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## The effects of key factors on parent's decision in choosing a private school and their impact on student's enrollment

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that influence parents' decisions to enroll and keep their children in private schools. The number of private schools in Lebanon has grown significantly over the past years despite evidence that academic performance is lacking and, at best, matches that of public schools; therefore, the importance of this study lies in understanding the motivations for private school enrollment. Five parents from “Collège Notre Dame du Perpétuel de Secours” were interviewed by telephone and asked to describe the importance of their school characteristics and especially how school's location, cost and quality of education had influenced their school's choice. This study will use parental attitudes and priorities towards school characteristics to help determine what motivates parents to pull children out of governmental schools and enroll them in private schools. Given that, as part of the survey, parents were asked to tell the importance of different factors that could affect their choice of private school's enrollment. Interviews with two private school – “Collège Notre Dame du Perpétuel de Secours” and “Ste. Thérèse School” – principals and administrators will also provide more data from their long experience, about factors that could influence the parent's choice of a private school.

Several researches had shown that in Lebanon, Private schools could provide more knowledge, skills development and human capabilities, better than in public schools. Therefore, parents will be looking for the best private school to ensure the best educational environment for their child. This research examines the factors considered by parents when deciding to enroll their child in private schools. Based on literature review, some eight factors have been identified, but this research only deals with three which are the school's location, its cost and its quality of education. Analysis shows that the majority of parents prefer private schools because of its very high good quality of education. Lowering private school fees or distance or raising the quality of education raises private school students' enrollments. In Lebanon, the strong demand for private schools is consistent with evidence of greater language and scientific courses achievement in private schools than in public schools, thus the academic performance of the school was placed the first in preference. The school's location including its environment and facilities is the second factor considered by parents and the third factor was the school's cost.

The major aim of this study was to examine the two following research questions:

How do the geographic location, price and quality of education affect parental decisions in choosing private schools?

How should a private school improve the factors mentioned above to increase the student's?

A literature review's based study has been approved to recognize the factors influencing the parents' decision to send their children to private school. Several studies have shown different opinion regards to the subject.

According to Rick Newberry, and based on his experiences, nine factors contribute to the enrollment growth in a private and Christian school. These factors are: leadership; quality school experience; vision and school improvement; faculty and staff; parent satisfaction; reputation; demographics, location and prices; competition; Marketing and Enrollment Plan/Strategies [1]. In addition, Newberry suggested that Quality school experience is one of the most important factors in school growth because parents are investing significant resources to give their child the best education, that's why in order to increase the school's enrollment, an integration of a high quality experience is a must. Location, demographics and the tuition price will have also a significant impact on enrollment because to grow the tuition price should be affordable to the existed families in your community and specifically in the area where the school is. Parent satisfaction will first lead to a strong retention and secondly, the satisfied parents will positively talk about your school with their friends which also increase the rate of the students' enrollment. Reputation created by the experiences of students, parents, staff, donors and graduates could also affect enrollment. Faculty and staff should be very connected with parents in a positive way, and the vision, drive and personality of the leadership will both affect the enrollment. Finally, Newberry mentioned that marketing and enrollment plan strategies will have an effective affect on the enrollment in the face of the increased competition between private schools.

As founded by West, that exam results and the reputation of schools are key features directing parents' school selections [2]. The demographics characteristics of parents such as their level of education affect their reasons in choosing the appropriate private school for their children. Thus, parent's profession, their education, the environment of education, the smaller size of classes at private schools, teacher student ratio, etc and many other factors, could influence the decision of parents in the selection of private school [3]. The study of these authors had shown eight factors influencing parent's decision in choosing private schools which are: Social Background/Status, Income Level, School Syllabus, School Environment/Facilities, School Performances, Location, Teachers' Quality and Distance.

Quantitative research can be used to identify problem based on a theory's testing, measured with numbers and analyzed using graphics, tables, etc. In contrast, Qualitative research's goal is to understand a certain human or social problem from different perspectives. The qualitative research involves talking with individuals in their ordinary location.

The use of the two methods (quantitative and qualitative research) will offer the study a quantifiable look and a more general view of a particular phenomenon.

Primary research is defined as realistic because the researcher will use scientific method to collect specific and new data for his study.

Secondary research is defined as an analysis and interpretation of primary research. Thus, this is a collecting primary research relevant to the topic and an interpretation of the primary research found, to obtain result and explain it.

Based on the above findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were made to increase the enrollment in a private school, and especially in the two chosen private schools for the study.

The sustained viability of College NDPS and Ste. Thérèse School, is extremely dependent on the degree to which these schools can adjust and effectively respond to the ever changing environment, and the scientific and technological evolution. Thus, these two private schools must compete with an ever widening variety of options open to parents for educating their children, by improving their recruitment and enrollment strategies to address not only

regional issues and concerns, but each must also address its own particular and exceptional needs. The research process undertaken pointed the importance of the school's cost, location and quality of education in increasing the school's enrollment and it had also shown the importance of the extracurricular activities and the relationship between parents, teachers and all school's staff on affecting the choice of parents when deciding which school their children should attend. Hence, these five factors were the most influential in determining enrollment trends and patterns for both private schools.

The College NDPS should do its best to provide extracurricular activities to students, such as creating sports teams like basketball team for its students. NDPS should also create a committee that organizes several activities to reinforce students' and parents' engagement with the school, and follow-up different kind of competitions prepared in Lebanon between private schools, which could increase the commitment and the motivation of the students, and make the school's name more familiar and promote its reputation.

Ste. Thérèse School should prepare financial activities to support its fund, so it could be more helpful with the parents that don't afford to pay all the tuition, and to maintain its sustainability. This school should also work on its environment by renovating its classrooms and playground, in a way to be more comfortable and attractive for students' parents.

Each of these schools should study the surrounding schools that may affect its students' enrollment, to explore what strategy is the best to take, so they can add features that give the school a unique identity and specialty.

To be more popular and well known, both studied schools should use the marketing strategy. To do so, they should create a content that attracts their targeted parents and/or students, and can be found on Google and in social media. This content should make the school's blog and website alive, and should be aiming to solve problems and answering questions that the targeted parents are searching for online. It should also contain appropriate data and general terms, to inform those who don't know about the school and that are looking for a good private school in a particular area. Moreover, the most marketing tools for today's marketing are the website and the school's facebook page, which are considered as the provider of news, activities and information about the school.

Furthermore, these schools could prepare activities in their area for example a festive day or a kermes to promote its school geographically. Many cheap forms of promotional activities could be considered by the school like newspaper inserts, brochure distribution, etc.

Finally, the principal must think out of the box and study with all the school's staff how to motivate the students, the teachers, the administrators and of course the parents, to increase their productivity and engagement to the school, which will be reflected to the community and encourage others to come and join the school.

## References

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