



**TEACHER'S PERCEPTIONS ON QUALITY EDUCATION IN EMERGING
PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOLS IN MABELREIGN/WARREN PARK DISTRICT,
HARARE OF ZIMBABWE**

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ABSTRACT: The aim of the study was to explore teacher's perceptions on quality education in emerging private high schools in Mabelreign/Warren Park District in Harare Metropolitan Province of Zimbabwe. A clear assessment of quality education is essential to bridge the knowledge gap on quality of education in emerging private high schools. It is also important to mention that the study is unique as it assesses the quality of education in emerging private high schools in an education set-up where there is massive increase in the population of private high schools. The study was guided by the systems theory which looks at the phenomenon at hand through the lens of interrelatedness of elements in the emerging private high schools' systems. Systems theory view a system as an entity with interrelated elements which can then view a boundary around the organisation which then differentiate internal and external elements such that organisational inputs and outputs are clearly identified as guided by the four dimensions of quality education. The study adopted a mixed method research approach, pragmatism paradigm, and concurrent triangulation design, which enabled the researcher to collect and generate both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently and then compared the two databases that led to convergence of QUAL and QUAN findings. More so, the sample for the study under QUAN was 288 respondents from 3 emerging private high schools in Mabelreign/Warren Park district under QUAL, the sample size of 12 interviewees, 7 lesson observations were reached based on saturation point principle. The major findings are that recruitment of good quality teachers with subject and pedagogical knowledge, high level of professionalism have strong positive influence on quality education in emerging private high schools. The study concluded that existence of a school library equipped with relevant, modern library materials, equipped with relevant, modern equipment have positive influence on quality education in emerging private high schools. The study also recommended that Entrepreneurs in emerging private high schools should purchase textbooks such that they go by their promise to the target market of textbook: pupil ratio of 1:1.

KEY TERMS: *quality education, emerging private high schools, traditional private high schools.*

INTRODUCTION

The globe is described by two spheres which are northern hemisphere and southern hemisphere. As such, the northern hemisphere constitutes the global north countries, and the southern hemisphere consists of global south countries (Kowasski, 2020). As such, global north are those nations that are well developed or are fast developing, and they are situated to the northern hemisphere of the globe with characteristics such as high level of quality education, high levels of income, advanced in technology, and well-developed infrastructure. It is also important to note that the concept of global north and global south emerged soon after the cold war in 1991. In addition, the global north countries are developed nations with very powerful and sound economic systems in parts of the world such as Europe, North America, Australia, Israel, South Africa and others (Odeh, 2010; Shotte, 2019). Shotte (2019) claims that these nations include USA, UK, Brazil, Germany, amongst others. It is also important to note that the concept “global north and global south” are separated by how poor or rich the country is, of which the issue of determining whether the country is rich, or poor is determined by Human Development Index (Odeh, 2010). Consequently, Human Development Index looks into how the citizens of a country access essential services such as education, health, justice, modern tools of accessing information, among others (Odeh, 2010). As such, global north nations are ranked high by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in terms of access to quality education. In line with this assertion, Kegley & Wittkopf (1999) claim that global north countries such as USA, UK, Japan, France, Spain, Belgium, Israel, South Africa, Italy, and Sweden, have the capacity to meet basic needs of its citizens such as provision of quality education and health care services unlike global south nations.

Private education in the United States of America (USA)

US Department of Education (2005) asserts that private primary and secondary schools were the original academic organisations in the United States of America (USA). It is also important to note that the Roman Catholic Church in the USA in 1884 spread the word to its congregants to enrol their children to Catholic schools (Archer, 2000). More so, Roman Catholic Church was the leading church that was offering private education to children in the USA. Furthermore, USA has an Office of Non-Public Education that safeguards the interests of learners in private schools. Statistically, the population of primary and secondary private schools in USA has increased by 8, 78% from 26 093 to 28 384 schools for the period 1993 to 2003 (National Centre for Educational Statistics, 2006). Again, in the year 2007, 1 377 000 learners were attending private secondary education settings (Snyder et al., 2008). Powell

(2012) claims that approximately 10% of students in USA are attending private education settings.

American Education system introduced the policy of voucher system which was meant to fund the education of young Americans. Furthermore, USA enacted a law in 2001 entitled 'No Child Left Behind' (NCLB) Act of 2001 (Bathon & Spradlin, 2007). This Act was meant to give students whose parents have financial challenges the opportunity to attend a public and private academic institution in their respective districts. It is also interesting to note that US Department of Education (2009) posits that students and teachers from private institutions benefit from NCLB policy. These benefits include financial assistance to improve education for migrant learners. Lips (2005) observes that Cleveland, Milwaukee and Washington were some of the big cities that introduced the voucher programmes that provided limited financial assistance for learners in public schools to enrol to private schools of their choice. It is also interesting to note that Davis (2011) affirms that the purpose of the voucher system or programme was meant to accord an opportunity to learners from low-income families to receive quality education same as those learners from affluent families. Lips (2005) asserts that in those states where there are no voucher programmes, average tuition fees to be charged by private schools were equal to the value of vouchers. Davis (2011) affirms that there is research that concluded that private school education in USA is more superior to education that is offered by public schools. This assertion is conclusive that private schools in USA offer better quality education in comparison with public schools. Braun et al. (2006) conducted research on reading and mathematics scores for learners in private and public schools in USA. It is interesting to note that the research in question concluded that learners in private schools have high scores in comparison to their counterparts in public schools. The research by Braun, et al. (2006) cements the notion that was unearthed by Davis (2011) that private school education in USA is more superior in comparison to education that is offered by public schools. Davis (2011) asserts that learners attending private schools in USA continue to outperform their counterparts in public schools for the past thirty years. Additionally, Davis (2011) observes that enrolment in private schools is relatively stable, which is an indicator that many American parents are sacrificing financial resources to send their children to private schools.

Overview of the Netherlands private education

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2017) observes that Netherlands is a parliamentary democracy nation. National Educational decisions are made in the parliament by a permanent sub-committee. It is also important to note that Netherlands is

one of the global north countries in the world with most developed education system and provide high quality of education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2017, OECD: Netherlands 2016). In addition, schools in Netherlands have high degree of autonomy in terms of school administration (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2017). Constitution governs the operation of private schools in Netherlands. It is also interesting to note that most of private secondary schools in The Netherlands are Roman Catholic and Protestant, while a few are owned by religions such as Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish (UNESCO-IBE, 2007). Again, few private secondary schools are owned by entrepreneurs who offer quality education to the learners.

Global South`s perspective of private schools

According to Kowalski (2020) Brandt line is an imaginary line which was drawn up by Willy Brandt in 1980s in order to demarcate the global north countries and global south countries. Yet, asserts that as such, global south countries are mainly characterised by the provision of poor quality of education (Odeh, 2010). Again, these nations are mainly found in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and they include Pakistan, Turkey, India, Mexico, China, Brazil, Indonesia, Senegal, Zambia, Malawi, Comoros, Ghana, and Zimbabwe just to mention but a few (Odeh, 2010). Machure (2006) as cited in Shotte (2019) argue that the global south countries are heavily controlled by the global north countries since these countries are the champions of technology.

The Zimbabwean education system pre-independence

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country which borders South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique, and Zambia. Historically, Zimbabwe is a former British colony and was under its rule from 1890-1980 (Garira et al., 2019). Nherera (1994) claims that the first school which was established for black Africans in the then Rhodesia was opened in 1859 at Inyati by Robert Moffat of the London Society, more than 30 years before the first European settlers arrived in Zimbabwe. It is also important to mention that the colonial rule stifled the quality of education offered to blacks by missionaries through crafting policies in the form of Ordinances that were meant to suppress the quality of education (Garira et al., 2019). Zvobgo (1986) claims that the Rhodesian government approved construction of more schools for the blacks. According to Zvobgo (1986), the population schools that were meant for blacks rose to 115 schools by 1910, 750 schools by 1920 and eventually 1422 schools by 1930. Due to increase in the number of missionary schools, the colonial masters crafted education policies that were meant to control these schools such that the missionaries would not over educate and provide quality education

the black Africans (Zvobgo, 1986; Nherera, 1994; Nherera, 2000; Kanyongo, 2005; and Shizha & Kariwo, 2012). In addition, Goromonzi secondary school was the first government school intended for the blacks which was constructed in 1946 by the Rhodesian government (Zvobgo, 1986; Nherera, 1994; Shizha & Kariwo, 2012)

The trend of private schools post independence Zimbabwe

After attaining Her Independence in 1980, the Government of Zimbabwe under the visionary leadership of the former President Cde Robert Gabriel Mugabe embarked on massive and aggressive educational reforms (Nherera, 2000; Kanyongo, 2005; Shizha & Kariwo, 2012). The government of Zimbabwe constructed many schools across the country soon after attaining her independence (Nherera, 2000; Kanyongo, 2005; Shizha & Kariwo, 2012). According to The NewsDay dated July 22, 2022, there are approximately more than 10 000 schools being attended by more than four million learners under the guidance more than 135 000 educators. Meanwhile, the quality of education in government secondary schools deteriorated to alarming levels which resulted in poor quality of education being offered to the learners (Nherera, 2000; Kanyongo, 2005; Shizha & Kariwo, 2012). At the same time, the traditional private high schools are charging high schools fees such that the low to middle income earners cannot afford to pay such exorbitant school fees. As such, entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe discovered this gap and exploited it by constructing low-fee paying private high schools. It is very important to note that this led to mushrooming of private high schools (Tichagwa, 2010) across the country. A number of studies on quality education were conducted in Zimbabwe (Machingura et al., 2012; Mafa & Tarusikirwa, 2013; Mapuranga & Nyakudzuka, 2014; Garira et al., 2019). Despite these studies, there is dearth of literature on quality of education in emerging private high schools in Zimbabwe. Against this background alluded to, this study was unique as it explored teachers' perceptions on quality education in emerging private high schools in Mabelreign/Warren Park district in Harare Metropolitan Province, Zimbabwe. Thus, the main research question of the study is to explore how quality education is being practiced in emerging private high schools in Zimbabwe.

Statement of the problem

In recent years, Zimbabwe has experienced the unprecedented increase in the population of emerging private high schools in cities, towns and rural areas alike (Mapfumo, 2010). As such, this is also the case with Mabelreign/Warren Park district, which is in Harare Metropolitan Province. Apparently, these emerging private high schools are providing education to children whose parents are shunning government schools due to poor quality of education. It is also important to mention that, quality education in these emerging private high schools has become a lip service. Thus, the entry point to the current study, “Teacher’s perceptions on quality education in emerging private high schools in Mabelreign/Warren Park district, Harare of Zimbabwe”.

Main research question

How is quality education being practiced in emerging private high schools?

Research sub-questions

1. What influence do the educational inputs have on quality education in emerging private high schools?
2. How does the physical environment of emerging private high schools influence quality education?
3. How can quality education be improved in emerging private high schools?

BRIEF REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A comprehensive view of the theoretical framework, and four dimensions of quality education as propounded by Frick (2012) are critically looked into. According to Frick (2012), the four dimensions of quality education are context, content, process, and outcome.

Content

Content as a dimension of quality education focuses on the goals and objectives of learning that is earmarked for students in academic settings such as emerging private high schools (Frick, 2012). Content as the first dimension of educational quality mainly focuses on the educational resources that emerging private high school education administrators feed into the education system (Frick, 2012). Basically, these are the educational inputs such as quality of teachers, teacher qualifications, experience of teachers, teacher-pupil ratio, pupil-textbook ratio, teaching/learning resources, textbooks, interactive whiteboards, educational videos,

smartphones/Cellular phones, projector, infrastructure, physical learning environment, e-learning, electricity, library and information centre, water facilities, toilets and bathrooms, boundary walls, playgrounds, and safe learning environment.

The influence of quality teachers on quality education in emerging private high schools

According to Stromquist (2018) academic settings are very crucial as they mould learners' mental capacities for knowledge accumulation to promote socio-economic, political and technological development of the global economy. In this vein, it is very important to note that classroom practitioners play very important role in quest of educating the global citizens. In addition, all stakeholders to any given private academic setting concur that teacher quality is one of the most important educational inputs that has impact on learners' academic performance in schools (Gichuru & Ongus, 2016; Wong Wong, 2009). Good quality teachers have attributes such as good teacher professionalism (OECD, 2016b), good subject mastery, and pedagogical knowledge, among others (Stromquist, 2018; Mwesiga, & Okendo, 2018). Interestingly, Tompson et al. (2013) conducted a study in United States of America (USA) on parents' attitude about quality of education in USA and the findings point out that teacher quality plays an important role in the provision of quality education. In addition, Shabaz (2018) conducted research in Pakistan which reveals that quality teachers have influence on quality education.

Teacher Professional development and its influence on quality education

Jayaram et al. (2012) affirm that teacher professional development courses have great influence learners' academic. Accordingly, teacher development courses should be done such that it can meet the needs of teachers for them to deliver effective lessons to the learners (Scwhille et al., 2007; Sayed, 2009). Again, Amanullah and Adeeb (2014) conducted research in Pakistan on analysis of schoolteacher's practices for quality education in view of their head teachers at secondary level which recommends that special refresher courses, seminars, and workshops are a prerequisite for improving teacher's performance in order to enhance quality education.

Teacher-pupil ratios and class sizes

ILO/UNESCO (2019, p.86) asserts that "class size should be such as to permit the teacher to give the pupils individual attention". Individual attention helps the teacher to assist individual learner to reach his or her full potential. However, a study that was conducted in Pakistan by Andrabi et al (2002) points out that "in Pakistan, the schools have low student-teacher ratios". In line with research that was conducted by Andrabi et al (2002), Shabbir et al. (2014)

conducted research in Pakistan which concludes that parents were transferring their children from public schools to private schools due to high teacher-pupil ratio in public schools. Again, Kalemba and Mulauzi (2020) conducted research in Zambia on the effect of High pupil-teacher ratio on the quality of learning process of Mathematics in selected public secondary schools of Lusaka district which reveals that there is high pupil-teacher ratio in majority of the public secondary schools. Furthermore, Kalemba and Mulauzi (2020) further note that individualised attention is greatly affected by high pupil-teacher ratio. In addition, Kennedy (2021) conducted a survey in Malaysia entitled, “Challenges of COVID Standard Operating Procedure Compliance in a Secondary Private School” which reveals that parents are mainly concerned with high class sizes in public schools, thus, are now preferring private high schools.

Pupil-textbook ratio

According to Doctor R.S Ranganathan (1931), “every book its reader” is one of the five laws of the library whose emphasis is on 1:1 textbook: pupil ratio (Kaushika, 2006; Chisita, 2016). Clearly, ‘every book its reader’ denotes that textbook: pupil ratio in private high schools should be 1:1. World Bank (2002) posits that in Sub-Saharan Africa textbook: pupil ratio is around 1:5 to 1:10 and the situation could be worse in some of the schools.

Interactive whiteboards (IWBs).

Interactive whiteboard is a huge, touch-sensitive board that requires a computer, digital projector, and interactive whiteboard software in order to function (SMART Technologies, 2006; National Centre for Technology in Education, 2009). Nevertheless, IWBs are used in the education sector as a motivational tool so as to arouse the learner’s interests. Moreover, IWB plays a crucial role to motivate the 21st century learner such that educational goals can be accomplished.

IWBs and learner engagement

Classroom practitioners are known by involving learners in the learning process by asking questions to enhance their understanding. SMART Technologies (2006) asserts that educators world over are using student engagement as the central pedagogical strategy to improve learner’s academic achievement. Educators are using modern pedagogical theories such as the social learning theories to promote quality education. Social learning theories encompass constructivism teaching philosophical paradigm, whole class teaching and active learning (SMART Technologies, 2006; Solvie, 2001). It is also important to note that Cambridge

Assessment International Education (2020) affirms that one of the core attributes of the Cambridge learner is learner engagement. Indeed, IWB is one of the 21st century pedagogical tools that foster on learner engagement which is crucial in terms of provision of quality education in secondary schools. SMART Technologies (2006); Harlow, et al. (2010) observe that IWBs enhance teacher-learner interaction, learner-learner interaction, digital learning resources and the teacher and learner interface and enrich of ICT through enough working space by way of user touching the IWB screen. More so, the user-be it a teacher or a learner can demonstrate a concept in front of the class computer (SMART Technologies, 2006; Karsenti, 2016) while other learners being engaged in the learning activity.

SMART Technologies (2006) posits that research that was conducted in the USA, UK, and Australia reveals the functionality of IWB and its accessories enhances rich development of activities in the classroom that are engagement in nature, thus improve learner's academic achievement.

Several research were conducted in the USA (Gerard & Widener, 1999; Solvie, 2001; Solvie, 2004), and in Australia (Bush et al., 2004; Cunningham et al., 2003) on the use of IWBs. The findings from these researches are centred on learner engagement as a key function of IWBs to improve learner's academic achievement.

Gerard & Widener (1999) conducted research in the USA in terms of the use of IWBs. The research-Gerard & Widener (1999) found out that IWB plays a crucial role in terms of supporting teacher-learner; learner-learner; teacher/learner-digital resources in the classroom which brings in a new dimension in this 21st century. In addition, Solvie (2001) carried out research in the USA which investigated the correlation between the use of an IWB as a delivery tool for literacy instruction in a first-grade classroom and student attention to and participation in the literacy lessons. The research findings are very interesting since some of the learners who took part in the study indicated that the IWB is good in our lessons since I can see that my finger is magic. As such, learners feel motivated to learn and motivation is an ingredient for learners to improve their academic achievement. Furthermore, Solvie (2004) conducted another research in USA which reveals that learners were engaged in learning activities since IWB brought together the teacher and the learner.

Context

According to Frick (2012), context dimension zero-in on the teaching and learning environment. As such, infrastructure, safe learning environment, classroom lighting, and classroom colour, the school fields, and the boundary wall are some of the variables that constitute teaching and learning environment. It is also important to note that school environment should be free from any forms of school violence such learners can receive quality education in a peace and friendly school environment.

Furniture

The assessment of ergonomic seating and positioning of learners in UK schools have been neglected while several studies paid particular attention to ergonomic at the workplaces (Yeats, 1997) while focusing on computer usage (Mutongi, 2016; Guvava & Madziwo, 2016). Guvava and Madziwo (2016) affirm that poor seating on a chair may lead to health problems such as neck and shoulder. However, few studies on ergonomic seating and positioning of learners were conducted by Troussier (1999). As such, Troussier (1999) found out that there was improvement on task behaviour and some changes were also noted in terms of sitting position after the introduction of ergonomically friendly furniture in their classrooms.

Burke and Grosvenor (2003) observe that learners who contributed to a book entitled 'The School I'd Like' point out that inadequate furniture is a major factor that hinder proper teaching and learning. In addition, researches that were conducted by Aagaard-Hansen and Storr-Pauben (1995); Marschell et al. (1995) also have the same findings of inadequate of furniture in classrooms being a factor which hamper teaching and learning. From design and technology's perspective, Zandvliet and Straker (2001) suggest a design for desk and chair that are adjustable in nature to suit different heights of learners at secondary school. It is also interesting to note that Zandvliet and Straker (2001) claim that the idea of adjustable chairs and desks in the classroom were in line with European Standard on School furniture.

Malik and Rizvi (2018) point out that students in the classroom must be comfortably seated, thus the need for school authorities to choose the rightful size of chairs and desks for learners to keep them focused. Furthermore, classroom furniture that is made up of steel frames should have rubber caps on the legs. In this case, rubber caps can minimise irritating noise that can be produced by steel leg the moment there is slight movement of furniture.

Library and Information Centre

Many researches were conducted on school library and its contribution to quality education such as Lance (1994); Lance et al. (2000); Smith (2001); Rodney et al. (2002) all in the USA; Williams et al. (2001) in the UK; Lonsdale (2003) in Australia and Borkum et al. (2013) in India.

Phiri (2010) and Dube (2018) observes that the school library should be the centre of the academic institution to promote the much needed quality education in secondary schools. Furthermore, Kaushik (2006); Adio and Olasina (2010) and Chisita (2016) view library as a learned institution that is equipped with literacy resources that are well organised, managed by a qualified librarian with the aim of educating patrons in secondary schools. Meanwhile, Tapfuma and Munyoro (2010) claim that Doctor Ranganathan, a famous information was mainly concerned with developing a library that would be of value to the patrons when he promulgated the five laws of the library. As such, library is viewed as a very important complimentary department in any given secondary school world over with the notion of promoting quality education.

Process

According to Frick (2012) process is one of the four dimensions of educational quality. It is also important to note that process focusses on the school activities such that teaching and learning can take place within the defined context. In secondary schools, educational processes can include teaching and learning in the classrooms, teacher-parent consultations, and conduct of both internal and external examinations, administration activities, assembly activities, disciplinary activities, and extra co-curricular activities. Apparently, educational processes anchor quality education in secondary schools (Garira et al., 2019).

Career guidance sessions

OECD (2003, p.40) posits that, “One key challenge for this changing service is to move from helping students decide on a job or course, to the broader development of career management skills”. David et al. (2020) posit that career management skills is mainly concerned with the competencies which equip learners in secondary schools to gather information about the self, education programmes at school vis-à-vis future job prospects as they make and implement career decisions. David et al. (2020) conducted a study in Romania entitled, “Exploring the impact of a career guidance intervention program in schools: Effects on knowledge and skills

as self-assessed by students” which concludes that the most important obstacle that students at secondary level experience is to orient themselves on the grounds of the professions that they can take after completing their secondary education. As such, career guidance specialists help the learners in high schools to make informed decisions on subjects that will be aligned to their intended educational programmes at tertiary level (Career Development Guide for Human Resource Practitioners at ANU, 2016).

Consultations

Bozkur and Kaya (2021) claim that secondary schools should make use of teacher-parent discussion to discuss child’s academic life. Guli (2005) conducted research entitled, “Evidence-based parent consultation with school-related outcomes” which points that parent consultation is an effective and efficient education process which can help the learner to achieve positive educational results. As such, consultation platforms are very crucial in the provision of quality education in secondary schools.

Outcomes

The fourth dimension of educational quality is outcome (Frick, 2012). Educational outcomes can take the form of achievement in literacy and numeracy, examination results, health related outcomes and outcomes sought by parents.

It is also important to mention that the literacy level determines the quality of education being provided to the citizens by the government and other private players in the education sector of a given nation. In Africa, Tunisia is ranked first in terms of literacy level and Zimbabwe is placed on the second position with over 90% literacy rate (Shizha & Kariwo, 2012). According to Ray et al. (2018) examinations are a good yardstick that measure whether the learner has mastered the content of the syllabus or not throughout the academic programme. As Uche (2005) observes, China emerged as the first country that has the first written tests that were used to screen prospective government employees. In line with this assertion, the United States of America also introduced oral examinations before 1815 to its citizens (Ray et al., 2018).

Historically, Zimbabwe is a former British colony for a period which stretched between 1890-1980 (Shizha & Kariwo, 2012; Garira et al., 2019). As Sibanda and Maposa (2013) claim, Zimbabwe inherited the British education system including administration of examinations. Apparently, the Rhodesia government was administering public examinations through the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES); University of London, and Associated Examining Board (AEB) (Shizha & Kariwo, 2012; Sibanda & Maposa, 2013)

which proved to be credible examination systems. In recent years, public examinations malpractice in Zimbabwe has put a ‘dent’ on the provision of quality education (Mashanyare & Chinamasa, 2014; Viriri & Makaye, 2020). It is also important to note that Maxwell Tapatapa, a Herald Reporter, Herald dated 4 February 2023 reports that ZIMSEC has nullified results of approximately 4 961 O Level candidates who sat for November 2022 examination series who accessed live examination papers well before the examination day. Ray et al. (2018) claim that key ZIMSEC stakeholders are involved in examination malpractice and maladministration than to lay the blame on the candidates. It is also important to note that examination malpractice and maladministration have strong influence on the provision of quality education in any given country (Ray et al., 2018; Viriri & Makaye, 2020).

Theoretical framework

This study was grounded on the systems theory. Samson and Daft (2012) view a system as a set of interrelated components that work to accomplish the organisational goals. Yet et al., (2009) in Mele et al. (2010) view a system as an entity which is described by a boundary around the organisation which then differentiate internal and external elements such that organisational inputs and outputs are clearly identified. In view of this assertion, there are various kinds of systems namely viable systems (Viable System Approach); service systems (Service Science, Management, Engineering and Design- SSMED); living systems (natural science); economic systems; social systems (Sociology); institutional system (legal perspective); ecosystem (ecology perspective); and technological systems (cybernetics). This study looked briefly on key systems approaches such as the general systems theory (GST). Von Bertalanffy (1956) in Mele et al. (2010) views a system as a complex component that interact with each other so that the entire system can function effectively and efficiently. It is also important to note that Von Bertalanffy is the proponent of the systems (Mele et al., 2010). Again, Von Bertalanffy (1956) asserts that the major aim of the general systems theory is the interactions of all the elements in a system. Mele et al. (2010) assert that the major tenet of the General Systems Theory is to differentiate between open system and closed system. According to Samson and Daft (2012, p.69), “open systems must interact with the environment to survive; closed system need not”. As such, educational inputs interacts with each other as well as the external environment to enable education administrators in emerging private high schools to provide quality education to its stakeholders.

THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Bhattacharjee (2012) views ontology as the study of being which is concerned about the nature of existence and elements of reality and what human beings want to know about the universe. Interestingly, the researcher adopted the mixed method approach to assess teachers' perceptions on quality education in emerging private high schools in Mabelreign/Warren Park district which then situated this research at the middle of the objectivist perspective and subjective perspective of the ontological assumption (Bryman, 2012). It is also important to note that the research current study obtained an intermediate ontological position which appreciated the perspective that both objective and subjective perceptions of reality play an important role in assessing the teachers' perceptions on quality education in emerging private high schools in Mabelreign/Warren Park district in Harare Metropolitan of Zimbabwe. In addition, Donald et al. (2010) view epistemology as how human beings view the universe and deduce real meaning out of it and as such convey the message to other people in the society. As such, this study obtained an intermediate view perspective on epistemology that acknowledge is created by both positivists and phenomenological stances. Apparently, this position assisted the researcher to create knowledge on quality education in emerging private high schools in Mabelreign/Warren Park in Harare of Zimbabwe. This study used the lens of pragmatism paradigm which is mainly guided by the ontology that reality in emerging private high schools in Mabelreign/Warren Park district was constantly negotiated under the auspices of mixed method research approach (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Research Approach

Mixed method research refers to a research approach that involves the blending of qualitative and quantitative approaches as well as other paradigm tenets (Creswell, 2009). Given the nature of the phenomenon under study, mixed method research approach was found suitable because it mixed up the strengths of qualitative approach and quantitative approach, henceforth, it helped to improve the quality of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Research design

A concurrent triangulation design was adopted to assess teachers' perceptions on quality education in emerging private high schools in Mabelreign/Warren Park district, in Zimbabwe. More so, Creswell (2009) claims that Concurrent triangulation approach enabled the researcher collect and generate data of quantitative nature and qualitative nature concurrently.

It is also important to note that the researcher compared QUAN data base and QUAL database and discovered that the two databases converged.

Population and sample

Donald et al. (2010), Bhattacharjee (2012) and Betchoo (2017) view population as all the variables (people, items, events, or objects) that have similar characteristics that one intends to study. As such, the population for this study was one thousand one hundred and forty (1140). Consequently, a sample of 288 respondents participated in this study under QUAN and were chosen based on convenience sampling technique. Again, 15 interviewees and 7 lessons that the researcher observed were reached on the saturation point and lessons observed were picked based on simple random technique.

Instrumentation

The researcher distributed structured questionnaires to the teachers and also conducted semi-structured interviews. In addition, the researcher adopted participant observation to generate data from the selected three emerging private high schools in Mabelreign/Warren Park district, Harare of Zimbabwe. It is also important to note that the questionnaire return rate stood at 86.11%.

Data presentation and analysis procedure

The researcher employed descriptive statistical tools namely tables, bar graphs and pie charts to analyse QUAN data. In addition, content analysis was adopted to analyse QUAL data. It is also important to note that after analysing both QUAN data and QUAL data separately, the researcher compared QUAN and QUAL results using a table and discovered that the two databases converged.

Presentation, Analysis, Interpretation, and Discussion of QUAL data

Recruitment of good quality teachers and influence on quality education

Participants had different views on the recruitment of good quality teachers viz-a-vis the influence on quality education. As such, majority of the participants agree to the fact that the recruitment of good quality teachers in emerging private high schools in Mabelreign/Warren Park district have strong positive influence on quality education. One participant, a teacher, from school A said,

“If you look for good quality teachers, it means lesson delivery will be good and also good teachers will also be able to help those learners who have got challenges in education and also the teachers will do their things professionally so I think the recruitment of good quality teachers have got an impact even on pass rate that we get at the end of four years or at the end of the two years if we are talking of A level”.

The other participant shared the same sentiments and has this to say,

“Yes, for example they know how to teach a mixed ability class”.

In the same vein, another participant, a teacher, from school C has this to say,

“Yes, that’s correct, because if a teacher is qualified and has got experience in what they do, it means that they are going to deliberate properly to the students. They are going to know how to tackle every individual basing on their abilities”.

The views of the participants are in line with Bainton et al. (2016); Zimbabwe Ministry of primary and Secondary Education (2015) who posit that Teachers’ professional ethics and values may enable them to give equal treatment for all the learners and valuing diversity. In addition, ILO/UNESCO (2019, p.4) observes that “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in its Goal 4, has recognised the importance of qualified teachers in achieving inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all”. As such, inclusive and equitable quality education delve on handling learners with different academic capabilities. In addition, one can also further comment that good quality teachers can plan for remedial lessons for the slow learners to master the low order concepts and theories contained in the syllabus.

Low teacher: pupil ratio and its influence on quality education.

Low teacher: pupil ratio is one of the most important elements of quality education in any given country. However, the participants have different perceptions on the influence of low teacher: pupil ratio on quality education in emerging private high schools in Mabelreign/Warren Park district. One participant said,

“It’s true in the sense that if you look at lower numbers, they are manageable. Why am I saying so? Because learners have different capabilities. Some are fast learners, and others are slow learners. So, if there is low teacher: pupil ratio it

means the teacher has ample time to attend even to the weaker students and give them the much-needed assistance. So, I believe low teacher: pupil ratio has a positive influence, instead of having bigger classes say seventy learners to one teacher, and the teacher might end up not giving adequate attention to weaker learners who might need more of those as compared to those that grasp concepts much faster”.

Similarly, another participant concurred that low teacher: pupil ratio means the teacher has more time to attend to learners’ individual needs. Another participant said,

“Low teacher: pupil ratio, yes, to a greater extent it does contribute. Why? Because working with a smaller group like the education system that we have today which is learner based it’s easier to coordinate you know you can designate tasks easily, they do take you know very short space of time to complete and things like that so low teacher pupil ratio has strong positive influence on quality education”.

The perceptions of the participants resonate well with literature review (ILO/UNESCO, 2019) with regards to “low teacher: pupil ratio which will allow the teacher to give the pupils individualised attention”. As such, one can point that low teacher: pupil ratio is desirable and ideal for emerging private high schools to offer good quality education. In this case, one can further point out that individualised attention can be properly and effectively used by teachers when there is low teacher: pupil ratio in any given emerging private high school.

School Library equipped with relevant, modern library materials and its influence on quality education

It is interesting to note that majority of the participants had similar views on the effect of a school library that is equipped with relevant, modern library materials on quality education in emerging private high schools. One participant has this to say,

“Yes, sir. When we look at a library, it’s not just about books. Nowadays we are looking at libraries with journals, we look at libraries with computers, and we look at libraries with all sources of research materials. So, if there is a well-equipped library it means learners can go beyond the classroom facilitation and then they can go and beef up on what they will have learnt in class and therefore there is library they have quite time to study and to go over concepts”.

Again, another participant has this to say,

“Yes, sir. Those schools that do not have libraries that do not have relevant books will obviously have poor results. The students need the right content within a conducive atmosphere to excel”.

The views of the participants are in line with the findings from research that was conducted in Botswana by Dube (2018) which reveals that the library should be the centre of any secondary school has ICT resources in order to allow learners and teachers to conduct their personal research. In addition, these views are also in line with Tapfuma and Munyoro (2010) who lament that Doctor Ranganathan, a famous information expert’s concern when he promulgated the five laws of the library was in establishing a library that would be of much value to the patrons it serves. As such, one can say that the value that Doctor Ranganathan delve on is none other than the benefits that accrue to the patrons such as positive educational outcomes after any given form of assessment.

Again, the views of the participants are in consistency with Dube (2018) who asserts that digitalisation of libraries in Botswana has improved their recognition by the patrons through regular library visits. One can comment that a school library with relevant and up-to-date library materials have positive influence on quality education. In this vein, the learners will ICT resources in the library to research different concepts enshrined in the syllabus.

Proper administration of examinations and its influence on quality education in emerging private high schools.

Proper administration of examinations in emerging private high schools ensure that there is no examination malpractice and maladministration. One participant has this to say,

“Aaaaa, there is reasons for students to study hard because they know that their exams are well monitored and well taken care off. There are no risks of exams leaking to the students. Therefore, you know that whatever it is testing them they have not seen it before in the same format”.

The views of the participants are in consistency with Ray et al. (2018) who claim that examinations must be well managed for the results to be creditable. Again, the participants’ views resonate well with the findings from research that was conducted by Viriri and Makaye (2020) entitled, “Unhu/Ubuntu and examination malpractice in Zimbabwe: Perceptions of selected stakeholders from Masvingo urban secondary schools” which reveals that it seems like

it's now the order of the day that each Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council examination series is marred by examination malpractice and maladministration.

Furthermore, participants' views are supported by a Herald report made by Maxwell Tapatapa, a Herald Reporter, Herald dated 4 February 2023 which says approximately 4 961 O Level candidates for October/November 2022 examination series had their results nullified by ZIMSEC due to examination malpractice after having access to live examination papers well before the examination day. One can comment that public examinations are very crucial in economic, social, cultural, political, and technological development of any country in the world, thus, the need for proper administration of examinations. Again, one can comment that some of the parents are enrolling their children in emerging private high schools in Zimbabwe in search for Cambridge International examination board since Cambridge International examinations are administered properly in the country.

Intervention strategies suggested by the participants that can be adopted by emerging private high schools to improve quality education

During the in-depth face to face interviews, the participants suggested different strategies that can be adopted by emerging private high schools to improve quality of education.

It is important to note that the participants suggested that entrepreneurs in emerging private high schools must remunerate workers reasonable wages and salaries. One participant has this to say,

“Okey. Ummmmmm! They should try to pay their workers well. Remuneration is one good way of motivating teachers instead of the general mind-set that they have that if you have more students, if you have more classrooms, you will get better results. You get better results when you have a team of motivated teachers and people come here to work as to provide for their families”.

It is also important to note that the participants suggested that in this 21st century, entrepreneurs in these emerging private high schools should invest in modern teaching and learning educational media and technology such as computers, interactive whiteboards and projectors. One participant has this to say,

“But what I can add is on the resources materials they need to improve on that especially resources such as overhead projectors that has something to do with

technology and also what they can call the smart boards. They are few private schools that have those, so they are need to invest more on those resources”.

Again, the participants also suggested that teacher development programmes such as workshops that are planned by Cambridge International Assessment Education in various subjects should be attended by teachers. The reason being that majority of these emerging private high schools are affiliated to Cambridge International examination board. One participant opined,

“Yaa, I think we can as well go for seminars whereby we are called for a week or so rather than these short workshops which goes for half a day or some hours. I think that’s what I have”.

As suggested by the participants, emerging private high schools are likely to improve the quality of education that they are offering to the market.

Lesson observation

The teachers who were selected at random granted the researcher permission to observe their lessons by signing lesson observation consent form. In this study, the researcher observed seven lessons from the selected teachers in different subjects. At School B, two lessons namely Lower 6 Business Studies and Form three Biology were observed on 12 September 2022. In addition, on 13 September 2022 two lessons were also observed at School C namely Form 4 Mathematics and Lower six History. Again, Form one History, Lower six Physics, and Form 4 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are three lessons that were observed on 15 September 2022 at school A.

In each case, the researcher was introduced to the learners and the learners were made aware that the visitor is a researcher for ethical reasons. The researcher was granted permission by the school heads at each school and was referred to the Deputy Heads` office for data collection and generation.

The researcher`s first visit for lesson observation was at School B on 12 September 2022. Interestingly, the researcher arrived at School B around 0740 hours. The researcher started to distribute the questionnaires to the teachers before proceeding for lesson observations. Apparently, Lower 6 Business Studies teacher and Form three Biology teacher were randomly selected.

Business Studies teacher led the researcher to the classroom where Business Studies lesson was to be conducted. Introductions were done to both the researcher and the learners. The lesson started at exactly 1100 hours and lesson introduction was done by way of recap questions. This was followed by lesson topic '*Theories of motivation*' which was clearly written on the white board. It is also important to mention that lesson development was good and up to standard. As such, the researcher observed the following: good knowledge of the subject; the teacher used both *Shona* which is vernacular language and English Language through out the lesson though English language dominated the entire lesson; hand-outs were used as educational media and technology; good questioning technique; there were 40 learners in this class; learners were not seated in rows; natural light was adequate for teaching and learning activities to take place; electricity was also available also helped the situation when the classroom was a bit dark due to change in weather; learners had no textbooks; pupil-pupil interaction and teacher-pupil interaction; furniture type standard student desks and chair; and the teacher concluded the lesson by giving a summary for the content covered. The lesson ended at 1135 Hours.

It is interesting to note that the observations on good subject mastery demonstrated by the teachers in all the subjects observed are in line with Mwesiga, & Okendo, (2018) who observe that school heads in secondary schools are under immense pressure of producing good public examination results, thus, the need to recruit teachers who are technocrats in their areas of specialisation.

It is also important to note that teacher-pupil ratios and class sizes that the researcher observed in all the lessons observed are well supported by the research findings from research that was conducted by Shabbir et al. (2014) in Pakistan and also another one that was conducted in Zambia by Kalemba and Mulauzi (2020) which reveal high pupil-teacher ratio as another key element that is pushing parents to enrol their children in private high schools. Furthermore, Kennedy (2021) claims that small class sizes in private high schools will enable teachers to cater for individual attention.

As such, one can comment that teachers who are experts in their areas of speciality have well content mastery and are likely to impart good quality education to the learners. Furthermore, there is no doubt that one can say that learners will have high confidence with a teacher who has good subject mastery.

Again, it can be commented that emerging private high schools are now mainly characterised by high teacher-pupil ratios which is contrary to the information that they fed to their target

market that they have low teacher: pupil ratio. Furthermore, one can also comment that owners and entrepreneurs of emerging private high schools are not worried about increase in class sizes but rather are on the money-making side. As such, one can also point out that entrepreneurs in the education sector with profiteering mentality are likely to shortchange the parents since teachers may fail to provide individualised attention to the slow learners in their classes because of high teacher-pupil ratio.

Presentation, Analysis, Interpretation, and Discussion of QUAN data

Responses of Teachers based on Questionnaire.

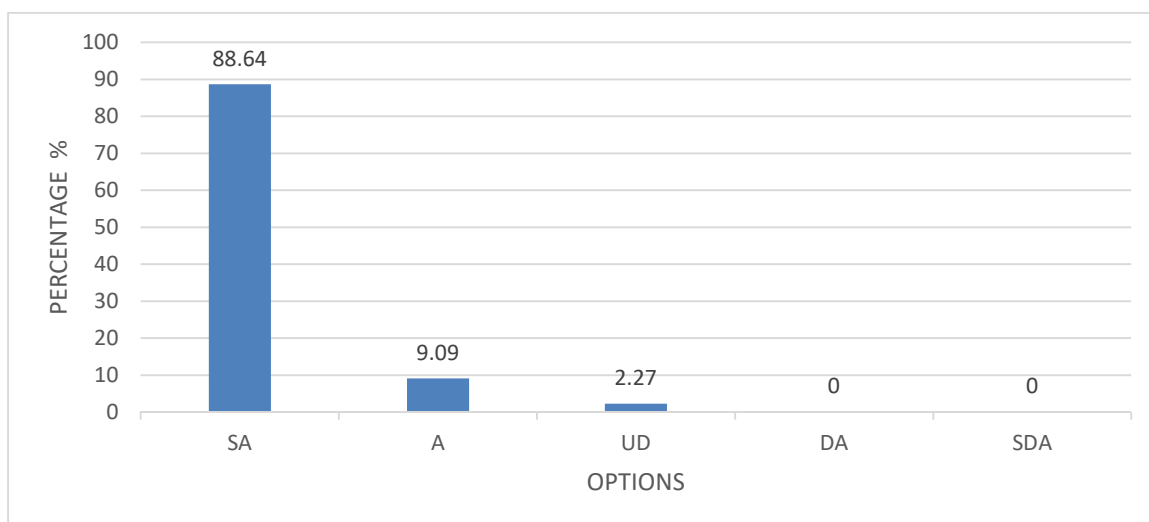


Figure 1 Good quality of teachers has positive influence on quality education. N=44

Figure 1 above depicts that 88.64% of the respondents strongly agree, and 9.09% agree that good quality of teachers, with subject knowledge and skills, high level of professionalism have strong positive influence on quality education. On the other hand, only 2.27% of the respondents were undecided. As such, majority of the respondents' opinions show that good quality of teachers, with subject knowledge and skills, high level of professionalism has strong positive influence on quality education.

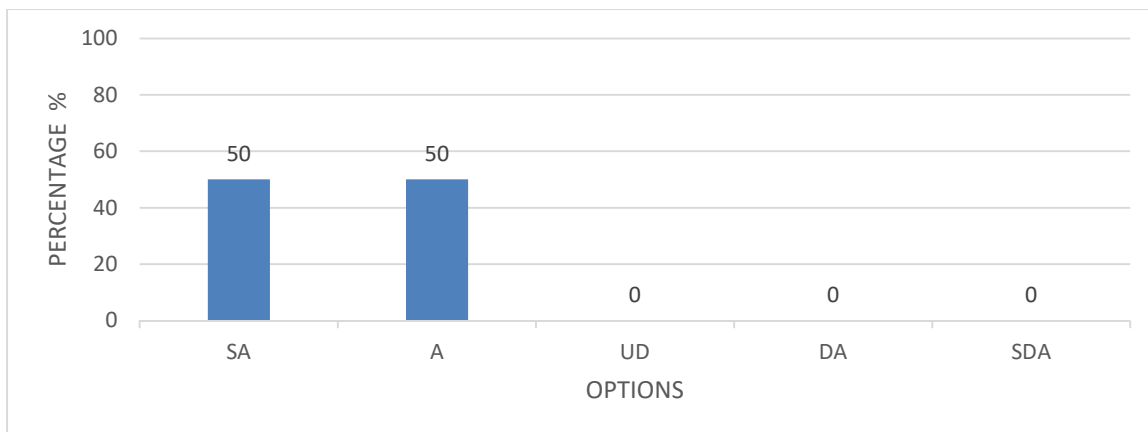


Figure 2 Low teacher: pupil ratio and its influence on quality education N=44

Figure 2 depicts that 50% of the respondents strongly agree, 50% agree that low teacher: pupil ratio has positive influence on quality education. As such, majority of the respondents' perceptions reflect that low teacher: pupil ratio has positive influence on quality education.

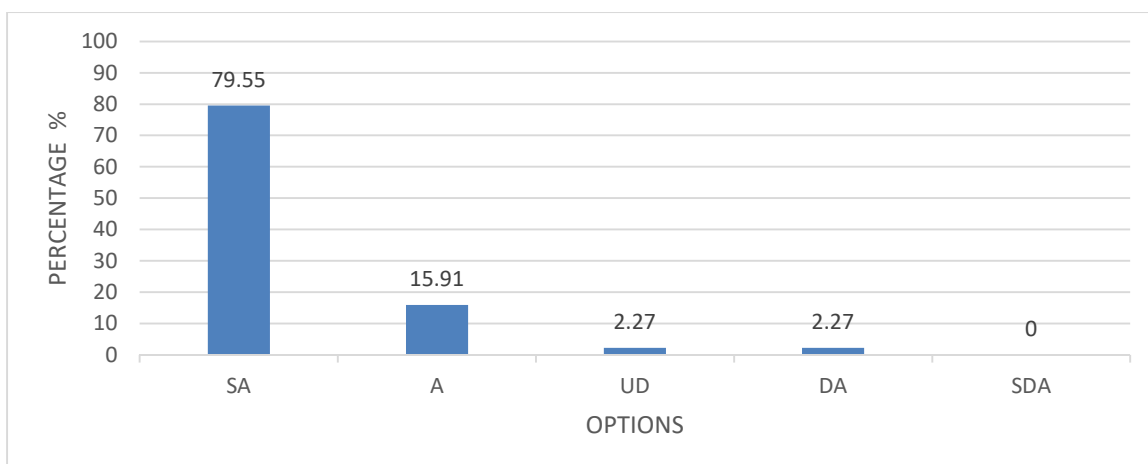


Figure 3 Textbook: pupil ratio of 1:1 and its influence on quality education N=44

Figure 3 depicts that 79.55% of the respondents strongly agree and 15.91% agree to the notion that textbook: pupil ratio of 1:1 has positive influence on quality education. Conversely, 2.27% of the respondents were undecided, and 2.27% disagree that textbook: pupil ratio of 1:1 has positive influence on quality education. In this vein, majority of the respondents' perceptions show that textbook: pupil ratio of 1:1 has positive influence on quality education.

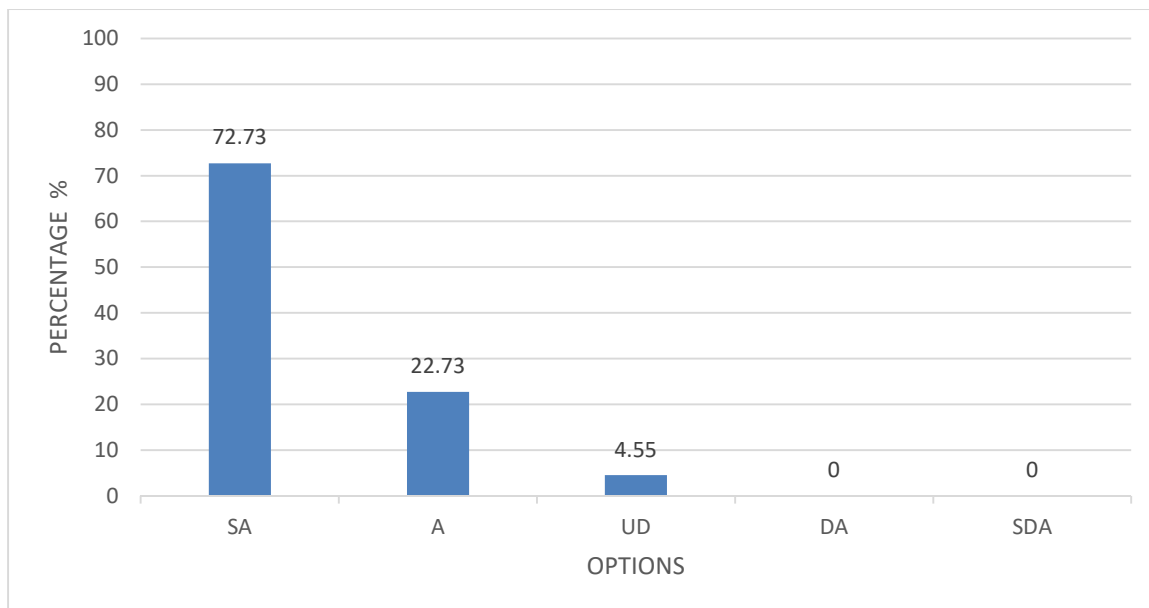


Figure 4 Teaching/ learning materials should be modern to promote quality education. N=44

Figure 4 depicts that 72.73% of the respondents strongly agree, and 22.73% agree that teaching/ learning materials in emerging private high schools should be modern, for example, interactive white boards, educational videos, cellular phones, etc, to promote quality education. As such, majority of the respondents' opinions agree that teaching/learning materials in emerging private high schools should be modern, for example, interactive white boards, educational videos, cellular phones, etc, to promote quality education.

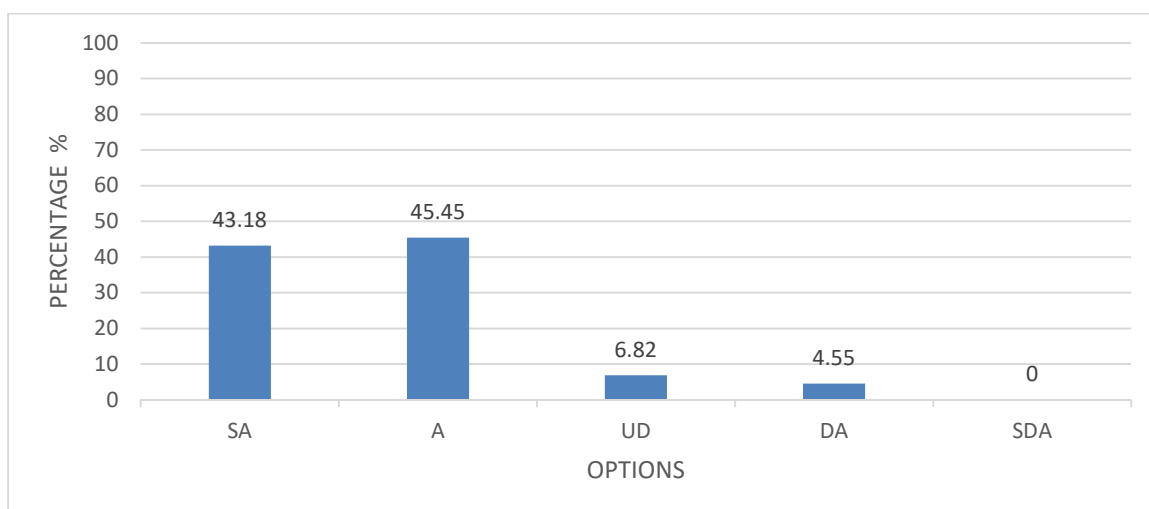


Figure 5 A classroom with ergonomic furniture promotes quality education N=44

Figure 5 above depicts that 43.18% of the respondents strongly agree, and 45.46% agree that a classroom with ergonomic furniture promotes quality education. On the other hand, 6.82% of the respondents remained undecided, and 4.55% disagree to the effect that a classroom with ergonomic furniture promotes quality education. As such, majority of the respondents` opinions show that a classroom with ergonomic furniture promotes quality education.

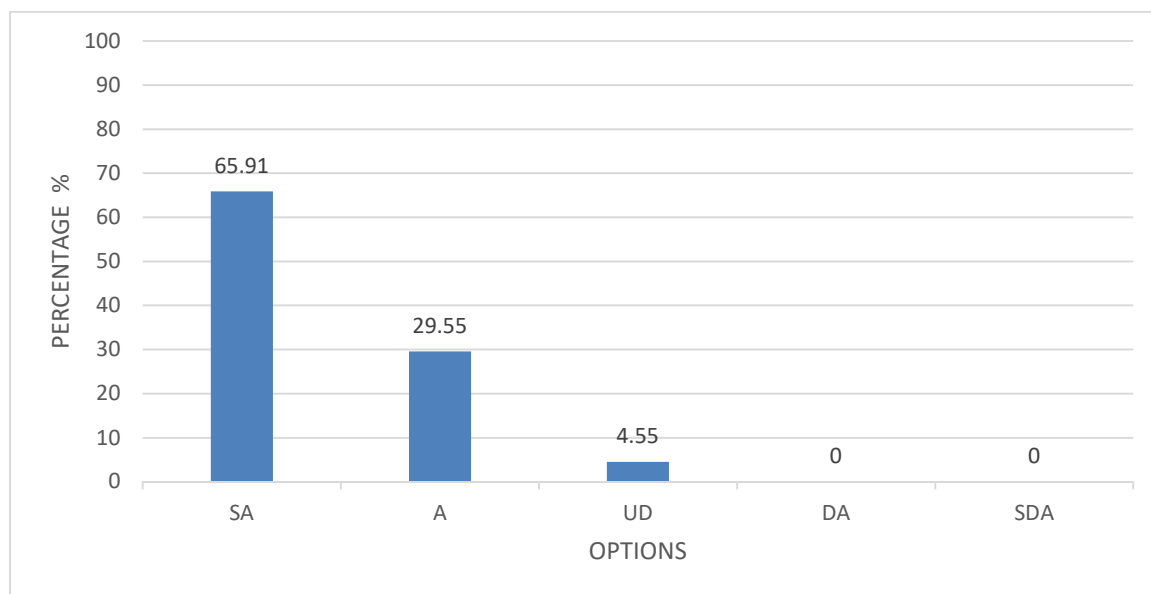


Figure 6 Library equipped with relevant, modern library materials and its influence on quality education in emerging private high schools N=44

Figure 6 depicts that 65.91% of the respondents strongly agree and 29.55% of the respondents agree that library equipped with relevant, modern library materials have positive influence on quality education in emerging private high schools. Conversely, 4.55% of the respondents remained undecided. In this vein, majority of the respondents` opinions show that library equipped with relevant, modern library materials have positive influence on quality education in emerging private high schools.

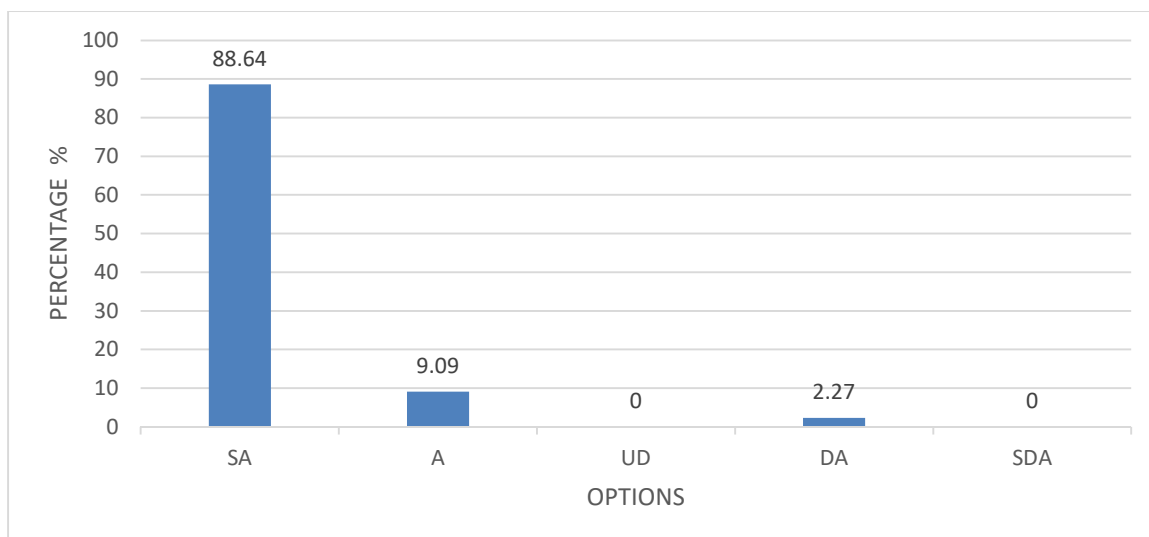


Figure 7 Teacher development programmes and its influence on quality education N=44

Figure 7 shows that 88.64% of the respondents strongly agree, and 9.09% agree that investing in teacher development programmes / seminars/workshops offered by Cambridge Assessment International Education will improve quality education in emerging private high schools. On the other hand, 2.27% of the respondents disagree, and none strongly disagree. As such, majority of the respondents` perceptions reflect that investing in teacher development programmes / seminars/workshops offered by Cambridge Assessment International Education will improve quality education in emerging private high schools.

Discussion

The results for the questionnaire item Textbook: pupil ratio of 1:1 has positive influence on quality education. are in line with the research findings conducted in Pakistan by Andrabi et al. (2002) which reveals that secondary schools in Pakistan have low student-teacher ratios. Again, the findings are well supported by research findings by Kennedy (2021) in Malaysia which points out that parents favour private schools because of low teacher: pupil ratio. As such, one can comment that low teacher: pupil ratio in emerging private high schools will enable the teachers to have individualised attention to the weak learners (Kalemba & Mulauzi, 2020). In addition, the results based on questionnaire item Textbook: pupil ratio of 1:1 resonate well with one of the five laws of a library that were promulgated by one of the gurus in Information Science fraternity, Doctor R.S Ranganathan (1931) which looks on textbook: pupil ratio of 1:1 ‘every book its reader’ (Kaushika, 2006; Chisita, 2016). As such, it can be commented that textbook: pupil ratio of 1:1 has positive influence on learners` educational outcome.

The findings for the questionnaire item teaching/ learning materials in emerging private high schools should be modern, for example, IWBs, educational videos, cellular phones, etc, in order to promote quality education are in line with SMART Technologies (2006) who claims that educators world over are using student engagement as the central pedagogical strategy to improve learner`s academic achievement by modern teaching and learning materials like smart boards.

It is also important to note that the findings from a questionnaire item ‘Library equipped with relevant, modern library materials have positive influence on quality education in emerging private high schools’ are well supported by Dube (2018) who observe that the library should be the centre of the academic institution which has modern ICT resources in order to accommodate learners and teachers for personal study. Again, the in line with Tapfuma and Munyoro (2010) and Mutongi (2016) who observe that in schools, librarians develop appropriate learning materials, educate students on good study habits, equip them with information literacy skills (Phiri, 2010) to overcome information overload (Tapfuma & Munyoro, 2010).

Furthermore, the results from a questionnaire item ‘A classroom with ergonomic furniture promotes quality education’ are in line with Troussier (1999) who found out that there was improvement on task behaviour and some changes were also noted in terms of sitting position after the introduction of ergonomically friendly furniture in their classrooms. In addition, with regards to back pain, Zandvliet and Straker (2001) argue that back pain exists among learners due to usage of traditional chairs and desks which are not comfortable hence negatively affects their attentiveness in class, thus, the provision of quality education is negatively affected.

Again, the results from questionnaire item ‘Investing in teacher development programmes / seminars/workshops offered by Cambridge Assessment International Education will improve quality education in emerging private high schools are in line with Jayaram et al. (2012) who affirm that professional development courses on the part of the teachers can significantly influence learners` educational outcome.

Conclusions of the study

The conclusions hereunder were drawn from the QUAN findings and QUAL findings that converged.

1. The study concluded that recruitment of good quality teachers with subject and pedagogical knowledge, high level of professionalism has strong positive influence on quality education in emerging private high schools.
2. The study also concluded that low teacher: pupil ratio and textbook: pupil ratio of 1:1 has positive influence on quality education in emerging private high schools.
3. It was also concluded that existence of a school library equipped with relevant, modern library materials, Science laboratory, and computer laboratory equipped with relevant, modern equipment, and consumables have positive influence on quality education in emerging private high schools.
4. It was also concluded that teaching/ learning materials in emerging private high schools should be modern, for example, IWBs, educational videos, cellular phones, etc, to promote quality education.in emerging private high schools.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Emerging private high school administrators should continue to recruitment good quality teachers, with subject knowledge and skills, and high level of professionalism.
2. School administrators in emerging private high schools should maintain low teacher: pupil ratio as per their ads to the market to promote quality education. Furthermore, Education Administrators in emerging private high schools should purchase textbooks such that they go by their promise to the target market of textbook: pupil ratio of 1:1.
3. Entrepreneurs in emerging private high schools should construct libraries and equip them with relevant, modern library materials to promote quality education.

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