

Parents perception in choosing private primary school



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The elimination of school fees from public primary school under the Governments policy in Cambodia in order to reach the EFA Goal by 2015 has increased student enrollments from year to year. However, the quality of education of public schools has reduced while the number of students who transfer from public to private schools has increased more and more. To obtain a better understanding of the factors influencing parents' decision in choosing private primary schools for children, researcher has investigated the perception between two groups of parents, high and low educated parents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from 2 high educated parents and 2 from low educated parents. The interviews were conducted with the parents whose children studying in a private primary school in Phnom Penh. Data was analyzed by using an interpretive analysis method. The findings indicated the different factors influencing the parents' decision such as quality and standard of education, learning environment, security, safety and services. However, most parents consider about the quality and safety of their children because they don't have enough time to take care their children even their education during the daytime. According to the findings, most parents have a positive perspective on the choice of private schools even some private schools are expensive. They believe that the higher the school fees it set the higher in quality they will be offered. One of the parents; for example, transferred her child from cheaper to higher price in term of school fees and services. The children in wealthier and higher educated family background have a higher possibility of transferring to private schools than children from poorer and lower educated family background.

Education plays an important role in socioeconomic development in every country. It can also improve human resources as not all the human abilities which are offered by birth. Education makes people feel confident, aware and active in term of knowledge and skill development (Rehman, Khan, Tariq & Tasleem, 2010). It develops human abilities needed for economic and social development. Many years public schools play a very important role in developing the education as well as building human resources. However, in recent years, private schools have grown very fast by providing good quality. No matter the fee in private school is very high, parents are still happy to invest their youngsters in the private sector (Rehman et al., 2010).

According to the report of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports 2010-2011, private schools have been growing very fast. Private schools have done its privatization since 1992 under the supervision of MoEYS (MoEYS, 2011). Among 24 provinces and cities, there are only 9 provinces and cities that have sent their report of private schools to the EMIS office (MoEYS, 2011). Until now there are 264 private schools in the whole kingdom, but only 120 schools that provide primary education. Among 120 schools, 71 schools located in Phnom Penh (MoEYS, 2011).

Cambodia is one of many developing countries with a recent history of rapid growth within the private education sector. Since Cambodia steps into a free market economy in the early 1990s, education has become a very important key to human resource development. However, while the demand of education begins growing faster and faster, public education is still in poor condition and unresponsive to the growing need and free markets that offer <https://assignbuster.com/parents-perception-in-choosing-private-primary-school/>

people what they want (Bernal, 2005). Bernal (2005) stated that since competition among public schools has not been introduced, parents are free to choose any schools they want for their children. On the one hand, competition among private schools is very strong, so each school has managed many kinds of strategies in order to attract the parents as well as their children to participate the school. Private school enrollment is not a simple function of parental preferences. The quality of private schools can be a high demand in which parents seek for their child's education (Desai, Dubey, Vanneman & Banerji, 2008). Private education is often perceived to be about serving the needs of the high and middle classes, not the poor.

Most of parents want to provide the best educational environment for their children. The parents decide to invest their children in form of education depends on number of social, cultural and economic factors (Rehman et al., 2010). Parents usually decide to choose the best quality school for their youngsters when they are dissatisfied with public school. Private schools are mostly more effective than public schools in terms of school environment, qualified teachers, smaller size of classes and parents' education. Rehman et al. (2010) found that a great majority of parents seemed dissatisfied with the public school due to various reasons: qualified teachers, good relationship between schools and parents, class sizes and others.

Choosing school for children, parents may make themselves feel more confident that children will be taught effectively and treated fairly (Spellings, 2005). Choosing schools carefully is an important way parents can help their children all what he / she can be. School choice is highly related to parents' occupational status. The parents with higher occupational status prefer to <https://assignbuster.com/parents-perception-in-choosing-private-primary-school/>

choose private school rather than public school for their children. The school choice of parents show about their satisfaction with the school they choose (Rehman et al., 2010).

Moreover, many parents consider teacher quality the most important factor to guarantee the quality of their children education while the other value school academic reputation and facilities (as cited in Wilkinson, Denniss & Machintosh, 2004). According to the research of Wilkinson et al. (2004) stated that some teachers have perceived pressure in the public school system that may lead to the non-quality teaching condition. In contrast, private sector offers incentives, good working environment, and other benefits which encourage teachers to work hard by providing the best quality of education, that's why parents choose private school rather than public school.

1. 2 Problem Statement

Private education in Cambodia has expanded rapidly in number as well as absorbing more students. Private sector, especially private school, has become one of the potential partners with the government to improve and develop the education sector as well as human resources. The increasing competitions as well as the huge demand of education have led to the rapid expansion of the private sector, which is new in the history of modern education in Cambodia. Because these private education institutions are profit seeking, the majority of them are only to offer courses with high demand and high quality (Desai, Dubey, Vanneman & Banerji, 2008).

Moreover, the private education in Cambodia raises many questions

concerning about future success and quality. On condition that it's new

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existence and concerning among public, the private education keeps increasing students' enrollment from year to year. This rising enrolment contributes to the continuous growth of private sector which the priorities of the private institutions are for profit, and depend mostly on students' fee. Even the fee of some institutions increases more and more, students' parents still choose private school but not the public one. Since the last few decades, public school seems to be less attention from parents in term of service, quality...etc.

On the other hand, high income of families is also a key factor that affects the school choice. For instance, some parents who have higher income will send their children to a high-fee school (Wilkinson et al, 2004). Similarly, parents with lower income will send their children to less expensive private school or public school. Moreover, according to the study of Rehman et al. (2010) found that lack of education facilities, unsuitable teaching methods, poor discipline, less attention to the overall development of the children, overcrowded classes, lack of teachers' interest and unsuitable educational environment are major reasons that the parents avoid the public schools. They also mentioned that the classes in public school are mostly overcrowded and become very hard for teachers to concentrate on the development of every student. These have aroused my curiosity to explore parents' perceptions towards private schools in Cambodia.

1. 3 Research objectives

The purposes of this research are to identify the common factors as well as the reasons parents decide to choose private school for their children

education and also to find out the factors which motivate parents to choose <https://assignbuster.com/parents-perception-in-choosing-private-primary-school/>

a particular school to educate their children. Researcher wants to explore the critical factors influencing parents' decision to pursue their children study in the private sector and in choosing a particular private education institution. Another purpose for this research is to identify the different perception between parents who are in the city and suburb area. It also assesses how they view the quality of private schools based on their own experience.

1. 4 Research Questions

This study is conducted purposively to answer the following two research questions:

What are the factors influencing parents' decision to choose private primary school for their children?

What are the different perceptions between high and low educated parents in choosing the schools for their children?

1. 5 Significance of the Study

This research is attempted to contribute to the discussion of critical factors that affect parents' decision in choosing a private school as well as their perceptions of quality of private sector. It also gives an understanding of parents' experiences of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in private and public education which would be aware of students' need and the view of customers. So those private sectors may respond by designing suitable courses, programs, and service to meet students' needs. The findings of this research will also allow public schools to be better informed as well as aware of new roles of private education sector as seen by parents' perceptions.

This may allow public education sector to readily reorganize some dissatisfaction factors by providing an education with higher quality. It would also contribute to the future growth, development and significance of private education sector in Cambodia.

Definition of key terms

This research will include 3 key terms that are particularly used to refer only in this study, but not in general.

Private primary school is referred to non-government school which is run by private sector. However, this private primary school, from grade 1 to 6, is under the supervision of the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports.

High educated parents mentioned in this research are referred to the ones who have the Bachelor Degree or higher. And they are referred to the ones who work as government officers, NGOs staff and company staff (As higher position).

Low educated parents which mentioned in this paper are focused on the parents who have no Bachelor Degree or equivalent certificates. These parents may not work as government officers, NGOs staff or company staff, but they just sell things at the market or have a small business.

1. 7 Proposed chapter outline of research paper

This research contains five chapters. Chapter one gives detail background of the previous studies related to the topic. It also provides detail information of research problem, research objectives, research questions, then significance of study, and definition of key term. In chapter two, there will be literature

review which will discuss on previous studies and how they related to this study. Then in chapter three, there will be methodology covering research design of qualitative, tools/instruments for data collection, sample size and sampling method, data collecting procedures, data analysis, ethical consideration, and strengths and limitation of the method. Findings and discussion will be presented in chapter four giving results of the research and together with some problems or solutions to be discussed. The last chapter is conclusion and recommendation and must be followed by reference list giving detail about the sources which are used in this research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of “ Quality” in Education

Quality in education should involve learners, content, processes, environments, and outcomes (UNICEF, 2000). Learners are healthy, ready to participate and learn, and supported by their communities and families. Contents include literacy, numeracy, and especially life skills. Environments are referred to healthy, protective, safe, and provide appropriate resources and facilities to students in their learning processes. Outcomes are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. OECD (2012) has combined the quality with equity which means that if social and personal circumstance such as ethnic origin, family background or gender, are able to access the educational fairness, the quality of education will increase higher and higher.

2. 2 Comparison between Public and Private Schools

Private schools have greater demand than public schools. Nowadays the idea that 'private education is always better than public education' has become a common idea which is linked to discipline, level of attainment and individual attention (Bernal, 2005). This study was to evaluate parents' school choice and this may produce exclusion of society and inequality. Particular populations, economically disadvantaged groups, immigrants and ethnic minorities are considered the same schools (Bernal, 2005). In contrast, research argued that an open market system is not important in order to ensure the social class reproduction. However, parents are free to choose the school for the children's education. Then family income and number of children attending the same school has increased dramatically. Private schools are free to plan the model of what they prefer. The competition among private schools is very strong in all kinds of commercial and marketing strategies. There are five characteristics of the market system in Spain: free choice of school, school "sells" themselves to parents, public financing to both form of provision, diversity, control and management. The tough competition between schools and the outcomes are similar (Bernal, 2005). The upper and middle classes go to private schools, while economically disadvantaged groups, ethnic minorities and immigrants go to the public school.

Children who are in private school have higher reading and arithmetic skills than those in public schools (Desai et al., 2008). This paper explores the relationship by examining different economic status in the private and public schools; moreover, it indicates that while children from lower economic

status are more likely to be physically punished in the public schools than their peers who choose private schools. The relationship between economic status and physical punishment is negligible in private schools. There are private schools for the poor and they are most likely to have the big effect on enrollment (Baird, 2009). Parents select private schools because they think that the schools will provide better education in term of quality and opportunities in the future for their children than the state schools. Baird (2009) also found that there is no relationship between a particular area's wealth and the enrollment in private schools. Private education should be generalized throughout the world, not just in India especially for the poor. The less satisfied citizens are with the government schools; in contrast, the rich choose private schools for their children education. The government schools or state schools should provide better education in term of quality, particularly for the poor (Baird, 2009). Choosing private school is not the decision of parents alone, but it has to be shared by their children in this decision making.

However, Bertola, Checchi, & Oppedisano (2007) mention that expensive private school is supposed to be better than free public school in terms of quality and safety because parents will send their children to other schools if they don't offer better service. Student quality is likely very different in terms of across academic and vocational secondary school tracks (Bertola et al., 2007). Parents are positively associated with private schooling and may also appreciate the longer hours and flexibility of private schools' schedules. Rational choice of theory suggests that parents are utility maximizers who can make their own decisions from clear value of preferences, that they can

demand effective actions from local schools and teachers, and that they are able to be relied upon to pursue the best interest of the children (Bosetti, 2004). This presents a different perspective and argues that parents invest a mixture of choice when selecting schools. Bertola et al., (2007) argue that a schooling system's organization may consider that private school enrollment leads to worse subsequent activities in the future education or in the labor market. If students are different not only their families' ability to pay but also their own ability to take advantage of their talent, theory predicts that private schools attract students badly when publicly funded schools are better suited to force progress not only their families' ability to pay but also their own ability to take advantage of their talent.

2. 3 School Fee affects on School choice

Coulson (2009) finds that private school families are basically different from public school families because they choose the schools through the school fee. Some parents believe that the higher school fee they set the higher quality of education they will offer. The result of this research also provides clearer understanding about the expectations, ideals and experiences of parents influence school choice. Most of parents want to educate their children with the best quality of education environment. They want to invest their children depend on a number of cultural, economic and social factors (Rehman et al., 2010). In Pakistan, education is offered by both private and public sectors. Studying in public schools is free of charge while parents have to pay in private schools. The price in private school is higher; however, parents still send their children to private school because they hope that their children will receive better education. Since the last three decades,

private sector has been considered as an important resource of education in Pakistan. Then the factors that motivate parents' decisions about private sector are yet to be explored. Family size, education level of parents, income of parents, school performance and staff qualifications are considered as the major factors that affect parents' choice in choosing private school (Desai et al., 2008; Rehman et al., 2010). This study has shown that about 88.5% were the view these schools have a progressive mode of education while 86% parents avoided public schools due to unsuitable educational environment. Even the school fees are high or low, there is no different between private and public schools (CEP, 2007). Holme (2002) suggests that poor families should be provided with the same quality of educational choices that the wealthier have. It is inequity that private schools seem to be established for the rich not the poor.

2.4 School choice influences on Students' Achievement

Choosing a school has direct effects on children development as well as children's educational achievement, literacy, numeracy and scientific knowledge (Sylva, 1994). Moreover, formal educational qualifications are the main key for children to enter higher education or training and also employment. The results show that excellent attendance, cognitively oriented pre-school programs was associated with later school competence. Pre-school graduates were more likely than the control group to provide achievement-related answers to the invitation. Findings also suggest that early education changed the family achievement orientation. Most mothers whose children attended pre-school expected more from their children. The children themselves also show more pride in their achievement. Pupil

cognitions, motivations and school performance also effect pupils' development. Academic self-concept has an independent impact on children academic attainment and parental education (Sylva, 1994; Gibbons et al., 2009).

A productive school normally produces high achievement for students for their school fee on investing with schools (Hoxby, 2003). If a school could raise students' achievement while spending the same as the others, it would be expected to draw the students away from those schools. Low-productivity producers will be driven out by high-productivity producers. There are many different types of schools: for profit, for non-profit private schools, regular public schools, and charter schools (Hoxby, 2003).

Moreover, it is slightly different from others because the others about the choices parents make for their children while this literature is about the influences of the school. Children developments such as pre-school education, primary school on children's attainment, attitudes and behavior, pupil cognitions, motivations, school performance, social competence and attainment are likely to be concerned by most parents (Sylva, 1994).

Gibbons and Silva (2009) argued that parents choose schools for children according to their high performance. Previous research suggested that school quality is not only one dimension about which children and parents concern, other school factors like pupil happiness and enjoyment of their learning environment are also considered. These lead the researchers consider about parents perceptions of school choice based on academic standards and related with the children wellbeing. Some researcher (Gibbons et al., 2009; Sylva, 1994; Coulson, 2009) found that attitudes and <https://assignbuster.com/parents-perception-in-choosing-private-primary-school/>

experiences, among pupils and their parents linked to standard test score based measures of academic performance, and whether parents' perception of school quality linked to their children's happiness and enjoyment of school. Gibbons et al. (2009) assumed that parents choose schools for children according to their high performance. They suggest that school quality is not only one dimension about which children and parents concern, other school factors like pupil happiness and enjoyment of their learning environment are also considered. This need to be considered about parents perceptions of school choice based on academic standards and related with the children wellbeing. Bernal (2005) & Baird (2009) also agreed that parents select private schools because they think that the schools will provide better education in term of quality and opportunities in the future for their children than the state schools. There is no relationship between a particular area's wealth and the enrollment in private schools.

Private education is assumed to be concerned only with serving the high or middle class, not the poor (Trooley et al., n. d; Baird, 2009). Children who were in the private unaided schools get higher score than government school students. Moreover, children in unrecognized private schools achieve higher marks in mathematics than government students, 83% higher in Hindi and 246% higher in English. Scores in the recognized private schools were higher. Researchers also found that children in unaided private schools were more satisfied than the government schools. Unrecognized private schools are assumed to be educationally inadequate. This assumption is untrue because there are many unrecognized private schools achieved universal basic education, education for all. Children in private unaided schools get

higher achievement than government schools. Private unaided schools cost less than government schools; moreover, teaching commitment is higher in private unaided than the government schools. However, these findings mean that nothing could be improved in the private sector for serving the poor (Trooley et al., n. d). According to the United Nation Millennium Development Goal of “ education for all (EFA)”, education should be provided equally, even the poor. Then; however, private schools still take part in contributing the knowledge, not only public schools, for all children equally with quality of education.

2. 5 Transferring from Public Schools

The quality of education in public schools has reduced and the number of students who transfer from public to private schools has increased according to suggestion make by some experts (Nishimura, M. & Yamano, T., 2008). As results, researchers have found that the school quality has a positive impact on the choice of private schools. They found not only transfers from public to private schools but also between public schools. Children who are in wealthy households have a higher probability of transferring to private schools than children who are in poorer households. Nishimura et al., (2009) & Trooley et al., (n. d) have shown that to maintain the quality of education is an urgent policy agenda for Nation Millennium Development Goal of “ education for all” that have adopted free primary education policies to enhance the education system equally. There is a positive impact on the choice of private schools. So it means that private education play very important role in providing good quality of education, even for the poor.

2. 6 Choosing School through where they live

Even some public schools are as high in quality as or higher than that of private schools, parents still send their children to private schools (Figlio, 1997). Parents might find a well disciplined for their children, or might satisfy with a higher probability that their children can participate in extracurricular activities substantively. Figlio (1997) finds that parents might wish for their children to perform with a right peer group. Parents choose private schools for their curricula and academic emphasizes, discipline, and safety. Checchi et al. (2004) agrees that private schools allow parents to choose the quality of education and the amount of price that they believe appreciate and satisfy. Beside, this literature also indicates that resource indicators, outcome indicators, and subjective assessments are the factors in which we can measure as quality of schools.

There are many ways in which parents are involved in children's education. And one of the most important ways is through choosing the best school for children to attend (Goldring, et al., 2006). Most of parents choose a school according to where they live. Private schools are available more and more for parents because of the increasing availability of leaflets or vouchers that are targeted to low-income families. Some researchers may compare the choice of the parents between public and private schools. Goldring et al. (2006) examine how parents make school choices and the dynamics of the choice progress with an emphasis of public schools. Then he also indicates that parents who participate in school choosing have five different ways: parental involvement, socials networks, educational priorities, demographics, and satisfaction with previous school. Parents who choose the schools also

tend to be more involvement in children's education. School quality can be related to its characteristics such as: school demographics, school location, school atmosphere, and academic performance (Goldring, et al., 2006). Parents really concern about their children's safety when it comes to how they travel to or from school (Faulkner et al., 2010 & Figlio, 1997). Parents always look after children so they have to find the best ways for them to send them to school safely. However, some parents may allow their children travel to school independently (Faulkner et al., 2010). In contrast, children can be allowed to walk according to the street or the way to school is safe for them. And whether how far is the house from school. But others think that parents don't care how far it is if school provides the best quality of education.

2. 7 Choice depending on family's background

According to the study by CEP (2007) finds that key family backgrounds were considered as the prior factor that forces students or parents to choose public or private schools. Students who attend private schools receive no better on achievement tests than those who choose public schools in reading, Math, history, and science. Students who had attended any type of private school ended up with no more jobs satisfaction that those who choose traditional public school. However, students' achievement depends on school they choose. If students attend private school with higher school fee, test scores will be higher (Alderman, Orazem, & Paterno, 2001; Holme, 2002). Transferring from government schools to private schools is increasing because of the quality and higher achievement test scores. The strong demand for private schools is depended on the evidence of greater language

achievement and mathematics in private schools than in public schools (Alderman et al., 2001). Parents' education significantly; however, reduces no-schooling option. When parents are educated well, they will concern more about their children's education. Then private school is the first choice for their children even the school fee is high or really high, what they want is quality of education.

The ability of high-income parents will allow their children to access to high-quality school by moving to a good school area. Parents concern about student discipline based on students' racial and class background, particularly violence at school. Holme (2002) finds that according to the income parents earn, they can send their children to the best private or public school to ensure that children will get the best quality of education. The researcher has also found that high-status schools tend to attract more well-qualified teachers. That can result in providing students a challenging curriculum. Parents are sensitive about the location of schools, and prefer school with positive atmosphere as reflected in school discipline, class size, and school safety. Moreover, parents believe that private schools offer better education, additional resources, better policies and practices, and an environment more deductive to learning (OECD, 2012). Parents are well-informed about school curriculum and others important factors as mention above.

Parents' education and use of individual tutoring lessons also raise the possibility of private school enrollment. Parental involvement and share of students in private display no correlation with college enrolment. Bertola et al. (2007) suggest that as long as peer effects are relevant, the students <https://assignbuster.com/parents-perception-in-choosing-private-primary-school/>

from lower quality private school imply a similarly low quality of the education offered by this segment of the market.

2. 8 Conceptual Framework

There are several reasons that influent parents' decision in choosing a private primary school. The study journals, articles, and reports from the above literatures provide different perspectives as well as reasons influencing parents' decision in choosing a private school such as school fees, students' achievement, safety, and family background.

Choosing a school has direct effects on children development as well as children's educational achievement, literacy, numeracy and scientific knowledge (Sylva, 1994). Children can achieve higher test scores depends on their abilities, together with the schools they choose. However, the best school will provide the best quality of education. Pupils' motiv