

Torn by conflicting desires, goals for their kids

Amelia Teng

The Straits Times, 17 July 2017

Parents want everything, it seems.

Over half of those surveyed wished for schools to focus more on moral education, but also wanted them to put greater emphasis on academic subjects such as English and mathematics.

They said they were satisfied with their children's schools and teachers, but also wanted school curricula to be more manageable.

These desires might seem contradictory but people do have many considerations to weigh, noted Dr Mathew Mathews, a senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies.

On the one hand, he said, they would like the school system to be more manageable.

"At the same time, they don't want to lose out. They know the reality is that their kid needs good proficiency in academics, even IT skills and many soft skills."

Parents face a tussle between wanting their child to be both academically competent and an all-rounder, one whose moral values and development are not neglected, he added.

When asked about their child's future, about 66 per cent believed university qualifications would still be more important in securing better work opportunities, compared with acquiring skills through schemes such as SkillsFuture.

"This suggests that many parents still cling to the traditional Singaporean mindset that a prerequisite for a successful career is getting a first degree," said Dr Mathews.

Ms Jamie Chan, 36, a corporate communications officer, said she makes a "conscious effort not to impose my expectations on my children, and to appreciate them for who they are".

Said the mother of two daughters, aged six and eight: "As parents, our job is to get to know our children, and help them discover their strengths."

Ms Mabelyn Ow, 45, who works in the creative industry and has two sons, aged five and 11, said: "There's always this sense of conflict.

"You feel so much for your child when you see him tired and crying from juggling everything - co-curricular activities, supplementary classes, trying to finish his homework.

"Yet, you want the best for him - you want him to do well so he is not left behind."