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Managing School–Family Coordination in Student Education at Lower-Secondary Schools in Hanoi: Current State and Determinants

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ABSTRACT: Effective coordination between school and family is widely regarded as essential to the holistic education of lower-secondary students, yet the management of this coordination remains under-researched, particularly in large, rapidly urbanising contexts. This study examined the current state and determinants of managing school–family coordination in student education at lower-secondary schools in Hanoi, Vietnam, and tested a capacity-building measure for homeroom teachers. A mixed-methods design combined a survey of 1,182 respondents (administrators, teachers, and parents) across 15 schools in inner-city, peri-urban, and suburban areas with semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and a pre-/post-intervention experiment. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and correlation analysis. Results showed that both coordination activities (overall $M = 3.42$) and their management (overall $M = 3.17$) were rated at a moderate level, with awareness rated highest and checking-evaluation the weakest function. Inner-city schools outperformed suburban schools on every management function, and administrators rated coordination significantly higher than parents did. Homeroom teachers' coordination competence was the strongest correlate of management effectiveness. A pilot programme training 60 homeroom teachers raised their coordination competence from $M = 2.82$ to $M = 3.65$ (a 29.4% gain). The study proposes a three-tier management model suited to a two-level urban government context and offers practical implications for school leaders.

KEYWORDS: school–family coordination, educational management, lower-secondary school, homeroom teacher, parental involvement, Vietnam

1. INTRODUCTION

The renovation of general education toward developing students' qualities and competences has redefined education as a shared responsibility extending beyond the school. The 2018 General Education Curriculum in Vietnam (Ministry of Education and Training [MOET], 2018) explicitly emphasises the coordinated roles of school, family, and society in students' development, echoing the long-standing principle in national education policy that school education must be combined with family and community education.

The lower-secondary stage is a pivotal period of physical, psychological, and social change. In Hanoi, the rapid expansion of information technology, social media, and urbanisation is reshaping adolescents' behaviour and creating new challenges, including problematic internet use, school violence, and psychological vulnerability. Recent surveys indicate that over 90% of lower-secondary students in Hanoi use social media for two to four hours daily, intensifying the need for close, systematic school–family coordination.

In practice, however, coordination remains uneven and weakly managed. Responsibility is often “left entirely” to the school, or families intervene without coordination; communication is frequently one-directional; and there is a shortage of models, processes, and tools for organising, directing, and evaluating coordination systematically. While the international literature on parental involvement is substantial (Boonk et al., 2018; Castro et al., 2015; Wilder, 2014), research that treats coordination as an object of school management, foregrounding the role of school administrators and homeroom teachers, remains scarce (Pham, 2020; Tran, 2019), especially within a large urban system undergoing administrative restructuring toward a two-level local government.

Hanoi presents a distinctive context for this inquiry. As the capital, it combines dense inner-city districts with rapidly expanding peri-urban and suburban areas, producing pronounced disparities in school resources, parental profiles, and community conditions within a single administrative system. The city is also moving toward a two-level local-government structure, which reshapes the lines of authority and support

that surround schools. These features make Hanoi a setting in which the management of coordination is both especially consequential and especially variable, and in which area-based comparison can reveal how structural conditions shape managerial performance.

This study addresses that gap through three questions: (1) What is the current state of managing school–family coordination in lower-secondary schools in Hanoi? (2) Which factors influence its effectiveness, and how do assessments differ by area and respondent group? (3) Can a capacity-building measure for homeroom teachers improve coordination competence? The study contributes a function-based, three-tier management model and field-tested evidence relevant to comparable urban systems.

The study makes three contributions. Theoretically, it reframes school–family coordination from an activity to be encouraged into an object to be managed, specifying the management functions through which schools organise, direct, and evaluate it. Empirically, it provides large-sample evidence, from 1,182 respondents across three contrasting areas, on the current state of this management, its determinants, and the divergence between how administrators and parents perceive it. Practically, it proposes and tests a three-tier management model and a keystone capacity-building measure, offering school leaders an actionable route to improvement.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. School–family coordination and its management

International scholarship conceptualises home–school relations through overlapping-spheres and parental-involvement frameworks (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Epstein, 1995, 2018; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), which identify multiple types of involvement and the barriers that constrain them, including teachers’ attitudes and skills (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). These frameworks establish that coordination is multidimensional and that the quality of communication and role definition strongly shapes outcomes (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). They focus, however, on the activity of involvement rather than on the management of coordination as an organisational process.

Empirical research has repeatedly linked parental involvement to academic and behavioural outcomes, with meta-analytic evidence indicating positive associations across age groups (Castro et al., 2015; Fan & Chen, 2001; Kim & Hill, 2015; Wilder, 2014), while also showing that the strength of these associations depends on the type and quality of involvement and on how schools structure it (Boonk et al., 2018; Jeynes, 2012). At the lower-secondary stage in particular, the form of effective involvement shifts from direct help with schoolwork toward communication, expectation-setting, and academic socialisation (Hill & Tyson, 2009), which places a premium on the school’s capacity to organise and sustain two-directional communication (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019; Kraft & Dougherty, 2013). This evidence underscores that coordination is not self-sustaining; it must be deliberately designed, resourced, and evaluated, which is precisely the managerial dimension this study foregrounds.

This study draws on function-based management theory (Bush, 2020; Fayol, 1949), conceptualising the management of coordination through planning, organising, directing, and checking-evaluation, complemented by a participatory approach and a human-resource-development perspective that treats the strengthening of teachers’ coordination competence, especially that of homeroom teachers, as the decisive lever (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009). The homeroom teacher functions as a “class-level manager” of coordination, whose competence in planning, organising, communicating, and handling situations directly determines coordination quality. Within this perspective, the school administrator acts as the overall coordinator who sets direction and allocates resources (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2020; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009), the homeroom teacher serves as the direct implementer at class level, and parents are indispensable partners whose engagement the system must actively cultivate. This tripartite structure provides the conceptual basis for the three-tier management model developed in this study.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research design

A mixed-methods design was employed, integrating a quantitative survey with qualitative interviews and document analysis, followed by a pre-/post-intervention experiment to test a proposed measure (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The design enabled measurement of the current state and its determinants to be triangulated with explanatory evidence and validated through field testing.

3.2. Participants

The study was conducted in 15 lower-secondary schools in Hanoi across three areas: inner-city, peri-urban, and suburban. The survey sample comprised 1,182 respondents, including 132 administrators, 450 teachers (especially homeroom teachers), and 600 parents, with twelve district- and ward-level administrators (Table 1). Semi-structured interviews and document analysis (coordination plans, parent-meeting minutes, communication books, and summary reports) provided qualitative data. The intervention involved 60 homeroom teachers. Data were collected during the 2025–2026 academic year.

Table 1. Survey sample by area and respondent group

Area	Admin.	Teachers	Parents	Total
Inner-city (5 schools)	42	152	204	398
Peri-urban (5 schools)	40	150	200	390
Suburban (5 schools)	38	148	196	382
District/ward administrators	12	–	–	12
Total	132	450	600	1,182

Note. Admin. = administrators.

3.3. Instruments and reliability

Three questionnaire blocks measured the current state of coordination activities, the management of coordination, and influencing factors, all using a five-point Likert scale. Mean scores were interpreted using equal intervals. All scales showed good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .817 to .896 across the three surveys, exceeding the conventional .70 threshold (Taber, 2018) and confirming the reliability of the instruments.

3.4. Data analysis

Quantitative data were analysed in SPSS using descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-tests (comparing inner-city and suburban schools), one-way ANOVA (comparing respondent groups), and Pearson correlation (relating influencing factors to management effectiveness). The intervention used a paired-samples t-test on pre- and post-measures across five competence criteria, with effect sizes interpreted following Cohen (1988). Qualitative data were thematically analysed following the six-phase approach of Braun and Clarke (2006), and trustworthiness was supported through triangulation of interviews and documents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical procedures included voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Current state of coordination and its management

The findings are organised around the three research questions, beginning with the current state of coordination and its management, then turning to differences by area and respondent group and the influencing factors, and concluding with the outcomes of the capacity-building intervention. Qualitative evidence from interviews and document analysis is used throughout to interpret the quantitative patterns.

Coordination activities were rated at a moderate level overall (overall $M = 3.42$). Awareness of the importance of coordination was rated highest ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.79$), followed by coordination methods and forms ($M = 3.58$) and the implementation of coordination principles ($M = 3.50$), whereas the coordination mechanism ($M = 3.14$) and the checking and evaluation of coordination ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.03$) were rated lowest. This profile indicates that while the parties value coordination and engage in it, the structural mechanism that should organise it and the evaluation that should improve it are comparatively underdeveloped.

The management of coordination followed the same pattern: awareness ranked first ($M = 3.96$), while checking-evaluation again ranked last ($M = 2.97$), with the four core management functions averaging 3.17 (Table 2). The consistent weakness of the evaluation function indicates that schools attend to coordination in principle and in delivery more than to systematic monitoring and improvement. Qualitative evidence reinforced this reading: interviewees described coordination plans that were rarely reviewed against outcomes, and communication that often flowed from school to family without a structured return channel. Document analysis confirmed that summary reports tended to record activities rather than evaluate their effects, leaving the improvement loop effectively open.

Table 2. Assessment of management functions for school–family coordination

No.	Management content	M	SD	Rank
1	Awareness of coordination management	3.96	0.78	1
2	Organising implementation	3.29	0.91	2
3	Directing	3.27	0.93	3
4	Planning	3.13	0.96	4
5	Managing assurance conditions	3.13	0.96	4
6	Checking and evaluation	2.97	0.99	6
–	Mean of four management functions	3.17	0.95	–

Note. N = 1,182. Five-point scale; higher values indicate better performance.

4.2. Differences by area and respondent group

Independent-samples t-tests revealed that inner-city schools outperformed suburban schools on every management function (Table 3). The largest gaps appeared in directing (3.43 vs 3.17; $t = 4.67$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.29$) and in managing assurance conditions (3.26 vs 3.00; $t = 4.63$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.28$), pointing to a persistent urban–suburban divide in management capacity and resources.

Table 3. Comparison of coordination management between inner-city and suburban schools (t-test)

Management content	Inner-city	Suburban	Test result
Planning	3.24	3.12	$t = 2.01$; $p = .045$; $d = 0.13$
Organising implementation	3.42	3.25	$t = 3.02$; $p = .003$; $d = 0.19$
Directing	3.43	3.17	$t = 4.67$; $p < .001$; $d = 0.29$
Checking and evaluation	3.01	2.89	$t = 2.17$; $p = .030$; $d = 0.14$
Managing assurance conditions	3.26	3.00	$t = 4.63$; $p < .001$; $d = 0.28$

Note. d = Cohen's d effect size.

One-way ANOVA showed significant differences among respondent groups on all four assessed dimensions. Administrators consistently rated coordination and its management more favourably than teachers, who in turn rated them more favourably than parents. The widest divergence concerned two-directional information exchange (administrators 3.38, teachers 3.18, parents 2.95; $F = 18.96$, $p < .001$), underscoring that parents perceive communication as more limited than school staff do.

4.3. Influencing factors

Correlation analysis (Table 4) indicated that homeroom teachers' coordination competence ($r = .343$, $p < .001$), the school's mechanisms and resources ($r = .342$), and the principal's management competence ($r = .339$) were the factors most strongly associated with management effectiveness. The prominence of homeroom teachers' competence directly motivated the choice of intervention.

Table 4. Correlation between influencing factors and management effectiveness

Influencing factor	r	Sig.	Level
Homeroom teachers' coordination competence	0.343	< .001	Moderate
School mechanisms and resources	0.342	< .001	Moderate
Principal's management competence	0.339	< .001	Moderate
Awareness of administrators and teachers	0.216	< .001	Weak
Awareness and responsibility of parents	0.195	< .001	Weak
Two-level local-government context	0.125	< .001	Weak

Note. $N = 1,182$. r = Pearson correlation with management effectiveness.

4.4. Intervention: building homeroom teachers' coordination competence

The intervention targeted the factor identified as most influential and most amenable to change. It was selected because homeroom teachers' coordination competence had the strongest correlation with management effectiveness, because it has a clear and measurable scope, and because it can plausibly be improved within the timeframe of a pilot. Sixty homeroom teachers across the three areas participated in a structured professional-development programme addressing communication, the organisation of parent meetings, counselling and psychological support, the handling of unexpected situations, and the use of digital technology in coordination. Competence was assessed before and after the programme on five criteria using a five-point scale, and differences were tested with paired-samples t -tests, complemented by observation and interviews.

Coordination competence improved across all five criteria, with the overall mean rising from 2.82 to 3.65, a gain of 29.4% (Table 5). The largest gains occurred in psychological counselling and support skills (+33.3%) and in handling unexpected situations (+31.6%), the two criteria that started from the lowest baselines and that are typically hardest to cultivate without targeted training.

Table 5. Homeroom teachers' coordination competence before and after the intervention

No.	Competence criterion	Pre	Post	Δ	Gain %
1	Communication and rapport with parents	2.86	3.68	+0.82	28.7
2	Organising parent meetings	2.92	3.72	+0.80	27.4
3	Counselling and psychological support	2.64	3.52	+0.88	33.3
4	Handling unexpected situations	2.72	3.58	+0.86	31.6
5	Using digital technology in coordination	2.98	3.76	+0.78	26.2
–	Overall mean	2.82	3.65	+0.83	29.4

Note. $N = 60$; paired-samples t -test; five-point scale. Δ = post – pre.

Gains were consistent across all three areas, with suburban teachers improving by +0.83 from a lower baseline, suggesting that targeted training can help narrow the urban–suburban gap identified earlier. Qualitative feedback from observation and interviews corroborated the quantitative gains, with teachers reporting greater confidence in organising parent meetings and managing sensitive situations.

5. DISCUSSION

The results portray a system in which the value of school–family coordination is widely recognised but its management is only moderately developed, with evaluation as the persistent weak link. This mirrors international findings that home–school partnership is often endorsed in principle yet implemented unevenly (Epstein, 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011), and it extends them by locating the weakness specifically in the managerial function of checking and adjustment.

The area and group differences add nuance. The inner-city advantage across every function, and the parents' markedly lower ratings of two-directional communication, indicate that both structural resources and the directionality of communication shape coordination quality. The finding that homeroom teachers' competence is the strongest correlate of management effectiveness aligns with parental-involvement frameworks that foreground teacher attitudes and skills (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018), and with a human-resource-development perspective on management (Desimone, 2009).

The intervention provides the study's most actionable contribution. A focused, measurable training programme produced substantial gains in homeroom teachers' coordination competence, with the largest improvements in the affective and situational skills, counselling and handling unexpected situations, that are hardest to develop informally, a pattern consistent with evidence that sustained, practice-focused professional development is needed to shift such skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). That suburban teachers improved as much as their inner-city peers suggests capacity building as a practical route to equity.

The divergence between administrators' and parents' perceptions warrants particular attention. That parents rated two-directional communication lowest, while administrators rated it comfortably above the midpoint, suggests a perceptual gap in which schools may overestimate the reciprocity of their communication. Such a gap is itself a management problem: it points to a need for feedback mechanisms that surface the parental perspective and for evaluation routines that treat parents as a source of evidence rather than merely as recipients of information (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019; Koonce & Harper, 2005). This interpretation reinforces the finding that the checking-evaluation function is the weakest link, since a well-functioning evaluation cycle would ordinarily detect and correct precisely this kind of asymmetry.

On this basis, the study proposes a function-based, three-tier management model, coordinating the school administrator as overall coordinator, the homeroom teacher as direct implementer, and parents as indispensable partners, designed to operate within Hanoi's emerging two-level local-government context. The model integrates five mutually reinforcing measures: raising awareness among educational forces; directing the development of concrete, phased coordination plans; renewing the content and methods of coordination with appropriate use of digital technology; building the coordination competence of teachers, especially homeroom teachers; and organising comprehensive, continuous evaluation oriented toward improvement. Within this model, building homeroom teachers' coordination competence functions as the keystone measure, because the quality of class-level implementation conditions the success of every other measure.

The practical implications are direct. School leaders should prioritise systematic, programmed professional development for homeroom teachers, with explicit attention to the affective and situational skills that the intervention improved most, and should institutionalise an evaluation cycle that incorporates parental feedback. System-level actors should attend to the urban-suburban gap, directing additional support and capacity building toward suburban schools, where baselines are lower but responsiveness to training is comparable. The appropriate, measured use of digital communication channels can support, though not replace, the relational core of coordination, provided that it is designed to be genuinely two-directional (Bordalba & Bochaca, 2019; Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

Limitations include the single-city scope, the cross-sectional nature of the survey, and an intervention without a separate control group, which constrain causal and generalisable claims. Self-reported assessments may also be affected by social-desirability bias, although the inclusion of parents alongside school staff and the triangulation with interviews and documents reduce this risk. Future research should employ quasi-experimental designs with control groups, extend the model to other regions and school levels, and incorporate longitudinal measures of student outcomes to test whether improved coordination management translates into measurable gains for students.

6. CONCLUSION

Managing school-family coordination in Hanoi's lower-secondary schools currently stands at a moderate level, strong in awareness but weak in systematic checking and evaluation, with a persistent inner-city advantage and a gap between how administrators and parents perceive communication. Homeroom teachers' coordination competence is the most influential factor in management effectiveness, and a targeted capacity-building programme produced significant, equitable gains in that competence. The proposed function-based, three-tier management model offers school leaders a practical framework for steering coordination within a rapidly urbanising, restructuring urban system. Strengthening homeroom teachers' competence emerges as the keystone for improving the quality and sustainability of school-family coordination.

Suggestions for future research. Subsequent studies should validate the three-tier management model through multi-site, longitudinal, and quasi-experimental designs that include control groups; extend the analysis to other regions and to primary and upper-secondary levels to test generalisability; and incorporate objective indicators of student behavioural and academic outcomes to assess whether improved coordination management produces measurable benefits for students. Comparative studies across urban systems undergoing administrative restructuring would further clarify how governance context shapes the management of school-family coordination.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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