

# A Study of the Impact of WeChat Groups on Home-school Cooperation in Primary and Secondary Schools in the Era of "Internet+"

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**Abstract:** *Home-school cooperation is an important part of primary and secondary education. With the advent of the Internet+ era and the popularity of WeChat in China, WeChat groups have gradually become an important tool and means of home-school contact and classroom management, which are commonly used in primary and secondary schools in China, and parent WeChat groups are playing an increasingly important role in primary and secondary schools. From the perspective of home-school cooperation, this paper examines the advantages and disadvantages of WeChat groups for home-school cooperation and explores ways to manage WeChat groups.*

**Keywords:** WeChat groups; Home-school cooperation; Era of "Internet+".

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, as a mean to solve the complex needs of children, the responsibilities of families and schools in student development and learning have changed from a relatively independent approach to a partnership approach (Adams & Christenson, 2000). There is no doubt that schools and families share the common task of educating children and young people and integrating them into society (Conoley, 1987). As far as educating children, family education must be integrated and coordinated with school education. Only by complementing each other and forming synergy can education be successful. With the development of science and technology, new impetus has been injected into the traditional way of home-school cooperation. Premier Li Keqiang first proposed the "Internet +" action plan in the government work report of the Third Session of the Twelfth National People's Congress in 2015, which opened the prelude to the integration of education with Internet technology. Among many new media and new technologies, online communication with the help of WeChat platform has become a novel communication method that is different from traditional home-school communication. At present, WeChat groups for parents in primary and secondary school classes across the country have turned into a universal and necessary means and way of home-school cooperation, and their importance has been increasing, and the study of WeChat groups has become an indispensable and unavoidable demand, and in-depth research on the application of WeChat in home-school communication is of great practical significance.

## 2. BENEFITS OF WECHAT GROUPS FOR HOME-SCHOOL COOPERATION IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE "INTERNET PLUS" ERA

### 2.1 Timeliness of information

One of the functions of effective coordination and communication between teachers and students' parents is to help students get help from their parents and receive assistance to deal with learning problems. Home-school cooperation plays a pivotal role in the education and management of students. And WeChat groups have taken on important tasks in the new era, dealing with a variety of issues, ranging from small issues like homework arrangement to serious problem like urgent notices, propaganda of safety issues, and propaganda of new educational concepts, etc. What's more, the WeChat group facilitates the transmission and storage of files, so that the head teacher and the subject teacher can negotiate and cooperate with each other to release information in a timely manner. Teachers can also upload relevant courseware and listening materials every day for parents to download in time.

### 2.2 Recording school life

WeChat is a multimedia technology that integrates text, sound, graphics, images, and movies. Teachers keep parents abreast of learning dynamics by sharing students' learning in WeChat groups, and based on teachers' classroom activities, parents can learn and improve with their students after class, making WeChat sharing more meaningful. In addition to studying at school, students also have a colorful class life (Huang, 2019). For example, the weekly thematic class meeting held by the class teacher, the speech given by the students according to the theme, the blackboard paper drawn by the students, and the wonderful moments of the students on the sports meeting will be captured and photographed via mobile phones, and delivered to the WeChat group in time and saved in the system. These are valuable growth materials that vividly let parents feel the school and teacher's dedication to their children's education, and can also guide their children to cooperate with the school's work in a more targeted manner and promote their children's all-round development.

### 2.3 Getting rid of the limitation of time and space

School WeChat group has solved the time and space constraints of traditional offline communication, and built a new platform for communication between parents and schools. In the past, communication with parents was usually when parents came to school, or teachers visited their homes, or held parent-teacher meetings. The simplest way was to contact with parents by short message or telephone. This kind of communication method could not be timely or targeted, and communication on WeChat platform could avoid this limitation. WeChat communication is a two-way communication. Teachers can learn about students' family life and family education through WeChat groups. Parents and students can also learn about teachers' daily dynamics and daily life through the messages sent by teachers, and learn about the educational trends and directions of schools. This communication mode greatly avoids the psychological strangeness and communication distance between teachers and students. Even for those students who are shy and unwilling to communicate face-to-face, they can express their emotions with online expressions such as "smiling face, greetings and blessings", and they can also use fashionable network language to eliminate the generation gap and estrangement between them, narrow the distance between teachers and students, and remove communication barriers, which can't be achieved by telephone or face-to-face communication (Su, 2017).

### **3. DEFECTS OF WECHAT GROUPS FOR HOME-SCHOOL COOPERATION IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE "INTERNET PLUS" ERA**

#### **3.1 Blurred teacher's responsibility**

The value of home-school communication lies in the cooperation between family and school, so as to achieve the purpose of educating students and making them develop in an all-round way. Although the double reduction work requires strict control of students' extracurricular homework. For example, students in grade one and two should not have written homework, and students in other grades should finish their written homework within one hour every day. Teachers should carefully design homework, and every teacher should carefully select homework, personally correct all homework and give timely feedback. Assigning mechanical, repetitive and difficult assignments to students should be resolutely prohibited. It is forbidden to increase the workload on weekends and holidays and punish students by increasing the amount of homework. However, in practice, home-school communication with the help of WeChat group has become a tool and means for some teachers to pass on their own tasks, making the family a continuation of the school classroom. Many teachers began to assign homework anytime, anywhere through this platform, requiring parents to supervise students to finish homework, and even worse, requiring parents to correct students' homework.

#### **3.2 The flood of bad information**

The original intention of teachers to set up WeChat group is to enhance mutual trust between home and school and promote the efficient development of class work. However, due to the particularity of parents themselves, sometimes there will be some chaos that deviates from education. For example, some parents deliberately praise teachers in WeChat group in order to make teachers pay more attention to their children. The teacher's daily work will be greeted with a lot of praise, such as "thank you teacher" and "the teacher has worked hard". What's more, on special festivals, the WeChat group became a blessing group, and the communication between home and school was overwhelmed in the process of parents constantly sending the same blessing messages (Su, 2017). Such information keeps piling up and parents are unable to grasp the information in time. Sometimes the questions raised by parents are drowned in too much information and teachers are unable to answer parents' queries in time, thus seriously affecting the efficiency of home-school cooperation. There are also some parents who like to show off or seek attention in the WeChat group, such as showing babies, life, and grades, which will also lead to a bad atmosphere in the WeChat group. In addition, some parents, influenced by utilitarianism, send business information in WeChat group, and some behaviors such as seeking praise, promoting sales and canvassing votes appear, which deviates from the educational function of WeChat group.

#### **3.3 Reducing student initiative**

For students in lower grades, they may not understand the homework and tasks assigned by teachers. Informing parents through class WeChat group can ensure the completion and efficiency of students' homework, which is a time-saving and labor-saving way. However, assigning homework and tasks through the class WeChat group may reduce students' autonomy, and they may depend on the WeChat group. And some students do not focus on the course, indifferent to the tasks and homework assigned by teachers, using the class WeChat group as a "notepad", which is fail to fulfill students' duties. Due to the busy work, some parents can't accompany their students all the time, and can't convey the homework assigned by their teachers clearly. They may equip students with mobile phones for convenience. However, students can't restrain themselves, they are likely to play with mobile phones on the grounds of checking homework. In the long run, students will gradually become lazy.

### **4. WAYS TO MANAGE WECHAT GROUPS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE "INTERNET PLUS" ERA**

#### **4.1 Regulating WeChat group function**

When the teacher manages the class WeChat group, the first task is to clarify the type of WeChat group. According to the needs of class management, it is recommended to set up two WeChat groups (Zhang, 2021). One mainly releases school information and class information, and prohibits all parents from replying or communicating. This group is only used for home-school communication and exchanges, and assumes the basic function of home-school contact, not a private group, and generally only releases content related to the life of school students and teaching and management, and shall not release messages and remarks unrelated to this. Private issues and non-general information will not be posted in the group. The time of information release is concentrated on working days, and information involving everyone is not posted at other times in principle. The other one focuses on discussing topics such as education, teaching and students, and encourages parents to communicate. This group is a communication and sharing group where teachers can share their students' school life and parents can discuss and share their views on education.

#### 4.2 Establishing clear WeChat group rules

The classroom parent WeChat management rules are first and foremost a set of rules for home and school to agree on and follow, rather than a unilateral mandatory requirement from the school to teachers or parents. It is also a relatively serious document, and a comprehensive and reasonable structure and content is the basic requirement of the relevant text and clauses. The documents should be specifically prepared by the school's organisational working group in accordance with the appropriate code of practice, and should not be the subject of a separate rule set by a class teacher for a particular group of classes. It is a document of a contractual nature that requires extensive consultation with teachers and parents or representatives to reach a de facto agreement. It is issued and revised by the school and should be followed and implemented by the relevant parties and updated and optimised on an ongoing basis.

#### 4.3 Monitoring the implementation of rules

Membership of WeChat groups is class-based, with the group leader generally being the class teacher, the group administrator generally being the subject teacher, life teacher or parent representative committee member, and the members being mainly the parents or guardians of the students, and unrelated persons are not allowed to join. Schools may assign a member of the working group to be stationed in the classroom group as a supervisor to monitor the situation. The school can send a member of the working group into the WeChat group as a supervisor to supervise it, while electing a family committee to manage the WeChat group effectively (Zhu & Wang, 2020). Supervisors should keep an eye on the public opinion of the WeChat group, and understand the trend of all aspects in real time. In the event of problems and risks should be communicated to the class teacher to deal with the response, and those that cannot be resolved should be reported to the relevant leader in a timely manner.

### 5. CONCLUSION

It is not only the information conveyed by the media that can bring about changes in society, but the very existence of the media itself can have an impact on society. Its involvement in educational activities may bring about more than a change in technological means. It may bring about changes in the way people think, live and even in the culture of society. Class WeChat groups are an inevitable trend as a new medium of home-school communication. While keeping up with the trend, education should also face up to the problems that arise in WeChat group communication. Teachers and parents should maximise the advantages and minimise the disadvantages of WeChat groups through scientific and feasible methods as much as possible, so that WeChat groups can bring more momentum to home-school cooperation.

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