KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS’ CHOICE OF SCHOOL FOR THEIR CHILDREN

A fascinating study has recently been published in Malaysia titled, “Factors Influencing Parents’ Decision in Choosing Private Schools.” At Caloundra City Private School, we found it rather interesting indeed, exploring many ideas that could potentially be implemented and understood at a universal level. To read the article in full, you can access it here. The paper identifies several factors that influence parents’ decisions in selecting a Private School for their children, including:

Social Background and Status

Socioeconomic indicators are a large contributing consideration experienced by parents when deciding on the right school to send their children. Indicators of social background include:

- The status composition of parents’ education;
- Parents’ occupational status;
- Income; and
- Family material possessions; and

All of these factors influence a parents’ satisfaction with their choice of school for their children, as they consider the career status options likely to eventuate for their child (particularly as a direct result from their schooling experiences) and their long term well-being.

This research indicates that there is social class ‘creaming’ or conglomeration, as parents with wider social networks and more access to information are more likely to actively participate in the selection process. Income level becomes an important factor which affects the parents’ choice in their children’s education, due to the level of financial contribution towards quality schooling.

School Syllabus

Subjects offered by Private Schools may differ from that of a Public School, or even amongst individual Private Schools. According to this research, the differences in vocational subjects offered is a key indicator of the schools’ capacity to prime their students for further study (i.e. tertiary university studies). Schools with an emphasis on university actively help their students pave their future career path.

Many parents choose a school for their child based on religious factors, and this can also influence course offerings. Non-denominational schools may not offer and/or use valuable curriculum time in ‘religious education’ subjects, or worship services. Whilst religion is important to many, the emphasising of this factor when selecting schools differs from one family to another; it is a matter of personal preference.

School Environment and Facilities

The facilities on offer to students and the state of the school grounds are also another strong influence on a parent’s choice of school. Generally speaking, school buildings are favoured on a
well located, accessible and appealing site. This will include the facilities and surrounding environment provided for students to concentrate, learn, and play. The significance in providing a profound learning culture in a school and for the child are of paramount importance to many parents.

A highly valued educational environment is one that has a strong and complex organisational structure of influential education providers and their founding relationships:

- At the top, school management and leadership (i.e. the Principal is an influencer of school culture);
- School organisation and class management (i.e. in the respectful and vital relationships in communications between individual students and their Teacher(s), including Teachers’ quality, experience and effectiveness);
- At the foundation, the school is not a place that focuses only on academic outcomes, but also highlights the aspects of personal and social development among peers; a school must include the elements of convenience, safety, and desirability.

School Performances

There is a clear link between a schools’ student performance and environment; parents are likely to send their children to a Private School based on the academic performance of the students at that school. NAPLAN testing results of students in Australia are portrayed on the MySchool website, aiming to promote transparency of academic outcomes and parent choice to promote quality schooling. It seems that the most valuable feature in the MySchool website is the ‘Learning Gains’ section which shows in detail the levels of learning in numeracy, reading and writing students at a single school have gained over a two year period. However, it is important to note that the data does still need to be ‘read’ carefully, as gains are larger for lower performing students than higher achievers.

Quality of Education

Throughout many industrialised countries, Private Schools are expected to provide a better quality of education than Public Schools (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005). Nurahimah (2010) stated that the quality of supervision can either increase or decrease a Teachers’ efficacy – the right balance needs to be achieved for optimal results. Certainly, Private Schools have greater autonomy and immediacy in influencing Teacher effectiveness, professional learning, and the mutually respectful quality of Teacher and student relationships. These factors are the key to providing quality learning environments for children.

Proximity and Locality

Parents often select a school due to its accessibility. It is important for parents to be involved with their children’s education because the road between school and home is frequently traversed. In addition, research respondents from this study who admit the importance of location, are essentially people who need to have necessary resources to travel back and forth or people who stay far away from school location.
At Caloundra City Private School, our Mission is to provide an outstanding educational environment that is vibrant and exciting; a place of exceptional standards in a nurturing setting with emphasis on the care and attention of each individual student. Every student matters as we strive for the very best learning environment and outcomes for each precious child.

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