service learning is particularly effective for understanding complex issues within larger systems through repeated application of concepts in realistic settings. Survey results reinforce these principles, with students rating personal growth (M=3.81) and engagement and satisfaction (M=3.87) highly, while teachers also valued activities with external organizations (M=4.26), consistent with findings by Krug (1994) that such programs improve self-esteem and attitudes toward school and community. This aligns with the role of community-friendly schools in fostering all-round development as a core function of their educational contributions. Moreover, these initiatives cultivate practical skills and emotional intelligence, promoting self-regulation, teamwork, and leadership abilities. Conrad and Hedin's (1989) research highlights service learning's role in enhancing self-esteem, fostering social responsibility, and promoting complex thinking, while Voukelatou (2019) emphasizes the importance of mental, emotional, and social interactions in

creating dynamic learning environments. By integrating theory with practice, community-friendly schools fulfill their educational role by providing a holistic approach that prepares students for life beyond the classroom, making them active contributors to their communities while enhancing their self-awareness, critical thinking, and readiness to face future challenges.

Motivation, as a critical driver of learning, is shaped by various factors, including the learner, the educator, course content, teaching methods, and the learning environment (D'Souza and Maheshwari, 2010). Community-based activities provide authentic contexts for students to exercise autonomy and achieve competence, accounting for 80.01% of the variance in learning motivation ($R=0.8944$). Gelona (2011) and Kosgeroglu et al. (2009) highlight motivation as essential for goal-oriented behavior and educational success. However, variability in personal growth observed in external collaborations ($p=0.0592$) suggests the need for refinements to ensure consistent alignment with theoretical principles and practical goals. Community-friendly school initiative embodies Robert Blum's (1995) vision of evolving educational goals, emphasizing critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving. By integrating real-world applications and fostering collaboration, these programs cultivate self-awareness and lifelong learning abilities, enabling students to connect theoretical knowledge with real-world challenges effectively (Guo et al., 2016). These contributions underscore the pivotal role of community-friendly schools in building stronger connections between education and community, as the initiative integrates real-world problem-solving with educational excellence.

Community-friendly initiative has elevated the role of schools as vital learning hubs that serve not only students but also their communities, creating mutual benefits for all three major stakeholders—schools, students, and the community. This initiative fosters deeper connections with stakeholders, with teachers highly valuing their role in relationship-building and community engagement ($M=4.37$). Students' moderate appreciation suggests room for enhancing alignment with their interests, underscoring the importance of evolving this initiative to better meet their needs. The OECD's Future of Schooling report envisions schools as dynamic hubs where diversity, experimentation, and community integration drive learning, civic engagement, and social innovation (OECD, 2020). As hubs of community connection, community-friendly schools actively bridge the gap between education and real-world application, helping students and communities address shared challenges. Community-friendly schools embody this vision by implementing hands-on learning experiences that transcend traditional classroom boundaries—such as monitoring river water quality, analyzing air pollution, and solving local challenges through humanities projects. These activities not only enrich students' learning and personal growth but also empower communities by fostering collaboration and addressing local concerns. Research highlights that such initiative enhances school reputation by showcasing adaptability and societal contributions (Brown et al., 2006; Gilpin, 2010; Helm, 2011). By embracing diversity, experiential learning, and community involvement, community-friendly schools strengthen their role as centers of mutual benefit—empowering students with critical skills, enhancing community well-being, and establishing schools as pivotal agents of civic engagement, social innovation, and sustainable development.

4.2. Recommendations

In light of the findings and limitations identified in this study, we propose several key recommendations for future research aimed at enhancing the understanding and effectiveness

of community-friendly schools. These recommendations focus on addressing the challenges of sampling, measurement, data collection, and cultural context, as well as mitigating the impact of time, resource constraints, and subjectivity in self-evaluation.

To evaluate the lasting effects of community-friendly school initiative, future research should consider conducting longitudinal studies. These studies could track students over several years to assess changes in personal growth, academic performance, career development, and social responsibility. By examining how early exposure to community engagement influences life-long learning and societal contributions, researcher can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the sustained benefits of these programs. Incorporating more robust score scales with additional questions targeting areas such as personal growth, civic awareness, and critical thinking can help uncover deeper insights into students' developmental trajectories.

Future research should expand its scope to encompass a diverse range of schools from various regions and educational systems. Including schools of different sizes, types, and cultural settings through random sampling methods can enhance the generalizability of findings. Comparative studies across different contexts would provide valuable insights into the patterns, variations, and challenges in implementing community-friendly initiative. By broadening the research scope, it becomes possible to identify best practices and tailor strategies to suit different community and educational needs.

Improving the precision and reliability of measurement tools is essential for advancing research on community-friendly schools. Questionnaires and interview protocols should be refined through pilot testing to ensure clarity and effectiveness, while triangulation methods—such as combining qualitative interviews, quantitative surveys, and observational data—can help reduce bias and validate findings. To enable a more nuanced evaluation, future research should introduce comprehensive score scales that assess the overall performance of schools as community-friendly hubs. These scales can integrate various dimensions, including academic outcomes, stakeholder satisfaction, community engagement, resource efficiency, reputation, connection with the community, and the role of education within the community. Additionally, more detailed score scales tailored to evaluating the impact on students should be developed, incorporating indicators for personal and social development, problem-solving abilities, and adaptability. Including metrics to measure broader benefits such as community cohesion, resource utilization, and societal contributions would provide deeper insights and guide schools in refining their initiatives. By systematically measuring these areas, researcher can identify strengths and areas for improvement, ensure accountability, and support the continued development of community-friendly schools.

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