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Determinants of Parents' Choice in Selection of Private Schools for Their Children in District Peshawar of Khyber Pakhunkhwa Province

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Abstract

Almost all parents want to educate their children in the best possible educational environment. Their decision to invest in children depends on a number of social, economic and cultural factors. Education in Pakistan is offered by both public and private sector educational institutions. It is free of cost in public schools whereas in private schools, the parents have to bear the financial burden. For the last three decades private sector is emerging as an important source of imparting education in Pakistan. It provides education at all levels. Many aspects regarding the education system of Pakistan have been discussed in various studies so far. However, the factors which motivate the parents to make a decision about private sector are yet to be explored.

The present study was conducted in District Peshawar to know the factors which motivate the parents to educate their children in private schools and also highlight the factors which lead parents to avoid the public sector schools. Primary data was collected for this purpose from 200 parents of secondary school students. The results were derived by using descriptive as well as quantitative tools. Binomial Logistic Model was used as quantitative tool for estimation. The regression results show that family size, education level of parents, income of parents, staff qualifications and school performance are major factors which affect parents choice in selection of private school. Medium of instruction and teacher's interest can also affect the parents' choice. About 95.5 % of the surveyed parents believed that private schools produce self-confident students. Similarly, 88.5 % were of the view that these schools have a progressive mode of education, 86 % parents avoided public schools due to unsuitable educational environment and 89.5 % due to over crowded classes.

The study suggested effective reward and punishment system in public schools, proper monitoring system for private schools, and motivation of public school teachers. It was also suggested to encourage investment in private school system.

Key words: Parents Choice, Preference of Private School, Avoid Public School, Binomial Logistic Model,

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1. Introduction

Education plays a critical role in socio-economic development of a country. It improves human capabilities as not all the human capabilities are by birth. Education accelerates economic growth through knowledge and skills development. It makes individuals confident, aware and active. Education is considered an economic good. Similarly, it is both consumer and as well as capital good as it offers utility to consumer and act as an input in production of goods (Olaniyan and Okemakinde, 2008). It develops human resources required for social and economic development. The utilitarian aspect of education provides incentive to both government and individuals to invest in education. The government provides for education through expenditure on education and facilitation of the process of education while individual's expenditure on education is shared by the parents in terms of fee structure etc.

Majority of the parents want to provide their children with the best possible educational environment. Their decision to invest in children in form of education depends on a number of social, economic and cultural factors. Education in Pakistan is offered both by public as well as private sector. It is free of cost in public schools whereas in private schools, the parents have to shoulder the finances. For the last three decades private sector is emerging as an important source of imparting education in Pakistan providing education at all levels. In recent years, the private schools have improved their quality, attracting good input through fee concession ranging from a percentage to full fee concession. These schools, on one hand are educating youth and on other hand, are emerging as an important sector for the investors interested in investment in this sector. Many aspects regarding the education system of Pakistan have been discussed in various studies so far. However, the factors which motivate the parents to make a decision about private sector are yet to be explored.

The parents usually decide to educate their youngsters in private school at the time when they are completely dissatisfied with public schools. Educational environment, teacher student ratio, parents' education, their profession and smaller size of classes at private schools are among the few reasons which help parents in selection of school. The private schools are more effective than public schools with same students and parents composition mainly due to school environment (Dronkers and Peter, 2003). School choice is highly associated with parent's occupational status. The parents with higher occupational status prefer private school over public school for their children. The school choice of parents show their satisfaction with the institute they choose. The private education can produce higher per capita income and the societies choose public education if majority of its agents are earning income below average (Glomm and Ravikumar, 1992).

This paper aims at finding out the factors which may influence the parents decision in selection of private schooling. The focus will be on secondary level schools in district Peshawar. The paper will also analyze the reasons which convince parents to avoid public sector schools. The present study will explore strengths and weaknesses of both private and public sector schools. This analysis will be beneficial not only for parents but equally for investors interested in investment in education sector. The study will also provide suggestions for improvement in quality of both public and private sector schools in Pakistan.

2. Literature Review

Bibby and Peil (1974) analyzed the secondary education in Ghana. An interesting result was that the students with fathers having higher education and job status showed no better performance in their examinations than the students with comparatively weak background. Interestingly those who passed Common Entrance Examination with highest marks were admitted to public schools while the lowest marks obtainers find place in the private schools

Arabsheibani (1988) worked on educational choice and achievement in Egypt to find the determinants of school choice at secondary level. The results revealed that students with fathers in higher occupational categories preferred private school over public school. They also tend to choose general schools rather than religious or technical education schools. Other determinants found were high social background and attendance at private schools.

Wilson *et al* ; (1992) enquired the school choice in USA. Black parents who were once major supporters of public schools were found choosing nonpublic schools for their children. Their satisfaction from public schools changed into dissatisfaction in 1960s and further in 1980s. The study concluded that black parents do not trust public schools for education of their most precious possession, their children. They believe that public schools cannot provide them quality education..

Arum(1996) concluded on the basis of his study in USA that student teacher ratio differ in public and private schools in various states in USA. It affects the student outcomes and is responsible for difference in public and private schools. .

Saporito and Annette (1999) find race as a very powerful force which can compel a family for a particular school choice in American school. The white parents prefer private schooling for their kids while unlike the white, the black parents don't show such behavior.

Hoxby (2002) found that school choice by parents increase demand for high quality of teacher's education. The parents at the time of school selection keep in mind the teachers education, institutions quality, teacher's effort and teacher's command over the subject.

Bast and Walberg (2004) investigated, can parents choose best school for their children. The results showed that most of parents keep in mind on top the academic achievement for their children long term performance. Parents have the right incentive and access to information for selection of best choice

Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) found positive and significant correlation between education and economic growth. Education produce improved citizens and helps in improvement of standard of living of people. The study recommended that in order to achieve economic growth through education, the quality of education must be very high to meet the skill demands of the economy

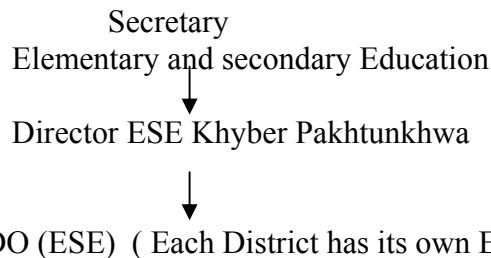
Ikoya and Oluremi (2009) examined the rural-urban disparity in private sector participation in management and provision of education in Nigeria. The results showed higher private sector participation in urban areas than rural areas. The study suggested a more effective private sector programme to enhance its participation in provision and management of primary education.

Lai *et al*; (2009) carried out an interesting study in Beijing regarding parent's choice of school selection. This study took data from 4717 students who were just entering the middle schools in Beijing. This study enquired whether wrong selection made by parents can affect the child performance. The results show that due to parent's errors in school selection a number of students were admitted to lower quality schools and this affected their examination results. The study suggested support to parents in efficient selection of school.

In a nutshell, the present study can be differentiated from most of the studies in the sense that it will use descriptive methodology as well as Binomial logistic regression model for estimation purpose. This study will analyze all socio-economic factors which affect the school choice on part of parents.

3. Education Profile Peshawar

Peshawar is the capital and largest city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. The Education set up in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been divided into two departments known as Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) Department, and Higher Education Department. The ESE department is the administrative department of all schools in the province. The higher education department is the controlling authority of colleges. So the concerned department of the present study is Elementary and secondary education with following hierarchical set up



Secretary Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is administrative head and decision making authority of all schools in public and private sector at all levels. Secretary is supported by Director, ESE Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Director by Executive District Officers in all districts.

The private schools in Peshawar are registered and affiliated by a regulatory authority of BISE Peshawar. They are governed by the rules and regulations of Elementary and Secondary Education department. Most of the schools follow the national curriculum with English as medium of instruction. The private sector schools offer education at both primary and secondary level. There are 26793 public schools in NWFP (ASC, 2008-9). In Peshawar, there are 1300 public and 1116 private schools as shown in table I. out of public schools 1025 are primary, 146 are middle and 129 are high /higher secondary schools. These schools impart education to both girls and boys. In private sector, there 328 primary, 471 middle and 317 high schools.

Table I Schools in Peshawar district

S.NO	Level	Public schools	Private Schools
1	Primary	1025	328
2	Middle	146	471
3	High/Higher Secodary	129	317
	Total	1300	1116

Source : ASC 2008-9 and BISE Peshawar

4. Data and Methodology

4.1 Data

The data used in this study is primary in nature. A questionnaire was developed in consultation with experts to cover the objectives of the study. The data was collected from parents of the secondary school students of district Peshawar. A total sample of 200 parents was drawn purposively from 40 secondary schools of Peshawar District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province during September-October 2009. These schools included both, male and female schools. Similarly the data was collected from rural as well as urban schools. The schools related data was collected from the principals of the schools in study area. The Other related data was collected from EDO Peshawar as well as from Education Management Information System (EMIS) government of NWFP.

4.2 Methodology

The parents' choice in selection of private schools depends on a number of factors. In this study the parents' choice has been treated as dependent variable. It has been taken as dummy variable with binary values 1 and 0. Where '1' stands for choice of private school while '0' means avoiding private school. Income, education, family size, dissatisfaction with public schools, schools performance and medium of instruction, staff qualification and lack of teacher's interest are major variables which are expected to affect the parents' decision in selection of public or private school. Income has been taken as independent variable which can affect the parent's decision because choice of private school involves monetary contribution for children education. Parents' education is also believed to play its role in selection of a proper school as educated parents are more aware of importance of education and will leave no stone unturned in provision of quality education to their kids. Similarly if people are not satisfied with public schools, they will have no other option than the private schools. So dissatisfaction with public schools is another important determinant affecting parents decision in selection of school.

The dependent variable in this study is in qualitative form with two choices, Yes and No. Therefore logistic regression model will be used in this study which is based on the theoretical framework developed by Arab (1998). Suppose that school choice is denoted by 'Y' which has binary values. When Y=1, it shows the parents choice in favour of private school and so on. If 'p' is the probability that the parents choose private school then 1-p will be the probability of choosing public school. This means that p/1-p will be the odd ratio in favour of private school selection.

As 'p' is the probability that Y=1 then

$$P=(Y=1)=f(Z \beta)$$

Where

Z= Vector of independent variables which affect school choice

B= Vector of coefficients

Therefore we can write

$$Y = \ln(p/1-p) = Z \beta$$

As in the present study $Z = f(I, Ed, Fs, DPbS, SP, WQS, MOI, LTI)$

So the empirical form of the model becomes

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 I + \beta_2 Ed + \beta_3 Fs + \beta_4 DPbS + \beta_5 SP + \beta_6 WQS + \beta_7 MOI + \beta_8 LTI + U_i$$

Where

I = Parent's income

Ed = Education level of parents

Fs = Family Size

DPbS= Dissatisfaction with public sector schools

LTI = Lack of teacher's Interest

MI= Medium of Instruction

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1. Regression Results

In the Present study, the major aim was to find out the factors which motivate the parents to choose private school instead of public sector school to educate their children. The dependent variable was school choice. The results were derived with the help of software "SPSS" and "STATA 9". Family size, Parents education, Income of parents, dissatisfaction with public schools, lack of teacher's interest and medium of instruction were the explanatory variables of the study. The parents Education was divided into secondary school certificate (SSC), FA, BA and MA. The results have been displayed in the following Table. II.

Table II: Results of Binomial Logistic Regression Model with school choice as Dependent variable

Variable	coefficient	St.Error	Z	p	95% Conf. Interval	
Fs	-.2560612	.1050532	-2.44	0.015	-.4619617	-.0501608
FSSC	.8643978	1.172194	0.74	0.461	-1.433061	3.161856
FBA	-.8176198	1.117589	-0.73	0.464	-3.008054	1.372815
FMA	3.641776	1.667232	2.18	0.029	.3740609	6.909492
IG1	4.123182	1.321101	3.12	0.002	1.533871	6.712493
IG2	2.564349	1.119128	2.29	0.022	.3708986	4.7578
IG3	1.918837	1.378334	1.39	0.164	-.7826476	4.620322
DPbS	2.584606	1.032935	2.50	0.012	.56009	4.609122
WQS	2.800906	.8728252	3.21	0.001	1.0902	4.511612
SP	2.654014	1.075892	2.47	0.014	.545305	4.762723
LTI	-.0260372	.9895758	-0.03	0.979	-1.96557	1.913496
MOI	-1.351603	1.208558	-1.12	0.263	-3.720334	1.017127
Cons	-2.113168	1.980193	-1.07	0.286	-5.994274	1.767938

Number of obs = 200 LR chi2(12) = 63.79
Pseudo R2 = 0.5280 Prob > chi2 = 0.0000

The regression results show that father education level does affect the decision of school choice made by the parents. The three levels of education SSC, BA and MA emerged as determinants of school choice. The parents with SSC level of education showed positive impact on parents' choice however the result was not statistically significant. Education level at BA also showed its effect but with unexpected opposite sign. The parents with MA level Education showed a significant positive relationship with the school choice which shows that highly educated parents strongly prefer private sector to educate their offspring's. Family size affects almost all decision made by the households. The regression results show a negative significant relationship between the family size and school choice. It indicates that the higher the family size, the lower will be tendency to choose private school.

Private sector education system places the cost of education on the parents of the students; therefore income of parents was expected to have strong relationship with the decision regarding school choice. The parents were divided into four groups on the basis of their income. Parents with monthly income up to Rs.10, 000 per month were placed in income group 1 and with monthly income above Rs.10, 000 but up to Rs.20, 000 were placed in group 2. Group 3 consisted of parents having their income in the range of 20,001 to 30,000 rupees and group 4 were those parents who earn more than 30,000 rupees per month. Income group 1 and income group 2 showed significant impact on the parents' decision regarding the school choice while income group 3 showed positive but statistically insignificant effect on school choice decision. This shows that those parents having their income up to Rs.20, 000 per month keep in mind the income factor while making school choice while the parents having their income above 20, 000 per month give little weight to income as compared to other factors.

The results showed that a great majority of parents seemed dissatisfied with the public sector schools due to various reasons. The dissatisfaction of parents from public sector schools emerged as a significant factor of school choice. The dissatisfaction from public sector school was found positively associated with the decision of choosing private school. The result is significant at 5 % level of significance. Higher qualification of teachers of private schools also showed positive and significant relationship with school choice indicating the fact the more qualified the teachers in private school, more will be attraction for the parents.

Similarly lack of teacher's interest remained insignificant determinant of school choice. The sign of parameter was as expected means the negative sign of the parameter shows that lack of teacher interest negatively affects the choice of private school. The results further show that choice of medium of instruction in a school also affects the school choice of private school but not significantly.

5.2. Survey Results

The surveyed schools were both from rural as well as from urban areas.48.5% schools were located in rural while 51.5 % were in urban areas. Interestingly 50.5% of children of surveyed parents were students of 9th class while 49.5 % were in 10th class. The survey included students of both sexes, 67% students were male and 33% were female.

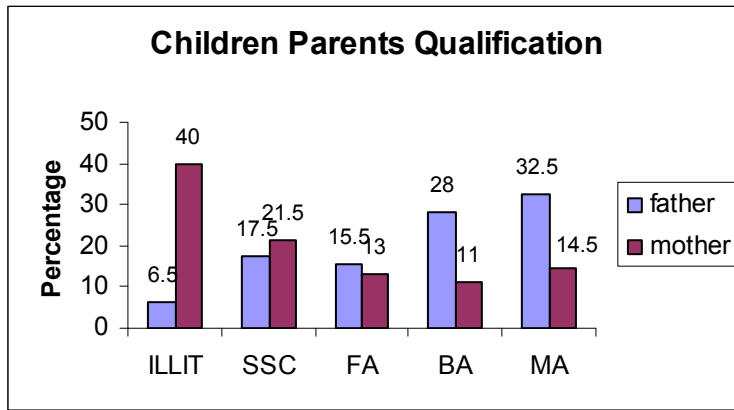
No of Children

The total number of children and number of school going children also affect the parents' decision of school choice. The survey also covered this aspect. The surveyed parents had number of children ranging from 1 to 8. 39 % of the surveyed parents had 2 children, 28 % had 3 and 26 % had 4 children. Out of total parents 2 % had 6 to 8 children and 6% of the parents had only one child. Similarly the number of school going children can affect the parents decision. 50%of the respondents had 2 school going children. Out of the surveyed parents 22 % had 3 and 13 % had 4 school going children.

Parents Qualification

Education of parents is considered as one of the most important variables which creates awareness regarding the level and standard of children education. Out of the total 200 parents, majority of the parents were educated. However they differed in level of education. More than 90% of fathers and 60% of mothers were educated. Out of surveyed respondents 17.5 % of fathers and 21.5 % of mothers had education up to Matric. This shown in Figure.1

Figure . I : Parents Qualifications



The figure shows that 15.5 % of fathers and 13% of mother were F.A. out of total parents 28 % fathers were BA and 32.5 % were MA. Similarly 11% of mothers had education level of BA and 14.5 % had MA as basic qualification.

Parents Profession

In order to find out the determinants of parents choice regarding the education of their children, the profession of parents was also considered in this study. Among the parents majority of the fathers (31.5 %) were government servants. 28 % of fathers were from business sector and 2.5 % were from farming profession. Among the mothers majority of the mothers (66.5% were housewives and 27.0 % were from teaching profession as shown in Table. III

Table. III: Parents Profession

Profession	Father (%)	Mother (%)
GOVERNMENT SERVANT	31.5	3.5
PRIVATE	22.5	3.0
TEACHING	15.5	27.0
BUSINESS	28.0	-
house wife	-	66.5
Farming	2.5	-
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Income of Parents

Income is one of the most important factors which affect most of human social and economic decisions. The present study also addressed this factor. Majority of the parents(40%) had their income in the range of 11000 to 20000 rupees. Out of total respondents 29% had their income between 21000 and 30000 rupees. 13.5 % had income in the range of 31000 to 40000 and 4.5% had their income over 40000 per month. The average monthly income of the surveyed parents is given in Table.IV.

Table. IV. Income of Parents

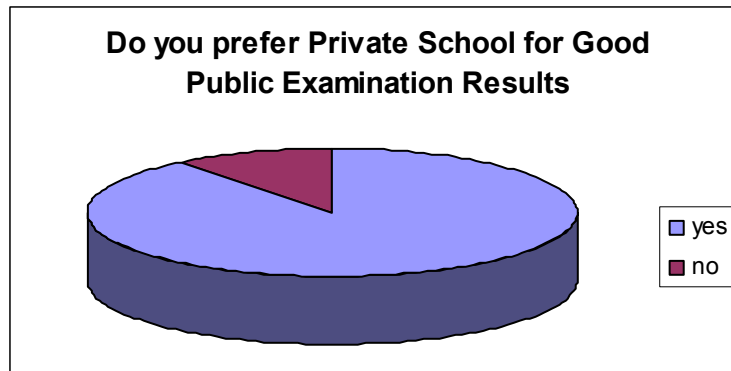
Income	Frequency	Percent
10000 and Below	25	12.5
11000-20000	81	40.5
21000-30000	58	29.0
31000-40000	27	13.5
41000 & above	9	4.5
Total	200	100.0

Source : Field Study

Good Public Examination Results

The school level ends at Secondary School Certificate (SSC) in Pakistan and the choice of future profession is mostly based on the results of the SSC examination. Due to this reason, majority of parents prefer private school as shown in figure. II.

Figure. II: Parents preference of school



Source: Field Survey

Parents Education at Private school

Educated parents are comparatively well aware of significance of good schooling especially if they have been themselves students of both types of schools. The survey results clearly show that this issue was also undertaken in the present study. Out of total parents most of the parents 68.5 % had never been students of private school during their educational career. 10% of fathers and 16.5 % mothers studied in private schools. Interestingly 5 % of parents (both mother and father) had been students of private school. When the parents were asked about the reasons for preferring the private school, the results were very interesting. The results are shown in Table. V.

Table. V: Reasons for choosing Private School

Question	Yes		No	
	No	Percentage	No	Percentage
your child has friends going to same school	28	14	172	86
good pupil care	172	86	28	14
Progressive style of education	177	88.5	23	11.5
welcoming atmosphere for visitors	120	60	80	40
Having brothers or sisters at the same school	94	47	106	53
Private schools produce confident pupils	189	94.5	11	5.5
Satisfied with existing fee structure	130	65	70	35
Activity-based learning	141	70.5	59	29.5

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that 86% of the parents rejected the claim that they preferred the private school because their child had friends going to same school. As expected good pupil care emerged as an important determinant of school choice and 86 % of parents selected the private school for their children. Moreover, 88.5 % of parents selected

private school due progressive style of education and 60% parents did so due to suitable environment for visitors. Number of children in same school also attract parents for selection of same private school because they find fee concession, easy to pick kids and easy to drop. The survey results show that about 47 % of total respondents have chosen a particular school because their other children were also students of same school.

It is generally believed that due small class size and progressive mode of education, the private sector educational institutions promote overall development of child which creates self-confidence in child. This view was supported by more than 94 % of surveyed parents. Similarly 130 out of 200 parents seemed to be satisfied with existing fee structure and 70.5 percent of the respondents favoured the view that the learning in the private sector schools is activity-based.

When the parents were asked why they avoid a public sector school, they presented various reasons as shown in Table. VI

Table.VI : Reasons for Avoiding Public School

Question	Yes		No	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
Less qualified teachers in these schools	67	33.5	133	66.5
Less educational facilities	132	66	68	34
Unsuitable educational environment	172	86	28	14
Lack of teacher's interest	168	84	32	16
Over crowded classes	179	89.5	21	10.5
Unsuitable teaching methods	151	75.5	49	24.5
Poor discipline	177	88.5	23	11.5
You do not like the medium of instructions	158	79	42	21
Less attention on social, moral and physical development of child	188	94	12	6

Source: Field survey

Teacher qualification and command over subject taught is one of the most important determinants of the quality of teaching. Surprisingly, 66.5 % parents believed that the teachers in public sector schools are highly qualified as compared to the private sector school teachers but still they prefer the private school. This means that the parents keep in mind a number of factors while choosing a school for the future of their children. 66 % of parents believed that public sector schools have comparatively less educational facilities. The quality of education depends to a great extent on the environment of the educational institution. Out of total 200 respondents, 172 respondents avoided public sector schools due to unsuitable educational environment.

The 89.5 % of parents think that the classes are overcrowded in government schools while 84 % parents have criticized the teachers of these schools for not taking interest in teaching and children. One of the major expectations of the majority of parents from the educational institutions is to help child adopt proper discipline. The parents keep this factor especially in mind while admitting their children. The survey results revealed the

fact that 88.5 percent of respondents avoid the public sector educational institutions for poor discipline. The teaching methods also affect the standard of teaching and 75.5 % of parents consider the teaching methods in public sector schools being unsuitable.

The medium of instruction is also a key determinant of school choice. Unfortunately, the government of Pakistan is badly failed to adopt a single medium of instruction in educational institutions even after a lapse of 60 years of independence. The national language Urdu is officially declared medium of instruction in the academic institutions but ironically, during the process of employment, those candidates are preferred who have strong command over the English. That is the reason that 79 % of surveyed parents preferred private school due to English as medium of instruction.

Education not only promotes the cognitive development of children but also add its share in the social, moral and physical development of children. The survey results show that 94 % of parents keep in mind this factor also while choosing school.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study was carried out in District Peshawar of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The aim of the study was to find out the factors which motivate parents to choose a particular school for their children. Both descriptive as well as quantitative techniques were used to derive the results. It can be concluded on the basis of the results of the study that family size, parents' education, income of parents, teacher qualification, school performance and dissatisfaction from particular schools are the most important variables which affect the parents' decision regarding selection of public or private school in the study area.

Teacher's interest also plays an important role in parents' choice and lack of teacher's interest is the factor which leads parents to avoid public or private school. Medium of instruction also emerged as a determinant of parents choice but not statistically significant. The examination results especially at secondary school certificate level also affect the parents' choice as revealed by the survey results that majority of parents preferred private school due to good public examination results. 88.5 % parents in Peshawar went for private schools due to its progressive style of education. The parents also expect from the school apart from education that the educational institution may make the children confident. 94.5 % of the parents during the survey favoured the view that private schools produce confident students.

The study found that lack of educational facilities, unsuitable educational environment, lack of the teacher's interest, over crowded classes, unsuitable teaching methods, poor discipline and less attention to the overall development of child as major reasons for the parents avoiding the public sector school.

The following recommendations are hereby made on the basis of the study.

1. Private sector play an important role in provision of educational facilities, therefore private sector investment in education should be encouraged and the process of legal documentation may be made easy for the investors.
2. The public sector school teachers should be motivated to take interest in students collectively as well as individually as public sector is the major supplier of educational facilities to common masses. Reward and Punishment can be an affective tool for this purpose.

3. The classes in public schools are mostly over crowded and it becomes impossible for the teachers to concentrate on the overall development of each student. Therefore, opening of new schools and starting double shift in public sector schools is suggested to reduce the class strength.
4. Teacher training with updated teaching methods and tools may hopefully improve the conditions of public schools.
5. The improvement of discipline in both public and private secondary schools needs to be prioritized.
6. The government needs to figure out the root causes of poor results, consequently followed by the adaptation of carefully designed suitable proper strategies to address the problem of poor results.
7. The monitoring system for private sector schools should be made effective as a large number of private sector schools in Peshawar do not fulfill the required standard.

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