

CONUNDRUM OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN SINGAPORE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the prevalence of private commercial schools in Singapore, many of which may not have met the regulatory requirements if strict monitoring actions were to be applied to them. The majority of private commercial schools in Singapore are small and have no proper facilities including libraries, student recreation facilities and computer labs. While over 600 schools have been deregistered since 2009, either voluntarily or involuntarily, following the introduction of the Council for Private Education Act which in 2009, over 300 schools are still operating. Of these 300 schools, only less than one-fifth can be considered to have proper facilities. This first part of this paper explores the possible reasons why some private commercial schools are still in operation despite not meeting the recommended regulatory guidelines. It suggests stricter actions could be taken by the Council for Private Education to ensure that private commercial schools contribute to the improvement of the overall education landscape in Singapore and makes recommendations where the Council for could increase its vigilance on these schools. It also recommends a framework relating to the monitoring and review of the current audit process of private commercial schools. The second part of the paper explores the failure of private commercial schools to deliver quality education to their students and the reasons students are still choosing the private education route as an option for their studies. Contrary to popular assumptions, private commercial schools in Singapore pose no significant competition to public schools. Teachers at private commercial schools had not receive as much training and development as those in public schools. Profit seemed to be the main driver for these commercial schools.

KEYWORDS: Private Schools, Quality Education

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

The significance of this study is that it explores the possible reasons why some private commercial schools are still in operation despite not meeting the recommended regulatory guidelines. It also suggests stricter actions should be taken by the Council for Private Education to ensure that private commercial schools contribute to the improvement of the overall education landscape in Singapore and makes recommendations where the Council could increase its vigilance on these schools. It examines the views of students and teachers of four private commercial schools in areas such as teaching quality, students' attendance, school facilities, students' support and counselling, and number of full-time faculty members.

Despite the failure of some private commercial schools to deliver quality education, students are still choosing the private education route as an option for their studies. Principal characteristics or behaviour have a profound impact on school performance (Yu, 2009). They are the main agents of change for improving schools' performance. Teachers' attitudes and effectiveness depend on the incentives they receive. Lavy (2004) found that incentives led to increased student achievement through changes in teaching methods and teachers being more responsive to students' needs. A large

amount of literature has investigated the impact of teachers' salaries on student outcomes, with mixed results (Lavy, 2002; Glewwe, Ilias & Kremer, 2003). Teachers of private commercial schools interviewed felt that their peers at public schools are being rewarded higher than them. They see higher pay as one of the main motivational factors to work harder. This paper does not aim to present any direct evidence on the educational benefits of increased pay, though the use of incentive payments raises a presumption that it has a positive motivational effect on teachers' commitment and teaching quality.

Contrary to popular assumptions, private commercial schools in Singapore pose no significant competition to public schools. Teachers at private commercial schools do not receive as much training and development as those in public schools. Profit seemed to be the main driver for these commercial schools. With the strong financial support from the government, private commercial schools could not compete with public schools.

This paper also concludes that the EduTrust Certification Scheme is discriminatory towards local students. It should be amended and made compulsory to all Private Educational Institutes (PEIs or private schools) regardless of whether they enrol international or local students. Currently, it is a voluntary scheme applicable to those institutions which enrol international students. The original objective of the scheme was to differentiate PEIs with higher standards in key areas of management and the provision of educational services. The fact that it is applicable to institutions which wanted to enrol international students creates a discriminatory effect on local students. This scheme have discriminated local students as its main focus is the well-being of the international students. The scheme should be broaden to cover all private schools registered with the Council for Private Education (CPE) and not selectively to those which enrol international students.

Background of the Private Education Industry

A majority of private commercial schools are occupying premises below 200 square metres with no proper facilities such as libraries, recreational facilities and computer labs. Many schools cut costs by providing only very basic facilities and compromise on teaching quality by hiring unqualified teaching staff. Many of the teaching staff are either part-timers or are unregistered with the Council for Private Education. While many private commercial schools have been deregistered since the implementation of CPE Act in 2009, many more schools have mushroomed as business enterprises discover creative ways to overcome the restrictions imposed by the CPE Act. There is, thus, a need for the governing authority to check the exploitation of the loopholes in the Act. It needs to review the existing audit processes of private commercial schools to weed out errant school operators. Only through a comprehensive and effective oversight of private commercial schools can it enforce the CPE Act for public good.

While private schools have mushroomed, there are no clear differences in quality between larger schools and smaller schools as many small schools with no proper facilities are awarded with a 4-year registration status. This gives the public a very misleading picture as they may perceive the 4-year registration status as an endorsement of quality. The attainment of the four-year EduTrust mark does not guarantee that the quality of education provided by the private commercial schools is of high standard. The management of many of these schools have put in much effort to "dress-up" the school's environment and various records (admission, attendance, staff training and faculty profile) during the audit period process without implementing real changes to its operations.

In January 2016, the Singapore government announced the formation of a new statutory board, the SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) which will focus on the implementation of SkillsFuture, coordinating pre-employment training and continuing education and training. The CPE, which currently regulates the private-education sector, will be subsumed

under the SSG. This is timely as there are a wide variety of training programmes which do not come under the CPE. As the SSG assumes oversight of the private education sector, it should increase the competencies of CPE's auditors and inspectors to include skills such as understanding company accounts in relation to student fees and staff compensation. These two areas are often exploited by the management of private commercial schools and CPE's auditors and inspectors should recognise the skills gaps in their current job roles.

Many smaller private schools are unable to comply with the regulatory requirement of having an Examination Board and Academic Board. Advisory boards play an important role in assessment and improving curriculum an improved curriculum ensures that students will receive an education responsive to community needs (Taylor, Marino, Rasor-Greenhalgh & Hudak, 2010). While members of the Examination Board are tasked to ensure the quality of the programs, the assessment process and learning outcomes, many of those listed as members of the Examination and Academic Boards are not actively involved with these processes. The inclusion of their names with their impressive credentials in the school websites should be considered deceptive business practices if they are not actively engaged in developing examination and assessment procedures, moderating examination and assessment marks and handling appeals from students with regards to examination or assessment matters.

The independence of the Academic and Examination Board have often been compromised in private commercial schools as very often the school's management dictates the curriculum, the assessment criteria and examination matters. Advisory Board members offer support to institution administrators and faculty (Conroy, Lefever, & Withiam, 1996). They comprised of accomplished experts offering innovative advice and dynamic perspectives (Stautberg & Green, 2007). In some private commercial schools, the principals took the initiative to change the examination marks of students without consulting the other Examination Board members. This conflict of interests of the school principal is evident as he may serve multiple roles as the CEO, principal, member of Academic Board and member of Examination Board.

Another area of concern is the number of qualified full-time lecturers. All private commercial schools face difficulties in recruiting full-time lecturers. The 2014 annual report of the CPE showed that there are 16,079 teachers and that 36% of this figure (5,788) are on full-time basis. This figure requires further investigation as it gives an average of 19 full-time teachers to each school, based on the figure of 312 schools as at end 2014. Many large private commercial schools do not have such a high figure of full-time teachers. They normally engage part-time teachers which may teach in more than one school. The trend is for most institutions to use part-time lecturers to reduce labour costs (Alston, 2010). Part-time teachers have become an important cost-cutting strategy for many schools (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 1998). The CPE needs to relook at the teachers who have been registered with more than one school and ensure that schools do not just list the names of the teachers in their website to give an impression that they have sufficient qualified teachers. This has negative implications to students as part-time teachers may not be able to commit to teach at a particular school if he has already had a prior commitment with another school. Part-time lecturers face the insecurity of their employment relationship and the dilemma between the need to earn an income and attending to their personal development (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 1998, Bryson, 1988, Hey, 2001). In such instance, the school may opt for a lesser qualified or unqualified teacher as a replacement. This will lead to an inferior class of part-time lectures which serve as shock absorber (Entin, 2005). Part-timers are likely to be less prepared for classes and their availability for further consultations is minimal. These factors will affect the learning process of students negatively and lead to the decline of quality education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper was to ascertain the probable reasons some small private commercial schools are still operating despite not having proper facilities. The study examined the perceptions of students regarding the quality of education in their private commercial schools. It also ascertained the perceptions of teachers regarding the availability of motivating factors in their schools. Finally, it made some recommendations which the governing authorities could adopt to ensure that private commercial schools are contributing to the improvement of quality education in Singapore

Research Questions

Consequently, the study intends to answer the following research questions:

- What are some of the reasons smaller private commercial schools are still operating despite not having proper facilities?
- What do students feel about the quality of education in their schools?
- What are the motivating factors for teachers?
- What recommendations could be made to the governing authorities, specifically the Council for Private Education?

Organization of the Study

This paper consists of five chapters. The first chapter includes background information, research objectives and research questions. The second chapter consists of review of literatures relating to the study and the third chapter describes the research methodology. Chapter four covers the presentation of the research findings. The fifth chapter presents recommendations and conclusions derived from the findings as they relate to the importance of greater supervision of private commercial schools by the relevant authorities

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There have been many concerns about the relatively lax regulatory environment which has enabled the establishment of private schools where they are not commercially viable or where there are other issues which should preclude them from setting up (Nicholls 2004). Financial and regulatory controls are inadequate or have been selectively ignored. Those planning to establish new schools or are running existing schools know the loopholes in the CPE Act and this has enable them to circumvent existing rules and policies.

Many studies have shown that private schools are more superior to public schools, in terms of educational efficiency and cost-effectiveness (Jiminez, Lockheed and Wattanawaha 1988, Kingdon 1994, Govinda and Varghese 1993). However, this may not be the case in Singapore where public schools receive substantial funding from the government.

Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) concluded that employees commitment to an organization depends on three factors: (1) strong identification with the organizational goals and values; (2) willingness to “go an extra mile” and (3) a strong desire to remain with the organization. Shore and Martin (1989) conducted studies to attempt to link organizational commitment with desirable work outcomes such as increased employee satisfaction, improved attendance, improved job

performance and a reduction in employee turnover. Similarly, Baruch (1998) concluded that high organizational commitment lead to workforce stability in terms of fewer turnovers and higher attendance. Numerous research studies have been carried out to identify the antecedents of organizational commitment. Hawkins (1998) noted that perceived autonomy, perceived organizational support, and perceived support as the primary predictors of organizational commitment in his studies of school principals.

It is important to note that organizational commitment cannot be expected without reciprocity (Aityan and Gupta 2012). To gain high levels of commitment from employees, an organization is expected to show a similar or even higher level of commitments to its employees.

School’s Climate and School’s Culture

School climate characterizes the school at the building and classroom level while school culture is the shared values, attitudes and beliefs that give the school its identity and standard for expected behaviour. Reid, Hopkins and Holy (1987) in their research study listed the characteristics of effective schools as having strong and skilled principals, clearly autonomous management, conducive school climate, clear and consistent school discipline, teacher accountability for student learning and professional development, coordination of curriculum, favourable student-teacher relationship, conducive environment, high expectation of student learning and small school size. Lee and Smith (1993) showed that higher academic achievements are associated with smaller schools, and that being small is a characteristic of private school. The school climate is a significant factor affecting teachers’ motivation (Anderson, 1982; Hoy and Miskel, 1996).

Major components which contribute to school’s climate include school’s appearance, faculty relations, students’ interactions, leadership, disciplined environment, learning environment, school-community relations. Broadly, we could categorise the school’s climate into: a) physical environment, b) social environment, c) affective environment and d) academic environment (Figure 1).

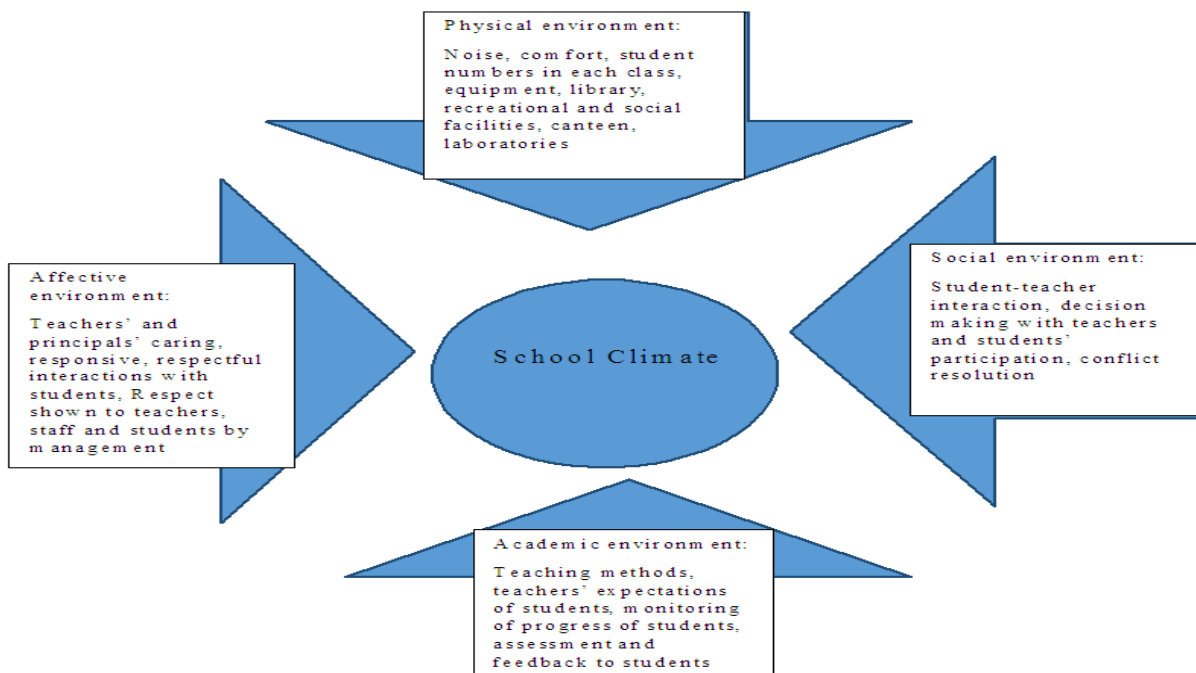


Figure 1

Research studies have shown that school climate have a significant impact on student's physical and mental health. The school climate affects the self-esteem of students (Hoge, Smith & Hanson, 1990). It is strongly correlated with the emotional and health outcomes of students (Power, Higgins & Kholberg, 1989; Scochet, Dadds, Ham & Montague, 2006; Way, Reddy & Rhodes, 2007). A positive school climate has also been shown to reduce student absenteeism (DeJung & Duckworth, 1986; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Reid, 1982; Rumberger, 1987; Sommer, 1985) and lower rates of suspension (Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982).

Many private commercial schools in Singapore do not have a strong school culture. They may have a Vision and Mission statement, but that do not adequately reflect the school culture. A school culture that supports learning will encompass values whereby administrators, teachers, students and parents participate in decision making. Conversely, a school culture which impedes learning involves making decisions without the participation of teachers and parents. The school culture is influenced by the students and their social class background. Thrupp (1997) reiterated that the social mix of the school affects how it functions. Students who attend the school favour it in a certain way through their own student culture. Deal and Kennedy (1983) stressed that each school has a different reality of mindset of school life. Real improvement in private commercial schools can only come about through the changing mindset of the school administrators. It is not just about changing the school's curricula, teaching and learning strategies, assessment structures and entry requirements. It involves placing academic quality as the main objective rather than profit-making as the main objective (Yu, 2009). Sustainable improvement of private commercial schools depends on its ability to reculture. Reculturing is the process of developing new values, beliefs, and norms. It involves transforming mindsets, paradigms, images, beliefs and shared meanings.

School's Policy

Sanders and Krautman (1995) suggested that entering private schools could reduce the dropout rate of students significantly. Lee and Bryk (1989) and Raudenbush and Bryk (1986) found that student achievement of private Catholic schools was greater than those in public schools. Lee, Smith and Croninger (1997) stated that student achievement was associated to school organization of curriculum and instruction. Private school students' higher achievement can be attributed to the excellent school organization. Schools which emphasize student academic achievement showed lower absenteeism (Heyns, 1978).

Teacher friendship for students has a significant correlation with students' academic achievement. Reid, Hopkins and Holy (1987) found that class teacher attitude has an effect on students' academic achievement.

School's Structure

Chubb and Moe (1990) stressed that political environment affects school organizations. Public schools are more bureaucratic and are accountable to many stakeholders. The structure of the school affects its values and beliefs. Private schools are subjected to the forces of competition and they have more freedom to hire and fire teachers. Hirschhorn (1997) recommended the movement of the traditional school structure towards multidirectional communication and away from top-down hierarchical structures. Hoy and Sweetand (2001), and Langer (1992, 1997) emphasized on self-reliance and self-worth among teachers by advocating empowerment of teachers. Rousseau (1978) asserted that an organization formalized rules and procedures have a strong correlation with absenteeism, the propensity to leave the organisation,

physical and psychological stress, and job dissatisfaction. There is a high level of frustration associated with bureaucratic controls (Bonjean & Grimes, 1970).

Teacher Motivation

A key determinant of job satisfaction is remuneration. Salary has been the greatest motivational issues for private commercial schools teachers. Teachers’ salaries at private commercial schools are relatively lower than their counterparts at public schools. (Table 1) This is due to the strong emphasis by the government to attract good teachers to public schools. Private commercial schools face stiff competition from public institutions to recruit qualified full-time teachers and have to opt for more part-time teachers.

Table 1: Salary Grade by Qualification, SGD / Month

	Private Commercial Schools	Public Schools	Public Higher Learning Institutes
Masters	3,500 -4,500	4,500 - 6,500	5,000 - 7,000
Doctorate	4,000 - 5,000	5,500 - 7,500	6,500 - 12,000

Source: Jobstreet.com, jobsbank.gov.sg

Besides salary, the motivation of teachers is affected by factors such as social economic status, classroom environment, students’ behaviour and respect from principals. School’s leadership and management style can either motivate or lower teachers’ morale and commitment. Teachers feel highly motivated when they are being consulted about decisions regarding their work. Conversely, unfair administrative and supervisory practices tend to demotivate teachers. Teachers who experience a low level of job satisfaction are more likely to leave (Steel & Ovalle, 1984). Promoting teachers without basing on proper appraisal and evaluation mechanism also tend to demotivate teachers. A highhanded and autocratic principal dealing with teachers tend to lower teachers morals.

Demotivated teachers tend to have a negative impact on students’ performance. Teachers who are highly motivated in their teachings will raise the self-esteem of their students (Peck, Fox, and Morston (1977). Students see teachers as their role model. There are significant differences in the scores of students taught by teachers with high job satisfaction and of those taught by teachers with low job satisfaction (Brumback, 1986). A motivated teacher will generally be satisfied with his job. This motivation will then bring about positive learning attitudes and self-esteem of the students.

School management needs to pay particular attention to the way they deal with teachers. Treating teachers with respect, providing good working environment and developing teachers skills and competencies will motivate teachers to perform better. Sirgy, 1986 stressed that when the higher order needs such as esteem and self-actualization needs are met, teachers will move towards a higher level of development. The more motivated teachers are, the greater commitment they will place in their work. When teachers see that their students are progressing and achieving their targets, they become motivated as their esteem needs have been met. Motivated teachers direct their work towards achieving their goals of teaching (Vroom, 1964; McClelland, 1985; Maehr, 1984)

Studies by Wilby, 1989 found that teachers were motivated when they are involved in discussions regarding school policies and when they are valued as professionals. Principal leadership behaviours and organisational structures affect teachers’ job satisfaction (Miskel, 1974, 1979; Yu 2009). Principals’ recognition of teachers’ contribution and professional development of teachers have a high correlation to teachers’ productivity (Holdaway, 1978).

Figure 2 illustrates a cycle whereby principals first motivate teachers, who in turn motivate students. The higher

the students' achievement, the more motivated are the teachers. It is, therefore, essential that principals pay attention to the way they interact with teachers.

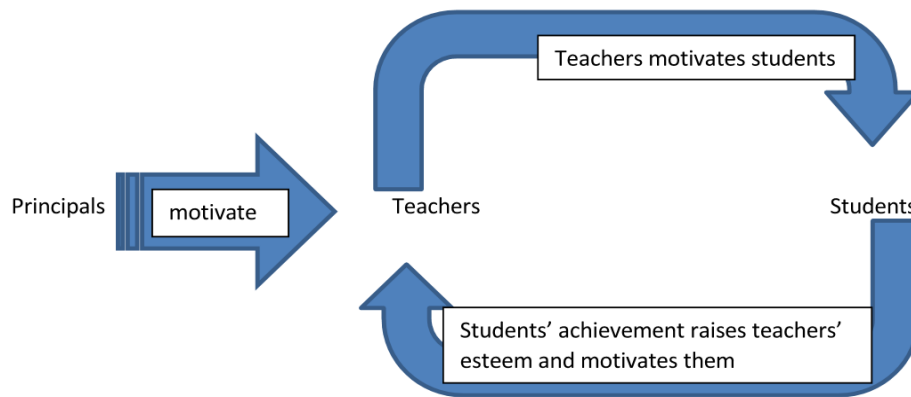


Figure 2

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

The research study was carried out on four private commercial schools in the Western and Central part of Singapore, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Two of the schools could be categorised as small with less than 100 students while the other two have between 100 and 200 students. The two larger schools are located in the Central part of Singapore while the smaller schools are located in the West. A random sample of 100 students and 12 teachers was interviewed.

Two researchers were appointed to be engaged in interviews and collection of other relevant data from the students. The student sample consists of 55 male students and 45 female students. The students were interviewed outside their schools to avoid any pre-prepared answers and also not to alarm the schools' principals. Approximately 20 students were interviewed from each of the small school while 30 students were interviewed from each of the larger school. The students were interviewed regarding curriculum, student support, school facilities, commitment of teachers and classroom size. The data was collected over a four-week period.

A typical 5-point ordinal Likert scale was used by the respondent to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with the interview statement. The students and teachers were given different sets of questionnaires to measure the attitudes or opinions under investigation

The students were asked to fill up a survey form which consists of 20 questions. Survey respondents were asked to give their views on how much they agree with the statements relating to curriculum, student support, facilities and adherence to school policies. No incentives were provided for the participants and their participation was entirely on a voluntary basis. During the interviews, different prompts and probes were used to encourage participants to talk and in their own way (Drever, 1995). Prompts and probes may include questions like "are you sure?" and "why is that so?" to get the participants to clarify an answer or explain further.

Four teachers from the each of the two larger schools and 2 teachers from each of the smaller schools were contacted through e-mails to gather their participation in the interview process. A set of questionnaires were sent to the

teachers’ e-mail. The teachers were asked to give their views on the motivational factors in their jobs. They were interviewed regarding their issues relating to salary, experience, qualifications, training and development, welfare and benefits, students’ performance, students’ attendance, and students’ profile.

Protection of Privacy

To ensure the protection of privacy, all participants were given a consent form to sign prior to the data collection process. The consent form explains the purpose of this study, stressed that participation is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw from the study if they so wishes. To protect the confidentiality of participants and the private commercial schools, numerical codes have been used in reporting the findings.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Analysis of Students’ Survey

The Cronbach’s Alpha is chosen as a measure of internal consistency or reliability. Table 2 shows a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.897 which indicates a high level of internal consistency for our scale. This means that respondents who select high scores for one item also select high scores for the others. Likewise, those who select low scores for one item will also select low scores for the other items.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics (Students’ Survey)

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.897	.903	20

Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations of the different variables. The variable “fairness” has the highest mean with 3.13, followed by “school environment” with mean of 3.1 and “receiving quality feedback” with mean of 3.07. The variable “fairness” has a standard deviation of 1.07 which meant that there is a wide dispersion in the sampling distribution of the sample mean. Similar situations exist for the variables “school environment” and “receiving quality feedback” with standard deviations of 1.07 and 0.99 respectively. The large standard deviations reflect a large amount of variations in the sample being studied.

Schools should assess how students feel about their school. If a student feels that the school does not care about him, it will impact the student’s behaviour in classroom and his motivation in class. Studies have shown that a high-quality school climate may counter the negative effects of self-criticism and low levels of learning abilities.

The variable with the lowest mean is “absenteeism” with mean of 2.24. This essentially indicates that students place very little emphasis in school attendance and do not see attendance as an important factor. “Enforcement of discipline” is another concern as mean of 2.36. Students do not see adherence to school discipline as important and have placed very low priority in this factor.

School climate affects the student’s perception of belonging and closeness with others at the school (Loukas, 2007). A student who feels connected to the school will be less likely to be absent from schools (DeJung & Duckworth, 1986; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Reid, 1982; Rumberger, 1987; Sommer, 1985). Principals should implement programs to

improve school's climate. These include: (a) upgrading teachers' knowledge and skills; (b) ensuring order and safety; (c) enhancing parent-school-community ties; and (d) improving curriculum and instructional guidance.

Table 3: Item Statistics (Students' Survey)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Choice	2.9200	.87247	100
Stressed	2.8400	.99209	100
Wellbeing	2.9800	.90988	100
Opportunity	2.9100	.91115	100
Feedback	3.0700	.99752	100
Money	2.7400	.76038	100
Enthusiastic	3.0400	.97359	100
Qualified	2.6100	1.00398	100
Concerned	3.0300	.92611	100
Curriculum	2.8100	.77453	100
Discipline	2.3600	.92682	100
Control	2.3900	.88643	100
Attendance	2.3500	.83333	100
Absenteeism	2.2400	.81798	100
Respect	2.5200	.95853	100
Fairness	3.1300	1.05078	100
Facilities	3.0000	.88763	100
Environment	3.1000	1.07778	100
Rules	2.8600	.87640	100
Recommendation	2.9700	.88140	100

Table 4 contains a column containing "Corrected Item-Total Correlation" for each of the item. It displays the correlation between a given variable and the sum of the other variables. For example, the correlation between "Choice" and the sum of the other variables is 0.845. What this means is that there is a strong positive correlation between "Choice" and all other variables. This indicates that the students' assessment of whether a school is their choice school is being influenced by many other factors such as school environment, wellbeing, attendance, and so on.

The column on "Cronbach's Alpha if Deleted" indicates that removal of a variable will improve the overall Cronbach Alpha. For example, the removal of Question 2 which relates to the variable "stress" faced by students would lead to small improvement in Cronbach's Alpha and we could see that the "Corrected Item-Total Correlation" was a low 0.133 for this item. Similarly, the removal of the variable "respect" will improve the Cronbach Alpha marginally to 0.901. However, as the "Corrected Item-Total Correlation" was much higher at 0.222, we may consider retaining this item in the questionnaire.

Table 4: Item-Total Statistics (Students' Survey)

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Choice	52.9500	98.917	.845	.938	.883
Stressed	53.0300	110.575	.133	.248	.903
Wellbeing	52.8900	99.392	.778	.908	.885
Opportunity	52.9600	99.029	.798	.931	.884
Feedback	52.8000	100.162	.660	.730	.888
Money	53.1300	103.003	.697	.607	.888
Enthusiastic	52.8300	105.981	.370	.423	.897

Qualified	53.2600	113.245	.004	.348	.907
Concerned	52.8400	105.833	.401	.382	.895
Curriculum	53.0600	104.845	.561	.514	.891
Discipline	53.5100	103.970	.503	.677	.893
Control	53.4800	103.686	.546	.843	.891
Attendance	53.5200	104.131	.559	.851	.891
Absenteeism	53.6300	105.407	.492	.804	.893
Respect	53.3500	108.977	.222	.577	.901
Fairness	52.7400	104.255	.418	.553	.895
Facilities	52.8700	102.498	.615	.616	.889
Environment	52.7700	101.936	.516	.550	.892
Rules	53.0100	99.364	.813	.958	.884
Recommendation	52.9000	99.768	.783	.911	.885

We also investigated the dimensionality of the scale by using the Principal Component Analysis. Internal consistency is concerned with the interrelatedness of the test items while homogeneity measures the degree of unidimensionality. The concept of reliability assumes that unidimensionality exists in a sample of test items.

From Table 5, we look at the Eigen Values of the various items. Eigen Values tell us how much of the variances in the items are captured by the factors. We see that the Eigen Value for the first factor accounted for 40.9% of the total variance, the second factor 18.4%, the third 7.8% and fourth 5.5%. All the other remaining factors are not significant.

The Extracted Sum of Square Loadings columns showed four rows which correspond to the number of factors retained. The values in this panel are based on the common variance and are smaller than the total variance.

Table 5: Total Variance Explained (Students' Survey)

Component		Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Dimension0	1	8.185	40.923	40.923	8.185	40.923	40.923
	2	3.686	18.429	59.352	3.686	18.429	59.352
	3	1.572	7.859	67.211	1.572	7.859	67.211
	4	1.094	5.471	72.682	1.094	5.471	72.682
	5	.925	4.625	77.308			
	6	.676	3.378	80.686			
	7	.644	3.218	83.904			
	8	.576	2.878	86.781			
	9	.489	2.443	89.224			
	10	.457	2.286	91.511			
	11	.367	1.835	93.345			
	12	.310	1.549	94.894			
	13	.269	1.347	96.241			
	14	.220	1.100	97.342			
	15	.171	.854	98.195			
	16	.124	.620	98.816			
	17	.097	.487	99.302			
	18	.057	.284	99.587			
	19	.054	.271	99.858			
	20	.028	.142	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.							

Table 6 of Communalities below shows how much of the variance in the variables have been accounted for by the

extracted factors. For instance, over 92% of the variance in “choice of school” and “rules” have been accounted for by the factors extracted. The variables “stressed”, “curriculum”, “respect” and “environment” have values below 60% which meant that the variables do not share much variances with other variables.

Table 6: Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Choice	1.000	.922
Stressed	1.000	.598
Wellbeing	1.000	.854
Opportunity	1.000	.887
Feedback	1.000	.680
Money	1.000	.651
Enthusiastic	1.000	.715
Qualified	1.000	.625
Concerned	1.000	.650
Curriculum	1.000	.522
Discipline	1.000	.714
Control	1.000	.807
Attendance	1.000	.839
Absenteeism	1.000	.850
Respect	1.000	.561
Fairness	1.000	.687
Facilities	1.000	.663
Environment	1.000	.528
Rules	1.000	.925
Recommendation	1.000	.857
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

Analysis of Teachers’ Survey

Table 7 shows a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.715 which indicates a high level of internal consistency for our scale. This means that respondents who select high scores for one item also select high scores for the others. Likewise, those who select low scores for one item will also select low scores for the other items.

Table 7: Reliability Statistics (Teachers’ Survey)

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.715	.708	20

Table 8 shows the means and standard deviations of the different variables. The variables “salary”, “training”, “recognition”, and “teaching requirements” all have means above 4. This meant that many teachers are dissatisfied with their current schools. The low standard deviations of below 1 indicate that all their views are quite similar in the sample being studied.

Principals of private commercial schools must develop the necessary skills to manage a school. While some skills may be developed through formal principalship training, others are learned while on the job. Principals have to cultivate relationships with their staff and their attempts to be successful within the school environment is dependent on their

leadership styles (Scribner, Hage & Warne, 2002).

Improvement of relationships with teachers must be a core strategy for change. How principals interactions with teachers will determine the educational setting of the school. Deal and Peterson (1998) define school culture as “the underground streams of norms, values, beliefs, traditions and rituals that have built up over time as people work together, solve problems and confront challenges”.

Principals need to have better communication with teachers and be aware of the various factors which motivate them. From our survey, teachers agree that giving incentives will be a way of motivating them. Pay-for-performance or merit pay is a powerful motivational tool when used effectively. High performers prefer performance-based pay systems more than low performers. Incentive pay for teachers can be in various forms such as career ladder pay, merit pay, and pay for performance (Hatry& Greiner, 1994).

A major concern arises in the entry requirements of students. Teachers felt that the schools have not adhere to the entry requirements and have accepted students without the proper qualifications. Students who do not meet the entry requirements are more likely to perform poorly in school and this demotivates teachers. While profit motive may undermine private commercial schools strict adherence to entry requirements, principals have often compromised the professionalism of teachers by admitting unqualified students. This may include students who have not attained the proper English language proficiency or who have not met the basic academic qualifications for entry into a program.

Training and development is another area which have not received high priority in private commercial schools as principals are not willing to invest in upgrading the skills of lecturers and staff for fear that they may leave after gaining the additional skills and knowledge. Training and development promote significant and worthwhile change in teachers’ practice and principals need to be supportive of this if they are determined to bring about improvement in the school. Teachers need to develop not only the factual knowledge but also the procedural knowledge of when, how and under what conditions to apply their new skills.

Table 8: Item Statistics (Teachers’ Survey)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Salary	4.4000	.63246	15
Fairpay	4.0667	.88372	15
Incentive	1.8667	.83381	15
Leadership	3.6667	.81650	15
Principalvalue	3.2667	.96115	15
Training	4.2667	.79881	15
Recognition	4.1333	.35187	15
Fairness	3.8667	.63994	15
Satisfaction	3.6667	.81650	15
Teaching	4.0667	.79881	15
Teachingresource	2.8667	.74322	15
Studentscommit	3.4667	1.06010	15
Studentsquality	3.5333	1.30201	15
Lowentry	1.8667	.74322	15
Attendance	2.4667	.74322	15
Highmarks	2.2667	1.22280	15
Staffwell	2.3333	.72375	15
Studentwell	2.4667	.99043	15
Branding	3.6667	1.11270	15
Workplace	3.0667	.79881	15

Table 9 contains a column containing “Corrected Item-Total Correlation” for each of the item. It displays the correlation between a given variable and the sum of the other variables. For example, the correlation between “Satisfaction” and the sum of the other variables is 0.545. What this means is that there is a strong positive correlation between “Satisfaction” and all other variables. This indicates that the teachers’ satisfaction is being influenced by many other factors such as salary incentive, principal value and so on.

Teachers’ job satisfaction is influenced by factors such as participation in school decision making, influence over school policy, control in the classroom and recognition of contribution. Blasé and Balse, 1994 showed that principals using shared governance strategies and participatory management were able to motivate teachers and give them a sense of ownership and empowerment. Principals need to know how best to motivate teachers to bring about improved performance of teachers, which in turn bring about improved performance of students.

The column on “Cronbach’s Alpha if deleted” indicates that removal of a variable will improve the overall Cronbach Alpha. For example, the removal of Question 19 which relates to the variable “branding” would lead to small improvement in Cronbach’s Alpha.

Table 9: Item-Total Statistics (Teachers’ Survey)

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Salary	60.8667	46.838	.046	.720
Fairpay	61.2000	45.600	.105	.720
Incentive	63.4000	45.543	.124	.717
Leadership	61.6000	47.400	-.038	.730
Principalvalue	62.0000	41.857	.391	.693
Training	61.0000	43.000	.382	.696
Recognition	61.1333	47.838	-.067	.721
Fairness	61.4000	43.686	.419	.696
Satisfaction	61.6000	41.257	.545	.681
Teaching	61.2000	42.171	.465	.689
Teachingresource	62.4000	43.114	.407	.695
Studentscommit	61.8000	40.314	.461	.685
Studentsquality	61.7333	40.638	.320	.702
Lowentry	63.4000	43.971	.316	.702
Attendance	62.8000	42.171	.509	.687
Highmarks	63.0000	40.000	.397	.691
Staff Well	62.9333	44.924	.226	.708
Studentwell	62.8000	40.886	.456	.686
Branding	61.6000	46.686	-.019	.738
Workplace	62.2000	44.886	.198	.711

Table 10 shows the Eigen Values of the various items. Eigen Values tell us how much of the variances in the items are captured by the factors. We see that the Eigen Value for the first factor accounted for 20.9% of the total variance, the second factor 16.7%, the third 11.6% and fourth 10.8%. A total of eight factors have been chosen.

The Extracted Sum of Square Loadings columns showed eight rows which correspond to the number of factors retained. The values in this panel are based on the common variance and are smaller than the total variance.

Table 10: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Dimension0	1	4.188	20.941	20.941	4.188	20.941
	2	3.350	16.749	37.691	3.350	16.749
	3	2.322	11.608	49.298	2.322	11.608
	4	2.166	10.830	60.128	2.166	10.830
	5	1.805	9.027	69.155	1.805	9.027
	6	1.785	8.923	78.078	1.785	8.923
	7	1.128	5.642	83.720	1.128	5.642
	8	1.035	5.175	88.895	1.035	5.175
	9	.760	3.802	92.697		
	10	.578	2.888	95.585		
	11	.442	2.211	97.796		
	12	.268	1.338	99.134		
	13	.125	.624	99.757		
	14	.049	.243	100.000		
	15	2.889E-16	1.444E-15	100.000		
	16	2.574E-16	1.287E-15	100.000		
	17	2.122E-16	1.061E-15	100.000		
	18	1.405E-16	7.027E-16	100.000		
	19	5.602E-17	2.801E-16	100.000		
	20	-1.352E-16	-6.762E-16	100.000		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 11 of Communalities below shows how much of the variance in the variables have been accounted for by the extracted common factors. For instance, over 91% of the variance in “salary” and 86.5% of the variance in “Fair pay” has been accounted for by the factors extracted. The high values of all variables indicate that all the variables share a high degree of variances with each other.

Johnson (1986) suggested three theories of motivation and productivity: Expectancy theory which describes that individuals are more likely to work if there is an anticipated reward that they value; Equity theory which states that individuals are dissatisfied if they are not justly compensated for their efforts and accomplishments; and Job enrichment theory which indicates that workers are more productive when their work is challenging and varied.

Table 11: Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Salary	1.000	.912
Fairpay	1.000	.865
Incentive	1.000	.885
Leadership	1.000	.978
Principalvalue	1.000	.894
Training	1.000	.962
Recognition	1.000	.906
Fairness	1.000	.837
Satisfaction	1.000	.861
Teaching	1.000	.890
Teachingresource	1.000	.874
Studentscommit	1.000	.892
Students quality	1.000	.958

Lowentry	1.000	.864
Attendance	1.000	.759
Highmarks	1.000	.866
Staffwell	1.000	.914
Studentwell	1.000	.775
Branding	1.000	.919
Workplace	1.000	.968
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

RECOMMENDED NEW COMPLIANCE AUDIT FRAMEWORK

This new audit framework addresses the current shortcomings of the current audit process. The shortcomings have given the opportunity to private commercial schools operators to circumvent the various requirements of the Private Education Regulations of the CPE Act. The areas which require special focus include the following:

- Enrolment Verification
- Attendance
- Entry Requirements
- Training & Learning
- Program Approval
- Registration of faculty (Full Time and Part Time)
- Compliance with Accounting Policies

A robust compliance program is essential to ensure that private commercial schools comply with their obligations under the relevant legislation (CPE Act) and that instances of non-compliance are addressed by enforcement or other actions.

The new framework promotes effective monitoring and review of the current processes by requiring CPE auditors and inspectors to look at loopholes which are being exploited by private education providers. Achieving audit quality requires careful audit and quality control procedures. Such a disciplined and structured approach would encompass careful planning of the audit process as well as impromptu and unannounced visits to private commercial schools. It is imperative that when auditors and inspectors perform the audit, they understand the particular school's environment at normal times and not just during the audit period where much insincere efforts have been put in by the school administrators to project an image of efficiency and compliance.

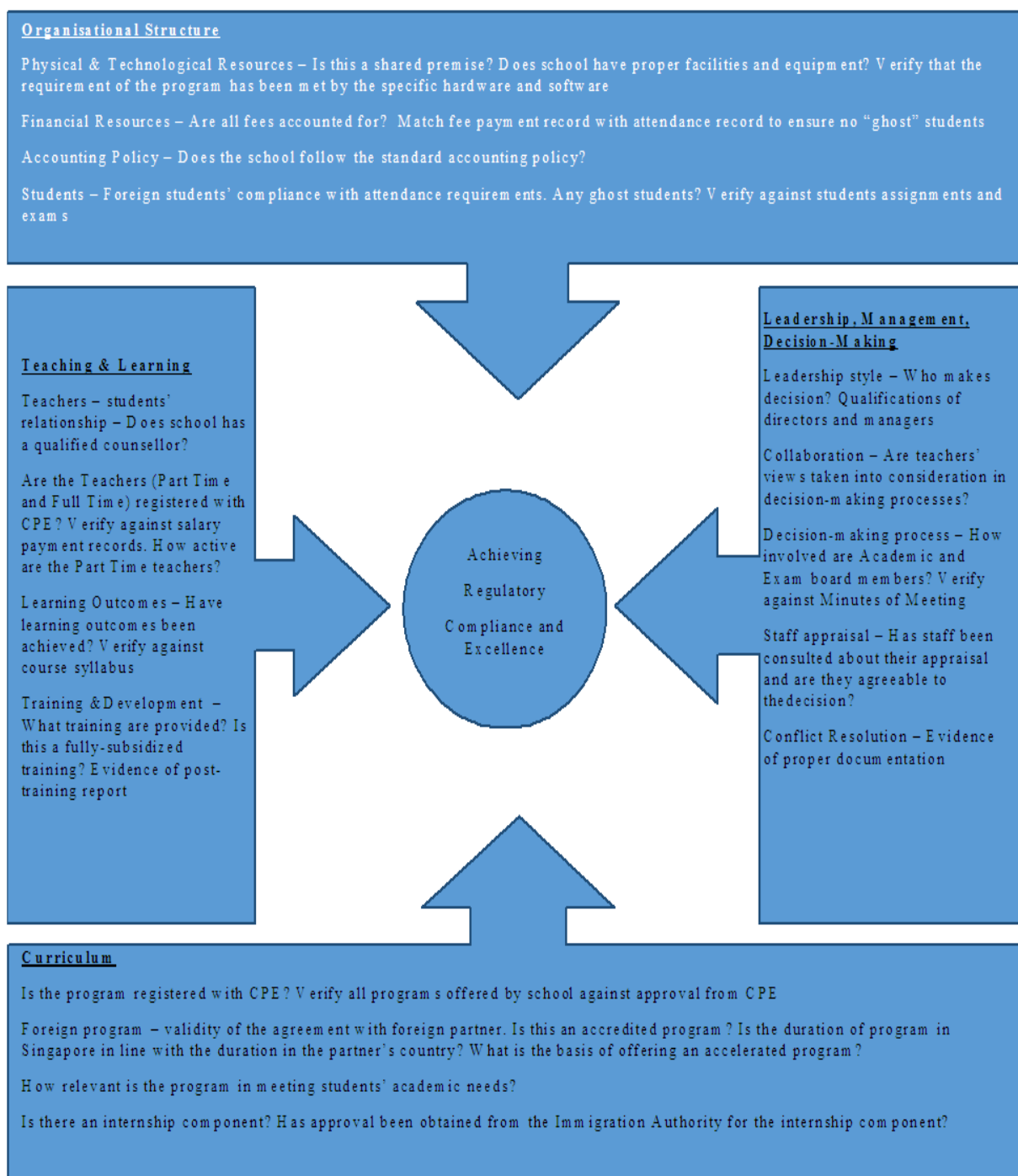
The new audit framework takes into account the four elements of education institutions (Dimmock, 2007). The first element of Organisational Structure involves how human and physical resources are established and deployed. The second element of Leadership, Management and Decision-Making Processes deals with leadership styles and performance appraisals. The third element of Curriculum looks at the objectives, breadth and depth, and relevance of the curriculum offered. The last element of Teaching and Learning examines the delivery of courses, teacher-student relationship and learning outcomes.

This paper recommends the establishment of a new framework for compliance audit incorporating the various variables in our questionnaires. With the new framework, auditors and inspectors of private commercial schools could have a tool to improve on the existing audit processes of private commercial schools.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Recommendation for a New Compliance Audit Framework (Figure 3)



RECOMMENDATIONS OF ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED IN COMPLIANCE AUDIT CHECKLIST

The items to be included in the audit checklist include the following:

Enrolment Verification

Objective: To ensure that all students enrolled in the school are accounted for

- Identify the presence of phantom (ghost) students. Match students record with fee payment record
- Match attendance record with transcripts
- Match foreign students record with attendance record
- Verify that students meet the entry requirements. Match students admission record with transcripts to ensure that all students sit for the required tests or exams

Revenue / Reimbursement

Objective: To ensure that financial records reflect all the funds collected from students and refunded to students

- Student fees – Verify that all fees accounted for and match them with students' attendance record
- Highlight any contribution in kind not accounted for
- Verify the use of standard accounting policies

Training and Learning

- Staff training and development provided by external parties or in-house training
- Match with invoices and payment record
- Evidence of post-training report

Faculty Members

To ensure that the faculty members listed in the website are actually involved in teaching at school

- Full time faculty members – Verify against salary record
- Part time – match against pay slip. Determine the level of involvement of part-time teachers over a certain period
- Part time faculty – Are they registered with the Council for Private Education?

Academic and Examination Board Members

- To ensure that the academic and examination board members are contributing to the assessment and examination processes in the school. Verify against documentary evidence of level of activity and regularity of involvement. Evidence of minutes of meeting

Programs

- Are foreign programs offered accredited by reputable organizations?

- Are all programs offered registered with the Council for Private Education?
- Lecture notes in line with the course curriculum and teaching plan
- Verify achievement of learning outcomes against course syllabi
- Are the programs offered on an accelerated basis? If so, what is the reason for the shortened duration as compared to the duration at partner's institution? Evidence of proper course matching by partner institution.

Award of Diploma

- Match against transcripts. Have students fulfilled the graduation requirements?

Physical Facilities /Equipment

- Are there sufficient facilities and equipment to conduct the class?

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main limitation of the study is the small sample size. The study focused only on private commercial schools and did not cover other private schools. In the future, further studies could be done to analyse the contribution of all private schools in Singapore. These could include private international schools, arts schools, tutorial schools and enrichment schools.

The other difficulty is getting the cooperation of the principals of the private schools as they were unwilling to participate in the survey. The small sample size of both the students and teachers could reduce the statistical accuracy and reliability in analysis. Further research needs to be conducted on how principals of private commercial schools motivate their teachers and non-academic staff.

The differences between responses from male and female students and male and female teachers were not investigated. Male and females may have different preferences and interpretations of factors which may be of importance to them. It would be worthwhile to conduct further studies in this subject area.

Private commercial schools have the choice to not advocate public values and national interests. They have the right to turn away students of different ethnicity and religious backgrounds. There is no need to promote social values as they do not rely on government funding. There is nothing much the authorities could do if they refuse to conform to community values such as inclusiveness and tolerance which the Singapore government is promoting. It is really up to the management of each private school to determine whether it would like to engage in discriminatory practices. The contribution of private commercial schools to the education landscape in Singapore could be a subject of further studies.

CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis of the questionnaire to students, we find that some of the reasons students choose private schools include the low entry requirements, the lax attendance policy, the low discipline control and the possibility of pressuring the principal for higher examination marks. This is particularly worrying as such a school environment will have negative implications for both students and teachers. Students who have not met the entry requirements may not have a similar level of knowledge as his other classmates. This may slow down the learning process of the whole class. In addition, teachers will be demotivated to teach those students who should not have been admitted into a program in the

first place. Principals must become more sensitive and aware of their teachers' needs. They have to learn the skills to motivate teachers and to keep teachers' enthusiasms and interests high. Motivated teachers are school assets. The more motivated the teachers, the greater are their work commitment. Providing a good working environment and giving teachers more resources are not quite enough as teachers strive towards a higher stage of personal development.

Failure to implement a stringent attendance policy will only encourage "ghost" students to enrol in private commercial schools. Many of these students are working illegally without the approval of the Immigration Department or the Ministry of Manpower. Schools tried to circumvent the 90% attendance policy set by the Immigration Department by declaring false attendance records to the authorities. Students working illegally are a cause of social problems and many private commercial schools are contributing to this problem as profit-making is their main objective.

Principals of private commercial schools are more likely to give in to the pressure of students to increase their exam grades. They may make the decision alone without consultation of the other Examination Board members. As most principals of private commercial schools are also members of the Academic and Examination Boards, there are normally no higher management level person to oversee his actions.

Feedback from students showed that they were generally quite indifferent about the quality of education in their schools. This may be due to their lower expectations of the schools in terms of quality education and facilities. They felt that while the teachers have the qualifications to teach them in class, they are less concerned about the learning outcomes of students. This may be due to a number of demotivating factors of teachers which include the quality of students in class, the attendance of the students, the lack of interactions with students, the salary of the teachers, and the relationship with the principals.

Most teachers at private commercial schools were not satisfied with their job. The reasons include the perception that they are being paid lower than the peers at public schools and public universities. They felt little recognition for their contribution and that the quality of students and their poor attendance were some of the major issues that have not been addressed by the principals.

Private schools, however, remain competitive in Singapore. They cater to students who may not have achieved the basic entry requirements into a program. A large proportion of their students are from overseas and also working adults who may not fit into the rigorous schedule of public schools. The Council for Private Education needs to relook at the ways it monitors private commercial schools for compliance related issues.

The recommended new compliance audit framework serves as a tool to assist CPE auditors and inspectors to conduct a more thorough and diligent assessment of private schools. They have to pay particular attention to the physical facilities, attendance records, entry requirements, and faculty members. Many small private commercial schools operate from premises which have an area no more than 200 square metres. While many of these schools are owned by entrepreneurs, the authorities have a duty to ensure that there is proper compliance of the regulations and that enforcement actions need to be stepped up to deter errant school owners.

The Edutrust Certification Scheme is discriminatory towards local students. It should be amended and made compulsory to all privateschools regardless of whether they enrol international or local students. The original aim of the Edutrust Scheme was to differentiate high quality schools from low quality private schools and is only applicable to those private schools which recruit international students. Local students deserve the same protection as international students,

regardless of whether they study in an Edutrust certified school or not. Further shake-up is inevitable to weed out low quality schools. Only then, can the authorities claim that Singapore has a high standard of private education which caters to both local and international students.

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APPENDIX 1

Students Survey

1. I feel that I have found the school of my choice
2. I feel stressed in class
3. I feel that the school is not concerned with our well-being
4. I receive sufficient opportunities to demonstrate proficiency on learning
5. I receive quality feedback from teachers on my progress in school
6. I feel that the school is only concerned with making money
7. Most of my teachers are enthusiastic about their teaching
8. Most of my teachers are qualified to teach the subjects allocated
9. Most of my teachers are concerned about whether I learn in class
10. Most of the curriculum are planned well
11. I feel that the discipline in the school is lax
12. Teachers have little or no control of students in class
13. I feel that the school does not follow strict attendance policies
14. Many students skipped class
15. I feel that the principal does not respect students
16. The principal deals with problems and conflicts in a fair manner
17. I feel that the school's facilities are adequate
18. I feel that the classroom environment is quite comfortable
19. I feel that school rules are not enforced in any fair way
20. I will recommend the school to my friends

APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Q1) Do you agree that this is the school of your choice?				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q2) Do you agree that it is stressful in school?				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q3) Do you agree that the school shows concern in your well-being?				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX 3

Teachers Survey

1. Do you consider your remuneration to be in line with public schools?
2. Do you agree that you are being paid fairly?
3. Do you agree that higher incentives will motivate you in your teaching?
4. School leadership is effective?
5. Principal value your input in making decisions?
6. Much training and development have been provided to you?
7. Your talents are being recognised by the school?
8. Administrative procedures in your school are fair?
9. Satisfied with the leadership of the school?
10. Teaching requirements at the school manageable?

11. Easy to get the resources you need for teaching at the school?
12. Students' commitment at the school?
13. Quality students in the school?
14. Do you feel that the school has accepted students despite them not meeting the entry requirements?
15. Do you agree that students' attendance is a problem?
16. Been pressurized by the principal to give higher marks to your students?
17. Do you agree that the school focuses more on profit than staff wellbeing?
18. Do you agree that the school focuses more on profit than students' wellbeing?
19. Very proud are you of your school's brand?
20. Satisfied with this school as a place to work?

APPENDIX 4

SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

<p>Q1) Do you consider your remuneration to be in line with public schools?</p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strongly agree</td> <td>Agree</td> <td>Neutral</td> <td>Disagree</td> <td>Strongly Disagree</td> </tr> </table>						Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree						
<p>Q2) Do you agree that you are being paid fairly?</p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strongly agree</td> <td>Agree</td> <td>Neutral</td> <td>Disagree</td> <td>Strongly Disagree</td> </tr> </table>						Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree						
<p>Q3) Do you agree that higher incentives will motivate you in your teaching?</p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15%; height: 25px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strongly agree</td> <td>Agree</td> <td>Neutral</td> <td>Disagree</td> <td>Strongly Disagree</td> </tr> </table>						Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree						

