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A Comparative Analysis of Quality Service Education; a Case of Chipinge Urban Secondary Schools in Zimbabwe

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Abstract:

Of recent there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of privately owned secondary schools in the town of Chipinge, Zimbabwe. It is surprising that parents seem to prefer to send their children to these newly established schools instead of the already existing public secondary schools. The thrust of this paper was to carry out a comparative service quality analysis between the public and private secondary schools in this town. The study sought to establish reasons behind these two trends; the proliferation of private owned schools as well as the preference by the parents to send their children to these little known and newly established private secondary schools. Six schools (three private and the other three public) were involved in this study and respondents included 2 education officers, 6 school heads, 12 teachers, 12 parents and 12 students. These schools were purposively selected such that both private and public secondary schools were represented. The study utilised open ended questionnaires and unstructured interviews to collect data from Education Officers, school heads, teachers, parents and students. The study established that the emerging privately owned schools lack quality in terms of inputs, processes and outputs (resources, the teaching process and the results). Ironically, these schools are relatively expensive and yet parents prefer sending their children to these schools. The only reasonable explanation to such decisions by parents would be that fees are paid on a monthly basis; therefore, parents are comfortable paying fees bit by bit than paying the whole amount at once. The study therefore recommends using different quality service education monitoring instruments in both private and public schools.

1. Background

Zimbabwean education has been dominated by government schools and community schools with a number of mission schools and trust schools. In recent times there has been a proliferation of privately owned schools. The demand for education in Zimbabwe has increased especially after the demonetisation of the Zimbabwean currency and the introduction of the multi-currency regime. With the rise in demand of education, there was a corresponding rise in the private players. The emergence of private schools in Zimbabwe was a very welcome development because it expands opportunities for accessing quality education. It is then not surprising that Chipinge urban and peri-urban also experiences an increase of several private schools. These include Mvurachena Primary School, and St Albertina. Secondary schools include Chipinge Christian Community, Dottam College, Shekinah College and in 2016 Herentals Chipinge opened its doors. However, this study focused on secondary schools.

Questions have surely been asked on the nature of the quality of education offered by private schools. There have been arguments that private schools offer better quality education as compared to public schools (Baird 2009). There has been much talk about the quality of education delivery from government and many other stakeholders. On the other hand, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education minister, Dr. Lazarus Dokora has on record said that all teachers in Zimbabwe should possess the necessary educational qualifications so as to successfully discharge their duties and has also reminded those teachers without the necessary qualifications to upgrade themselves, (the Sunday Mail of 10 July 2016).

Supervisory instruments are also ready in place to ensure that the education system delivers value for money to the parents. These instruments help to safeguard the quality of education delivered by schools both private and public. Some of these instruments are Director's circular 36 of 2006 which stipulates the quantity and quality of work to be given to pupils. There are a number of other instruments that have been gazetted into policy to safeguard the delivery of quality education. Government has however come in strongly of late against private education providers by removing the teachers in these institutions from government payroll saying these private schools should pay their own teaching staff. Government is struggling to pay its workers and this move is meant to ease pressure on the fiscus even though it hampers on the quality of education delivered in private schools where the workers are paid from school coffers.

This paper is divided into a number of sections. These include literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, data analysis and discussions. Lastly, informed by findings from the study recommendations are made to education policy makers.

2. Literature Review

The idea of quality service is part and parcel of education delivery in Zimbabwe. Governments, parents and students alike, aim for quality education as business entities, schools endeavour to serve quality education. The question then is; what is quality education? People over the years have continued to look for quality of goods and service from organisations and likewise organisations have gone to great lengths to fulfil their customer's quest for quality.

UNESCO (cited in Mafa and Tarusikirwa, 2013) views quality at two levels, the individual and societal levels. At the level of the individual, quality education is:

- One which allows children to reach their fullest potential in terms of cognitive, emotional and creative capabilities. At the societal level, the education received by children should allow them to meet societal expectations. Three principles that are broadly shared and are thought to influence quality of education can be summarised as the need for more relevance, for greater equity of access and outcome and for proper observance of individual rights (UNESCO, 2005). In much current international discourse, these principles guide and inform educational content and processes (Mafa and Tarusikirwa 2013: 2478).

Government has tried to improve the quality of education over the years. Kanyongo, (2005) observes that from 1990 to 2001 government implemented reforms that focused more on the relevance and quality of education and training through new approaches to content, technologies, teaching methodologies, skills provision and through decentralisation and devolution of technical and teachers colleges into degree awarding institutions. In terms of teachers, Kanyongo (2005) further observes that the number of trained teachers increased sharply. "In 1990, about 51.48 per cent of primary school teachers were trained and by 1997 the proportion of trained primary school teachers had jumped to 77.2 per cent" (Kanyongo, 2005: 67). This development led to improved education delivery as the teachers were equipped with the requisite skills for classroom practice. However, the qualified teachers were inclined to take up jobs in towns and cities shunning rural areas where quality education remained a utopia.

A study carried by Ross and Mahlck (1990) revealed that the issue of quality education was at the centre of education even in rural schools. Ross and Mahlck (1990) further argue that results in the rural areas and run by rural district councils improved after a period of five years. They also assert that examination feedback is important as it allows schools to assess themselves especially when they are being ranked as is the case with Kenyan primary schools and is now the case with Zimbabwean schools both at primary and secondary.

In his 1990 study, Nyagura submits that there are a number of variables that should be considered in order to have quality education. Nyagura (1990) posits that the quality of the teachers and the ability of schools to retain their qualified staff, funding and learning materials, the environment at the school and the surrounding community also play a role in the access to quality education. For Nyagura (1990), those schools whose fees are high, which are mostly former group A and B schools and mission schools which have a sound financial backup are doing better than the poorly resourced mainly rural schools. Nyagura (1990) observes that the rural schools are poorly staffed with the least number of qualified teachers. Both, public and private schools are funded largely from school fees paid by parents and this leads to poor financial backgrounds. These are usually inadequate to finance

the schools thereby impacting negatively on the quality of education offered by these institutions. Another militating factor is that rural schools take the weakest students who are usually older than those in the former group A and B schools. Furthermore, the schools do not have adequate books, furniture, laboratory equipment and housing for the teachers.

Nyagura (1990: 30) also argues that rural schools are "characterised by inadequate learning resources, less qualified teachers, high staff turnover, students with lowest pass grades in grade 7 examinations, and the least conducive social and academic environments." Nyagura and Riddell (1991) are of the persuasion that the schools which produce good results are backed by a sound financial base and this is the case with most private schools compared to public schools. In the end, schools with a sound financial base provide high quality education as compared to schools with poor financial resources.

Teacher pupil ratios are critical in the provision of quality education. Masuko (2003) offers that the recommended pupil teacher ratio differs with each level at secondary school level as follows:

Form 1 and 2, 33 pupils as to 1 teacher,

Form 3 and 4, 30 pupils as to 1 teacher,

Form 5 and 6, 20 pupils as to 1 teacher, (Masuko, 2003: 17).

The teacher pupil ratio is important in measuring the quality of education offered by schools. The ratio determines the nature of attention given to individual students during lessons and amount of time spent on marking. Because of the lack of clear policy in most rural and community schools, school authorities do not have a clear picture of the number of students they should enrol. In the end school authorities enrol every student who applies for school with them despite the fact that they do not have adequate resources to deal with the huge numbers they enrol. The schools do not have enough rooms to house the students such that in the end they create classes as big as 60 students and this surely hampers on the quality of education since a class should have no more than 33 students at forms 1 and 2 as alluded to by the Sunday Mail of January 17, 2016.

Baird (2009) carried out a study to find out parent's preferences of school in India. His study established that the reason why parents choose private schools over public schools is the use of English as a medium of instruction. Whilst this is done under a backdrop of other official languages in India, English remains a favourite language with the local people for a number of reasons. Since English is

the language used by most newspapers, and this pushes up demand for schools where English is used as a medium of expression. Thus the language is useful given that the community has various languages. Also it provides political advantages to the students hence the marked preference of private schools where the English Language is used. "English provides competitive advantage: though the country has official languages at the state level" (Baird, 2009: 21).

In his observation of the preference by parents to have their children attend school at private institutions, Baird (2009: 21) argues:

- Today, English serves as the language of expertise and management in India; politicians, if they can speak good English, will often do so to assert elite status. As a result, English maintains a powerful presence among the poor of India: the vast majority of low income parents I interviewed believed that if their child can speak English, he or she would be guaranteed a middle-class job.

In his study, Baird (2009) also argues that parents choose private education because they believe that private schools provide better education and future opportunities than the government schools. He argues that there is a high demand for private schools by parents in India and because of that private schools will continue to exist. There are however no numerical relationships between the wealth of a particular community or region with the enrolment of private schools. As such, he observes that the private schools will be always there for both rich and poor Indians.

Day, et al (2014) also contend that private school pupils achieve better learning outcomes than state school pupils. A number of reasons explain this position. One of the contributing factors is that there is higher level of accountability of the teachers in the private education sector than in public schools. Many owners of the private owners expect value for their money. In this regard teachers can enhance job security by ensuring high pass rate and the teacher also has a weak job security and the best form of security is the subject pass rate which when it goes down which is not the case with public schools.

According to Day et al (2014) teaching in private schools is better in comparison to that in the public sector due to "more teacher presence" and better lesson delivery, as well as the teaching methods which seem more likely to improve the output. Private school teachers are more accountable to their employers as they have a direct relationship with the owners of the institution. More so, the private school teachers usually have less formal teaching qualifications, and this leads to them having "a weak job security; such conditions might in part explain the greater teacher effort in private schools" (Day et al 2014: 16). Thus compared to their colleagues in the public sector, they put in a lot of energy in their work so as to please the employer in order to retain their jobs.

Private schools emerged when white people pulled out their children out of former group A schools which were once a preserve for the whites and coloureds during the colonial era in Zimbabwe. Colclough, Ltifstedt, Manduvi-Moyo, Maravanyika, and Ngwata (1990: 72) argue that the move by whites "resulted in furthering elitism in education which the government was trying to eliminate".

Colclough, et al (1990) posits that quality is determined by the nature of funding that schools have. Government pays the salaries of teachers at all registered schools and authorized secondary schools and per capita grants for each school pupil. It also pays boarding grants for secondary school pupils who are boarders and provides all secondary schools with building grants covering only 5 per cent of the total capital cost of each facility. The per capita grant is grossly insufficient to purchase books and equipment required by schools. Thus, unless parents were able and willing to supplement school resources by buying additional materials, the quality of education available to their children would be seriously affected (Colclough, et al, 1990).

In their study, Colclough et al (1990) found out that the funding system was significant in determining the quality of education offered by schools. The study showed that there were wide differences in the quality of education provided which worked in correlation with the material wealth of the parents of the pupils. Nyagura (1990: 32) observes that high fee paying schools are on average more effective than the other types of secondary schools, and that former group A schools are as effective as mission schools but are more effective than rural group B and former group B urban government schools, and rural district council schools. For Colclough, et al, (1990) this created a scenario where only a few rich people have the good schools at their disposal while the rest of the pupils in Zimbabwe have to contend with the poor and numerous schools. Most children coming from poor families dropped out of school after grade seven while others fell off along the way after enrolling for form one classes.

Colclough et al (1990) also observed that teachers contributed to making schools serve quality education. For them, quality education could only be attained when teachers were trained for their job. However, in their research, Colclough et al (1990) noted that the number of untrained teachers equalled the number of trained teachers. Of the trained teachers, most of them were found in the well-financed schools leaving the poor schools with the untrained teachers. The lack of trained teachers in the poorly financed schools has a negative impact on the quality of education served in these schools. The poorly resourced schools are unable to attract trained teachers let alone retain those they have. Generally, the shortage of qualified and experienced staff affects the management and administration of the education system, and the actual delivery of instruction in the classrooms (Colclough, et al, 1990).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

This section explores the conceptual and analytic framework and the key theory is total quality management. The central objective of the paper is to examine the two types of schools, public and private and assess which type is offering quality service education in Chipinge urban at secondary level.

Total quality management (TQM) is a management approach to long-term success through customer satisfaction. In a TQM effort, all members of an organization participate in improving processes, products, services, and the culture in which they work. The methods for implementing this approach come from the teachings of such quality leaders as **Philip B. Crosby, W. Edwards Deming, Armand V. Feigenbaum, Kaoru Ishikawa, and Joseph M. Juran.**

“It is a holistic approach to long-term success that views continuous improvement in all aspects of an organisation as a process and not as a short-term goal. It aims to radically transform the organisation through progressive changes in attitudes, practices, structures and systems. TQM transcends the product quality approach, involves everyone in the organisation and encompasses its very function: administration, communications, distribution, manufacturing, and marketing, planning, and training among other elements of an organisation” (Business dictionary.com)

Oakland (2003) defines quality as “simply meeting the customer requirements”. Oakland argues that quality involves consistently satisfying the customer leading to customer loyalty. If quality is meeting the customer requirements, then this has wide implications. The requirements may include availability, delivery, reliability, maintainability and cost effectiveness, among many other features. Quality has to be managed – it will not just happen. Clearly it must involve everyone in the process and be applied throughout the organization (Oakland, 2003).

Oakland (2003) is of the view that for TQM leads to a number of benefits. These include the following:

- Enhanced customer loyalty, increased customer satisfaction and leading to new and repeat business.
- Reduction in costs through the initiatives geared at getting things right first time and cutting wastes.
- Less frustrated happier and motivated employees who transmit the pleasant feeling to customers.
- Better feedback from both internal and external customers.
- Reduced staff turnover and recruitment costs
- Enhanced corporate image. Greater pride and self-worth as reputation of organization grows.
- Large market share, lower quality costs, and higher profitability
- internal customer/supply relationship through employee participation.

The paper applies the TQM principles to interrogate provision of quality service in private and public schools in Chipinge.

3. Research Methodology

The research adopted a qualitative research approach This approach enabled the researchers to collect data on the proliferation of privately owned secondary schools in Chipinge town as well the data on quality service in private and public schools. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 2 education officers, 6 school heads, 12 teachers, 12 parents and 12 students from 3 public and 3 private secondary schools in Chipinge town. Purposive sampling is a qualitative method in which participants are selected for a specific purpose, usually because of their unique position, experience and knowledge (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007:114 Batxer and Jack, 2008). Patton (2007) concurs and adds that the focus of purposive sampling is to identify information rich sites. The study therefore selected participants on the basis of their experience in privately owned secondary schools or public schools in Chipinge town. On the whole the study sample had 44 participants.

The data was collected through in depth interviews and Focused Group Discussions. Interviews were carried out with parents, students, school heads and some teachers in both private and public schools. Teachers from both private and public schools were involved in sessions of Focussed Group Discussions. Collected data is presented as thick descriptions and emerging themes and it is analysed using the total management theory as a conceptual framework.

4. Data Presentation Analysis and Discussion

The content analysis approach was used to analyse the collected data. This analysis approach enabled the researchers to group the collected data in accordance with the views from the respondents namely headmasters, teachers, educationists, parents and students. The ideas of Total Quality Management Model were then used as evaluative tools gauge the views of the respondents in order to come up with an informed position on which schools provide more quality educational services between public and private secondary schools. Again the views of these respondents were grouped into inputs, processes and out puts as envisaged by the systems theory so as to have a lucid comparative analysis of the of private and public schools in terms of the quality of education they provide.

Educationists’ responses showed that the increase in the number of private schools in Chipinge can be attributed to a number of reasons. Some of the reasons include the fact that there are few public schools in Chipinge. Chipinge town has seen an upsurge in population and a demand in education has risen proportionally to the population growth. Available public schools have failed to absorb all the students who are in need of education hence the proliferation of private schools to accommodate the students. Another reason which explained the presence of private schools is creation of employment by the owners of the schools as well as the desire to make a profit. More so, there has been a rise in the demand for education as communities now realize that education is key in accessing employment in Zimbabwe and abroad. Many people who did not make it in schools have come back to sit for failed subjects. This has definitely increased the demand for education in Chipinge.

However, having responded to the increase in the number of private schools the educationists were of the view that, quality of education being offered by private secondary schools is compromised. The education officers also explained that most of the teachers in private schools are not qualified hence they cannot provide a service according to customer requirements and tastes as stated by the Total Quality Management principles. This was also in concurrence with the views aired by school heads and teachers from public secondary schools who said that private secondary schools employ non-qualified personnel since most of these newly established private secondary schools cannot afford to pay qualified teachers. In contrast, they pointed out that public secondary schools have better qualified personnel. In other words, their response was that most teachers in public secondary schools are trained making them better equipped to deal with pedagogical lesson delivery processes and the diverse students in their classes. All these views from the educationists, headmasters and teachers are in tandem to the ideas solicited from parents. The parents also pointed out the private

secondary schools are taught by people who are not trained teachers and they teach up to four subjects as the schools cannot take trained teachers. This is because most of most of these private schools do not have adequate resources and financial means to hire trained teachers and pay them satisfactorily. Most of the teachers in the private schools are not trained and are usually inexperienced and have no proper skills to do proper lesson delivery, as such it is this reason why such schools deemed to provide poor quality education which does not meet customer needs as envisaged by the Total Quality Management principles.

In addition to this, the educationists, school heads and teachers also said that, it is not surprising that teachers in private schools have a very large load unlike in public schools where teachers have got a comparatively smaller load in terms of number of subjects they teach thus making them more positioned to meet customer needs as explained by the Total Quality Management model. The explanation given to this is that, private schools are there to make maximum profit possible out their business hence one teacher teaches many subjects so that a given private school may have fewer teachers to pay.

However, all the respondents were of the idea that private secondary schools have got fewer children in comparison to public secondary schools. With fewer pupils, the teacher in a private school has more time for individual attention. This makes it easier for the teacher to identify weak areas for the students and assist them accordingly. This then gives the teacher to work towards the main objective of the institution which is producing high quality results. However, the major drawback is that the teachers in private secondary schools are not trained to teach hence even though they may have fewer children their lesson delivering process is not to expectation.

In addition, the educationists, school heads and teachers also responded that inputs such as text books within the private secondary schools are very few to the extent that most pupils are asked to buy their own. Comparing with public schools the educationists, school heads and teachers were of the view that public schools have relatively more text books since United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) donates a variety of text books to these schools. In terms of other learning materials in view of these respondents was that public schools have specialist's rooms like science laboratories which can cater for customer needs as put across by the Total Quality Management theory by providing wider employment prospects to students when they finish school. It is then not surprising that the quality of education from private secondary schools is comparatively poor to the quality of education from public secondary schools.

On curriculum issues educationists, school heads and the teachers were all in agreement to the effect that public schools have a wide curriculum and this makes them the schools of choice. These respondents highlighted that at these schools there are such activities as soccer or netball which are not found at private schools. Private schools in Chipinge do not include sport and cultural activities in their curriculum making public schools look far more attractive. The respondents which include school heads, teachers and parents acknowledged that some private schools may offer sporting activities but they will be fewer compared to the wide array of sporting and cultural activities offered in public schools.

The respondents also put across varying responses pertaining to the pedagogical process found in both private and public schools. Educationists, school heads as well as parents were of the view that, since private schools are employing unqualified teachers unlike public schools which employ trained teachers; it then goes without saying that their methods of teaching are flawed to achieve the intended output, that is quality education. In addition, the absence of specialist classrooms like, laboratories in private schools usually lead them to teach only general science subjects and in most cases cannot provide the level expected education in pure science subjects mainly due absence of the required materials to do so and lack of the right trained teachers who can deliver especially in these subject areas.

However, the same respondents were of the few that the process of lesson delivery in public schools given the fact that fact they have laboratories and trained manpower, is superior to that of the private schools. This can be evidenced to the comparatively better results of science subjects from public schools.

However, some respondents (students) observed that there is more security at public schools as compared to private schools. One of the respondents cited the idea that private schools influence students into joining activities that are worrying to parents or guardians like prostitution and drug abuse. Parents also argued that private schools expose children to these life experiences which make it very difficult for their children to obtain good results from such private schools.

Respondents including parents and students highlighted that there was good quality service at private schools. They said private school ferried students to and from schools with school transport which is why they like it compared to public schools. However, this is not the case with public secondary schools whose children sometimes have to walk very long distances to schools and this is against the Total Quality Model which seeks to foster customer loyalty through making sure that customers are satisfied.

In addition to this the research participants again strive to meet customer needs through creating a child friendly atmosphere at their schools. Parents prefer to send children to schools where the children feel free to allow learning to go on. The public schools were noted to be too strict. This observation was made by students perhaps because they feel the public school makes a serious demand for discipline. Private schools believe in effective administration and management. This is because they are results oriented so they put an emphasis of work output making them effective as a management system.

5. Discussion of Research Findings

From the above findings, it can be noted that the rise in private players has nothing to do with the desire to give quality education. It is clear that the private schools are not providing better education as the Chipinge community still think that public schools offer better quality education. People in Chipinge continue to be biased in favour of public education. Educationists and parents believe the rise in privately owned schools can be attributed to few public secondary schools, a growth in the school-going population coupled with repeat students leading to a failure by the public education system to absorb all would-be learners. The other reason which was given

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