

Parental school
choices public private
or both education
essay



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Should parents be allowed to choose schools for their children? When parents demand for choices over the schools in which their children attend, what are the reasons that parents use to measure whether or not the schools are suitable for their children? When children attend schools of their choosing, are parents satisfied with their choices of schools?

Today, many choices of schools exist such as government schools, private schools, people-run schools (Tsang, 2000), and to name just a few. Given the availabilities of choices, parents can make the best decisions in selecting an appropriate school for their children. Because parents understand their children the most, they are best able to make a good judgment over schools in which their children enroll (Thomas & Oates, 2005). Moreover, parents are the primary stakeholders in their children's education, so they have their own rights and responsibilities to choose education for their children (Thomas & Oates, 2005). Parent can choose to enroll their children in a private or state school which is believed to be the best and most suitable for their children.

Even though there are many choices available, some parents do not really have choices over school selection due to budgetary constraints and limited number of places available (Thomas & Oates, 2005). Hence, school choice to some extent creates inequality and inequity in educational setting because poorer families cannot afford high costs of private schooling (Alfonso, 2002; Neal, 2008; Tsang, 2000). Due to households' income, some families have limited choices in having access to schools that fit their desire (Thomas & Oates, 2005) leading to low enrollment of low-income children in schools (Alfonso, 2002).

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1. 1 Background of the study

A number of private schools, particularly primary schools, in Cambodia have increased drastically in the last few years (Table 1). Rises in a number of private schools give Cambodian parents options to choose between a public and private school. As parents, people are always trying to make the best decisions for children and their futures. When it comes to schooling, parents often have to work out whether to send their children to a private school or keep them in a public one.

Table 1: Number of private schools in Cambodia, 2006-2009

Academic Years

Kingdom

Pre-schools

Primary

Secondary

College

2006-2007

174

52

78

25

19

2007-2008

223

76

107

24

16

2008-2009

234

83

106

30

15

Source: MoEYS, Education Statistics of Private Schools, 2006-2009

Access to private schools helps expand choices for parents to choose their preferred school in terms of quality (CA, 2007; Tsang, 2000), academic performance and achievement (Thomas & Oates, 2005; Tsang, 2000;),

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academic reputation and college preparation (CA, 2007; Chen, 2007), safety, religion and moral instruction (CA, 2007; Chen, 2007; Neal, 2008), discipline (CA, 2007; Neal, 2008), location, cost, prestige, tradition, extra curricular activities, personal aspiration and judgment (CA, 2007; Chen, 2007; Neal, 2008; Thomas & Oates, 2005; Tsang, 2000) as well as other aspects of school life that are not solely academic (Neal, 2008).

Therefore, parents have a variety of choices for school selection. Even though there are many choices available for them, parents do not always express clearly about their levels of satisfaction over their choices of schools (Manna, 2002). Even with choices available, costs of education become burdensome to poor households. Due to monetary constraints, some families do not really have choices because they are poor and cannot afford tuition fees of private education (Alfonso, 2002; Thomas & Oates, 2005).

1.3 Problem statement

Educating children is a long term, expensive and unclear investment.

Therefore, making a good school choice is not always the case by parents.

Some scholars believe that parents choose well only when they have gathered quality information about schools (Manna, 2002). It is believed that when parents are well-informed about the availabilities of choices over schools, markets for education also work best (Bridge, 1978; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Elmore, 1990; Fantini, 1973; Godwin, Kemerer, Martinez, & Ruderman 1998; Schneider, Teske, Roch, & Marschall, 1997). On the other hand, if parents are less informative about school selection, it is possible that they have less confidence in schools; thus, demand for supplementary tutoring for

their children (Bray & Kwok, 2003). When parents do not have confidence in the selected school, it becomes apparent that their investment is at risk.

Considering between sending their children to either a public or private school, parents have to think of some reasons that concern them the most (Manna, 2002). Those reasons include costs of education, school's reputation and quality, location, discipline and so on (CA, 2007; Chen, 2007; Manna, 2002; Neal, 2008; Tsang, 2000). It is a common observation that Cambodian parents do not have evidence-based reasons over their choices of which school to enroll their children. Without any clear and valid reasons, parents send their children to an affordable private school of their choices. Those parents are easily influenced by their peer groups because they simply send their children to a private school that their friends and/or neighbors have already chosen. Also, some wealthy families choose the most famous and expensive schools for their children because they think those ideal schools will provide ideal education as well. Parents usually think that private schools are academically better than public schools. However, such a conclusion is not always the case. Research results indicated in his study that private schools are not superior to public schools in all settings if only measured by effect on achievement and attainment (Neal, 2008).

Even though earlier study conducted by Neal (2008), showed that educational quality of private and state schools is comparable, parents remain concerned about the quality of their children's education in those schools, particularly the quality of teaching and learning (Tsang, 2000 and Commonwealth of Australia, 2007). It is believed that teacher is the most important person in class to transfer useful knowledge to students (Tsang, <https://assignbuster.com/parental-school-choices-public-private-or-both-education-essay/>

2000). Furthermore, some other parents are thinking about the security of their children when they are away from home (Tsang, 2000 and Neal, 2008). As a result, they prefer to send their children to a private school because they believe that state schools do not have much secure environment (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007). Similarly, some other parents are worried about such things as academic reputation, school discipline, facilities, location of school and many others (Tsang, 2000; Neal, 2008 and Commonwealth of Australia, 2007). Parents choose a school depending on their own judgments and personal aspiration (Tsang, 2000 and Neal, 2008). Maybe you have presented a list of statements that parents consider when deciding school for their children from both study (if any).

It is believed that school choices increase parental satisfaction; thus, they are likely to participate and involve in their children's education as well as other activities oriented by the schools (Thomas & Oates, 2005). When there is a series of schools for parents to choose, they are best able to judge the appropriate schools that fit their children (Thomas & Oates, 2005); hence, increasing students' performance and achievement in their academic disciplines (Neal, 2008; Tsang, 2000 and Thomas & Oates, 2005). Owing to the fact that most parents have different viewpoint regarding the factors influencing their decision to choose one school over the others, it is essential for them to think thoroughly before selecting individual schools for their children. Hence, it is significantly crucial to conduct a study on parents' consideration factors in choosing a school as well as to seek their satisfaction in their school selection so that their investment in their children's education

is worth spending. Otherwise, such ignorance and unawareness of the parents will lead to a waste of their time and resources.

Then you discuss if parents feel happy with the school of their choosing for their children.

1. 3 Objectives of the study

According to my own observation, informal discussion with parents, and reading in general, I found out that most of the parents do not have any specific choices and reasons when sending their children to schools. Some parents send their children to private schools because their friends do so. What is more, some wealthy families send their children to expensive private schools simply because they want to spend their money extravagantly. Owing to the fact that many parents do not have any reliable and valid reasons for sending their children to private schools, it is significant for this study to be conducted so as to inform parents about the benefits of school choices on their children's academic performance and achievement.

Therefore, a primary objective of this study is to explore reasons influencing parents' choices to invest in primary education of their children.

Furthermore, it aims to discover parents' level of satisfaction over the school they choose.

1. 4 Research questions

To be more specific, an attempt is made to answer the following research questions:

Why do some parents send their children to private schools, some to public schools and others to both?

How much do they feel satisfied with the school of their choosing?

Do levels of satisfaction vary according to household head's level of education, employment category and socioeconomics and type of school (public and private)?

1. 5 Research significance

Due to the increase of interests among parents to send their children to private primary schools, a study of consideration factors and satisfactory situation for parents in choosing private primary school becomes interestingly significant (Tsang, 2000). A number of earlier studies have examined the relative effectiveness of private versus public schools, while some others have investigated on the effect of school competition on students' academic outcomes (Anand, Mizalal & Repetto, 2008). However, there are not enough published studies investigated on the key drivers that influence parents to choose private schools as well as their satisfaction with their choices of schools (Tsang, 2000). In addition, the limited number of studies in this area has indicated the need for further research in correlating parents' school choices. This research study will be of value in assisting parents with the selection of the effective schools for their children.

Moreover, it will be significantly useful for public and private institutions in organizing the schools to fit the needs of the parents and students.

Furthermore, it will be valuable as a reference to administrators, school principals, and teachers as well as other stakeholders in organizing the

schools effectively and efficiently, planning a strong curriculum, and developing a child-friendly environment to fit the demands of both parents and students.

for inferences school officials might draw from parents' decisions,

and for the way scholars study choice programs.

1. 6 Scope and limitations of the study

Time constraints

Lack of information about private education in Cambodia

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

When the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) was held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, most of the countries attending the meeting had committed to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015 as indicated in the six EFA goals. Since the commitment had been made, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has determined to achieve all the six EFA goals, particularly the second goal, which is to ensure that children everywhere, especially girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory nine-year basic education of good quality by 2015 (MoEYS, 2002). In the attempt to bring all school-aged children into schools as well as to increase the access to high quality basic education for all children, Cambodian government has been trying to help reduce the households' costs of education through the implementation

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of Priority Action Program (PAP) for primary education, focusing on reducing cost burden on the poor and promotion of improve internal efficiency in early 2000 (MoEYS, 2002). In accordance with PAP, pro-poor education financing policy was established leading to the abolition of registration fees and other informal school fees for grades 1 to 9 in 2001. This policy contributed to the increase in primary and lower secondary enrollment from 2.35 to 2.68 million and 0.39 to 0.46 million respectively in the last 12 months (MoEYS, 2002). Furthermore, school operating budgets (Riels 35 billion in 2002) from Government funds for primary and lower secondary schools were introduced to replace the school charges previously imposed on parents; thus, increased participation of their children in basic education.

Due to the increase in primary school enrollment, the cost burden on the Cambodian government also increases. According to Alfonso (2002) and Salisbury (2005), the governments in many developing countries face tight budgets that prohibit them from expanding the educational access due to the fact that the costs of public schooling in basic education must be accountable for by the government. Given financial constraints on public school expansion, the government uses alternative methods such as the use of tuition fees in public schools and the establishment of private schools (Alfonso 2002). Some policy-makers and relevant stakeholders also find school choice a useful way to help reduce the cost burden on the government. School choice can save public budgets by providing parents with some or all costs of private education (Salisbury, 2005). In order for parents to invest in their children's education, the government must provide a wide array of programs and services to fit their needs. When there is a

series of schools for parents to choose, they are capable of judging the most appropriate schools for their children (Thomas & Oates, 2005). Parents can also choose their preferred schools in terms of safety, discipline, moral instruction and other aspects of school life that are not solely academic (Neal, 2008). Therefore, school choice becomes the focus of this study.

2. 1 Overview of Cambodian educational history

In order to better understand the current state of education in Cambodia, it is necessary to have an overview on its early history.

2. 2 Rationales for parental school choice

Although research on school choice is growing significantly, much of it does not illuminate in much depth the rationales parents weigh when choosing a school (Manna, 2002). A quick review of literature makes this point clear.

Many scholars have paid much attention to school choice which helps increase students' achievement and parents' involvement (Greene & Peterson, 1996; Greene, Peterson, & Du, 1999; Marschall, 1998; Rouse, 1998; Schneider, Teske, Marschall, Mintrom, &

Roch, 1997; and Witte, 1998, 2000 as cited in Manna, 2002). However, none of these studies have clearly expressed the decisions parents make when they opt for a choice school. In addition, some scholars have compared parents' levels of satisfaction with their reasons of school selection, the most consistent findings across a range of setting is that parents who have choices over school have greater satisfaction (Levin, 1998; Peterson, 1998).

Investment Choices of Parents:

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Private Public

Reasons????????? Reasons?????????

2. 3 Model for decision-making

2. 4 Conceptual framework

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter thoroughly describes the sampling methods adopted for this research as well as data collection methods and methods for conducting data analysis. Moreover, it explores ethical issues that may arise when conducting this study and the steps taken to address them.

In order to achieve the aims of an exploratory research, both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed for different purposes. To begin with, the qualitative method is adopted in order to gain an in-depth understanding of parents' perception and conception about their choices of schools. This interview is particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. Furthermore, it provides rich information about parental school choices and their satisfaction on the selected schools because the interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. In addition to qualitative data, quantitative method is used to discover demographical background of the participants such as level of education, employment and socio-economic status. This method is helpful for the researcher to critically analyze the differences in decision-making among parents from different background.

3. 1 Study design

This study is conducted exclusively in Phnom Penh. Fifteen parents of primary school children are randomly selected from different employment status such as governmental staff, teachers, NGOs and business people. The interview is divided into two different parts. The first part is a five-minute interview conducted in order to have a better understanding of their family's background such as education level of household's heads, their employment and socio-economic status. The socio-economic status of respondents is based on questions regarding weekly income and expenditure on essential household items (such as food and clothing) and number of people living in the respondent's household (excluding domestic employees).

After finishing the first part of the interview, the researcher uses a semi-structured interview as a guide to collect data in order to ensure that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee. Also, it assures that all interviews are conducted in the same manner. In this semi-structured interview, the researcher has a specified set of questions that elicits the same information from the respondents. Moreover, the questions are phrased in such a way that they elicit the desired information.

This semi-structured interview is also pre-tested to identify deficiencies and suggestions for improvement. Even though this interview provides more focus than the conversational approach, it still allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting information from the interviewees. The researcher, finally, conducts an in-depth interview with parents to gather information on their choices of school and their level of satisfaction over the school of their choosing.

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Obtaining data from the interview, the researcher develops a new form of questionnaire by categorizing all the collected information into different headings. This questionnaire distributed to household's heads in Phnom Penh in order to collect data about their viewpoint on school selection and their satisfaction over the schools of their choosing. It also aims to discover indicators that parents use to measure each school before they make decision.

To obtain detailed information about level of education of the heads of households, their employment status and socio-economic status, the researcher adopts another household survey questionnaire from an earlier research study conducted by an American professor. Dr. Victoria A. Beard is an associate professor at University of California, Irvine. Before using this questionnaire, the researcher emailed to ask for permission from the author to revise and make use of her questionnaire for data collection for this study. After getting positive response from the author along with a ' Permission Letter', the researcher uses the questionnaire for data collection to seek information on level of education of household's heads, their employment and socio-economic status in order to ensure that information from both interview and questionnaire is accurate. The household survey questionnaire is responded by the head of the household, or spouse of the household's head or another adult of household members.

3. 2 Sampling technique

Because it is difficult for the researcher to find participants of the type needed, snowball sampling method becomes useful and essential for the study. Snowballing is adopted because the researcher can choose just a <https://assignbuster.com/parental-school-choices-public-private-or-both-education-essay/>

small number of participants who fit the researcher's needs and using those participants to identify additional participants until the researcher has sufficient number of participants need for the study. First of all, the researcher decides how many participants are needed. Then, fifteen parents of primary school children are selected from different employment status including government workers, teachers, NGOs workers and retailers for interview. After the interview is completed, the researcher let initial participants recruit additional participants that fit the requirements of the researcher until the desired number is reached.

3. 3 Sample size

Fifteen parents of primary school students are chosen for interview. Then, the researcher let initial participant recruit additional participants. Hence, actual number of participants depends entirely on suggestion from initial participants.

3. 4 Research tool

Two types of research tools are adopted for this study. The first one is a semi-structured interview which is used to collect data on family's background such as education level of household's heads, their employment and socio-economic status. Using a semi-structure interview helps researcher to include questions that come into mind during the interview and to eliminate some questions that are already answered when interviewing participants. Furthermore, the interview also aims to discover from parents what reasons for their choices of school as well as their satisfaction over the school of their choosing. The questionnaire is used to gather quantitative data from parents about their choices of school, their satisfaction over the <https://assignbuster.com/parental-school-choices-public-private-or-both-education-essay/>

school of their choices as well as the differences in decision-making among parents from different demographical background. In addition to semi-structured interview, questionnaire is distributed to household's heads in Phnom Penh in order to collect data about their viewpoint on school selection and their satisfaction over the schools of their choosing. It also aims to discover indicators that parents use in order to select school for their children.

Both a semi-structured interview and a household survey questionnaire are used for data collection and are a means of informing participants about the aims of this study. Prior to data collection, these tools are pre-tested for timing and appropriateness. Moreover, pre-testing the instruments is important for the researcher to investigate the deficiencies and suggestions for improvement. Feedback and suggestions are used to refine the instruments before distribution to participants.

The purposes for the study, including a short text about the research aims, its significance and inviting them to participate voluntarily and anonymously, are also presented in the instruments. The questions are divided into different sections. First of all, information on participants' demographical background (level of education, employment and socio-economic status) is presented in the first section. After that, information about parental school choices and their satisfaction over the school of their choosing comes into play in the second part.

3. 5 Data collection procedure

Design interview questionnaire to interview 15 parents.

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Use collected data to develop a questionnaire and deliver to the participants.

Snowball survey by asking the participants to help deliver the questionnaire to their friends and neighbors.

3. 6 Data analysis

Analysis will be commenced immediately after the data collection procedures are completed.

Cross tabulation of the data

3. 7 Ethical consideration

The short text explaining about the research aims and significance and inviting them to participate voluntarily and anonymously are attached and sent together with the questionnaire. At the beginning of the questionnaire, there is an explanation about the purposes of the research. This point the participants are introduced to the research topic and are provided with the brief and concise description of the research objectives. The significance of the study is also included in this paragraph. This paragraph explains the nature of the research and the involvement being requested from potential participants. Therefore, the research participants may perceive a broader picture of this research, and then they can make decision whether or not to involve in this study.

The next paragraph of the questionnaire will again present the invitation to participate voluntarily and anonymously in the study. It is believed that all the participants have their own experiences and knowledge when making decision either to send their beloved children to a public school, a private

school or both. Parents are clearly notified in this section that their participation in this research completely voluntary. Those who wish to participate in the study can show their willingness by filling in the questionnaire and send back to the researcher. For those who are not interested can give no response back to the researcher. Furthermore, for those who are participated in the beginning have complete freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. Finally, the issues of anonymity and confidentiality are highly stressed. It is clearly stated that participants will be identified neither during the data analysis nor in the final report.

Upon agreement of the participation in the study, the questions and an Informed Consent form are sent along with questionnaire to be completed. Within the informed consent, the participants are informed about the researcher's purposes and research aims. Also, the potential interviewees clearly understand that to take part in the study is voluntary and they can refuse to answer the questionnaire without penalty. The interviews will be transcribed, and their identity will not appear in any form without their prior approval.

The questionnaire and recording of transcription will be stored securely in the researchers' personal computer. No identification will be used and the original materials will be destroyed after the completion of final report.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter thoroughly describes