The Perceptions of Parents and Students Towards Implementation of Fully Privately Run Public Schools in Malaysia

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Abstract: The National Education Blueprint (2013-2025) launched in 2012 that forms eleven (11) shifts to reform the national education system to attain desired student outcomes and be comparable to international education standard. Among the strategies highlighted by the ministry of education in realising this aspiration is to procure the private sectors involvement. Presently, the involvement by the private sector whilst the trust school, in Malaysia is considered as a “weak form public-private partnership model” and it was argued to has “lacks of scalability”. The “strong form public-private partnership model” is proposed to be deliberated. Therefore, this study aims to examine the perception of parents and students toward implementing “strong form public-private partnership model” or in this study known as fully privately run public schools (FPRPS) in urban area, Malaysia. The study was performed using quantitative approaches through structural self–administrated closed ended questionnaire survey method. Two sets of questionnaires were distributed to parents and students of 13 schools in three districts Bangsar-Pudu in Kuala Lumpur Federal territory, Hulu Langat and Petaling Utama in Selangor Darul Ehsan. The finding indicates most of the parents are ready and willing to accept the FPRPS implementation. They perceive the implementation of FPRS could offers huge potential benefits to their children. These includes improvement in students’ skill, academic performance, infrastructures, facilities, and efficiency in learning. Nevertheless, those potential benefit are not the only dimension highlighted by the parent and students, high school fees is perceived to be imposed to the students which may give impact to the lower income students on access to education. Therefore, careful attention need to be taken to avoid any exacerbated inequalities that may cause from FPRPS implementation. Appropriate strategic framework and regulation of FPRPS need to be carefully examined to minimize challenges in managing cost-quality trade-off problem in education.

INTRODUCTION

The effort for ensuring a quality of education and lasting service has appeared to examine the involvement of private sectors in the context of financing support and sharing their area of core expertise in raising education system standard (Patrinos, 2007; Genevois, 2008). This initiative of partnerships is commonly referred as public-private partnerships.
(PPP). Given the background, smart PPP takes place when agencies or companies share expertise, adopting experience or products in a field that has proven to be successful and pertinent ((Draxler, 2013). In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education has encouraged the involvement of private sectors in assisting the education sector toward achieving the ideals of school for the needs of the 20th century. The National Education Blueprint (2013-2025) had been launched in 2012 that forms eleven (11) shifts to reform the national education system to attain desired student outcomes and be comparable to international education standard (Jabarullah and Hussain, 2018). Among the strategies highlighted by the ministry of education in realising this aspiration is to procure the private sectors involvement. As at to date, it has seen a growing involvement of private sectors in education in Malaysia and this has been hailed as a crucial effort in the move to expand and enhance the superiority of education. Several form of private sectors involvement that has been embraced in Malaysia include the formation of Trust School through Yayasan Amir programme, Adopted school, one off sponsorship and CSR programme. Furthermore, Hamilton (2014) reported that the involvement of private sectors particularly under the initiative of Trust School which involved selected government primary school has proven to be successful in delivering higher quality of education and teaching approach. However, Hamilton (2014) argue that the present involvement by the private sector whilst the trust school, in Malaysia is considered as a “weak form public-private partnership model” and has “lacks of scalability”. In which, the present trust school programme is fully funded by the private sector particularly, Government Linked Companies (GLCs) through Yayasan AMIR’s intervention programme. This may constrains the ministry of Education(MOE) to transform many other lowest performing school in Malaysia as the ministry has to rely the fund from private sectors. Given that in mind, MOE might consider to looks a step further on “strong form public-private partnership”, urging fully involvement of private sector in the operation or management of the schools as a possible way to improve the standard of teaching and learning in the government schools. This is to execute the Ministry’s plan to expedite the involvement of private sectors and secure right sponsors for the Public Private Partnership Initiative which in line with MEB 2013 – 2025. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to examine the perceptions and expectations of parents and students towards the initiative of “strong form public-private partnership” or in this study will use the term of “fully privately run public schools” (FPRPS) in urban area, Malaysia. This study is organized as follows, Section 2 consecutively discusses the literature review, Section 3 discusses the methodology and data description of this study, Section 4 highlights the estimation results and finally, Section 5 present recommendation derived from the study and the conclusion of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW
The total contribution of private companies in helping the education sector hit hundreds of millions of ringgit since it was introduced in Malaysia. The Ministry of Education Malaysia sees this development as a positive indicator towards strengthening the nation’s education and making it a smart partnership in education. The 9th shift of the National Education Blueprint (2013 - 2025) stipulates that involvement of parents, communities and the private sector needs to be expanded. The current educational environment demands engagement from parents, communities and the private sectors to actively promote student and school performance as well as create students who can contribute to the community when they graduate. (Komuniti
Segamat, 2017). It is empirically evidenced that public schools with private operations tend to improve student performance (Schütz, West, & Woessmann, 2007).

The results from US and UK yielded significant improvement of student outcome such as their performance from an operationally-run private sector of the public schools. Similarly, According to World Bank (2003), when the public school is run by the private school, the decisions made are closer to the beneficiary. Meaning that, experts from the organization are being utilized and innovative instructional and management practices are derived. This will transform the education system right from the beginning. This could be an improvement to the traditional educational system with the educational service specialist are given autonomy in running the school (which includes autonomy in pedagogy methods decision, autonomy in finance, and autonomy in human resource management) that could provide better quality of education. This is one of the success factors in improvement of the academic rates of the public schools which are operated by the private specialist despite having lower cost (Allcott & Ortega, 2007; Barrera-Osorio 2007). Besides having an open enrolment and free education, the schools are also given the autonomy to provide a specialized curriculum to target specialized populations such as potential dropouts or special needs students (Hoxby & Rockoff, 2004). This also implicates student selection at different levels. This new type of school will also provide more school choices to the public. The other part is the accountability of the private sector towards the parents. The parents are given the choice on where to school their children, therefore, putting pressure on the private sector to increase enrolment and improve quality of education at their school. This will shift the attention of accountability from the government to the parents. As a result, this will facilitate in developing innovative approaches in learning (Hanushek et al., 2007; Hoxby, 2000).

Overall, Public-Private Partnership offer an opportunity for overcoming some of the critical challenges and for developing the higher education subsector. Partnerships in education could support the affiliated systems between private sector and ministry of education in improving the quality and standard of education (Bass, 2010).

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study use quantitative method, Using stratified sampling and Area Sampling Technique (Salem et al., 2016). Two sets of questionnaires were developed for the survey, which the first set is for students and the second set is for parents. The questionnaire for students was designed to measure the student satisfactions towards schools environment and facilities. The questionnaire for students consists of 3 parts, part A, part B and part C. Part A is on demographic profile of the students including age, sex and race. Part B is on the student satisfaction towards their present teachers, environment and facilities of the schools. Part C is student’s suggestion toward having conducive environment and facilities according to their priority. There were 402 completed questionnaires gathered in the survey. Whilst, the Questionnaire for parents was designed to determine the parents’ perception and expectation towards FPRPS. Questionnaire for parents was designed in 4 parts, part A, part B, part C and part D. Part A is on the respondents profile. Part B is on the parents’ perception towards the teaching and learning, school facilities, parents and teachers relationship. Part C is on the parents’ expectation on the FPRPS initiative and part D is their suggestion.
toward curriculum, co-curriculum activities, conducive learning environment and management of the schools. About 169 completed questionnaires collected in the survey. The questionnaires were distributed in 13 schools at the 3 districts, Wilayah Bangsar-Pudu in Kuala Lumpur Federal territory, Hulu Langat and Petaling Utama.

**EMPIRICAL RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The demographic profile of the students was measured through age, gender, race, father’s and mother’s education. In summary, the dominant characteristics observed in the student sample are as followed: age 14 years old (52%); female (59%); Malay (59%). For parent demographic profile, age, gender, race, and family monthly income were observed. The dominant demographic profile for parent is as followed: 46 to 50 years old (43.2%); female (72.2%); Malay (70.4%); and family monthly income from RM4,000 to RM6,999 (50.3%).

**Student Satisfaction Survey**

From the result of the student satisfaction survey, 90% and above said they are proud to be a student of their schools and happy to be in the schools. They adore their teachers, and enjoy to study at their present school. More than 80% of students agree that their school provide excellent teachers; more than 70% of students agree that their schools’ libraries are favourable that sufficient for their reference and reading materials; more than 60% of the students agree that their schools are safe and secured. More than 50% agree that their school buildings are clean and beautiful. However, only 40% agree that their schools’ sport facilities are interesting for indoor and outdoor activities.

![Figure 1: Student Satisfaction toward their present school](image1)

![Figure 2: Student Satisfaction towards School facilities and environment](image2)

Student’s perception toward the importance of education and curriculum was also analysed in this study. Figure 3 presented the overall finding of the Student’s perception toward the importance of education and curriculum. More than 90% of the students agree that the knowledge they obtain in school are important for their future career and life. This will help them to be a better person. Whilst, more than 80% agree that the syllabus and curriculum are worthwhile which they have possessed the useful skills. Student satisfaction towards their achievement was also measured. Over 90% of students agree that they have to study hard in order to achieve best result in their examination. Meanwhile, about 60% students felt that they just achieve satisfactory standard in their learning, and know how to cope with task given to them. The students were also asked to rank from...
1 to 8 on from the most important to the least important on the characteristics of the school. The students ranked highly dedicated teachers as the most important factor, followed by good school discipline, conducive learning environment, efficient school administration, excellent student performance, excellent curriculum and co-curriculum, school recognition and finally diversity. Some of the central recommendation given by the students toward improving the present school environment are to have conducive canteen which many different kind and healthier food are served to the students, better infrastructure and facilities are among their interest, which enough facilities for students to perform their indoor and outdoor activities, quality furniture are provided to make students really enjoy in their learning.

![Figure 3: Student’s perception toward the importance of education and curriculum](image)

Parent’s Perception Toward Present Teaching and the FPRPS Implementation

Regarding the perception of parents on present teaching and learning, more than 50% agree that the school is offering a high quality of education. Meanwhile, more than 40% of the parents believed that the teachers are doing a good job in teaching, the teachers are committed to teaching, the teaching strategies are innovative, and the relationship between the teachers and students are very good. In terms of ranking of the most important aspects of the school, the parents ranked school administration as a top priority, followed by dedicated teachers, school discipline, curriculum and co-curriculum, conducive environment, excellent performance, school recognition, and cultural diversity as a least priority. Figure 4 below summarizes the results.

![Figure 4: Parents Perception towards Teaching and Learning](image)

With regards to the perception of parents on the implementation of FPRPS, most of the parents expressed their readiness and willingness in accepting the FPRPS’s implementation. Figure 5 below summarizes the overall perception of parents on the FPRPS’s implementation. They perceived the implementation of the FPRPS would improve the quality of education, the learning delivery approach will be effective and efficient. Holistic education system would be operated in this initiative. Moreover, the parents perceived, in the classroom the medium of learning will be in English with national identity preservation and foresee there will be some modification and improvement in the syllabus. However, the school fee is also one of the top concern for parents in FPRPS’s implementation. Most of the parents anticipate there will be high fee imposed as a trade-off for quality services and education from this initiative. They suggested the implementation of FPRPS should not burden the parent and makes parents feel more relax with this new initiative. Some of the parent perceived this implementation only will serve the
higher and middle class income parent, not the lower income parent if the fee is set as higher.

Figure 5: Parents’ Perception on FPRPS

CONCLUSION

The aims of this study is to examine the student’s perception toward quality education of their current school and parent’s perception toward the implementation of FPRPS initiative in Malaysia. From the survey conducted, although the students are satisfied with their present schools in term teachers and learning environment, the finding reveal there are some concern highlighted by the students that need to be considered in order to attain higher quality of current education environment. Some concern addressed are to have more conducive learning infrastructure and facilities. As for parents, the study reveals that the parents expressed their readiness and willingness in accepting the FPRPS initiative in Malaysia. They believe the implementation of FPRPS could contribute to improve quality of current education system and environment. They also believe with the improvement of the quality of services and education system could improve the students’ achievement. The quality of administration, dedicated teacher, discipline, curriculum, co-curriculum, conducive environment are the main factors the parent concern the most. Imposing fee of FPRPS’ implementation is also one of the top concern highlighted by the parents. They perceived when public school is fully operated by the private sectors, higher school fee will be imposed to the students. This however, may jeopardize the principle of equality of educational opportunities, in which students from lower income family who cannot afford to pay higher school fee will be excluded to access to education through FPRPS’ initiative. Therefore, it is worthwhile to bear in mind, careful attention need to be taken to avoid any exacerbated inequalities that may cause from FPRPS implementation. The happiness and wellbeing of the society need to be reflected and it should be implemented on a non-discriminatory basis. Appropriate strategic framework and regulation of FPRPS need to be carefully examined to minimize challenges in managing cost-quality trade-off problem in education. The finding of this study is expected could assist the policy makers to develop strategic framework if FPRPS initiative is intended to be implemented.

Although this research was carefully prepared and planned, there are still aware of its limitations and shortcomings. The population of the experimental group is small, only 402 students, 169 parents involved in this study (Salem et al., 2018). This number might not represent the majority of the students and parents of the schools in Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan. Perhaps future study can increase the number of respondents for “wide geographical areas” and different target of respondent such as teachers, regulator and potential private sectors.

REFERENCE


