The relationship between special educators in the DEECD Victorian Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Signature:

Name: Huong T. Le

Date:
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my senior supervisor, Associate Professor Heather Fehring, my husband The, and my daughter Thao.
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So far, doing this PhD thesis has been the most valued learning journey to me. The thesis, however, could never have been written without the kind assistance and support of so many people. First and foremost, I would like to extend my utmost gratitude to my senior supervisor, Associate Professor Dr Heather Fehring who has guided me through an expedition full of hurdles and challenges. Dr Fehring has played a decisive role in helping me going through to the completion of my thesis. I am indebted to Dr Fehring for her academic insights, stimulating support, unrelenting encouragement, and especially her kindness and congeniality.

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Abstract

The current thesis investigated the relationship between Vietnamese parents of children with a disability and special educators who worked with these parents in both mainstream and special schools in Melbourne Metropolitan Regions of the state of Victoria, Australia. The key objective of the study was to research the role of the parent-educator (interpersonal) *relationship* and its interrelatedness with the *task*: two major components of a home-school partnership. The research question that guided this study was ‘How does the parent-educator relationship influence the operation of a family-centered home-school partnership?’ With partnerships involving parents of diverse cultural backgrounds, investigating cultural influences on the partnership were an integral part of the research process. A qualitative interpretive approach was employed in searching for perceptions of involved parties about their home-school partnerships. The design selected was multiple embedded case studies with purposeful sampling. Influences on home-school partnership were investigated from a multidimensional perspective and were described and interpreted from the views of both parents and educators. The findings indicated that the *relationship* played a much more significant role than the *task* in the successfulness of an intercultural home-school partnership. Without a mutual understanding of home-school communication, the collaboration was far from productive or even did not work out. There was also evidence that a harmonious parent-educator interpersonal relationship did not seem to have any influence on the effectiveness of a home-school partnership without parent-educator mutual understanding and agreement in terms of goals and roles expectations. The need for the educators to be more appropriately equipped with cultural training and family-centered principles also arose from the study findings.
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CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION

1.1 The focus

The research settings of the present study were located in the Metropolitan Regions of the state of Victoria, Australia. In the context of a home-school partnership, the study examined the relationship between Vietnamese parents who had a child or children with a disability studying in both mainstream and special settings and special educators (including classroom teachers, teacher aides, and school health professionals) who worked with these children.

The study described and interpreted the findings from the perspectives of both parents and educators who participated in the study. The objective set to be achieved from this research was to investigate the interrelatedness between the two major components of a home-school partnership: the relationship and the task. The aim was to address the study research question: How does the parent-educator relationship influence the operation of a family-centered home-school partnership?

Three major concepts pertaining to this research were the task, the relationship, and family-centered partnership. Explanations for and definitions of these terms will be provided in detail in Chapter 2: Literature Review.

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1 The following terms are also used interchangeably in the present study: the Victorian Metropolitan Regions or Melbourne Metropolitan Regions
The present study was conducted aiming at generating contributions to the process of establishing a theory of home-school partnership that takes into account cultural aspects. An overview of the historical background of the home-school partnership and the rationale for this research will help demonstrate the significance of this study.

### 1.2 Historical background

Although parents in Australia and other Western countries have always been involved in aspects of the education of their children, the issue of involving parents of children with disabilities in their child’s education has only become a topic of concern since the late 1970s (Spann, Kohler, & Soenksen, 2003). Prior to that time, there was no legal base supporting parent involvement in special education. Since then, several landmark steps have been taken in an effort to establish the official role for parents in their child’s education. I have divided these steps into three main stages. The first stage was from early 20th century to the late 1960s. The second stage was from early 1970s to the late 1980s. And the last stage was from early 1990s until the present time. The following section reviews challenges and contemporary issues that both families and professionals have faced in the mutual process of developing functioning partnerships.

#### 1.2.1 From early 20th century until late 1960s

Up until the early part of the 20th century, parents were mainly viewed as the major cause of their child’s disability and families were a primary source of negative influences (Case, 2000; Chopra & French, 2004; Reyes-Blanes, Smalley, & Swire, 2001). Professionals, who were trained with specialized skills and knowledge, were
destined to take up an expert role that aimed at delivering a professional practice with specific expertise and being solely responsible for the welfare of the child (Garriott, Wandry, & Snyder, 2000). Parents on the other hand were always considered as unqualified lay persons. With their expertise and experience not being recognised, parents had no choice and were placed in a lower and passive position in their child’s education. This situation lasted until the late 1960s. Inclusive education and parents’ involvement were therefore not acknowledged during this period.

The practicing pattern employed during this early time until the late 1960s was called the expert model (Case, 2000; Dale, 1996). The focus of this traditional home-school coordination was on the child (Knight & Wadsworth, 1999). According to Case (2000), with a higher position in the role of an expert, the professional was the one who controlled the relationship and made decisions without having to consult parents’ views or feelings. The involvement of the parents was limited to providing information relating to the child when required. The model had its own advantages in case parents were under the influence of emotional or psychological conditions; or lacked qualified knowledge, necessary time and inclination to participate in their child’s treatment process. However, the model also put parents in a passive and powerless stance which hindered them from being independent and making decisions of their own. Without home-school interactions, it was a good condition for parents to create and reside their beliefs in unrealistic expectations for the development of their child, whereas professionals might make decisions which were inappropriate for the needs and values of the family (Cunningham & Davis, 1985). In Victoria, according to Collins (1987), although many centralized curriculum development projects were conducted during the 1960s in an effort to bring new practices to the school system,
the result was not very promising. Not having enough time and being absorbed by the effort required, teachers frequently rejected the curriculum proposals in favour of the old ‘tried and true’ methods (Collins, 1987). The home-school nexus in this period had not yet appeared. Teachers were unapproachable whereas some parents did not know what to do though they wanted to help; others may have avoided being involved due to their own negative experiences with school in the past (Wilby, 1987).

According to Collin (1987), even though the role of parents in the home-school interaction was not yet officially recognized until this time, parents of students with disabilities had been the driving force behind up-coming policies that addressed the need for inclusive education for children with special needs as well as the involvement of parents in their child’s education – the initial step in bringing parents and the professional closer in the process of developing a working home-school partnership. Although the introduction of centralized curriculum development projects in Victoria during the 1960s did not produce expected results immediately, they would help educators realize the necessity and advantages of bearing responsibility for curriculum decisions at the school level (Collins, 1987). Collins (1987) noted that involvement in the decision making process helped increase the quality and influence of decisions made as they were based on the expertise and experience of different staff in the school. As a result, it would bring about educators’ personal commitment, confidence, collaboration, and responsibility. In addition to that, the process would also enhance the school-community relationship as local needs and issues were taken into account. The 1970s was the time when the role of the home and the community in education was more closely examined than ever before (Beare, 1987a). The
importance of the home-school connection in improving educational quality was also acknowledged.

1.2.2 From early 1970s until late 1980s

From the early 1970s, in assessing students’ educational achievements, schools took into consideration issues pertaining to their home background such as the educational level of the parents, the socioeconomic status of the family, family cohesiveness level, parental attitudes towards schooling, the way language is used to communicate at home, students’ study space, as well as the number and types of books they read. The 1970s saw working class parents have the opportunity to become actively involved in their child’s education, which prior to this was exclusive to children of middle class families (Wilby, 1987). Collins (1987) indicated that during the 1970s there was the existence of two almost opposite approaches from educators’ perspectives to the issue of home-school cooperation. The first approach was called the ‘deficit theory’ in which educators that saw their major task was to replace the family bringing students optimal academic conditions due to the perceived deficiency of the parents. This approach as stated by Collins (1987) did not result in essential changes in students’ academic outcomes. However, the perception was favoured by educators and continued to be applied through the 1970s and may still have persisted until late 1980s. The second approach was named the ‘partnership theory’. Educators who supported this approach had a shared interest with families in helping the student maximize their educational development. Advantages from parents’ involvement in schooling were many. However, the issue of home-school partnership was still looked at only from the point of view of the school. The concept was still far from familiar with a large
proportion of parents and the community (Beare, 1987a). In 1975, the necessity of
genuine parental cooperation and their involvement in school decision making for the
essential development of the individual child was stressed in the Commonwealth
Schools Commission Report (Beare, 1987b). The report emphasized that the
participation should be student-oriented; based on mutual respect, shared interest, and
equal responsibilities. Changes in this period led to a significant change in the
organizational model of home-school coordination from ‘service delivery’ to ‘school
community’ (Pettit, 1987b). Evidence from the literature revealed that the home-
school relationship in Victoria had a parallel development with the home-school
partnership movement in the Western countries such as Britain and the USA (Beare,
1987a; Pettit, 1987a).

The home-school interaction pattern applied during the 1980s was called the
transplant model (Cunningham & Davis, 1985), and was characterized by the explicit
involvement of parents in their child’s education. The model was positive in that it
was now possible for the interaction to comprise a two-way dialogue. However, it was
not yet an ideal model which could effectively develop as a full partnership, as
professionals were still in control of decision making, parents were dependent on
external expertise (Case, 2000; Dale, 1996; Pettit, 1987a), and essential issues such as
parenting style, family relationships, resources, values and cultures were not yet taken
into account (Case, 2000; Pettit, 1987b).

In Victorian State schools, the joint decision making process with the involvement of
parents, teachers, students, and educational administrators officially became a policy
(Beare, 1987b; Kirner, 1987). Funded by the Victorian In-Service Education
Committee (VISEC), a variety of in-service education programs were organized by the Victorian Federation of State School Parents Clubs (VFSSPC) throughout this period for the purpose of assisting parents in their new role as partners of educators, for example “Parents in curriculum”, “Label jam jars not people”, “Compulsory schooling – relevant curriculum” (Gibson, 1987). However, according to Gibson (1987), a couple of State-wide activities a year were not enough to create a major change in students’ learning as well as parent-professional relations. The only difference was that parents now had equal access to information about such programs which had been before passed on to them. The need to increase parents’ power and authority to be involved in the planning process was expressed through the establishment of “Parents Say”, an Australian Commonwealth Schools Commission Project which aimed at training parents to become discussion group leaders in parents’ clubs – an environment considered as most suitable for parents to work through their issues together.

By the end of 1980s, in addition to funded programs, individual schools also organized their own activities to increase parental involvement (Dewey, 1989; Jackson, 1987). As specified in Dewey (1989), changes in home-school relationships in Australia during this period could be found in the nationwide research study conducted in 1988 which surveyed 23,000 parents and 17,000 members of the then largest professional teaching association in Australia, the Primary English Teaching Association (PETA), to discover their concerns about primary schooling. Results revealed that parents in general became more familiar with the home-school interaction with some of them actively involved in the classroom and teachers now more relaxed with children and tended to work as members of teams. However,
although most teachers had supportive relationships with parents, some were still
reserved due to a lack of training in communication skills, negative media reports on
school teachers, or unpleasant parents. With parental involvement no longer an issue,
what mattered next, according to Beare (1987a), was how far that involvement should
extend.

1.2.3 From early 1990s until 2009

From the 1990s on, the role of parents in special education has dramatically changed,
gaining increasing emphasis in special education laws and practice. In Victoria, the
Disability Act 2006 was enacted to set out principles to endorse respect to persons
with disabilities and objectives for service providers (VLPD, 2009a). With a wider
recognition for people with disabilities, the vital role of parents in the education
process of children with special needs is also strongly emphasized. Parents are now
considered valued partners of professionals. The Victorian Department of Education
and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) in its Program for Students with
Disability 2009 Handbook (DEECD, 2009b) states that school policy and practice
should reflect the parent-professional collaboration aiming at gaining mutual
agreements for the benefits of the child. Special education services should also be
based on the child’s specific educational needs with consideration to the child’s
background. Parent participation is a very strong principle for Early Childhood
Education and Care (ECEC) in Australia with a variety of policies at both government
and service levels that encourage parental involvement (Press & Hayes, 2000)

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2 The Victorian Disability Act 2006 is listed on the Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary
The legal mandates reflect a theory of social ecology which aims at officially recognizing the critical role of the family to the positive development of children with disabilities. At the same time empowering parents to become equal stakeholders in the decision making process for their children in all aspects of their education. For example, parents are now invited to attend assessment and evaluation procedures, set educational goals, or design instructional practices. Parents are also allowed to obtain and control access to their child’s school records, or able to participate on special education advisory committees (DEECD, 2009a; Pruitt, Wandry, & Hollums, 1998; Reyes-Blanes et al., 2001; Rogers-Adkinson, Ochoa, & Delgado, 2003; Singh, 2003; Spann et al., 2003). In addition, new laws and policies also aim at promoting fair treatment of students with special needs from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds (DEECD, 2009b). It is now the school’s responsibility to inform diverse background parents in their native language of activities and actions taken by the school with regard to its special education services.

A noticeable change that is well documented in the literature in this period is that there is a shift in focus in home-school coordination. The cooperation is family-oriented. Issues in the wider world of the child that may have an influence on the education process are now taken into account (Dunst, 1999; Dunst, Johanson, Rounds, Trivette, & Hamby, 1992; Dunst, Johanson, Trivette, & Hamby, 1991; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

1.3 Rationale

It has also been widely documented in the literature that home-school partnerships produce a great deal of benefits for all stakeholders who are involved in the education

1.3.1 Benefits of home-school partnerships

1.3.1.1 Benefits for the child

First of all, and most importantly, the purpose of any home-school partnership is for the benefit of the child. Benefits for children with disabilities resulting from the parent-professional collaboration are many and obvious in numerous research studies regardless of age or type of disability of the children (Beckman, 2000; Knight & Wadsworth, 1999; Pruitt et al., 1998). An active partnership will help provide the child with greater consistency in his/her two most important environments – home and school; increase his/her opportunities for learning and growth; and expand his/her access to resources and services (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001).

Research studies have indicated that positive home-school relationships are essential for improving students’ academic achievement, self-esteem development, and their transition into adulthood (Geenen, Powers, & Lopez-Vasquez, 2001; Knight & Wadsworth, 1999). According to Leithwood and Louis (1999), parental involvement in children’s education accounted for 50% of the variance in the school achievement of children. The home-school collaboration makes the children feel more secure and more purposeful (Dewey, 1989). There is also evidence of the association between parents’ active participation in transition programs and the success of students with disabilities on employment outcome measures (Geenen et al., 2001). The strong home-school collaboration is more critical to students with disabilities from CLD
backgrounds as the relationship can promote cultural understanding which is important for home-school communication that in turn helps schools effectively meet parents’ expectations and their child’s needs (Clear, 1999; Kang, Lovett, & Haring, 2002; Kim, Rendon, & Valadez, 1998; Lamorey, 2002; Mokuau, 1990; Zionts, Zionts, Harrison, & Bellinger, 2003).

Although parent involvement at all levels is helpful, many studies have emphasized that the most meaningful and effective participation that can lead to significant academic and social changes in the student should be commenced at an early age, be purposeful, well-planned, active, and ongoing (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b; Christenson, Rounds, & Franklin, 1992; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004; Pruitt et al., 1998).

### 1.3.1.2 Benefits for the parents

Parents are their children’s first educators and have a long-term responsibility for them (Kirner, 1987). Parent participation in schooling has therefore been identified by legislation and practice as a critical contributor to effective education for both children with and without disabilities (Coffey & Sears, 1996; Coots, 1998; Griffith, 1998; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Turnbull, Blue-Banning, Turbiville, & Park, 1999; Whitaker & Whitaker, 1999). Parent participation would help provide parents with the opportunity to be directly involved in their child’s education process and being connected with others in the school and the community. The participation, according to Epstein (1995) and Spann et al. (2003), very much helps increase parents’ satisfaction, continuity in the education process, as well as the ability to manage and resolve problems. Productive home-school cooperation also provides parents with greater understanding of the needs of their child and the objectives of the
professional; information on their rights and responsibilities as parents of an
exceptional child; specific ways to extend the positive effects of school programming
into the home; increased skills to help their child in the home environment, skills to
maintain treatment gains; and access to additional important resources for their child
(Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001).

1.3.1.3 **Benefits for the professionals**

The professionals can be listed as including general classroom teachers, teacher aides,
special need educators, and school health specialists. According to Turnbull and
Turnbull (2001), through the interaction with families, the professionals are provided
with a greater and deeper understanding of the needs, desires, and strengths of the
parents in addition to the overall needs of the child. The professionals also have the
opportunity to develop and refine skills for working with families as well as the
ability to comply with legislation mandating continuing parental input in the
educational process. With a better understanding of the families, professionals can
avoid disagreements with families or better resolve disputes if any, and prevent costly
actions as a result of the mediation process (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland,

Despite nearly 30 years of legislative foundation, empirical support and theoretical
justification, it is widely documented in the literature that there is still a lack of active
parental involvement in special education, especially parents from CLD backgrounds
(Al-Hassan & Gardner, 2002; Kang et al., 2002; Kim et al., 1998; Lamorey, 2002;
Thorp, 1997; Torres-Burgo, Reyes-Wasson, & Brusca-Vega, 1999; Zionts et al.,
There are, therefore, areas in the field of home-school partnership that need further research.

1.3.2 Areas suggested for further research in the literature

Several topics suggested for further research in the field of home-school partnership are:

- How to affect change within a legal-based system in order to facilitate policies that support multicultural practices and effective home-school partnership? (Prasad & Ebbeck, 2000; Zionts et al., 2003)

- The role of the interpreter in the parent-educator interaction (Cho, Singer, & Brenner, 2000)

- Issues about the boundaries between families and professionals (Blue-Banning et al., 2004; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2002)

- How do types of parent participation (e.g. participation at home and at school) influence home-school partnership? (Bempechat, 1998; Coots, 1998; Geenen et al., 2001; Griffith, 1998)

- The personal communication process between parents and professionals, parent input in the Individualized Education Program (IEP)\(^3\) process, parent level of satisfaction with services provided (Spann et al., 2003; Zionts et al., 2003)

- Influence of cultural aspects on families’ interpretations of their children’s disabilities, their priorities and expectations in educational goal setting (Reyes-Blanes et al., 2001), their involvement in their children’s schools in general (Griffith, 1998) and in the transition process in particular (Geenen et al., 2001)

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\(^3\) Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a US program. The equivalent program in the Australian school context is called the Individual Learning Plan (ILP).
Among areas suggested for future research, understanding parent-professional interpersonal relationships emerges as the most important issue that would help bring about the expected links between home and school, especially with families that have CLD backgrounds.

However, a review of literature in the field of home-school collaboration shows that although numerous research studies conducted recently have tried to look at the issue from a diverse perspective, the emphasis on cultural issues affecting families of children with a disability is quite new (Harry, 2002). A lack of focus on the Asian population is obvious (Geenen et al., 2001; Lee & Manning, 2001). This is also an issue in the Australian school context (Germanos-Koutsounadis, 2001; Prasad & Ebbeck, 2000). As a result, a similar situation applies to the Vietnamese population in Victoria.

1.3.3 Lack of studies about the Vietnamese population in Victoria

According to the 2001 census statistics (VOMA, 2003), the population of the state of Victoria was 4,612,097 with the top four countries of origin being England, Italy, Greece and Vietnam. The Vietnamese community is, therefore, the largest group among the Asian population with 56,664 persons.

Although there are similarities among the numerous Asian ethnic groups, they do not fall into one homogeneous group (Kim et al., 1998; Lee & Manning, 2001; Mathews, 2000; UNESCO, 2004). The need for specificity is therefore essential especially in special education where individual needs are highly prioritized (Zionts et al., 2003). Available data reveal that most Vietnamese parents still have limited participation in
their children’s education and have not fully integrated into the Australian society (Cahill, 1996; Trinh & Nguyen, 1996). According to Hoang (1991) in her study about Vietnamese people with disabilities in Victoria, Vietnamese parents rarely have access to information or services on which they can rely for help. However, it is noticeable that these studies were conducted over 10 years ago and updated information is not available. All this drew me to the conclusion that there is a need for research about the Vietnamese community. It is worth finding out about the influence of the Vietnamese culture on the home-school partnership.

1.4 Boundaries of the research

The study was carried out by one investigator within a restricted time frame, and with limited resources. Therefore, the study confined itself to the topic under investigation: “The relationship between special educators in the DEECD Victorian Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability.”

For accessibility reasons, the research sites were therefore within the Victorian Metropolitan Regions. Parent-educator relationship was the focus of the study. The data collected needed to reflect perspectives of both Vietnamese parents and special educators. These viewpoints would provide an insight into the connections between the task and the relationship: two major components of a home-school partnership. The ultimate purpose was to understand the role and the influence of the relationship in the operation of a home-school partnership, especially a family-centered partnership.
1.5 Outline of the thesis

The structure of this thesis illustrates the sequence that the investigator followed in conducting and presenting this research. The present chapter – Chapter 1 – provides an overview of the background of the study.

Chapter 2 examines the relevant literature which is related to the topic and the research question under investigation. This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section deals with the philosophical and practical issues of family-centered partnerships. This section explores the construct of home-school partnership and the concept of family-centered practice. The terminology use in the thesis is covered in this section. The next section presents the foundations of the family-centered approach with related theoretical backgrounds and major established conceptual partnership models. This section lays the groundwork for the last section – research paradigm – in which the investigator builds up a theoretical framework for the current study. This framework, which has two major interrelated areas of investigation including the task and the relationship, sets the parameters of the research. The framework therefore guides the way this study was carried out.

Chapter 3, research design, gives details of the research methodology used in the present study. The nature of the topic and the research question under investigation determined the research strategy employed for the study. Explanatory case study is the methodology of choice. Explanatory case study helps deal with the operational links between the task and the relationship - the two major components of a partnership. In accordance with this methodology, qualitative methods of collecting and analyzing data were used. Specific techniques and procedures employed include:
in-depth interviews, observation, documentation analysis, and physical artefacts’ investigation.

The process of data analysis is also part of the research design chapter. The process entails two main phases: The concurrent analysis and the intensive analysis. The first phase occurred during the course of data collection. The process helps the investigator reflect on the data to readjust the focus of the study if necessary and at the same time keep track of what has been done. The second phase, intensive analysis, was conducted once all the data had been collected. The intensive phase was performed both at the individual case level (within-case analysis) and across the cases (cross-case analysis).

Chapter 4 describes findings at the individual case level. The chapter presents detailed case study write-ups for each case and describes explanatory networks illustrating the operational links among prominent features of each individual case.

Chapter 5 presents cross-case discussions of themes emerging from individual case results.

Chapter 6 specifies the practical and theoretical contributions that the research has made to the field of home-school partnership, together with recommendations for practitioners and educational policy makers.
CHAPTER 2       LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1    Family-centered partnership

2.1.1    The construct of home-school partnership

Dunst et al. (1992) developed a model that illustrated different levels of the parent-professional interaction, including coordination, cooperation, collaboration, and partnership. The levels range in order from the most basic level of involvement to higher levels of involvement.

Although there are different characteristics, it is extensively agreed in the literature that there are two common features among these terms, which are important for the operation of a collaborative relationship. They are the interactive process among people involved and the shared goals that parents and educators set to achieve to benefit the child (Chrispeels, 1996; DeChillo, Koren, & Schultze, 1994; Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 2005; Dunst & Pager, 1991; Pfeiffer, 1980; Timperley & Robinson, 2002). Timperley and Robinson (2002) call these two major characteristics: the relationship and the task.

In reality, many authors use either partnership or collaboration to convey the same meaning (Brookman-Frazee, 2004; Christenson, 2004; Pentyliuk, 2002). A number of alternatives are also used with similar meaning, e.g. a collaborative partnership (Lucyshyn, Blumberg, & Kayser, 2000), a collaborative relationship (DeChillo et al., 1994), an incorporating partnership (Brookman-Frazee, 2004), and a helping relationship (Dunst, 2002; Dunst & Pager, 1991). The short term “relationship” is
sometimes employed with the same meaning (Kasahara & Turnbull, 2005; Roberts, Rule, & Innocenti, 1998). Partnership, however, is emerging as a preferred terminology and will be used in this study. Nevertheless, to avoid repetition, some of the alternatives will also be used.

With regard to the nature of a home-school partnership, Dunst and Pager (1991) have created a widely accepted operational definition of partnership, which features a home-school partnership. Specifically, it is “an association between a family and one or more professionals who function collaboratively using agreed-upon roles in pursuit of a joint interest and common goals” (p. 28). The definition points out minimal conditions for a partnership to exist, which are widely reinforced by other researchers (DeChillo et al., 1994; Street, 1998; Turnbull, Turbiville, & Turnbull, 2000). All of these elements surround two main components of a partnership: the task and the relationship.

The relationship component reflects the interpersonal attributes that require various psychological aspects from participants involved in the partnership (Christenson, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Park & Turnbull, 2003). Loyalty, trust, and honesty are considered the pillars of any effective collaborative relationship (Dunst et al., 1992; Mahoney & Wheeden, 1997; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). In order to fulfil the mutual task, a joint sharing of resources and expertise is very important (Judge, 1998; Webster-Stratton, 1997). As stated by Dunst and Page (1991), relationship is a vital condition for a partnership to exist. However, they also emphasize that people involved in an active joining of interests can only become partners when they are
voluntary participants and have mutually agreed upon roles that are designed to achieve the ultimate goals of the partnership.

A parent-professional collaboration, first of all, needs to be balanced in terms of agreement and sharing of power between parties involved (Lucyshyn et al., 2000; McWilliam, Maxwell, & Sloper, 1999; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). Parents should be the ones who make final decisions regarding the interests, the goals, and even courses of action of the intervention process (Dunst & Pager, 1991). Dunst and Pager (1991) call them “senior” partners (p. 30). Professionals are responsible for providing parents with the necessary information and helping them assess available options so that they can make informed decisions regarding their child and their family (Turnbull et al., 1999; Turnbull et al., 2000). Balance in this context is created when involved parties have opportunities to successfully fulfil their agreed upon goals. Nevertheless, in order to ensure the successful operation of a partnership, the power shares and rightful roles of each party should be clarified at the entry point of the collaborative arrangement (Dunst & Pager, 1991). It is the transformation in power sharing and responsibility by the family and professionals that has led to significant shifts in the nature of family-oriented home-school services (DeChillo et al., 1994; Roberts et al., 1998).

2.1.2 Major family-oriented practices

Dunst et al. (1991) classify family-oriented practices into four broad models along a continuum according to the degree of family-centeredness of each model. The models are: professionally-centered, family-allied, family-focused, and family-centered. All four models consider the family the unit of intervention and employ social systems
frameworks to obtain a thorough understanding of the functions of the family within different ecological systems. The degree of family-centeredness of the models is based on the relational and participatory proponents of the interaction process (Dunst et al., 1991). Relational elements imply interpersonal skills required by professionals in order to maintain a relationship with families, which can be listed as including active listening, compassion, empathy, respect, and being non-judgmental. Professionals’ beliefs and attitudes towards family capacities and competencies are considered the most important elements (Dunst, 2002). Participatory elements refer to levels of independence that families are given to get involved in the family-professional collaboration, to perform their duties, and to make their decision. These elements also include the practitioners’ decision and ability to respond to families’ needs (Dunst, 2002).

Figure 1: Family-centeredness continuum

In professionally-centered models, professionals are experts who reserve the right to determine child and family needs from their own perspective as families are seen as incapable in the area that requires professional intervention (Dunst et al., 1991; Trivette, Dunst, Boyd, & Hamby, 1995).
Family-allied models view families as the professionals’ assistants. Families need instructions from professionals to implement interventions deemed important for the benefit of the child and necessary for the function of their family (Dunst et al., 1991; Trivette et al., 1995).

In family-focused models, families and professionals collaborate in a joint effort to decide family needs and options (Dunst et al., 1991; Trivette et al., 1995). Even though families have more freedom and respect from professionals to perform their rights and responsibilities, they are still thought to need professional advice and guidance in order to be able to function in a more effective manner. Evidence from the literature in home-school relations has revealed that family-allied approaches still dominate the ways parents are involved in their child’s education. This model is designed to promote parent participation and where practices employed are also aligned with family-allied or family-focused approaches (Dunst, 2002).

Family-centered models – the most state-of-the-art family-oriented practices – are completely consumer-driven. Aspects of the intervention process are based on the families’ needs and desires, and the professionals are viewed as the agents of the families (Dunst et al., 1991). The following section will further detail the philosophy of family-centered practice.

2.1.3 The philosophy of family-centered practice

Adapted from the health care field, the term “family-centered” has been increasingly used to describe types of social interventions both in early intervention and non-early intervention fields (Mahoney, Kaiser, Girolametto, MacDonald, Robinson, Safford, &
Spiker, 1999; Trivette et al., 1995). However, the term is often mistakenly used in exchange with some of other family-oriented paradigms (Bailey, Buysse, Edmondson, & Smith, 1992; Trivette et al., 1995). The essential point that distinguishes the family-centered practice from other family-oriented models used in working with families is the simultaneous use of both sets of relational and participatory components (Dunst, 2002).

Family-centered practice is defined as a friendly, respectful partnership with families. It includes the provision of emotional and educational supports and opportunities for families to participate in service delivery and to make decisions regarding their needs (Mahoney et al., 1999; McWilliam et al., 1999). In this concept, professionals are viewed as instruments of families, whose major role becomes that of resource and supporter of family priorities designed to maximize family functions and to produce optimal child well-being (Bailey & McWilliam, 1993; Dunst, 2002; Kasahara & Turnbull, 2005). The professionals are responsible for assisting the family in identifying goals for intervention and ensuring that family members are well informed before they make their decisions. The information provided may include results of child assessments; related resources, services, intervention activities and strategies available; and ways to get access to these sources of information. It is also the professional’s responsibility to support the family’s decisions although these decisions may not be congruent with the professional’s concept of appropriate practice.

Adopting a family-centered approach means professionals should conform to its beliefs and practices that treat families with dignity and respect (Dunst, 2002); and
employ individualized, flexible, and responsive interventions that value family choice regarding their children’s services (Bailey et al., 1992; DeChillo et al., 1994; Turnbull et al., 2000). Therefore, appropriate interventions can only be developed upon family ecological information gathered. Assessment and intervention activities are typically conducted at a time and place convenient for families and usually at the family’s home (Lucyshyn et al., 2000). Respecting family choices and priorities means the professionals must be positive, sensitive, and responsive to the family’s needs and wishes (Bailey et al., 1992; McWilliam et al., 1999).

It should be noted that, according to Mahoney and Wheeden (1997), the concepts of family choice and families as experts are not philosophical premises. Other intervention procedures such as building a trusting relationship with parents; respecting their cultural identity, beliefs, values, coping styles; and designing intervention activities that are based on the family’s goals and values are all a means to encourage parental participation in their child education, not the ultimate goal of family-centered philosophy. The emphasis of a family-centered philosophy should be that of reinforcing the role of parents in their child’s development by enhancing their skills, self-efficacy, and self-confidence. It is family empowerment that leads to family-mediated intervention and thus supports the goal of a family-centered philosophy (Mahoney et al., 1999; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). The family-centered philosophy, as defined by Dunst and Pager (1991), “places major emphasis upon partnerships and empowerment as the mechanisms for support and strengthening family functioning” (p. 42).
An intervention empowerment model stresses the family’s inherent strengths and capacities (Allen & Petr, 1996; Dunst et al., 1991) and shifts the locus of control to parents and related family members (Turnbull et al., 2000). Such a model enables families to acquire competencies to solve their problems, meet their own needs, and finally attain family goals (Brookman-Frazee, 2004). Evidence in the literature has revealed that empowered parents demonstrate confidence and effectiveness in teaching their child, managing their daily routines, interacting with service providers, and obtaining services for the child (Turnbull et al., 2000). They, in summary, actively participate in the treatment planning and education of the child (Brookman-Frazee, 2004). Conversely, according to Brookman-Frazee (2004), an unempowered parent is dependent on service providers with behaviours and attitudes that reflect frustration, stress, depression, and helplessness. The responsibility of the interventionist is to provide the assistance and support necessary to improve the child’s behaviour in a family context. The goal of family-centered interventions is, therefore, to create positive outcomes that extend to all problem contexts, help improve the well-being of the family unit as a whole. Most importantly, family-centered intervention should be sustainable overtime (Bailey & McWilliam, 1993; Lucyshyn et al., 2000).

The investigator has covered the philosophy of the family-centered practice. The next part will provide a quick overview of the foundations of the family-centered approach and major conceptual partnership models. The outline will serve as the base for the research paradigm of this study.
2.2 Foundations of the family-centered approach

The combination of legislation, family advocacy efforts, theories, and research has led to the widespread acceptance of the notion that the purpose of early intervention is not only to improve the development of the child with a disability, but also to support his or her family (Bailey & McWilliam, 1993; Beare, 1987a; Dunst et al., 1992; Fewell & Vadasz, 1986; Harris & McHale, 1989; Kazak, 1987; Mahoney & Bella, 1998). The following section will look at major contemporary theories underlying the family-centered approach to intervention services for children with a disability.

2.2.1 Family systems theory

Family systems theory promotes the importance of understanding various aspects of the family in order to effectively meet the needs of both the child and the family (Bowen, 1978; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). The family context and the experiences provided within this context are extremely critical to a child’s development and well-being (Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, Hamby, Raab, & McLean, 2001). Family is the first point parents turn to in looking for support and comfort to cope with stress and caregiving difficulties (Kang et al., 2002). Family members, including those in the extended family or close friends of the family, are usually the ones who offer this inside support (Bowen, 1978; Kang et al., 2002). Parents who experience less support from family members or close friends have more difficulty in adjusting and handling the heavy caregiving demands (Bosrock, 1997; De Vos & Slote, 1998; Maidment & Mackerras, 1998).
Family systems theory brings about a major theoretical shift from a one-person or intrapsychic model to a multiperson, interactional model (Kozlowska & Hanney, 2002; Satir & Baldwin, 1983). Family systems theory stresses the interactional nature of the family unit and suggests that events affecting any one member of the family will in turn have an impact on all family members. The family is viewed as consisting of subsystems (e.g., parental, sibling, spousal), whose membership and roles change over the life cycle of the family (Carter & McGoldrick, 1980). Professionals employing the family orientation no longer view the child in isolation as the intervention target (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). Instead, they look at the entire family and even other environmental contexts such as the school if necessary for the influences of these contexts on the child’s development (Kozlowska & Hanney, 2002; Valentine, 1992). Doherty and Peskay (1992) describe the basic principles of family systems theory as follows:

1) Family interaction patterns regulate the behaviour of individuals, and tend to be repeated across generations.

2) Family belief systems have powerful influences on individuals’ behaviour.

3) Key family interaction patterns occur in triangles. Triangular patterns are the minimum unit for understanding ongoing relationships.

4) It is important for family members to know who is in, or out of, the family and its subsystems.

5) Family health requires a balance between group solidarity and individual autonomy in order to avoid children being raised to be oversocialised or undersocialised.
6) Flexibility is a key safeguard against serious family dysfunction. Being able to change rules, interaction patterns, beliefs, and roles in response to demands from inside the family or from the outside environment is essential for a healthy family system (Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell, 1979). Being flexible gives families the active stance which will help them determine the influential outcome of internal or external events on family functions. It is also because of a family’s inflexibility that parents have difficulty in sustaining collaborative relationships with school professionals.

7) Individuals’ symptoms frequently have meaning within the family’s interaction patterns or worldview. If family relationships are viewed as an interconnected complex living system, then the “breakdown” of one member may be related to what is occurring with other family members or with the family as a whole.

8) Small events can lead to significant unforeseen change for good or ill.

9) Professionals become part of a new system with the family.

Characterised as a system, families are placed in a conceptual framework that depicts all the interconnected features that affect the operation of a family, including family characteristics, family interaction, family functions, and family life cycle (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). As described in Turnbull and Turnbull (2001), family characteristics refer to the family’s size and form, cultural background, socio-economic status, and geographic location. Each of these characteristics influences the family’s responses to a member’s uniqueness and is a potential resource for collaboration and empowerment. Family interaction indicates relationship types within the family as well as the way family members interact with people outside the family. Family
functions imply the family’s process of performing tasks that aim at meeting the individual and collective needs of all family members. Turnbull et al. (2000) identify eight categories of family functions, including affection, self-esteem, spiritual, economics, daily care, socialization, recreation, and education. Turnbull and Turnbull (2001) believe that knowing the way the family satisfies these eight functions and the effect that the family ‘s cultural values and traditions creates on its functions are critical in accomplishing the empowering context. Family life cycle refers to a number of predictable and stable developing stages that each family experiences over time. However, as stressed by Turnbull and Turnbull (2001), a family life cycle is not simply a sum of the life cycles of each family member; rather, it incorporates the interactions among all changes occurring in the family over its life time.

A major limitation of family systems theory, according to Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie, and Uchida (2002), is that it relies primarily on case studies conducted in the United States of America, involving clinic populations mainly from North American and European cultures. As a result, the theory reflects in part Western ways of thinking and patterns of relatedness. Rothbaum et al. (2002) caution against the application of the theory to cultures in which its concepts have been infrequently tested. However, family systems theory is still the corner-stone for intervention services, and it offers a more complex and non-blaming ways of understanding troubled families as well as the complex dynamics between families and schools (Doherty & Peskay, 1992). However, interventions may not be productive if multiple sources of influence on the child and his or her family members in different ecological settings are not taken into consideration since context is presumed to influence the development of the individual (Vincent, Salisbury, Strain, McCormick, & Tessier, 1990). The ecology
theory of human development proposed by psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979a, 1992) has provided a useful framework for understanding these hierarchical environmental systems of influence.

### 2.2.2 Ecological systems theory

In his ecology theory of human development, Bronfenbrenner (1979a, 1992) proposed an ecological systems model which explored the evolving systemic process of interaction between human organisms and the environment. The ecological systems approach examines the environment at four levels beyond the individual organism including the microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems.

Microsystems are the immediate settings in which individuals are nested or have direct contact with such as home and school. Microsystems lie at the very core of an ecological orientation. Just like individual development, the evolution and development of microsystems are influenced by forces generated both within and without the immediate setting (Garbarino, 1990; Garbarino & Ganzel, 2000).

According to Garbarino (1990), “the quality of a microsystem depends upon its ability to sustain and enhance development, and to provide a context that is emotionally validating and developmentally challenging” (p.81).

Mesosystems refer to the interrelations between, or among, major immediate settings (microsystems) in which the individual participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a, 1992). The richness of a mesosystem is measured in the number and quality of its connections (Garbarino, 1990; Garbarino & Ganzel, 2000). It is suggested that the strength of the mesosystem, linking the setting in which an intervention is
implemented with the setting in which the individual spends most significant time, is crucial to the long-term effectiveness of the intervention and to the maintenance of its effects (Whittaker, 1983).

Exosystems are formal and informal social structures in which events occur that affect the child’s immediate environment and as a result will influence the individual development of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a, 1992). However, in contrast to the mesosystems, the child does not play a direct role in these settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a, 1992). For most children, the key exosystems include the workplace of their parents, and those centers of power such as school boards, church councils, and planning commissions that make decisions affecting their day-to-day life (Garbarino, 1990). The concept of an exosystem, according to Garbarino (1990), illustrates the projective nature of the ecological perspective. A setting that is an exosystem for the child may be a microsystem for the parent and vice versa. Thus, transforming exosystems into microsystems in order to enhance parental participation for parents from disadvantaged groups may be a worthwhile intervention effort. The transforming process could be initiated by, for example, getting parents to visit the family day-care home or by creating on-site day care at their workplace.

Macrosystems are generalised and ideological patterns of the social institutions common to a particular culture or subculture in which the individual functions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a, 1992). These patterns serve as the master blueprints for the ecology of human development. The patterns reflect shared cultural assumptions and represented institutions of a people (Garbarino, 1990). The macrosystem concept is clearly expressed through religions which involve both a theoretical definition of the
world and a set of institutions reflecting that definition including roles, rules, buildings, and programs (Garbarino, 1990). Thus, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979a, 1992), within a given society or social group, its microsystems, mesosystems, and exosystems tend to have comparable structure and substance, and function in similar ways. On the other hand, the fundamental systems between different social groups may vary markedly. Analyzing and comparing social blueprints that rest upon contrary fundamental institutional expressions are therefore effective ways to understand the ecological properties of different social contexts which are the environments for human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a, 1992).

Conceptualised from the ecological model of human learning and development, early intervention views a child as functioning in a multiple determined complex in which the process that influences the child’s learning and development originate from the interaction of the settings the child participates in and characteristics of the people within these environments (including the developing child) (Dunst et al., 2001). The most important characteristic of the ecological perspective is that it emphasizes development in context (Carlson, Hickman, & Horton, 1992; Garbarino, 1990). However, the ultimate focus of any intervention strategies from this perspective remains on the developing child (Tharinger & Horton, 1992) which have been revealed in the literature to be no longer effective (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). In order to bring about successful intervention outcomes, there have been calls for a paradigm shift that can positively integrate and impact multiple ecosystems (Gallimore & Lopez, 2002; Harry, Allen, & McLaughlin, 1995; Weisner, 2002). In response to this call, the Ecocultural Framework has emerged as the contemporary framework that guides research and practices in the field.
2.2.3 The ecocultural framework

2.2.3.1 Ecocultural theory

The ecocultural theory is built on both family systems theory and ecological theory and includes a social constructivist perspective (Gallimore, Coots, Weisner, Gamier, & Gunthrie, 1996). The ecocultural theory proposes that families socially construct their child’s activity settings to accommodate the child’s needs within the pressures and opportunities of the family’s environment (Bernheimer & Keogh, 1995; Brookman-Frazee, 2004). Main components of the theory include the family’s ecocultural niche, daily routines, and accommodations. Interventions that are culturally appropriate, fit into the family’s daily routines, and incorporate objectives placed on such routines which would enhance the contextual fit of such interventions (Albin, Lucyshyn, Horner, & Flannery, 1996; Bernheimer & Keogh, 1995; Gallimore & Lopez, 2002; Lucyshyn et al., 2000; Moes & Frea, 2000; Paul & Frea, 2002).

A contextualist approach emphasizes the embeddedness of all contexts in which the developing child and his or her family are nested (Harry, 2002). According to Harry (2002), these contexts are in turn embedded in different cultural layers. Contextual fit therefore underlines the need for interventions to address culture, especially the cultural background of the family. Both culture and ecology help determine the ways in which a family’s contribution to the shared act of responsibility or decision making occurs (Roberts et al., 1998). However, Roberts et al. (1998) emphasizes that a family only actually enters a partnership when family members begin to understand the sustainable routines in which the partnership takes form and are able to meaningfully engage the routines into their ecological niches.
Ecocultural theory, in brief, emphasizes family strengths rather than family pathology (Gallimore, Goldenberg, & Weisner, 1993). Ecocultural theory acknowledges families’ active stance in their accommodation process. Families are well recognized to have strengths and resources that complement, rather than supplement, professionals’ expertise (Dunst, 2002; Turnbull et al., 1999). As the child’s primary decision makers, helping families address their own needs and recognize their inherent strengths will also ultimately help the child (McWilliam et al., 1999). According to Brookman-Frazee (2004), an effective home-school partnership should adopt the ecocultural model and employ a strength-based approach.

### 2.2.3.2 A strength-based approach

A strength-based approach aims at enabling parents to utilize their own abilities to meet the needs of their child and gradually become less dependent on professionals (Dunst, 2000). Identifying existing family strengths and capabilities is a goal of family-centered intervention (Trivette et al., 1995). In their article about a strength-based approach in support of multi-risk families, Powell, Batsche, Ferro, Fox, and Dunlap (1997) provide a thorough description of the principles of this philosophy. The focus according to them is on the unique knowledge, competencies, capabilities, and resources of individual family members as well as of the family as a whole.

An emphasis on family strengths, however, according to Powell et al. (1997), does not imply an absence of problems or deny family needs. It is still the responsibility of professionals to assist families in addressing and dealing with their problematical issues by helping the family identify strategies and resources they normally use. The purpose is to promote the full potential of the family and each family member so that
in the future they can independently utilize their unique strengths to build capacities for dealing with their own crises, meeting their own needs, as well as for creating opportunities for positive interactions. Family members become promoters of each other's skills and capacities. This approach results in families gaining greater access to resources and more control of their own lives. In brief, families are empowered to self-enhance their functioning and well-being. The needs of the child with a disability will then be addressed in the context of the quality of family life. This concept is referred to by Powell et al. (1997) as a proactive approach. An interesting additional point they make in relation to this approach is the principle of reciprocity. Families should also be viewed as givers of services and resources instead of mere receivers. Being considered as those who are able to make a difference in the lives of others having similar situations will help enhance their own self-confidence.

Upholding the belief that every family has strengths, a strength-based approach also implies the recognition and acceptance of differences among families as well as respect for family autonomy (Bailey & McWilliam, 1993; Powell et al., 1997). Families, according to Bailey and McWilliam (1993), vary in terms of the structure of the family unit, the nature and consistency of their daily routines, their unique beliefs, cultural and ethnic heritage, socioeconomic background, their geographical location, acculturation process, as well as the ways they use external resources and support. It is therefore important for professionals to tailor interventions that fit the unique characteristics of each family if they are to be effective (Harry et al., 1995; Zhang & Bennett, 2003). In addition to being individualized, strength-based interventions should also pursue a family-driven agenda at every level of service delivery (Powell et al., 1997). This optimal respect for family autonomy is based on the assumptions
that families have the most intimate knowledge of their child’s history, characteristics, environment; and a unique perspective on the family dynamics (Bailey & McWilliam, 1993). Thus, all aspects of the service planning and delivery should be driven by needs, goals, and perspective of the entire family; and family members should be the ultimate decision-makers (Dunst et al., 1992).

Doing a better job of matching practices to families’ real concerns, priorities, and desires; strength-based interventions hold great promise as a way of engaging families, especially those that traditionally have not been involved in their children's education and schooling (Dunst, 2002; Powell et al., 1997). According to Brookman-Frazee (2004), the literature on empowering parents of children with disabilities and providing ecocultural fit services share similar themes and suggestions for intervention planning and implementation. The interventions are in general family-driven in nature with the ultimate goal being for the family to acquire self-sustaining and adaptive behaviours that emphasize growth among all family members and overall enhance the family’s quality of life (Krauss, 2000; Trivette et al., 1995). However, it is advised that when incorporating these themes into their interventions, professionals should carefully examine the type of help-giving model they employ (Brookman-Frazee, 2004).

2.3 Major conceptual partnership models

Traditionally, models of human services were based on a pathological approach in which the role of professionals was to identify their clients’ problems and bring them to a more normalized state (Friesen & Koroloff, 1990; Singh, 1995). Referred to as deficit models, traditional practices were characterized by paternalistic values and
hierarchical behaviours in which professionals were decision makers (Powell et al., 1997). From these traditional models, over the past 30 years, variations of conceptual models from various disciplines have grown out of practices designed to maximize intervention outcomes and search for the most effective way to improve service delivery to children with disabilities (Case, 2000; Coben, Thomas, Sattler, & Morsink, 1997). Family-centered models are not exceptional, and are a logical expansion of home-school partnerships with the acknowledgement of the importance of families in the intervention process (Bruder, 2000).

Although models for family-centered intervention vary, they are all based on the assumption that the child and his or her family are intertwined; thus, the efforts spent to help the family will ultimately benefit the child (Bailey et al., 1992). This section will briefly review three major models of family-professional partnership. They are Epstein’s *Framework of six types of parent involvement* (Epstein, 1991, 1995; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Epstein & Sanders, 1998), Turnbull and Turnbull’s *Unified Model* (Turnbull et al., 1999; Turnbull et al., 2000; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001), and Dunst’s *Model of parent-professional partnerships* (Dunst, 2000; Dunst et al., 1992; Dunst et al., 1991; Dunst & Pager, 1991). These models have complementary characteristics and are widely accepted as the underpinning frameworks for most current research and practices concerning strengthening the partnerships between home and school (Dunst, 2002; Pruitt et al., 1998; Pushor & Murphy, 2004; Svidal, 2000).
2.3.1 Epstein’s framework of six types of parent involvement

Parental involvement, according to Case (2000), may be essential to the development of an equitable parent-professional relationship which will ultimately lead to a partnership. However, strategies to enhance parent involvement take time to establish and require continuous effort to develop and need to be periodically reviewed and improved since such plans must take into account the potential needs of the family as the child grows and the family changes (Epstein, 1995). Furthermore, in order to get the full benefit of these strategies, the strategies should also meet the ethnic, socio-economic and urban/rural needs of the school community (Graham-Clay, 1999).

To facilitate such efforts, Epstein and her colleagues (Epstein, 1991, 1995; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Epstein & Sanders, 1998) have generated research and demonstration models regarding parent and family involvement, which are widely accepted as foundations for establishing and strengthening a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships (Dunst, 2002; Graham-Clay, 1999; Pruitt et al., 1998). Epstein outlines six types of parent involvement in school, including:

1) Parenting. Professionals should assist families with parenting skills (e.g., by conducting parenting courses, providing workshop for parents), and encourage families to assist schools in understanding families’ backgrounds, cultures and goals for their children so that the schools in turn can help establish supportive home environments to facilitate learning at each age and year level.

2) Communicating. The school should take an active stance in designing the home-school interactive communication system in varied, effective, and
productive forms to communicate about school programs and student progress. Producing periodical newsletters, conducting parent-teacher-student conferences, or facilitating language translators to assist families when needed are some examples. These two-way communication channels will also help families keep in touch with the school community.

3) Volunteering. Organizing parents in the school environment as volunteers and audiences is a handy way for educators to involve families in assisting and supporting their children and the school. However, an effective parent volunteering program requires a well-designed recruitment, training, activities, and schedules plan.

4) Learning at home. Families should be encouraged to be involved with their children in academic learning activities at home such as with homework and setting learning goals. Educators can help create opportunities for families by providing parents with specific strategies to improve children's vocabulary at home, or providing parents with helpful information so that they can effectively assist their children in homework and other related activities.

5) Decision making. In order to encourage families to be ultimate decision makers, parents should be included in all their child-related school decision making processes. Schools can assist families by providing training in decision making skills, and in obtaining information from and giving information to those they are in contact with.

6) Collaborating with the community. Integrating community resources and services into school programs is helpful in enabling educators to create more
opportunities for families to be involved in school-related activities, which in turn will help strengthen the community, home, and school ties.

According to Epstein and Jansorn (2004), comprehensive partnership programs should include activities for all six types of involvement. Each activity should raise various explicit challenges that must be met in order to encourage parent involvement at school and at home, as well as to improve home-school two-way connections. Input from families will help schools address challenges; improve future plans and activities so that all families can be productive partners in their children’s school success (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). However, it is emphasized that activities implemented should be customized to meet specific goals and needs of each student and his or her family (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). As stated by Epstein (1995), a range of thoughtful, well-organized opportunities should enhance overall parent participation over time. Thus, an awareness of this framework will be very helpful in assisting professionals in carrying out their efforts (Graham-Clay, 1999).

In an effort to increase the success of the suggested framework, Epstein (1995) embeds it in a five-step, three-year process that requires a whole-school approach in association with support from the community. Since partnerships require teamwork, the first step is to form an action team for each partnership that consists of teachers, parents, the principal, other educators, and community partners. All parties involved have active roles to play in guiding the development of the partnership program and in improving and sustaining their work over time. The second step involves obtaining funds to support the work of the team so that the program can be started. This includes grant applications, school-based fund raisings, or local business partnerships.
Step three is the starting point of the partnership, which involves the analysis of current partnership practices of the school with inputs from key stakeholders regarding the school’s present strengths, changes required, expectations, special issues (e.g. numbers/types of hard-to-reach families), and overall goals. Developing a three-year plan is the fourth stage, which involves the identification of specific steps to encourage parent participation in the various categories of involvement as proposed in the ‘Six types of parent involvement framework’. A detailed one-year plan is essential for the process to be implemented. The last step, step five, involves frequent planning, running, and reviewing of the program so that key participants can keep track of the progress that has been made. This is of decisive influence on participants’ future decision as to whether to extend their involvement in the program or not.

Epstein’s (1995) framework describing six types of parent participation in their child’s education process has been extensively used by both educators in practice to influence home-school relations and investigators researching family involvement in schooling (Dunst, 2000; Svidal, 2000). However, the model has its own limitations. Empirical findings indicate that the majority of efforts by elementary school personnel to involve families in their children’s education emphasize the role of parents as home teachers of their children. Their major task is to support schools in improving student achievement and reaching highly specific teacher goals through implementing activities or following advice suggested by their children’s teachers at school. The bulk of these activities have involved parents helping with and monitoring children’s homework and other curriculum-related activities (Nelson, Jayanthi, Brittain, Epstein, & Bursuck, 2002; Nelson, Jayanthi, Epstein, & Bursuck, 2000). In Epstein’s (1995) model, the school’s view seems one-way in which the
school seeks to determine what parents can do for teachers rather than the other way round (Cairney & Munsie, 1992). Ultimate decisions therefore also rest with educators (Pushor & Murphy, 2004).

In addition to those aforementioned restrictions, an important aspect that limits the implementation of Epstein’s model according to Turnbull and Turnbull (2001) is that the six types of partnerships are mainly for home-school collaboration within general education. Most principal issues related to home-school partnerships in special education such as joint parent and educator involvement in the IEP conferences are noticeably absent from the research and literature employing the Epstein model (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001).

Concerning the family-professional collaboration in both general and special education at different school levels, Turnbull and Turnbull (2001) in combination with the Epstein’s model propose a unified conceptualized framework for family-professional partnerships in elementary, middle, and secondary schools.

**2.3.2 Turnbull and Turnbull’s unified model**

In order to productively make joint decisions, as stated by Turnbull and Turnbull (2001), the dynamic process of home-school collaboration should include families’ and professionals’ resources in responsive education context factors. This is the collaboration framework for empowerment.

Families’ and professionals’ resources both consist of two similar categories, namely motivation and knowledge/skills. Motivation contains five sub-categories including self-efficacy, perceived control, high expectations, energy, and persistence.
Knowledge/skills encompass four sub-categories comprising information, problem solving, life management, and communication skills. Although these resources are essential for the collaboration process, education context resources as emphasized by Turnbull and Turnbull (2001) are vital for the success of the collaboration for empowerment.

Education context resources refer to the opportunities for partnerships, which focus on what families and professionals should do together; and the obligations for reliable alliances, which emphasize how the relationship should be carried out. Turnbull and Turnbull’s (2001) empowerment framework for family-professional collaboration includes seven opportunities for partnerships and eight obligations for reliable alliances.

The seven opportunities for partnerships are based on the first five types of home-school partnerships specified in Epstein’s (1995) model with the inclusion of the last type, collaborating with community, in each type. Considering ‘collaborating with community’ an inseparable aspect, Turnbull and Turnbull (2001) merge this last type into all other categories of partnerships. Two additional opportunities that are unique to special education are then added, including evaluating for special education and individualizing for appropriate education. There are thus a total of seven opportunities for partnership, which arise as: i) communicating among reliable allies, ii) meetings families’ basic needs, iii) evaluating for special education, iv) individualizing for appropriate education and placement, v) extending learning into home and community, vi) attending and volunteering at school, and vii) advocating for systems improvement.
However, according to Turnbull and Turnbull (2001), in order to successfully carry out all these seven opportunities to be partners with families, it is crucial for professionals to establish reliable alliances with families rather than hierarchical relationships. The importance of establishing reliable alliances with families has been strongly emphasized in the literature as the decisive factor for an effective partnership (Gallagher, Rhodes, & Darling, 2004; Gallimore & Lopez, 2002; Timperley & Robinson, 2002; Turnbull et al., 1999; Turnbull et al., 2000).

The eight obligations for reliable alliances as identified by Turnbull and Turnbull (2001) include knowing yourself, knowing families, honoring cultural diversity, affirming family strengths, promoting family choices, envisioning great expectations, communicating positively, and warranting trust and respect. Knowing yourself is the first obligation which influences the way educators understand and appreciate the personalities and behaviours of others. Educators are therefore required at the outset willing to understand their own perceptions and the impact of these perceptions on their relationships with families (Kroth & Edge, 1997). Just as important as knowing yourself in building reliable alliances with families is knowing families. To facilitate this aspect, Turnbull and Turnbull (2001) suggest families be examined from a family systems perspective in order to recognize families’ interactive and dynamic qualities. Honoring cultural diversity requires educators to put themselves in the circumstances of the families they work with to the greatest extent possible in order to understand and appreciate the influence of cultural aspects on their life. Affirming and building on family strengths correspond with the strength-based approach proposed in the ecocultural framework. This fourth obligation recognizes and underlines families’ strengths as key features in the process of supporting families to enhance their own
self-efficacy (Bailey & McWilliam, 1993; Brookman-Frazee, 2004; Powell et al., 1997; Trivette et al., 1995). Promoting family choice relates to establishing reliable alliances and setting empowering contexts that increase families’ opportunities to express and have their choices heard (Turnbull et al., 2000). Enclosing maximum flexibility in service planning and delivery is the best way to promote family choices. Envisioning great expectations is the sixth obligation of a reliable alliance. Just like self-efficacy, great expectations are one of the elements of motivation resources. Communicating positively is an especially important skill which decides the success of home-school partnerships (Sileo & Prater, 1998). Being able to accurately and constructively communicate their thoughts and feelings, families and educators have more chances of building successful alliances which are the premises for creating an empowering context. Although fluent communication is not a natural ability, it is fortunate that it can be learned (Kroth & Edge, 1997). Warranting trust and respect is the last obligation. It is also the most important element of all the components requisite for building reliable alliances and creating empowering contexts. Trust and respect are extensively mentioned in the literature as essential factors for the establishment of parent-educator relationships (Dunst, 2002; Kalyanpur & Rao, 1991). Building trust and respect is an indispensable phase of the formation of a partnership (Case, 2000) which would help collaboration and empowerment to flourish.
## Education Context Resources

### Family Resources

**Motivation**
- Self-efficacy: Believing in our capacities
- Perceived control: Believing we can apply our capabilities to affect what happens to us

**Knowledge/Skills**
- Information: Being knowledgeable
- Problem solving: Knowing how to bust the barriers
- Life management skills: Knowing how to handle what happens to us
- Communication skills: Being on the sending and receiving ends of expressed needs and wants

**Energy**
- Lighting the fire and keeping it burning

**Persistence**
- Putting forth a sustained effort

### Opportunities for Partnerships

**Opportunities Arise At…**
- Communicating among reliable allies
- Meetings families’ basic needs
- Evaluating for special education
- Individualizing for appropriate education and placement
- Extending learning into home and community
- Attending and volunteering at school
- Advocating for systems improvement

### Obligations for Reliable Alliances

**Reliable Alliances Consist Of…**
- Knowing yourself
- Knowing families
- Honoring cultural diversity
- Affirming family strengths
- Promoting family choices
- Envisioning great expectations
- Communicating positively
- Warranting trust and respect

### Professional Resources

**Motivation**
- Self-efficacy: Believing in our capacities
- Perceived control: Believing we can apply our capabilities to affect what happens to us

**Knowledge/Skills**
- Problem solving: Knowing how to bust the barriers
- Life management skills: Knowing how to handle what happens to us
- Communication skills: Being on the sending and receiving ends of expressed needs and wants

**Energy**
- Lighting the fire and keeping it burning

**Persistence**
- Putting forth a sustained effort

---

**Collaborating for empowerment**

Source: Turnbull & Turnbull (2001, p. 42)

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**Figure 2: Empowerment framework: Collaborating for empowerment**

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Reliable alliances as summarized by Turnbull and Turnbull (2001) require parents and educators to possess and exercise a great deal of empathy, the ability to understand and appreciate each other’s feelings, thoughts, and motives. Such alliances will provide families and professionals with more opportunities to develop empathy for each other and become reliable allies. The sophisticated model is presented in Figure 2.

2.3.3 Dunst’s model of parent-professional partnerships

It is suggested by Dunst et al. (1992) that it is the association of both the interactive time and the demonstration of various behavioural states and traits of parents and professionals during the time they jointly work together in pursuit of agreed upon goals that leads to the formation of different types of parent-professional relationships. These relationships evolve along a continuum from coordination to cooperation to collaboration, and then to partnership. At the most basic level, partnerships can be formed as a result of effective reciprocal interactions. It is emphasized that a relationship can only be appropriately described as a partnership when the relationship possesses “certain operationally defined and behaviourally established states and traits” attributed to partnerships (Dunst et al., 1992, p. 169). From this perspective, it could be misleading for professionals to inform parents in advance that the helping style they employ in working with them is partnership. The following table displays four major dimensions of parent-professional partnerships along with their definitions and particular states and traits that characterize a partnership.
Table 1: A categorization scheme for organizing the major characteristics of parent-professional partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Cognitive attributions about how one should act or ought to behave towards other people</td>
<td>Trust, mutual respect, honesty, acceptance, mutually supportive, non-judgemental, presumed capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Particular (emotional) feelings about a person, situation, or relationship</td>
<td>Caring, understanding, commitment, empathy, positive stance, humour, confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication style</td>
<td>Methods and approaches for information sharing between partners</td>
<td>Open communication, active listening, openness, understanding, full disclosure of information, information sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural actions</td>
<td>Behaviours that reflect translation of attitudes and beliefs into actions</td>
<td>Mutual respect, openness, flexibility, understanding, shared responsibility, mutual agreement about goals, dependability, equality, humour, problem solving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dunst et al. (1992, p. 163)

The system has practical implications for parents, professionals, and researchers. For researchers, as indicated in Dunst et al. (1992), major characteristics of parent-professional partnerships presented in Table 2 could be used as a checklist to assess the extent of certain attitudes, beliefs, and particular behaviours that professionals are assumed to display during their course of interactions with parents. The same list could also be used to obtain parents’ perspectives on the nature of their relationships with professionals who work with them by comparing their opinions on the professionals’ exhibition of states, traits, and behaviours with those listed in Table 2.

With the major aim of investigating the relationship between Vietnamese parents of children with a disability and educators of their children, Dunst et al.’s (1992) model
of parent-professional partnerships in combination with the conceptualized models recommended by Epstein (1995) and Turnbull and Turnbull (2001) provided a helpful guiding framework for the planning of this study.

### 2.4 The study’s theoretical framework

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, partnerships have two inherent characteristics. They are the *shared goals* that participants aim to achieve and the *interactive process* among involved people (DeChillo et al., 1994; Dettmer et al., 2005; Dunst & Pager, 1991; Timperley & Robinson, 2002). Along the way, the *shared goals* and the *interactive process* have been given different titles in an attempt by researchers to make the concepts clearer and easier to understand. Examples of analogous terms are illustrated in Table 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>The shared goals</th>
<th>The interactive process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christenson (2004)</td>
<td>Service level</td>
<td>Interpersonal level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey et al. (1998)</td>
<td>Processes</td>
<td>Rationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruder (2000)</td>
<td>Set of practices</td>
<td>Philosophy of care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunst (2002)</td>
<td>Participatory components</td>
<td>Relational components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park and Turnbull (2003)</td>
<td>Structural factors</td>
<td>Interpersonal factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christenson and Sheridan (2001)</td>
<td>Parity</td>
<td>Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timperley and Robinson (2002)</td>
<td>TASK</td>
<td>RELATIONSHIP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ideas have been conceptualized into a theoretical framework proposed by Timperley and Robinson (2002), which is supported by their empirical research studies conducted in the New Zealand school context. According to this theory, a partnership always consists of two parts that are the task and the relationship. The authors suggest that the strength of partnerships lies in the ability of the partners to integrate the relationship and task dimensions in a way that enables them to work together and learn from one another. They provide a conceptual framework for successful partnerships that can be used to inform policy, practice, and research.

Aimed at researching the home-school partnerships with a focus on the interpersonal relationships between parents and educators, the current study will employ Timperley and Robinson’s (2002) approach to partnership to design a theoretical framework. The framework will serve as a guide through the processes of data collection and data analysis, and also will be the basis for the study discussion. Using Timperley and Robinson’s (2002) theory, parent-professional partnerships investigated in this study will entail the two key components of task and relationship as illustrated in Figure 3. Detailed description of each component will be elaborated in the following sections.
According to Timperley and Robinson (2002), the concept of task implies the notions of a shared understanding among involved participants of each other’s roles and the
processes they employ to carry out those roles in order to accomplish their goals. I call these notions respectively: role understanding and role functioning.

Figure 4: Embedded elements of the partnership task
Figure 4 above illustrates the embedded elements of the task component. The ovals indicate that Role Understanding and Role Functioning are two collective systems. Each embraces a set of internal interacting elements which will be presented in detail below.

2.4.1.1 Role understanding

Dunst and Paget (1991) have defined a partnership as a working relationship between family members and one or more professionals who collaborate on the basis of agreed upon roles in pursuit of a joint interest. A shared understanding of each other’s roles will facilitate involved parties carry out their task, comprehend one another’s relative responsibilities, and appreciate the way power should be shared (Peterson & Cooper, 1989; Thorp, 1997; Timperley & Robinson, 2002; Wielkiewicz, 1992). As a consequence, a shared understanding helps prevent participants from making uninformed decisions based on their subjective interpretations. In addition, with their roles verified, partnership participants will also experience positive payoffs in terms of the resources they can claim from the role and the positive emotions produced (Turner, 2002).

2.4.1.1 Task-related responsibilities

According to Timperley and Robinson (2002), partnership participants must accept some level of responsibility in order for the task to be accomplished. Due to the complex nature of partnership tasks in which not every task-related decision is within the partners’ control, it is important for participants to explicitly clarify their overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1996), their within sphere responsibilities, as well as openly acknowledge potential restrictions that may have an impact on their
responsibility performance (Powell et al., 1997). The accomplishment of shared tasks, as emphasized by Timperley and Robinson (2002), depends on participants’ levels of interaction. Higher levels of interactions mean partnership participants have more opportunities to enhance their mutual understanding. Participants are also associated in a much closer working relationship with little influence of power. Such partnerships promise positive reciprocal influence and mutual agreement.

In line with family-centered practice, the responsibility of families is to find solutions to their own problems and to acquire most wanted knowledge and skills to improve their life quality (Dunst, Boyd, Trivette, & Hamby, 2002; Turnbull et al., 1999). The responsibility of service providers, on the other hand, is to actively involve helpseekers in identifying parents’ desired goals and preferred courses of action that will ultimately help strengthen their existing capacities and enhance their new skills in a conscious manner (Gutierrez, 1995; McWhirter, 1991; Wielkiewicz, 1992). For example, as indicated in Turnbull et al. (1999), professionals could be responsible for teaching parents specific techniques so that they can help their child. However, the way the techniques are applied in a particular family context remains the responsibility of parents.

It is noticeable that the participants’ acceptance of responsibility is affected by the way tasks are defined (DeVito, 2003). A poorly defined task that causes misunderstanding among participants will lead to individual partners making separate assumptions about their responsibilities within it (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). In addition to that, individuals’ acknowledgment of responsibility also depends on their own cultural norms regarding responsibility (DeVito, 2003).
The relevant responsibilities of participants in strength-based approach partnerships as presented above indicate a shift in partners’ decision making power sharing (Case, 2000; DeChillo et al., 1994).

### 2.4.1.1.2 Decision-making powers

It is well documented in the literature that responsibility acceptance and power sharing between families and professionals are two most important aspects of home-school collaboration, which determine the nature of family-centered services (DeChillo et al., 1994; Roberts et al., 1998). Pursuing equal decision making power is not “a must” for partnership participants to have a balanced relationship (Dunst & Pager, 1991). However, power has always been a controversial subject. It is both implicit and explicit in relationships between parents and professional educators (Case, 2000; Todd & Higgins, 1998; Turner, 2002). Thus, in order to fulfil the aim of achieving a shared understanding among partnership participants and also to attain a sense of equality, it is advisable to negotiate and clarify the power shares between each party at the entry point of their collaborative arrangement (Dunst & Pager, 1991). According to Dunst and Pager (1991), in family-centered partnerships, decisions normally rest with parents. Parents are the ones who make final decisions regarding their goals and preferred courses of action in the intervention process.

Having obtained a shared understanding regarding their respective responsibilities and decision making power, participants need to turn these understandings into action in order to accomplish their goals as well as to fulfil their roles. The processes of role functioning are the means through which individuals are provided with opportunities to carry out their functions (Timperley & Robinson, 2002).
2.4.1.2 Role functioning

2.4.1.2.1 Role functions of professionals

The strength-based approach to home-school partnerships defines the role of professionals as one of establishing a partnership with the family in recognition of the fact that family members also have contributions to make and that there is a shared responsibility in the intervention process (Powell et al., 1997). The sharing of power and responsibility in parent-professional collaboration is reflected through the ways professionals perform their tasks. Proponents of family-centered models view professionals as instruments of families, who provide services that are individualized, flexible, and responsive to family concerns and priorities. Professionals provide families with opportunities to be actively involved in choices, actions, and decisions to achieve their desired goals and outcomes. This will help families enhance and strengthen their family functioning themselves (Bailey et al., 1992; DeChillo et al., 1994; Dunst, 2002; Peterson & Cooper, 1989; Trivette et al., 1995; Turnbull et al., 2000).

In line with the family systems approach, support services must be individualized in order to match the specific needs of the child and his or her family. Individualization in family-centered partnerships means the provision of supports must take into account the family structure, cultural composition, goals, values, and lifestyle with the ultimate goal being to enhance the family functioning and well-being (Powell et al., 1997). In practising this approach, as highlighted in Powell et al. (1997), professionals are challenged to be flexible about the place and time support services
should be provided as well as the target of the intervention in order to maximize the program effectiveness. Partnership without flexibility, according to Todd and Higgins (1998), will simply reflect hierarchical power structures. It is therefore critical for professionals to employ a comprehensive perspective when developing individualized intervention goals (Power et al., 1997).

Broad-based support, according to Powell et al. (1997), aims at providing services that recognize and attend to the diverse needs of families rather than just tackling the specific need that brings the family to the support program. However, instead of drawing a plan for a family to follow, it is strongly emphasized that professionals base their services on things the family already does well (Trivette, Dunst, Deal, Hamby, & Sexton, 1994). It is important for the professional to concentrate on identifying existing family strengths and capabilities in order to bring about the maximum effects of the partnership (Judge, 1998). The focus is on the unique knowledge, competencies, capabilities, and resources of individual family members as well as the family as a whole. With its strengths being fostered, the family will become even stronger and more capable of supporting the well-being of not only the child with special needs but also that of other individual family members and the whole family unit (Trivette et al., 1994).

A number of action strategies embedded in the ecocultural approach to partnerships that aim at helping the professional successfully carry out individualized support programs have been found in the literature (e.g., in Bernheimer & Keogh, 1995; Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis, 1986; Rogers-Adkinson et al., 2003; Thorp, 1997). The strategies could be organized into a 5-step assessment and intervention
sequence, including: (1) professionals’ self-exploration and examination of available resources; (2) examining a family’s efforts to shape their daily routines; (3) assessing family coping strategies; (4) enhancing family understanding of their child’s needs; and (5) assessing intervention outcomes.

With regard to the roles of families, corresponding to the emergence of family-driven agendas, families with their unique contributions can now join service providers to develop an individualized plan of support for themselves (Dunst et al., 2002; Powell et al., 1997; Reyes-Blanes et al., 2001).

2.4.1.2.2 Role functions of families

It is emphasized that families nowadays should be actively involved in the process of assessing their circumstances; deciding what specific resources and services the family needs; as well as participating in designing, developing and implementing appropriate supports and courses of action to achieve desired outcomes (Alper, Schloss, & Schloss, 1995; Brookman-Frazee, 2004; Dunst et al., 2002; Powell et al., 1997; Turnbull et al., 2000). In this partnership, professionals play a supportive role as support providers (Dunst et al., 1994).

Having expertise regarding their family members, their family ecologies, strengths, goals, and histories (Dunst, Trivette, & Jodry, 1997; Powell et al., 1997), families would know best how support procedures should be incorporated into their families’ daily routines (Brookman-Frazee, 2004). Professionals can obtain needed information through families’ description of their daily lives (Gallimore & Lopez, 2002). Such information, according to Galimore and Lopez (2002), has deep implications for intervention planning. However, in addition to contributing important information
which is helpful for the assessment process, families must also be active partners in the consistent implementations of strategies so that positive intervention to occur in a meaningful way (Stichter & Caldicott, 1999). Most parental participation activities can be categorized into two main groups of activities undertaken at school and in the home (Coots, 1998).

School-based activities include attending teacher-parent conferences (Epstein, Munk, Bursuck, Pilloway, & Jayanthi, 1999; Hernandez & Leung, 2004; Werts, Harris, Tillery, & Roark, 2004) and participating in school committees and governance (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987; Linan-Thompson & Jean, 1997). In special education, parent participation also includes involvement in the mandated meetings regarding the IEP (or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)) that is part of the referral, placement, and planning process (e.g. Cho et al., 2000; McWilliam et al., 1999; Spann et al., 2003; Thorp, 1997; Werts et al., 2004).

Home-based activities are those occurring within a family home, which have a direct connection to improved school functioning or improved basic cognitive, socioemotional, and motoric functioning (Coots, 1998). Some of these activities include reading to children, signing notes sent home from educators in charge, and discussing school activities with children (e.g. Garcia, Perez, & Ortiz, 2000; Maroney, 2001; Presley, 1993).

Although parental participation at home and at school with parent-directed as well as other-directed activities are considered as crucial for the success of home-school partnerships (Epstein, 1990; Salend & Taylor, 1993; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993); the amount and type of participation engaged in by individual families varies
greatly in reality (e.g. Epstein, 1984, 1986; Lareau, 1989; Storer, 1995; Yanok & Derubertis, 1989). According to Coots (1998), there are four major categories that researchers have suggested are related to variations in parental participation including child factors, parental attitudes, school characteristics, and family resources.

Despite shortcomings, families and professionals in general have exclusive contributions to make during their joint function performance towards achieving the common goals of their partnerships (Case, 2000; Pruitt et al., 1998). As expressed by Timperley and Robinson (2002), the way professionals and families arrange and evaluate their performance of task-related activities is through the notion of mutual accountability. An accountability arrangement might include writing a report; giving a statement of reasons, causes, grounds, motives or providing an explanation regarding one’s conduct; or just simply presenting an account of facts or events (Leithwood & Earl, 2000). According to Timperley and Robinson (2002), in a partnership arrangement where the task is multifaceted but both partners have equal responsibility for most decisions, accountability is likely to include many of the above elements.

Timperley and Robinson (2002) emphasized that not only does mutual accountability cover the progress towards achieving the task, it also has a significant influence on the quality of the parent-professional relationship. It is broadly agreed by researchers in the field that the interactive teaming model is only as effective as the manner in which it is implemented (Coben et al., 1997; Dunst, 1999). Thorp (1997) suggests that in order to successfully assess families and carry out support programs, it is essential for professionals not only to become cultural researchers who should learn as much as possible from families about their cultural experiences, values, and attitudes; but also
be able to establish an ongoing relationship with them. The following section will examine this component of a partnership.

2.4.2 The relationship

The study of relationships has long been written about in the literature. Klopf and Cambra (1996) defined a relationship as the “state of being mutually or reciprocally interested, as in social or business matters” (p. 146). A relationship is thus only established when there is an interest from two sides. Swensen (1973) stated that “whenever two people are collaborating towards the achievement of some common goals, they become integrated into an interpersonal situation” (p. 41). Thus, when talking about a relationship, especially an interpersonal relationship, it is assumed that some substantial connection binds people together, causing them to integrate into an interpersonal situation. That substantial tie that helps connect people together is, however, rarely physical (Lustig & Koester, 1999).
Figure 5: Key elements that determine the establishment and development of an interpersonal relationship and inner attributes of the elements

Usually, people enter a relationship to achieve some practical outcome or just for reasons of companionship (Klopf, 1998; Swensen, 1973). Becoming integrated in an interpersonal situation, as stated by Sullivan (1954), is “a process in which (1) complementary needs are resolved (or aggravated); (2) reciprocal patterns of activity are developed (or disintegrated); and (3) foresight of satisfaction (or rebuff) of similar needs is facilitated” (p. 129).
Based on the above mentioned conceptions of interpersonal relationships, it can be hypothesized that an intercultural relationship is a mutual process in which culturally different people are connected together by shared interests of achieving companionship or some common practical goals. Quite a few theories have been created to explain the function of interpersonal relationships such as attraction theory, relationship rules approach, social penetration theory, social exchange theory, and equity theory. Among these ones, social exchange emerges as the most influential and widely used theory in the study of relationship.

Social exchange theory claims that people are more likely to be involved in a relationship that could bring them the most profit (Chadwick-Jones, 1976; Gergen, Greenberg, & Willis, 1980; Thibaut & Kelly, 1986). According to Swensen (1973), “the essence of the exchange theory view of interpersonal relations lies in the outcome” (p. 228). There are many agreements between the social exchange theory with everyday common sense. It is quite obvious from everyday relationships that people relate to each other because they stand to get something from it (Swensen, 1973). The theory also emphasizes the importance of rewards and expectations on people’s behaviours in interpersonal relationships. According to Swensen (1973), what goes on within each of the participants and what goes on between them are the two key elements that determine the establishment and development of any interaction. These two elements are illustrated in Figure 5 together with their internal attributes which will be explained hereafter. Similar to the Task diagram, Intrinsic features and Communication process are encircled in the ovals to show that these are two combined systems.
2.4.2.1 Intrinsic features of a relationship

2.4.2.1.1 Relationship attributes

Every person brings with them into any relationship their past experiences; some specific goals and expectations; and has their own interpretations of the relationship (Lustig & Koester, 1999). A shared process of these elements is the key that helps tie people together in an interpersonal relationship (Lustig & Koester, 1999). Communication and behaviour are the basic means that help an interpersonal relationship develop (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959).

i) Past experiences

Past experiences, according to Swensen (1973), are an integral part of any interpersonal interactions. According to Swensen (1973), past experiences have significant influences on individuals’ behaviours. In any interaction, depending on the interacting type, participants will choose appropriate behaviours. In addition, there is also a common tendency for most participants to repeat behaviours that have been previously rewarded in similar interactions in the past. These behaviours would help enhance people’s feelings of security and confidence. Past experiences are also part of people’s expectations (Klopf, 1998; Reyes-Blanes et al., 2001). Home-school partnership literature has revealed that in addition to parents’ educational and cultural backgrounds, parents’ perceptions towards professionals and parental involvement also initiate from prior incidents of their child or from their own education experiences (Thorp, 1997; Whitaker & Whitaker, 1999). Those who have negative experiences tend to mistrust authority, have negative perceptions towards school
personnel and negative expectations for their child’s development (Al-Hassan & Gardner, 2002).

ii) Goals and expectations

The role of goals and expectations in interpersonal relationships can be summarized as follows. According to the social exchange theory, expectation is essential and provides individuals with the inspiration to enter a relationship (Lustig & Koester, 1999; Swensen, 1973; Turner, 2002). It is also a fundamental element constituting criteria used to judge relationship satisfaction (DeVito, 2003). The influence of culture on expectations, according to Lustig and Koester (1999), can be seen through the way people look at their self; norms for expressing and receiving emotion; the way role is assigned in an interacting context; the way symbols guide and reinforce individuals’ behaviours; and the way status sets standards for expectation. Expectation is thus another source that can cause relationship tensions.

iii) Individual interpretation

Along with the process of selecting and organizing stimuli, people at the same time attach meaning to what they have selected to perceive (Millar, Crute, & Hargie, 1992). However, people rarely interpret stimuli ‘as they are’ partly because there is no way they can do that (Swensen, 1973). People always need some standard of comparison to look at when evaluating and attaching meanings to things. And the culture in which a person has been raised or spent most time with will be the basis for this standard of comparison. Or put it in other words, learned components of values, beliefs, and attitudes will play the role of comparison standard for each individual (Kisanji, 1995). These components help decide the meanings attached to the stimuli sensed (Klopf,
In addition to that, other environmental, personal physical and/or psychological factors of interaction context, health, needs, expectations, and past experiences also contribute a great deal to this process (Millar et al., 1992). Interpretation is therefore a very subjective process which is different from individual to individual. The implication for interpersonal, especially intercultural communication, is that it is very likely that participants will encounter diverse perceptual differences (Klopf, 1998). As a result, interpretation is a potential source for tension which causes misunderstandings in communication.

In order to understand interpersonal relationships, especially interpersonal relationships between culturally different people, it is essential to investigate people’s perceptions – the ‘power’ that drives functioning within individuals involved in an interpersonal relationship and has a significant impact on what actually happens between them – the communication process and basic units of behaviours (Lustig & Koester, 1999). I will now examine the influence of culture on people’s perceptions before going on to describe what is exchanged between participants involved in an interpersonal relationship.

2.4.2.1. People’s cultural perceptions

Weaver (1993) has stated that people’s perception influences and directs their reactions to others. The investigation of people’s perception will therefore help explain the ways people form their interpretations; recognize factors that influence people’s expectations; and understand their past experiences (Singer, 1998). As people’s perceptions are shaped by their culture, a proper knowledge of people’s perceptions and the cultural base, according to Klopf (1998), is the key to
understanding intercultural communication. This will then lead to understanding of
intercultural relationships, a context in which intercultural communication occurs
(Chen, 2002). It is obvious that there is a close interrelatedness among culture,
perception, and communication.

There are various elements that influence the construction process of people’s
perceptions. These can be organized into two groups called non-learned and learned
factors (Klopf, 1998; Singer, 1998). Non-learned factors include individual physical
differences and environmental determinants that are often out of people’s control.
Although non-learned factors play a significant part in the construction of people’s
perceptions, it is well documented that learned factors have a far more essential role
(Klopf, 1998; Singer, 1998). Learned reactions are gained from what people have
learnt from or been taught by the groups or cultures with which they have spent most
time. These culturally-related, learned components are called ‘cultural perceptions.’
They not only have a significant impact on the way people perceive stimuli, but also
shape people’s communication styles as well as determine appropriate norms for
social behaviours (Singer, 1998).

i) Values

Values refer to the qualities that a group of people attach to an idea, object, person,
place or practice (Dodd, 1998; Lustig & Koester, 1999; Singer, 1998). Each
individual group has its own ranking of values (Klopf, 1998; Lustig & Koester, 1999).
Rokeach (1976) divided values into two main types, named: instrumental and terminal.
Instrumental values refer to personal modes of conduct, and terminal values indicate
the qualities of social and personal life. As values are more the ideal expectations of a
culture than actual characteristics that occur in everyday life, they are long lasting. Values of primary importance are often well protected.

According to Chan (1986), traditional Asian values derive from cultures that have existed for over 5,000 years. In Asian cultures, hierarchical roles and status govern behaviour, subordination and interdependence, education, and scholarship. Formal qualifications are valued. In the Vietnamese culture, for example, status is more important than wealth (Dung, 1984). On the traditional Vietnamese social scale, the scholar has had the highest social status (Ferguson, 1996). Children will therefore bring honor to their families by excelling in school, which will then further enhance the family social standing and status (Nguyen Van Nha, 1986; Vincent et al., 1990). Education is thus a family concern, rather than an individual achievement (Chan, 1998).

An approach to understanding traditional value patterns of the ‘Chinese nations’ of Asia is to relate the cultural patterns to religious influences that are embedded in the ‘three teachings’ of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism (Chan, 1998). In accordance with these teachings, the family is considered the basic social and economic unit of a society, a model for society as a whole, and the central focus of an individual’s life. Individuals have a profound sense of responsibility and loyalty to the family. Family members are dependent on each other for social and psychological support. Values of family and filial piety also include respect for elders, ancestors and the past. As emphasized by Tran My Van (1996), Vietnamese overseas are still bound to the notion of ‘collective responsibility’. Children bear the duty of maintaining the good family name in their actions and then must pass it on to the next generation. If
that is not possible, then at least they should not soil the name of their ancestors. This family spirit constitutes a source of mutual assistance which can enhance the sense of security and spiritual life although it can put pressure on the individual, cause great discomfort and sometimes tension. Some other significant virtues which are highly valued in the culture of ‘Chinese nations’ include living in harmony, suffering in silence, assumption of responsibility, hard work, modesty and humility (Chan, 1998).

According to Chan (1986), traditional Asian values contrast markedly with Western cultural values. These differences in cultural value patterns between professionals and families have become a regular source of problems which affect their relationships as cultural value differences will generate different expectations in respect of the educational process and the roles of various parties involved in the relationship (Hofstede, 2001).

**ii) Beliefs**

Beliefs are defined by Lustig and Koester (1999) as “a set of learned interpretations that form the basis for cultural members to decide what is and what is not logical and correct” (p. 80). Beliefs have different levels of importance, ranging from the ones that are “central to a person’s sense of self to those that are more peripheral” (Klopf, 1998, p. 114). Ecocultural studies that address the views and experiences of different groups of families have found key themes of beliefs that have clear implications for professionals in disability services, including conceptions of disability, expectations for child development, and parental roles in the intervention process (Hanson, Lynch, & Wayman, 1990; Harry, 2002; Lamorey, 2002).
Conceptions of disability

Conceptions of disability vary across cultures (Kroth & Edge, 1997; Rogers-Adkinson et al., 2003; Stricklin, 1997). Different cultures attach different meanings to the presence of disabling or at-risk conditions. Views related to disability and its causes range from those that emphasize the role of fate to those that rely on biomedical explanations, e.g., physiological imbalances caused by improper nutrition or health practices during pregnancy (Chan, 1986; Cho et al., 2000; Hanson et al., 1990).

Traditional Asian beliefs may attribute the birth of a child with a disability to their own wrongful deeds, either in this life or in their previous cycles of incarnation (Chan, 1986; Cho et al., 2000). It may also be because of their ancestors’ sins as it is believed that the actions of one’s ancestors hold the key to one’s fortunes (Cho et al., 2000). With this conception, many families have a tremendous sense of guilt, which is evaluated as more negative and more potent than that in Western cultures (Cheng & Page, 1995). In addition to that, they also experience the burden of ‘failure’ and ‘face loss’ (Kang et al., 2002; Vincent et al., 1990). Having a child who is unable to carry out traditional life responsibilities means that the family’s ‘wealth’ and ‘status’ are diminished. This may be considered to be a serious loss of face for the family. The sense of guilt, failure, and face loss may induce them to hide the child with a disability as much as they can in an effort to protect the child from any interference from the outside world as well as to save the name of the family. These beliefs are the reason for the families’ hesitation to seek outside help or share their difficulties with ‘outsiders’, including a family experiencing a similar situation or professionals who offer assistance. A cross-cultural study by Nihira, Webster, Tomiyasi, and Oshio
(1988) revealed that compared to parents in the United States of America, Japanese parents discussed their child’s disability much less openly and had less knowledge about the child’s health and education needs. Vincent et al. (1990) stated that the need to accept fate and the passive stance of families in Asian cultures are incongruent with reactions of outward grief and grieving and seeking support of families in Western cultures. Thus, it is easy for professionals to misinterpret these responses of Asian families as the refusal not to deal with their child’s disability.

Also according to Vincent et al. (1990), there may be misunderstandings between families and professionals in other areas such as the cause of a child’s disability and future treatment. There is strong support from cross-cultural studies for the argument that definitions of disability are socially constructed according to group norms and expectations (Harry, 2002). As pointed out by Harry (2002), although all groups recognize gross developmental, behavioural, or sensory impairments with regard to severe disabilities, the attributions for their importance differ widely, as does the extent of shame or value attached to the condition. Likewise, parental beliefs about mild disabilities will also vary. Precisely in this area as indicated in Harry (2002), disagreements between parents and professionals most frequently arise regarding the classification of children as “mildly retarded,” “behaviour disordered,” or “learning disabled.” In traditional Asian cultures, children are believed to be good and will develop as a result of their families’ teachings. Thus, families tend to refuse to accept professional predictions that a child is mentally retarded or will be delayed in development. The concept of mental retardation when translated may also create confusion for families of Asian backgrounds as many Asian languages do not have an equivalent for the term. If they do not believe that their children have disabilities,
parents may attribute their children's problems to a variety of other factors. For example, mothers in the study by Perez (2000) attributed communication difficulties to such factors as the child's young age, isolated events (e.g., teething), ear infections, and personality characteristics. As a result of differences in views about disability, families and professionals may not have a shared understanding about the purpose and goals of intervention programs. Findings of a study by Garcia et al. (2000) indicated that the mothers in the study barely understood the operational definition of developmental delay or language disabilities that had resulted in their children’s placement in the treatment program. They were not aware of the developmental criteria against which their children being described as delayed or disordered. And most importantly, they did not appear to recognize the remedial nature of the intervention process their children were receiving. As a consequence, they perceived interactions between interventionists and their child as ‘play’. According to Vincent et al. (1990), while Asian parents are not likely to overtly disagree with professionals, they may simply ignore suggestions or not come back for scheduled meetings. As indicated by Garcia et al. (2000), it is possible that the difference in views about disability between families and service providers reflects a breakdown in communication between the two groups.

Thus, it is widely agreed that the credibility of professionals who provide services for children with disabilities who have diverse backgrounds rests on the professionals’ understanding of these cultural beliefs (Garcia et al., 2000; Lamorey, 2002; Linan-Thompson & Jean, 1997; Vincent et al., 1990). According to these authors, being aware of families’ cultural interpretations of disability will help the professional bridge the perception gap. As indicated in Hopfenberg, Levin, Chase, Christensen,
Moore, Soler, Brunner, Keller, and Rodriguez (1993), if the parents did not share special education’s predominantly biomedical belief system, they had been perceived by professionals as contributors to their children’s disability rather than as partners in the intervention process. Consequently, these parents become excluded from participating in the educational decision-making process (Harry et al., 1995).

Undoubtedly, beliefs held by families about the nature of disability influence their need or willingness to seek help as well as their beliefs about and participation in treatment and intervention (Lamorey, 2002; Lynch & Hanson, 1992). However, educators should keep in mind that, as emphasized by Harry (2002), cultural construction of disability must not be interpreted in ways that support cultural stereotypes.

Although it is widely recognized that it is difficult to understand precisely how families interpret or apply meanings to their children’s disabilities (Harry, 2002; Rogers-Adkinson et al., 2003), professionals are advised to make attempts to understand the alternate views of disability held by the families with whom they work and to try to avoid simply asserting that families are ‘in denial’ when they query the terms and labels used by the educational and medical systems (Kroth & Edge, 1997; Stewart, 1986). As suggested by Lamorey (2002), professionals’ attempts to understand a child’s disability would be more effective if they occurred within the context of the family’s familiar traditional cultural ways and supports. Once the family sense that their own views of their child’s disability are understood and accepted, they may come out of their shell. Then, the family could be more open to incorporating modern intervention approaches into their preferred traditional treatment. Families’ reliance on a duality of beliefs as they seek treatment and special
educational services for their children is a point that professionals should take into account when working with families of culturally diverse backgrounds (Lamorey, 2002). Although these families may have different views in relation to the meaning of a disability which are incongruent with the typical belief systems of professionals from middle-class European backgrounds who provide educational and support services, there may be some aspects of Western cultures that the families want to adopt. The point is reinforced by Harry (2002) that culture and acculturation provide a good basis for understanding why parental beliefs about mild disabilities vary. There is evidence that as far as language and accessibility to services are permitted, these families choose to take advantage of Western medical treatment in combination with their own traditional culturally-specific cures, which are reported as helpful in reducing the families’ feelings of anxieties, fears, and guilt (Ryan & Smith, 1989).

While understanding and working on families’ conceptions of disability are essential for creating partnerships with families with diverse background receiving special education services (Lamorey, 2002), this is just the ground breaking stage as beliefs about disability also affect families’ expectations concerning their child’s typical development (Garcia et al., 2000).

*Expectations for child development*

It is well documented that parents of culturally diverse backgrounds who receive special education services may not share the same expectations about their child’s development as the professionals who serve them; and parental expectations tend to reflect perspectives of their cultural groups (Garcia et al., 2000; Manning & Lee, 2001).
The contrast between Asian beliefs and Western standards with regard to expectations for child development can be summarized as follows. Asian parents tend to be permissive towards their children during infancy as they see them as ‘gifts from the Gods’ (Chan, 1986). They therefore have lower expectations for their child’s attainment of development milestones in the self-help area. During the preschool years, on the other hand, Asian parents tend to have higher expectations in the self-help area and emphasize more on the need for the child to be fluent in performing social interaction rules as their behaviours reflect the ‘face’ of the family (Masino & Hodapp, 1996). Traditional Asian cultures also value cooperation, obligation, and reciprocity over Western competition, autonomy, and self-reliance (Chan, 1986). Tending to be more rigid about discipline than Western parents (Chinn & Plata, 1986), Asian parents do not expect their children to openly express their feelings, wants, likes, and dislikes. Thus, the relationship between children and their parents is characterized by respect and obedience with communication likely to be one-directional (parent to child) (Chan, 1986; Chinn & Plata, 1986). According to Vincent et al. (1990), given the focus in the early intervention curriculum on communication as an important social skill, strong disagreement may arise on this topic between professionals and Asian parents who hold traditional child-rearing values.

Expectations among Asian families for their children’s academic attainment are also high. According to Nguyen Van Nha (1986), not many Vietnamese parents appear interested in vocational training for their children unless they fail in their academic work or are physically incapacitated. Parents see the ‘superiority of intellectuals’ as natural. Thus, they usually have high expectations and put great emphasis on their child’s academic performance. The shortcoming of this view is that it may result in
negative attitudes towards children with disabilities due to their potential or actual poor academic performance (Kang et al., 2002; Nguyen Van Nha, 1986). This is a critical point for professionals to take into consideration when working with families from CLD backgrounds (Masino & Hodapp, 1996; Patrikakou, 1996). According to Turnbull and Turnbull (2001), students from diverse backgrounds can be at risk of being treated unfairly as a consequence of prejudicial decisions made by professionals who fail to employ cultural reciprocity to obtain an accurate understanding of the students’ and their families’ perspectives and collaborating with them to affirm great expectations. Parents, on the other hand, expect professionals to have and express hope about the future of their child – an alternate sense of great expectation that gives the family a vision that good things are likely to occur in the future. Sharing with families the success of other individuals with similar situations is, as suggested by Turnbull and Turnbull (2001), one of the best ways professionals can use to reassure families’ expectations.

Another point that would help professionals better understand families’ perspectives is that in addition to traditional beliefs regarding expectations for the development of children with disabilities that come from families’ cultural groups, parental expectations also reflect the family’s strong religious beliefs. Cho et al. (2000) reported in their study of Korean-American families with young children with disabilities that the majority of these families were members of Korean ethnic churches. The strong religious influences of the Korean immigrant churches appeared to relieve the parents from self-blame as most families indicated that they experienced a new sense of hope and support through their involvement in the church. Many of the parents in the study were not religious prior to their immigration but joined the church for a sense of
community and support. Gray (1995) found that some of the Australian families with children who had autism had strong religious beliefs that helped explain their children’s disability. These parents also had higher expectations for their children. As stressed in Harry (2002), in addition to providing a source for understanding, parental beliefs regarding mild disabilities, culture and acculturation are also strong predictors of parental expectations of children’s cognitive as well as social development. In a study of Mexican American and Anglo American mothers, Gutierrez and Sameroff (1990) found that those Mexican Americans who were highly acculturated and efficiently bicultural (American/Mexican) demonstrated more complex maternal views of child development than did the Anglo American mothers or the Mexican American mothers of only moderate acculturation status. The authors concluded that "parents at different levels of acculturation and biculturalism are likely to differ in their interpretation of the developmental process" (Gutierrez & Sameroff, 1990, p. 392).

Different developmental norms in combination with dissimilar cultural constructions of disability may negatively affect parents’ participation in home-school partnership. These differences often impinge on parents’ understanding of the assessment and diagnosis process, as well as the setting of priorities for educational goals for their children (Harry, 2002). This is one major difficulty that faces parents and educators when they come into contrast with one another (Reyes-Blanes et al., 2001). According to Lamorey (2002), if parents and professionals have compatible perceptions, professionals would better understand families’ views and be able to help enhance great expectations of families for their child’s development. In addition, it is also easier for the professionals to explain to families the influence of the child’s disability
on his or her learning process. As a result, professionals and family members are more likely to identify their joint intervention goals. However, it is noticeable that although incongruence may exist between professionals and families from different cultural backgrounds with regard to their expectations for child development and constructions of disability, there is evidence that they have remarkable agreement on the issue of educational goal prioritization. Results of a study by Coffey and Sears (1996) that compared prioritization of educational goals of parents and professionals from the preschool age through to the postsecondary years for individuals with severe disabilities who received special services indicated no significant differences between parents and professionals in this area. This high degree of similarity in goal setting should be helpful for parents and professionals as they develop long term outcomes.

In addition to conceptions of disability and expectations for the development of children with disabilities, each culture also has its own explanations for what responsibilities and roles are expected of family members, helpers, and other members of the society towards the rearing of these children (Groce, 1999; Summers et al., 1989). Differences in values and beliefs pertaining to respective roles of professionals and families from diverse backgrounds are thus another hurdle in their partnership (Stricklin, 1997).

**Role expectations**

Besides putting a great deal of pressure on their children, in the matter of education (as it is in high regard throughout the Vietnamese society), it is also common for Vietnamese parents, rich and poor alike, to endure hardship for themselves and make great sacrifices in their lives in order to provide a good education for their children.
(Nguyen Van Nha, 1986; Tran My Van, 1996). With children with disabilities, the duty to look after them in Asian cultures in general belongs to all family members, particularly the mother (Hoang, 1991; Wang, 1993). It is this traditional care-giving role that the mother typically bears most of the stress (Wang, 1993). Furthermore, limited resources and a fragmented service delivery system also cause the families a great deal of frustration (Wang, 1993). Most importantly as emphasized in the literature, it is likely for families with collective attitude to over protect and have low expectations for children with disabilities, especially those with severe conditions, which can negatively influence the concept of independence (Hoang, 1991; Kang et al., 2002). Nevertheless, these are home-bound role expectations of families with children with disabilities. When coming into interactions with professionals, they bring with them different expectations about the roles that they are expected to perform (Pettit, 1987a). This is also true in the case of professionals. According to Pettit (1987a), it is in the classroom that most teachers come closest to expressing their personal ideal of the teacher’s role. Being socialized into the group ethic of ‘the school’, professionals project a compound of the personal and the group role in their relationships with parents.

While parent participation is widely accepted and parents express general satisfaction with services, parents’ role is largely passive in nature (Harry et al., 1995). Findings from studies focusing on parent participation in IEP conferences have emphasized a distinction between attendance at meetings and genuine participation (Irwin, 1996; Vincent et al., 1990; Werts et al., 2004). As stated by Harry (2002) and Vincent et al. (1990), the advocacy role expected of parents is an ideal that proves difficult to achieve, even for middle-class parents. For low-income and minority parents, the
challenge has been even more difficult. Early studies investigating this topic have been criticized for tending to focus on white middle-class families, with little attention being paid to differential effects of social or ethnic status. Marion (1979) was among the first researchers who paid direct attention to adaptations that might be needed for particular minority groups to participate effectively in the IEP process. Marion’s (1979) main point was that poor and minority parents were at a disadvantage due to the fact that it was common for professionals to treat them with a lack of respect due to the stigma that had traditionally been attached to their ethnicity, culture, and social status. Vincent et al. (1990) indicated that Asian families tend to make fewer assumptions about entitlements to services than Western families, and may be less likely to take advantage of those services that are offered. Although the success of intervention programs relies for the most part on the availability of appropriately trained personnel who are knowledgeable about the cultures, values, and languages of parents, such staff are not generally available (Reyes-Blanes et al., 2001; Sileo & Prater, 1998; Vincent et al., 1990). According to Swetnam (2003), the educational systems of the US and Australia indicated that the situation in general was similar in both countries in that teacher training programs were not effective in their efforts to prepare pre-service teachers to work with a diverse student population and the parents of these students.

Obviously, cultural beliefs about parental involvement play a significant part in home-school partnerships. Parents bring into their interactions with professionals their general expectations about their roles which derive from their families’ cultural beliefs of parental involvement (Foster & Furstenberg, 1999). Parents also have their own expectations in relation to their level of involvement as well as their own beliefs
about the desired effects of their involvement (Griffith, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987). As accentuated in Vincent et al. (1990), the development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or IEP that is based on family goals and directions may pose particular difficulty for the Asian family. Asian parents who abide by traditional cultural customs tend to be respectful and try not to interfere in interventions with professionals. Chan (1986) emphasized that teachers are highly regarded in Asian cultures and should not be questioned or contradicted. Similarly, teachers in traditional Vietnamese culture are regarded as spiritual and intellectual leaders or as ‘gurus’ who open the children’s minds; thus, there has always been a certain distance that separates teachers and parents (Nguyen Van Nha, 1986). Chinn and Plata (1986) pointed out that having been raised in educational systems where teachers know best, parents who have immigrated to other (western) countries may get confused by professionals’ attempts to involve them in decision making. Parents are not familiar with being involved in a decision making process. They are also reluctant to do so out of fear of being wrong or offending professionals with their preferences. Nevertheless, being respectful and avoiding interference do not mean that parents always agree with educators. If teachers’ points of view are markedly opposed to families’ traditional values and beliefs regarding appropriate child-rearing practices, the teachers’ credibility with the families will be limited (Vincent et al., 1990).

With diverse values, it is likely that people from different cultural backgrounds have many adjustments to make when they come into interaction with one another. It is believed that the bigger the gap between the teachers’ and the parents’ perceptions of their role, the greater the task of creating a shared understanding (Pettit, 1987a). Rogers-Adkinson (2003) suggested that teachers were able to promote effective
communication and collaboration by gathering information about the family’s culture and perception of their role in their child’s education. The strategy is further detailed by Griffith (1998) who stated that by learning about parents’ expectations for both their level of involvement and the desired effects of their involvement (e.g., parents feeling informed of their children’s education/school performance or parents willing to make the school more accountable and responsive), teachers’ understanding of parent involvement should be improved. As a result, teachers could help create more satisfying conditions for parents and optimal learning environments for students.

Furthermore, it is extensively suggested by researchers in the field that professionals should pay particular attention to other factors surrounding the families’ acculturation process. They include the impact of industrialization, urbanization, socioeconomic factors, political change, migration, and educational opportunities on traditional family systems given that the acculturation process is believed to have a powerful effect both on parenting styles and on parental beliefs about child development (Gutierrez & Sameroff, 1990; Harry, 2002; Lamorey, 2002; Ninio, 1988; Stricklin, 1997).

Lamorey (2002) writes that cultural beliefs can be a protective shield for families. These beliefs have been transmitted through generations and have shaped the meaning of those family members’ lives. These beliefs help mold their views of disability; define their goals for their children; and characterize their relationships and responsibilities in working with professionals. Thus, it is essential for professionals who provide special services for culturally diverse families to remember that they may encounter impediment if they ignore a family’s traditional belief system and focus only on their contemporary practices. As it is impractical or almost impossible
to be agents of change, professionals may want to see their roles as “interpreters or translators of Westernized approaches and resources available within the special education community, and as guides who respectfully offer services that families may or may not choose to embrace” (Lamorey, 2002, p. 70). In line with the eco-cultural approach to working with families, the role of context is emphasized as an important factor (Lamorey, 2002; Vincent et al., 1990). A systematic integration of essential contextual components such as community support, intergenerational cooperation, parental interpretations of child competence and childrearing goals will assist educators in understanding families’ acculturation process as well as help bring about an effective intervention program. The concept of family-centered, culturally responsive services is based on the principles of respect and acceptance of each family’s ethnicity, language, structure, values and beliefs (Hartman & Laird, 1983). There is evidence that families who have a short history in an adopted country may hold values that are more consonant with their native society than with the new country’s mainstream values (Harry, 2002). Nevertheless, as emphasized by Harry (2002), it does not mean that professionals should change their own beliefs in order to be able to examine, accept, and respect families’ cultural characteristics. Rather, they need to do is to learn a way to understand the beliefs of the families who receive their services.

Values and beliefs are inner components of people’s perceptions and attitudes (Rokeach, 1976; Singer, 1998). However, attitudes are observable. Therefore, attitudes are documented as the most important source that causes confusion in intercultural communication (Klopf, 1998).
iii) Attitudes

Attitudes can be defined as learned judgments towards new motivations (Klopf, 1998; Rokeach, 1976; Singer, 1998). People learn preferential attitudes from the cultural groups with which they socialize. The cultures also help individuals establish their own attitudinal framework through which they can organize, assess and make judgments about new incentives. Attitudes are established as soon as people are able to perceive things around them. According to Klopf (1998), socialization, experience, and personality are three significant factors that contribute to the formation of attitudes. Although attitudes are quite enduring, it is easier for humans to change their attitudes than their values.

Attitudes are recognized in the literature as a major source of misunderstanding in intercultural communication. People’s judgments towards the communicative behaviours of the other are so strongly influenced by their personally learned orientations towards the stimuli that they may no longer be objective (Klopf, 1998).

In connection with family-professional collaboration in special education, it is well documented in the literature that in addition to technical competence, families also value professionals who demonstrate an open spirit, sincerity, humility, and a long-lasting interest in empowering family members (Lucyshyn et al., 2000; Park & Turnbull, 2002; Zions et al., 2003). According to Park and Turnbull (2002), families will remember and appreciate committed professionals for a long time, who in the parents’ opinions are characterized by their readiness to go the extra mile and effort to involve the whole family. Indeed, biases and stereotypes demonstrated by educators in the school settings from different angles is a common concern of parents (Skrtic,
In some extreme cases, as pointed out in Skrtic (1991), the school would even blame parents for their children’s disability or their unsuccessful interventions. Results of a study by Zionts et al. (2003) which investigated the influence of cross-cultural sensitivity on parental level of satisfaction has revealed that parents in their study wanted more respect for themselves and their children from school personnel. Professionals’ insensitivity suggests the dominant role educators take which reciprocally puts a subservient role onto parents (Garriott et al., 2000; Thorp, 1997).

There has been evidence that educators’ negative perceptions towards the skills, abilities, and interest of parents from disadvantaged population prevent them from including parents in the education process (Epstein, 1991; Griffith, 1998; Rogers-Adkinson et al., 2003). As a result of teachers’ unsupportive attitudes and practices, parents, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds gradually develop beliefs such as those that suggest that they are incapable of helping their child or they are not expected by the school to do so (Eccles & Harold, 1993). A circle of unsatisfactory communication and lack of cooperation is created (Pruitt et al., 1998).

In reality, student-centered practices still take precedent over family-centered practices (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001) with professionals remaining reactive rather than proactive towards parental issues and tending to take control of the relationship (Case, 2000). According to Lambie (2000), blaming the lack of time and believing that working with families is not their responsibility are the most prevalent attitudes of educators. Resistance to change is another negative attitude. It stems from fear of failure, fear of the unknown, or other reasons that make teachers feel inadequate.
Resistance to change may also be the result of teachers being too familiar with the current situation and not wanting to change.

People’s cultural perceptions obviously play a significant part in intercultural relationships. Perceptions help determine people’s decisions and influence their communication behaviours (Irwin, 1996; Singer, 1998; Weaver, 1993). All participants in the educational context – teachers, students, parents, school administrators, and other staff – bring their cultures’ beliefs, values, and norms to a situation (Lustig & Koester, 1999). Nevertheless, under the impact of various kinds of factors, the accuracy of people’s perceptions is rather poor (Millar et al., 1992). As a consequence, the ways people act and communicate are also influenced since people’s beliefs and concepts about the world are intrinsically linked to their choice of words, interactions, and communication patterns (Valentine, 1992). Improving parent-professional communication has been extensively recognized in the literature as an essential part that would help bring about a successful home-school partnership (Christenson, 2004; Christenson et al., 1992; Coffey & Sears, 1996; Peterson & Cooper, 1989).

2.4.2.2 Communication process

Communication is a term that has various meanings. Lustig and Koester (1999) defined that “communication is a symbolic process in which people create shared meanings” (p. 25). When people communicate, they have to use symbols familiar to both senders and receivers for transmitting and interpreting messages. Symbols are therefore essential to the communication process. Communication is described as a “dynamic, systematic, adaptive, continuous, transactional, and irreversible” process.
(Klopf, 1998, p. 21). It is a two-way process which involves at least two persons including the speaker who encodes messages and the listener who decodes them (Matsumoto, 2000). The communication process influences the behaviours of people engaged in the interaction (Jandt, 2001). Communication therefore involves both content and relationship dimensions (DeVito, 2003).

Klopf (1998) organizes communication into two main forms: mediated communication and oral communication. Mediated communication is the process which has the appearance or assistance of a third party. Oral communication involves direct, face-to-face interaction between two persons. According to DeVito (2003), messages exchanged between communicators always bear some effect which can be intentional or unintentional. The effects that intentional messages have may be cognitive, affective, or psychomotor. Due to their accidental nature, unintentional messages can create a counter effect on intercultural communication.

Weaver (1993) stated that communicators’ attitudes along with their own personal values, past experiences, needs, cognitive styles, and perceptions of self and others create a social-psychological context which significantly influences the way people perceive information received. Edward Hall (1959) claimed that “culture is communication and communication is culture” (p. 10). This means that culture and communication have an interrelated, inseparable relationship. Culture forms people’s communication styles; and the way people communicate reflects their culture. The importance of the relationship between culture and communication has been recognized in different disciplines (Samovar & Porter, 1991). The term that most
suitably describes this current study and therefore will be used from now on is intercultural communication.

**2.4.2.2.1 The construct of intercultural communication**

According to Matsumoto (2000), “intercultural communication refers to the exchange of knowledge, ideas, thoughts, concepts, and emotions among people of different cultural backgrounds” (p. 360). People are considered to be of different backgrounds when the degree of difference between them “is large and important enough to create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about how to communicate competently” (Lustig & Koester, 1999, p. 59). Intercultural communication, as stated by Irwin (1996), can be regarded as a process of negotiating culture.

There have been numerous definitions of culture. In the field of intercultural communication, culture is considered a collection of social behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, values, and norms systems, that are selected, learned, shared, accepted, and expected by a large group of people; and transmitted from one generation to another through symbols (Jandt, 2001; Singer, 1998). Pervasive, changeable, and adaptable are some important features of culture (Bond, 1994). Thus, for people who spend a great amount of time living in a different environment other than their original homeland, their communication styles could change as a result of cultural influences.

The intercultural communication process is affected by various factors which according to Matsumoto (2000) can be listed as including gender, family, religion, and educational, political, and economic systems. Though gender is a biological factor, it has long been an essential cultural aspect and is always taken into account in intercultural communication research. Almost every culture has different sets of
attitudes, beliefs, values, communication behaviours, and gender roles for boys and girls. All of the factors listed above are culturally-specific.

Usually mutual intercultural communication effectiveness will not be established when interactants do not understand or cannot predict their partners’ behaviours (Dodd, 1998). With numerous culturally different groups in the world, a synthesis of similarities and differences among cultural patterns are necessary. An understanding of the similarities and differences between cultures is as stated by Weaver (1993) important in helping researchers assess the degree of influence of culture on an intercultural exchange.

Edward Hall’s high- and low-context cultures (Hall, 1976, 2000; Hall & Hall, 1990), Geert Hofstede’s and Michael Bond’s cultural dimensions (Bond, 1994; Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede & Bond, 1984) are major theories that can be used as criteria that help compare and explain differences in communication patterns between Vietnamese parents who come from an Eastern culture and Australian special educators most of whom have Western cultural backgrounds. The comparison in this study is of a general nature only and will be the basis for the discussion of research findings later. Specifically the comparison will refer to the communication styles of parties involved in this research study, namely Vietnamese parents of children with a disability and special educators in Melbourne Metropolitan Regions. Such a comparison is important given that the communication process is one of the two elements that constitutes a relationship.
i) Edward Hall’s high-context and low-context cultures

Context is defined as a situation or environment in which the interaction takes place and has certain influence on interactants’ communication (Dodd, 1998; Jandt, 2001). Although there are always different people in each culture, it is widely accepted in the literature that people whose meanings rely more on the context during the communicating interaction belong to cultures called high-context cultures, and those whose messages are expressed in the explicit code belong to cultures called low-context cultures (Bochner, 1994; Hall, 1976; Streeck, 1994; Triandis, 1994). The cultures may be put on a continuum (Hall, 2000). Cultures at the extreme ends of the continuum have opposite characteristics with regard to communication styles as well as interaction behaviours. Klopf (1998) stated that Asia is the representative of high-context cultures.

Relying more on the physical environment, in high-context cultures, information mainly comes nonverbally. People are subtle and skillful in reading implicit messages conveyed through body language and environmental signs. Avoiding talking too much, people are ready to maintain a high level of uncertainty that usually lasts through the early phases of the interaction. Time is always needed to build up a relationship. The perception of self is also not appreciated in these cultures. Based on these descriptions, Vietnamese culture belongs to this group.

In low-context cultures, information must be explicit. Messages are always coded and expressed clearly and in details. People in these cultures have a tendency to be talkative, direct and not good at recognizing nonverbal cues. Practicality is highly valued. Uncertainty is therefore not tolerated in these cultures. Practicality also helps
relationships to be established faster and easier. Jandt (2001) places Australia in this group. It lies near the low-context end of the low-context and high-context cultures continuum.

ii) Geert Hofstede’s four dimensions

Based on his study of over 100,000 employees of the multinational company IBM in 40 countries, Geert Hofstede (1980; 1997; 1998; 2001) identified four dimensions that help distinguish and describe cultural patterns. He labeled these: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, and masculinity-femininity. These four cultural pattern descriptors are useful in helping explain culturally different communication behaviours.

High-power and low-power distance indicates the degree of power distribution within one culture. In high-power distance cultures, privileges and wealth are concentrated in the hands of certain individuals. People are taught and learn to accept unequally distributed power from within the family to the outside world. Listening, agreeing, and obeying are encouraged. Everything should come in horizontal order, from top to bottom. Subordinates should not initiate interactions with their superiors; and are expected to display respect for those with higher status. Vietnamese culture is categorized into this group (Jandt, 2001). Opposite to high-power distance cultures, low-power distance cultures value equality and independence. Communication is encouraged. Power and wealth are therefore more equally distributed across the population. Australia is listed in this group (Irwin, 1996).

Uncertainty avoidance reflects the extent of tolerance that one culture has for ambiguity and risk. Depending on its nature and perception, each culture has a
different way of looking at and dealing with the issue of interaction uncertainty. In
general, according to Jandt (2001), people in these cultures which are non-aggressive,
emotional and ready to accept personal risk are often weak in uncertainty avoidance.
On the other hand, those cultures where the people are more aggressive in nature,
intolerant, and active are strong in uncertainty avoidance. Security is prioritized in
these cultures. People often try their best to seek ways to reduce risks or uncertainties.
Australia belongs to this category. Nonetheless, in a modern world which is
characterized by change and development, there have always been exceptions (Jandt,
2001).

The individualism-collectivism dimension refers to the way people relate to one
another in one culture based on the perception of self and individual values. In
Collectivistic Cultures, the self is not apparent. Groups’ benefits are always given
precedence. Anything related to the group should come first. These characteristics are
also shown in the addressing system. ‘We’ and ‘us’ are more often used than ‘I’ and
‘me’ (Klopf, 1998). Indirect communication styles are preferable. Within a group,
interdependent activities and group harmony including having decent language,
clothes, and behaviours are strongly stressed. However, it is noticeable that the
number of groups people in these cultures choose to join is very restricted and the
number of members in each group is also limited (Jandt, 2001). Being prepared to
give up self, it is understandable that collectivists accept status differences from inside
the family to the outside world. Based on these characteristics, the Vietnamese culture
belongs to this category. Individualistic cultures, in contrast, highly promote
individual independence. People tend to join different groups to satisfy their personal
interests as well as to develop their personal potentials. Group types are therefore
diverse. However, since personal goals and interests always have higher priorities, ties between group members are loose. With regard to communication style and behaviour, confrontation and directness are favourable. Appreciating self, people in these cultures reject status differences and support a fair approach to virtually all areas of life. Hofstede (1980) put the Australian culture to this group. The classification is made upon the dominant orientation of the culture. Also, every culture has people with different tendencies.

The masculinity-femininity dimension refers to personality characteristics that one culture values. People-oriented feminine cultures nurture cooperation, interdependence, and emotional lifestyles. Masculine cultures cherish assertiveness, dominance, competition, and achievement. People are encouraged to be independent. Emotional expressions should be internalized. Australia has a Masculinity and Femininity (MAS) Index similar to those for Canada, Great Britain, Germany, New Zealand and the USA (Hofstede, 1980). This is quite contrary to the value orientations of the Japanese or Thais. Coming from an oriental culture, it can also be inferred that Vietnamese Australians hold value orientations which to a certain extent are contrary to those of European Australians.

iii) Geert Hofstede’s and Michael Bond’s fifth dimension

Extended from Hofstede’s work (Hofstede, 1980), the fifth dimension was originally labeled High Confucian Dynamism and later called the Long/Short-term Orientation. It refers to an individual’s sense of commitment and loyalty towards his/her work and organization (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). In cultures characterized with Long-term orientation, people respect tradition, focus more on the present, and value a relaxed
lifestyle and interpersonal relationships. As a result, they have a great concern for the preservation of face. Short-term Orientation cultures do not give priority to maintaining people-oriented relationships or preserving traditional values. The future is emphasized. Growth, achievements, and money are encouraged. There are very marked contrasts between the Asian values and Australian values in corresponding areas on this dimension (Chan, 1992). Quite different sets of values about family, hierarchies and relationships apply. The potential for these values to affect relationships and intercultural communication is obvious. Chan (1992) has offered a summary of differences in communication patterns between traditional high-context collectivist Asian cultures and low-context, individualistic cultures such as Australia.

Table 3: Contrasting communication patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of traditional Asian high-context collectivist cultures</th>
<th>Characteristics of low-context, individualistic cultures such as Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Indirect</td>
<td>- Direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Implicit, nonverbal</td>
<td>- Explicit, verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Formal</td>
<td>- Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Goal oriented</td>
<td>- Spontaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Emotionally controlled</td>
<td>- Emotionally expressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Self-effacing, modest</td>
<td>- Self-promoting, egocentric</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Extracted and modified from Chan (1992, p. 252)

Having examined the interrelatedness among culture, perception and communication; the following section will investigate the role of communication in intercultural relationships.
Relationship and communication have an inseparable connection. Relationships are established through interaction (Littlejohn, 2002). As Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson (1967) state, whenever two persons come into a communication interaction, a relationship is created. The type of relationship influences the way communication messages are interpreted, and the communication process overtime could also help change the nature of the relationship (Littlejohn, 2002; Werner & Baxter, 1994). Although relationship nature is often defined implicitly (Watzlawick et al., 1967), communication messages are explicitly expressed through verbal and nonverbal elements (Weaver, 1993).

i) Verbal and nonverbal cues

Verbal and nonverbal cues vary across cultures. Different cultures have different sets or systems of symbols that are used to construct verbal and nonverbal messages (Jandt, 2001).

Due to great differences in the symbols used and the meanings attached to those symbols among cultures, it is often very difficult for individuals involved in intercultural interpersonal relationships to obtain effective communication (Lim, 2002; Matsumoto, 2000). Under the dominant influence of their original culture, people as a habit simply bring into an intercultural contact their own ways of communicating along with their own expectations for appropriate interacting behaviours from their partners (Matsumoto, 2000). Language is actually a cultural institution (Dodd, 1998; Matsumoto, 2000). The relationship between language and culture as described in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is that the behaviour and habits of thinking in a culture are
determined by the language people in that culture use (Sapir, 1958; Whorf, 1956). Limiting people’s choices of interpretation, language is a frame that moulds people’s perceptions of reality (Klopf, 1998). Context also has an essential role in a communication process. It influences the meanings of the messages exchanged, and determines the speech patterns that people choose to use to suit their communication circumstances (Bernstein, 1971; Dodd, 1998).

Although verbal cues are the most recognizable part of a communicative transaction where information is transmitted, it is widely agreed in the literature that nonverbal cues play a much more significant role than verbal cues in forming an effective communication process (Birdwhistell, 1970; Burgoon, 1994; Ekman & Friesen, 1975; Hall, 1966; Hall & Hall, 1990; Heslin & Patterson, 1982; Keating, 1994; Knapp & Hall, 1992; Leathers, 1997; Mehrabian, 1981). According to Mehrabian (1981), nonverbal language accounts for up to 93 percent of the meaning of the communication process. Only 7 percent of the meaning is transmitted through verbal cues. Birdwhistell (1970) suggested that when people communicate, 65 to 70 percent of what is exchanged are nonverbal messages.

Nonverbal language refers to nonlinguistic means that convey messages (Weaver, 1993). It is therefore a powerful means that rather accurately conveys people’s feeling and emotions (Leathers, 1997). Probably all researchers who have examined nonverbal language suggest that it is the main, reliable, and stable supply of meanings in interpersonal interactions (Birdwhistell, 1970; Mehrabian, 1981). Nonverbal cues, however, do not operate separately from verbal messages (Klopf, 1998). They actually act as a framework for verbal communication. Nonverbal behaviours support
speech in a number of ways in order to enhance communication effectiveness. They include repeating, substituting, complementing, contradicting, and regulating (Burgoon & Ruffner, 1978). In addition, nonverbal behaviours contribute a great deal to the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships (DeVito, 2003). Nevertheless, like verbal language, nonverbal cues are also culturally specific. Each culture has its own system of nonverbal communication. Nonverbal cues can include body movements incorporating facial expressions and eye contacts, physical qualities, paralanguage, touching behaviours, and cultural perceptions of time and space (Andersen, Hecht, Hoobler, & Smallwood, 2002). Given that various behaviours function simultaneously through culturally-influenced complex rules, nonverbal language could possibly be another source of communication misunderstandings for those who have culturally different backgrounds (Richmond, McCroskey, & Payne, 1991). As stated by Andersen (1991), cultural differences in nonverbal behaviours result from differences in five dimensions including immediacy and expressiveness, individualism, masculinity, power distance, and high and low context.

The influence of culturally-specific factors on the intercultural communication process is obvious. Most of them, if used unconsciously, will bring misunderstandings. In addition, the process of approaching communication effectiveness largely depends on individual communication ability (Dodd, 1998).

ii) Communication competence

Intercultural communication competence is expressed through the presentational communicative behaviour, adaptive communicative behaviour, and relational communicative behaviour (Klopf, 1998).
Presentational communicative behaviour refers to the way people present themselves in interpersonal interactions (Richmond et al., 1991). The behaviour incorporates elements such as communication apprehension, predispositions towards verbal behaviour, communication style, and self-disclosure; in which communication style is possibly the most influential element on the communication process. Communication style is individuals’ instinctive and distinctive way of communicating and expressing themselves and carries personal qualities (Dodd, 1998). According to Dodd (1998), most people are not aware of their style and behave as a result of habits. However, there are also interactants who are very conscious of their own style and use it as a powerful means to create certain communication impressions. In general, most people involved in intercultural interpersonal interactions are impressed by their partners’ communication style which is to some extent determined by their culture.

Adaptive communicative behaviour relates to individuals’ abilities to be involved in the interaction by being aware of, able to adapt to and adjust to the requirements of the communication situations as well as being able to observe and respond to their partners’ subtle verbal cues and behaviours. The ability requires individuals involved to be attentive and perceptive.

Relational communicative behaviour relates to elements such as self-monitoring, orientation to tasks, interactive topics, and loneliness. It is important for individuals to possess the ability to self-monitor their own behaviours, be sensitive to situational influences; be conscious of their roles in the interaction, monitor conversational topics that should be included during the communication process in order to help establish, maintain, and strengthen their relationship; and finally be aware of their own emotions.
In addition to the elements mentioned above, other important features that influence interactants’ communicative behaviours can be listed as age, gender, occupation, religion, ethnic origin, and geographies (Klopf, 1998). With various elements contributing to the misunderstandings between individuals involved in an intercultural interpersonal interaction, mediation is essential in assisting communication and resolving conflicts which are very likely to occur (Katan, 1999; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002).

iii) Mediation

In intercultural encounters where there are language and perceptual differences and translation is needed, interactants are significantly influenced by translated information (Dodd, 1998). Translation, according to Schäffner and Kelly-Holmes (1995), is more than a means that helps convey literal meanings in intercultural exchange. In addition to the issue of translation accuracy, mere back-translating that does not fully transfer cultural meanings may cause communication misunderstandings or reduce the effectiveness of the interaction (Hermans, 1997; Jandt, 2001; Katan, 1999). As explained by Kaiser-Cooke (1997), “linguistically articulated ‘real-world’ knowledge is culturally significant knowledge of the world” (p. 285). Interpreters and translators are those who can understand and transfer such knowledge in face-to-face as well as indirect intercultural interactions. Interpreters and translators therefore also take the role of a cultural mediator. Their role is to facilitate communication, understanding and action between culturally different persons by effectively conveying culture-specific expressions, intentions, perceptions, and expectations of each party to the other. This role also allows them to decide their degree of participation in the interaction process (Taft, 1981). In order to fulfil the
requirements, the mediators are required to have a proper knowledge of both cultures involved (Katan, 1999). It means that, in situations that require an intermediary, the intervening role of the interpreter or the translator should always be taken into account (Banks & Banks, 1991; Wadensjo, 1998). According to Gulliver (1979), the presence of the interpreter, as a third party, influences the communication process of the interacting parties. More important, the self-interest of the interpreter may cause her/him to side with one of the parties involved. Her/his presence and unexpected interference will affect the content as well as the progression of the intercultural interaction. Therefore, successful mediation depends on two key factors: impartiality and face maintenance (Jandt, 2001).

In interpersonal interactions, face is understood as favourable social images that individuals involved would like to have and expect their partners to respect (Lustig & Koester, 1999). Protecting and saving face are therefore people’s utmost concerns when conflict occurs. However, face concerns, facework behaviours, and conflict styles are different from one culture to another (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002). In terms of the collectivism-individualism dimension, face in collectivist cultures is looked at from the social environment perspective, whereas self-respect – an equal term for face used in individualist cultures – is assessed from the individual point of view (Hofstede, 2001). Collectivist people involved in conflicts pay more attention to avoiding shame while individualist people try to avoid guilt (Morris, Williams, Leung, Larrick, Mendoza, Bhatnagar, Li, Kondo, Luo, & Hu, 1998). Differences in value orientations create different conflict styles (Morris et al., 1998). Individualists with great concerns for self-face are likely to employ face-to-face confrontation or direct negotiation (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002). On the other hand, collectivist people
with greater concerns for other-face and mutual-face maintenance prefer to solve conflicts through the mediation of intermediaries (Ma, 1992). In accordance with Confucian teachings, harmony is a keynote of existence (Chan, 1992). Confrontation is therefore avoided and ‘face’ protected. Individuals strive to reconcile conflicting forces, principles and points of view to maintain harmony. Politeness, tact and gentleness characterize interpersonal relations.

The major features which are embedded in the task and the relationship, two major components of a home-school partnership have been reviewed. All of these elements are summarized and illustrated in Figure 6 below. Figure 6 also serves as the research framework for the present study. The aims of the study are to investigate the role of the two major components of task and relationship in the functioning of an intercultural partnership as well as the interaction between these two components in such a partnership.
Figure 6: A summation of key elements and their inbuilt features of the task and the relationship
2.5 Summary and the research question

Over the years, researchers in the field of home-school partnerships have made remarkable efforts in distinguishing major features of the task and the relationship and ascertaining the extent of their influence on a home-school partnership (Bailey et al., 1998; Bruder, 2000; Christenson, 2004; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Dunst, 2000, 2002; Dunst et al., 2002; Dunst et al., 1992; Dunst et al., 1991; Park & Turnbull, 2003; Timperley & Robinson, 2002). While the interconnectedness between these two components has received extensive support from researchers, there seems to be conflicting views regarding the values of these two dimensions. So far, there have been three major trends.

The first trend places an emphasis on the relationship component. It is believed that this component helps bring about compromise and develops meaningful partnership accountability (Blue-Banning et al., 2004; Lindle, 1989; Paget & Chapman, 1992; Roberts et al., 1998; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001).

The second trend provides equal support for both components (Christenson, 2004; Park & Turnbull, 2003). According to authors who support this position, barriers at both interpersonal and service (task) levels are dynamic and must be understood in relation to each other. As collaborative relationships take place in a context that usually extends beyond the control of individuals involved, it is suggested that conceptualizing partnerships at both levels is useful in revealing the nature and elements of service integration (Park & Turnbull, 2003).
The last trend supports a focus on the task in family-professional partnerships (Dunst et al., 2002; Timperley & Robinson, 2002). According to this trend, the task is considered the motivation for parent participation in partnerships (Timperley & Robinson, 2002).

Searching for the interconnection between these two components of a partnership is an ongoing process. This is also the concern of the present study. The emphasis of the study is on the role of the parent-educator relationship and its influences on the operation of a family-centered partnership. As the study involves Vietnamese parents, cultural differences are expected to significantly affect the relationship as well as the partnership. From this point of view, the key proposition for the current research is: an on-going relationship with educators will have a positive influence on parents’ understanding of their role a home-school partnership. The influence could help sustain the transformation in the family home. The study research question is as follows:

How does the parent-educator relationship influence the operation of family-centered a home-school partnership between Vietnamese parents of children with a disability and special educators in the DEECD Victorian Metropolitan Regions?

The following chapter, Research Design, will present the philosophical stance and the theoretical background for the chosen research methodology, the study design, and the data collection methods and procedures. The chapter also details the data analysis strategies taken to ensure the quality of the research design.
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research perspective

3.1.1 Research strategy: Case study methodology

“The relationship between special educators in the DEECD Victorian Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability” is the topic under investigation in the present study. The research question that directed the investigation is: How does the parent-educator relationship influence the operation of a family-centered home-school partnership? The question is explanatory in nature. It is the research question that influences the research strategy. The rationale for the selection of the research strategy for this study is specified below.

In any relationship, people often hold perceptions of their partners and the impressions or perceptions formed can significantly influence behaviour, motivation, and commitment of the perceived to the relationship (Millar et al., 1992). Perceptions are subjective and strongly affected by the surrounding environment. Thus, a good knowledge of the research participants’ contexts and situations is crucial for understanding their perceptions, as well as necessary for grasping the multiple meanings of their relationships. Contexts and situations are emphasized by many authors in case study research (Burns, 2000; Diesing, 1972; Stake, 2000; Sturman, 1997).

Case study methodology offers an appropriate means of investigating complex social units and real-life situations consisting of multiple factors (Boucher, 2001; Merriam,
1998; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995). Case studies help maintain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Merriam, 1998; Neuman, 1991; Sturman, 1997). Case study was the methodology of choice as the current study required the understanding of contextual conditions (the home-school partnership) in order to gain insight into the research phenomena (the relationship between the educators and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability).

As a result of this choice of methodology, qualitative methods were employed to collection data. Techniques and procedures used included interviews, observations, documentation, and physical artefacts collection. The following section will describe the theoretical perspective that lies behind this choice of methodology.

3.1.2 Theoretical perspective: An interpretive approach to explanatory research

A theoretical perspective is defined by Crotty (1998) as “a way of looking at the world and making sense of it” (p. 8). The current study employed an interpretive approach to researching the world. The purpose of interpretive explanation is to foster understanding (Neuman, 1997).

The interpretive approach adopts a practical orientation and is concerned with people’s personal reasons or motives that shape their internal feelings and guide their decisions to manage their everyday lives and practical affairs (Allan & Skinner, 1991; Neuman, 1991; Weber, 1970). Thus, in order to understand or find meaning in a particular action or practice, the interpretive researcher needs to interpret in a particular way what the actors are doing by placing the action within a specific
context of a culturally relevant symbol system (Bleicher, 1980; Gallagher, 1992; Silverman, 2001). The idea of obtaining an inside understanding is “a powerful central concept that reflects the purpose of qualitative inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 191).

Interpretivism emphasizes importance of context in which a particular action occurs in an effort to understand that action. Therefore, interpretivism can in one sense be characterized as hermeneutic - an epistemological stance embedded in the interpretive approach (Outhwaite, 1987). This approach allowed the investigator to fully discover research participants’ social interactions and socially constructed meaning systems.

3.1.3 Epistemology: The way of hermeneutics

Philosophical hermeneutics argues that understanding is a characteristic of being human (Gadamer, 1977; 1989; Taylor, 1985a; 1985b; 1995). Philosophical hermeneutics emphasizes that understanding is participative, conversational, and dialogic (Bernstein, 1983; Connolly & Keutner, 1988; Grondin, 1994). Understanding, as stressed in philosophical hermeneutics, is not a product of an independent meaning analysis of the interpreter. Philosophical hermeneutics sees meaning not necessarily as constructed but as negotiated (Gadamer, 1981; 1989). Philosophical hermeneutics also indicates that traditions shape what we are and how we understand the world (Gadamer, 1989). However, the fact that we are shaped by traditions does not mean that we should re-enact the socio-historical inherited biases in our interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The goal of philosophical hermeneutics, according to Madison (1991), is to understand what is involved in the process of understanding itself.
I have so far set forth the research inquiry process in terms of the methodology, theoretical perspective, and epistemology. A summary of this process is illustrated in Figure 7.
Having clarified each element of the research process with regard to its significance within the proposed research process framework, the following section details the case study design.

### 3.2 Case study design

As indicated in Yin (1984; 1994), there are four major types of case study designs following a $2 \times 2$ matrix. This matrix is illustrated in Figure 8. The first pair of categories is composed of single-case and multiple-case designs. The second pair distinguishes between holistic and embedded designs based on the unit or units of analysis to be undertaken and can occur in combination with either of the first pair. Although, according to Yin (1994), these designs need ongoing modification and improvement, their present forms can assist researchers in designing methodologically sound case studies.

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<tr>
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<th>Single-case designs</th>
<th>Multiple-case designs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Holistic</td>
<td>TYPE 1</td>
<td>TYPE 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Single unit of analysis)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Embedded</td>
<td>TYPE 2</td>
<td>TYPE 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Multiple units of analysis)</td>
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Figure 8: Basic types of designs for case studies (Yin, 1994)
From these suggestions and based on the nature of this research, the multiple embedded cases design is the most suitable model applicable to the present study.

3.2.1 Multiple embedded cases design

In investigating the relationship between Vietnamese parents and educators, this study involved parents and children from a number of families and educators who worked with these parents and children from different schools. Each “pair” of parent-educator formed a single case. As this study contains more than one case, it also employs a multiple-case design.

In order to decide whether this was a holistic or embedded case study, it was essential to define the study unit(s) of analysis. Not only does it assist in selecting the right case study design, but it also assists with identifying the limits of the study’s boundaries. This study was about the relationship between parents and educators, and took place within the context of the home-school partnership. Nevertheless, the unit of analysis for the case was neither the parents nor the educators. Rather, each case focused on the research phenomenon of the parent-educator relationship. Thus, relationship was a major unit of analysis. However, in order to fully understand the role of the relationship in the function of a family-centered partnership, it was essential to also consider the task – the other component that constitutes a home-school partnership. The task was therefore another major unit of analysis of the current study. These two major units of analysis each had a number of inherent subunits of analysis, including role understanding and role functioning for the task; and intrinsic features the communication process for the relationship. These inherent subunits of analysis are
also called embedded units of analysis - lesser units than the major ones (Yin, 1994). The resulting design was consequently called an embedded case study design.

The current study adopted the logic of replication in selecting cases. According to this logic, cases selected either (a) predicted similar results (a literal replication) or (b) produced contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication).

With regard to literal replications, cases with an orientation towards the task were selected to see if these cases produced similar results as proposed in the task-focused theory of partnership of Timperley and Robinson (2002). In relation to theoretical replications, relationship-oriented cases were employed aiming at demonstrating the current study proposition regarding the role of the relationship in the functioning of a family-centered partnership. The proposition was that the relationship rather than the task had a critical influence in the success of the intercultural partnership. Results obtained from relationship-oriented cases should therefore be contrasted with those produced from cases in the task-oriented group. The current study was, however, open to different research findings and did not attempt to use focus-on-the-relationship cases to reinforce a preconceived proposition because in case studies there are various unforeseen factors and circumstances that cannot be taken into consideration at the outset of the study (Yin, 1994).

Having determined the types of cases chosen for the study, the remaining issue that needed addressing was the selection of the number of cases of each type and the rationale underlying that selection. How many cases would be sufficient?
3.2.2 Suggested number of cases

With regard to the number of literal replications (task-oriented cases), this issue therefore does not demand an excessive degree of certainty. As a result, three to four task-oriented cases were considered sufficient.

In relation to the number of theoretical replications (relationship-oriented cases), this slightly larger number of four to five relationship-oriented cases would be identified in this study.

Before any field procedures could be carried out, several important steps were put into place.

3.3 Essential preparations

3.3.1 Authority approvals

3.3.1.1 Ethics application

An ethics application was prepared by the investigator for the Faculty of Education, Language, and Community Services (FELCS) \(^4\) Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee (HRESC).

The approval by the HRESC is found in Appendix 1. A similar application was also submitted to the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DE&T) \(^5\) for

\(^4\) Faculty of Education, Language, and Community Services (FELCS) is now the School of Education which belongs to the College of Design and Social Context, RMIT

\(^5\) The Department of Education and Training (DE&T) is now the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD).
approval to undertake research in Government schools. The letter of approval from the DE&T is found in Appendix 2.

Letters asking for permission to get access to schools were sent to the Principal of each school involved (Appendix 5). Together with approval notifications from relevant authorities, the schools were also provided with a summary of the application to conduct research in schools, research proposal, Plain Language Statements (Appendices 6, 7), Prescribed Consent Form (Appendices 11), and sample questions used to ask research participants (Appendices 16, 17). All schools gave verbal approval when contacted by the investigator by telephone followed by written consent.

Originally, the investigator selected *school counsellors* as the study’s target. However, results from preliminary conversations with Vietnamese parent participants indicated that almost all the parents had very limited to almost no contact with school counsellors. As a result, the investigator applied to have the research title officially changed from *school counsellors* to *special educators*. The application was approved by the Research Student Management Group, FELCS, RMIT before the data collection commenced (Appendix 3). Later on, another adjustment also needed to be made to the research title when the Department of Education and Training of Victoria (DE&T) changed its name to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). A note of approval from the RMIT Graduate Research Office (GRO) in relation to the use of the term DEECD in the thesis title is attached in Appendix 4.
3.3.1.2 Plain Language Statement (PLS)

A PLS aims at providing participants with all essential information that they need to know in a study: The general purpose, methods and demands of the study. The present study PLS clearly and succinctly outlined the study design and participant expectations. The PLS gave detailed explanations regarding what participants were expected to do, contributions they may make, their rights to withdraw unprocessed data or from the study at any time they wished during the research process, how and by what means the information would be gathered and used, and identities of the organization and people conducting and being responsible for the information collection and how to contact them should informants had enquiries. The PLS emphasized priorities of the study investigator regarding protecting the privacy of research participants, their rights, interests and wishes given the need for publication may arise during the study. The PLS also indicated security arrangements in terms of storing the information collected, including the period of time during which the information would be retained and how the information would be disposed of at the end of this period.

Basically, the general contents are the same in all Plain Language Statements to the participants. Nevertheless, as different participants had different participation requirements, it was important for the participants to be provided with the right PLS. The special educators (Appendix 6) were expected to involve in approximately one to two focused group interviews, 60 minutes each. The participation of school management staff, however, only involved one 60-90 minute interview and provision of relevant documents (Appendix 7). Social workers and other participants would involve approximately two interviews, 60-90 minutes each (Appendix 8). As the
study major research participants, parents (Appendix 9) were asked to take part in a series of approximately five to six interviews, 40-60 minutes each. A translation version into the Vietnamese language was also prepared for the parents (Appendix 10). In addition to the interviews, all participants were also asked to provide relevant documents and for their permission to be observed during parent-teacher interviews and/or other meetings.

3.3.2 The study investigator

3.3.2.1 Skills of the investigator

It is important to identify the investigator’s personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000).

Having had the advantages of growing up in Vietnam but also living and studying in Australia for almost 10 years now, it is appropriate to say that I have a certain understanding of the complex cultural values experienced by the Vietnamese community in Melbourne, Victoria. Nevertheless, as cultural perceptions vary from people-to-people, it would be detrimental to make any subjective assumptions ahead of the study. Although I had prior experience doing research related to this topic, the parents I had previous contacts with were from English-speaking backgrounds. Thus, it would be inappropriate to apply the knowledge gained from researching these parents to making judgments about the attitudes, behaviours or ways of interacting with educators of the Vietnamese parents participating in the current study. The positive side of these personal experiences was that they helped me become more cautious, open, and sensitive in approaching and working with the informants in the
present study. In addition, being constantly alert to the interaction between the theoretical issues being studied and the data being collected was an exercise regularly practiced to prevent potential preconceptions. However, I understood that although I would make every effort to ensure the objectivity of the study, the latent biases underlying my former experiences might still influence the way I viewed and examined the data collected as well as the way I interpreted the responses.

With regard to personal qualifications, I have a Master of Educational Studies degree (2001, The University of Queensland, Australia) specializing in Guidance and Counseling in which I was well trained in different research skills especially project management and interviewing skills. Psychology was an important part of the program. As a compulsory requirement of the course, I spent one semester doing the practicum in a preschool Special Education Unit in Ipswich (Queensland) under the supervision of a professional school counsellor. The opportunity provided me with many precious real-life experiences in working with parents and professionals in a school setting. The course indeed provided me with adequate abilities to confidently perform the data collection of this study. As a famous Vietnamese saying has it “a thorough preparation is never redundant.” However, additional endeavours were made to meet further skills required to help prepare myself in carrying out the research as a sole case study investigator. These additional skills, as specified in Burns (2000), included being able to ask good questions and interpreting the answers; being a good listener; being adaptive and flexible so as to make the most of newly encountered situations; having a thorough understanding of the issues being studied; and being unbiased by preconceived notions including those derived from theory. A solid grasp
of the issues being studied was the main means the investigator relied on to stay on track.

### 3.3.2.2 Ethical issues

According to Rubin, Rubin, and Piele (2005), discussion of the research process is not complete if the matter of responsibilities of the researcher is not considered. More than bureaucratic paperwork, ethical issues in the present study were attended to in every step of the research process. Adhering to the related discipline’s professional standards of conduct, the investigator remained systematic and objective in making choices in relation to designing measures, selecting and observing participants, analyzing data, and reporting study results.

Efforts to reduce or eliminate risks for research participants were a critical part of the ethics of conduct. Rights, needs, values, and desires of research participants were respected. They were treated fairly and with courtesy. The participation was on a voluntary basis with participants’ knowledge and consent. A signed Prescribed Consent Form (Appendix 11) was used to authenticate that participation was voluntary and to acknowledge their knowledge of and use of the data collected. A Vietnamese version of the Prescribed Consent Form was also prepared for Vietnamese participants (Appendix 12). Due to the sensitivity of the research topic, real identities of research participants were converted to fictitious ones or kept anonymous so that they could not be identified. Participants’ attributes, related information, points of view, or comments that may allow the case itself to be precisely identified were avoided or disguised. This does not include the two Vietnamese social workers although their real names were not used in the present study.
Being the primary instrument for data collection, the data were filtered through the investigator’s particular theoretical position. Thus, biases that could not be controlled were detailed in relevant sections of the written report. Sufficient information was also given to help readers draw their own conclusions.

### 3.3.2.3 Back-up plan

To facilitate and help enhance the quality of the research process, a back-up plan was essential. Plans for unanticipated events were taken into account, i.e., changes in schedules and availability of both research participants and the investigator. Techniques used to cope with unpredicted temporary schedule changes included: allowing plenty of time for the data collection and being well organized so that appointments could easily be rearranged. Reminder phone calls for future appointments, prior notices for cancelled meetings proved to be effective options.

Procedures were also planned to deal with participants feeling vulnerable or being upset by certain research questions. They could be listed as showing empathy; sharing experiences; avoiding reinforcing interviewee’s responses; listening more, talking less; following up, not interrupting; and tolerating silence. If the research participants refused to be recorded, hand-written notes were used instead.

### 3.3.3 Guidelines for the case study reports

#### 3.3.3.1 Outlines of the reports

Cases were first analyzed at an individual level. Task-oriented cases were assessed to see if they produced similar results as proposed in the theory of partnership.

Relationship-oriented cases were also evaluated to find out if they brought about any
contrasting results to those in task-oriented cases. Interpretation at the individual level was crucial for the cross-case analysis which looked at the interconnectedness between the two critical components of task and relationship in a home-school partnership. The cross-case interpretation may then lead to theory modification and would help the study investigator develop relevant policy implications. The outline of the case study reports is illustrated in Figure 9 below. The model adopted was that of the case study method related to the replication approach to multiple-case studies of Yin (1994).

Source: The replication approach to multiple-case studies. Yin (1994, p. 49)

Figure 9: Model of case study reports
The format of the case study report facilitated the collection of relevant data and reduced the possibility of having to revisit the case study site. Nevertheless, the investigator did not rigidly adhere to a pre-designed protocol. Changes in case study plans as a result of the initial data collection are actually considered to be an advantage of the case study strategy if used properly and without bias (Yin, 1994).

3.3.3.2 The audiences

The reports are for the study investigator’s supervisors and examiners. The preferences of the potential audience dictated the form of the reports. In order to serve the academic group, the reports conformed to standard compositional forms including required length and focused on the methodological and theoretical issues. The ultimate reports aim at communicating directly with the community of readers.

3.3.3.3 Features of the reports

In an effort to bring about a genuine holistic picture, each case study was summarized from the viewpoints of both parents and educators. Each case was presented in a story-like form. The story was narrated in an objective story-telling tone with complete underlying contexts and surrounded circumstances. The single case narrative was used to describe and analyze the case. Results from each individual case were the focus of a summary report. The multiple-case report covered the cross-case analysis and results. Approaching parents was the last preparation step before the data collection process commenced.
3.3.4 Approaching parents

3.3.4.1 Where were the parents?

Having put preliminary preparations in place, the investigator moved on to the most essential task of searching for prospective research participants. Parents needed to be approached first because without them the study investigator could not know with which schools to work. Moreover, given the large number of schools in the Victorian Metropolitan Regions, it would be very ineffective and also almost impossible to contact every individual school to find out if they had students of Vietnamese background who had a disability enrolled in their schools. In addition, the Victorian Information Privacy Act 2000 (VIP Act) also does not allow such disclosure of information (VLPD, 2009b).

At the outset of this study, the investigator wrote to the relevant authority of the Victorian Department of Education and Training to obtain statistics about the number of Vietnamese students with a disability and the schools they attended. Unfortunately, those data cannot be released. In addition to that, without parents’ consent in the first place, the schools would be very reluctant to do the introduction or give the researcher permission to access to their schools to conduct a study of such a very sensitive nature.

Without a direct means to approach parents, I used informal networks drawing on all the resources available to me. I started with the Vietnamese Community, Victorian Chapter as this is the organization which represents the Vietnamese people in Victoria. Being bound by the Privacy Act (VLPD, 2009b), the staff suggested I contacted a

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6 The Victorian Information Privacy Act 2000 (VIP Act) came into effect on 1 September 2002 in Victoria, Australia (VLPD, 2009b)
Migrant Resource Centre (MRC). I made several similar contacts either over the phone or in person without much success. This was a very difficult and frustrating process. However, I obtained the telephone number of an organization called ADEC (Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities). From here, I had the opportunity to meet Ms Thanh, a Vietnamese, who at the time worked as a social worker for ADEC and was in contact with three groups of Vietnamese parents of children with a disability. Each group consisted of approximately 20 parents. In total, there were about 60 parents. Parents of these groups resided in three different areas of Metropolitan Melbourne: Springvale (the city of Greater Dandenong), Footscray (the city of Maribyrnong), and Coburg (the city of Moreland). According to the classification of the DEECD Victoria, these three areas respectively belong to three of the four Melbourne Metropolitan Regions. They are Southern Metropolitan Region (SMR), Western Metropolitan Region (WMR), Northern Metropolitan Region (NMR), and Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR). The abbreviations and full terms of these regions are provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Abbreviations and full terms of four Melbourne Metropolitan Regions

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<th>Abbreviations</th>
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<tr>
<td>EMR</td>
<td>Eastern Metropolitan Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMR</td>
<td>Northern Metropolitan Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMR</td>
<td>Southern Metropolitan Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>WMR</td>
<td>Western Metropolitan Region</td>
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Each of the above groups had a monthly meeting in its own region. I had obtained Ms Thanh’s permission to attend the monthly meetings of the groups. Initial meetings with the parents who resided in the WMR provided me with the opportunity to be introduced to another Vietnamese worker, Ms Hong, who was in charge of managing a group of around 20 to 30 Vietnamese parents who have children with a disability from 1 to 18 years. The group is called Parent-to-Parent\(^7\). I had Ms Hong’s permission to come to the weekly meetings of the group. Many of parents of this group also attended the Footscray group run by Ms Thanh from ADEC. This was a good start for getting to know the parents.

**3.3.4.2 Getting to know the parents**

During the four month period set for the process of getting to know the parents, I attended monthly meetings of each of the three groups run by Ms Thanh (ADEC) (Appendix 13). I observed and obtained contact details of several parents who were assessed as prospective research participants.

The same time I took part in the weekly meetings of the group administered by Ms Hong. On average, I went to eight meetings, most of which were held at the Braybrook Community Centre (Appendix 14). Most of my research participants were members of this group. As the group met regularly on a weekly basis, I had a better chance to select prospective participants. Not only did I have the opportunity to attend the group meetings, do the observations, but over a period of time, I was also

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\(^7\) Parent-to-Parent was a program originally established for English speaking parents of children with a disability and was administered by one of the parents who is also the program founder. The Parent-to-Parent western network belongs to MacKillop Family Services now operates across the Western Metropolitan Region (WMR). It is available to families from diverse cultural backgrounds. Parent-to-Parent Western offers support to parents and carers who have children with a disability within the age range of zero to 18 years. Ms Hong is one of the coordinators of the program who is in charge of the Vietnamese group.
considered by parents to be a regular member of the group. As the boundary between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ was eliminated, I was welcomed to participate in a variety of the group’s activities from attending psychologically therapeutic sessions which were held regularly every week and run by the group coordinator (Ms Hong) to organizing barbecues and going camping with the group and their families. I had the chance to develop a strong bond with almost all members of the group and most importantly, I had their trust. This was a critical factor that helped pave the way for the recruitment of participants for the pilot study, as well as for the actual cases in the main study.

3.3.4.3 The pilot study

The conduct of the pilot study was aimed at ensuring that the case study design was appropriate. The pilot data helped provide considerable insight into the issues being studied. As a result, the study investigator was able to develop relevant lines of questions. In fact, more time and effort were devoted to this phase than to the actual data collection as the pilot study was much broader and less focused than the ultimate data collection plan.

With regard to the selection of informants for the pilot case, those parents who were friendly, accessible and were a good source of information and data would be chosen. One pilot case was finally selected from all the parents attending the Parent-to-Parent group. As the ultimate purpose of a pilot case was to develop a suitable data collection procedure and because every case was unique, it was not necessary to conduct more than one pilot case. The pilot case looked at the research issues from the parents’ point of view only. Due to the sensitivity of the research topic and because the pilot case was carried out before the actual recruitment of participants, it was impossible to
have educators as participants for the pilot study. However, this was not a concern as the study mainly focused on the parents’ viewpoints. Moreover, questions for the educators could be developed using resources about home-school partnership available in the literature in combination with opinions of the parents in the pilot case. Results from conversations with parents in the pilot case revealed that in order to have a complete picture of the home-school partnership, data should be collected from the following four sources. They are interviews, observations, documentation analysis, and physical artefacts analysis.

The main pilot site was at the site of the weekly meetings of the Parent-to-Parent group. The study investigator, however, also joined the parents when they had outdoor activities with the group. This allowed for different phenomena to be observed from various angles. The pilot case reports were mainly in the form of memoranda which specified the lessons learned for both the research design and field procedure.

3.4 Data collection procedure

3.4.1 Recruitment of research participants

3.4.1.1 Selection criteria

It was noticeable that almost all the Vietnamese parents who joined the Parent-to-Parent group (Ms Hong) and the ADEC groups (Ms Thanh) had children with cognitive disabilities. The explanation given by the group coordinators was that most parents of children with a physical disability did not have the same need to participate in the groups. According to these parents, the groups were for those who needed
information and/or psychological support as they still had hope for their child to become normal whereas what happened to a child with a physical disability could not be undone and they did not want ‘strangers’ to know about their child’s condition.

The group coordinators admitted that it was virtually impossible to invite parents who had a child with a physical disability to take part in the services provided. With the permission of Ms Hong, I obtained the contact details of one parent who had a child with a physical disability and made efforts to contact the parent over the telephone as well as in person with the intention of recruiting her as a research participant. Although appreciating the benefits of the research, the parent was very reluctant to be part of the study simply because my appearance at her house and her child’s school (a mainstream setting) would make her neighbours and her child’s classmates suspicious of her child’s condition. The child’s disability was a family secret because the child’s disability was not obvious. Out of respect for the family and the future of the child, the study investigator decided not to proceed with the recruitment process in relation to this parent even though the parent had agreed to be a research participant after being informed this confidentiality.

The only option left was to recruit participants from among around 70 parents who were members of the Parent-to-Parent and ADEC groups. Among these parents, most of them had children diagnosed with different types of autism. Several had children with Down syndrome. There were only two parents from one family who had a child with an intellectual disability attending the meetings on a regular basis. The child was over twenty years of age. In accordance with the purpose of this study, the study participants should be in P-12 (Prep to Year 12) and currently be enrolled in the school system. The selection option therefore was limited to parents who had children
with autism or Down syndrome. These two types of disabilities fit the classification of
the DEECD Victoria (DEECD, 2009b) of students who are considered in need of
special education support. According to that policy, the students must meet the criteria
set for one of the seven following disabilities including physical disability, severe
language disorder, severe behaviour disorder, hearing impairment, intellectual
disability, visual impairment, and autism spectrum disorder. In addition to the
selection criteria mentioned above, there were other factors that should be met by the
parents before they were selected as research participants. First, that was cultural
background (parents should self-identify as Vietnamese), and secondly, their
geographical residence (they must reside within the Melbourne Metropolitan Regions).

In addition to the criterion regarding the nature of the case (task-oriented or
relationship-oriented), cases were also selected based on their uniqueness. This
included the case’s historical background; the physical setting; other economic,
political, legal, and aesthetic contexts. The uniqueness may help reveal a phenomenon
and/or provide knowledge that the investigator would not otherwise have had access
to. The sampling of the present study was therefore a purposeful sampling (Patton,
2002). The selection process required the study investigator to be immersed into the
activities of the groups and have private conversations with prospective informants
and participants. This was an interesting but time-consuming process. Those parents
who could provide the information, perspectives, and experiences related to the
research topic were selected.
3.4.1.2 Recruitment protocol

All of the selected parents welcomed the research and did not hesitate in agreeing to become research participants. The connection established between us during the time I joined the groups possibly played a part in the smoothness of this process.

After prospective parent participants were identified and officially recruited, school educators who worked with these parents were contacted. In order to access the schools, permission from the school principal was essential. Initial telephone contacts were made for appointments. Then applications to access the schools were sent to the school Principals. The supportive attitude that I received from the schools was overwhelming, which in turn helped to boost my confidence. As part of the study required an understanding of school management and policy aspects, the school principal or vice-principal was invited to take part in the study. Further appointments were made for the data collection. Having assisted in passing my invitation onto the teachers involved, the principals also helped arrange interview times. Data were collected at the convenience of research participants. All the interviews, observations, and necessary documentation were conducted and collected in schools and during home-school meetings. Educators participating in the study included classroom teachers, teacher aides, and a school speech pathologist.

With regard to other informants, one social worker was recruited. Ms Hong had had regular contact with parents and the Parent-to-Parent group she ran was seen as increasingly successful. The knowledge she had gained from managing the group contributed a great deal to the study investigator’s understanding of parents.
Due to their shortage of time, it was difficult to approach interpreters. However, one interpreter agreed to be interviewed. This was very helpful as almost all parents in the study relied on the assistance of an interpreter to communicate with the educators. The opinions of the interpreter helped provide an insight into the nature of the home-school communication. The recruitment procedure was the same as had applied to other participants.

Research participants were immediate family members. The immediate families were very independent and rarely counted on the support of the extended family even though in some cases such support was available.

3.4.1.3 Finalizing the number of cases recruited

The number of cases selected in this study followed the rationale presented earlier in section 3.2.2 ‘Suggested number of cases.’ According to that, three to four literal replications (task-oriented cases) and four to five different patterns of theoretical replications (relationship-oriented cases) were sufficient. Eventually, three cases that had a focus on the task along with four cases which expressed different levels of relationship orientation were selected. Each case served a specific purpose within the overall scope of inquiry. It is argued that the number of cases enriched the data and enhanced the trustworthiness of the research findings. Table 5 below summarizes the cases recruited in the present study and their partnership orientation.
Table 5: Cases recruited in the present study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task-oriented cases</th>
<th>Relationship-oriented cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case 1</td>
<td>Case 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the seven cases, parents of Case Studies 1, 3, and 4 participated in the ADEC groups run by Ms Thanh. Parents of Cases 2, 5, 6, and 7 were members of the Parent-to-Parent group run by Ms Hong. Some of the parents were members of both groups as, according to them, they found different benefits from attending the two different groups.

In an effort to reduce the risk of cases being terminated due to unexpected circumstances and maintain the number of cases as required by the research design, two additional parents who were assessed as appropriate to be prospective research participants were identified and informally invited to take part in the study. The request was accepted. Nevertheless, these reserve cases would only officially play a part in the study if the selected participants could not continue their commitments. This circumstance, however, did not happen. Table 5 below provides the pseudonyms of the participants.
Table 6: Pseudonyms of participants whose names are mentioned in the present study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case number</th>
<th>Pseudonyms of parents</th>
<th>Pseudonyms of children</th>
<th>Pseudonyms of others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mr Hai - Ms Giau</td>
<td>Child 1: Lam (boy)</td>
<td>Social workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Child 2: Loan (girl)</td>
<td>Ms Hong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Parent-to-Parent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ms Kim</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Ms Thanh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ADEC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mr Nam - Ms Oanh</td>
<td>Ty (boy)</td>
<td>Teacher aide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ms Sue</td>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>Ms Carina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Case Study 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mr Mark - Ms Xuan</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ms Lan</td>
<td>Anna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mr Teo - Ms Thi</td>
<td>Child 1: Rob</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Child 2: Joe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.2 Sources of evidence

Once the research participants were recruited, the data collection procedure commenced. Results from the pilot study showed that in order to create a complete picture of a home-school partnership, it was crucial for the study data to be collected from all four sources including: interviews, observations, documentation, and physical artefacts.

The use of multiple sources of evidence also helped cross checking the data and research findings. By triangulating the data from different interviews, different sites, different methods of data collection and analysis, the study findings and conclusions are likely to be more convincing and accurate. The strengths and weaknesses of each type are specified in the discussion below.
3.4.2.1 Interviews

Being the most important source of information, interviews were used to obtain an understanding of the beliefs, values, and perceptions of the research participants. Many of the key questions for the parents were adapted from those used in a study of Zionts et al. (2003) about perceptions of African American families of cultural sensitivity within the special education system. Some were based upon those asked in the “Questionnaire for Carers” in an ADEC survey about “Customers’ evaluation of the services at ADEC” conducted in 2003 by Ms Phuong Dang, a Vietnamese volunteer worker of this organization (Dang, 1996), and “Questionnaires for carers and care recipients” in a research project entitled “Speaking Out: Report on disability in the Vietnamese community, Western Region, Melbourne” carried out by another Vietnamese female worker named Hanh Nguyen in 2001 (Nguyen, 2001). Other questions were based on those suggested in the model of helping relationship suggested by Okun (2002). The questions aimed at inviting parents to discuss (a) the extent to which they were involved in the activities of a home-school partnership, (b) their perceptions of the impact of their ethnicity on special education services, and (c) their overall satisfaction with the services provided. A sample of the questions asked is assembled in Appendix 18.

Interviewees were contacted in advance by telephone for appointments. Interviews were conducted on a volunteer basis and fully catered to interviewees’ schedules and availabilities. Most interviews were carried out at the respondents’ homes. Since the setting chosen should be interference free, the parents helped organize the interviews when their children were at school and the educators tried to avoid play time. The two remaining interviews with Ms Hong, the social worker, and an interpreter were held at
a local library. All interviews were tape-recorded for case transcription. Tape recording was discussed before each interview. Fortunately, no respondent refused to be tape-recorded.

Although the tapes provided a more accurate rendition of an interview, it was not considered a substitute for listening closely throughout the course of an interview. Therefore, notes were also taken during interviews. An Interviewing Journal (Appendix 21) was kept to record the interviews, researcher’ comments and reflective notes as well as to help remind the investigator of what should be done in the next interview. Written notes were also used to support transcription accuracy. However, note taking was only used in the event that recording equipment failed or when necessary. Attention was mainly placed on the interviewing techniques.

In order to assist in reflecting the full set of single-case level concerns, interview questions were prepared in advance. There was a mixture of semi-structured and open-ended questions. The semi-structured questions were to help direct interviewees to the focus of the study (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990). The open-ended questions, on the other hand, were used to elicit views and opinions from the participants. The interview questions were organized into related categories in order to maintain the interviewing sequence. Questions that went beyond the narrow scope of the individual case were not asked.

Probe questions were used, for example ‘Why?’, ‘Why not?’, ‘Can you tell me more about that?’ , ‘Can you think of an example of when that has happened?’, ‘Could you be more specific?’ Attention was also given to specific terms that were not used or familiar in an Australian context e.g., paraprofessional. Other examples included
Year instead of Grade, primary school instead of elementary school, and Individual Learning Plan (ILP) instead of Individualized Education Program (IEP) (Appendix 24). Details of interview of the interview procedures and questions designed and prepared for each group of participants are detailed below.

3.4.2.1.1 Parents

The parents were interviewed first so that the study investigator could gain a grasp of the major issues. The emerging issues were then transformed into the questions for the educators who worked with these parents. Anything arising from interviews with the educators could always be brought back to the parents at a later time.

The parents were involved in a series of five to six interviews of 40-60 minutes each. One-on-one interviews were conducted. The number of interviews seemed great but in fact the interviews with parents often went off track with parents engaging in telling stories about their children and family history. Although this was a good sign of the investigator having parents’ trust, the process was time-consuming and the content strayed away from the research topic.

3.4.2.1.2 Educators

Management staff (usually the school Principal) were involved in one interview which was conducted on a one-on-one basis. The interview focused on general and management issues such as the operation of the parents group, the school’s inclusion program, in-service training for the teaching staff, and the home-school partnership. Questions about the home-school partnership were arranged under four subheadings: i) the school’s policy, ii) communication, iii) involvement, and iv) expectations. This
structure helped the investigator maintain the interviewing sequence and also kept track of the issues that needed covering. A sample of the questions asked is in Appendix 17.

Special educators in each case took part in one focus group interview. Although the interviews remained open and assumed a conversational manner, they were in fact semi-structured and followed a certain set of questions (open and closed type questions). A sample of the questions asked is assembled in Appendix 16. A major purpose of such an interview was to corroborate facts that had been established from other sources and helped prevent the conversation from shifting to irrelevant and broader topics. The questions were carefully worded so that respondents did not feel led by the study investigator and the respondents were free to provide their own commentaries. Caution, however, was exercised when interviewees appeared to be echoing the same thoughts. In these cases, further probing was undertaken.

At the outset of the interview, a general demographic sheet (Appendix 15) was also provided to all special educators and school management staff. This allowed informants to verify their roles and/or positions together with other related information such as school type, school population, percentage of students with a Vietnamese background, number of Vietnamese students studying at the school who had a disability, etc.

3.4.2.1.3 Others (social worker, interpreter)

The interpreter participated in one in-depth interview. Relevant issues investigated included the parents’ communicating and interacting styles. A demographic sheet and a sample of the interview questions for the interpreter are found in Appendix 20.
Ms Hong, the Parent-to-Parent coordinator, took part in two formal tape-recorded interviews and a number of informal conversations. The interviews and conversations were aimed at gaining an insight into the social lives of Vietnamese parents, perception of the social support services offered. A demographic sheet and a sample of the interview questions for the social worker are found in Appendix 19.

3.4.2.2 Observations

Two major forms of observations were used in the study. These were the formal observation and the casual observation. Formal observation mainly occurred during parent-teacher interviews. The focus was on the communication styles of the parents and the teachers. The role of the interpreter was taken into account as it may have had some influence on research findings. To avoid collecting unnecessary data, observation checklists for field work situations (Appendix 22) were prepared.

The casual mode comprised ad hoc observations made during field visits. Observation gave the study investigator the opportunity to perceive reality from the viewpoint of an insider. It was the informants’ subjective experience that was desired. Usually, observations were carried out during monthly and weekly meetings of ADEC groups and Parent-to-Parent. Occasionally, the observation occurred during the groups’ outdoor activities. Considerations related to the casual mode observations included the types of homes and housing in the community, major characteristics of the neighbourhood, and parents’ interaction styles (Appendix 22). Immersion gave the researcher an intimate familiarity with the parents’ lives and culture, which in turn facilitated the researcher’s understanding of the patterns in the parents’ lives, actions,
and words. The observations were terminated when the feeling of saturation was reached.

3.4.2.3 Documentation

A variety of documents were gathered in support of the construction of a comprehensive understanding of the roles of parents and educators in the home-school partnership. Documents collected from the parents included communication books, newsletters, notices, memoranda, and other communiqués. In addition, other published sources such as library materials, census data, community newspapers, and official records of various organizations related to the community were also collected.

Documents collected from schools and educators included school policies regarding services for parents, services for students with special needs; schools’ demographic profiles; and minutes of parent-teacher interviews. The meeting minutes helped the investigator develop a sense of the time budget the educators had for the parents as well as how frequently the parents attended or were involved in school activities.

In addition to providing an insight into the issues under investigation, collected documents proved to be helpful in verifying the correct spellings and titles or names of schools, teachers, other participants, informants, and organizations that might have been mentioned in an interview.

3.4.2.4 Physical artefacts

The physical artefacts collected were mainly from the parents. They took the form of photographs, art objects, tokens, stickers, and craft books with photos. The artefacts were used to help discern valuable comments during an interview or to elicit
information that observations and interviews may have missed. These items helped the investigator have a better understanding of the parent-teacher partnership.

### 3.4.3 Case study database

A case study database was built to systematically classify and store all collected data. First of all, data in the form of words based on observation, interviews, documents, and raw field notes were edited and some were typed up. Tape recordings were transcribed verbatim. The tapes and their duplicate copies were then placed in a secured location. Transcripts of interviews conducted in English were stored as computer files. Interviews with Vietnamese parents which were conducted in Vietnamese were not translated into English as the researcher speaks fluent Vietnamese. The resulting transcripts were then reviewed for overall accuracy by reading the transcript and listening to the audiotape. This was also to contextualize and make sense of the responses. Computer files were printed out as hard copies so as to better assist the process of intensive analysis which was performed by hand.

Transcripts of interviews, field notes, and artefacts were sorted into files (e.g. F1, file 1) and stored by case in relevant subfolder (e.g. S1, subfolder 1) in a mother folder called Data for Analysis (e.g. DA1, Data for Analysis folder 1). Documents such as school newsletters, school-related information, and support services, brochures from social organizations were classified and kept in a separate set of folders called General Information (e.g. GI1, General Information folder 1). Labels were used to clearly distinguish each file and subfolder. A full Code list to the study case database is found in Appendix 23.
Citations and links to the relevant portions of the case study database were provided in the case study reports when necessary. In addition, the database indicated the circumstances under which the evidence was collected, e.g. time and place of an interview.

Preliminary analysis was undertaken of the collected data. This concurrent phase was conducted between data collection activities.

3.4.4 Concurrent analysis

Concurrent analysis involved continual reflection on the data. The simultaneous analysis assisted the investigator in adjusting the focus of the study and keeping track of what had been completed.

Initially, notes from the first round of interviews showed that answers to the interview questions were still very broad, sometimes unrelated. This rudimentary analysis led to the need to restructure questions in relation to the parents’ personal circumstances. It is one characteristic of the Vietnamese culture that once the bond between the interviewer and interviewee had been established, the interviewee was usually very open and willing to talk in depth about their family issues, including their extended family. However, as all the parents had adopted the Australian way of life and had very independent lifestyles, it was obvious that the roles of the extended family members were no longer essential.

In addition to information from the interviews, documents and materials gathered from the first round of data collection helped shape the focus for the next round. As most parents did not speak English fluently, a communication book was the most
preferred communication method. This raised a need to further investigate the issue of communication, especially the nonverbal aspects.

The influence of the parent-educator relationship on parents’ understanding of their role as well as the way the parents carried out that role were the focus for the last round of data collection. Concurrent analysis ended when data that helped address the research question became saturated. The second phase of intensive analysis began. The process was conducted at both the individual level (within-case analysis) and across the cases (cross-case analysis).

### 3.5 Within-case analysis

#### 3.5.1 General strategies: Describing and explaining

Analytic strategies were employed to explain how and why things occurred. The strategies included: developing a case description and setting up an explanatory network. The approach was process-oriented in that it emphasized the case context (describing). It also dealt with the relations among concepts and revealed a theme orientation (explaining). A series of analysis episodes with different analysis techniques, that integrated both of these strategies were used to understand what, how, and why.

Hand analysis was selected as the current study involved a small database, of less than 500 pages of transcript and field notes. It allowed the investigator to be close to the data. The progression started from describing case contexts; coding and listing themes; then building within-case explanatory networks that tried to illustrate the connections.
and influences among key components. The diagram in Figure 10 below helps visualize the within-case analysis.

**Within-case analysis**

![Diagram of Within-case analysis](image)

- **Case description**: Case background, context
- **Themes listing**: Coding, listing themes
- **Explanatory network**: Chronologically arranged events sorted into categories, Links between events

Figure 10: Within-case analysis diagram

### 3.5.2 Case description

The case context was revealed through a detailed description of the geographic characteristics of relevant research settings, demographic information of institutions involved, and a portrait of key actors and their relationship. More complete descriptions were used later to create reasons for whatever happened.
3.5.3 Themes listing

First, all the data including interviewing transcripts and field notes drawn from observations and documents were carefully read to obtain a general sense of the information, its credibility and use. Notes of ideas were written down. To assist with coding, a list of all possible topics was created. The topics were derived in accordance with the conceptual framework of the study (Figure 6 in Chapter 2) and the study research question. The topics were then abbreviated as codes. The code reference was then taken back to the data and assigned to appropriate segments of text. The initial codes were considered temporary. To help examine for fit and power, they were applied to the first set of field notes. Quite a few codes were revised. The codes were then applied to the remaining data.

Themes were classified into two categories: task and interpersonal relationship. Themes were fully developed when saturation was reached. Redundancies were eliminated if necessary. Multiple perspectives on each theme were examined through assessing viewpoints from different research participants and data sources. Quotes that illustrated the themes were selected to be used in the final report. An exhaustive check of various sources of data was conducted to confirm that the themes had been adequately specified.

Fragments of an explanatory nature were noticed during the process of coding. An explanatory network connecting the fragments was then established. The network adopted the state-event model of Miles and Huberman (1994).
3.5.4 Explanatory network

The network displayed the most important events (shown in boxes) and states or conditions (shown in round-edged boxes). Events were what actually happened in a case. They were sorted into categories and arranged chronologically. States or conditions served as the mediators or links between specific events. The sharp edges of the boxes imply specific and narrow-in-time characteristics of the events. Round edges imply more diffuse and less concrete features of the conditions that often exist over a longer time. The interactions among states and events that consistently appeared together in a case and had some kind of relationship were connected by arrows. The process helped combine discrete pieces of data into an evidential chain of relationships. The connections were, however, directional rather than correlational. A display is presented at the end of the analyzed results for each case study. The process was approached deductively and inductively. Deductively, the theoretical framework already carried guesses about the directional influence among investigating factors. The two major within-case embedded propositions to be examined were (1) parents who emphasized the parent-teacher relationship tended to be more active in their involvement in the home-school partnership, and (2) a low level of parent-teacher interaction appeared to influence the effectiveness of the home-school partnership. These propositions related to a larger case proposition which was “parents who have a relationship with educators better understand their roles and more successfully carry out the task”. On the other hand, inductively, what the data suggested was not ignored. Coded segments of text were analyzed sentence by sentence to understand the

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8 Individual explanatory networks of the case studies are illustrated in diagrams in Figures 12-19 of Chapter 4
relationships or threads of meanings. The techniques used were making contrasts and comparisons, and tracing the threads back and forward.

### 3.6 Cross-case analysis

#### 3.6.1 General strategies: Case-oriented and theme-oriented

In the cross case analysis, the investigator’s deliberate choice was to employ mixed strategies which integrated descriptive case-oriented and explanatory theme-oriented approaches. The case-oriented approach was used to maintain specific and concrete patterns of cases and their particularistic findings. A combination of the approaches helped developed a set of explanations. The operations used to build a cross-case explanatory network are illustrated in the *Cross-case analysis diagram* in figure 11 below.

**Cross-case analysis**

- **Cross-case comparison tables**: Individual case main features listed
- **Cross-case explanatory network**: Creation of linear chains

![Cross-case analysis diagram](image)

**Figure 11: Cross-case analysis diagram**
3.6.2 Word tables for cross-case comparisons

Seven individual case networks were put up on a display surface. Word tables were then established to create comparative analyses of all cases. The tables (7 to 22) are found in Appendix 25 *List of tables used to analyze cross-case data*. The tables were explanatory rather than simply descriptive. Word tables were also used for triangulation purposes.

Patterns and themes derived from the process of comparing and contrasting across the cases were noted. The examination of word tables for cross-case patterns relied strongly on argumentative interpretation, not numeric tallies. New categories and concepts that had not been anticipated also emerged from this process.

3.6.3 Cross-case explanatory network

Building a cross-case explanatory network was one way to move from case-specific to more general explanations of clusters of cases which shared important attributes. The network helped reinforce the common and at the same time maintain local particularities of individual cases.

In an effort to simplify assumptions about the explanatory relationships, cross-case patterns were placed in a linear chain. Such a chain helped the investigator create an explicit view of the connections among certain phenomena. Individual chains were then elaborated and linked with one another. The final version of the network was reached when the model accommodated all the information from the related cases.
Returning repeatedly to field notes and taking into consideration extreme cases were methods used to check, test, and extend the network. Constant reference to the original purpose of the inquiry and possible alternative explanations were made. Case study protocol, case study database, and chains of evidence were other safety measures used.

Conclusions drawn from the explanatory network were presented in narrative form. The narratives told stories about the influences of multilevel systems and the connections among the major features.

### 3.7 Verifying conclusions

In order to verify individual case (within-case) results, the investigator consulted with parent participants on a one-on-one basis at the parents’ homes. The parents were asked for their comments in relation to the research findings. The parents were provided with their case summary and a diagram of the factors influencing their home-school partnership. Parents’ opinions indicated that the study findings reflected their perceptions of the issues being investigated. Feedback from the Parent-to-Parent coordinator, a Vietnamese social worker also supported the findings. With regard to the educators, follow-up contacts with the schools unfortunately revealed that many of the study participants had either retired or no longer worked at the schools. Individual case findings, however, showed that perspectives of the educators did not vary much. In addition, peer reviews also corroborated the educator-related findings.

Professional advice from the study supervisor was one method employed to help check the derivation of the research conclusions by tracing the steps of the study from
the initial research question to case study conclusions. Contributions from peers at the School of Education conferences also confirmed the study’s cross-case findings. Peer debriefing also proved to be very helpful against bias.

3.8 Measures to ensure quality of the data analysis

Trustworthiness of the data collected and data analyses of the present study was discussed using trustworthiness standards of credibility, dependability, and conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Carson et al., 2001; Gabrielian, 2008).

3.8.1 Credibility

The credibility of the present study is expressed through a detailed literature review of relevant conceptual frameworks, prior theories, and research results of studies in the field of home-school partnership. These foundations were reflected in the study research framework (Figure 6 in Chapter 2) which was established as a conceptual guide for the present study.

3.8.2 Dependability

The dependability of the present study was established through a comprehensive account of how the study was carried out. The study research design (Chapter 3) provided in-depth descriptions of the study settings, selection of participants, rationales for the data collection and analysis strategies, together with discussions of the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. The purpose was to help minimize the errors and biases in the study.
3.8.3 Conformability

The conformability of the present study was demonstrated through a detailed account of the data analyses (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5). The analyses were linked back to the study research framework, prior theories from the literature, and prior theories pertaining to the study findings. In an effort to enhance the study transparency, the interpretation of research findings was made with clear descriptions and explanations.

3.9 In summary

Based on the nature of the research question, the study employed case study methodology. Multiple embedded case studies with purposeful sampling were used. In accordance with the selected methodology, interviews, observations, documentation, and physical artefacts were qualitative techniques and procedure used to carry out the project. Data collected were analyzed at an individual level with a process and theme oriented approach. The purpose was to develop case descriptions and explanations for the way things have occurred in each case. Cross-case analyses were later conducted to search for cross-case patterns. Mixed strategies that integrated descriptive case-oriented and explanatory theme-oriented approaches were employed to analyze data at this level.

The study described and interpreted the findings from the perspectives of both parents and educators who participated in the study. A number of measures were conducted and used throughout the study to help ensure the quality of the data analysis. Multiple sources of evidence, a case study database, detailed account of the way the study was carried out, peer debriefing, literature enfolding, respondent feedbacks were among
the strategies and techniques used to strengthen the study credibility, dependability, and conformability. The next chapter details the results of the within-case analysis process.
CHAPTER 4 WITHIN CASE RESULTS

4.1 Case study 1

4.1.1 Case description

The children involved in Case Study 1 were a boy called Lam and his young sister Loan. Both had been diagnosed to have an autism spectrum disorder by the Department of Child Development and Rehabilitation, Melbourne Royal Children’s Hospital. At the time of this research, Lam was in Year Three and Loan was in Year One, studying at a mainstream school in the Northern area of Melbourne. Participants in this case study included the father Hai, the mother Giau, and involved educators.

Interviews with the parents were conducted at the family home. There were five meetings, three with the mother only and two with both parents. Total meeting time was about seven hours. The interviews were taped recorded. The investigator also had an opportunity to take part in a cruise trip with the parents, which was organized by ADEC for carers. Further interactions with the parents outside the family home included the investigator and both parents attending a group meeting at ADEC and a parent-teacher interview where the investigator helped out as an interpreter. There were a number of documents from both children obtained with the parents’ consent for the analysis. In Lam’s case, they included an assessment report by the Royal Children’s Hospital; school reports 2003; minutes of Program Support Group (PSG) meetings 2002; speech pathology language assessment report 2002; and individual
learning goals record sheet 2002. In Loan’s case, there were school reports 2003, and an individual learning record sheet 2003.

Contacts with the educators involved in this case study included an interview with the Assistant Principal and a group interview with two senior teaching staff of both children. An overview of the family’s background and the context of the school are detailed below.

4.1.1.1 Family background

The family house was located in a quiet residential area in a Northern suburb of Melbourne and was not far from the children’s school. It was a spacious, nice brick house which was well kept, featuring a Buddha altar.

Hai came to Australia as a refugee and went back to marry Giau with the arrangement from both families. Giau is an active, young lady who was in her mid 30s and was twelve years younger than Hai. Both parents had middle secondary education and spoke very limited English. The children were not given English names. The children, according to the parents, had problems with communication and socialization. Giau said she had a lot of pressure and worked very hard as a machinist during her pregnancies. Having just arrived from Vietnam, Giau was overwhelmed and isolated during her first pregnancy. And while she was pregnant the second time, her mother in Vietnam passed away. Nevertheless, Giau did not think that these difficulties had much to do with the children’s condition because it could be genetically-related. Hai’s brother had a severe cognitive disability and had already passed away. Giau’s niece also had a severe disability that prevented the girl from being able to control her movements.
Giau was a home-bound mother who did not drive and was not often in contact with other people. Hai worked casually from three to six months a year. Vietnamese was the language spoken in the home. The couple was happy with life as it was. The family house was paid off and they received enough financial support from the government. Only occasionally, the couple sent money to Vietnam to support Giau’s father.

4.1.1.2 School context

The mainstream school was housed in a double storey, brick building located in a residential area in a northwest inner working class suburb, about six kilometres to the north of the Central Business District (CBD) of Melbourne. The school was in close proximity to the local market and a shopping centre. The school drew children from a diverse range of ethnic groupings and socio-economic backgrounds. The school population was 280. Fifteen students were Vietnamese. There were seven students with a disability, two of whom were Vietnamese. Lam’s class size was 25. Lam was one of two students with special needs in the class. Loan was the only student with special needs in a class of 21 students. There was one integration aide provided for students with special needs in the school. According to the parents, Lam and Loan each had an hour of integration aide service a week.

Professionals who participated in this case study included the Assistant Principal and the female classroom teachers of Lam and Loan. The Assistant Principal was in his 40s and is a Caucasian. Lam’s teacher was in her 40s, of English-speaking background, had a Bachelor’s degree, and had been in the position for 28 years. She had one year of experience in the integration program and had been Lam’s teacher for
a year. Loan’s teacher was in her 30s, also of English-speaking background, had a Bachelor’s degree, and had been a teacher for 19 years. She only worked with Loan for a year.

4.1.2 Case results

4.1.2.1 Parents preparedness for cooperation

There were certain factors that played prominent roles in the process of the parents preparing for home-school cooperation. These factors included the parents’ perceptions of their children’s disability and of help, together with support from the school and the specific ILP for each child.

4.1.2.1.1 Parents’ perception of children’s disability

i) Acceptance

During the first few years after their children had been diagnosed, Hai and Giau were very sad and pessimistic about their children’s future. However, a long with time, they gradually built up their “spirit” and accepted the children’s conditions. As the children’s general understanding improved, the parents were glad to reveal that they felt better.  

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9 Quotations used in Case Study 1 were extracted from transcripts of interviews with the parents, school management staff, and the teachers. Respectively, the transcripts were stored under code names of Files 1, 2, and 3 (F1/F2/F3). The transcripts were kept in Subfolder 2 (S2) of the Data for Analysis Folder number 2 (DA2). The reference code for these transcripts as listed in the Code list to the case study database (Appendix 23) is DA2.S2 (F1/F2/F3).
ii) Children’s improvement

According to the teacher, Lam was achieving to the best of his ability. He made “excellent” progress in maths, literature, and communication. Lam had a circle of friends that he socialized with within the classroom and the playground. He was able to complete the Year Two maths curriculum without difficulty, and could write “terrific stories”, letters and instructions. The parents, on the contrary, were not very happy with Lam’s progress. Hai said even though Lam had made some progress in terms of his “general understanding”, the progress “is not to a normal level yet”. In the parents’ view, Lam’s social skills were still poor. Lam was not yet able to tell stories and was also slow at maths. Giau wondered on what basis the teachers built their assessments and was concerned that only “good things” were mentioned in the school reports.

In regard to Loan, the teacher revealed that she also made “excellent” progress in all areas of the curriculum. She was eager to be part of class discussions. She even put up her hand to answer questions. Her understanding of tasks was complete. With the assistance of the teacher aide, her verbal skills showed signs of improvement. She was confident to volunteer as a class helper and enjoyed the feeling of responsibility. Hai and Giau said Loan was now able to understand what they said to her and was less aggressive than before. However, Loan was not yet able to communicate in English. She also did not have friends to play with and was often on her own during playtime. Loan did not know what to do when being bullied and had been struggling to cope with this situation.
4.1.2.1.2  Parents’ perception of help

i)  Self-help

With no family member in Australia and only a few friends from ADEC, the parents relied on themselves. They only rang friends for information when needed. There was a Vietnamese family living across the road, who could give a hand when the parents were in desperate need. Claiming to be an “introvert”, Giau would have loved to boost her confidence. She wanted to learn English to improve her chance of finding work and to effectively help the children with their study.

Being Buddhists, religious belief had been a constant source of comfort for both parents who initially blamed themselves for their children’s conditions and were influenced by the thought of their previous lives. They got over this belief after that and no longer searched for the cause of the symptoms or “were tormented” by that. “We think it is God’s will,” they said. Giau disclosed that although she did not fully follow all the rituals required, she did burn incense everyday, read her prayers, and went to pagoda to pray.

ii) Social support services

The parents used a couple of social support services although they did not know which organizations provided these services. Hai and Giau also received related information in Vietnamese from Centrelink\(^\text{10}\). The parents knew that in case they needed help, they could contact the Department of Human Services via the interpreting service.

\(^{10}\) Centrelink is an Australian Government Statutory Agency, assisting people to become self-sufficient and supporting those in need (Centrelink, 2009)
4.1.2.1.3 School support and the ILP

i) School support

Speech therapy and an integration aide were the special support services provided by the school for both Lam and Loan. The Assistant Principal said the school also had “a myriad of ways” through which parents were supported to get involved in the school community such as the Parents Group, camp for parents, barbeques, and a cultural festival every second year. Nevertheless, continued the Assistant Principal, not many Vietnamese parents participated in these activities. Also, there was no Vietnamese representative on the School Council. Giau said they did not join the school Parents Group because the group was comprised of all Westerners and she and Hai did not speak English very well. However, the parents knew that in case they needed assistance with any queries, they could see the Vietnamese-speaking staff who was available every Wednesday. Hai and Giau also very much appreciated the support they had received so far from the school in relation to Loan’s being bullied. It was very helpful, Giau said. According to the parents, the school environment in general was good.

ii) The ILP

Each child with special needs had a very structured ILP. The goals of the ELP were merged with the general curriculum. It was written by the classroom teacher every term. The programs were child-focused. In order to assist the teachers in applying the two curriculums, the teacher aide helped Lam and Loan in small groups. However, the Principal said no bilingual program was available because there was no funding.
4.1.2.2 Home-school partnership

The home-school partnership was carried out in two main stages representing the relationship and the task. These two stages were the home-school communication and the home-school cooperation. Details of each stage are investigated below.

4.1.2.2.1 Home-school communication

i) Communication lines

Major home-school communication lines available for the family in this case study included the parent-teacher interviews and “without-appointment talking time” with the teachers before or after school.

Parent-teacher interviews were where the curriculum and the children’s progress were discussed. Hai used to attend meetings himself. Lately, Giau had accompanied her husband to the meetings because she was afraid that he did not fully express their concerns. According to the Assistant Principal, Giau was quite concerned when she came and she was good at asking questions. The Assistant Principal said Giau was the one who did the talking and she used the interpreter more. Giau’s concerns mainly surrounded the children’s progress. When Hai and Giau realized that they were eligible for an interpreter in parent-teacher interviews, they were more comfortable in meetings with educators. Observation in a parent-teacher interview before the parents knew of their right to have an interpreter showed a restrained atmosphere. In this meeting, in spite of their concerns for Loan’s welfare and hours with the teacher aide for both Lam and Loan, Hai and Giau did not raise any of these concerns with the teachers. The parents were always afraid of “bothering” the teachers and dared not ask
for an interpreter, thinking it would be an “outrageous” request given that it was a government school. Observation after the parents had an interpreter for the parent-teacher interviews showed some changes in the parents’ communication style. “We are more confident now as we’ve got our ‘own’ interpreter,” Giau said. The role of the interpreter was obviously important, especially when complicated issues were discussed. Advantages of having an interpreter, according to the Assistant Principal, included both parties getting their messages across and the teachers learned more about the parents’ culture, needs and how to help their children. However, there were always disadvantages. Communicating via an interpreter took more time and sometimes the messages “can get a bit mixed up” because the interpreter did not exactly translate what was said, the Assistant Principal said.

The school did not set rule for home-school communication books. It was up to the individual teacher to decide whether communication books should be used. According to the Assistant Principal, it was a flexible arrangement even with students with special needs. Lam and Loan did not have one because the teachers supposed that written English was a barrier for their parents. “Direct verbal communication is better,” Loan’s teacher said. Most often the father came to school to talk to the teachers before or after school about something that needed to be sorted out or clarified. The Assistant Principal said time allotment for communicating with parents was not set specifically. It all depended on the individual parent and teacher. It also depended on factors such as whether or not the parent was shy or whether or not the teacher was ready to spend a lot of time chatting to the parents. In addition to direct verbal communication, there was a newsletter in English that went home weekly. The school did not have the funds to have it produced in any other languages. Parents
could always ring up the school about anything that they did not understand. The school always encouraged parents to make appointments or pop in and see the educators. Nevertheless, home visits were not on the school agenda. The Assistant Principal said it was not part of the teachers’ job. Also, it brought up legal problems about insurance in case the teachers were injured when they were out making home visits. In addition, some teachers would not find it comfortable going to some parents’ homes.

   ii) Home-school relationship

Hai and Giau mentioned changing schools on more than one occasion. The first time was in relation to Loan being bullied. The parents seemed distressed over the fact that Loan no longer wanted to go to school and the school could not find a conclusive solution to deal with the bully. The school met with Hai and Giau to discuss the issue. According to the Assistant Principal, the incident was unfortunate and the so-called ‘bully’ did not intentionally hurt Loan. The second time Giau mentioned sending the children to a different school was during a conversation about the children’s progress. “In general they are making progress, if not, we will change school,” Giau said. With changing school their first option when encountering difficulties, the parents showed a lack of confidence or maybe lacked trust in the school. The educators, however, were positive about their relationship with Hai and Giau. “We go out of our way as a school to have interpreters when we think it’s important,” says Loan’s teacher. The home-school collaboration, according this teacher, was in “a very good balance” which did not put any pressure from the school on the parents. The Assistant Principal also very much appreciated Hai’s efforts to come to all the parent-teacher interviews,
and to other meetings when required, as well as to come in from time to time to see the teachers.

4.1.2.2 Home-school cooperation

i) Stakeholders’ perceptions of roles

Hai and Giau were not involved in the classroom activities because, according to the teachers, it was very hard for parents with limited English. Children-related issues were mainly discussed in parent-teacher interviews or briefly mentioned to Hai in those before and after school conversations. The educators, however, thought that the parents were “very supportive” in terms of their participation in the education of Lam and Loan. For example, the whole family helped Loan with her homework as she needed some extra work in mathematics. Hai and Giau admitted that homework was basically the only area in which they could assist the children. In general, they did not know what Lam and Loan did during the day at school. They did not have enough English to ask the teachers and the children also did not talk much about that. Hai and Giau also asked the teachers if there was anything else they could help with at home. According to the teachers, language was the only difficulty. However, the parents were concerned that there may be “not very good things” about the children because the teachers “always say good things about them.” The parents were also not happy with the fact that the teachers still wanted them to use pictures to communicate with the children. Hai and Giau said they only used this method when needed because they wanted Lam and Loan to memorize things. In addition, the parents did not see the role of the teacher aide as helpful at all because “teacher aide is for the whole group, not just for the ones with special needs,” Giau said. The view of the Assistant Principal
was that he hoped Hai and Giau understood that the school wanted to work with them and was trying to help them as much as they could to do the best for the children.

**ii) Expectations**

The teachers not only had academic but also social expectations for Lam and Loan. The teachers were glad that the children were happy to come to school, got on well with other kids and were also very well accepted by other kids. With regard to Hai and Giau, the parents said they were not too optimistic about the children’s future. They no longer expected that Lam and Loan would “become normal”. They only wished that Lam and Loan “will be a bit better, be independent, and can take care of themselves” given that both Hai and Giau did not have any family members in Australia.

### 4.1.2.2.3 Better home-school cooperation

**i) Cultural issues**

According to Loan’s teacher, the pre-service training obtained 20 years ago in terms of cultural aspect “was less than satisfactory.” Teachers mainly learnt from the parents and experience when they got into the school environment. The Assistant Principal said parents had always been an important part of a two-way home-school partnership. Therefore, in order for the partnership to be successful, it was important for parents to support the school. What parents could do, continued the Assistant Principal, was “to get the communication happening” so the school could learn about them, and about what was happening at home. “It’s just not up to the school,” he said.
ii) Funding

Funding had always been an issue for the school. There was no funding for translating the newsletter into any languages other than English; for bilingual individual support programs for students with special needs, or even for telephoning the interpreting service. The Assistant Principal said the school would like to have these services but there was no money. However, the school also did not have so many different cultures, he concluded.

4.1.3 Case summary

Having accepted the children’s conditions and being happy with the children’s progress were positive factors in the parents’ process of preparing for the home-school cooperation. The parents also had a self-help strategy in which they basically relied on themselves, their faith in religion, and sought social support when necessary. However, there were still factors that had a great deal of impact on the home-school partnership. They were language difficulty, cultural differences, and a lack of trust in educators. In addition, educators being unaware of parents’ view towards educators and home-help suggestions also contributed to parents’ difficulties. There was no evidence of a parent-educator relationship. There was a slight difference in each side’s expectations for the children in terms of their education. Each party did their best to fulfil their role separately. Figure 12 below diagrammatically represents the analysis results of Case Study 1\textsuperscript{11}.

\textsuperscript{11} Explanations for abbreviations, shapes, and signs used in the diagram: P-T : parent-teacher; (+) positive influence; (-) negative influence; Arrows: directional influences; Boxes: events that actually happened, were chronologically arranged and sorted into categories; Round-edged boxes: conditions or states that served as the mediators or links between specific events
The process of home-school partnership

Parents preparedness for the partnership

Parents overcoming pessimistic stage, were glad to see the children improve, interested in children’s education
Parents used social support when needed, had faith in religion & self-help

School resources, support services: ILP, teacher aide, speech therapy, activities for parents, a Vietnamese-speaking staff

Educators’ readiness

Parents very limited English; low level of social interaction
Parents had a lack of trust in educators in certain areas

Home-school cooperation

Parents helped children with homework, but were not happy with educators’ home-help suggestions; did not think integration aide service was effective
Parents had higher academic expectations for children and were not too optimistic about their future

Home-school communication

P-T interviews, non appointment talking time; educators were not aware of parents’ views of educators and home-help suggestions
Child-focused helping; educators’ lack of knowledge of parents’ cultural background

Educators had academic & social expectations for both children; suggested parents use signs to communicate with children at home

Figure 12: A summary diagram of influences on the home-school partnership in Case Study 1
4.2 Case study 2

4.2.1 Case description

The child involved in Case Study 2 was a girl called Helen and had been diagnosed with a severe autism spectrum disorder at Sunshine Hospital. At the time of this research, Helen was fourteen years of age and was attending a special developmental school (SDS) in a Western suburb of Melbourne. Participants in this case included Helen’s mother Kim and involved educators.

Interviews with the mother were conducted at the family home. Total meeting time was six hours plus approximately 40 minutes for a couple of telephone conversations. The interviews were taped recorded. A number of relevant documents and artefacts were collected. They included individual learning record sheet 2003-2004; ILP 2003; and student portfolio 2003.

Contacts with the educators involved in this case study included an interview with the Principal and a group interview with the classroom teacher and the teacher aide. An overview of the family’s background and the context of the school are detailed below.

4.2.1.1 Family background

Kim was in her mid 40s and claimed to be unlucky in love. She had been married three times and experienced domestic violence in each marriage. Kim found herself to be a sentimental but not pessimistic person. Kim had two children, a 19 year old son from the second marriage and Helen from the third marriage. Her son lived separately
with his girlfriend and was looking for a job. Kim was living with Helen in a rental property in a Western suburb. The house was small but tidy and well-kept.

Kim was a singer who originally migrated to the United States then came to live in Australia. Kim was a beautiful woman with a fun loving personality. She was frank, straight for work, open, easy going, friendly, and was not the type of person who worried too much about the future or has a future plan. Kim had a confident, clear, fluent, and succinct communication style. Kim said she finished Year 12 and her English was sufficient to communicate about simple things with professionals, in writing or by telephone. Vietnamese was, however, still the main language used in the home. Kim was interested in talking about her private life, her love for fashion and did not avoid sensitive topics. The investigator was warmly welcomed at the family house. Kim was ready to sign the Prescribed Consent Form without reading the contents or even listening to the explanations. Kim was working at home as a machinist. The family’s financial situation had long been Kim’s major concern.

4.2.1.2 School context

The special school Helen attended was about 14 km west of Melbourne. The school was established as a Baseroom Model. The Baseroom Model, according to the school history, was established in the belief that students would learn best through supported and meaningful integration in the school and in the broader community (SSDS, 2008). The school maintained a very caring, safe and supportive environment where students were treated as individuals. Baserooms provided opportunities for students to access the age-appropriate programs and facilities of the host schools through a mutual exchange of resources and expertise. All students of primary school age currently
attended baserooms in three local primary schools. Middle and senior students attended the main campus. Helen was at the main campus in a class of six students. The school catered for approximately 100 students from Preparatory to 18 years of age and who had a range of moderate to profound intellectual disabilities and special needs. Forty percent of the student population was of Vietnamese background.

Professional participants in this case study included the Principal, Helen’s classroom teacher and the teacher aide. The Principal was in his mid 40s and of English-speaking background. Helen’s classroom teacher was in her 50s and also of English-speaking background. The teacher, who had a Primary Education Diploma, had been a special teacher for 25 years and had been working with Helen for three years. The teacher aide, with secondary education qualification, was in her 40s and of English-speaking background. She had been in the position for over 20 years and had been helping Helen for three months.

4.2.2 Case results

The case was analyzed by looking at the process in which the parent prepared for her cooperation with the school and the home-school partnership.

4.2.2.1 Parents preparedness for cooperation

There were certain factors that played prominent roles in the process of Kim preparing for home-school cooperation. These factors included Kim’s perceptions of Helen’s disability and of help, support from the school and the specific ILP for Helen.
4.2.2.1.1 Parents’ perception of child’s disability

i) Acceptance

As a victim of domestic violence, Kim said she was under a lot of pressure during her pregnancy with Helen. This, according to Kim, could be the reason why Helen had the disability. However, Kim still thought that she was lucky because “some children have more severe conditions.” Kim said “we have to accept that. It’s God’s will.” Kim thought that having such a disability, Helen would ever be innocent and would always need her mother’s care and protection. Kim supposed that Helen was a gift from God that she needed to treasure.12

i) Child’s improvement

Kim revealed that Helen now became more independent. Helen could control her toileting, recognize her name, put things around the house in their right places, buckle up the seat belt and shut the car door herself. With the teachers’ help, Helen had completed the toilet training program and no longer needed to wear nappies. Kim said she felt so free that she did not see herself as having a child with a disability. Kim’s only concern was that Helen did not talk although she improved a lot in expressing what she wanted to say by using pictures. According to the teachers, Helen did not speak at all although she had the ability to understand. Helen knew when to be quiet. She laughed and made a couple of noises but she had no words.

12 Quotations used in Case Study 2 were extracted from transcripts of interviews with the mother, school management staff, and the teachers. The reference code for these transcripts as listed in the Code list to the case study database (Appendix 23) is DA2.S3 (F1/F2/F3).
4.2.2.1.2  Parents’ perception of help

i)  Self-help

Kim did not have any relatives living in Australia. She also did not have friends because “they are all married.” She did not rely on neighbour’s help either. However, Kim said she did not feel lonely. She was happy with the available social support with which she was provided.

Being a Buddhist but not practicing, Kim said that she had a belief in God in general. More than that, she believed in doing the right thing and in scientific knowledge. However, Kim emphasized that she did not rely on religious belief to find her inner peace. She could balance her own life herself and looked forward to the future.

ii)  Social support services

Kim was connected with Interchange\textsuperscript{13} and had been provided with such services as respite care and half price taxi fees. Recently, Kim had her name listed in the Parent-to-Parent group run by Ms Hong and the ADEC group of Ms Thanh. However, Kim did not join these groups. Kim greatly appreciated Interchange for providing helpful information, suitable services, and prompt assistance whenever she needed it. Kim said she did not have much difficulty communicating with professionals in English about simple matters.

\textsuperscript{13} Interchange Victoria is a community based, not for profit organization that provides support to Victorian families who have a child or a person with a disability. A wide variety of programs which are carried out with the help of selected volunteers are available for both children and adults. Interchange programs include host care, youth groups, school holiday programs, camps, sibling and family activities (Interchange, 2009).
4.2.2.1.3 School support and the ILP

i) School support

The school had a large team of Allied Health professionals including a physiotherapist, occupational therapists, a speech pathologist, a music therapist, an art therapist, and therapy aides. The staff worked together with parents and staff across all campuses. The school also had a fairly small number of students in each classroom ranging from four to seven. Each classroom had a teacher and a teacher aide.

The school had a Vietnamese-speaking parent on the School Council. Parents were supported through the Parent Support Group which held a meeting every two months. In addition, there were information nights, celebration days and community barbeques. Interpreters were provided for these activities. According to the Principal, Vietnamese parents came to these activities although he was not sure of the percentage who attended. The school became aware of cultural factors through the parents. For example, the Christmas celebration was now called the-end-of-year celebration because the word Christmas kept some families from attending the event. The teachers said they were trying to encourage more Vietnamese parents to come along because the school was predominantly Vietnamese. The school had a Vietnamese-speaking staff who would write to, or ring parents to talk with them. That was one method to get more parents to come to the Parent Support Group. Also when working with the children in the class, the Vietnamese staff could talk with parents about what was happening in the class on the teachers’ behalf. However, the Principal said that NESB (non-English speaking backgrounds) parents in general were shy and fairly reserved. Kim was not an exception. Helen’s teacher said that Kim did not attend the
Parent Support Group meetings although she occasionally came to the barbeques. According to the teachers, the language barrier was hard to cross. Kim, therefore, usually just communicated with her own child’s teachers and would not socialize with the teachers of other classes.

ii) The ILP

The ILP was planned through discussions between Allied Health staff, teachers, parents and other key service providers at Program Support Group (PSG) meetings. Kim as well as other parents were notified each term of their child’s progress through Learning Diaries and/or student reports. The school believed that meaningful inclusion and integration could occur in a variety of environments and settings. Guidelines for ILPs were set by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) and made use of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) (VCAA, 2009). Kim, nevertheless, said she had no idea of the ILP but noticed Helen was getting better.

4.2.2.2 Home-school partnership

The home-school partnership was carried out through two main stages representing the relationship and the task. These two stages were the home-school communication and the home-school cooperation. Details of each stage are investigated below.
In this case study, the most common home-school communication methods employed were through meetings, communication books, and telephone calls. Because all school children were taken to and from school by taxi, the parents did not often come to school to talk to the teachers.

The teachers thought they communicated very well with Helen’s family through written communication. The family was well informed of Helen’s activities at school on a daily basis. They knew that Helen’s brother would help interpret the teachers’ entries for the mother. Kim sometimes replied in English if she had concerns. The teacher said although Kim’s writing was “a bit jumble,” she did get her point across. Kim also occasionally rang the school about her concerns. The teachers tried to make it very simple for Kim and would ring back with an interpreter if she did not appear to understand. According to the teachers, telephone conversations were time-consuming. However, they were convenient when the related issues were too involved or too long to put them down on paper. The teachers said they would rather have an interpreter than not understand what was being discussed. The Principal said the time issue could be overcome by planning a longer time. In addition to those communicating methods, home visits would be an option if the need arose. The occupational therapists or physiotherapists would do home visit to see how the child was coping with the physical environment at home and made suggestions and organized modifications. If it was necessary, the classroom teacher would do that, the Principal said. In general, in the teachers’ view, the home-school communication was well covered by this
school, especially through the Parent Support Group meetings or the Program Support Group (PSG) once a year. The teachers believed that Kim was quite happy with what they were doing at school.

In Kim’s opinions, there was nothing special about the Parent Support Group meetings or the Program Support Group (PSG) meetings. They were for parents who wanted to learn more about their child’s disability or had special requirements. Kim said she did not need the meetings because she did not have any special requirements. Usually, the teacher would make an appointment to see Kim if necessary. Kim also preferred to have an interpreter in meetings with teachers although Kim was not satisfied with the performance of some interpreters. According to Kim, some interpreters were not fluent enough. The mother, however, liked the teachers’ communication style which she called “simple,” and “gentle,” and “polite.”

ii) Home-school relationship

Kim understood the hard work the teachers undertook when working with children with special needs. Kim was happy with Helen’s progress and very much appreciated the educators’ efforts in helping Helen. Kim said in an interview that “I don’t know any other places that may have a better program, especially a place for children with a disability.” Being a very frank person, Kim said she would not hesitate in seeing the teachers if she needed to. In addition, she was not afraid of bothering them. She would inform the teachers of her concern or frustration over something so that the teachers could help “handle that for me.” However, claiming to be “an easy going person”, Kim revealed that she would “let an issue go if it was not a big deal”. In Kim’s view, the teachers were like friends. “I always show my respect when talking to them but in
fact I consider them my friends,” Kim said. Kim thought that both parents and teachers were of equal importance in the parent-teacher relationship. The way Kim showed her attention towards Helen was to impress the teachers, to show to the teachers that she cared about Helen. The educators also acknowledged the importance of building up a positive relationship with families. However, with the interpreter in between, the teachers did not think that their relationship with Kim was “as social as they would like it to be.”

4.2.2.2 Home-school cooperation

i) Stakeholders’ perceptions of roles

According to the teachers, parents did not come into the classroom unless there was a certain activity being put on just for them to come and see how the students were progressing. When Kim attended the parent support meeting, she did not speak with the classroom because she thought that would upset Helen. Kim was nevertheless interested in Helen’s education. She sometimes put forward suggestions that she felt Helen might like to do or accomplish and the teachers would use them in the class. Kim once wanted help with communication with Helen. So the teachers prepared some signs that they felt would help Kim communicate better with Helen at home. The teachers, however, did not know if Kim used the signs because “we are not at home.” The assistance Kim sought was actually related to Helen’s lack of talk. Kim wanted Helen to be able to speak, even with single words. Kim insisted that Helen had the ability to hear. So she believed that using signs to communicate with her would somehow turn her into a “mute”. Moreover, Kim said she just could not use signs in the street. Sympathizing with the teachers’ work-load, Kim used her own
method of training. She kept talking with Helen at home whenever possible using both English and Vietnamese because she noticed that Helen seemed to understand better in English.

Except for the desire for Helen to be able to speak, Kim revealed that she did not have any plan for Helen’s future. She focused on taking care of Helen’s eating habits based on her own experience and reasoning. Helen would eat healthy food like herbs, fresh tomatoes, and vegetables. Helen was also encouraged to eat a great amount of raw onions, spring onions, and garlic to help her avoid or recover from colds and flu because Helen rejected medicines. Observation showed that Kim truly loved her children. She always talked about the children with a gentle, loving voice and a tender look in her eyes. Kim remembered and recited in detail every stage of Helen’s development. Kim treasured Helen’s learning portfolios because they featured a lot of photos of Helen in various activities at school. Kim thought love was all Helen needed. However, Kim admitted she loved but did not spoil the children. “Love with discipline,” she smiled.

ii) Expectations

Kim wanted Helen to speak. “Say ‘eat’ when she’s hungry or say ‘go’ when she wants to go out. That’s enough,” Kim said. In addition, Kim also wanted Helen to learn some skills such as cooking and cleaning so that Helen could take care of herself later on. To Kim, work skills were not necessary. In terms of Helen’s speaking, the teachers revealed that they had explained to Kim that it was almost impossible. They believed that Helen would always have to rely on signs to communicate.
4.2.2.3 Better home-school cooperation

i) Cultural issues

The teachers said only a minimal amount of teaching about cultural aspects was provided in pre-service training. There was almost no in-service training regarding inter-cultural issues. According to the teachers, the main way they learnt about family cultures was from parents and colleagues. The Principal agreed that the school did not have a lot of formal professional development (PD) in that area. Currently, the teachers relied on the interpreting service. For better partnerships, the educators wished that they had more information about the cultures of the families, the way people interacted, and what other cultures expected of the school so that they could better meet parents’ needs. The Principal informed finding a training source was also a hurdle.

According to the Principal, to get the best results for the students, families and staff should be working together as a team. “It is important to treat it as an equal partnership,” he said. The Principal suggested that parents should take an active approach to the home-school partnership and did not think that educators were experts who knew everything. Parents should voice their concerns and together with the school work out a strategy to help. However, in order to make team work come true, the Principal said it was essential that families should first accept that the child had a significant disability. Secondly, having realistic and appropriate expectations were critical. Some families had “extremely high and unrealistic expectations”, others had very low expectations which hindered the child’s becoming independent.
ii) Funding

With a predominant population of Vietnamese students, Vietnamese parents at this school were well cared for and did not feel isolated like those in some other schools. The school had a Vietnamese-speaking staff. Interpreters were provided for meetings and other events, and the school newsletter was translated into Vietnamese. Funding for cultural support was therefore not emphasized by the Principal as a big problem.

4.2.3 Case summary

Kim was a loving, caring, and self-reliant parent who did not need the support of religion. Being a single parent, Kim more than anyone understood the necessity of social support services and very much appreciated the support she had been receiving so far. Although Kim accepted that Helen had a disability, she did not seem to realize its seriousness. Again, although Kim was happy with Helen’s achievements, she bore the false hope that Helen could be far better if she was provided with the right support services by the school. The mother’s reasoning in this case did not help lead to a cooperative partnership. Cultural differences, discrepancies in expectation, and language barriers emerged as major difficulties hindering an effective home-school partnership. There was limited sign of a parent-teacher relationship. The analysis results of Case Study 2 are diagrammatically represented in Figure 13 below.
Figure 13: A summary diagram of influences on the home-school partnership in Case Study 2
4.3 Case study 3

4.3.1 Case description

The child in Case Study 3 was Ty, who at the time of this research was ten years of age. Participants in this case study included Ty’s parents, Ms Oanh and Mr Nam, and the educators at the special school where Ty was attending. According to the school Principal, Ty had Autism and mental retardation.

Interviews with the parents were conducted at the family house. There were six meetings, ranging from one and a half to three and a half hours each. In addition, there were several conversations with the mother over the phone. Total interviewing and chatting time was about 15 hours. The investigator was introduced to the mother at one of the meetings conducted by Ms Thanh, a Vietnamese worker for ADEC. Documents and artefacts obtained with consent from the family for the purpose of data analysis included a fitness training diary for constipation, a psychometric assessment by a speech pathologist 1997; an ILP 2003; school reports from 2000 to 2002; and health reports for 2002.

Contacts with the educators involved in this case study included a group interview with the Principal and the Assistant Principal cum school welfare officer, and a one hour and a half group interview with Ty’s classroom teacher and teacher aide. An overview of the family’s background and the context of the school are detailed below.
4.3.1.1 Family background

Ty was the eldest child of three and was the only child with a disability in the family. Ty and his siblings lived with their parents in a four-bedroom, brick family house which was located in a Western suburb of Melbourne and was in close distance to public transport. The house featured a Jesus Christ altar and pictures of other saints. Traditional Vietnamese guest welcoming culture was well preserved in the family home with the investigator always provided with drinks at each interview, given home-grown fruits and vegetables as gifts, or invited to stay for meals. The children did not have English names. The language spoken at home was Vietnamese.

Oanh, the mother – who was in her early 50s – did law and education in Vietnam; nurse, child care, and interpreting in Australia. At the time of this study, Oanh was taking leave from her part-time study of Asian studies at Victoria University to have more time to prepare suitable food for Ty. Nam, the father – who was in his early 50s – had a Bachelor’s degree in information technology and was working full-time as a worker at a laundry factory. His income, according to the wife, was not better than unemployment benefits. Oanh said the family did not have enough financial support from the government and they did not have enough money. She often compared their family’s financial situation with that of her relatives. Oanh wished that her husband was not so “stubborn” keeping the “manual, low-income job”, going back to study, and “learning to look after the family financially.” Oanh was very keen on finishing off her degree and then taking a pedagogy course in order to be able to help Ty. Oanh said she had spent the last ten years taking care of Ty. Observation showed that Oanh was also busy with her third child, who was still breastfed at the age of two and carried by Oanh all the time during the interviews and would cry hysterically if put in
her pram. Nam said that his wife did not know how to properly manage her study and take care of the family.

The couple said they just occasionally informed each other of what they were doing. “We rarely share our thought,” Nam said. However, they still helped each other doing house chores. According to Oanh, extended family members from both sides of the family were a pain, who only cared about money, interfered with her family issues, and made fun of her study. She was better off without them. The family also did not have support from neighbours and friends. With social support services, Oanh used to use respite care but due to language and cultural differences, it did not work out. Oanh said she was not happy with “unprofessional” volunteered helpers as well as was not satisfied with the services provided. The family basically no longer used any social disability support services except for the financial assistance from Centrelink.

4.3.1.2 School context

This was a state government special developmental school (SDS) for students who had an intellectual disability aged between five and eighteen years. The school was located in a Western suburb, about 30 km from the Melbourne’s Central Business District (CBD). The school had a population of 150 students and Ty was the only student of Vietnamese background. There were nine students in Ty’s class.

The school facilities featured function rooms, a library, a fenced playground with yard facilities for students to play large scale games, covered walkways and ramps connecting all classrooms, and a school garden growing plants of students’ choices. The school had committed significant resources to student welfare programs with support services including teacher aides, and speech, psychology, physiotherapy, and
occupational therapists. In addition, there were group sessions in relation to self-esteem and social skills. The school curriculum provided diverse educational opportunities to prepare students for lifelong learning so that they may reach their full social, emotional, academic and physical potential. The school philosophy was that the home-school partnership was vital to a student’s success. The school had a Parents Group. Decisions on policy and practice were based on students’ needs as well as inputs from students and parents by way of the School Council.

Educators who participated in this case study included the Principal, the student welfare coordinator, the classroom teacher, and the teacher aide. The female Principal and the female student welfare coordinator were in their 50s and of English-speaking background. The classroom teacher was in his 40s and also of English-speaking background. The teacher had secondary education, specialist qualifications, and a Bachelor’s degree. The teacher was also undertaking a Master’s course specializing in special education needs. He had been a teacher for three years and had worked with Ty in this case for two years. The teacher aide with secondary education was in her 30s and of Italian background. She had been working with Ty for one year.

4.3.2 Case results

4.3.2.1 Factors influencing home-school partnership

Before migrating to Australia, Oanh suffered from kidney disease and serious typhoid. She recently had chronic headaches, exhaustion, and lack of blood. In addition to the issue of health, Oanh’s perception of Ty’s disability also had direct and significant impact on the home-school partnership.
The chronology of Oanh’s story of Ty’s condition was very confusing. Details were not coherent and not at all clear. It was very easy for Oanh to get distracted from the questions asked. The father also provided very ambiguous answers. The history of Ty’s condition was gathered by the investigator as follows.

Oanh gave birth to Ty when she was 39 years of age. Ty’s constant crying started when he was at kinder. The family was notified by the pre-school teacher. However, the parents refused to take any action as they did not think there was anything wrong with Ty. Ty went on attending a mainstream school. An assessment report by a school psychologist conducted when Ty was in Prep showed that Ty had problems across all learning areas. Ty appeared to have significant difficulties understanding what was being asked of him, which may reflect receptive speech problem or a cognitive problem. Oanh said Ty was panic-stricken during that period as extended family members started to move out of their family home and he did not want that to happen. In Year One, specialists suggested sending Ty to a special school. Oanh said she was in shock when informed of the news and decided to let him stay and keep studying at the mainstream school. “I found it was a right decision,” she said. In Year Two, Ty suffered from ‘faecal blocking and dripping’ in school and was teased by his peers. He cried a lot and went down hill in his academic work. He started to receive treatment from a hospital. In Year Three, the faecal dripping stopped but Ty was already at low ebb. Ty could no longer study and dared not look at other people’s face when talking to them. “There’s a huge gap of knowledge compared to that of his peers,” Oanh said. Ty became irritated from time-to-time, depressed, and preferred to stay at home. Oanh informed the school of his condition. The teacher said it was
Oanh’s fault, blaming her because he was not happy at home so he did not want to go to school. The mother did not agree. She “knew” Ty was “insulted” by the teacher and “the teacher aide acted in concert with the classroom teacher to conceal Ty’s condition from me.” Ty was just too scared to tell his parents. Oanh said she was frustrated and “I then decided to send him to a special school.” 14

Ty, at the time of this study, was in Year Four at a special setting. “He is more disorganized,” Oanh said. At home, he cried, screamed, threw things around and suffered from constipation again. The whole family was influenced by his condition. Oanh even thought of sending Ty to a mental health hospital. He no longer wanted to go to school. “I think he is afraid of school,” she said. He had been to school only a few days this year. Oanh said being absent from school was all right because “it is a special school.” Actually, Oanh did not really care because as she said “no one from the school has paid the family a visit,” and Ty “has learnt almost nothing from the school and has not improved academically”. According to the teachers, Ty was physically violent and was not able to use verbal skills. However, in general “he was happy at school with some bad days with bad behaviours,” the classroom teacher said. Ty’s being away from school, according to the classroom teacher, had become “a bit of a pattern.” The teachers were frustrated that Ty missed school so much because they believed that when Ty was at school, he made progress.

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14 Quotations used in Case Study 3 were extracted from transcripts of interviews with Ty’s parents, school management staff, and the teachers. The reference code for these transcripts as listed in the Code list to the case study database (Appendix 23) is DA3.S2 (F1/F2/F3).
4.3.2.1.2 *Parents’ expectations for the child*

The parents did not accept the reality that Ty had a disability which contributed a great deal to the whole situation. In a recent interview, the parents gladly informed me that Ty had recently been assessed again and this time doctors correctly diagnosed him as having depression, not autism. Ty was now on the waiting list to have psychological treatment. The inevitable consequence of not accepting the reality was that the parents bore unrealistic expectations for Ty. “He’s not bad,” the father said, supposing that Ty would be in the current condition for a while and then “he would become normal again.” “I’ll try anything to make him normal again,” Oanh said. Being instilled with the thought that their child would become normal again, Oanh had second thought of sending Ty to a special setting. “He studies in the same environment with other children with special needs. Thus, he looks more and more insane. Perhaps, it was not a good idea to put him in a special school in the first place,” the mother said. Culture may have certain influence on the parents’ attitude. Oanh expressed concern over “loosing face with the community.” She could not trust social workers also because the possibility was that more people in the community may learn about their situation and would make fun of them. “That will affect our life as well as the future of our children,” Oanh said.

4.3.2.1.3 *Parents’ perceptions of professionals and support services*

Oanh blamed the teachers for not being sensitive, not believing her, not helping, lack of enthusiasm and professional knowledge. According to the mother, teachers always said good things about their students because “special students brought money to the school. The school wants to keep them”. The lack of trust was also reflected in the
parents’ perspective of other professionals. The parents refused to let Ty take his
prescribed medication suspecting it may cause long term effect. Social workers were
considered “foreigners” because they had a different culture and spoke a different
language; therefore Oanh did not think that they could work well with her child.
Adding to the lack of trust was the mother’s subjectivity, arbitrariness, and impatience.
Oanh had made her own prescriptions to treat Ty and other family members based on
her knowledge of herbal medicine that she had learnt for a couple of months. The
ingredients were “very cheap and available at Chinese Herb Medicine shop,” she said.
Very often, Oanh changed treatment strategies without professional advice. The
mother was still “thinking of new strategies to treat Ty.” She was going to give him
her own medicine and only took Ty to hospital for treatment when his condition “gets
worse.”

In relation to school support services for parents, Oanh said there was no activity that
helped parents and teachers understand each other. The mother wondered if the school
ever felt sorry for her family.

4.3.2.2 Home-school partnership

The home-school partnership was carried out through two main stages representing
the relationship and the task. These two stages are the home-school communication
and the home-school cooperation. Details of each stage are investigated below.

4.3.2.2.1 Home-school communication

The home-school communication lines available for the parents in this case study
included the parent-teacher interviews, telephone, and a student communication book.
In relation to time allotment to work with families, it was quite flexible and all up to the teachers as well as depending on the parents’ concerns, needs and necessities.

i) Parent-teacher interviews

There was a regular ILP meeting at the beginning of the year which was to plan for the whole year. School reports were sent home in the middle and at the end of the year. Parents were invited to come in after each report to discuss any issues raised from the report. In relation to concerns such as Ty not attending school, a special meeting would be organized.

Usually both Ty’s parents attended meetings. The classroom teacher indicated that parents did make a pretty good effort when they came. They tried to speak as much English as possible and would use the interpreter if they could not express something. Understanding that the parents “are going into a strange territory,” the teachers also tried their best to understand the parents as much as possible. Although the parents appeared to be able to communicate fairly well in English, the classroom teacher insisted that it was better to have an interpreter. Ty’s family was the only family that would need an interpreter in the class. The advantage, according to the teacher, was that the parents probably felt free in what they said as they knew it was going to be translated. The meetings were smooth as the parents seemed to understand. For the teachers, the time consumed was the only disadvantage. In the Principal’s view, however, communication via an interpreter was not as direct, an essential element to have a better parent-teacher relationship. Observation of a parent-teacher interview showed that the father did not say anything. The mother mostly kept silent, showed no feeling, and gave short answers when asked. After the meeting, Oanh advised the
investigator that she was “against” all the suggestions by the school although she did not raise her opinions during the meeting.

In addition to these interviews, the parents only contacted the teachers when there was something that was “worth talking about” because they did not want to “beg” for help and did not believe that they could have any influence on the teachers. The parents supposed that the teachers knew better than the family with regard to Ty’s strengths and weaknesses. There was a discrepancy in the home-school understanding of Ty’s behaviours. According to the teachers, Oanh was worried about Ty’s negative behaviour at home. Oanh said Ty got into a lot of fights and had negative attitude towards school. The teachers were surprised because Ty seemed happy enough at school when he did come to school. The teacher aide said Ty was a very lively student and applied himself to what the teachers expected him to. The classroom teacher did not know what the mother meant by saying Ty got into fights. The teacher aide reasoned that there may be a little bit of comparison between siblings. Possible problems in the family had always been a question that concerned the teachers. Ty’s having difficulty speaking two languages and adjusting into two different environments were possibilities, 25 the classroom teacher. The teacher had been thinking of getting the school physiotherapist who happened to be of Vietnamese background and worked at the school two days a week to help spend some time with Ty and got an idea of how well Ty communicated in Vietnamese. The aim was to find out whether Ty had a problem in communicating in Vietnamese as well or just in English. According to the teacher, Ty seemed to understand what the teachers said to him.
ii) Communication book and other communication methods

All school students had a communication book. Ty’s mother did write in the book and
the writing was “quite understandable,” the classroom teacher said. The teacher
understood that there was always the possibility that the parent would not understand
what was written in the book. Although Ty’s mother did not respond frequently, the
teacher had enough responses to suggest that it was worth writing in the book.
Because the messages did not seem to get across sometimes, the teacher aide said a
follow-up was necessary. They would ask the children to make sure that their parents
got the message. Oanh, on the other hand, said that she was upset because the school
just wrote good things in the communication book and school reports and concealed
all the things they “insulted” Ty. The family therefore, according to Oanh, would
never know of “the real progress of Ty.”

Oanh once contacted the school by telephone informing the teacher that Ty did not
want to go on camp. The classroom teacher rang home using the telephone
interpreting service to discuss the issue with Oanh. It turned out Ty was worried that
he was going to sleep in a tent, which he was not. The teacher encouraged Oanh to
talk Ty into going because it would be a great experience for him. Ty went on camp
that time although after that he had not been to school for ages. Basically, what the
teachers would do was encouragement. Even when the response from the family was
a “no”, the teacher aide said. They would ring and try to encourage something that
they felt was really important for Ty to try to do. The teacher aide said there was the
need to do so if the family and school were going to understand each other. The
problem was that although ringing was more or less fairly straightforward, it was very
time-consuming because they needed to engage an interpreter. The school was very
much concerned about Ty’s frequent absence from school. The student welfare officer occasionally contacted the family over the phone about this.

In spite of their concerns for Ty, the teachers did not do home visits. They did not think it was encouraged and was possibly done at higher authority by the welfare officer or the Assistant Principal in accordance with the school policy and through another process via the School Council. Legal matters were also a concern. The Principal agreed that home visits were not something that was encouraged in lots of schools. They therefore did not ask teachers to do so for safety reasons and concern for the teachers’ long hours of work. However, the Principal said if home visits by teachers were the best way to do something then the school would ask the teachers to go to their students’ homes.

4.3.2.2 Home-school cooperation

i) Teachers’ responsibilities

When Ty was off school for more than two days, the classroom teacher contacted the welfare officer who then rang the parents. Oanh informed the school that Ty did not want to go to school, suffering from depression. The parents were contacted again by the school and a meeting was arranged to find out what the problem was and why. The educators were literally left wondering what was going on. They really hoped that they could work that out with the family. Being afraid that Ty got bored staying at home for so long and in an effort to compensate for his loss, the teachers had the idea of sending home craft kits and some little minor projects for Ty to do. The teachers said Ty loved to be in the kitchen and doing hands-on activities. That was an example of what the teachers did to help Ty in his home environment. The teachers in this case
took an active role in their partnership with the family and encouraged the family along the way. According to the classroom teacher, it was easier for them to encourage parents because parents “might be unsure about how much they can stick their noses in or get involved.”

ii) Parental involvement

Even though being encouraged, the teachers revealed that the parents were “very rarely” involved in school and classroom activities. Because parents were part of what happens at school, the classroom teacher thought that it was very important for parents to see what the teachers were doing with the children. Parents would see and learn and could assist to help as well. Being part of a classroom environment could be a visual effect, taking into consideration the language barrier or shyness that might prevent the parents from coming into class.

In Ty’s case, although the parents seemed to agree with Ty’s ILP, what the teachers needed was the parents’ contributions. The teachers wished that they could come up with some agreement with the family. “It’s hard to know what their expectations are, what we might consider acceptable,” the classroom teacher said. “The most frequent feedback we get from them is that they want him to be able to read and write and do maths,” the teacher aide added. What the teachers would like to suggest was the parents should face their reality. “It’s having him at the level that he can cope with rather than trying to turn him into a scientist,” the teacher aide said. “We don’t try and set too high expectations of the students,” she continued. According to the teachers, although Ty was sometimes able to speak very well, his ability was not too high and sort of came and went. Thus, all they would like to see was for him to be a little more
confident in conversations. The view of the Principal was that “if you worry about their progress, one of the first things to look at is whether they are here regularly or not.”

Explaining about their lack of involvement in Ty’s schooling, Oanh said that she thought Ty’s current curriculum had a very “low standard” and should be used for Year One or Year Two students only. She complained that Ty was still unable to read and the teachers could not guarantee that he would be able to read by the age of eighteen. The learning environment was also considered by the mother to be not appropriate with “a large group of mentally ill children put in one room screaming and crying.” Oanh said she no longer cared about Ty’s education. “They just teach art in a general way. They should invite artist to come to give them lessons as school teachers just have general knowledge of art,” she went on to say.

4.3.2.2.3 Better home-school cooperation

i) Cultural issues

The classroom teacher said that cultural issues were only “touched on” in his pre-service training. The teacher aide, on the other hand, had the opportunity to collaborate with different families in her training. The classroom teacher revealed that he was doing a Master’s in Special Education course which he thought was more helpful than his original training in terms of cultural aspect. The teachers admitted that they sometimes had difficulty working with diverse background parents as they could not know every different culture, customs or what was considered acceptable. It was important to know and understand what the parents believed and expected. Culture, according to the teachers, very much played an important role in the home-
school partnership. Without any specific in-service training in relation to working with diverse background parents, the teachers said they mainly built up a background of experience from just having done their job or from talking to students, parents, and friends. The Principal, however, did not think that there was a high need for cultural training because the school did not have many NESB parents. The school tried to make sure that their communication with diverse background families was appropriate by using interpreters.

Being left to wonder about Ty’s condition and what was actually going on in the family home, the teachers realized that there was a need to have better home-school communication. “You are always uncomfortable that the message is not getting through,” the teacher aide said. The school had tried to use the social worker who had been working with the family for a couple of years as a medium communicator between home and school but it did not work out well. It turned out that the social worker was also not well informed of the family circumstance.

The classroom teacher suggested that having more information about the family may be helpful. Having someone to help fill in related information about Ty and relevant cultural knowledge of his family would be critical because the teacher admitted he sometimes got lost. The teachers said they had recently discovered a file regarding Ty’s past history. The file contained different reports in different formats and, according to the teacher aide, they had to put the information together and worked out their own strategies of how to deal with the student and the family. It seemed that the only person who could feasibly help the teachers was the school welfare officer because this was the one who was authorized to correspond with agencies outside the
school community or conduct home visits. “Our concerns will go to our welfare officer,” the teacher aide said. And this officer would bring back information that she felt relevant for the student in question. The teachers would then receive from the welfare officer any necessary documentation that they needed to know. The classroom teacher was concerned whether the parents understood the messages sent home in the communication book, whether the parents needed a follow up phone call, and “does someone in the office follow up the phone call?” The procedure showed that there was a need for better communication among school staff as well. “Communication is the most important thing not just with parents but also as a team,” the teacher aide said. The classroom teacher agreed.

ii) Funding / resources

The teachers suggested some ideas that they hoped would help improve the home-school cooperation. Changing the format of school reports was one of them. They said the current format was hard to understand. That was why they had parent-teacher interviews to help explain it in appropriate English to parents. Another idea was to invite therapy professionals to attend parent-teacher interviews. Parents would be provided with an inner view of what was going on at school. More professional spread was another wish from the teachers. Currently, therapy priority in the school tended to go to the younger students and the school did not have the resources for bilingual programs.
4.3.3 Case summary

The mother’s health and psychological issues together with the fact that the parents had a different perspective as to Ty’s condition, all had a harmful impact on their ability to communicate with the school and cooperate with the educators. There was a one-way home-school relationship in this case study. As a consequence, the home-school cooperation did not exist. Figure 14 below diagrammatically represents the analysis results of Case Study 3.
Figure 14: A summary diagram of influences on the home-school partnership in Case Study 3
4.4 Case study 4

4.4.1 Case description

The child involved in Case Study 4 was Andrew. Andrew had been diagnosed at three years eight months as severely autistic in conjunction with mild intellectual delay and visual-spatial splinter skills (based on the assessment results provided by the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Monash Medical Centre). At the time of this research, Andrew was fourteen years of age. He was studying at a special school in a class of six students. Participants in this case study included Sue, Andrew’s mother, and involved educators at Andrew’s school.

Interviews with Sue were conducted at the family house. There were four meetings, ranging from half an hour to two and a half hour each. Total meeting time was six hours. The interviews were tape-recorded. Although both parents agreed to participate in the study, the father did not take part in the interviews due to work commitments. There were additional casual interactions with Sue during group meetings for Vietnamese parents of children with a disability in the south-eastern area. The meetings were organized by Ms Thanh of ADEC. Sue regularly attended these meetings. The study investigator was introduced to, and got to know Sue from one of these meetings. Sue, however, did not join in any other outdoor activities organized for the group. Andrew’s documents and artefacts obtained with consent for the analysis included school reports for nine years from 1996 to 2003 and an assessment summary by the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Monash Medical Centre.
Contacts with the educators involved in this case study included an interview with the Principal and a group interview with Andrew’s classroom teacher and teacher aide. An overview of the family’s background and the context of the school are detailed below.

### 4.4.1.1 Family background

Andrew lived with his parents, who were in their 40s, and a younger brother who, according to the mother, was normal but slow. Sue said she had no problem during her pregnancies. There was nothing that could possibly make her stressed. There was also no known relevant family history of developmental or learning disorders. Both children had Vietnamese names but used English names at school. Vietnamese was the language spoken in the home although both parents could communicate fluently in English. The two storey family home was located in a very beautiful, upper middle class area with a friendly neighbourhood in an Eastern suburb. The house was very clean, tidy, and well-displayed with artworks that featured Vietnamese culture with an influence of Western culture.

Sue was very polite and punctual. The investigator was warmly welcomed by the parent and always provided with beverage and refreshments during interviews. Both parents were the same age and from well-educated families. Sue worked as a book-keeper after finishing Year 12. She met her husband at work in Vietnam. Sue then migrated to France. Her then boyfriend went to Australia. Sue later came to Australia from France to marry him. Sue had changed her surname into her husband’s. The parents had been in Australia for over twenty years. They had a stable and supportive relationship although Sue admitted her husband was patriarchal who did not like to
socialize with people and wanted his wife to stay at home looking after the children. Sue did feel disadvantaged and isolated. However, she convinced herself that her husband was “reasonable in his own way” and no longer considered that issue essential. Being a full-time mother, but having always wanted to go back to study, Sue enriched her knowledge by watching talk-shows and applying suitable tactics to their family life. She learnt to balance her life. “The key to having a happy family life lays with the woman,” Sue said. According to Sue, she had a happy family life. The family did not have financial difficulty as her husband worked full-time as an accountant and received a high income.

4.4.1.2 School context

This special school was situated within the City of Monash, about 23 km east of the Melbourne’s Central Business District (CBD). The school catered for students from over two years to 18 years with significant developmental delay and/or intellectual disabilities including multiple disabilities and autism spectrum disorder. There were three main age groups including the kindergarten, primary, and senior groups. The school population was 128, about ten were Vietnamese. There was no Vietnamese representative on the School Council.

Professional participants in this case study included the Principal, the classroom teacher, and the teacher aide. The Principal was in her 50s and is a Caucasian. The male classroom teacher is of English-speaking background and had a Primary Education Diploma and specialist qualifications in special education. The teacher had twenty years of experience in his position. He had been working with Andrew for two years. The last participant was a female teacher aide who was in her 40s and is of
Norwegian background. She was qualified in secondary education and had a degree in nursing. She had been in this position for twenty one years and had only worked with Andrew for one year.

4.4.2 Case results

The case was analyzed by looking at the process in which the parents were prepared for their cooperation with the school and the home-school partnership.

4.4.2.1 Parents preparedness for cooperation

There were certain factors that played prominent roles in the process of the parents preparing for home-school cooperation. These factors included Sue’s perceptions of Andrew’s disability, support from the school and the specific ILP for Andrew.

4.4.2.1.1 Parents’ perception of child’s disability

i) Acceptance

Sue revealed that like other parents who had a child with a disability, she initially wished that Andrew would become normal again. She now accepted Andrew as he was. The parents used to get upset with other people’s opinions and traditional Vietnamese perception of having a child with a disability. They learnt to ignore people’s attention. With anyone she met, Sue just let them know that she had such a child.
ii) Child’s improvement

The parents were aware that Andrew’s condition was severe although, Sue said, it did not seem to be as severe as that of his peers in the group. Andrew loved and listened to his younger brother. Sue supposed that the fact that a child got along well with his teacher very much decided the child’s progress. “Some years I can see the progress, some I don’t,” the mother said without the intention to blame anyone. It was simply because Andrew and the teacher were not matched, she added. This year, Andrew’s behaviour improved significantly and he could even bath on his own. He was no longer upset and was well behaved. The result was like a reward for Sue as she had spent years learning to restrain the boy, trying to help him not to get upset to a violent level. Sue admitted that she did not have any standard other than observing Andrew. If Andrew was still happy going to school everyday, it meant he was making progress. “The teachers’ assessment is similar to what I see,” Sue said. 15

4.4.2.1.2 Parents’ perception of help

i) Self-help

The family had little support from their extended family members. Sue’s family was in France. When the parents were busy, Andrew’s paternal grandmother could help look after him for a couple of hours. Sue revealed that they had gone a long way convincing her husband’s family to understand their circumstance. Sue had a close Vietnamese friend who also had a child with a disability. Sue had an active approach in helping Andrew. Every year, she asked the family doctor for advice of what they

15 Quotations used in Case Study 4 were extracted from transcripts of interviews with Andrew’s mother, school management staff, and the teachers. The reference code for these transcripts as listed in the Code list to the case study database (Appendix 23) is DA2.S1 (F1/F2/F3).
should do for Andrew. With Andrew reaching puberty, Sue prepared a diet with less sugary food to help control his level of activeness. The parents also self-updated their knowledge of relevant information by communicating with friends, social workers, educators, as well as through newspaper, books, radio, television, and the internet. “We have to try to learn,” Sue said.

The parents accepted life as it was and when comparing their own situation with that of others they still considered themselves as being “lucky”. Without expecting too much, the family focused on improving their life quality based on what they had. Religious belief obviously played an important role. Turning to religion after Andrew’s diagnosis to find inner peace had been a successful self-help strategy for Sue who claimed to have been empowered by Buddha to have a more comprehensive view and understand things at a deeper level. “I’m so relaxed now,” she said. Sue’s faith in religion also helped bring her hope. Her husband and the children are Catholics.

ii) Social support services

The family used respite care and holiday programs provided by Villa Marie so that the parents had time for each other and their second child. Sue had recently for the first time joined a social support group run by Ms Thanh, a Vietnamese social worker for ADEC. Since joining the group, “I have been much happier,” Sue said. Being with a group of parents who had similar circumstances, Sue felt that she had the psychological support needed. She had the opportunity to meet with people and talk and share her feelings. The outstanding attitude of Sue in terms of social support
services was that “we should appreciate what they can do for us no matter how small it is.”

4.4.2.1.3 School support and the ILP

i) School support

School facilities featured well-equipped playgrounds, a multi purpose room, and school buses providing transport to students residing within the school’s designated educational zone. All school programs were supported by a Therapy Team including speech pathologists, occupational therapist, physiotherapists, psychologist, a social worker, and special education trained teachers. Andrew’s mother was aware that the school had its own policy in relation to special support services. Thus if they needed help, they just asked for it.

Although being positive about attending meetings as “attending is also a way to learn,” Sue only went to the Parents Group meetings once and the reason was that “I was the only Asian person”. According to the Principal, some Vietnamese parents would not come to big gatherings such as the barbecue at the beginning of the year, the end of year party, and the multicultural day. The reason was they would be isolated and it was related to the ability to communicate in English. Cultural factors, however, were not really considered in school activities for parents although vegetarian option was always available in barbecues, the Principal said.

ii) The ILP

With low child/teacher ratio, the school had individual and small group instructions and provided regular assessments and reviews. Parents were twice yearly involved in
Program Support Group (PSG) meetings with regard to individual goals for the
students. The senior teaching program focused on a broad range of independence
skills. “They teach the children social skills to prepare them for life,” Sue said. Sue
really liked the way of teaching concentrating on practical things at the school and
very much appreciated the care of the teachers towards her son. “I am glad that he has
people who help look after him all day and teach him things,” she said.

Cultural consideration, according to the Principal, was taken into account when
appropriate individual goals were selected for each child based on the child’s family
background. Although Sue did not think it was the case, she also did not think that the
teachers had to do so either. Sue suggested that parents should learn the Australian
culture and be prepared to integrate into the society here.

4.4.2.2 Home-school partnership

The home-school partnership was carried out through two main stages representing
the relationship and the task. These two stages were the home-school communication
and the home-school cooperation. Details of each stage are investigated below.

4.4.2.2.1 Home-school communication

i) Communication lines

The home-school communication lines utilized by Andrew’s family and the school
included the parent-teacher interviews, telephone, and a student communication book.

There were two interviews, one at the beginning of the year and one halfway through
the year. Andrew’s progress, goals, and problems were discussed at these meetings.

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According to the teachers, Andrew’s parents were quite fluent in English. They spoke good English and wrote very well. The school therefore did not need to provide an interpreter for parent-teacher interviews. Both parents often took turns attending the interviews. Interviewing time was approximately 30 minutes and that was enough, Sue said. The interviews were the chance for her to clarify things written in school reports such as the meaning of the assessment levels. Sue had the view that asking to clarify understanding was basically the responsibility of parents. “We have to ask if we don’t understand. It’s all up to us,” she said. Sue was satisfied with Andrew’s school reports because “everything is clear.” She had no problem with the way that teachers only emphasized good points of students. In case she had any concern, or would like to find out more about Andrew’s weaknesses, she would ask. In addition to this rather formal communication method, the home-school communication line was also open to other informal communication avenues.

Every child in the school had a communication book in which the classroom teacher informed parents of what the child had been doing at school and checked to see if the parents had anything important to say. Sue said she checked the book everyday to see what Andrew was able to do during the day at school. The decision on how often to write in the book “depends on the teacher,” Sue said. However, she was happy that Andrew’s current teachers regularly took turns to write in the book. Home visits in this case, according to the teachers, were not relevant because Andrew did not require home services. Except for parent-teacher interviews, Sue did not come to the school often because there was a bus pick-up and because she realized that Andrew was not comfortable seeing her at school. Sue said if she would like to see the teachers, she would make appointments because she did not think it was appropriate just to go into
the school although she supposed it might be alright to do so. “I learn the way people do it here,” she said. Making an appointment, in Sue’s view, was to give the teachers time to prepare before meetings. The school newsletter was another home-school communication channel. The newsletter was, however, not translated into Vietnamese and the school also did not have an in-house interpreter. The Principal said it was always a problem. Fortunately, it was not a problem for Andrew’s parents as their English was quite strong. With this advantage, the parents and the teachers also did not hesitate to contact each other by telephone when needed.

ii) Home-school relationship

“We have a very good relationship with Andrew’s parents,” the Principal said. The parents, according to the Principal, were willing to help the school. Sue said she learnt and knew everything about Andrew from talking to the teachers. Her perception of home-school relationship was that parents should play an active role in communicating with educators. If parents did not express their concerns then the teachers would not know what the parents want and/or may assume that the parents were happy with the school. “So basically, it mainly depends on us,” Sue said. In relation to cultural differences, Sue would tell the teachers and remind them if necessary how in her own culture issues of a sensitive nature would be dealt with. With certain mutual understanding, it would be much easier for both parties to communicate after that. The key to a satisfactory relationship, according to Sue, was that parents had to be “straight”. Over the years, Sue thought that she was more confident and comfortable interacting with professionals although she would be more relaxed communicating with a female teacher than a male counterpart. Nevertheless, what matters was she did not sense any “distance” with the teachers who were “so
relaxed.” Sue emphasized the importance of learning “what is good for us that would help us integrate better into the society”. And “respect and cooperation are what I’ve learnt from the culture here in Australia,” Sue said.

4.4.2.2 Home-school cooperation

i) Stakeholders’ perceptions of roles

According to the Principla, the goal of the school was that what the students learnt in one environment, if it was relevant, needed to be reinforced in the other environment, but no homework. The teachers would therefore be advisers to Andrew’s parents regarding certain goals and would ring the parents in case assistance was needed. On certain instances if there were problems, Andrew’s parents would also give the teachers advice. For example, Sue shared with the teachers her tip of how to discipline Andrew when he was naughty or disobedient. “Just ask him to cross his hands, he would know that he was wrong,” Sue said. In Andrew’s case, the classroom teacher said, it was very easy because the parents were good to talk to and work with. They had a big interest in Andrew’s education but did not want a lot of pressure put on him. All they want was to see him happy at school. Parents, nevertheless, were not encouraged to participate in classroom activities because this was a special school. Parents’ participation would distract the students and their behaviour would become difficult to manage. Andrew’s parents, therefore, did not have a big involvement in Andrew’s day-to-day learning in the classroom.

In the view of the classroom teacher, parents and teachers were partners and it was important for everyone to get involved. The mother had a lot of respect for those who “are very brave to learn to become special educators” and “must be very patient to be
able to teach children with a disability”. However, she looked at them as “teachers rather than partners”.

**ii) Expectations**

“We have tried our best at home; however, his progress can only reach a certain level,” Sue said. The parents figured out that it would probably be the same with the teachers at school. Sue thought the teachers knew where Andrew was up to. “They must have tried their best, thus we should not demand too much,” Sue continued. She reasoned it was also a way for parents to avoid getting disappointed and blaming service providers when things did not turn out as expected. Sue suggested that parents should have sympathy for teachers in case their child did not make any progress because “this job is demanding and there’s a lack of teacher aides”. “It’s hard when we just want things our own way,” she said implying that there were other children in the class not just Andrew and therefore it would be hard for the teachers to cope.

Being aware of Andrew’s developmental level, however, Sue wanted Andrew to be “a bit better.” She asked the teachers if Andrew could have a speech therapist to help him with his pronunciation. “My wish currently is that he’ll be able to properly take care of himself when he’s grown up. That’s enough for me,” Sue said. The teachers knew that Andrew had the words although he did not say straight out and not everyone would understand him. They agreed that there would be sound if there was a speech therapist to train him to say the words properly. On the other hand, the teachers did not think that there would be any problem at all because Andrew’s receptive language was very good and he had sufficient understanding in English to survive compared to a lot of other students at the school who were nonverbal.
4.4.2.2.3 Better home-school cooperation

i) Cultural issues

The teachers said they were not well trained in college in terms of working with parents. They mainly worked on experience once they started teaching. The difficulty was that different people had different cultures and beliefs. They were therefore required to be very confident in approaching parents and understanding what the parents’ needs and beliefs were in relation to education. The process, according to the Principal, took time as parents sometimes did not initiate telling the teachers the problems that the teachers needed to know about.

In addition to the lack of pre-service training, the teachers also did not really have any professional development (PD) with regard to ethnic backgrounds. The classroom teacher supposed such a program “will be a good idea” and he was optimistic that the issue had been realized by the administration.

ii) Resources

According to the Principal, lack of resources was an important factor that influenced the home and school partnership. The school did not have anyone on the school staff who had Vietnamese as their language or as their second language. The school also did not use the interpreting service regularly. The newsletter was not translated which in part was “another way of isolating the families” from the school, the Principal admitted.
4.4.3 Case summary

Sue expressed a great deal of love for Andrew. Sue also had a thorough understanding of her child’s condition and was satisfied with what Andrew had been able to achieve. The mother valued social support but emphasized the importance of self-help. Sue therefore had a strong commitment to cooperate with the educators to jointly help Andrew both at home and in the school environments. In addition, the mother’s determination to learn the Australian culture together with her efforts to integrate into the native society and the ability to fluently communicate in English all made it very easy for the educators to work with the family. As a consequence, there was a good parent-teacher relationship which had positive influences on the home-school cooperation. The school was optimistic that helping strategies applied by the school were kept being reinforced in the home environment. A diagram summarized this partnership is presented below in Figure 15.
Figure 15: A summary diagram of influences on the home-school partnership in Case Study 4
4.5 Case study 5

4.5.1 Case description

The child involved in Case Study 5 was called Jessica. She had been diagnosed with Autism at Sunshine Hospital. At the time of this study, Jessica was in Prep at a mainstream primary school in a Western suburb of Melbourne. Participants in this case study included Jessica’s parents, Mr Mark and Ms Xuan, and a team of educators at Jessica’s school.

Interviews with the parents were conducted at the family house. In total, over ten hours were spent collecting data for this particular case. About two third of which was for interviewing, observing and talking with the parents either in person or over the telephone in a period of five months. In addition, the study investigator also had extra opportunities to observe and communicate with the parents at the weekly workshop run by Ms Hong, a Vietnamese coordinator for the Parent-to-Parent Program in the Western region. The workshop was scheduled for ten consecutive weeks, plus a BBQ outing and a Snow-and-Ski trip. Documents and artefacts obtained from the parents with consent for the analysis include the Developmental Assessment Report by Sunshine Hospital in 1999, a learning portfolio 2003, a parent-teacher communication book 2003, school reports 2003, the ILP 2003. All of the documents were well-kept and classified.

Contacts with the educators involved in this case study included an initial meeting with the school Principal, an interview with the Principal, and a group interview with the multi-disciplinary educational team. The study investigator also had the
opportunity to attend a parent-teacher interview. Summaries of the family’s background and the context of the school are described below.

4.5.1.1 Family background

Jessica lived with her parents, who were in their 50s. Jessica had a half brother, who was 16 years older than her. The primary language spoken at home was Vietnamese. Both parents had secondary education. The parents worked full-time from home as machinists with stable incomes. The family house, which was located in a Western suburb, was in proximity with public transport, shopping centres, and schools. The house was quite old but well kept and tidy. There was a Jesus altar and statutes displayed in different areas.

Vietnamese culture was well preserved in this family. The study investigator was always warmly welcomed, served with drinks during the interview, invited to have meals or join the family during weekend outings. Going out fishing or for a picnic was the family weekly activity. In addition, being Christians, Jessica’s family also went to church regularly, almost every Sunday. Attending mass was a sacred duty of the whole family. The parents admitted they almost always did things together and consulted each other before any decision was made. They were a happy couple. Respect and support were their keys to a happy marriage life. With only a few relatives living in Melbourne, the family did not have much support from their extended families.

The parents started to have concerns about Jessica when she was about two years. Jessica was noticed to speak only when she wanted to and was able to use less than ten single intelligible words. In addition, she had tantrums like screaming, crying, and
hitting her head on the floor. After various medical assessments and check-ups, Jessica was diagnosed with Autism at the age of three. Professional reports confirmed that Jessica presented with significant concerns in a number of developmental areas such as communication, play and social interaction skills, and controlling and ritualistic behaviours. According to the parents, there was no family history of speech, learning or motor difficulties. However, Xuan revealed that she was unwell during her pregnancy, suffering hypertension and gestational diabetes. The baby was nevertheless born a healthy baby girl. At around twelve months old, Jessica had swollen glands above her eyes. This resolved without medication or active treatment.

4.5.1.2 School context

The school where Jessica attended was a mainstream school with a population of 160 students: Of which 40 were of Vietnamese background. There were 16 children with a disability at the school. Most students had varieties of mild Autism, mainly speech problems. Jessica was the only Vietnamese student with a disability. Jessica was also the only student with special need in a class of 26 students. Being in a transition stage, Jessica studied three days a week at the new mainstream school and the remaining two days at a special setting. There was an integration aide provided three days a week only for Jessica at the new mainstream school.

The school was located approximately 20 kilometres west of Melbourne. According to the Principal, the neighbourhood was a low socio economic area with 70% of families receiving the Education Maintenance Allowance. About 50% of the school students came from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESBs). The area had the highest rate of unemployment, the highest amount of single parent families, the
highest number of drug offenders, and the lowest percentage of internet access in the whole state. A poor community with lots of parents uneducated made it very difficult for the school as the school had to provide everything, the Principal said.

Educators who participated in this study included the Principal, a female classroom teacher, and two female integration aides. The Principal was in his fifties, of English-speaking background and had previous experience working with students with Autism and their parents. The classroom teacher, who had a Bachelor’s degree, was in her thirties, of English-speaking background, and had participated in the integration program for eight years. She had worked with the student in this case study for twelve months. The first teacher aide was in her thirties and of Italian background. This teacher aide, who was qualified in secondary education, had experience as an integration aide for two and a half years; six months of which was with Jessica. The second teacher aide was in her forties and of English-speaking background. She had been working as a teacher aide for six months and only spent several weeks with Jessica.

4.5.2 Case results

4.5.2.1 Parents preparedness for cooperation

Jessica’s parents were very active, well-prepared and revealed a high level of readiness in cooperating with educators in particular and professionals in general in the fight to help their daughter. They were active in asking for help, searching for information, interacting with teachers, as well as establishing a relationship with the teachers for the benefits of Jessica. Their active and ready state of mind was
established upon a variety of factors: Accepting their child’s condition; being active in searching for help; being encouraged by Jessica’s improvement, the matter of luck, religious belief; an appropriate understanding of parental role and setting realistic goals and expectations. These factors are detailed below.

4.5.2.1.1 Parents’ perception of child’s disability

i) Acceptance

Mark, Jessica’s father, said that he accepted the fact that Jessica had Autism, right from the time she was diagnosed as Autistic. Mark then psychologically helped prepare his wife for the reality. “Once we can accept it, we are free,” the father said. The old Asian perception that having a child with a disability was the consequence of terrible things committed by their ancestors in the past did not affect this family. Xuan had never blamed herself for Jessica’s condition. The parents’ view was that learning to accept Jessica’s condition was for her benefits. They believed that they could still help create changes in Jessica.  

ii) Child’s improvement

The parents were happy that Jessica got used to having her cousins coming to the house. She even played with them and talked to them over the phone. Jessica also knew how to make friends with other children, which Xuan never dreamt would happen. Jessica was becoming more independent and could concentrate for longer periods of time. She could eat on her own although still needed help to get dressed.

Quotations used in Case Study 5 were extracted from transcripts of interviews with Jessica’s parents, school management staff, and the teachers. The reference code for these transcripts as listed in the Code list to the case study database (Appendix 23) is DA1.S2 (F1/F2/F3).
Academically, Jessica improved significantly in art-related subjects such as drawing and coloring. The investigator was shown a lot of Jessica’s art works which were beautiful. In relation to Jessica’s speaking skill, she could say longer sentences with a clearer voice, use more accurate words, and talk about different topics. She could also fill in lunch order forms herself. The parents were glad of Jessica’s improvement given that she only uttered one word ‘papa’ at ten months old and then stopped talking until her fifth birthday. She now loved going to school and did homework herself. Jessica had recently been transferred from a special setting to a mainstream school. It was a turning point for the whole family. Summarizing Jessica’s progress, the father said proudly “I am surprised myself, let alone others.” Jessica’s improvement, according to the parents, was enormous and worth their sacrifice. Although having more confidence in Jessica’s future, the parents were aware that Jessica still had Autistic signs. They therefore always prepared themselves for unexpected incidents and paid close attention to her eating habits (to avoid foods and drinks high in sugar).

In the parents’ view, luck had definitely played a significant role in Jessica’s fast-track improvement. Luck had been emphasized and repeated many times by both Mark and Xuan in their conversations. Contributing to this perception were factors such as Jessica had the opportunities to study at good schools; the teachers were enthusiastic, eager to help, and very friendly; and last but not least the parents had never been ill-treated and often accidentally met with people who were helpful and ready to share useful information. “It’s help from fairy Godmother,” Mark concluded.
4.5.2.1.2  Parents’ perception of help

i) Self-help

The parents chose to take Jessica to and from school although a school bus was provided. They would like to talk to Jessica on the way. Sometimes they let Jessica come home on the school bus. Occasionally, Mark and Xuan went back to the school at lunch time to bring Jessica hot food. At home, the parents focused on improving Jessica’s behaviours, language skill, and maths. They also provided Jessica with more opportunities to interact with people by taking her to a Saturday Vietnamese class, a swimming lesson, and attending a group activity on Sunday after mass at the church. The parents revealed that in order to help Jessica effectively, they learnt to be patient themselves and experiment with different helping strategies.

In addition to relying on their own, the parents were also open about asking for help. Mark stressed the importance of parental activeness. “My view is that we need to come to others to ask for help ourselves,” he said. According to the parents, their relationship with friends remained the same as before Jessica was born because they had always been frank and open about Jessica’s condition. “They understand and sympathize for us. It means that they have already helped us,” Mark said.

Religious belief also had an important role. The parents talked about their religious belief with passion. They once took Jessica interstate to observe the ‘seeping oil Jesus’ phenomenon. They hoped that the love of God would help bring about some miracle to their daughter. The parents were devout Catholics and their belief in God had always been strong. However, recently, religion had also been their source of relief and support.
ii) Social support services

Mark and Xuan were regular, active, and popular participants of social support groups such as Westarc\(^ {17} \) and Parent-to-Parent. They also used respite care. Observation showed that the parents did not miss any of the 10 weekly workshops organized by Ms Hong for the Parent-to-Parent group. As a result of regularly attending meetings, they always had enough information. With information that they only vaguely knew about, they would go and ask. “It’s all up to us,” Mark said. Being well-informed makes them panic less, Mark reflected. However, joining support groups was not just about information because “too much information is not necessary,” he added. Social support groups were where they could talk and share their own experiences with other parents who had similar circumstances.

4.5.2.1.3 School support and the ILP

i) School support

Integration aide and speech therapy were two special services Jessica received from the school. The parents very much appreciated the school support and knew that they could request support services if they desired.

Among the school general support services for parents were math nights which were for both parents and their kids and had always been a great success, the Principal revealed. There had been a good turn up of Vietnamese parents for this activity. Day time parenting programs and school concerts were other activities available to all

\(^ {17} \) Westarc is the short name for the Noahs Ark West Early Childhood Intervention Program. The program is an initiate of the Association for Children with a Disability (ACD) and only available in Western Metropolitan Region (WMR) of the State of Victoria, Australia (ACD, 2009).
parents at the school. However, the result was not very satisfactory. The parents were also not involved in the structural planning, goal setting, and assessment process. There was not a Vietnamese representative on the School Council. Many of the parents were not interested or just felt that they could not be involved. It was difficult to get the Vietnamese community to be involved in the school and it could be culturally-related, reflected the Principal. “My suspicion is that their culture tells them that their kids come to school and we deal with the problem and they deal with them at home,” he said. Language barrier was another reason. Some parents did not feel confident in their English and they were anxious about expressing their opinions.

Taking into account the nature of the local community, the school accepted the reality and mainly relied on themselves. With language support, the school had a part-time Vietnamese multicultural aide who also took the role as an interpreter to assist with Vietnamese parents’ general enquiries, some parent teacher interviews, and to translate the newsletter into the Vietnamese language.

ii) The ILP

Being a mainstream school, the special education program was integrated into the normal program. The program had been run for over twenty years at the school and had recently been restructured and individualized to make sure that the children were not just “cruising,” the Principal said. A part-time teacher was allocated to help establish an ILP for all integration students and those who were considered at risk but were not under the integration program. Together with the teachers, the team met termly at the beginning of the term to assess, discuss and set new goals – long-term and short-term goals – for each student. They also talked regularly every week to see
how the program was going. Tasks were divided among team members. The classroom teacher revealed that teamwork helped avoid duplication of time and effort.

### 4.5.2.2 Home-school partnership

The home-school partnership was carried out through two main stages representing the relationship and the task. These two stages were the home-school communication and the home-school cooperation. Details of each stage are investigated below.

#### 4.5.2.2.1 Home-school communication

i) Communication lines

A number of home-school communication methods were available for Jessica’s family. They included parent-teacher interviews, telephone, a communication book (Appendix 26), and without-appointment talking time with the teachers before and after school.

At the interviews, the parents met with the educators to discuss the goals, the progress, and any concerns they may have for their child. Home visits were discouraged due to security reasons and restricted funding. Mark and Xuan said they were very relaxed when interacting with the teachers. Being open and understanding were attitudes the parents said they learnt from the Australian culture. Mark’s ability to communicate using English also played a vital role in enhancing the home-school communication. Admitting his English was only “enough to understand,” Mark said he always learnt and tried his best to express himself in different ways to help get the message through. Observation in a parent-teacher interview showed that the father did not need the assistance of the interpreter. He was relaxed, comfortable, making eye contact with
educators occasionally, using hand language and responsive. The interpreter, however, still played an important role in parent-teacher interviews. Both the teachers and the parents appreciated the service. The assistance of an interpreter, according to the teachers, was essential, especially in a meeting situation where parents might be under pressure and feel a little bit tense, or emotional. Being able to talk in their own native tongue would help them feel more comfortable and express themselves adequately. The advantage from the parents’ point of view was that the teachers did not have to explain things again and that would help save time. The only disadvantage was that the teachers tended to break down what they wanted to say into smaller concepts given that the interpreter needed time to interpret. There was therefore not so much “general talk,” the classroom teacher said, who supposed that: “If you are in a room with English-speaking, you tend to talk more.”

Following the parents’ request, Jessica’s daily activities were reported in a communication book by the teacher aide. Inputs from the teacher aide were regular on a daily basis. However, there was almost no response from Jessica’s parents (extracts from Jessica’s home-school communication book are found in Appendix 26). Mark and Xuan said they checked the book everyday although they rarely replied. In addition to the communication book, Jessica’s parents also chose to contact the teachers informally nearly every school day, usually in the morning or after school. Although this approach was preferred by Jessica’s parents, teacher aide One did not have the same view. Before school hours, she says, was not the right time to talk because that was when she should be in the classroom. Lack of time was a concern of both teaching staff and the Principal.
ii) Home-school relationship

The impression of Jessica’s parents was that the school environment in general was very good. All the teachers were friendly and always saying hello to them. Mark thought that the way the teachers dealt with parents was sincere and heart-felt. Mark and Xuan said they never felt uneasy due to the teachers’ lack of cultural understanding. They had trust in the teachers, whose strength was their willingness to help, Mark said. A parent-teacher relationship, at least from the parents’ perspective, was established in this case. “As parents of a child who has a disability, we always feel that we very much need help from the teachers, we rely on the teachers, we need their care and their attention towards our child,” Mark said. This led to the thought that they needed to have a good relationship with the educators for the benefit of Jessica.

4.5.2.2 Home-school cooperation

i) Stakeholders’ perceptions of roles

The parents’ concern for their age was a powerful force behind their activeness. Mark and Xuan were afraid it may be too late if they did not help Jessica now. Their health and energy would deteriorate, and their ability to tackle things would be slower. Also, it might be more difficult to teach Jessica when she got older because she would be less active in receiving help. Being active and self-reliant was the parents’ action philosophy.

The teachers described Mark as being “dedicated, participated, and concerned.” He was “not only taking on board everything, but also gives opinions and makes
“suggestions,” teacher aide Two said. However, with Mark’s coming to school quite often, teacher aide Two thought that he was a bit “overprotective.” The Principal agreed, saying it was “too much.” The school would like the parents to give Jessica more space. “We try softly and gently to encourage them to allow Jessica a little bit more independence,” the Principal said. Except for excursions, parents in general were not encouraged to get involved in classroom activities.

In relation to the nature of the home-school cooperation, the Principal said that the school did not want the cooperation to be dominated by either child-oriented or family-oriented philosophy as children and parents “are different aspects of two important issues,” and no one had a greater value over the other. Thus, for the optimal outcome it was best to have both. The teachers still saw themselves as information providers on the educational structure of the school. “We try to provide welfare with concern,” the classroom teacher said.

ii) Expectations

The parents knew that Jessica had a lot of disadvantages compared to her peers. However, given her improvement, they believed that in five or ten years, there would be changes. Although she could not be 100% like normal children, the parents hoped that she could be 50% to 60% or up to 70% better. They would take it one step at a time. “We are full of hope but not too optimistic,” the parents revealed. “I only wish that she could keep up with her friends … and can take care of herself when she gets older,” Xuan said. What they could do was just to try their best. “The rest is up to God,” the parents said.
Being more specific, the teachers wanted the parents to achieve short term goals which were termly based and broken from long term goals. “We’re very much into little steps so the children can succeed,” Jessica’s teacher said. The goals, however, were not culturally based. “We possibly would not think of cultural differences when we are setting the goals,” the teacher said. It was more life skills focused. The educators only wanted to give their students experiences that they possibly would not have at home and link that with academic skills. Currently, the educators were trying to get Jessica’s parents to become involved in the reading and spelling at home because, the classroom teacher said, Jessica usually did not understand what she read.

As for Jessica’s social development, the teacher was trying to convince the parents that it would be good for her to join groups rather than always doing academic work. “Parents should be positive but not too worried,” the classroom teacher said. The Principal held the same view. “It is essential that parents supported their children in setting realistic goals, particularly with some parents in the Vietnamese community,” the Principal said. According to the Principal, having school homework and more homework from Saturday school was a big demand for children. Although there was nothing wrong with Mark and Xuan having high expectations for Jessica, the Principal continued to say, it was important that their expectations had to match Jessica’s ability or else these expectations would put excessive pressure on her.

4.5.2.2.3 Better home-school cooperation

i) Cultural issues

In order for the teachers to better cooperate with the parents, the need for more professional development (PD) was realized and emphasized at the school. According
to the Principal and the teachers, current pre-service training programs were not sufficient. In-service training was, however, mainly about how to work effectively with the children, teacher aide Two said. With the school’s high percentage of diverse background students, the teachers were expected to self-train and learn real lessons from practice. The teachers still thought that they needed cultural training. “Cultural matters are a very big concern in in-service provision,” the Principal agreed.

ii) Funding

According to the Principal, the current funding was not enough for their needs and applying for funding was a lengthy process. The school had a speech therapist and a psychologist for a half a day a week each. The school had to pay for these services which often did not fulfil the school needs. Due to lack of funding, the school currently did not have a specialist integration teacher, only integration aides who supported the normal classroom teacher. However, it was hard to get good teacher aides, the Principal said. There were not many special education trained teachers available, which was another difficulty. “Those that are specially trained tend usually to work in the special schools,” the Principal explained. Thus, setting up its own integration program and providing on the job training was an option that the school was about to employ to compensate for the lack of personnel. Nevertheless, it would be a hard process as it would require long-term commitments from the school and funding, the Principal said.

Establishing a community liaison team was another project that the school was trying to initiate. This also required time and money. In the previous term, the Principal revealed, a forum was held in which all community stakeholders were invited to come
along to share their ideas of how to improve the communication between the school
and the rest of the community and how the communities amongst themselves could
improve the education of young children and young people. The forum was also an
effort to avoid service duplicate and to introduce the services that were available to
the communities and to strengthen the links between ethnic communities and the
school.

4.5.3 Case summary

The parents in this case were very active and positive in their approach to helping
their child, Jessica. Their determination was shown in their readiness to accept
Jessica’s condition, commitments to improve their social and communication skills,
efforts to overcome cultural differences, appreciation towards social support,
investment of time and resources in ‘coaching’ the child, having deliberately
established a relationship with the teachers and actively co-operate with them. In
addition, a strong religious belief, a committed marriage, a stable financial
circumstance, the father being able to communicate in English together with Jessica’s
significant improvement were some of the family’s positive advantages which helped
enhance the parents’ commitment and cooperation. The positive home-school
cooperation in turn strengthened the parents’ self-help ability. However, there was a
slight discrepancy in parent-educator expectations for child.

The whole collaborating process was, however, very much child-oriented. According
to the teachers, they were trained as service providers for children. In addition,
cultural issues were not included in their pre-service training and were not a focus in
their in-service training. Cultural understanding was realized by educators as an
essential factor in the home-school partnership. Insufficient funding was perceived to be the problem. Figure 16 below diagrammatically summarizes the analysis results of Case Study 5.
Parents preparedness for the partnership

Parents freely accepted & were completely open about child’s condition; were surprised & delighted at child’s progress; very active in child’s education
Parents had strong beliefs in self-help, religion, & social support services

School resources & support services: ILP, teacher aide, speech therapists, interpreter, support services for parents, Vietnamese multicultural aide, newsletters translated into Vietnamese

Father being able to speak English; parents active in learning about Australian culture
Parents frequently in contact with educators; valued P-T relationship; believed in school
Emphasized on helping child at home, being dedicated, a little too protective
Parents focused on child’s academic work, but paid more attention to develop child’s social skills

Home-school communication

(+)
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P-T interviews, communication book, telephone, non-appointment talking time; educators had an open relationship with parents
Child-focused helping, lack of cultural training in working with CLD parents; wanted parents to give child some space
Teachers wanted Jessica to join groups to develop her social skills instead of always doing academic work

Home-school cooperation

(+)
(+)
(+)
(+)

Figure 16: A summary diagram of influences on the home-school partnership in Case Study 5
4.6 Case study 6

4.6.1 Case description

The child involved in Case Study 6 was Anna who had been diagnosed at birth as having Down syndrome. Participants in this case included Lan, Anna’s mother and the educators at the mainstream school where Anna was studying. The father was too busy working and declined the invitation to take part in the interviews. At the time of this research, Anna was in Year Four in a class of 25 students.

Total meeting time with the mother was eight hours. There were five meetings, ranging from an hour to two and a half hour each. Interviews were conducted at the participant’s family home. Additional meetings with the mother were during Parent-to-Parent group psychological sessions, where Lan was a regular participant. The workshop was run by Ms Hong, a Vietnamese coordinator for Parent-to-Parent Program in the Western area of Melbourne. Lan, however, did not attend other outside activities organized by the group. The investigator first met Lan at one of these sessions. Major documents and artefacts obtained from the parent with consent for the analysis included Anna’s thirteen home-school communication books, school reports for five years from 1999 to 2003, Play-plus report by an Early Intervention Centre 1994, and an individual Assessment Report 1996.

Contacts with the educators involved in this case study included an initial meeting with the school Principal, an interview with the Principal, an hour group interview with the Anna’s classroom teacher and the integration aide who worked full-time and provided the integration aide service only for Anna. The study investigator also
attended a parent-teacher interview as an observer. Summaries of the family’s background and the context of the school are detailed below.

### 4.6.1.1 Family background

The family house was located in a residential area in a Western suburb not far from the school and in proximity to a major shopping centre and public transports. Anna lived with her parents and an older brother who did not have a disability. Lan, who was in her late 40s, was a full-time mother. The father, who was the same age as the mother, was the family’s main income provider. Graduating from a skill training college, Lan had two years working as a teacher in Vietnam. Lan had a clear, succinct, accurate, very open, and frank communication style. However, she was a soft-talking person with a calm, polite, gentle, and rather modest manner. Lan claimed to be a perfectionist and not a sentimental, feminine person. She disliked a messy house and did not often encourage, kissing or hugging the children. However, Lan was actively involved in her children’s education. Vietnamese was the language spoken in the home. Lan said her husband, who had primary education, was patriarchal and hated anything to do with paperwork, learning, or meetings. However, according to Lan, being a self-employed carpenter, her husband was very handy helping fixing things around the house.

Lan revealed that two of Anna’s cousins, from her father’s side, had mental health problems. When pregnant with Anna, Lan was living in the same house with her parents-in-law, working as a machinist and was the family bread earner. According to Lan, she did not get along with the in-laws. In addition, she was also harassed by her husband’s former girlfriend who kept contacting the family from overseas. The whole
episode put her under stress. In addition, Lan suspected that Anna’s condition may have something to do with their previous lives as well. This was a Vietnamese cultural belief. The theory, however, did not influence their family life.

The parents did not have much support from their extended family members. Lan’s younger brother occasionally helped take Anna to hospital. The family had almost no friends as the husband was always busy with his business and often away from home. Lan had a close friend who was a teacher in Sydney and a female friend she met through ADEC and Parent-to-Parent who often came over to her place. Lan said she almost had no support from her husband. Their marital relationship had always been at odds. “Once we were on the edge of divorce,” Lan said. However, for the sake of their children, they tried their best to compromise each other and that, according to Lan, had “a big influence on Anna’s progress.”

4.6.1.2 School context

The school was located in a Northwest suburb of Melbourne, about 15 km from the Melbourne’s Central Business District (CBD) with a low to non-English speaking community. The school was a mainstream institution with a school population of 260, of which, eight were of Vietnamese background. There were four students with mild disabilities studying at the school, including Anna. Anna was the only Vietnamese student in the school who had a disability. All representatives on the School Council are of English-speaking background. There was no Vietnamese parent in the school Parents Group either. According to the Principal, parents of diverse backgrounds were reluctant to be involved in Parents Groups or the School Council. It could be time, language or that the parents felt uncomfortable. Nevertheless, parents were very
positive as far as supporting the class programs and the teachers with discipline issues when necessary.

The school provided a wonderful learning environment with shady gardens and courtyards for active and passive play, extensive asphalt and paved areas, an oval and a variety of play equipment that complements the school. All children had access to a broad range of resources in all learning areas.

Professionals who participated in this case study included the school Principal, the classroom teacher, and Carina - the teacher aide. The Principal was in his 50s and is a Caucasian. The classroom teacher was in his 40s and of English-speaking background. The teacher, who had a Primary Education Diploma and a Bachelor’s degree, had been in his current position for 27 years. He had two years experience with the integration program when working with Anna. Carina was in her 40s and also of English-speaking background. According to Carina, she had qualifications in secondary education and an Integration aide 1+2 course. Carina had eight years experience as a teacher aide, in which six years had been spent working with Anna.

4.6.2 Case results

The case was be analyzed by looking at the process in which the parents were prepared for their cooperation with the school and the home-school partnership.

4.6.2.1 Parents preparedness for cooperation

There were certain factors that played prominent roles in the process of the parents preparing for home-school cooperation. These factors included Lan’s perceptions of
Anna’s disability and of the help provided, support from the school and the specific ILP for Anna.

**4.6.2.1.1 Parent’s perception of child’s disability**

i) Acceptance

Lan’s philosophy was that everything would settle down with time. “Just live your life, then you’ll be able to overcome your difficulties. There are people out there who are more miserable than us,” Lan said. ¹⁸

ii) Child’s improvement

Anna, according to the mother, was very independent and tougher than her brother. Anna only spoke English at home though her brother used Vietnamese. Anna had a Vietnamese name but preferred her English name. Anna still needed help with bathing and getting dressed. She made progress with reading and understanding. However, she still had difficulties understanding abstract concepts and was not able to speak a whole sentence. Anna wrote a lot, improved her number facts, and was good at physical education. According to the teachers, Anna liked to socialize. She related and reacted well to different adults who came into the class to help with the reading. Anna also fit in and was well accepted, treated and cared for by the other children. The teachers said they never had to tell the other kids not to be cruel to Anna because they never were. Anna was happy at school.

¹⁸ Quotations used in Case Study 6 were extracted from transcripts of interviews with Anna’s mother, the Principal, and the educators. The reference code for these transcripts as listed in the Code list to the case study database (Appendix 23) is DA1.S3 (F1/F2/F3).
Lan was happy that Anna no longer bore any fatal diseases. After her birth, Anna was seriously ill. She had eyes, liver, throat, and ears problems. At times, there were up to five specialists taking care of her, each for a different condition. Now Anna only needed to see the eye specialist.

4.6.2.1.2 Parent’s perception of help

i) Self-help

For information, Lan listened to the Vietnamese radio as well as sought advice from the family doctor and specialists. Although Lan did not have time to sit down and play with Anna, she tried to talk to Anna on the way to and from school.

Having a child with a disability forced Lan to find peace in God. Lan turned to Buddhism to regain her belief in life, to come to terms with the reality of having a disabled child, and to pull herself together. She had since felt alive again, wanting to go back to classes to study English and still had thoughts of going back to teaching if it was possible.

In relation to Anna’s health, Lan said used to bear different diseases. Lan kept praying and gradually Anna’s health improves. Although Anna’s mind was not quite normal yet, but “looking at her face I see that it’s not too bad,” Lan said. According to Lan, Anna’s facial features looked more normal now. The change was obvious to all family members and the family GP also said the same thing. “I always pray to God to help her become normal again mentally and physically like other children,” Lan said.

Lan had an absolute belief in religion. “Religion helps me have a different view of life. I feel more relaxed, open, and positive,” she said. Lan also felt lucky. Anna had
always been well cared for by professionals and that made Lan really pleased and happy. “I feel that each person has his own luck,” she said.

ii) Social support services

Being conscious of social integration, Lan learnt to drive to be more independent; took English and computer courses to help improve her communication skills and enhance her chance to find work as a volunteer. To her, not being able to speak English was a huge barrier which hindered her from integrating into the mainstream society and taking advantage of support services available. “I was very quiet. But after Anna’s birth, I open my mouth more often to inform people of my child’s condition. I’ve learnt quite a lot of interesting things,” Lan said.

The family had used early intervention and respite care. Anna also had a manager who took a good care of her needs. These services were known to the family through word of mouth. Lan supposed that there might be many other services that she did not know about. “We rely on information from friends,” she said. Language, according to the mother, was the main difficulty. However, Lan still considered herself as being ‘lucky’ because she knew a lot more information than other parents who had similar circumstances. The only two social groups that Lan had ever joined were ADEC and Parent-to-Parent. The groups had helped heal her wounds and opened the door to the outside world. Lan said these two societies made her feel comfortable, relaxed, and could express herself the most. The mother highly praised the psychological sessions provided by Parent-to-Parent, which in her view were not only interesting but also very helpful. Since applying the knowledge learned from the workshop into her married life, Lan’s relationship with her husband had improved significantly. There
was less stress and they could communicate with each other more effectively. She also had the opportunity to learn from other parents’ experiences. “I am able to understand how to live my life more meaningfully and to be aware of what is happening in my life,” the mother concluded.

4.6.2.1.3 School support and the ILP

i) School support

There were meetings at night for parents. However, Lan did not attend these meetings because interpreters were not provided and because night time was not good for her. Lan also did not have contact with, or any idea of the function of, the school’s Parents Group. Nevertheless, the mother still had brief conversations with other parents during pick-up time. Lan admitted that the school atmosphere made her feel comfortable. “I think what the school has done for us is enough,” she said.

Special support services that Anna received from the school include integration aide, physical therapy, and speech therapy. Lan was very pleased with the support for Anna from the school. “There is absolutely no discrimination in the way they treat my child,” Lan said. According to Lan, the school children were very good. They always said hello to Anna whenever they saw her although Anna just replied when she liked. Anna also loved to show off her work to the Principal. He often rewarded her with a pen or trivial things like that. Anna was happy with the attention. The cooperation among teachers, in Lan’s view, had contributed to Anna’s progress which in turn helped enhance Lan’s hope for Anna. The support had a positive effect on the parent-teacher relationship. Thus, although always looking up to the teachers, Lan said she felt close to them.
ii) The ILP

Anna had a modified program for reading and writing. She also had her own program for things like cooking and shopping to help develop her life skills. Because Anna’s program was skill-focused, cultural factors were not considered to a high extent, informed the Principal. Anna’s ability was, according to the classroom teacher, high in terms of someone with Down syndrome. However, it was way too low of what was expected of a Year Four student. Therefore, the current curriculum would be used for the next couple of years unless the mother wanted some change.

4.6.2.2 Home-school partnership

The home-school partnership was carried out through two main stages representing the relationship and the task. These two stages were the home-school communication (the relationship) and the home-school cooperation (the task). Details of each stage are investigated below.

4.6.2.2.1 Home-school communication

i) Communication lines

Major home-school communication lines available in this case study included parent-teacher interviews, telephone, and communication books.

Being a primary school teacher herself in Vietnam, Lan very much appreciated the hard work of educators and highly regarded the home-school partnership, especially the parent-teacher personal relationship. The appreciation was expressed through her regular contacts with Anna’s teachers. The school communication lines available for
Anna’s family included the parent-teacher interviews, telephone, a communication book, and without-appointment talking time with the teachers before and after school.

Parent-teacher interviews were a formal home-school communication channel. In the first interview, parents had the opportunity to talk about their child, his/her progress or troubles. It was also a chance for the teachers to talk to the parents about the expectation because in March the teachers were not expected to know where the children were at. Following meetings were to inform parents of their child’s achievements and/or explain what was written in the school reports. Anna’s school reports were a modified one which were not translated into Vietnamese but would be explained to Lan with the assistance of an interpreter. The teachers said they usually just had meetings with the mother, a couple of times a year with an interpreter. Although the teachers could understand Lan, she preferred to have an interpreter in formal meetings. The teachers thought it was a good idea to have an interpreter because they would not miss a point that the parent would like to convey to them. The only disadvantage of using an interpreter was that it was time-consuming. In order to help Lan feel comfortable, the teachers tried to get the same interpreter every time if he was available. In addition to formal scheduled meetings, Lan could have a meeting any time she needs. The teachers would arrange that with an interpreter provided. The Principal revealed that they could use the translation service as often as they like and they have funding for that. Thus, it was not something they saw as a problem. Nevertheless, they could not afford an in-house interpreter. The teachers emphasized that using an interpreter did not hinder them from establishing a relationship with the family. In fact, with the assistance of the interpreter and his knowledge, they got a better sense of what the mother really meant and they were also more able to explain
exactly what they meant. Without the interpreter, they may not get those meanings across, the classroom teacher said. Lan was in general satisfied with the interpreter’s performance. Observation from a parent-teacher interview showed that the teachers cooperated well with each other and there was a close relationship between the mother and the educators. Lan was actively engaged in the conversation although she rarely used body language. Lan asked prepared questions as well as questions based on information revealed by the teachers. The mother spoke in a very polite and modest way although sometimes a bit lengthy. Lan, however, mainly addressed the interpreter and avoided eye-contact with the teachers.

The Communication book (extracts are found in Appendix 27) had been the main communication channel between home and school in this case. It all began when Anna first started school. According to Carina - the teacher aide, they did not always have time and it was not always practical to have a conversation with parents at the start and end of everyday. So Lan and Carina used the book to inform each other of what Anna did in her two environments of home and school. It was important because Anna often would not tell her mother what she did in class. When writing in the communication book, Carina made sure her writing was clear and not using Australian terms or slang. The teachers knew that Anna’s brother or uncle would help Lan out if she would not understand certain words. In case Anna was going to be away, Lan always sent a note with Anna’s brother who went to a secondary school nearby. The classroom teacher appreciated the effort of the teacher aide to keep the communication avenue open which was just not possible without her, given that he had to take care of 25 children. The teacher also praised the effort and time the mother put in writing in the books. There were 13 books in total, from when Anna was in
Prep until Year Four. Inputs and responses were on a daily basis. There were around 60 words from the teacher aide and 100 words from the mother. The mother’s written English was understandable. The books showed a close relationship between Lan and Carina.

In addition to the communication books, Lan occasionally came in to see Carina for a few minutes. Lan did not like making appointments because she thought appointments would cost the school time and money to book an interpreter even though they had funding for that. The mother and the teacher aide also made phone calls but only to inform each other of Anna’s health status. Lan also relied on her son to help her be informed of Anna’s school activities so that she could promptly inform Carina of what she would like Anna to do. This could also help save her time coming to school.

ii) Home-school relationship

The teachers thought that their communication lines with Anna’s family were in general fairly good and open. Although they did not know if Anna’s mother felt the same, they supposed it must be okay from what they read in the communication books and because they had not suddenly got “a whole lot of negative things,” the classroom teacher said. Carina the teacher aide did not find communicating with Anna’s mother a problem because she could understand Lan most times. However, Carina thought Lan may have difficulties at times.

The school did not have a policy for time allotment to work with parents. In Anna’s case, according to the Principal, Lan and the teachers might sit down six times a year. The school could help cover the classes and so on. The male classroom teacher agreed that he had as much time as it was needed. Parents in general, however, were very
considerate. Formal meetings with Lan were always allocated for about an hour because they had an interpreter and there were often a lot of things that Lan wanted to raise. Lan especially appreciated the way she was treated by the teachers. According to Lan, “the way they communicate with me makes me feel like there is no distance between us.”

Although Lan preferred working with female teachers due to her cultural background, she did not have any problem communicating with Anna’s male classroom teacher at all. She felt encouraged by the teacher to express her concerns.

iii) The mother-teacher aide interpersonal relationship

The home-school communication went beyond the call of duty and an interpersonal relationship between the mother and the teacher aide had been established. Carina was the person Lan contacted most of the time. Carina supposed that it was because Lan knew her well and felt comfortable with her. Lan was about Carina’s age. They were, according to the mother, “more like friends.” Carina was “very kind and understanding.” They were often in contact and Lan was well informed. Lan said she was comfortable and could freely express herself when communicating with Carina. That helped enhance her confidence when working with other professionals as well.

Lan supposed that Carina played a more important role in Anna’s progress. Carina knew Anna really well and Anna listened to Carina more than she did to her mother. Lan was amazed that although Anna could not speak a whole sentence, somehow Carina figured out all the activities Anna did at home. Lan was grateful that Anna had had Carina as her teacher aide for such a long time. That was, in Lan’s view, great for Anna because the girl liked things which were familiar. Carina was like Anna’s
second mother, Lan said. Lan always had gifts for Carina on special occasions. The two also often exchanged and wrote about the cultural information they learnt in the communication book. Carina learnt about Vietnamese culture through books and experiences by going to a restaurant to try Vietnamese food. Lan had spoken to Carina about her being a Buddhist and going to the temple. There was obviously a trust between them. “Their relationship is good,” the Principal said. Close home-school cooperation started to elaborate from there.

4.6.2.2 Home-school cooperation

i) Stakeholders’ perceptions of roles

The teachers’ perception of role was that it was up to the parents to sort out their own children at home and the teachers’ responsibilities start once the children “walk through the school gate,” the teacher said. In Anna’s case, according to Carina, the family always supported educators in what they did with Anna at school. Anna did not talk about her home activities though. Lan therefore would let Carina knew what Anna did at home. Based on that Carina would talk about it with Anna at school and Anna would write about it. Lan and Carina also often consulted each other about Anna’s behaviour so that they were able to help her along the way. According to the classroom teacher, Lan had provided a great source of information for Carina to work on, to help prompt Anna at school. Carina thought the family was great in terms of their involvement in Anna’s education. Lan said she kept all the learning equipment Carina had made for Anna over the years and used them as Anna’s homework or when needed to deal with Anna’s behaviour.
The school had a policy of homework, which generally started very minimal. Lan wanted homework everyday and expected that Anna should be doing what other children were doing, the classroom teacher said. “I ask Carina to give Anna maths to do at home because Anna does not like doing maths at school and she’s not encouraged to do that if she does not want to,” Lan said. The mother was concerned that Anna could only do simple maths problems whereas Year Four pupils learnt to do multiplication and division. The teachers’ view, however, was that it was not possible and it was not fair for Anna because it was just not within her capacities to be able to do that. Anna could do simple things like picking out a picture of someone swimming in the newspaper but she would not be able to look up the information and write it all down, Carina said. The teacher aide therefore focused on spelling words, the type of homework that she thought more important because Anna was simply not able to do other types of homework. The classroom teacher understood that Lan wanted the best for her daughter but sometimes she seemed to forget that Anna could not do those things.

ii) Expectations

“Sometimes I think that Lan thinks Anna doesn’t have any problems,” the classroom teacher said. “There are lots of issues where what Lan expects and what we expect are different,” the classroom teacher continued. Sometimes things that Lan expected were the ones that the teachers could not do. They therefore had to try to work out how to explain that to Lan although they were always sensitive to her needs.

Except from being involved in her child’s education at home, Lan had never expressed a desire to come in and be involved in classroom activities. Carina said Lan
once declined the invitation to accompany Anna and Carina to the pool, which was not far from the school, to watch Anna swim, citing that she was busy. Lan also expected Carina to take Anna to the healthy human relations course which was a course about girls, body awareness and puberty. The teachers advised Lan to take Anna to the course herself because it was a mother daughter thing and what Anna learnt from the course would mainly be put into practice at home. The teachers’ view was that it was an opportunity for Lan to participate in the discussion and for Anna to meet other friends because at school Anna did not really go back to other children’s houses. The teachers thought that it was up to Lan to follow up to build those sorts of groups. The Principal agreed that Anna’s mother “should be involved and help out and be aware of what strategies and things that Anna is taught.”

Another different point in home-school expectations was related to the school’s special support services for Anna. As much as it was a good point, the fact that Anna had a full-time teacher aide concerned the Principal the most. “The trouble is going to be when Anna gets to an age when she has to move on, that’s going to be the biggest trouble,” the Principal said. The reliance on the teacher aide, according to the Principal, would prevent Anna from being independent and “just prolongs the inevitable” because Lan was going to want Carina to repeat and it was of no value to Anna. In relation to Anna’s transition to secondary school, both the school and the family had a great deal of concerns. The mother was concerned about school and what it would lead to. The Principal admitted that he did not know what would happen in the future and that they just did their best for the present time. However, he thought that Anna would need a special setting where she would be better off in a situation with trained people, small groups, therapists, and other special support. She would
miss out on those things if sent to a secondary mainstream school. “We haven’t the expertise,” the Principal said. Anna’s integration worked beautifully for the first three or four years but he doubted that it would work that well when the child got older. The Principal revealed that lately Anna had spent a large part of her playtime just sitting on the concrete step all by herself. “It is the nature of her disability that she does not want to play and the children are also not as receptive as they once were and that’s not integration,” the Principal concluded. Lan was, on the other hand, optimistic when informed by the teachers that Anna knew quite a lot. Lan was, therefore, afraid that Anna would not have the opportunity to learn more if put in a special setting. “It’s better for her to study in a mainstream school,” Lan said. Lan bore a long lasting wish for Anna to have a normal mind like other normal children although she knew that it was almost impossible for children like Anna to become normal again. Nevertheless, Lan said she kept praying for that as hope brought her inspiration to do more for her child.

4.6.2.2.3 Better home-school cooperation

i) Cultural issues

In relation to pre-service training to work with parents of diverse backgrounds, the classroom teacher said that what he learnt “wasn’t that beneficial.” The integration aide had the same opinion. The teachers agreed that they got more from talking to parents and students about cultural things. They thought a cultural program for teachers would help although it was not a necessity. What they were doing was based on their own experience and common sense such as being non-judgmental, treating
children of different religions equally, or providing vegetable burgers for children who did not eat meat when having a barbeque.

ii) Funding

With regard to in-service training, the Principal agreed that “there’s not a lot offered” because they did not have enough funding for professional development (PD). The amount they received was not enough for one person let alone appropriate PD activities or courses that suited the teachers’ needs. They also did not have enough funding for integration aide activities. Carina actually had to “chase a lot of funding herself” through different agencies to cover swimming and dancing lessons for Anna.

4.6.3 Case summary

Anna’s mother showed enduring devotion in her bid to help Anna. Lan accepted Anna’s condition given the nature of Anna’s disability, Down syndrome. However, Lan had the strong hope that one day Anna would become normal again. Lan’s hope significantly influenced her expectations for Anna’s education. Although the discrepancies in home and school expectations for Anna’s education in this case did not impact the partnership, it did influence the effectiveness of the cooperation.

The most outstanding feature of this case was that the parent had established a unique interpersonal relationship with Anna’s teacher aide. However, it was noticeable that although the interpersonal relationship enhanced the harmonious parent-educator relationship in general, there was no evidence of the connection between the interpersonal relationship and the cooperation process. Such factors as Lan’s self-determination, understanding, strong religious belief, ability to use written English,
and especially Anna’s improvement all played a critical role in the home-school partnership which is diagrammatically illustrated in Figure 17 below\textsuperscript{19}.

\textsuperscript{19} Abbreviations used in the diagram:

P-T: parent-teacher
TA: teacher aide
Figure 17: A summary diagram of influences on the home-school partnership in Case Study 6
4.7  Case study 7

4.7.1 Case description

There were two children involved in Case Study 7, Rob and Joe. Rob had been diagnosed to have Asperger syndrome and a severe language disorder by Mental Health Services for Kids and Youth, Sunshine Hospital. The intellectual testing assessment results, however, showed that Rob could study in a mainstream school but needed a teacher aide. Rob’s significant weakness on the verbal scale actually could not be fully explained due to English being his second language. Before that Rob had already repeated one kindergarten year as the kindergarten teacher suggested that his understanding was not enough for him to start school.

Joe was assessed at three years and two months by a group of professionals at the Developmental Assessment Clinic, Sunshine Hospital, including an occupational therapist, a speech pathologist, and a pediatrician. Assessment results showed Joe’s pattern of development was consistent with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder which required Joe’s inclusion in an intensive Early Intervention Program through Westacre. Joe showed delays across his communication, social interaction and play skills. Follow-up assessment at five years six months showed Joe still had tantrums, screaming, and squealing.

At the time of this research, Rob was in Year Three in a mainstream school and Joe was in Prep at a special setting. Participants in this case included Thi, the mother, and involved educators at both schools. Interviews with Thi were conducted at the family home. The father was not interested in participating in the study. Total interviewing
time was nine hours plus a couple of follow-up telephone conversations. The interviews were tape-recorded. Additional interaction with the mother was during weekly sessions of Parent-to-Parent, a BBQ outing, a Snow-and-Ski trip, a parent-teacher interview for Rob, and a parent-teacher interview for Joe. A number of relevant documents and artefacts were collected with Thi’s consent for the analysis. Rob’s documents included an Autism Assessment (2000), an ILP (2003), and three school reports (2001-2002). With regard to Joe, there was a developmental assessment report (2000), an intellectual disability assessment report by DEET (Department of Education, Employment and Training, 2002), an individual learning record sheet (2003), two school reports (2003-2004), and a learning portfolio (2003).

Contacts with the educators at Rob’s school included an individual interview with the Principal and a group interview with other involved educators, including the classroom teacher, the teacher aide, and the speech psychologist. Contacts with the educators at Joe’s school included an individual interview with the Principal and a group interview with Joe’s classroom teacher and the teacher aide. An overview of the family’s background and the context of the schools are detailed below.

4.7.1.1 Family background

Thi, who was in her late 40s, was a home-bound mother and the main carer for Rob and Joe. Thi said because both her and her husband Teo had three-letter names, they would also want to give the children short names which were easy to call and easy to remember. They finally came up with two English names, Rob and Joe, which they thought were distinctive. Thi was a small, beautiful, hospitable woman with a soft voice. She looked younger than her age. The couple was four years apart in age. Both
parents spoke very limited English and could hardly read or write in Vietnamese. They knew each other before Teo fled Vietnam. He later went back to sponsor Thi to come over. She gave birth to Rob and Joe in Australia when she was at 37 and 40 years of age respectively. The family lived in an old wooden house in a residential area in the Western region of Melbourne. Although the house was small and old, Thi was happy that it was paid off. However, Thi said the house was so old that she “dares not” invite friends to come over because she was afraid they would “look down” on her.

Teo was a full-time worker who took care of the family financially. Occasionally they sent money to Vietnam to support Thi’s parents and some of her husband’s siblings. Those times brought financial strain to the family. According to Thi, her husband was a quiet, hard-working man who did not like to socialize with people and was not sensitive. Knowing that Teo was too busy working, Thi still felt self-pity due to her husband’s insensitiveness. At times, Thi suspected that Teo did not sympathize with her hardship of looking after the children. Thi revealed that the fact that the children had Autism did significantly influence the family life. The couple no longer had time to care for each other. The situation, however, had slowly changed since Thi joined Parent-to-Parent.

4.7.1.2 School context

Rob’s school was within walking distance from the family house. The school was located in a residential area in a Western suburb, approximately 10 kilometres west of Melbourne. Rob walked to and from school everyday with a family friend. The school had a high percentage of Vietnamese students, 60% out of the total population
of 280. There were 19 students with a disability, about 50% were Vietnamese. Rob was one of three students with special needs in a class of 27 students. Rob had an hour of integration aide service a week. The school had a pleasant appearance with spacious well-equipped playing areas.

Professional participants in this case included the Principal, the Assistant Principal, a special support officer, the classroom teacher, and the speech pathologist. The Principal was in his 50s and of English-speaking background. The Assistant Principal was in his 40s and also of English-speaking background. The special support officer was in her 50s, had four years experience in the integration program and had been working with Rob for one year. The class teacher, who had a Bachelor’s degree, was in her 50s and of English-speaking background. The class teacher had had over 20 years of teaching experience, 10 of which were with the integration program. She had been working with Rob for one year. The teacher aide was in her 50s, of English-speaking background, and was qualified in secondary education. The teacher aide had been in the current position for over 20 years and had been working with Rob for the last four years. The speech pathologist was in her 20s, of English-speaking background, had been a specialist for three years and a half, and had been in charged of Rob for two and a half years.

Joe’s special school was located in an area 14 km west of Melbourne. Joe was studying at the same school and in the same campus with the Helen, the child in Case Study 2. However, Joe was in the junior group with the class size of four students. Professional participants in this case included the Principal, Joe’s classroom teacher and the teacher aide. The Principal was in his mid 40s and of English-speaking background.
background. Joe’s classroom teacher was in her 20s and also of English-speaking background. The teacher had a Bachelor’s degree, had been a special teacher for five years, and was Joe’s teacher for one year. The teacher aide was in her 20s and of Croatian background. The teacher aide, who had college/university qualification, had been in the current position for three years and had been helping Joe for two months.

4.7.2 Case results

The case was analyzed by looking at the process in which the parents were prepared for their cooperation with the school and the home-school partnership.

4.7.2.1 Parents preparedness for cooperation

There were certain factors that played prominent roles in the process of the parents preparing for home-school cooperation. These factors included Thi’s perceptions of the children’s disability and of the help provided, support from the school and the specific ILP for each child.

4.7.2.1.1 Parents’ perception of children’s disability

i) Acceptance

“I’ve learnt that through 24 years of research, the answer still has not been found,” Thi said of her knowledge of Autism. Although having stopped searching for the causes of the children’s conditions, Thi disclosed that she still agonized about the children’s conditions. “Anguish overpowers our family happiness,” she said.
Explaining why she had a permanent smile, Thi said it was to hide her sad feelings for the situations of children and her family circumstance.  

ii) Children’s improvement

According to the teachers, Rob showed an ability to learn, particularly on visually based tasks. However, Rob still had difficulties in the area of social interaction and communication. Thi had the same judgment. Rob’s difficulty was that he did not concentrate and did not remember. Rob still did not know he was Autistic. As Joe also had Autistic symptoms, Rob drew the conclusion himself that he might have Autism as well. Thi was advised by Ms Hong, the social worker, and Rob’s classroom teacher to find a sensitive approach to let him know as early as possible to avoid him from being shocked. Nevertheless, in general Thi was confident in Rob’s progress. “He’s making progress his own way and pace,” Thi said. Thi proudly revealed that Rob understood house rules as well as school regulations. According to Thi, Rob was a smiley, kind, and caring boy who was very active but liked things to be neat and tidy and was aware of danger. Rob’s progress helped Thi a lot as she now could predict his thoughts and behaviours. The fact that Rob was eligible to study in a mainstream school made Thi really proud of her son. The mother’s happiness was surprisingly simple though. “He has a chance to wear uniform,” Thi said.

Thi, on the other hand, had more concerns for Joe who did not speak and was not aware of danger. Thi said Joe liked to play a lone and did not have interacting skills. His reflex was poor. The teachers, however, believed that Joe had the capacity to

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20 Quotations used in Case Study 7 were extracted from transcripts of interviews with the mother, school management staff, and the teachers. The reference code for these transcripts as listed in the Code list to the case study database (Appendix 23) is DA3.S1 (F1/F2/F3).
speak even though it was difficult to hear his responses. Joe could also read quite well. He knew all the letters of the alphabet and numbers up to 50. “He is not silly,” the teacher said, “he can pick up a lot of things.”

4.7.2.1.2 Parents’ perception of help

i) Self-help

Teo had a brother residing in Sydney. Without support from their extended families, the couple mainly relied on themselves. Working all day, Teo did not have much contact with the children. However, on weekends when he did not have to work, Teo often took the children out to the park. Thi had a few friends with similar circumstances, but there was no one who was close enough for Thi to share her thoughts with. Thi had never invited anyone to her house because Teo did not like that.

For information, Thi often listened to the weekly SBS radio medical program broadcasted in Vietnamese. And in order to help herself better integrate into the society, Thi learnt English. Thi was a very determined woman who learnt to find her own way to make things better for the whole family. Thi was not hesitated in asking for help. When it was possible, Thi asked the investigator to help translate letters, documents or fill out application forms for funding.

In relation to their religious belief, Thi said the family worshiped their ancestors. Their belief was that if they were not cruel to others then terrible things would not fall on their heads. There were times when Thi thought that she was being punished for something she had done in her previous life. Such thoughts no longer existed since Thi joined Parent-to-Parent.
ii) Social support services

Having had to rely on their own to raise the children and having experienced the isolation after her arrival from Vietnam, Thi deeply understood the necessity of social support services. Thi was a dynamic member of Parent-to-Parent and ADEC. Thi used all the services available, or known to her, such as taxi vouchers for Joe, double parking time permit, respite care, case manager for Joe, and tutors for both Rob and Joe from the local city council. Thi was also active in applying for funding from various social organizations. The story of Thi’s family was once published in the monthly magazine of the Association for Children with a Disability. Being sponsored by Aber Care, the family also had a week-long holiday to Sydney.

Thanks to Parent-to-Parent, Thi said, the quality of her family life had improved significantly. Applying the knowledge learned from the psychological sessions, Thi has learnt to communicate with her husband. Thi realized that she had not really understood Teo. Things were working out very well. Thi was now happier and found that life was worth living again. Joining support groups also provided Thi with the opportunity to socialize. “Now I can see things beyond my old house,” she said.

4.7.2.1.3 School support and the ILP

i) School support

Support services that Rob received from the school included integration aide and speech therapy. With 60% of the students being of Vietnamese background, the school had a Vietnamese-speaking staff member who worked two days a week. The school’s newsletter had a Vietnamese version. Vietnamese language was taught at the
school along with Italian. “We want to be a Vietnamese-friendly school,” the Principal said. The school also had a strong homework policy because, according to the Principal, the large majority of Vietnamese parents and some other parents wanted homework. However, school reports were not translated into Vietnamese.

With regard to Joe, support services provided included teacher aide, speech therapy, and occupational therapy. In Joe’s school, there was a Vietnamese group which met once a month to help circulate related information and services. Interpreters were provided for meetings with guest speakers. Thi often attended the group meetings. The group was now for parents of all backgrounds. The school also had a Vietnamese-speaking staff who was at school every Tuesday. The staff also acted as a teacher assistant who worked in classes with a lot of Vietnamese children. When necessary, she would write to parents or ring parents up to talk with them about their children. According to the Principal, this would also help bring more parents to the Parent Support Group. However, due to the percentage of Vietnamese students being less than 50%, there was not a Vietnamese version of the school newsletter. Thi thought it was a disadvantage for parents. Nevertheless, important information and school reports were in Vietnamese.

ii) The ILP

According to Rob’s teachers, Vietnamese children as well as children from a non-English speaking background (NESB) in general had similar difficulties with the English language. So language with a focus on grammar was incorporated into the ILPs. Culture, however, was not seen as a “huge factor” because “that is not something very individual,” the classroom teacher said. Rob also had one-on-one
sessions with the speech pathologist who had funding to help him on the language disorder. Along side Rob’s ILP, the general curriculum was also applied to help develop his socialization.

Joe also had an ILP like other children in the school. The plan was developed with contributions from the teachers, the parents, and other therapists. According to the Principal, there would not be any problem carrying out the plan thanks to the fairly small number of students in each classroom, from about four to seven, given that there were two staff in each class, a teacher and a teacher aide.

4.7.2.2 Home-school partnership

The home-school partnership was carried out through two main stages representing the relationship and the task. These two stages were the home-school communication and the home-school cooperation. Details of each stage are investigated below.

4.7.2.2.1 Home-school communication

i) Communication lines

Thi’s major communication lines with Rob’s teachers included the parent-teacher interviews and Thi’s coming to the school, when having concerns, without appointments. Thi was the only parent who attended the parent-teacher interviews. According to Thi, Teo hated meetings. He would not attend any meeting even though he was not busy. When Rob started school, Thi requested more meetings. The number of meetings was gradually reduced as Rob made a lot of progress and Thi got more confident with the teachers. Interpreters were provided for formal meetings. The advantage of having an interpreter was that the message got across, the Principal said.
The teachers’ view of using an interpreter was that it was time-consuming, things got lost in translation, and it was more impersonalized. The teachers therefore preferred to use their own personnel because she knew the community and was known by the teachers. “It’s more personal, friendly, and informal … and we will be more confident,” the classroom teacher said. Observation from a parent-teacher interview between Thi and the educators including Rob’s classroom teacher and teacher aide, the speech therapist and the Principal showed that Thi avoided eye contact with the educators and mainly addressed the interpreter. Avoiding eye contact in Vietnamese culture was a sign of respect. Thi’s major concern was Rob’s integration. The mother’s opinions were, however, very general and expressed in a lengthy polite way. This was also a typical Vietnamese communication style (Tran, 2001). Thi often got confused when asked to clarify her point.

With regard to other communication methods, in Rob’s case, there was no communication book or home visit. Telephone was used by the teachers occasionally. Coming to school to see the teachers without making an appointment in advance, nevertheless, seemed to be Thi’s most favourite communication method. According to the teachers, Thi knew the school system and the timetable of the Vietnamese staff very well. She came fairly often, about twice a week. “I speak to her quite often as she likes reassurance,” the teacher aide said. Thi was happy that she could be in contact with the teachers this way.

On the contrary, the communication book and telephone were Thi’s major contacts with Joe’s teachers. Thi knew that she could ring the teachers, when needed, using the telephone interpreting service. With the communication book, the teachers said they
tried to write in the book everyday. Thi occasionally had inputs in Vietnamese. When the Vietnamese staff member was available, she would help translate things written in there to the teachers. Thi said parents should be allowed to keep the book at the end of the year. Although important information was sent home in Vietnamese, Thi still thought that not having a translated version of the school newsletter was a disadvantage for NESB parents. School reports were, however, translated into Vietnamese and sent home twice a year following parent-teacher interviews. Observation from a parent-teacher interview also showed that Thi avoided looking into the educators’ eyes when addressing them. During the meeting, Thi was emotional and had difficulty expressing her points. Thi was concerned about Joe’s behaviours and his inability to speak. Thi would like the teachers to pay more attention to Joe in case he fell over and got hurt. In order to help parents feel comfortable, the educators tried to engage the same interpreter from previous meetings although it was not always possible. According to the educators, it seemed that the only disadvantage of using an interpreter was time-consuming. At Joe’s school, all children were taken to and from school by taxi, so the parents did not often come to the school. When Thi had concerns she would ring to request a meeting and come to talk to the teachers. Being a special setting, home visit was also an open option if required to help build up the relationship with families, the Principal said.

ii) Home-school relationship

According to Rob’s teachers, due to language difficulty, they could not socialize with Thi. Thi said she was once offended by a teacher who refused to talk to her and asked her to come back the next day when a meeting had been scheduled. Whenever Thi had concerns, she just came over to the school to see the teachers. Thi emphasized that she
had “the Principal’s permission to come to the school anytime.” Thi’s view was that if she was hesitated in informing the teachers of her concerns, it meant she did not fully cooperate with the school. Thi, however, admitted that she sometimes came to the school a little too often. Thi very much appreciated the school staff’s patience. Thi said she felt close and comfortable to communicate with the staff, teachers, especially the Principal who was “relaxed,” “experienced” and had a good sense of humour.

Similar to Rob’s case, Joe’s teachers said they did not have a close relationship with Joe’s mother due to language difficulties. The teachers admitted there was misunderstanding on both sides. Through the Vietnamese assistant, the teachers revealed that they tried to learn about the Vietnamese culture to help them better understand Vietnamese parents. They would not talk about culture with parents being afraid that they would offend parents.

4.7.2.2 Home-school cooperation

i) Stakeholders’ perceptions of roles

Rob’s teachers said they try to make Thi involved in what was going on in the school and knew that Thi was not hesitant to talk to the teachers if she needed to. The teachers considered their role as “a little bit between service provider and partner.” The teachers thought Thi was a “good advocate” who was very interested in Rob’s education although it was “a bit over the top in the beginning.” Thi, however, was not involved in school and classroom activities. “I think that their confidence in English prevents them from coming,” the teacher reasoned.
According to the Principal at Joe’s school, families and staffs should work together as a team in an equal partnership to get the best results for the students. It was more important when the students first came to school because parents knew their child better than the teachers. In Joe’s case, the teachers said Thi really wanted to be involved in everything and did a lot to help Joe at home. To assist the mother, the speech therapist consulted with Thi on how she wanted things done and what sort of things to use with Joe at home. The speech therapist then sent some communication devices for Joe, some different picture exchange activities that Thi was now doing at home. Thi also came in with her ideas although sometimes there was misunderstanding because Thi came up with something “that is quite a little too advanced to what is actually possible,” the classroom teacher said. The educators, however, tried to manage that and in general the cooperation “is working very well,” the teacher said.

Talking about her perception of parental role, Thi said she was active in approaching the teachers because due to language and culture differences it was harder for the teachers to communicate with her. Thi also kept a close eye on school activities through the newsletter and basically participated based on her own capacity. If there was anything that Thi did not understand, she would ask a neighbour, a Vietnamese social worker, or the Vietnamese school staff to help translate the information. “If I need anything, I just ask,” Thi said determinedly. Thi appreciated what the school had been doing for Rob. It was “more than enough,” Thi said knowing that Rob’s understanding ability was restricted. Although most of the teachers’ assessments were correct, Thi added, she thought that some were not as specific and close to what she observed.
ii) Expectations

What the educators would see with Rob was happiness. That was the most important thing, the Principal said. The school was also going to make sure that Rob could read and add up things to a good standard. The teachers all agreed that Rob was improving socially and academically. His behaviours were “a lot more appropriate, more mature, and more confident.”

The teachers’ main concern for Joe was to help him develop his independence. One example was that Joe would not pick up his food if he saw somebody standing next to him. “He will get your hand and get you pick it up for him,” the teacher said. It was likely that Thi would pick it up for him at home. The teachers found that difficult because Joe did not need help. “He is perfectly capable of doing it,” the teacher emphasized.

Thi was in general happy with the children’s progress. Although knowing that the Autism diagnosis would “follow them for the rest of their life,” Thi still hoped that the children would get better and could control some of their “abnormal behaviours.”

4.7.2.2.3 Better home-school cooperation

i) Cultural issues

Rob’s teachers revealed that although they had not had any specific cultural training, they had been trying to learn through the Vietnamese-speaking staff, parents, and attending PD sessions. “Not at all” was the answer of Joe’s classroom teacher for the question in relation to culturally-related pre-service training. The teachers were concerned about language difficulties and how to help and communicate with parents.
They only had a session on how to use the interpreting service a few years back. The Principal agreed that the school did not have a lot of formal PD in that area. Currently, the teachers relied on the interpreting service. For better partnership, the educators wished that they had more information about the cultures of families, the way people interacted, and what other cultures expected of the school so that they could better meet parents’ needs. Finding a training source was also a hurdle, informed the Principal.

With regard to language and culture issues, the Principal at Rob’s school revealed that although the school values different cultures, it was hard to get a lot of diverse cultures on the School Council. Parents were reluctant to come. Part of the reasons for the homework group being established was to help make it more comfortable for parents, especially Vietnamese parents, to come to school. The Principal would like Vietnamese parents to get more involved in school activities and take an interest in the School Council. In addition to the language difficulty, the Principal understood that cultural perception played an important role as well. Parents often thought that the school knew best and school was for learning. Therefore, they better did what they were told and did not speak up at school. The Principal at Joe’s school was totally in line with the Principal at Rob’s school in this regard. According to Joe’s Principal, to get the best results for the students, families and everyone should be working together as a team. “It is important to treat it as an equal partnership,” he said. He suggested that parents should take an active approach to the home-school partnership and did not think that educators were experts who knew everything. Parents should voice their concerns and together with the school worked out the strategy to help. However, in order to make that team work came true, it was essential that families should first
accept that the child had a significant disability, Joe’s Principal said. Secondly, having realistic and appropriate expectations were critical. Some families had “extremely high and unrealistic expectations,” others had very low expectations which hindered the child’s becoming independent, the Principal continued to say.

ii) Funding

Ten percent of the student population at Rob’s school had a disability. With such a high rate, the Principal said, it was very difficult if the school did not have government funding because being a mainstream school with special programs they needed to employ staff to work with the children and that cost money. And they needed more help.

At Joe’s school, with a predominant population of Vietnamese students, Vietnamese parents at this school were well cared for and did not feel isolated like Vietnamese parents in some other schools. The school had a Vietnamese-speaking staff member, interpreters were provided for meetings and other events. Funding for cultural and special support was not emphasized by the Principal as a big problem.

4.7.3 Case summary

Thi was still struggling to come to terms with the fact that both of her sons were Autistic. With Rob’s impressive progress, Thi really hoped that Joe’s condition would become better. Thi was very active in her approach to help Rob and Joe. However, the effectiveness of home-school partnerships was significantly influenced by restrictions such as language difficulties, cultural differences, and expectation discrepancies. Thi being over protective made it difficult for the teachers to help Joe become
independent. Being too concerned also caused Thi to come to Rob’s school a little too often. Too high expectations for Joe sometimes led to misunderstanding with Joe’s teachers. The whole collaborating process was child-oriented. Teachers at both schools expressed their wish to have more training in terms of cultural issues, which they thought was essential for better understanding and communicating with diverse background parents. The analysis results of Case Study 7 are diagrammatically summarized in Figures 18 and 19 below.
Figure 18: A summary diagram of influences on the home-school partnership in Case Study 7 (child 1, Rob)
Figure 19: A summary diagram of influences on the home-school partnership in Case Study 7 (child 2, Joe)
CHAPTER 5 CROSS-CASE DISCUSSIONS

Comprehensive research results across seven cases were put together in Tables 7 to 22 in Appendix 25. Hereafter is the investigator’s discussions of the results. Synthesizing and constantly comparing information across the tables were the major methods used. The aim was to construct meaning and develop themes. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), constant comparative method is a means to derive theory.

Cross-case analysis showed that a home-school partnership was sophisticated and was influenced by multiple systems of interaction. Thus, in order to fully address the research question of this study, perceptions of the parents and involved educators about home-school partnership needed to be examined and reflected from a multidimensional perspective. The ecological model of human development of Bronfenbrenner (1979a, 1992) and the ecocultural theory can best provide a framework to comprehend such multiple systems of interaction influencing a home-school partnership.

5.1 Microsystem level influences on the home-school partnerships

Home and school are the two immediate settings in which the child is nested and has direct contact with. Parents and educators are representatives of these two Microsystems. Demographic data of involved families and schools as well as characteristics of related parents and educators were gathered and analyzed to assess
their influence on the home-school partnerships. Distinctive characteristics of the children – the focal point of the partnerships – were also presented.

5.1.1 The children

There were nine children from seven families involved in the present study. All the children were Australia born and are of a Vietnamese background. The total four girls and five boys ranged in age from six to 14 years old. The average age of the children was 10 years. Almost all of the children were diagnosed with Autism or Asperger syndrome. Only one girl from Case Study 6 had Down syndrome. Among the 11 children, four attended special schools, and seven were in mainstream settings with an integration program. There were two exceptions. The boy in Case Study 3 used to attend a mainstream setting before being referred to a special school. The young girl from Case Study 5 was, in contrast, in the process of being transferred to a mainstream setting after spending a preparation year in a special school.

A child’s condition and level of progress had a critical role in the operation of a home-school partnership. With regard to the schools and the teachers, preparations for an ILP and partnership goals were all established based upon the assessment results of a child’s condition and level of progress. The parents, nevertheless, had subjective views of their child’s condition and progress. As a result, differences existed in most cases in relation to expectations of both parties for the children.
5.1.2  The families and the parents

5.1.2.1  The families

All families resided in a suburban neighbourhood. Five out of seven families were located in the Western area of Melbourne. Of the other two families, one was located in the Northern area and one in the Eastern area. All families involved in this study were nuclear families. Most families consisted of two biological parents and two children. Most of the children were at school age and one had a disability.

Most families did not have close relatives in Australia. With the three families that had close family members living nearby, the parents did not like to ask for help. In general, as a group, families had limited, very limited or no support, from their extended families. Similarly, most families did not rely on support from friends. Most parents reported that they only had friends or acquaintances that they could talk to in terms of information inquiry or exchange when necessary. There were only two cases in which the mothers could confide difficulties in their lives or share child-rearing experiences in their female friends. Other than that, parents in all cases would never ask their friends for help. Parents thought it was too much or simply impossible. In all cases, the mothers were the main carers who were involved in all aspects of their children’s life, including being in charge of the children’s education and dealing with school and the teachers. In some cases, the mothers were completely on their own in fulfilling these tasks (cases 2, 6, and 7). In other cases, the fathers shared some of the responsibilities with their wives. Mothers solely taking care of house chores and the children’s education are typical features in traditional Vietnamese families.
Basically, all families operated within their nuclear family. However, families differed in terms of their circumstances and parents’ perceptions of outdoor activities. Parents in Cases Studies 1, 2, and 3 said that they rarely to almost never went out to enjoy their time together as a family. In Cases 4, 5, 6 and 7, the parents revealed that they sometimes, to occasionally, enjoyed time outdoors. Especially, the parents in Case Study 5 were proud that their whole family went out almost every week. The level of participation in social activities also differed from family-to-family. Social activities in the context of this study included going out with extended family, friends, or involvement in activities organized by supporting groups or local communities. Most families had limited, to very limited, involvement in these social activities. With regard to the families’ financial circumstance, there were only two families reported to have financial difficulty. Largely relying on government benefits, the single mother in Case Study 2 revealed money was tight. The mother in Case Study 3 complained of a money shortage due to the husband’s low income job and government benefits not being enough to subsidize the single family income for three children. According to the parents in the five remaining cases (1, 4, 5, 6, and 7), money was not their family concern.

In brief, all families provided their children with a loving, caring, and traditionally Vietnamese living environment. Only a few family factors appeared to have indirect influences on the home-school partnership. They included the families being isolated and the parents’ rather low social integration level. These factors subconsciously influenced the parents’ perceptions of their role in the home-school partnership, their engagement level in school or classroom activities, as well as their interaction style with the teachers.
5.1.2.2 The parents

All parents were born in Vietnam and the language spoken in the family home was Vietnamese. Most parents were in their 40s or 50s. As a group, the parents had around 20 years residing in Australia. All parents expressed a certain level of faith in their belief or religion. All mothers were the main carers and were homebound. The fathers, on the other hand, were in charge of the family’s financial situation. Two fathers were factory workers. Two were self-employed. One worked casually. And one worked as an accountant. The parents’ education levels ranged from primary to tertiary. Eight parents had an education level from Year 12 to post secondary. Five parents had an education level from primary school to Year 9. Most couples had similar levels of education except the parents in Case Study 6. There was a big gap between the mother’s and the father’s education levels in this case. The mother had a tertiary degree and had trained to become a teacher in Vietnam whereas the father only had primary education. Most parents had completed their schooling in Vietnam. The parents’ levels of education, however, did not depict any specific patterns of influence on the home-school partnership. Some parents with a high level of education (Year 12 and above) had a very good relationship with the school and the teachers. An Australia-trained, tertiary educated mother (Case Study 3), nevertheless, had an unsuccessful relationship with her child’s school.

The parents’ English skill also varied, ranging from limited to functional to fluent. Six parents had limited English, five with a functional/competent level, and two could be classified as having fluent English. The classification was based on the parents’ self-evaluation, the study investigator’s observation, and the definitions from the on-line Merriam-Webster dictionary (Merriam-Webster, 2008). Although there was no
evidence that English ability influences the parents’ confidence in working with the educators, it obviously had a great deal of impact on the effectiveness of home-school communication and cooperation as it restricted the possibility of both parties to fully understand each other.

Parents’ health was an important factor that had a direct impact on family life. As a group, the parents were in good health. The mother in Case Study 3 had rather poor health. Although the mother’s health did not have a direct connection with the home-school partnership, it seemed to implicitly influence the mother’s ability to perceive the reality and to make open-minded decisions in relation to cooperating with the school and the teachers.

5.1.3 The schools and the educators

5.1.3.1 The schools

There were four mainstream schools and three special schools participating in this study. Five out of the seven schools were located in the Western areas of Melbourne. The other two schools, one was in northern and one was in eastern areas. Distance to the schools from the Melbourne’s Central Business District (CBD) ranged from six to 30 kilometres. The population of each school varied from 100 to 280 students. The student population of special schools was less than that of their mainstream counterparts. The number of students of Vietnamese background also varied from school-to-school. There were four schools in which the number of Vietnamese background students was less than 10% (Cases 1, 3, 4, and 6). These schools are scattered in all geographic areas. The number of students of Vietnamese origin in the
other three schools, all in the Western area, were 25% to 40% and 60% respectively (Cases 2, 5, and 7). The number of Vietnamese students with a disability in all schools ranged from less than 10% in three schools (Cases 3, 4, and 5) to 25% and up to 47% in the remaining four cases (Cases 1, 2, 6, and 7). There was evidence that the number of children of Vietnamese background in one school significantly influenced the school’s policy to provide support services for Vietnamese parents.

With regard to the teacher-children ratio, on average, a mainstream class had around 24 students with the inclusion of around one to three students who had a disability or a special need. There was only one teacher. The hours of integration service provided to children with special needs in a mainstream class were limited to around one hour a week. The class/lead teacher therefore remained the only educator taking care of the whole class the majority of the time. Class size in special settings was much smaller with approximately six students in one classroom. There were on average two educators – a class teacher and a teacher aide – in each special school. The lower teacher-child ratio in special schools meant the children were better supported in terms of facilities available for use and support services for the parents (opinion of the Principal in Case Study 6). It also meant that special school children may get more individual attention from the teachers than their peers in a mainstream setting. The student-teacher ratio was closely related to the teachers’ workloads and therefore significantly influenced the teachers’ capacity to maintain regular contacts with families. The student communication book was a requirement in all special settings and facilitated the maintenance of contact.
5.1.3.2 The educators

In most cases, educators participating in this study included the class teacher and the teacher/integration aide. There was only one speech pathologist who participated in a group interview. This female speech pathologist actively involved in the ILP planning and occasionally had direct contact with the mother in that case. It was consistently found that there was almost no direct contact between the parents and specialists.

In the case studies, there were in total six female and three male teachers working in both special and mainstream settings. The teachers ranged from their 20s to their 50s. There were three teachers in their 20s to 30s, six teachers in their 40s to 50s. All the teachers are of English-speaking background. The teachers were quite homogeneous in their education level. Most of them indicated that they had a Bachelor’s degree and/or a Primary or Secondary Education Diploma. Only one special teacher reported having specialist qualifications and was in the process of obtaining a Master’s degree in special educational needs. The teachers had from three to 28 years of experience; three teachers had less than 10 years of teaching experience, and the remaining six had on average 24 years of teaching. However, teachers’ years of teaching in general were not always in proportion to their experience in the integration program. For example, two mainstream teachers with 27 and 28 years of teaching only had one and two years of experience with the integration program respectively. Except one special teacher who had his teaching years match his years of experience with the integration program, the average years of experience with this program of the remaining teachers in this group were five years. The teachers who had been teaching for less than 10 years had about five years of experience with the program. Most teachers had from
one to two years working with the children involved in this study. The female teacher in Case Study 2 had three consecutive years as a class teacher to the girl in that case.

There were seven integration/teacher aides participating in this study. Most of them had limited contact with the parents as class teachers were responsible for home-school communication. However, there were two cases (Cases 4 and 6) in which the integration/teacher aides, in fact, had a more significant role in maintaining the home-school communication. Both aides in these two cases had extensive involvement in the education of the related children. They in a sense worked with the families on the teachers’ behalf. There were quite a few similarities between these two cases. The classroom teachers in both cases were male. The female aides in the two cases were in their 40s-50s, the same age range as that of the mothers in the relevant cases. The teacher aides were homogeneous in their education level. Both had completed secondary education. The teacher aide in Case Study 4, who is of Norwegian background, had over 20 years of experience as a teacher aide and had been assisting the child in that case for two years. The integration aide in Case Study 6, who is of English-speaking background, had been working as an integration aide for about eight years, six of which were with the child in the related case. Both mothers in Case Studies 4 and 6 emphasized their relationships with the integration/teacher aides, especially the mother in Case 6. The relationships, in turn, had positive influences on the mothers’ involvement in the home-school collaboration although at different levels.

There were differences between the parents and the educators in terms of their background and level of education. As a group, the educators are of English-speaking
background and have a higher level of education than the parents. The parents, on the other hand, are all Vietnam born and migrated to Australia. Most parents spoke limited English, were self-employed or did not work, and had varied levels of education, ranging from primary to tertiary. Discrepancies in level of education, however, did not show a significant influence on the home-school partnerships. Background differences, on the other hand, had more extensive influences as they were related to the parties’ perceptions of roles, expectations, and the way they perceived child’s conditions and progress. The parents’ limited English had a direct impact on home-school communication and cooperation.

Other than these differences, there were similarities among other characteristics. For example, the parents and the teachers as a group were similar in age. The majority of the educators are female and the mothers also played a more significant role in dealing with school and interacting with the educators. The fact that most parents and teachers were similar in age (in their 40s-50s) and are of the same gender (female) had positive contributions to the home-school partnership. Whereas the mothers appreciated the activeness of young teachers, they tended to have more trust in older teachers. The parents’ view was that older teachers were more experienced. Most of the mothers also said they were more comfortable interacting with female teachers. In such cases as (Case Studies 4 and 6) where the class teachers are male, the mothers were closer to the female teacher/integration aides leading to an interpersonal relationship. Case Study 3 also had a male classroom teacher. In this case, the family had a very tense relationship with the school. Despite his best efforts, the male teacher failed to establish a two-way communication channel with the mother. However, there
was not enough evidence to conclude that the parents’ gender preference influenced the home-school partnership.

5.1.4 In summary

At the microsystem level, families’ isolation and parent-teacher language differences are the only demographic characteristics that demonstrated a strong influence on the home-school partnership. Although differences existed between certain demographic characteristics of the parents and the educators such as level of education and occupation, these factors did not impact the partnership to the extent that they hindered the home-school communication or significantly affected the cooperation. From the school side, the number of students with Vietnamese backgrounds in the school population was strongly related to the support services available for Vietnamese parents. The student-teacher ratio had a connection to the teachers’ workload and their ability to maintain regular contact with parents.

5.2 Mesosystem level influences on the home-school partnerships

The parents and the educators came into contact at the mesosystem level. This is where home-school collaboration took place. Partnerships in all cases followed a similar format. They consisted of one or two preliminary meetings between the school and the family. The purposes of the meetings were to assess the child’s eligibility for funding from DEECD, and identify the needs of the child as well as of the family for support services. This was the first step that set the basis for the future home-school
cooperation. The official home-school collaboration during the year comprised of two parent-teacher interviews.

5.2.1 Parent-teacher interviews

Parent-teacher interviews were official occasions in which both parents and teachers had the longest allocated time to sit down and discuss the child’s issues with each other. These were also the opportunity for the parents and the teachers to share or express other concerns, expectations, and goals that they might have for the child. Each interview was scheduled for about half an hour due to the special needs of the child and the parents’ need for a Vietnamese interpreter. In most cases, the mothers were in charge of attending parent-teacher interviews. With regard to the educators, most parent-teacher interviews were conducted and attended by the class teachers and the integration/teacher aides. Either voluntarily or as an obligation, parents from all seven cases never missed a parent-teacher interview. Home-school communication in all seven cases was therefore alive. Nevertheless, with only two parent-teacher interviews a year, the frequency of parent-teacher interaction was quite low. In addition, the effectiveness of parent-teacher interviews was significantly affected by the perceptions of the involved parties about the related child’s condition and progress as well as their expectations for the child.

5.2.1.1 Perceptions of child’s conditions and progress

Almost all parents (six out of seven families) accepted their child’s conditions. However, levels of acceptance varied. Some parents accepted their child’s conditions with some sadness or agony (Cases 1 and 7). Some parents just simply accepted the
fact (Cases 4 and 6). Some parents even readily accepted the situation from the beginning without any uneasy thoughts (Cases 2 and 5). There was only one case (Case 3) in which the parents did not accept that their child had a disability despite objective assessment results. The condition of the boy in this case was considered severe by the school management staff. The child had been diagnosed with both Autistic and intellectual disability. The child had been transferred to his special school from a mainstream setting.

Parents’ levels of acceptance of their child’s conditions, in turn, strongly influenced their perceptions of the child’s improvement overtime. Basically, all parents agreed that their children made some progress over the years. However, for parents who accepted their child’s conditions, but still endured sadness or agony, the progress seemed to be slow or not much at all (Cases 1 and 7). The parents who accepted their child’s condition without ever questioning it, on the other hand, were very optimistic about the child’s achievement (Cases 2 and 5). These parents felt their child did surprisingly well and they were lucky parents. The parents in Case Study 3 who refused to accept that their child had a disability presented a very negative view about their child’s progress. According to the parents in this case, the child was going backwards and the family was having bad luck.

All parents were in general very subjective in their view of their child’s progress. The parents revealed that just by looking at their child, they would know whether the child had made any progress. The educators in all cases were objective in assessing the children’s conditions and were overall positive of the children’s progress based on the children’s conditions and capabilities. In some cases (Cases 1, 2, 3, and 7) where the
parents may not have been so happy with their children’s development, the teachers thought that the children made excellent progress. Discrepancies also existed in the expectations for the children of both parties.

### 5.2.1.2 Expectations for child

Given the children’s conditions, the first wish of most families was for their child to be able to take care of him/herself when grown up. However, most parents also had other expectations for their children. For example, the mother in Case Study 2 wanted her child to be able to speak whereas according to the class teacher, physically the child was unable to speak. Case Study 3 parents who had never accepted their child’s condition had strongly upheld their belief that their child would soon become normal. As a consequence of that belief, the parents in this case seriously expected the child to be able to read, write, and do maths like other children. In this case, the educators failed to establish a two-way home-school communication line no matter how hard they tried. The teacher in this case employed many strategies to engage the parents in the partnership. As a result, there was only one-way home-school contact. In another case, Case Study 5, where the girl was eligible to be transferred from a special setting to a mainstream school, the parents were full of hope that the child would become normal and expected that she would keep up with her peers in reading and writing skills. Similarly, the mother in Case Study 6 would have liked her daughter with Down syndrome to be able to do maths at her age level. This mother also suspected that her child was on a path to become normal. As a group, the parents had high expectations for their children. Some were little optimistic (Cases 5 and 6) and two were unrealistic (Cases 2 and 3).
The teachers’ expectations for the children, on the other hand, were more specific with an emphasis on both the children’s educational and social needs. The teachers also stressed the realistic nature of the expectations based on the children’s actual conditions. According to some of the teachers, the parents seemed to forget that their children had a disability. Differences in home-school expectations for the child were a difficult point in most home-school partnerships.

5.2.1.3 Parents’ contributions to the ILP

The parents’ involvement in the partnership was mainly through their contributions to the ILP during parent-teacher interviews or ILP meetings. By relying on their own subjective standards to assess their child’s progress as well as having different expectations for the child, many parents did not put much emphasis on the ILP. The mother in Case Study 2 even said that she had no idea what the ILP was about. The mother in Case Study 3 who had never accepted her child’s condition thought that the ILP was of low standard and not suitable for her child. Some families even expressed their lack of trust in the teachers. Trust in this context in accordance with the parents’ view was related to the teachers’ ability to care for the children to the parents’ satisfaction. The satisfaction was based on the parents’ assessment of whether their children were happy at school or how the teachers treated their children at school. With these criteria, it was recorded that four out seven families (Cases 1, 2, 3, 7) did not have trust in the teachers. The three remaining families (Cases 4, 5, 6) did. The mother in Case Study 4 even stated that it was an absolute trust. The mother in Case Study 4 was in line with the teachers in terms of the views about the child’s condition and progress. The mother’s expectations for her son also seemed to be compatible with those of the teachers. This was the only case in which the home-school
partnership was well-balanced with open and understanding home-school communication, social mother-teacher aide relationship, and effective home-school cooperation. Families found to have trust in the educators (Cases 4, 5, 6) were also recorded to have a closer and more positive relationship with related educators. Parents in these cases had a higher level of relevant inputs during parent-teacher interviews. Home-help strategies were also more actively reinforced in the home by the parents in these cases.

There would be only two parent-teacher interviews where parents and teachers would meet to discuss child’s issues. Therefore, during the year the parents and the teachers relied on informal communication methods to sustain the home-school communication and/or cooperation.

5.2.2 Informal communication methods

The communication book, telephone, and no-appointment talking time were three major informal communication methods used by the parents and/or the teachers in this study. Five out of nine children had a communication book. The children who had a communication book attended both special and mainstream settings. The telephone was used in four cases. In three of these cases, both the parents and the teachers used the telephone; in one case the class teacher used this means. Talking time without appointment was a method employed in four cases. No school in this study had a restricted time allotment for informal home-school communication. It is important to mention that almost every school in the present study supported the ‘pop in and chat’ policy and this could be seen as an effective way to establish the parent-teacher
relationship. Although this method was employed by some parents in this study, their application did not seem to be productive due to their language difficulties.

Together with the formal channels communication, informal home-school communication played a significant part in the home-school partnership. Nevertheless, the parents and the teachers had very different views about this informal channel in terms of the methods employed, the purposes and the frequency of using those methods.

5.2.2.1 Parents’ points of view

Not all families used informal methods. Case Study 3 family did not use this method. In the remaining cases, mothers were mainly the ones who employed this communication channel. There was a compromise in cases where the parents’ suggestions met those chosen by the teachers. Parents used these means to raise concerns (Cases 1, 2, 5, 7) or to inform teachers when needed (Cases 4, 6). These meanings were also considered by some parents as a way to socialize and/or build a relationship with the educators (Cases 4, 5, 6).

Parents’ frequency of using informal communication methods ranged from low (Case 3) to medium (Cases 1, 3, 4) and high (Cases 5, 6, 7). There were two cases in which face-to-face conversation was extensively employed by the parents (Cases 5 and 7). The teachers in these two cases, nevertheless, were not interested in the method as it interfered with their workload or time schedule. For example, the Principal in Case Study 5 indicated that the parents in this case came to the school far too often. It could be before school, after school, or during school lunch break when they brought their child her favourite hot meal. The mother in Case Study 7, similarly, often came to the
school of her elder son whenever she was available and had the need to bring a concern to the immediate attention of the teachers. This was usually during school hours when both of her children were at school. All parents in these cases thought that what they did was right and necessary. They also did not feel the need to make an appointment in advance with the teachers as they already had the permission from the school Principal to come to the school whenever needed. The mother in Case Study 7 said that having to rely on the communication book was unfair for her as inputs were not always translated into Vietnamese.

Although parents had different purposes and different levels of frequency in using these informal methods, all parents agreed that informal means were a convenient way to communicate with educators. For some parents, these methods were an effective way to facilitate home-school cooperation (Case 4) or to establish the home-school relationship (Cases 5 and 6).

5.2.2.2 Teachers’ points of view

Teachers preferred different methods of informal communication for different reasons. In most cases (five out of seven), the class teachers were in charge of contacting parents using informal methods. Two teacher aides in Cases Studies 4 and 6, however, were responsible for this task as they had a closer relationship with the mothers. Interpreters were required to assist in parent-teacher meetings in four out of seven cases. Vietnamese-speaking staff in some schools helped meet the language needs of the parents. In other cases, an interpreter was arranged when needed.

The frequency of using informal methods could be organized into three levels: low, medium, and high. The frequency level was ‘high’ in cases where the parents or the
teachers had contacts with each other on a daily basis. ‘Medium’ level was assigned to cases in which contacts were carried out irregularly by either of the parties usually a few times a month. ‘Low’ was attached to cases where contacts occurred from one to five times per year. The frequency level was recorded as ‘high’ in Cases 2, 5, 6, and 7a\textsuperscript{21}. Teachers in Cases 5 and 7a reported to having to maintain that high level of frequency to keep up with parents’ demand although it was really time-consuming given that the children attended mainstream settings where the class size was larger than that in a special school. In the other two cases (2 and 6) where the frequency was also at a high level, the teachers voluntarily maintained or were happy to maintain that level of contact. Different communication methods were used in these high frequency cases, including: face-to-face conversation, the communication book, and telephone. Children in these cases varied in age and attended different school settings. The remaining cases (1, 3, 4, 7b) all had a medium level of contact with the teachers. The involved children also varied in age and studied in both mainstream and special settings.

In brief, no particular pattern emerged from the frequency of contact. It all depended on the teachers and parents. Factors such as child’s age, the nature of the disability, school setting or school policy for time allotment for home-school communication did not influence the frequency of parent-teacher contacts using informal methods. With some teachers, the application of informal communication methods was initiated by parents (Cases 5, 7a). In other cases, informal methods were employed by the teachers voluntarily as in Case Study 6 or as part of a school policy (Cases 2, 4, 7b). Usually

\textsuperscript{21} As Case Study 7 involves two children in a family, the case needs to be clarify as case 7a (Case Study 7, specifically involves child number 1, Rob) or case 7b (Case Study 7, specifically involved child number 2, Joe)
special school teachers were encouraged to use the communication book as a means to inform parents of the child’s daily activities at school. This was because children at these schools were taken to and from school by taxi or school bus. Teachers’ views of these methods were varied. For some teachers, these methods helped meet parents’ needs (Case 1), facilitate home-school communication (Case 2) and cooperation (Case 4), or build a fruitful mother-teacher aide interpersonal relationship as in Case Study 6. Some teachers, however, admitted that these methods were time-consuming and/or interfered with their workload or schedule (Cases 3, 5, 7a).

5.2.3 In summary

The mesosystem level is where the home-school communication and cooperation took place. The parent-teacher interviews had a similar format and level of frequency across the schools. There was also an ‘informal’ stream of home-school collaboration, which varied from case-to-case. Parents and teachers had different views in relation to the types of informal home-school communication as well as the purposes of and the limits of using these methods. Major factors affecting the effectiveness of the partnership were language difficulty, differences in parent-teacher expectations for child, and differences in parent-teacher perceptions of the child’s condition and progress. These factors were shown to extensively and directly influence the parents’ contributions into the child’s ILP and their level of involvement in their child’s education.

Parent-teacher interactions were, however, only one aspect of the multisystem levels of home-school partnerships. Features at the exosystem and macrosystem levels also had significance influences on the home-school collaboration. Selected exosystem and
macrosystem level influences which related to the mesosystem issues are discussed below.

5.3 Exosystem level influences on the home-school partnerships

From an ecological perspective, events and activities that occur at the exosystem and macrosystem levels influence the interactions at the microsystem or mesosystem levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a, 1992). Social support services and school support services are events that occurred at the exosystem level that had both direct and indirect influences on parents and educators, perspectives about the home-school partnership.

5.3.1 Social support services

5.3.1.1 Social support services for the children

The majority of parents (six out of seven cases) were active in seeking help for their children. However, their levels of involvement were different. Two families were classified as ‘medium active’ (Cases 1, 2), two were ‘active’ (Cases 4, 6), and two were ‘very active’ and ‘assertively active’ (Cases 5, 7 respectively). ‘Medium active’ in the context of this study meant parents left help-seeking option open. When the opportunity came, the parents would then assess the situation to see if it was appropriate or worth engaging with these services. ‘Active’ meant parents were actively involved in seeking help when needed and when opportunities were available. ‘Very active’ meant the parents were actively involved in searching for help even
when opportunities were not there. ‘Assertively active’ meant the parents were somehow more than active in their help-seeking behaviours, engaging in almost any known opportunities for which the families were eligible for.

Parents’ help-seeking attitudes and behaviours were clearly reflected through the number of support services used by the family. The parents mainly learnt of these support services from social workers and other Vietnamese parents who had similar family circumstances. Some families needed help with information; others with material support such as buying their child a new bicycle, a computer, or fixing the family carport to help extend the children’s play area. Parents in cases 4, 5, 6, and 7 used social support services for their children more extensively than parents in the remaining cases. Services used included respite care (cases 2, 4, 5), holiday programs (cases 4, 5, 6, 7), or a tutoring service from a local council (case 7). Only Case Study 3 parents chose not to seek help. The family in this case chose not to use any support services for which they were eligible. The parents in this case also had negative perception of social support services in general. They found the services not helpful at all.

Except for this case, parents in the remaining six cases all had positive perceptions towards social support services. Some parents indicated that they deeply appreciated the social support services that they had been provided. Those parents who actively used social support services for children (cases 4, 5, and 7) seemed to be more active in contacting the teachers and did not hesitate to inform the teachers of their concerns or voice their opinions. These parents also tended to be more energetically involved in their child’s education at home and/or at school. The home-school cooperation was
dynamic in these cases although the effectiveness of the cooperation varied depending largely on the homogeneity of parent-teacher expectations for the child. It was also consistent across the cases that those parents who actively used social support services for their children were also interested in social support services for parents. Quite a few mothers expressed the need for emotional support.

5.3.1.2 Social support services for the parents

The parent-to-Parent is one of the programs of the MacKillop Family Services, which was established to provide support to families of children up to the age of 18 years with a disability (both learning and physical disabilities). Its purpose is to connect families in the Western Metropolitan Region (WMR) by providing families with information, assistance and support through the form of workshops, information sessions, and newsletters. In addition, it also helps link families to relevant services. The program for the Vietnamese parents had a Vietnamese coordinator (Ms Hong). The number of Vietnamese parents attending the program increased over the years. At the time of this study, the program had been running for three years with around 30 regular attendees. The coordinator realized that most Vietnamese parents ignored their personal, marital, or other family issues. Usually, the parents did not know where these problems came from and/or how to deal with them. Ms Hong ran a weekly workshop aiming at helping the parents understand themselves. The coordinator reasoned that helping parents understand themselves was the most effective way to help them comprehend and figure out their own issues or problems. The workshops started by encouraging parents to open up and talk about their situations. The parents then gradually came out of their shells and were able to overcome their shyness or embarrassment when talking about their own circumstances in front of other people.
The coordinator was successful in attracting parents to the workshop with group assignments, engaging them in the program activities, and most importantly helping parents see their problems from a whole new perspective.

Many of the parents who joined Parent-to-Parent also attended a similar program organized by ADEC. It was held monthly by another Vietnamese coordinator (Ms Thanh). This program, however, concentrated on providing parents with information and outdoor activities. Besides having their problems addressed, joining groups like Parent-to-Parent or ADEC provided the parents with the opportunity to meet with other parents who had similar family circumstances. The parents reported feeling supported and less isolated. The programs in a sense helped enhance the parents’ social integration. The future of these programs, however, was unknown due to the lack of funding. In addition to these two major programs, the parents also used different social support services depending on the needs of their families and their child. Parents in Case Studies 4, 5, 6, and 7 were regular attendees of Parent-to-Parent and/or ADEC groups. The parents in these cases also strongly appreciated and used other social supportive services more often than the parents in the remaining cases.

5.3.2 School support services

5.3.2.1 School support services for the children

Except one case, in which the school facilities were reported to be limited, all the remaining schools were confident with their broad range of well-established or well-equipped in-door and out-door facilities. The special schools also assisted students with school transport by using taxis or school buses. Support services for children
were standardized in all special schools which included a therapy team - also called the Allied Health professionals; and a class teacher and a teacher aide in each classroom. Support services for children with special needs in mainstream schools differed from case-to-case, depending on the child’s needs and the school’s available funding. In general, an integration aide was available who could either provide direct service to the involved child on a one-on-one basis or assist him or her in a group with other children who also had special needs. Usually, each child with special needs had about one hour to three hours of supporting time a week with the integration aide. In addition to the integration aide, mainstream schools also managed to provide the children with other services such as physical therapy and speech therapy if required.

The children, either in mainstream or special schools, each had an ILP. In some cases upon parents’ request, home-work or home-help strategies were specifically prepared by the teachers or teacher/integration aides so that the parents could help their children at home. These assignments were mostly for children with language difficulties. The parents were usually given signs so that they could practice communicating with their children using those signs at home. The problem was that the parents were not happy with these types of home-help strategies. Some were even offended by the teachers’ approach. Most parents thought using signs was a method that was far too simple, too easy, or not relevant and helpful in the long run as they wanted their children to be able to speak. Case Study 3 was an example of the need to have the ILP that took into account cultural factors. The class teacher in this case wished to have someone who could speak the child’s Vietnamese language to assist him in assessing the child’s difficulties. The reason was that the child’s parents complained of his lack of communication at home whereas at school the teacher
believed that he was doing really well. Discrepancies in perceptions of the parents and the teachers about the involved child’s conditions and capabilities were obvious in this case.

Although parents still had expectations of the school such as having a speech specialist who could help the children individually (Cases 1, 2, and 4), as a group, parents had a positive view about general school support services for their children. Some parents (Cases 4, 5, and 6) said that they could not ask for more. The mother in Case Study 6 even implied that the support also had a positive effect on the parent-teacher relationship. It is important to indicate that the above expectations of the parents were also what the schools had wanted to do. Lack of funding was the only problem that prevented the teachers from being able to do more. Lack of funding was a common topic which arose across all cases although the amount short in each case was emphasized differently. Due to an acute lack of funding, according to one mainstream school Principal, their school did not have appropriate facilities to meet the child’s special needs. Most parents were aware of the schools’ difficulties in this area. However, the parents also knew that they could ask for help whenever needed. Although occasionally the parents gently reminded the school and the teachers of their wish or expectations, no parent pressed the issue or demanded that their wish be carried out. To the parents, maintaining a harmonious relationship with the school and teachers was very important.

5.3.2.2 School support services for the parents

There was not much difference across all schools. Every school had a Parents Group which was available to parents of all children and from all backgrounds. Almost all
Vietnamese parents in this study, however, were very reluctant to attend or had never attended meetings or activities organized by the Parents Groups. Cultural differences were one reason for the lack of attendance. Language difficulties were another. In fact, cultural factors were not really considered in most school activities. A vegetarian option or vegetarian food were almost the only answers provided by the educators in response to questions about cultural consideration in school activities. The schools also had limited to no funding for interpreting services for extra curriculum activities.

Professional Vietnamese interpreters were provided for at parent-teacher interviews if requested by the parents. All parents who had ever been assisted by an interpreter had the same view stating that such assistance was helpful. Parents indicated that they would feel more confident when they could fully understand what was said. The father in Case Study 5 who loved to communicate directly in English with the educators whenever possible also helped save time as the teacher did not have to explain things again. The teachers had similar opinions as those of the parents in terms of the strengths of using an interpreter in parent-teacher interviews. For both parties to understand each other, according to the teachers, was the most important issue. The teachers also thought that the assistance of an interpreter was essential for parents as they might have felt tense or be emotional (Case 5). Knowing that things would be translated also made parents feel free to express their opinions (Case 3). In addition, teachers, in many cases, consider interpreters to be involved as a cultural liaison who could help them understand parents’ cultures and needs. According to the teachers, there were also limitations to communicating via an interpreter. They said it was time consuming; sometimes the message might get mixed up or lost in translation (Cases 1, 7). Other limitations were: conversation was not as direct because things
had to be discussed in small ideas/chunks to be translated (Cases 3, 5); or the process was impersonalized as there was no time for general talk (Cases 5, 7). Using an interpreter also cost money (Case 6).

There were four schools in this study (Cases 1, 2, 5, and 7) that had a part-time Vietnamese-speaking staff member who worked as a multicultural aide and an interpreter for curriculum-related activities. When needing help, the parents in these cases often came to the schools when the Vietnamese staff were on duty. The parents in Case Studies 5 and 7 used this service extensively. Three of these schools (Cases 5, 2, and 7) had very high percentages of Vietnamese students in their populations, 25%, 40%, and 60% respectively. The two schools with the highest percentages of Vietnamese students had their school reports or school newsletters translated into Vietnamese. In schools with a lower percentage of Vietnamese background students, language difficulty was a consistent problem. Teachers could not reply to parents’ information or parents could not fully express their concerns without the assistance of an interpreter or translator. Case Study 3 parents said they did not find at their child’s school any services that helped facilitate home-school understanding.

Home visits could be a means that helps enhance home-school understanding (Gallimore & Lopez, 2002). Nevertheless, when asked about this method of contact, the response from all schools was consistent: that is, it was not on the school’s agenda or part of their policy. Therefore, it was not part of the teachers’ job (five out of seven cases). In addition, according to the teachers, there were legal and health concerns. There was only one school in which the home-visit option was left open (Case Study 7). This school had 40% of school students of Vietnamese background, according to
the Principal, home visits would be considered if needs came up. According to the Principal, home visits would be the opportunity to see how the child was coping in the home environment so that suggestions could be made. The option may also help the school build relationships with families. This was also a suggestion of the class teacher in Case Study 3. According to the teacher, due to their time restriction and work load, involving a social worker in working with the family may help the school understand the family circumstances, which in turn would help the educators to find appropriate approaches to improve the home-school partnership.

5.3.3 In summary

At the exosystem level, social and school support services for the children and the parents had certain influences on the child’s two immediate environments – the home and the school. The parents were in charge of finding social support services for their children and themselves. With a language difficulty and a low level of social integration, this was a hurdle for most families. In relation to the schools, a lack of resources and a lack of funding for support services for children, parents, and cultural training for educators were recognized by school staff as major factors that influenced the effectiveness of the home-school partnership.

5.4 Macrosystem level influences on the home-school partnerships

Reflecting a generalized set of institutions of a particular social group, macrosystems are different from one social group to another (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a, 1992; Garbarino, 1990). Looking into the contrary fundamental institutional expressions,
according to Bronfenbrenner (1979a, 1992), is an effective way to understand the cultural assumptions shared by the people when social groups are compared. As shown in their personal demographic characteristics, parents and teachers in this study were very different in their cultural backgrounds. The difference not only caused difficulties in the communication, they also held back the process of cooperation. Cross-case analytic results showed that in most cases, there were discrepancies in parent-teacher perceptions of roles, perceptions about the children’s conditions and progress, as well as in their expectations for the children.

5.4.1 Influences of traditional Vietnamese culture

5.4.1.1 On parents’ perceptions of child’s condition

Parents’ perceptions of their child’s condition and their expectations for the child were showed to be significantly and unconsciously influenced by their traditional culture. The traditional ‘village culture’ and the responsibility to the ‘face’ of their family (Tran, 2001) kept some parents in this study from letting their immediate family members in Vietnam know that fact that they had children with a disability. This was illustrated in Case Studies 1 and 7. The parents in these cases were also very reserved. Their families were isolated and had limited social life. Case Study 3 parents never admitted the fact to their close relatives in Australia. The parents in this case also had very limited social life. They had negative views of almost everything investigated in this study from relationships with relatives to social support services, the school, the teachers, and school support services. Different from the parents in Cases 1, 3, and 7, parents in the remaining cases all accepted their child’s conditions although at different levels. The parents in these cases showed some higher level of
social integration with a more active and positive attitude towards both social and school support services.

5.4.1.2 On parents’ expectations for child

In contrast to their perceptions of their child’s condition, parents’ expectations for their child did not seem to be much influenced by their levels of social integration and were in most cases strongly influenced by Vietnamese traditional culture which prioritizes academic achievements. For example, the mother in Case Study 3 on many occasions repeated her admiration for her relatives who had become doctors, lawyers, or lecturers. The mother in Case Study 3 maintained that as a condition for her child returning to school, the school and the teachers had to guarantee that the child would be able to read and write by the age of 18. Similarly, as a teacher herself, the mother in Case Study 6 emphasized the need for her child who had Down syndrome to be good at maths. Inclining to focus more on their child’s academic skills, most parents neglected their child’s social needs. The schools in these cases wished that the parents would focus more on the children’s social needs.

5.4.1.3 On parents’ view of the teachers

Growing up in Vietnam, all parents revealed that they were still strongly influenced by the traditional Vietnamese perception of a teacher. The parents, first of all, looked at the teachers as those who held an important and noble position with a great responsibility for teaching their children. According to the Vietnamese tradition, teachers are the ones who solely made decisions about the education plans at school (Tran, 2001). There would be no contributions from families. The tradition therefore puts parents in a passive position with a subordinate role compared to that of the
teachers in the home-school collaboration. Teachers, according to the tradition, are and should always be looked up to.

It should also be taken into account that in Vietnamese culture, having a child with a disability would negatively affect a family, even its extended family members. Traditionally, it is said that only those who were evil or did something wrong in their past or previous lives would have a child with a disability. It is therefore shameful to any family in that situation. Such families often have no choice but to keep the person with a disability away from the mainstream society. These families are disadvantaged in that they do not have any support needed from the society. A majority of children with a disability in Vietnam do not have the opportunity to go to school or to be educated (Molisa, 2009)\textsuperscript{22}. Given this fact, all the parents in this study emphasized that it was a privilege that their children could attend school and were supported in a way they could never dream of if they were in Vietnam. The parents said they felt lucky in that sense.

Some parents constantly praised the efforts of the special teachers who in these parents’ eyes were very brave to learn to teach special children.

It is understandable that even though some parents in this study were not satisfied with certain aspects of the parent-teacher relationship or not happy with the outcome of the home-school cooperation, they would always refrain from doing anything that could damage the teachers’ ‘face.’ Saving the teachers’ ‘face’ and maintaining a harmonious relationship with the teachers were so essential that the parents may even

\textsuperscript{22} According to the latest unofficial statistic from the Vietnamese Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), currently there are about 1.2 million children with a disability in Vietnam. Up to 50% of the children are illiterate (Molisa, 2009).
sacrifice a satisfactory partnership. This was the case in Case Studies 1, 2 and 3 (task-oriented cases). The parents in Case Studies 1 and 2 did not agree with the teachers’ home-help method of using signs to communicate with their children. The parents, however, did not discuss the issue with the teachers or inform the teachers of their disagreement. Instead, the parents took the issues into their own hands and dealt with them in their own way. On the outside, the parents still maintained a normal relationship. Interviews with the teachers indicated that they were not aware of the parents’ dissatisfaction with these helping strategies. The parents in Case Study 3 had absolutely the opposite expectations to the teachers’ expectations for the child and disregarded all the projects sent home by the teacher for the child to do during his time off school. The parents in this case thought that the teachers did not know their child at all and the family no longer cared about the home-school partnership or parent-teacher relationship. Nevertheless, the parents still maintained a routine relationship by regularly attending parent-teacher interviews when invited without really engaging in the conversations with the teachers. The notion of maintaining a good relationship with the educators was also emphasized by parents in the remaining cases (4, 5, 6, and 7 – relationship-oriented cases). According to the parents in these cases, maintaining a good relationship with their child’s teachers could help make the teachers pay more attention to their children. It was for the children’s sake. Understandably, all parents acknowledged that their parent-teacher relationship in broad terms was good. Most parents appreciated the teachers’ hard work, understanding, devotion, and enthusiasm.

Influences of the traditional Vietnamese culture on parents’ view of the teacher, their perceptions of their child’s condition as well as their expectations for their child, all
had a significant impact on the parents’ perceptions of their role and their levels of involvement in their child’s education.

5.4.1.4 On parents’ perceptions of role

All parents saw their primary role was to help their child in the home. Some parents, however, did extend their roles to outside the family home. Case Study 4 parents felt the need to assist the teachers with the child’s behaviour by sharing their helping tips with the teachers. Parents in Cases 5 and 7 thought that it was essential to be in regular contact with the educators or to bring any family concerns to the teachers’ immediate attention. Most parents, however, did not get involved in classroom activities due to a language difficulty or to school policy. According to the teachers, parents were not encouraged to be involved in classroom activities given the nature of the children’s conditions. However, with certain school-related activities such as excursions or extra curriculum sessions, parents were invited to attend. It was not a surprise that parents did not take part in these activities or even refused to participate. The mother in Case Study 6 was an example of this. The mother kept refusing to accompany her daughter and the integration aide to the pool for the child’s swimming sessions. The integration aide was frustrated as those outings to the pool, in her view, would provide the mother with a great opportunity to expand the child’s social life. The mother and the integration aide in this case had been working with each other for six years and had a very close interpersonal relationship. However, when it came to home-school cooperation, the mother maintained that she would not want to interfere with the teachers’ work.
Although most parents considered teachers as those who taught their children, some parents also saw teachers as a friend (Cases 2, 6) or a partner (Cases 4, 5). Those parents claimed to be influenced to a certain extent by the Australian high context culture. However, there was no evidence that considering teachers to be friends made any contributions to the home-school cooperation except that the parents did not seem to hesitate to be in contact with the educators. On the other hand, the parents who saw the teachers as partners showed a more relaxed, understanding and cooperative attitude when it came to interacting with the educators.

5.4.2 Teachers’ perceptions of home-school partnership

5.4.2.1 Teachers’ perceptions of role

In two cases (Cases 4 and 6), the role of the integration/teacher aide was obvious. These integration/teacher aides had a very close working and interpersonal relationship with the involved parents. However, in most cases, the parents worked with the class teachers.

In general, the teachers admitted that home-school cooperation was in a very good balance, although they may not have a close relationship with parents due to the language difficulty. With the interpreter in between, the teachers said, the relationship with parents could not be as social as they would like it to be. The teachers’ views of the parents’ role function varied from case-to-case. Except Case Study 3 in which the teachers wished that they could come to some agreement with the family; as a group, the teachers’ view was that the parents were supportive or dedicated. Teachers’
expectations of parents were quite consistent across all cases. Their expectations encompassed the following points:

- Parents should be less protective (four out of seven cases)
- Parents should keep the communication line open (two cases)
- Parents should face reality or have realistic expectations for their child which should be based on the child’s conditions (four cases)
- Parents should be more involved in their children’s education or school-related activities (two cases).

Teachers’ perceptions of their role varied. Most of the teachers considered their major role was to help the child within the school context. The word ‘partner’ was not used by the teachers when describing their role in working with parents. Case Study 5 teachers specified their role as “information, education, and welfare provider.” The teachers in Case Study 7a saw their role as something between “service provider and partner.” Case Study 3 teacher had to maintain an active one-way position in working with the family as the parents in this case kept the communication line closed.

Teachers’ contributions into the home-school cooperation clearly reflected their perceptions of their role which solely focused on providing support services for the children involved.

Teachers’ perceptions of role were consistent with the philosophy of a home-school partnership applied in their schools. School management staff made it very clear that the role of the school was to assist the children only and mainly in the school context. What happens in the family home was the responsibility of the parents. Another factor also contributing to keeping the parents and the teacher further apart was the culture.
The teachers indicated that they all experienced certain levels of difficulty in working with parents of diverse background due to a lack of appropriate cultural training.

5.4.2.2 Cultural training for working with diverse background parents

When discussing their pre-service training in terms of their being equipped to work with families from diverse backgrounds, the teachers used different terms to describe the process. Demographic characteristics of the class teachers are listed in Table 12 (Appendix 25). These terms included “not sufficient,” “less than satisfactory,” “not specific,” “touched on,” “minimal,” or “not that beneficial.” Regardless of the terms used, the consistent view from these responses of the teachers was that they were not well-prepared for working with parents of diverse background in their pre-service training. The aides’ view was similar to that of the teachers in relation to their pre-service preparation to work with diverse background families, which was in general limited and basically they had to learn from their experience in the job.

The views of cultural training for staff were diverse. The three schools in Case Studies 1, 3, and 6 had the lowest percentages of students of Vietnamese background. These schools reported not to have a high need of cultural training for their educators or it was not appropriate to provide cultural training for staff. In contrast, the three schools with the highest percentages of Vietnamese background students put strong emphasis on the need to provide their staff with cultural training. As informed by the Principal in Case Study 7 – the school with the highest percentage of Vietnamese background students, 60% of culturally-related PD sessions had already been provided to the school staff. According to the Principal in Case Study 5, cultural training for staff was the school’s very big concern. The Principal in Case Study 2,
however, was more concerned about training sources as the school had experienced difficulties in finding appropriate providers who could meet the school’s need for relevant cultural training programs.

5.4.3 In summary

At the macrosystem level, the parents’ cultural background strongly affected their views of the teacher, perceptions of their child’s condition as well as their expectations for the child. These elements, in turn, significantly influenced the parents’ perceptions of their roles and their levels of involvement in the home-school partnership. With regard to the schools, a child-focused approach to home-school collaboration and the staff’s lack of appropriate cultural training to work with diverse background parents for their staff also contributed to the difficulty of home-school partnerships.

The above multisystem cross-case discussion has detailed the results of this study. The following section provides the interpretation of the study’s major findings in association with the research question and how these findings relate to previous research on home-school partnership.

5.5 Major research findings

5.5.1 Multidimensional influences on the partnerships

At the microsystem level, the parents’ level of social integration and English ability are the most significant demographic characteristics that have influences on the home-school partnership. With regard to the schools, available home-school communication
venues and support services for both parents and children with special needs helped prepare educators for home-school partnership.

At mesosystem level, home-school partnership took place in two main stages. They were home-school communication (the *relationship*) and home-school cooperation (the *task*). According to the chronological sequence of home-school partnership events in this study, the *relationship* came about first, then the *task*. Home-school communication was facilitated by both ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ communication channels. Parent-teacher interviews were the major formal home-school communication method which had a similar format and level of frequency across the schools in the study. Namely parent-teacher interviews occurred times per year. The informal lines of home-school interactions varied from case-to-case. There were a number of factors that had significant influences on the effectiveness of the home-school communication and collaboration processes. They included language differences; the perspectives of the parents and educators about the child’s condition, and progress; and most importantly, the parties’ expectations for child. These factors in turn affected the parents’ perspectives of educators’ home-help suggestions and school support services, their contributions into their child’s ILP as well as their level of involvement in the child’s school education. The results were obvious in cases that had parent-educator mutual understanding and agreement in relation to child’s condition, progress, and expectations for child. There was evidence that the positive home-school partnership constructively influenced parents’ expectations for child and enhanced parents’ trust in the educators.
At the exosystem level, the child’s two immediate environments – home and school – were influenced by the support services available. With limited English and a low level of social integration, most families in the study experienced difficulties searching for appropriate social support services for their children and/or themselves. The schools also had their own difficulties. A lack of funding was a concern for almost all of the schools in the study. Due to an acute lack of funding, the schools could not meet particular needs of the child and families. For the same reason, most schools reported difficulties in providing their staff with appropriate professional development (PD) in terms of cultural training.

At the macrosystem level, background differences had extensive influences on the home-school partnership as they related to the parties’ perceptions of roles, perspectives of the child’s condition and progress as well as the expectations for the child. Cross-case results showed that the child-focused orientation in home-school collaboration also had a significant influence on the effectiveness of the home-school partnerships.

A summary of the multidimensional influences on the home-school partnerships in this study is illustrated in Figure 20 below. The influences are presented in relationship to the two main stages of a home-school partnership: the communication (the *relationship*) and the cooperation (the *task*). Figure 20 will also be used to discuss the interrelatedness between the *relationship* and the *task* as well as their roles in the operation of a home-school partnership.
The process of home-school partnership

Parents’ awareness, acceptance of child’s condition; perspectives of child’s progress and education
Parents’ perception of help (social support) & self-help

Available school support services for child and parents (including ILP)

Parents preparedness for the partnership

Parents’ English ability, social integration and acculturation level
Parents’ trust in educators; parents’ relationship with educators
Parents’ involvement in child’s education; perspectives of ILP, educators’ home-help suggestions, and school support services

Home-school communication

Parents’ involvement in child’s education; perspectives of ILP, educators’ home-help suggestions, and school support services

Home-school cooperation

Educators’ readiness

Home-school communication venues; parent-educator relationship, mutual understanding and agreement in terms of roles, child’s condition and progress, and expectations for child

Educators’ perception of role, lack of cultural training in working with CLD parents

Educators’ expectations for child

Parents’ awareness, acceptance of child’s condition; perspectives of child’s progress and education
Parents’ perception of help (social support) & self-help

Available school support services for child and parents (including ILP)

Parents preparedness for the partnership

Parents’ English ability, social integration and acculturation level
Parents’ trust in educators; parents’ relationship with educators
Parents’ involvement in child’s education; perspectives of ILP, educators’ home-help suggestions, and school support services

Home-school communication

Parents’ involvement in child’s education; perspectives of ILP, educators’ home-help suggestions, and school support services

Home-school cooperation

Educators’ readiness

Home-school communication venues; parent-educator relationship, mutual understanding and agreement in terms of roles, child’s condition and progress, and expectations for child

Educators’ perception of role, lack of cultural training in working with CLD parents

Educators’ expectations for child

Figure 20: A summary diagram of the multidimensional influences on the home-school partnership across the cases

Dotted lines: the results that only occurred in certain cases.
5.5.2 The ‘task’ versus the ‘relationship’ in home-school partnership

As detailed in the study methodology (Chapter 3), the task-oriented group (Case Studies 1, 2, and 3) was associated with the families reported to have limited contact with the educators. The home-school collaboration in these cases was concentrated on the task. The relationship-oriented group (Case Studies 4, 5, 6, and 7) was associated with the parents who claimed to have frequent contact with educators and chose an active stance in the home-school partnership. The home-school collaboration in these cases included both the task and the relationship components. Research findings in relation to these two groups are detailed below. The interrelatedness between the relationship and the task as well as their roles in the operation of a home-school partnership are also discussed.

Research results indicated that in task-oriented cases, among other factors, parents’ lack of trust prevails as a major factor that prevented an effective home-school partnership. Parents’ lack of trust originated from the discrepancies in the parent-teacher views of the child’s condition and progress and/or the differences in their expectations for the child. These discrepancies were strongly related to the parties’ different cultural backgrounds. Parents considered parent-teacher interviews were more of a formality. The parents in these cases saw their involvement in the home-school partnership as an obligation. Their stance in the home-school partnership was therefore a passive one. In these cases, the home-school collaboration did not seem to have any effect on parents’ expectations for child, their trust of the educators, and/or their perspective towards their child’s condition. The study results also indicated that
parents may have negative perspectives towards educators’ home-help suggestions, the ILP, and school support services. The parents, however, created their own ways of getting involved in their child’s education at home.

Results from relationship-oriented cases showed that the parents were more engaged in the home-school partnership. More than an obligation, the parents were aware of the influence of their contributions on the ILP. Compared to task-oriented cases, there was more positive home-school communication with a higher level of parent-educator interaction. Parents’ attitudes towards their engagement originated from a number of factors. They included the parents being more open and/or having more positive perceptions about their child’s condition and progress; and most importantly, parents’ expectations for the child were more compatible with those of the educators. Parents with a high level of social integration (Case Study 4) even had their expectations for child almost in line with those of the educators. However, cross-case results also showed that almost all parents in these cases also had other expectations for their children. Some parents, who were influenced by their traditional Vietnamese culture, expected their child to improve academically (Case Studies 5 and 6). These expectations, according to the educators, were not fair for the children nor feasible or unrealistic given the children’s disabilities.

It can be inferred from this relationship-oriented group that although a higher level of parent-educator interaction was a sign of active parental engagement in home-school partnership, there was no evidence of a connection between a high level of parent-education interaction and the effectiveness of a partnership. Although the parent-educator interaction level in Case Studies 6 and 7 was very high, the communication
did not seem to be very effective. The close *interpersonal relationship* between the mother and the integration aide in Case Study 6 remained a personal issue between the mother and the integration aide. Exchanges in the child’s communication book may have helped them feel more comfortable in interacting with each other. However, the close interpersonal relationship did not help the mother accept the reality any better, or have more realistic expectations for her child. Quite the opposite, the love, the encouragement, the caring learning environment given to the child by the teachers, especially the integration aide, had somehow inadvertently pushed the mother further away from the reality. The mother was literally “over the moon” about the teachers’ comments about the child’s achievements. The mother in Case Study 7 was an example of being extremely active in contacting the educators. Although she had limited English, she was always confident when initiating contacts with the schools. Nevertheless, insensitively overusing the Principal’s offer to go to the school at anytime meant that the mother put pressure on the teachers unnecessarily, in terms of their time and workload. This case illustrated the fact that a high level of parent-teacher interaction did not guarantee effective cooperation and this was the case if it was not a mutual process with mutual agreement upon the goals and expectations. Mahoney and Wheeden (1997) similarly concluded that interventions dictated exclusively by relationship-related procedures face a serious risk of loosing sight of the goal of a family-centered philosophy.

There was another issue in relation to parents’ perception of role that had important implications. In both the relationship-oriented and task-oriented groups, the parents’ perceptions about their role in the partnership were very much influenced by their traditional beliefs. The parents never challenged the educators. In *relationship-
oriented cases, when things did not turn out the way they expected, parents were reluctant to raise their concerns with the educators. Almost all parents in the task-oriented group, on the other hand, kept maintaining a happy ‘facial’ relationship with the teachers rather than confronting the issue. The effectiveness of the home-school collaboration was therefore at risk. Without being aware of parents’ perspectives towards various issues, the teachers could not come up any solution. This, in turn, strengthened parents’ lack of trust in educators and school support services.

In summary, the demographic characteristics of the families had no direct influences on the home-school partnership. However, there was evidence that language difficulties influenced the establishment of a parent-educator interpersonal relationship. In relation to home-school cooperation, discrepancies in perspectives about the child’s condition and progress, as well as differences in expectations for the child were key issues which determined the effectiveness of a home-school partnership. In most cases, parents’ perspectives of the child’s condition, the progress, the expectations for child, and the perception of the educators’ role were significantly influenced by their traditional Vietnamese culture. Looking at the home-school partnership from a multidimensional perspective, the relationship component plays a significant role in the effectiveness of a partnership. Culturally facilitated home-school communication would enhance parent-educator mutual understanding, specifically their perspectives towards the child’s condition, the progress, and expectations for the child. A clearer view of these issues in turn enhanced the feasibility of the task being successfully carried out in both settings – home and school. However, there was also evidence that a parent-educator interpersonal relationship that was not grounded in the task would not have any influence on the
effectiveness of home-school partnerships. A mutual parent-educator agreement in relation to their roles and responsibilities in the partnership is therefore essential.

In relation to the role of the *relationship* component in the operation of a home-school partnership, the findings of this study indicated similarity with conclusions of studies that emphasized the importance of the relationship. According to this research, an equitable parent-professional relationship that brings together people with different conceptions about the duties and responsibilities involved in the relationship is believed to lead to a partnership characterized by empowerment (Case, 2000; Griffith, 1998; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2002; Klopf, 1998; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). Psychological aspects of a relationship such as parents' role conceptions, sense of self-efficacy related to involvement, attitudes towards education, and expectations for their children's performance are seen as a partnership primary concern (Christenson, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). This approach to home-school partnership, according Christenson (2004), allows educators to effectively collaborate with families even when different perspectives are apparent.

According to Zionts et al. (2003), parents have spoken openly about a desire for a more of a personal relationship with teachers as part of a team approach to home-school collaboration. This approach is regarded as very effective as it can provide consistency across the two major environments of a child’s life. Professionals defined collaborative their partnerships, at least, in part, by the quality of their interpersonal relationship with parents (McWilliam, Tocci, & Harbin, 1998). Turnbull and Turnbull (2001) emphasized that once a trusting and respectful relationship has been established, it can be ensured that collaboration and empowerment will be enhanced.
In contrast, without such a relationship, problems tend to permeate through almost everything they do together no matter how much effort the educator spends on the partnership or how good the intervention procedures are. In response to their lack of trust in school authorities, Harry (1992) has stated that parents tend to suspend their cooperation with professional recommendations while outwardly they may continue to attend to the professional out of a traditional respect for authority.

5.5.3 Are the partnerships family-centered in nature?

Family-centered partnerships place priorities on collaborations which are characterized by mutual respect, trust, open communication, and consideration of each issue or problem from an ecological perspective (Bailey et al., 1998; Bruder, 2000; Dunst et al., 2002). The aim is to empower parents. However, there was a lack of evidence to support the view that the home-school partnerships in this study were family-centered in nature. For example, home-school communication and interaction were infrequent and strictly school-based and home-school collaboration was child-focused. Although the parents were invited to get involved in the decision making process, their unique perspectives and values were not recognized and addressed. An empowerment model which enabled families to acquire competencies to solve their problems, meet their own needs, and attain family goals (Mahoney & Wheeden, 1997) did not exist. Roberts et al. (1998) stated that a family only enters a partnership when family members begin to understand the sustainable routines in which the partnership takes form and is able to meaningfully engage these routines into their ecological niches.
CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Research aims

The first influx of Vietnamese came to Australia in the late 1970s, almost straight after the Vietnam War ended (Tran Binh Nam, 1996). Living in a young community, Vietnamese parents with a child with a disability experienced many pressures: suffering from cultural shock, clashes of cultural values, language barriers, financial difficulties, isolation as they had no close family members around (Barnes, 1996; Dang, 1996; Hoang, 1991; Nguyen Van Nha, 1986; Tran My Van, 1996), and had they no understanding of the school system nor access to accurate information (Cahill, 1996).

Recognizing the lack of studies about the Vietnamese population in Victoria, Australia, the current study aimed at creating a new understanding of the participation of Vietnamese parents of a child with a disability in their child’s education; their integration into the host community; and most importantly their relationships with educators given the differences in the parent-educator cultural background. The study objective was to investigate the interrelatedness of the relationship and the task, two compulsory components of a home-school partnership. The ultimate purpose was to address the study research question: How does the parent-educator relationship influence the operation of a family-centered home-school partnership?
6.2 Research findings and recommendations for practice and policy

The study affirms previous studies in the field and provides some new insights into the relationship aspect of the home-school partnership. There is strong evidence to demonstrate that the relationship plays a much more influential role in the success of an intercultural home-school partnership. Even though the task is essential in that it sets the goals to be achieved in a partnership, the collaboration was far from productive, or in some cases did not work out, without a meaningful home-school communication. In addition, the study results also indicated that although a positive parent-teacher interpersonal relationship helped maintain a harmonious home-school relation, without mutual understanding and agreement between the two parties in terms of goals and expectations, the interpersonal relationship did not seem to have any influence on the effectiveness of the collaboration.

From the findings of this study, a number of recommendations arise for both practitioners and policy makers. The findings emphasized the need to have more effective home-school communication. There is evidence in the literature that although educators in general are well trained in their disciplines, relationship skills are not taught in a systematic way (Beckman, Newcomb, Frank, and Brown, 1996; Leff & Walizer, 1992; Stepanek, 1995). In addition, there is a need for cultural differences to be addressed in home-school communication. The clarification would help parents and teachers have mutual understanding of each other’s perceptions in terms of roles, child’s condition and progress, as well as their expectations for the child. It is also important that issues related to partnership goals and role expectations
in the communication process are clarified and mutually agreed upon. The more compatible the home-school role expectations, the greater the partnership would have the chance to be successful (Harry, 2002; Rogers-Adkinson, 2003).

In relation to cultural aspect of home-school communication, there was a strong need among the educators in this study to be more properly equipped with cultural training in order to be able to work effectively with families with diverse backgrounds. The need, however, was not quite equally recognized by management staff, especially in schools that had a low level of students with diverse backgrounds. In schools with higher levels of Vietnamese students, teachers should be provided with relevant cultural training and training in how to create appropriate support services for parents with diverse backgrounds and Vietnamese parents in particular. Management staff stated that the lack of funding and resources prevented the schools from meeting their needs. Policy makers should consider how to provide schools and educators with enough funding, relevant resources, and more culturally-related training. However, in the meantime, educators can help themselves bridge the cultural gap by exploring their own cultural experiences, values, and attitudes (Thorp, 1997). Recognizing the potential for cultural conflicts; recognizing their powerful role as service providers; exploring their own attitudes towards diversity and diverse populations; and practicing reframing are a number of activities suggested by Thorp (1997).

The frequency of parent-teacher interactation was quite low in this study. Therefore, an increased reliance on informal communication methods is recommended. The study’s evidence indicated that parents were quite comfortable with such methods as communication books, the telephone, or after hours’ chatting. Language was the main
problem that hindered both parties from using these methods. Two matters were associated with this issue of the language barrier. They were funding and time restriction. Lack of funding for language assistance services was a hurdle faced by most of the schools in this study. The time-consuming nature of working with parents via an interpreter was another issue raised by almost every educator who participated in the study. A flexible approach to the home-school partnership on a case-by-case basis that can encompass all of these elements is, therefore, necessary.

The study findings also indicated that support services in a school for Vietnamese parents were strongly related to the number of students with Vietnamese backgrounds in the school population. Another mesosystem influence that affected the home-school partnership was that of the student-teacher ratio. In special settings, the student-teacher ratio was smaller than that in a mainstream school. This element influenced the ability of mainstream teachers to maintain regular contacts with parents. A home-school support worker or a multicultural aide could be a solution (Webb & Vulliamy, 2003). A home-school support worker or a multicultural aide who is more than a language facilitator would help enhance home-school understanding and may help increase parental involvement in the children’s education. Such a mediator may also help involve fathers in school activities. Most participants in the present study were the mothers who were the main carers and also in charge of dealing with the school and the educators. In traditional Vietnamese culture, taking care of children is the mother’s responsibility. The school support teacher also believed that a home-school support worker or even a social worker if necessary would be useful (Case Study 3). The teacher supposed that a social worker might be helpful in connecting the family and the school. Such a social worker could help increase home-school
understanding by working as a mediator or providing the school with information about the family circumstances.

From an ecological perspective, there are other multisystem influences affecting a home-school partnership. The home-school collaboration, a process which occurs at the mesosystem level, is strongly related to and affected by factors taking place at other levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a, 1992). According to Huang and Gibbs (1992), ethnicity shapes parents’ beliefs of child-rearing practices, their attitudes towards education, their views on scholarly achievement, and their interaction style with educational institutions and professionals. The findings of this study, however, indicated that home-school partnerships were strictly child-centered and school-based only. Influential elements from other levels were not properly taken into account by educators and management staff when planning the ILP or support services for parents and children. The educators also did not view their services as family-centered. As a result, many parents did not see the point in carrying out teachers’ home-help suggestions.

There is a need for multisystem influences to be identified in order to bring about an effective family-centered home-school partnership. Nuttal, Li, and Kaplan (2006) propose an ecological model as a possible solution for partnerships involving culturally diverse families. Another approach may be through the study of each family’s unique ecological niche (Gallimore & Lopez, 2002). Home visits are a method that could facilitate this approach. An ideal method for educators to gain insight in the child’s environment is to visit the child’s home (Rogers-Adkinson et al., 2003). According to Rogers-Adkinson et al. (2003), a proper understanding of a
family’s typical daily routine could help reduce the possibility of educators making assumptions regarding their students’ home activities. Such understanding also helps ensure the provision of relevant and productive intervention services which are more likely to be woven into the family’s daily routine (Bernheimer & Keogh, 1995; Brookman-Frazee, 2004; Gallimore & Lopez, 2002). Unfortunately, the schools in the present study did not have a policy for home visits mainly for safety reasons.

Findings in relation to the nature of the home-school partnership in this study also raise the need for educators to be well equipped with the principles of family-centered practices and knowledge of how to put them into their school programs effectively. Not only should the issue be addressed in in-service professional development, it should also be taken into consideration in pre-service training.

In summary, the study findings have reinforced the importance of the family-centered approach to home-school partnership. The need to utilize the ecocultural framework in working with families of diverse cultural backgrounds was also highlighted. The dynamic of the relationship and the task in a home-school partnership as outlined in Timperley and Robison’s model (2002) was supported by the study findings. However, in this current study, the relationship was emphasized as having a more significant role than the task.

It is hoped that information, suggestions and recommendations from the present study will be helpful for educators and policy makers in evaluating their practices and initiating strategies to enhance the quality of the home-school partnership.
6.3 Limitations of the study and implications for future research

This study provided in-depth accounts of cultural influences on the home-school partnership from the perspectives of both parents and educators. The study has certain contributions to home-school partnership research. Several limitations, however, exist in this study. Limitations of the present study and implications for future research are discussed below.

First, the study only involved children who were diagnosed with autism. There are very few studies in the field focusing on children with other disabilities. Therefore, there is a need to have further research which includes children with different disabilities. Evidence from the present study indicated that parents’ collaboration with educators was significantly influenced by their perception of their child’s condition.

Another limitation of this study was that most parents who participated were mothers. The role and viewpoint of the fathers were therefore not thoroughly reflected. The importance of fathers’ involvement in their children’s education and achievement has been well recognized in the literature (Deveaux, 1997; McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Ho, 2005; Nuttal, Li, & Kaplan, 2006). However, there are not many studies investigating the role of the father in culturally-related home-school partnerships. An in-depth understanding of fathers’ perceptions of the home-school partnership would be useful for the teachers so that they can develop an effective empowerment strategy.

A restricted research population was also a limitation of the present study. Parents and educators recruited in this study were all from the Melbourne Metropolitan Regions of...
the state of Victoria. All of the parent participants are of Vietnamese background. In addition, most of the families had homogeneous demographic characteristics.
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APPENDIX 1

Letter of approval from the Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services\textsuperscript{24} Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee (FHRESC), RMIT

\textsuperscript{24} Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services (FELCS) is now the School of Education, College of Design and Social Context, RMIT University
30/07/2003

Ms Huong Thu Le
2/72 Ormond Road
Ascot Vale
Vic. 3032

Dear Huong

Re: Human Research Ethics Application

The Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee, at its meeting 24th July 2003, considered your ethics application for your Doctor of Philosophy, entitled, "The relationship between the school counselors in Melbourne Metropolitan Region and Vietnamese parents of children with disabilities."

I write to advise that your application was approved as Level 2 classification.

a) The committee noted that the study focuses on the School counselors and recommend that if the participants become broader than this i.e. school principals, that the candidate must return to this committee for further approval.

b) A copy of DE&T approval to be provided.

c) The committee also requested that a report on the progress of this study be provided in 6 months time.

Should you have any queries regarding the above amendments please seek advice from the Chair of the sub-committee Assoc. Prof. Heather Fehring on 9925 7840, heather.fehring@rmit.edu.au or contact me on (03) 9925 7877 or email heather.porter@rmit.edu.au

I wish you well in your research.

Yours sincerely

Heather Porter
Secretary
Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services
Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee
APPENDIX 2

Letter of approval from the Department of Education and Training

(DE&T)²⁵

²⁵ DE&T (Department of Education & Training) is now DEECD (Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, 2008)
Department of Education & Training

Office of School Education

SOS 002470

11 August 2003

Ms Huong Thu Le
2/72 Ormond Road
ASCOT VALE 3032

Dear Ms Thu Le

Thank you for your application of 14 June 2003 in which you request permission to conduct a research study in Victorian government schools titled: *The Relationship Between the School Counsellors in Victorian Metropolitan Regions with Vietnamese Parents of Children with a Disability.*

I am pleased to advise that on the basis of the information you have provided your research proposal is approved in principle, subject to the conditions detailed below.

1. You obtain approval for the research to be conducted in each school directly from the principal. Details of your research, copies of this letter of approval and the letter of approval from the relevant ethics committee are to be provided to the principal. The final decision as to whether or not your research can proceed in a school rests with the principal.

2. No student is to participate in this research study unless they are willing to do so and parental permission is received. Sufficient information must be provided to enable parents to make an informed decision and their consent must be obtained in writing.

3. As a matter of courtesy, you should advise the relevant Regional Director of the schools you intend to approach. An outline of your research and a copy of this letter should be provided to the Regional Director.
4. Any extensions or variations to the research proposal, additional research involving use of the data collected, or publication of the data beyond that normally associated with academic studies will require a further research approval submission.

5. At the conclusion of your study, a copy or summary of the research findings should be forwarded to me at the above address.

I wish you well with your research study. Should you have further enquiries on this matter, please contact Louise Dressing, Senior Policy Officer, Schools, Communities and Networks, on 9637 2349.

Yours sincerely

Judy Curson
Manager
Schools, Communities & Networks

encl.
APPENDIX 3

Letter of approval from the Research Student Management Group, FELCS, RMIT in relation to change of term used in the thesis title
Wednesday, 15 October 2003

Ms Huong Le
2/72 Ormond Road
Ascot Vale 3032

Dear Huong

I acknowledge receipt of your letter advising of the change of term used in your thesis title. The Research Student management Group has approved the change to your title and will advise Faculty Board and the Research and Graduate Studies Committee.

New Title:
The relationship between special educators in the DE&T Victorian Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability.

We thank you for your advice and wish you well with your studies.

Yours

[Signature]

Heather Porter
Secretary
Research Student Management Group
Faculty Education, Language & Community Services

c.c. Assoc. Prof. Heather Fehring
APPENDIX 4

A note of approval from the RMIT Graduate Research Office in relation to the use of the term DEECD in stead of DE&T in the thesis title
Dear Huong Le

I think it is appropriate for you to change the reference in your thesis title to ensure it is consistent with the new name of the Department. This does not constitute a change in your topic so I don't feel that you need to go through an approval process to have this very minor change to your title made. In any event, your supervisor is copied in on this message so at least they are aware.

I have amended your title in ResearchMaster so that it now displays correctly in MyResearch [http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=shlqkdvy4uiz](http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=shlqkdvy4uiz). I have simply changed the reference 'DE&T' to 'DEECD'.

Regards
Susanne
APPENDIX 5

An application to get access to schools
04/12/2003

Mr. Michael West
The Principal
Sunshine East Primary School
Duke Street, Sunshine 3020

Re: Access to Your School

Dear Mr. West,

I am Huong Le, a PhD candidate at the Department of School and Early Childhood Education (SECE), Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services (FELCS), RMIT University. My study is entitled “The relationship between special educators in the DE&T Victorian Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability”.

I have obtained consent from Mr. Cuong Nguyen and Ms. Dao Pham to involve in my study as research participants. Their daughter, Lucy Nguyen, is currently a student at your school. However, the nature of my research also requires me to work with special educators. I am thus now writing to obtain your permission and approval to have access to your school. It is essential for my study to have the opportunity to interview Lucy’s classroom teachers and other staff who are directly in charge of Lucy’s education or regularly in contact with Lucy’s parents. Attached please find the summary of my approved PhD Research Proposal; and Letters of Approval from the RMIT and Victoria DE&T Ethics Committees.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please feel free to contact me (telephone: 03 9925 1764; email: s3059921@student.rmit.edu.au) or my senior supervisor at the address below:

Associate Professor Heather Fehring
Department of SECE, FELCS
R.M.I.T. University
Tel: 03 9925 7840 / Fax: 03 9925 7887
Email: heather.fehring@rmit.edu.au

Yours sincerely,

Huong Le
PERMISSION TO ACCESS SCHOOL CHECKLIST

1. Application to Conduct Research in Schools - Summary
2. Research proposal
3. Sample questions used to ask research participants
4. Plain Language Statements
5. Prescribed Consent Forms to be completed by the participants
6. Approval notification for Doctor of Philosophy Higher Degree Application from FELCS, RMIT
7. Approval letter from the RMIT Sub Ethics Committee
8. Approval letter from the Victoria DE&T
APPENDIX 6

Plain Language Statement for special educators
Dear Educator,

I am Huong Le, a PhD student by research at the Department of School and Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services, RMIT University. I am now writing to invite you to participate in my research study entitled “The relationship between special educators in the DE&T Victorian Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability”.

The study aims at gaining an in-depth understanding of the relationships between special educators in the Victorian Department of Education & Training (DE&T) in Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability who live in these regions. It hopes to open a new understanding into the Vietnamese parents’ participation in their children’s education; their integration into the host community; and especially their relationship to the professionals. The study also aims to shed some light on difficulties faced by Victorian special educators in the area of dealing with diverse backgrounds parents of children with a disability. It would help educators recognize areas that need to be improved or added in future training programs. I wish that my research study could create some positive contributions along with long-term efforts from other researchers.

Your participation will involve approximately 1-2 focused group interviews, 60 minutes each; provision of relevant documents; and agreement to be observed in parent-teacher interviews. I seek your permission for tape-recording as it will assist me in the later stage of analysis and interpretation. You are assured that information collected is of general nature only and it will be kept in a secure place. Only I and my supervisor are those who have access to research data. Your identities will not be disclosed in any publication.
Details relating to your personal lives should only appear in publications with your prior consent. Your participation is voluntary. You have your own rights to withdraw any unprocessed data as well as from the study at any stage of the research. Your records will be kept in confidential for 5 years after the completion of the study. After that they all will be destroyed.

I look forward to your participation in this research study and thank you for your assistance. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please feel free to contact me (Huong Le, work phone number: 03 9925 1764, email: s3059921@student.rmit.edu.au) or my senior supervisor at the address below:

Associate Professor Heather Fehring
Department of School & Early Childhood Education
Faculty of Education, Language & Community Services
R.M.I.T. University
Tel: 03 9925 7840
Fax: 03 9925 7887
Email: heather.fehring@rmit.edu.au

Yours sincerely,

Huong Le

Any queries or complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), GPO Box 247v, Melbourne 3001. Phone number 03 9925 1745. Details of the complaints procedure are also available from http://www.rmit.edu.au/departments/secretariat/hrec.html.
APPENDIX 7

Plain Language Statement for management staff
Dear Participant,

I am Huong Le, a PhD student by research at the Department of School and Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services, RMIT University. I am now writing to invite you to participate in my research study entitled “The relationship between special educators in the DE&T Victorian Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability”.

The study aims at gaining an in-depth understanding of the relationships between special educators in the Victorian Department of Education & Training (DE&T) in Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability who live in these regions. It hopes to open a new understanding into the Vietnamese parents’ participation in their children’s education; their integration into the host community; and especially their relationship to the professionals. The study also aims to shed some light on difficulties faced by Victorian special educators in the area of dealing with diverse backgrounds parents of children with a disability. It would help educators recognize areas that need to be improved or added in future training programs. I wish that my research study could create some positive contributions along with long-term efforts from other researchers.

Your participation will involve one 60-90 minute interview and provision of relevant documents. I seek your permission for tape-recording as it will assist me in the later stage of analysis and interpretation. You are assured that information collected is of general nature only and it will be kept in a secure place. Only I and my supervisor are those who have access to research data. Your identities will not be disclosed in any publication.
Details relating to your personal lives should only appear in publications with your prior consent. Your participation is voluntary. You have your own rights to withdraw any unprocessed data as well as from the study at any stage of the research. Your records will be kept in confidential for 5 years after the completion of the study. After that they all will be destroyed.

I look forward to your participation in this research study and thank you for your assistance. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please feel free to contact me (Huong Le, work phone number: 03 9925 1764, email: s3059921@student.rmit.edu.au) or my senior supervisor at the address below:

Associate Professor Heather Fehring
Department of School & Early Childhood Education
Faculty of Education, Language & Community Services
R.M.I.T. University
Tel: 03 9925 7840
Fax: 03 9925 7887
Email: heather.fehring@rmit.edu.au

Yours sincerely,

Huong Le

Any queries or complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), GPO Box 247v, Melbourne 3001. Phone number 03 9925 1745. Details of the complaints procedure are also available from http://www.rmit.edu.au/departments/secretariat/hrec.html.
APPENDIX 8

Plain Language Statement for other participants
Dear Participant,

I am Huong Le, a PhD student by research at the Department of School and Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services, RMIT University. I am now writing to invite you to participate in my research study entitled “The relationship between special educators in the DE&T Victorian Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability”.

The study aims at gaining an in-depth understanding of the relationships between special educators in the Victorian Department of Education & Training (DE&T) in Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability who live in these regions. It hopes to open a new understanding into the Vietnamese parents’ participation in their children’s education; their integration into the host community; and especially their relationship to the professionals. The study also aims to shed some light on difficulties faced by Victorian special educators in the area of dealing with diverse backgrounds parents of children with a disability. It would help educators recognize areas that need to be improved or added in future training programs. I wish that my research study could create some positive contributions along with long-term efforts from other researchers.

Your participation will involve approximately 2 interviews, 60-90 minutes each; provision of relevant documents; and agreement to be observed in parent-teacher interviews or parents group meetings. I seek your permission for tape-recording as it will assist me in the later stage of analysis and interpretation. You are assured that information collected is of general nature only and it will be kept in a secure place. Only I and my supervisor are those who have access to research data. Your identities will not be disclosed in any publication.
Details relating to your personal lives should only appear in publications with your prior consent. Your participation is voluntary. You have your own rights to withdraw any unprocessed data as well as from the study at any stage of the research. Your records will be kept in confidential for 5 years after the completion of the study. After that they all will be destroyed.

I look forward to your participation in this research study and thank you for your assistance. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please feel free to contact me (Huong Le, work phone number: 03 9925 1764, email: s3059921@student.rmit.edu.au) or my senior supervisor at the address below:

Associate Professor Heather Fehring  
Department of School & Early Childhood Education  
Faculty of Education, Language & Community Services  
R.M.I.T. University  
Tel: 03 9925 7840  
Fax: 03 9925 7887  
Email: heather.fehring@rmit.edu.au

Yours sincerely,

Huong Le

Any queries or complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), GPO Box 247v, Melbourne 3001. Phone number 03 9925 1745. Details of the complaints procedure are also available from http://www.rmit.edu.au/departments/secretariat/hrec.html.
APPENDIX 9

Plain Language Statement for parents
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

Dear Parent,

I am Huong Le, a PhD student by research at the Department of School and Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services, RMIT University. I am now writing to invite you to participate in my research study entitled “The relationship between special educators in the DE&T Victorian Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability”.

The study aims at gaining an in-depth understanding of the relationships between special educators in the Victorian Department of Education & Training (DE&T) in Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability who live in these regions. It hopes to open a new understanding into the Vietnamese parents’ participation in their children’s education; their integration into the host community; and especially their relationship to the professionals. The study also aims to shed some light on difficulties faced by Victorian special educators in the area of dealing with diverse backgrounds parents of children with a disability. It would help educators recognize areas that need to be improved or added in future training programs. I wish that my research study could create some positive contributions along with long-term efforts from other researchers.

Your participation will involve a series of approximately 5-6 interviews, 40-60 minutes each; provision of relevant documents; and agreement to be observed in parent-teacher interviews or parents group meetings. I seek your permission for tape-recording as it will assist me in the later stage of analysis and interpretation. You are assured that information collected is of general nature only and it will be kept in a secure place. Only I and my supervisor are those who have access to research data. Your identities will not be disclosed in any publication.
Details relating to your personal lives should only appear in publications with your prior consent. Your participation is voluntary. You have your own rights to withdraw any unprocessed data as well as from the study at any stage of the research. Your records will be kept in confidential for 5 years after the completion of the study. After that they all will be destroyed.

I look forward to your participation in this research study and thank you for your assistance. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please feel free to contact me (Huong Le, work phone number: 03 9925 1764, email: s3059921@student.rmit.edu.au) or my senior supervisor at the address below:

Associate Professor Heather Fehring
Department of School & Early Childhood Education
Faculty of Education, Language & Community Services
R.M.I.T. University
Tel: 03 9925 7840
Fax: 03 9925 7887
Email: heather.fehring@rmit.edu.au

Yours sincerely,

Huong Le

Any queries or complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), GPO Box 247v, Melbourne 3001. Phone number 03 9925 1745. Details of the complaints procedure are also available from http://www.rmit.edu.au/departments(secretariat)/hrec.html.
APPENDIX 10

Plain Language Statement for parents in Vietnamese
THU MỞ THAM DỰ ĐẾ TÀI NGHIỆN CỦA KHOA HỌC

Kính thưa quý vị phụ huynh,

Tôi là Hướng Lê, hiện đang làm nghiên cứu sinh học vị Tiến sĩ tại Bộ môn Trường học và Giáo dục Tuổi ấu thơ, thuộc Khoa Giáo dục, Ngôn ngữ và các Hoạt động Công động, trường đại học RMIT. Đề tài nghiên cứu của tôi có tên gọi “Mối quan hệ giữa những người làm công tác giáo dục đặc biệt trong các trường học vùng trung tâm thuộc Phòng Giáo dục và Đào tạo tiểu bang Victoria với các phụ huynh người Việt có con em bị khuyết tật”. Nay tôi viết thư này kính mời quý vị tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu của tôi.

Để tài nhiệm tìm kiếm sự hiểu biết sâu sắc mối quan hệ giữa những người làm công tác giáo dục đặc biệt với các phụ huynh người Việt có con em có nhu cầu đặc biệt cư ngụ ở các khu vực này. Mục đích nghiên cứu bao gồm tìm hiểu mục đích tham gia của phụ huynh vào việc giáo dục con em mình, sự hỗ trợ của phụ huynh vào xã hội Úc, và đặc biệt là mối quan hệ của phụ huynh với những người làm công tác chuyên môn. Đề tài cũng nhằm khám phá những khó khăn mà những người làm công tác giáo dục đặc biệt gặp phải khi làm việc với những phụ huynh có con em bị khuyết tật đến từ các nền văn hóa khác nhau. Qua đề tài nghiên cứu này, tôi rất mong sẽ có thể gửi đến những người phụ trách công tác giáo dục ở tiểu bang Victoria cũng như những người làm công tác giảng dạy ở bậc đại học và sau đại học những kiến đóng góp quý báu để mối quan hệ này ngày càng được cải thiện hơn, hiệu quả hơn; các chương trình đào tạo người làm công tác giáo dục đặc biệt trong tương lai sẽ có tính thực tiễn cao hơn, đáp ứng được nhu cầu thực tế của xã hội. Tôi hi vọng rằng đề tài nghiên cứu này sẽ giúp đóng góp một tiếng nói nhỏ bé vào nỗ lực chung của tất cả các nhà nghiên cứu thuộc lĩnh vực này.

Việc tham gia của quý vị có thể bao gồm các hoạt động sau đây: tham dự 5-6 buổi phòng vấn, mỗi buổi từ 40-60 phút; cung cấp những tài liệu liên quan đến đề tài nghiên cứu; hoặc cho phép tôi được quan sát quý vị trong các buổi họp giữa phụ huynh học sinh và những người làm công tác giáo dục đặc biệt. Tôi xin phép quý vị được ghi âm những buổi phòng vấn với bằng giúp đỡ giúp tôi xử lý và phân tích dữ liệu một cách chính xác hơn. Tôi chi tìm hiểu những thông tin chung và xin đảm bảo rằng thông tin mà quý vị cung cấp sẽ được lưu giữ căn thận ở một nơi đặc biệt an toàn.
Chi có tôi và người hướng dẫn nghiên cứu của tôi mới được phép tham khảo các tư liệu này. Và trong bất cứ trường hợp nào, quý danh cùng các chi tiết cá nhân của quý vị sẽ không bao giờ bị tiết lộ. Các chi tiết này chỉ được phép xuất bản với sự đồng ý của quý vị.

Việc tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu này là hoàn toàn tự nguyện. Bất cứ lúc nào quý vị cũng có thể thu hồi những thông tin đã cung cấp cũng như rút lui khỏi việc tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu. Đủ liệu nghiên cứu sẽ được bảo quản cẩn mật trong 5 năm sau khi đề tài hoàn tất. Sau thời gian này, tất cả sẽ được hủy bỏ.

Tôi rất mong nhận được sự hướng Ứng và chia sẻ cảm ơn sự hợp tác của quý vị. Nếu quý vị có thắc mắc gì hoặc muốn biết thêm chi tiết, Xin vui lòng liên hệ trực tiếp với tôi (Hương Lê, điện thoại 03 9925 1764, email: s3059921@student.rmit.edu.au) hoặc người hướng dẫn nghiên cứu của tôi theo địa chỉ sau:

Phó Giáo sư Heather Fehring
Bộ môn Trưởng học & Giáo dục Tuổi Ẩu thơ
Khoa Giáo dục, Ngôn ngữ, & các Hoạt động Cổng đồng
Trường Đại học R.M.I.T.
ĐT: 03 9925 7840
Fax: 03 9925 7887
Email: heather.fehring@rmit.edu.au

Xin thành cảm ơn quý vị,

[Signature]
Hương Lê

MôIJ thac mac hay than phi en vê vieç tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu này có thể gửi đến The Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), GPO Box 247v, Melbourne 3001. Điện thoại 03 9925 1745. Chi tiết về thủ tục than phi en có thể truy cập tại trang lưu http://www.rmit.edu.au/departments/secretariat/hrec.html
APPENDIX 11

Prescribed Consent Form to participate in research
RMIT HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Prescribed Consent Form For Persons Participating In Research Projects Involving Interviews, Questionnaires or Disclosure of Personal Information

FACULTY OF Education, Language, and Community Services
DEPARTMENT OF School and Early Childhood Education

Name of participant: S
Project Title: The relationship between special educators in the DE&T Victorian Metropolitan Regions and Vietnamese parents of children with a disability

Name of investigator: HUONG THU LE Phone: (03) 9925 1764

1. I have received a statement explaining the procedures involved in this study.

2. I consent to participate in the above study, the particulars of which - including details of the interviews or questionnaires - have been explained to me.

3. I authorize the investigator to interview me or administer a questionnaire.

4. I acknowledge that:
   (a) Having read Plain Language Statement, I agree to the general purpose, methods and demands of the study.
   (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
   (c) The study is for the purpose of research and/or teaching. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
   (d) The privacy of the information I provide will be safeguarded. However should information of a private nature need to be disclosed for moral, clinical or legal reasons, I will be given an opportunity to negotiate the terms of this disclosure.
   (e) The security of the research data is assured during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to RMIT University in the form of a PhD thesis. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participant’s Consent

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

(Participant)

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

(Witness to signature)

Where participant is under 18 years of age:

I consent to the participation of ___________________________ in the above study.

Signature: (1) ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

(Signatures of parents or guardians)

Signature: (2) ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

(Witness to signature)

Participants should be given a photocopy of this consent form after it has been signed.

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (03) 9925 1745. Details of the complaints procedure are available from the above address.
APPENDIX 12

Prescribed Consent Form to participate in research

Vietnamese version
HREC Form No 2b - Vietnamese Translation

ỦY BAN ĐÀO DỤC NGHIÊN CỨU CON NGƯỜI TRƯỞNG DẠI HỌC RMIT

Phiếu Động Ý Tham Dự Đề Tài Nghiên Cứu dành cho những người tham dự vào các đề tài có liên quan đến Phòng Văn, Bảng Hội, hoặc liên hệ Thường Tin Cá Nhân

KHOA

Giáo dục, Ngôn ngữ và các Hoạt động Công cộng

BỘ MÓN

Trường học và Giáo dục Tuổi ấu thơ

Tên người tham dự đề tài

Mối quan hệ giữa những người làm công tác giáo dục đặc biệt trong các trường học vùng trọng tâm tiểu bang Victoria với các

phu huynh người Việt có con em bị khuyết tật

Tên chủ nhiệm đề tài

HUONG THU LE

Diễn thoại: (03) 9925 1764

1. Tôi đã nhận được thư mời giải thích chi tiết về đề tài nghiên cứu này.

2. Tôi đồng ý tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu trên, nhưng phân quan trong của đề tài bao gồm chi tiết về những buổi phỏng vấn hay bảng hỏi đã được giải thích cho tôi.

3. Tôi cho phép chủ nhiệm đề tài phỏng vấn tôi.

4. Tôi đã:

   (f) Đọc Thư Tham Dự Đề Tài Nghiên Cứu Khoa học.Tôi đồng ý với mục đích chung, phương pháp và các yêu cầu của đề tài.

   (g) Được cho biết là tôi có quyền rút lui khỏi đề tài bất cứ lúc nào cũng như được phép tham gia những thông tin chưa xử lý mà tôi đã cung cấp.

   (h) Hiểu rằng đề tài nghiên cứu này nhằm phục vụ cho mục đích nghiên cứu và giảng dạy. Đề tài có thể không dành lại lợi ích trực tiếp cho tôi.

   (i) Biết là các thông tin mà tôi cung cấp sẽ được bảo quản cá nhân. Tuy nhiên trong trường hợp những thông tin có tính riêng tư cá nhân được tiết lộ, các lý do liên quan đến pháp lý, y tế, hay đạo đức, tôi có quyền hoãn ý kiến về việc tiết lộ này.

   (j) Hiểu rằng sự an toàn của dữ liệu nghiên cứu sẽ được bảo đảm trong suốt quá trình đề tài được thực hiện cũng như sau khi đề tài hoàn tất. Các dữ liệu thu thập được trong suốt thời gian nghiên cứu có thể được xuất bản, và bán báo cáo về kết quả nghiên cứu của đề tài sẽ được cung cấp cho trường đại học RMIT dưới dạng lưu ăn Tiện St. Bạt cứ thông tin nào giúp给我 người dẫn biết được danh tính của tôi đều không được phép sử dụng.

Cháp thuận của người tham dự đề tài

Tên: ___________________________ Ngày: ___________________________
(Nguồn tham dự)

Tên: ___________________________ Ngày: ___________________________
(Nguồn làm chương)

Trường hợp người tham dự dưới 18 tuổi:

Tôi đồng ý cho ___________________________ tham dự vào đề tài nghiên cứu trên.

Chữ ký: ___________________________ (Chữ ký của cha mẹ hoặc người nuôi dưỡng)

Tên: ___________________________ Ngày: ___________________________
(Nguồn làm chương)

Người tham dự giữ một bản sao của phiếu Động Ý Tham Dự Đề tài Nghiên cứu.

Mới than phien liên quan đến việc tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu này có thể gửi trực tiếp đến The Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. Điện thoại (03) 9925 1745.

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APPENDIX 13

Getting to know the parents schedule:

Ms Thanh’s Vietnamese Metropolitan Groups
# GETTING TO KNOW THE PARENTS SCHEDULE

**Ms Thanh (ADEC)**

*Vietnamese Metropolitan Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>08/07/03</td>
<td>10:30-13:00</td>
<td>Footscray group meeting, Braybook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>15/07/03</td>
<td>10:30-13:00</td>
<td>Springvale group meeting, Queens Ave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>22/07/03</td>
<td>10:30-13:00</td>
<td>Coburg group meeting, Munro St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>02/09/03</td>
<td>10:30-13:00</td>
<td>Footscray group meeting, Braybook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5       | 21/10/03 | 11:00-13:00  | Carers’ Week: Cruise trip for multicultural groups on Yarra river, Exhibition Centre to Williamstown
- Present: carers of Vietnamese background and other ethnic groups
- Observation
  - Vietnamese stick together
  - Don’t feel comfortable with other groups
  - Difficult cultures and language don’t talk |
| 6       | 23/10/03 | 10:30-13:00  | Carer Week for Springvale group, Springvale Rd, Springvale City Hall |
| 7       | 11/11/03 | 10:30-13:00  | Footscray group meeting, Braybrook                                     |
| 8       | 18/11/03 | 10:30-13:00  | Springvale group meeting, Springvale
Presentation by Mary-Ann Liethof, ADEC
Topic: “Sibling Project”                        |
| 9       | 25/11/03 | 10:30-13:00  | Coburg group meeting, Munro St                                       |
APPENDIX 14

Getting to know the parents schedule:

Ms Hong’s Parent-To-Parent Group
### GETTING TO KNOW THE PARENTS SCHEDULE

**Ms Hong**  
*Parent-To-Parent*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10/07/03</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Parents’ weekly meeting in Braybrook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>17/07/03</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Parents’ weekly meeting in Braybrook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>26/07/03</td>
<td>4:00-16:00</td>
<td>Snow ‘n’ Ski Trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>31/07/03</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Parents’ weekly meeting in Braybrook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 13 parents attended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Topic of the week: “Active group” (purpose, activities, assessment, results)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Discussion of identity, self-understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Initial contacts with parents for recruiting purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>07/08/03</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Parents’ weekly meeting in Braybrook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>14/8/03</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Parents’ weekly meeting in Braybrook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Topic: “The art of listening”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Not many opportunities to share mentally, physically unbalanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ways to persuade their husbands (some listen, some refuse to listen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○ In certain cases, if possible, they are happy to cooperate with each other (Mark-Xuan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○ If impossible:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Some under two pressures: children and husbands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- some women find their own ways to survive (e.g. learn to drive, stop persuading, live their own lives because of their children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- some can’t manage as they don’t have the opportunities to learn, develop exhausted, don’t know what to do even in socializing with others as they are afraid they are like their husbands: unsympathetic roll into their own shell, helpless (bat luc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○ Some under two pressures: children and husbands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Ms Hong

*Parent-To-Parent*

*(continued)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21/08/03</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28/8/03</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>04/09/03</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>05/09/03</td>
<td>11:00-12:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11/09/03</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18/09/03</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25/09/03</td>
<td>16:00-17:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27/09/03</td>
<td>11:00-15:00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>06/10/03</td>
<td>14:00-15:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16/10/03</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ms Hong

*Parent-To-Parent*

(continued.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11/11/03</td>
<td>14:30-16:00</td>
<td>Still a bit shy as some of them don’t know each other and issues are new to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Never looked at the issues from a structural perspective; just looked at them as common sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Excitingly argue / discuss related issues. Some very negative (use religion as a way to free oneself, to find peace) accept their position instead of making change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18/10/04</td>
<td>13:00-14:30</td>
<td>Male parents (4) enjoy the meeting and contribute ideas from very different perspectives. Female parents feel relaxed, satisfied with those ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>An interview with Ms Hong, Footscray Library</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>An interview with Ms Hong, Footscray Library</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Researcher’s comments in relation to Ms Hong’s weekly workshops**

- **Services**
  - Services not known to many people
  - Recruit bilingual / cultural workers
  - Cultural issue: dare not complain of services if not satisfied

- **Hong’s methods**
  - Common sense theories
  - Detailed examples

- **Vietnamese culture creates**
  - men with negative “phu mau” characteristics
  - people with a lot of childish characteristics
  - if not trained have difficulties in educating their children as they are controlled by their natural instincts

- **Topics discussed at workshops**
  - Interpersonal communication techniques
  - How to overcome difficulties in interpersonal relationships
  - Recognizing self
  - Describing behaviors
  - Expressing feelings
  - The art of listening
  - Non-verbal communication
APPENDIX 15

General demographic sheet for special educators and management staff
GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET FOR
SPECIAL EDUCATORS & MANAGEMENT STAFF

Please tick the appropriate response(s) or complete the blank below

School: ...............................................................................................................................................

Name: ...............................................................................................................................................

Gender:  □ Male  □ Female

Age:  □ 20-29  □ 30-39  □ 40-49  □ 50-59

Position:  □ Principal  □ Vice Principal  □ Principal Assistant

□ Teacher  □ Teacher Aide  □ Others (please specify)

Ethnic background:  □ English speaking  □ Others (please specify)

Profile of the student in this study

Name: ...............................................................................................................................................

Grade/group: .......................................................................................................................................

Class size: ...........................................................................................................................................

Diagnosis:  □ Autism  □ Down syndrome  □ Developmental delay

□ Learning disability  □ Severe language disorder  □ Severe behavior disorder

□ Mental retardation  □ No formal diagnosis  □ Others (please specify)

Services received from school:  □ Teacher Aide

□ Speech therapy  □ Psychological therapy

□ Physiotherapy  □ Occupational therapy

□ Others (please specify)

CONTINUED OVER PAGE ...
For integration aides / teacher aides

Educational level:
□ Secondary education
□ Diploma / TAFE
□ Degree in nursing
□ College / University
□ Others

Total experience as a paraeducator / teacher aide (years): .................................................................
Working time with the student in the study (years): ...........................................................................

For special support needs teachers / coordinators, specialists, and general educators

Educational level:
□ Primary education diploma
□ Secondary education diploma
□ Bachelor’s degree
□ Master’s degree
□ PhD degree
□ Specialist qualifications (please specify)

Total experience as teacher / specialist (years): ..................................................................................
Total experience in the current (integration) program (years): .........................................................
Worked with the student in the study (years): ....................................................................................

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION!
APPENDIX 16

Sample of interviewing questions for special educators
INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATORS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Pre-service training
- How well were you prepared for the collaboration with diverse backgrounds families in pre-service training?

In-service training
- Could you please give me some examples of ‘good’ in-service training & support programs that you have participated in?
- How helpful are the programs for your collaboration with diverse background parents?

Integration Program
- Could you describe your experiences with the integration program?

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Team work
- Have you got a teaming model?
- How are teaming tasks organized?
- How are the parents facilitated to participate in the education process / classroom activities?
- What are the parents’ roles in the home-school partnership?
- How do you consider your role in the process of collaborating with families?
- What are your priorities when planning the ILP program?
- How have cultural factors been considered in the program?
  ° Are alternative assessment tools used to ensure validity for CLD students? (i.e., portfolios, observations, family information reports in addition to formal assessment tools)
  ° Are bilingual program available?

Communication
- What methods of home-school communication do you employ?
- What is the nature of home-school communication?
- What are the contributions of an interpreter to the parent-educator communication?
- What are the disadvantages of working with families via an interpreter?

Involvement
- How often do the parents in this study attend home-school meetings?
- Do they often attend school events or involve in classroom activities?
  ◦ How are cultural factors considered in those activities?
  ◦ Do they contribute ideas regarding culturally related issues?
- In what other occasions do they contact you? How & how often? What are their concerns?
  ◦ With whom are they often in contact with?
  ◦ With whom do you often communicate with? The father or the mother?
  ◦ What are your experiences in working with Vietnamese parents in comparison to English speaking background parents as well as parents of other ethnic origins?
  ◦ Could you describe their ways of expressing concerns, communicating with educators?
  ◦ Are Vietnamese parents interested in socializing with educators?
- What is the level of participation / involvement of the parents in this study in the referral, assessment, ILP decision making process?
- What is the time allotment you have for communicating or contacting with parents in general?
  ◦ Do you pay home visits to parents of children with disabilities?
  ◦ What are your issues in working in a special education environment?
  ◦ How does your work load influence your collaboration with parents?
- What are the strategies you employ to help you improve your understanding of the cultures of the families you work with (in general & Vietnamese culture in particular)?

Expectations

- What should the parents do to make it easier for you to talk to them about their child’s program, progress or success?
- What are the difficulties (with regard to their language skill development, communication) of diverse background children who have a disability when they study in an English-speaking environment?
- What are your expectations for (the development of) the child in this study?
- Do you know of any other issues that may hinder a possible better family-school partnership in general? (e.g., education law, funding, DE&T policy, community, personnel resources etc)
APPENDIX 17

Sample of interviewing questions for school management staff
INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT STAFF

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
- School type:  □ Mainstream with a special education unit  □ Special school
- School population: ............................................................................................................................
- Number or percentage of students with Vietnamese background:..................................................
- Number or percentage of students with disabilities: ...........................................................................
- Number or percentage of Vietnamese students with disabilities: ...................................................

SCHOOL COUNCIL / PARENT GROUP
- Are there any Vietnamese representatives in the School Council / Parent Group?
- What is the major function of Parent Group? How does the group operate?

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- What in-service training and support programs are available at your school to help educators improve their collaboration with diverse background parents?
- What are the effects and prospects of the integration program?

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

School’s policy
- What is the position of family in the school’s philosophy?
- What are your priorities in the school’s curriculum?
- How are the parents facilitated to participate in the education process? (e.g. referral, assessment, and IEP)
- How have cultural factors been considered in the school’s curriculum? (e.g. are alternative assessment tools used to ensure validity for CLD students, including portfolios, observations, family information reports in addition to formal assessment tools?)
- How are cultural factors included in school events / activities?
- How are language issues taken into account? Are bilingual program available?
  ° What is the source of interpreters?
  ° Have you got any issues relating to funding & support for this service?
  ° Does your school have a long-term strategy with regard to this issue?
- How is parent-educator interpersonal relationship considered and rated in the school’s policy for family-school partnership?
What is the time allotment educators have for communicating or contacting with parents in general?

Do they pay home visits to parents of children with disabilities?

**Communication**

- What methods of home-school communication are available at your school?
- What is the nature of the home-school communication?
- What do you think are the advantages & disadvantages of working with families via an interpreter?

**Involvement**

- How are home-school meetings organized (especially for parents of children with a disability)?
  - How often do the parents in this study attend home-school meetings?
  - In what other occasions do they contact schools? How & how often?
  - What are their major concerns when they come into contact with professionals?
  - With whom do you often communicate with? The father or the mother?
- What are your experiences in working with Vietnamese parents in comparison to English speaking background parents as well as parents of other ethnic origins?
- What is the turnout of Vietnamese parents in school related activities?
  - Do the parents in this study regularly attend those activities?
  - What is your evaluation of the level of participation / involvement of the parents in this study in the referral, assessment, IEP decision making process?

**Expectations**

- What should the parents do to make it easier for you to talk to them about their child’s program, progress or success?
- What are the school’s expectations for the development of the child?
- What are other issues that may hinder a possible better family-school partnership in general? (e.g., education law, funding, DE&T policy, community, personnel resources etc)
APPENDIX 18

Sample of interviewing questions for parents
INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

GENERAL INFORMATION

The child

Disability status of the child
- What do you think of your child’s disability?
  - Improving
  - No progress seems to be made
  - Progressing slowly
- What progress has your child made so far?
  - Reading / writing
  - Doing homework / housework
  - Communication skills
  - Others

The child’s need for support
- Have you got any issues relating to looking after your disabled child?
- Have you ever faced any difficulties when dealing with demands of caring? If yes, how stressful you find them?
- Please share any coping methods you use and indicate how helpful you find them?
- What kind of help/support does the child need?
  Self care
  - To drink from a cup
  - Eating
  - Dressing
  - Continence
  Mobility
  - Moving around the home
  - Transport
  Home living
  - House-related tasks
  - Finance
  - Administering medication
  - Transport
- Who often helps you look after child?
  - Partner
  - Grandparents
  - Friend(s)
  - Other children
  - Service carers
  - Other family members
- What kind of support do they give?
  - Emotional (e.g. listening or talking over your problems)
  - Financial / material
  - Others (helping you with daily tasks, giving the child ‘respite’ care etc.)
- Can you obtain their support any time?
- How confident are you that you can get emotional support from family and friends?
- How confident are you that you can get other supports from family and friends?

Assistance and use of support services
- What are your thoughts on seeking outside help to support you?
- How confident are you that you can get emotional support from people other than family and friends, if needed (e.g. counseling, religious groups)?
- How confident are you that you can get helping with your daily tasks from people other than family and friends, if needed (e.g. counseling, religious groups)?
- In Australia, if you are looking after a disabled person, you are a carer. As a carer, you can access to various services. What services have you got access to?
  - Home care
  - Aids and equipment
  - Day programs and recreation
  - Self-help groups
  - Respite
  - Counseling
  - Special schooling
  - RDNS
  - Other services (e.g. employment services)
- How do you receive information about disability support services?
  - Spoken language (radio, audio, word-of-mouth). Vietnamese and/or English?
  - Print materials (brochures, newspapers). Vietnamese and/or English?
- Have you ever had help from Disability Support Services to support you in looking after the child with a disability?
- How helpful have you found the services to be?
- Have you experienced any difficulties in accessing and using support services?
  - Language difficulties
  - Lack of information in Vietnamese
  - Lack of Vietnamese staff/interpreters
  - Lack of familiarity to the health and support system
  - Uncomfortable when having strangers at home
  - Feeling that being treated unfair, given your ethnic background
  - Professional workers don’t seem to appreciate the problems ethnic persons with disability face (culture, belief …)
  - Others
- Please specify reasons that prevent you from using support services?
- If these services do not meet your needs, how could they be improved?
- Would you seek help from disability services again?
- Please specify what ethnic community organizations have you been in contact with? How often? How helpful are they?
- What type of assistance from your own ethnic community do you think would be helpful to the child?
- What are some of the significant barriers that individuals from your own ethnic community face in getting their child’s needs met?
- The roles of mass media / ethnic community media:
  ° What are your favorite newspapers?
    • What are your favorite columns/articles?
    • How often do you buy/read newspapers?
  ° What radio stations do you listen to?
    • What are your favorite programs?
    • How often do you listen to the radio?
  ° What are your favorite TV channels / programs?
- What kinds of community activities that you have participated in? How often? How interesting/useful are they?
- Have you got frequent contact with fellow people in your own ethnic community?

Family life

Extended family
- Have you had any concerns over your relatives who are still living in Vietnam?
- If it’s possible, could you please share your resettlement experience?
- Levels of residential mobility

Recreation & Leisure
- Have you participated in any recreational or leisure activities away from home?
  ° Cinema
  ° Visiting family/friends
  ° Short trips
  ° Camping
  ° Going on holidays
  ° Shopping
  ° Sport/other physical recreation
  ° Sport spectator
- What are your past-time habits?
- How often do you meet with your friends?
- What are your favorite joint activities?
- Do you know about your neighbors / surrounding area?

Education and Employment
Have you ever been in the labor force? Please specify.

Your level of education

- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Post-school qualification
- Tertiary education

Financial Circumstances

Caring can be difficult because it may cause financial difficulties. Which of the followings best describes your financial circumstances?

- Carer pension / benefits / allowances
- Paid employment
- Other financial sources

Benefits for the child

What is your family’s main source of finance?

How do you describe your financial situations?

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

School selection

Did you choose the school for your child?

- If no. Who helped you choose the school for your child?
- If yes. Why did you choose this school?

What school activities do you currently participate in? Used to?

Do you actively participate in decision making regarding your child’s individual circumstances?

How satisfied are you with the services and supports you receive from the child’s school?

Have you experienced any difficulties? Please specify.

There is a special education law that is designed to view parents as partners in the education of their children. Does the child’s school treat you as a ‘partner’?

Are you aware that school personnel are being asked to learn to be sensitive to the cultures of students and their families? Do you think this is important? Do you have any personal experiences that support your opinions?

Do you think it would make a difference in the child’s educational program or services if educators and professionals are more sensitive to your family’s culture?

Do you take part in the School Council?

What do you know about the Council’s functions?
Communication

- How do you communicate with the educators and professionals?
  - Do you talk to them directly?
  - Do you need interpreters?

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of working via an interpreter?

- Have they got any influence on your relationship with the educators and professionals?

- In case you would like to discuss issues relating to your child e.g. home work etc. what is the major means of communication you use to contact the educators?
  - Telephone
  - Via an interpreter
  - Letters
  - Email
  - Student school-book
  - Fax
  - In-person directly
  - Others

- How do you feel each time you encounter
  - School personnel (e.g. the principal, student support officers)?
  - Special educators (e.g. classroom teacher, teacher aid)?
  - School health specialists (e.g. educational developmental psychologist, speech pathologist)?

- Are there any differences if you meet them at
  - School?
  - Other places?
  - Home?

Involvement

- Your experience in contacting with educators and professionals
  - How often do you meet with school staff?
  - Who often attend the meetings?
    - You
    - Both
    - Your partner
    - Others
  - What are the meetings about?
  - Who from the school personnel are often included in the meetings?
  - What is the meeting mode?
    - Group meeting
    - Individual meeting
  - How long is each meeting?
  - How do you feel when you meet them?
  - Are you comfortable in the meetings?
- Do you often contribute your opinions in school meetings?
  ° If yes, who often raises questions?
    • You
    • Both
    • Your partner
- What types of issues do you have concern over?
- Have any educators and professionals paid you a home visit?
  ° If yes, how often are you informed in advance?
  ° How long is each visit?
  ° What do you often do to welcome them?
  ° What do the educators often talk about during those home visits?
  ° How do you communicate with them in those cases?
    • Talk to them directly
    • Via an interpreter
  ° Do you ‘prepare’ issues that you need to discuss with them in those cases?
- In addition to meetings organized by school personnel, how often do you meet with other school staff on other occasions?
- What do you often talk about during those casual meetings?
- What do you know about DE&T Vic policy for students with disabilities?
- What do you know about school policy for students with disabilities?
- How do you get support from school personnel and classroom teachers?

Perceptions
- What do you think of ‘Westerners’ in general?
- When did you first encounter educators and professionals?
- What are your first impressions of the educators and professionals themselves as well as their culture?
- How do the educators / professionals treat you?
- What do you think of the school culture here in Australia?
- What do you think of the culture of this school?
- What do you think about the Australian society and the social culture in general?
- What is the role of the Vietnamese language in building your view/perception of the educators/professionals?
- Do you think that your cultural beliefs and values have been considered in service planning and provision for the child’s educational program?
- What would you like the school or other organization to know about the child’s disability as it relates to your cultural beliefs and values?
- In your opinion, what are the main issues in relation to ‘working’ with educators and professionals not coming from Asian backgrounds?
- What are your suggestions to overcome these issues?
- What are the major things that one should not do or say to parents from your (cultural, ethnic, or racial) community who have children with a disability like your son’s or daughter’s?
- Have you ever experienced any embarrassing moments when working / talking with the educators/professionals with regard to the sensitivity of your culture?
- What kinds of training should be provided to school counselors, teachers, administrators, and other staff members to prepare them to work with parents from your community who have children with disabilities like you son’s or daughter’s?
- What are the important components of cross-cultural training that should be included regarding:
  - Communication styles
  - Parent-educator/professional partnerships
  - Family decision-making structures
  - Help-seeking behaviors
  - Child-rearing, discipline practices
- What do you think of the educators and professionals you have worked with? Please specify.
  - Enthusiastic
  - Comprehensive
  - Helpful
  - Others
- Do your perceptions influence your relationships with the educators and professionals?
  - If yes. To what extent?
  - If no. How do you know?
- How do you define your relationship with the educators and professionals? Classroom teachers?
  - Working / Partnership
  - Helping
  - Others. Please specify.
- What are your judgments of your relationships with the educators and professionals?
  - Helpful (active)
  - Helping (passive)
  - Positive
  - Negative

**Expectations**
- How busy are you with your everyday life?
- What are your opinions of the traditional roles of Vietnamese women?
- What do you think of the traditional Vietnamese values attached to women: 3 obedience and 4 virtues?
- Could you please share stories of the roles of your mother/father in your family?
- Have you been brought up with these values?
- Are they still applicable now? Are there any changes?
- Have they got any influences in your everyday life?
- What do you think of your role now in the family?
- What are your partner’s opinions of these values?
- How does everybody in your family contribute to the decision-making process?
- How do people in your family support one another?
- What is the relationship between the child and
  - His/her peers?
  - His/her siblings?
  - His/her mother?
  - His/her father?
- How does the child’s disability influence your family life?
  - Everyday life
  - Life of his/her siblings
  - Marriage life
- How does family life affect the child him/herself?
- What expectations are placed on a person with a disability within Vietnamese culture?
- How do traditional Vietnamese values affect your expectations for the child’s education?
- What do you think the child can achieve in the future?
- What do you hope the child can achieve in his/her life?
- What are your expectations for the development of the child?
- What are your plans for the child in the future?
- Which options do you prefer for the child when you are no longer able to care for him/her?
  - Looked after at home, by the family
  - Looked after at home, with support from disability services
  - Alternative accommodation options
  - Others
- What have you gained from your relationship with educators and professionals?
- Have you got any expectations for this relationship?
- Do you think that educators and professionals have any impacts on your expectations for the child’s education?
  - No. How do you know?
  - Yes. How do you measure the impacts?
- How do the child’s type and level of disability influence your relationship with educators and professionals?
- How have the school and social cultures here influenced your way of thinking with regard to your child’s disability?
APPENDIX 19

Sample of interviewing questions for the social worker
DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET FOR THE SOCIAL WORKER

Please tick the appropriate response(s) or complete the blank below

Position: .................................................................................................................................................

Organization: ........................................................................................................................................

Program / Project Title: ..........................................................................................................................

Name: ..................................................................................................................................................

Gender: □ Male □ Female

Age group: □ 20-29 □ 30-39
□ 40-49 □ 50-59

Ethnic background: □ Vietnamese □ English speaking
□ Other (please specify)

..........................................................................................................................................................

Total experience as a social worker (years): .........................................................................................

Involving time in the current program / project: ....................................................................................

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION!
INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS FOR THE SOCIAL WORKER

1. Who involves in the project?
   • Who is the coordinator?
   • How is the project funded?

2. What is the nature of the project?
   • Whom is the project designed for?
   • How long is the project?
   • What activities involve?

3. What are the results of the current application?
   • How many parents register to take part in the program?
   • How many participate on a regular basis?
   • Who are these parents?
     § Parents of children with a physical disability
     § Parents of children with a mental / learning disability
   • How useful do they find the project?
     § What do the parents think they have gained from this project?
     § How have they applied these achievements into their lives?

4. Has the program experienced any difficulties?
   • Funding / facilities
     § Is the program provided with a regular venue to operate?
     § Do you have enough funding to run the program on a regular basis?
     § Do you have sufficient money for hand-outs or refreshments?
   • What are the factors that influence parent attendance?
     § Family / job commitments
     § Cultural taboos
     § Others (health, transport, etc.)
   • How do the program contents or design need to be changed or adjusted to suit parents’ needs?
     § Concepts application
     § Cultural factors

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION!
APPENDIX 20

Sample of interviewing questions for the interpreter
DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET FOR THE INTERPRETER

Please tick the appropriate response(s) or complete the blank below

Name: ...........................................................................................................................................

Gender:  □ Male          □ Female

Languages: ....................................................................................................................................

Age group:  □ 20-29      □ 30-39
                     □ 40-49      □ 50-59

Ethnic background:  □ Vietnamese      □ English speaking
                     □ Other (please specify) .............................................................

Total experience as an interpreter (years): ...................................................................................

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION!
INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERPRETER

1. What are the fundamental rules of interpreting?
   • What is your role?
   • What are your obligations and responsibilities as an interpreter?

2. Your experience as a school interpreter:
   • What is the influence of the school context on the communication process?
   • What are the educators’ communication styles?
   • What are the educators’ major concerns when working with parents of children with a disability?

3. With regard to Vietnamese parents (of normal vs. children with a disability)
   • What are the parents’ communication patterns?
   • What are the concerns they often bring to educators’ attention during family-school conferences?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION!
APPENDIX 21

Excerpt from the interviewing journal


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>06/11/03</td>
<td>- Ms Oanh agrees to be a research participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- ‘Prescribed Consent Form’ signed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Provided school contact details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Building rapport, paper work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Venue:</strong> Ms Oanh’s house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Interviewees:</strong> Ms Oanh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Present:</strong> Oanh’s youngest child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Duration:</strong> 10:50-13:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11/11/03</td>
<td>- Interview tape-recorded, good quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Everything going well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Oanh was open. The child was getting familiar with my presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Venue:</strong> Ms Oanh’s house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Interviewees:</strong> Ms Oanh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Present:</strong> Oanh’s youngest child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Duration:</strong> 10:30-13:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>24/11/03</td>
<td>- Interview tape-recorded, good quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- I had lunch with Oanh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Venue:</strong> Ms Oanh’s house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Interviewees:</strong> Ms Oanh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Present:</strong> Oanh’s youngest child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Duration:</strong> 10:30-12:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>08/12/03</td>
<td>- Interview tape-recorded, good quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Oanh was busy with the little girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- I stayed and had a chat with Oanh until 2:30pm. Oanh seemed to be more comfortable chatting than answering my questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## INTERVIEWING JOURNAL

### Case Study 3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>11/12/03</td>
<td>- Oanh’s communication style was observed during the interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Notes of the teachers’ approach were taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Parent-teacher interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Venue:</strong> Ty’s school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Attendants:</strong> School student welfare coordinator, classroom teacher,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teacher aide, interpreter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Observer:</strong> The investigator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Duration:</strong> 13:45-16:30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 6   | 09/03/04  | - Interview tape-recorded                                            |
|     |           | - Observation conducted                                              |
|     |           | - Interviews with Oanh officially ended                              |
|     |           | - Made an appointment to interview her husband next time             |
|     |           | **Topic:** 4th interview                                              |
|     |           | **Venue:** Ms Oanh’s house                                           |
|     |           | **Interviewees:** Ms Oanh                                             |
|     |           | **Present:** Oanh’s youngest child & Ty                              |
|     |           | **Duration:** 10:30-14:00                                             |

| 7   | 16/03/07  | - Interview tape-recorded                                            |
|     |           | - Notes taken                                                         |
|     |           | **Topic:** 5th interview                                              |
|     |           | **Venue:** Ms Oanh’s house                                           |
|     |           | **Interviewees:** Mr Nam                                              |
|     |           | **Present:** Oanh & the three children                                |
|     |           | **Duration:** 16:30-18:00                                             |
APPENDIX 22

Observation checklists for fieldwork situations
- Neighborhood
  □ Residential
  □ Industrial
  □ Special features
- Distance from the house to the
  □ School
  □ Shopping centre
  □ Community centre
- Housing style
  □ House
  □ Flat
  □ Apartment
  □ Housing Commission
- Accommodation condition
  □ Household arrangement
  □ Socio-economic conditions of the family
- Parent-child interacting styles
  □ Disciplined
  □ Understanding
- Expectations
  □ Optimistic
  □ Pessimistic
- Other features

.............................................................................................................................
OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Schools & Educators

- School environment

- School atmosphere

- School’s functions / activities

- School’s dominate culture

- Educator-parent communicating styles
## COMMUNICATION STYLES

*Parents, Educators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Gender (M/F)</th>
<th>Communicating style</th>
<th>Behavior &amp; Attitude</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eye Contact</td>
<td>Direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialists</td>
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<td>Interpreters</td>
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<td>Social workers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Notes:*
APPENDIX 23

A code list to the case study database
## A CODE LIST TO THE CASE STUDY DATABASE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case / Subject</th>
<th>Sources of evidence</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transcripts of interviews (parents / staff / teachers)</td>
<td>DA2.S2 (F1 / F2 / F3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes &amp; artifacts (research journal, data log, observation notes; communication books, student reports, photos, tokens, art works, etc.)</td>
<td>DA2.S2 (F4 / F5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documents (school newsletters, school related information, social support brochures …)</td>
<td>GI1.S2.F4 / GI2.S1 / GI2.S6</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Transcripts of interviews (parents / staff / teachers)</td>
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<td>Documents (school newsletters, school related information, social support brochures …)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## A CODE LIST TO THE CASE STUDY DATABASE (continued)

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<th>Case / Subject</th>
<th>Sources of evidence</th>
<th>Codes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Transcripts of interviews (parents / staff / teachers)</td>
<td>DA3.S2 / DA3.S2 (F1 / F2 / F3)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes &amp; artifacts (research journal, data log, observation notes; communication books, student reports, photos, tokens, art works, etc.)</td>
<td>DA3.S2 (F4 / F5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documents (school newsletters, school related information, social support brochures …)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>DA2.S1 / DA2.S1 (F1 / F2 / F3)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Field notes &amp; artifacts (research journal, data log, observation notes; communication books, student reports, photos, tokens, art works, etc.)</td>
<td>DA2.S1 (F4 / F5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documents (school newsletters, school related information, social support brochures …)</td>
<td>GI1.S2.F1 / GI2.S1 / GI2.S6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case / Subject</td>
<td>Sources of evidence</td>
<td>Codes</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Transcripts of interviews</strong> (parents / staff / teachers)</td>
<td>DA1.S2 (F1 / F2 / F3)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Field notes &amp; artifacts</strong> (research journal, data log, observation notes; communication books, student reports, photos, tokens, art works, etc.)</td>
<td>DA1.S2 (F4 / F5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Documents</strong> (school newsletters, school related information, social support brochures …)</td>
<td>GI1.S2.F1 / GI2.S1 / GI2.S6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Transcripts of interviews</strong> (parents / staff / teachers)</td>
<td>DA1.S3 (F1 / F2 / F3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Field notes &amp; artifacts</strong> (research journal, data log, observation notes; communication books, student reports, photos, tokens, art works, etc.)</td>
<td>DA1.S3 (F4 / F5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Documents</strong> (school newsletters, school related information, social support brochures …)</td>
<td>GI1.S2.F2 / GI2.S1 / GI2.S6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### A CODE LIST TO THE CASE STUDY DATABASE (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case / Subject</th>
<th>Sources of evidence</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Transcripts of interviews (parents / staff / teachers)</td>
<td>DA3.S1 (F1 / F2 / F3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes &amp; artifacts (research journal, data log, observation notes; communication books, student reports, photos, tokens, art works, etc.)</td>
<td>DA3.S1 (F4 / F5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documents (school newsletters, school related information, social support brochures …)</td>
<td>GI1.S2.F6 / GI2.S1 / GI2.S6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreter</td>
<td>Transcripts of interviews</td>
<td>DA1.S1.F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes (research journal, data log, observation notes)</td>
<td>DA1.S1.F2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documents (related papers)</td>
<td>GI1.S1.F1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A CODE LIST TO THE CASE STUDY DATABASE (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case / Subject</th>
<th>Sources of evidence</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social workers</td>
<td>Transcripts of interviews</td>
<td>DA1.S1.F3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>DA1.S1.F4 / DA1.F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(research journal, data log, observation notes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(related papers, support services, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legends**

- DA1: ‘Data for analysis’ folder 1
- GI1: ‘General information’ folder 1
- S1: Subfolder 1
- F1: File 1
List of Abbreviations

The glossary assembles a list of the abbreviations mentioned in this thesis. The list is alphabetically arranged for ease of reference. The glossary, in addition, summarizes a number of terms specifically used in the Australian school context and their counterparts widely used in the literature. Definitions for certain terms used in the present study were also provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviations</th>
<th>Full terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACD</td>
<td>Association for Children with a Disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADEC</td>
<td>Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>Central Business District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEECD</td>
<td>The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE&amp;T</td>
<td>The Victorian Department of Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEC</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education and Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMR</td>
<td>Eastern Metropolitan Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FELCS</td>
<td>Faculty of Education, Language, and Community Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRO</td>
<td>Graduate Research Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHRECS</td>
<td>Faculty of Education, Language, and Community Services Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDR</td>
<td>Higher Degrees by Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HESC</td>
<td>Human Research Ethics Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRESC</td>
<td>Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individualized Education Program (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFSP</td>
<td>Individualized Family Service Plan (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>Individual Learning Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRC</td>
<td>Migrant Resource Centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Abbreviations (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviations</th>
<th>Full terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NESB</td>
<td>Non-English Speaking Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMR</td>
<td>Northern Metropolitan Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-12</td>
<td>Prep-Year 12 (Preparation level to Year 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETA</td>
<td>Primary English Teaching Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLS</td>
<td>Plain Language Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSG</td>
<td>Program Support Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR</td>
<td>Southern Metropolitan Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDS</td>
<td>Special Developmental School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCAA</td>
<td>Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VELS</td>
<td>The Victorian Essential Learning Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFSSPC</td>
<td>Victorian Federation of State School Parents Clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIP Act</td>
<td>The Victorian Information Privacy Act 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VISEC</td>
<td>Victorian In-Service Education Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VLPD</td>
<td>Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOMA</td>
<td>Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMR</td>
<td>Western Metropolitan Region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table below compares a number of terms used in the Australian school context and their equivalents in home-school partnership studies and literature (those mainly conducted and published in the United States)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms used in Australia</th>
<th>Equivalents in the literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>IEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special educators</td>
<td>Paraprofessionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hereafter are definitions of certain terms used in the present study

**Special school**
A special school is a short term for a Special Developmental School which is designed for students with a disability or special needs.

**Special educators**
Special educators in the context of the present study include: class teachers, teacher aides, and school health specialists who work with students who have a disability.

**Mainstream school**
A mainstream school belongs to a dominant system of education which is mainly designed for normal students. However, a mainstream school always has integration programs.

**Integration program**
An integration program is a mainstream education program individually built for students who have a disability or with special needs.
APPENDIX 25

List of tables used to analyze cross-case data
List of tables used to analyze cross-case data

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Table 7: Demographic characteristics of the involved children across cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic characteristics of the children involved</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of children with a disability</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>male-female</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>male-male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>9-6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic/race</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnoses</td>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>severe Autism</td>
<td>Autism, mental retardation</td>
<td>severe Autism (*)</td>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>Down syndrome</td>
<td>Asperger syndrome - Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools having studied at</td>
<td>mainstream</td>
<td>special</td>
<td>mainstream then special</td>
<td>special</td>
<td>special then mainstream</td>
<td>mainstream</td>
<td>C1(^):mainstream C2 (*) special</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) with mild intellectual delay
(^) C1 = child 1; C2 = child 2
Table 8: Demographic data of the families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic data of the family</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of children in the family</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children with a disability</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of adults in the family home</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of parents living in the home</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people in the family home</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main carers for the child/ren with a disability</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s) participated in this study</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s) in charge of children’s education, dealing with school</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main language spoken in the home</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family geographical residence (*)</td>
<td>Northern area</td>
<td>Western area</td>
<td>Western area</td>
<td>Eastern area</td>
<td>Western area</td>
<td>Western area</td>
<td>Western area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from extended family or relatives</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>very limited</td>
<td>limited</td>
<td>limited</td>
<td>limited</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from friends</td>
<td>very limited</td>
<td>very limited</td>
<td>very limited</td>
<td>very limited</td>
<td>very limited</td>
<td>very limited</td>
<td>very limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family outdoor activities (^)</td>
<td>limited</td>
<td>very limited</td>
<td>very limited</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>almost every week</td>
<td>occasionally</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family social activities (^^)</td>
<td>very limited</td>
<td>very limited</td>
<td>very limited</td>
<td>limited</td>
<td>limited</td>
<td>limited</td>
<td>limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family issues (^^^)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>A few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial difficulty</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) in Melbourne  
(^) within the scope of the nuclear family  
(^^) with extended family, friends group, supporting groups, or local community  
(^^^) conflicts of interests with, or burdens to financially support, extended family members in Vietnam
Table 9: Demographic characteristics of the parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic characteristics of the parents</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>M: 30s; F: 40s</td>
<td>M: 40s</td>
<td>M: 50s; F: 50s</td>
<td>M: 40s; F: 40s</td>
<td>M: 40s; F: 50s</td>
<td>M: 40s; F: 40s</td>
<td>M: 40s; F: 50s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity/race</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of residing in Australia</td>
<td>M: 10, F: over 20</td>
<td>around 20 (*)</td>
<td>over 20</td>
<td>around 20 (**)</td>
<td>over 20</td>
<td>almost 20</td>
<td>M: 10, F: over 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious belief</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>not really</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes, strongly</td>
<td>yes, strongly</td>
<td>yes, strongly</td>
<td>not really</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital issues</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>some</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>improving</td>
<td>improving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ health in general</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>M: not well (⁴)</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F: good</td>
<td>F: good</td>
<td>F: good</td>
<td>F: good</td>
<td>F: good</td>
<td>F: good</td>
<td>F: good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(A): Australian trained  
M: mother / F: father  
(*) the mother in this case also had about 10 years residing in the United States before moving to Australia  
(**) the mother in this case had lived in France for a couple of years before migrating to Australia  
(⁴) without any specific symptoms or disease  
(⁵) According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2008), ‘limited’ means lacking breadth or originality; ‘functional’ means performing or being able to perform a regular function; ‘competent’ means having the capacity to function or develop in a particular way; ‘fluent’ means being capable of using a language easily and accurately

Reference

Table 10: School demographic data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School demographic data</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School geographic location (area)</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C1: Western</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C2: (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance from Melbourne’s Central Business District</td>
<td>6 km</td>
<td>14 km</td>
<td>30 km</td>
<td>23 km</td>
<td>20 km</td>
<td>14 km</td>
<td>C1: 10 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C2: (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School type</td>
<td>mainstream</td>
<td>special</td>
<td>special</td>
<td>special</td>
<td>mainstream</td>
<td>mainstream</td>
<td>C1: mainstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C2: (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student population</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>C1: 280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C2: (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese background students</td>
<td>15 (5%)</td>
<td>40 (40%)</td>
<td>1 (0.6%)</td>
<td>10 (7.8%)</td>
<td>10 (25%)</td>
<td>8 (3%)</td>
<td>C1: 168 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese students with a disability</td>
<td>2/7 (28.5%)</td>
<td>40/100 (40%)</td>
<td>1/150 (0.6%)</td>
<td>10/128 (7.8%)</td>
<td>1/16 (6.25%)</td>
<td>1/4 (25%)</td>
<td>C1: 9/19 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated class educator: (***)</td>
<td>class teachers of C1 &amp; C2</td>
<td>class teacher, teacher aide</td>
<td>class teacher, teacher aide</td>
<td>class teacher, teacher aide</td>
<td>class teacher, two teacher aides</td>
<td>class teacher, teacher aide</td>
<td>C1: class teacher, speech pathologist; C2: class teacher, teacher aide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services for the children</td>
<td>integration aide, speech therapy</td>
<td>teacher aide, Allied Health professionals ((^{\dagger}))</td>
<td>teacher aides; therapy team ((^{\dagger\dagger}))</td>
<td>teacher aide, therapy team ((^{\dagger\dagger\dagger}))</td>
<td>integration aide, speech therapy</td>
<td>integration aide, physical therapy, speech therapy</td>
<td>C1: integration aide, speech therapy; C2: teacher aide; speech, occupational therapies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services for parents (***)</td>
<td>parent group, a Vietnamese speaking staff</td>
<td>parent group, interpreter, Vietnamese speaking staff / school reports</td>
<td>parent group, interpreter,</td>
<td>parent group</td>
<td>parent group, a Vietnamese multicultural aide, interpreter</td>
<td>parent group, interpreter</td>
<td>C1: Vietnamese speaking staff / newsletters, interpreter C2: (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School facilities</td>
<td>well-established computer network</td>
<td>Baseroom model ((+))</td>
<td>taxi as means of school transport</td>
<td>well-established in-door &amp; outdoor facilities</td>
<td>well-equipped playground, school buses</td>
<td>limited</td>
<td>a broad range of resources in all learning areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding / resources</td>
<td>has always been an issue</td>
<td>is not emphasized as a big problem</td>
<td>more is needed</td>
<td>lack of resources</td>
<td>not enough</td>
<td>not enough</td>
<td>C1: more help is needed C2: (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of cultural training for staff</td>
<td>no high need</td>
<td>difficult finding training source</td>
<td>no high need</td>
<td>the need has been realized by the school</td>
<td>s the school’s very big concern</td>
<td>not appropriate</td>
<td>C1: cultural related PD sessions provided ((^{++})) C2: (*)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Notes for Table 4:

C1: child 1; C2: child 2
(\(^3\)) within Melbourne Metropolitan Regions
(\(\ast\)) the second child in Case Study 7 studies in the same school as the child in Case Study 2
(\(\ast\)) the number of Vietnamese children with a disability out of the total number of students with a disability in the whole school
(\(\ast\ast\)) including class/lead teacher, integration/teacher aide, specialists
(\(\ast\ast\ast\)) listed here are only some typical examples
(\(^\wedge\)) Allied Health professionals in this case include physiotherapist, occupational therapists, speech pathologist, music therapist, art therapist, and therapy aides
(\(\wedge\wedge\)) This school’s therapy team provides psychological, physio, speech, occupational therapies
(\(\wedge\wedge\wedge\)) Therapy Team in this case includes speech pathologists, occupational therapist, physiotherapists, psychologist, a social worker, and special education trained teachers
(\(+\)) Baseroom model provides opportunities for students to access age appropriate programs and facilities of the host schools through a mutual exchange of resources and expertise
(\(\wedge\wedge\wedge\wedge\)) PD: professional development


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom demographic data</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class size</td>
<td>C1: 25</td>
<td>C2: 21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children with special needs (*)</td>
<td>C1: 2/25</td>
<td>C2: 1/21</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>1/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of class/lead teacher</td>
<td>C1: 1</td>
<td>C2: 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of integration aide</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of integration aide service provided per week</td>
<td>C1: 1hr, group</td>
<td>C2: 1hr, group</td>
<td>full-time, whole class</td>
<td>full-time, whole class</td>
<td>full-time, whole class</td>
<td>3 days, individually</td>
<td>full-time, one-on-one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator-student ratio (**)</td>
<td>C1: 1/25; C2: 1/21</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>1/25</td>
<td>C1: 1/27; C2: 2/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C1: child 1; C2: child 2

(*) out of the total number of children in the whole class

(**) on average based on the majority of contacting time between involved educators and the children
Table 12: Demographic characteristics of the class teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic characteristics of the class teacher</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>C1: female C2: female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>C1: female C2: female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>C1: 40s C2: 30s</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>C1: 50s C2: 20s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic/race (*)</td>
<td>C1: ESB C2: ESB</td>
<td>ESB</td>
<td>ESB</td>
<td>EBS</td>
<td>ESB</td>
<td>ESB</td>
<td>C1: ESB C2: ESB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>C1: Bachelor’s degree; C2: Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Primary education diploma</td>
<td>Primary education diploma, specialist qualifications (^)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree, Secondary education</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree, Primary education diploma</td>
<td>C1: Bachelor’s degree; C2 (^): Bachelor’s degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of teaching</td>
<td>C1: 28 C2: 19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>C1: 27 C2: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of experience with integration program</td>
<td>C1: 1 C2: N/A (^^^)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>C1: 10 C2: 4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of working with the child involved</td>
<td>C1: 1 C2: 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>C1: 1 C2: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-service training (***)</td>
<td>less than satisfactory</td>
<td>minimal</td>
<td>touched on</td>
<td>not really</td>
<td>not sufficient</td>
<td>was not that beneficial</td>
<td>C1: not specific C2: not at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C1: child 1; C2: child 2
(*) ESB: English speaking background
(**) in relation to working with diverse background families
(^) additional qualifications: specialist qualifications, currently undertaking a Master’s degree in special educational needs
(^^) additional qualification: secondary education diploma
(^^^) N/A: response is not available
### Table 13: Demographic characteristics of the integration/teacher aides

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic characteristics of the integration/teacher aide</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>female ((^))</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>C1: female C2: female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>C1: 50s C2: 20s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic/race</td>
<td>ESB</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>ESB</td>
<td>C1: ESB C2: Croatian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>secondary education</td>
<td>secondary education</td>
<td>secondary education, degree in nursing</td>
<td>secondary education</td>
<td>secondary education, Integration aide 1+2 course</td>
<td>C1: secondary education; C2: college/university</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of working in current position</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>C1: 16 C2: 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of working with the child involved</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>C1: 4 C2: 2 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-service training in relation to working with diverse background families</td>
<td>minimal</td>
<td>general</td>
<td>work on experience</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>mainly learned from work</td>
<td>C1: learned through parents; C2: N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(\(^\)) the aide in this case study was not present at the educators’ group interview. Information in relation to the aide’s gender is provided by the family
N/A: not applicable
Table 14: Characteristics of the formal home-school communication process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H-S (*) formal communication</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major formal communication lines</td>
<td>P-T (^) interviews</td>
<td>P-T interviews</td>
<td>P-T interviews</td>
<td>P-T interviews</td>
<td>P-T interviews</td>
<td>P-T interviews</td>
<td>P-T interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of P-T interviews</td>
<td>discuss goals &amp; children’s progress</td>
<td>discuss child’s progress</td>
<td>planning; discuss school reports</td>
<td>discuss progress, goals, problems</td>
<td>planning; discuss goals, progress, concerns</td>
<td>planning; discuss progress, troubles</td>
<td>discuss progress, goals, problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of each P-T interview (◊)</td>
<td>20min each child</td>
<td>½ hour</td>
<td>½ hour</td>
<td>15min</td>
<td>½ hour</td>
<td>½ hour</td>
<td>½ hour each child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of P-T interviews</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents attending P-T interviews</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators attending P-T interviews</td>
<td>class teachers</td>
<td>lead teacher, teacher aide</td>
<td>lead teacher, teacher aide</td>
<td>lead teacher, teacher aide</td>
<td>lead teacher, teacher aide</td>
<td>lead teachers, teacher aide (C2)</td>
<td>lead teachers, teacher aide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents addressing teachers (**)</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother-father</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ input in the interviews</td>
<td>low (*)</td>
<td>medium (•)</td>
<td>low (^)</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ view of P-T interviews</td>
<td>chance to learn of children’s progress</td>
<td>nothing important</td>
<td>nothing new</td>
<td>opportunity to clarify things, find out child’s weaknesses</td>
<td>opportunity to learn of child’s progress, school helping strategies</td>
<td>opportunity to express opinions</td>
<td>opportunity to raise concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of an interpreter</td>
<td>yes (^)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes / no ()</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes / no (^)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ view of having an interpreter</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>feel more confident</td>
<td>could fully understand teachers</td>
<td>helpful when parents are emotional</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>save time</td>
<td>things get across</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
<td>in general, they are good</td>
<td>in general good though some are not fluent enough</td>
<td>some can’t fully convey parents’ opinions</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>very good in general</td>
<td>interpreters’ performance in general is good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ view of using interpreters</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>message get through</td>
<td>learn of parents’ cultures, needs</td>
<td>understand parents and their cultures</td>
<td>parents feel free knowing things would be translated</td>
<td>could be used as cultural liaisons</td>
<td>essential as parents might feel tense or be emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
<td>- message get mixed up</td>
<td>- not as direct</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>- would not miss parents’ points</td>
<td>- better understand parent</td>
<td>message get across</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- take more time</td>
<td>- time-consuming</td>
<td>- time-consuming</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>- things broken into small concepts to be interpreted</td>
<td>- no time for ‘general talk’</td>
<td>- time-consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- message might get time-consuming</td>
<td>cost money</td>
<td>- cost money</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>- things get lost in translation</td>
<td>impersonalized</td>
<td>time-consuming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes for Table 8:

C2: child 2
(*) H-S: home-school
(^) P-T: parent-teacher
(**) during the P-T interviews
(◊) approximately
(*) being afraid of asking “outrageous” questions
(•) during the first two years, the school was not aware of parents’ need for an interpreter in P-T interviews
(★) not necessary as there was nothing else the school could do to help
(▲) as there is nothing the school could do or would help for the child
(‡) the teachers in this case also requested the service of an interpreter in some cases only
(^*) the parents requested the service of an interpreter in some meetings although in most cases, the father preferred to directly communicate with the educators
(†) due to their work-load, the teachers could not satisfy the mother’s request to have P-T meetings regularly every term
N/A: not applicable as parents in this case do not need the assistance of an interpreter in meetings with educators
Table 15: Characteristics of the informal home-school communication process: Teachers’ viewpoint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H-S informal communication from teachers’ point of view</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major informal communication methods used by parents and teachers</td>
<td>no-appointment talking time ((^\ast))</td>
<td>CB ((\ast)), telephone</td>
<td>telephone</td>
<td>CB, telephone</td>
<td>no-appointment talking time ((^\ast)), CB</td>
<td>no-appointment talking time ((^\ast)), telephone, CB</td>
<td>no-appointment talking time ((^\ast)) (C1), CB (C2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ preferred informal communication methods</td>
<td>direct verbal communication</td>
<td>CB ((\ast))</td>
<td>telephone</td>
<td>telephone</td>
<td>CB</td>
<td>CB ((^\ast))</td>
<td>C1: direct ((\ast)) C2: CB ((^\ast))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers in charge of contacting parents using informal methods</td>
<td>lead teacher</td>
<td>lead teacher</td>
<td>lead teacher</td>
<td>teacher aide</td>
<td>lead teacher, teacher aide</td>
<td>teacher aide</td>
<td>C1: lead teacher C2: lead teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ frequency of using informal methods</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>high ((^\ast))</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>C1: high ((\ast)) C2: medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ purposes of using informal methods</td>
<td>as a result of parents’ contact</td>
<td>inform family of child’s activities</td>
<td>check on child, keep contact with family</td>
<td>inform family when necessary</td>
<td>out of parents’ initiative</td>
<td>inform parents, build relationship</td>
<td>C1: respond mother’s concerns C2: inform parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ view of informal methods</td>
<td>help meet parents’ needs</td>
<td>help communicate well with family</td>
<td>time-consuming, increase workload</td>
<td>facilitate H-S cooperation</td>
<td>interfere with time schedule</td>
<td>good way to build P-T relationship</td>
<td>interfere with workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of an interpreter/translator</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes/no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time allotment for H-S communication</td>
<td>not set specifically</td>
<td>not restricted</td>
<td>not restricted</td>
<td>not restricted</td>
<td>not restricted</td>
<td>not restricted</td>
<td>not restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School view of home visits</td>
<td>not on school’s agenda or part of teachers’ job; legal &amp; health concerns; teachers might find it uncomfortable</td>
<td>an option if needs arise; opportunity to see how child is coping at home &amp; make suggestions</td>
<td>not encouraged for safety and legal concerns</td>
<td>the child in this case, according to the Principal, does not require home services</td>
<td>are discouraged due to security reason and restricted funding</td>
<td>no school policy for home visits</td>
<td>C1: no home visits C2: an option available to help build relationship with families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes for Table 9:

C1: child 1; C2: child 2

(•) CB: communication book

(*) usually before or after school

(•*) it could be before, after, or even during lunch break when the parents brought a hot meal to school for their daughter

(••) it could be anytime during school hours when the mother was available and had the need to instantly bring a concern to the attention of the educators

(•+) as telephone require having an interpreter booked. It takes time

(•++) only use telephone to briefly inform each other of child’s health status

(•*) with the assistance of the school Vietnamese speaking staff

(••*) school children are taken to and from school by taxi so parents do not come to school often

(•) the teachers of child 1 in this case were in a passive position as the mother regularly came to school to talk to the teachers

(*) the teachers in this case are also in a passive position as the parents are regularly in contact with them

Table 16: Characteristics of the informal home-school communication process: Parents’ viewpoint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H-S informal communication from parents’ point of view</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ preferred informal communication methods</td>
<td>face-to-face conversation</td>
<td>CB</td>
<td>telephone</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>face-to-face conversation</td>
<td>CB</td>
<td>face-to-face conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents using informal methods</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ frequency of using informal methods</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ purposes of using informal methods</td>
<td>raise concerns when needed</td>
<td>raise concerns when needed</td>
<td>no specific purpose</td>
<td>inform teachers</td>
<td>socialize, ask questions</td>
<td>inform teachers, build P-T relationship</td>
<td>raise concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ view of informal methods</td>
<td>convenient</td>
<td>convenient as son can help as a translator</td>
<td>convenient</td>
<td>an effective way to facilitate H-S cooperation</td>
<td>convenient, a good way to build H-S relationship</td>
<td>terrific way to build interpersonal relationship with integration aide</td>
<td>C1: convenient C2: not fair as inputs are not translated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C1: child 1; C2: child 2
Table 17: Characteristics of the home-school relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H-S relationship</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ communication style</td>
<td>low context culture</td>
<td>low/high context culture</td>
<td>low context culture</td>
<td>low/high context cultures</td>
<td>low/high context cultures</td>
<td>low context culture</td>
<td>low context culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ communication style</td>
<td>high context culture</td>
<td>high context culture</td>
<td>high context culture</td>
<td>high context culture</td>
<td>high context culture</td>
<td>high context culture</td>
<td>high context culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents see teachers as</td>
<td>teachers</td>
<td>teachers, friends</td>
<td>teachers</td>
<td>teachers, partners</td>
<td>teachers, partners</td>
<td>teachers, almost a</td>
<td>teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teachers, partners</td>
<td>teachers</td>
<td>friend (º)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers see parents as</td>
<td>partners</td>
<td>partner</td>
<td>partners</td>
<td>partners</td>
<td>partners</td>
<td>partner, a friend (ºº)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ view of teachers’</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>simple, gentle, and</td>
<td>do not know the</td>
<td>devoted</td>
<td>enthusiastic</td>
<td>very nice</td>
<td>C1: experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication (º)</td>
<td></td>
<td>polite</td>
<td>child at all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C2: pleasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ trust in teachers (ºº)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>absolutely yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-T interpersonal relationship (º)</td>
<td>no (º)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes (º)</td>
<td>yes (•)</td>
<td>yes (ºº)</td>
<td>no (ºº)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents acknowledging the</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>appreciate teachers’</td>
<td>do not care</td>
<td>appreciate teachers’</td>
<td>appreciate teachers’</td>
<td>good, understanding</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H-S relationship in general</td>
<td></td>
<td>hard work</td>
<td></td>
<td>devotion</td>
<td>enthusiasm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers acknowledging the</td>
<td>in a very good balance</td>
<td>mother seems happy with</td>
<td>struggle to be in</td>
<td>parents are good to</td>
<td>in good term</td>
<td>good and open and</td>
<td>do not have a close</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H-S relationship in general</td>
<td></td>
<td>what the teachers do</td>
<td>in touch with family</td>
<td>talk to &amp; easy to</td>
<td></td>
<td>beyond the call of</td>
<td>relationship due to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>work with</td>
<td></td>
<td>duty</td>
<td>language barrier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) with the integration aide only
(ºº) from the integration aide’s viewpoint
(*) based on the teachers’ communication and interacting styles
(ºº) in terms of the teachers’ ability to care for the child/ren to the parents’ satisfaction (based on parents’ own assessment of whether child was happy at school)
(*) the existence of an interpersonal relationship between parents and teachers
(*) with an interpreter in between, the relationship can’t be as social as they would like it to be, said the teachers
(º) from the mother’s viewpoint and with the teacher aide only
(•) from the parents’ point of view
(ºº) between the mother and the integration aide only. This is the only and most obvious interpersonal relationship in all seven cases.

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Table 18: Characteristics of the home-school cooperation: Child’s conditions and progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H-S cooperation</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child’s conditions &amp; progress</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ acceptance of child’s conditions</td>
<td>yes, with sadness</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>absolutely no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes, without one uneasy thought</td>
<td>yes, with hope for change</td>
<td>yes, with agony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ perception of child’s improvement</td>
<td>C1: good C2: slow</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>- going backwards - bad luck</td>
<td>good, can’t expect more (*)</td>
<td>- surprisingly well - very lucky</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>C1: good C2: not much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ perception of child’s ILP</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>no idea but notice child is better</td>
<td>- low standard - not suitable</td>
<td>teachers know where child is up to</td>
<td>well-coordinated among team members</td>
<td>good though want more maths</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ expectations for child</td>
<td>- self-care (*) - not expect them to become normal</td>
<td>- be able to speak - self-care</td>
<td>- be able to read, write, &amp; do maths - be normal again anytime soon</td>
<td>- self-care - a bit better in terms verbal skill</td>
<td>- self-care - hopefully will become normal</td>
<td>- self-care - on path to become normal</td>
<td>- self-care - become normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ perception of child’s progress</td>
<td>C1: good C2: good</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>child sometimes able to speak well, but the ability sort of comes and goes</td>
<td>has sufficient understanding in English to survive</td>
<td>very good</td>
<td>a lot of hard work need to be done</td>
<td>C1: steady C2: good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ expectations for child</td>
<td>C1: improve writing and understanding skills C2: catch up with peers</td>
<td>- child a visual person but does not have the ability to talk - will rely on signs to communicate</td>
<td>- be more confident in conversations - do not set too high expectations (have him at the level he can cope)</td>
<td>has a speech therapist train child to say words properly</td>
<td>join groups rather than always doing academic work</td>
<td>have more friends - have more specialist support</td>
<td>C1: read &amp; add up to a good standard C2: be independent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C1: child 1; C2: child 2
ILP: Individual Learning Plan
(*) according to the mother, child’s progress can only reach a certain level
(^) child/ren be able to take care of him/herself
Table 19: Characteristics of the home-school cooperation: Parents and support services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H-S cooperation Parents &amp; support services</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ help-seeking attitude</td>
<td>medium active</td>
<td>medium active</td>
<td>passive</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>very active</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>aggressively active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support services used by families (*)</td>
<td>will ring Centre link or DHS if need help</td>
<td>Interchange (respite)</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Villa Maria (respite care, holiday programs)</td>
<td>- West Arc (respite care)</td>
<td>- ADEC (*)</td>
<td>- ADEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Parent-to-Parent</td>
<td>- ACD (**)</td>
<td>- Parent-to-Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ perception of social support services</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>cannot ask for more</td>
<td>not helpful at all</td>
<td>more than needed</td>
<td>great help</td>
<td>helpful</td>
<td>helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ perception of school support services (^)</td>
<td>know that they can ask for help when needed</td>
<td>quite good</td>
<td>- no service to facilitate H-S understanding</td>
<td>- enough</td>
<td>parents can request for required support services</td>
<td>very pleased, the support has a positive effect on P-T relationship</td>
<td>quite good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ expectations of school</td>
<td>to make sure there is no bullying</td>
<td>have a speech therapist to help child individually with speaking skills</td>
<td>invite artists to give children art lessons</td>
<td>not really</td>
<td>not really</td>
<td>not really</td>
<td>C1: have a Vietnamese version of school reports C2: have the newsletter translated into Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) at the time of this study
(*) for both child/ren and family
(^) ADEC: Action on Disability in Ethnic Communities
(**) ACD: Association for Children with a Disability
Table 20: Characteristics of the home-school cooperation: Perceptions of role of involved parents and teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H-S cooperation</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P-T perceptions of roles</td>
<td>Parents’ perception of role</td>
<td>help children at home with their homework</td>
<td>help child at home, focusing on health and speaking skill</td>
<td>find solutions for child’s health, aiming at bringing child back to normal</td>
<td>reinforce home-help strategies recommended by school</td>
<td>be child’s tutors</td>
<td>help child at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents’ input in the cooperation</td>
<td>contribute to ILP</td>
<td>ask teacher to help child with speaking skill</td>
<td>nil, no longer care</td>
<td>contribute to ILP</td>
<td>contribute to ILP</td>
<td>contribute to ILP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers’ perception of role</td>
<td>- help children in school</td>
<td>- help child</td>
<td>maintain active position in working with family</td>
<td>maintain good H-S communication</td>
<td>information, educational, and welfare provider</td>
<td>help child at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers’ input in the cooperation</td>
<td>- send work home as children need extra work</td>
<td>- prepare communication signs for parent to help child at home</td>
<td>- sent projects home for child to do when off school</td>
<td>- inform parents of child’s daily school activities</td>
<td>- work with parents</td>
<td>- carry out ILP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School’s service model</td>
<td>partnership</td>
<td>equal partnership</td>
<td>partnership with parents</td>
<td>everyone involved</td>
<td>work with families</td>
<td>“hopefully it is a partnership” (Principal)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 21: Characteristics of the home-school cooperation: Expectations of parents and teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H-S cooperation</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>Case 4</th>
<th>Case 5</th>
<th>Case 6</th>
<th>Case 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expectations of partners</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ view of teachers’ role functioning</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>fulfill their job</td>
<td>still pay attention to child &amp; family</td>
<td>teachers have tried their best, caring</td>
<td>attentive, enthusiastic</td>
<td>dedicated, attentive</td>
<td>C1: experienced C2: young, active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ expectations of teachers</td>
<td>be a little more attentive to the children in class</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>guarantee child could read by 18 years old</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>C1: no C2: be a little more attentive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ view of parents’ role functioning</td>
<td>very supportive although not involved in school or class activities</td>
<td>parent does not involve in child’s classroom activities due to child’s nature of disability</td>
<td>teachers wish they could come up with some agreement with family</td>
<td>- parents have a big interest in child’s education - helping teachers when needed</td>
<td>dedicated, participated, and concerned</td>
<td>mother seems to avoid to get involved in child’s school activities</td>
<td>really want to involve in everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ expectations of parents</td>
<td>be less protective</td>
<td>- keep communication line open - be aware of child’s condition</td>
<td>- face reality - let child go to school more often - be more involved in school &amp; class activities</td>
<td>no, as a special school, parents are not encouraged to participate in classroom activities</td>
<td>- be less protective - not put excessive pressure on child due to parents’ high expectations</td>
<td>- be more involved in child’s activities at school - have realistic expectations</td>
<td>be less protective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home reinforcement of helping strategies recommended by school</td>
<td>no, parents do not find it helpful</td>
<td>no, it does not help in the long run</td>
<td>no, irrelevant</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C1: child 1; C2: child 2
### Table 22: An assessment and comparison summary of home-school partnership influences from the family perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership influences</th>
<th>Task-oriented group</th>
<th>Relationship-oriented group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case 1</td>
<td>Case 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ perceptions of child’s conditions and progress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- acceptance</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- improvement</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- expectations</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ social integration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- English skills</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>ML</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- involvement in social support groups</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- perceptions of social support services</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and their roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- knowledge of the Individual Learning Plan (ILP)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- knowledge of home-school communication policy</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- involvement in child’s education at home</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- involvement in school or classroom activities</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- level of attendance in parent-teacher interviews</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- level of contributions in parent-teacher interviews</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- level of using other communication methods</td>
<td>ML</td>
<td>ML</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H  High  
M  Medium  
MH  Medium high  
L  Low  
ML  Medium low  
VL  Very low
APPENDIX 26

Samples of home-school communication via student communication book in Case Study 5
15/15
Hi, I went shopping this morning for the boy party. This afternoon we will have games.
Thanks, J.

16/15
Hi,
I went to the library this morning. We also did some writing about the zoo to make a book. Have a great weekend.
Regards, J.

21/15
Hi,
I had music, Pease and the Afterwards. She will have sensory.
Thanks, J.

22/15
Hi,
Today we went shopping for cooking. We made chocolate cookies and pasta for lunch. This afternoon we will play games.
Thanks, J.

25/15
Hi,
Today we went to the library and we were doing art at the park. We also had exercises. Have a good weekend!
Thanks, J.
27/5

Hi,
Today we did fine motor & art. We also did music & sensory.

Thanks,

---

28/5

Hi,
Today had a work session, music and this afternoon we will do show & tell and play some fun games. Regards

---

29/5

Hi,
Today we went shopping then we had party food for Scout's party. For last session we will play board games.

Thanks,

---

30/5

Hi,
Today we went to the library and had morning tea at Queen's Park. This afternoon we will have sport.

Thanks,

---

4/6

Hi,
Today had work with then music and for last session we will go for a walk.

Thanks,

---

5/6

Hi,
Today went shopping and then made pasta for lunch. loved it!

This afternoon we will play some fun games.
APPENDIX 27

Samples of home-school communication via student communication book in Case Study 6
Dear

I am very excited because tonight I am going to a Chinese restaurant to celebrate the New Year. Today I didn't do any work. I made her go bowling set and goggles. She enjoyed playing the game. I knocked down each time.

On the weekend I went shopping at Westfield with her family and we went to bowling with her dad and her. She enjoyed it very much.

Monday 3/2/03

Sunday 3/1/03
Dear [Name],

I had a wonderful time celebrating the New Year at a Chinese Restaurant last night. [Name] was very happy and talkative today. She completed some great math work, read her books and did some writing. She enjoyed her library lesson with [Teacher]. She has Art on Monday and library on Tuesday and swimming on Wednesdays.

Dear [Name],

As [Name] and I will commence going to the library this week, could you please sign the enclosed form and return it to me tomorrow.

[Name] really enjoyed her swimming lesson today. She has a new swimming teacher. Her name is [Teacher].

5/2/03
Dear,

Last Saturday, I stayed at my house while my grandma looked after my sister. She watched "The Big Bird" on TV and read books at home. She coloured the pictures and watched videos with her dolls.

I hope you had a nice day.

Love,

[Signature]

19/5/03

---

Dear,

I was very excited to receive an invitation to the traffic school last year's excursion. So I think she would really enjoy the invitation to everyone.

She is very nice and knows quite well. She has been to the traffic school last year on an excursion. So I think she would really enjoy the invitation to everyone.

Love,

[Signature]
Dear [Name],

I enjoyed her library lesson today. I read some books and then did some lovely work about her favorite book. The book was called 'Teasing Dad'. It is about a family day at the beach. - [Name]

20/5/03

Dear [Name],

I rang and cancelled [Name]'s swimming lessons today. I said I would ring when we wanted to start the lessons again. There was no problem doing this.

And I went to Westfield. We did some shopping for school, we looked in some shops. [Name] ate a pink doughnut. Tomorrow we will return her books and video to the Niddrie Library. - [Name]

21/5/03