Study on effective value chain management of Public and Private Schools; Empirical case study from South India

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration (Business Management) from Liverpool John Moores University.

Word Count: 18,481 (Excluding Table of contents, bibliography and appendices)

August 2013

Dublin Business School

Declaration

I, Praveen Kumar Perumal, declare that I am the sole author of this dissertation and during the period of registered study I have not been registered for any other academic award or qualification, nor has any of the material been submitted wholly or partly for any other award. I have personally carried out all the work except the references from the articles which is included in the bibliography.

Signed: Praveen Kumar Perumal   Date: 13th August 2013

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Acknowledgements

The researcher would like to thank all the people who are involved in the research and made this research to be completed on time. A special thanks for the following,

- First of all his supervisor Dr. P.J. Paul who has guided him throughout his research and gave valuable feedback to shape this research into a fine master piece of dissertation.
- The entire participant's for their time and involvement in participating in the interview process.
- His friends, colleagues and other staffs of DBS for helping him and providing valuable suggestions throughout the course for his development.
- His family members and wife who showed immense care and love and supported him to complete this dissertation.
- Finally God for the blessings to complete his dissertation successfully.

Abstract

This research will study the effective management of several attributes in value chain like resource utilization, quality of education, infrastructure, administration, marketing etc. It is a qualitative study and interviewing the management personnel's like principals and correspondent of private and public schools in India will outline the competitive advantage of their schools through strategies in management system and also lack of management system within the organization. The literature review finds the advantage of private schools over public schools and will make this research more valuable by further conducting this cross study evaluation. This study will help the schools to identify their need and drawback of current management practice and also examines the competitive advantage of private schools over public schools. It also differentiates the system of practice within the management by analyzing the value chain of public and private schools. This research will outline the existing system of value chain in schools in Chennai (India) and will also provide information for future researchers who are interested in detailed analysis of competitive strategies in value chain management of schools.

1. Introduction

Indian education system consists of primary, secondary and higher level of education. Primary and secondary education includes students with the age group up to 18 and higher education involves college level education. About 140 million students are left out from schools every year without enrollment and 200,000 more schools are needed in India (ASER, 2006). There was a huge demand for primary and secondary level of education in 2009 (Parker, 2010). World Bank report (2009) also states that the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) in secondary schools in India is 40% compared to 70% in East Asia and 82% in Latin America. All these factors made the Indian government to pass an act for compulsory primary education called as Right of Children to free and Compulsory Education in 2009. According to a survey conducted by District Information system for Education (DISE) across 633 districts in India, there was an increase in schools from 8, 53,601 in 2002 to 13, 03, 812 in 2009 due to the initiative taken by the government. Out of 13, 03,812 schools, 10, 48,046 were government owned public schools and remaining were privately owned schools (Jain, 2012). There was further growth in total number of schools from 13, 03,812 to 13, 96,331 out of which 54.8% were government owned primary schools (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2010). In spite of all these developments, India is the one of the largest illiterate population in the world with an average literacy rate of 74.04% (Ministry of Statistics report, 2013).

1.1. Background of the Problem

Though the percentage of private schools is less in India, it shows better result than public schools (Goodman and Moore, 2001). A study on private schools in one of the state of India shows 23% of higher score than public schools (Tooley and Dixon, 2003). Various factors like family income, access to information and parent's educational level plays a major role in the selection of schools (Bulman, 2004). According to McKinsey & Company, about 250 million people who fall in middle class segment in India prefers the private aided school even though the tuition fee is more compared to public schools. The private schools in major cities like Delhi, Bombay, Chennai in India places a major

competition to the public schools in terms of quality of education and management standards. According to the Annual State of Education Report (2011), private enrolment is as high as 60 per cent in India. The Poor infrastructure, lack of management and teaching quality of public schools made the parents to choose private schools in most places. Fowler (2002) also states that if public schools cannot keep the pace with private schools in terms of quality, then it can be seen as a dumping ground for people who cannot offer to pay. The number of public schools is more but the students enrolling every year is reduced drastically leading to the decline of country's literacy rate. About 93% of schools in India are government owned public schools and it is evident that these schools are of poor quality from the data that 40% of school going students attends private schools which constitute only 7% of the overall schools in India. On the other hand, over 80 % of children's attend public schools run by the government in USA, UK and Canada which is a result of effective management practice. Majority of population who study in government primary and secondary schools in India are in great depressed educational standards (IndiaToday.in, 2012). These impose a challenge to Indian government to improve the management practice and quality of secondary education in public schools.

1.2. Aim & Objective

The effectiveness of management system of private schools in India and the ineffectiveness of public schools in large number made the researcher to study the system of practice in value chain management of these public and private schools in terms of marketing, service, effective resource utilization etc. Also the major difference on the perception of public and private schools in India strengthened the researcher to focus on this area. Education is the basic need of country's development and the difference in educational standard was also the key reason for the researcher to choose this topic. This research will study the effective system of value chain in the secondary private and public education sector which forms the basis of their competitive advantage. This research helps to outline the important management factors influencing the competitive growth of private schools which is lagging in most government schools in south India. The analysis can help to draw a benchmark for effective management practice to an extent (due to sample limitations of this research) for the state government of Tamilnadu (India) to

improve their management efficiency and provide quality education in government schools. There are approximately 1221 schools in Chennai (India) following different teaching patterns like matriculation board of education, Anglo-Indian board, State board (Chennai.tn.nic.in, 2012). Two most competitive state board private schools and two public schools are selected from Chennai (India) based on maximum number of students enrolled every year and top management personnel's like principal or correspondent are interviewed for this research. The time taken to complete this project was 10 weeks and scheduled to complete before 16th of August 2013. The overall cost incurred for the researcher to conduct this research including domestic travel, food, printing, binding and international courier is €.111 (approx.).

1.3. Suitability of the Researcher

The researcher has an engineering degree with few years of experience in management profile in India. The researcher owns a small private school which has been started in 1992 and has a close connection in working with direct management. This has been a primary reason for undertaking this research topic. The skills gained through his past experience and from master's curriculum will help him to attain a master's degree by applying his knowledge and required amount of time and work in performing this dissertation. This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for Master level degree.

1.4. Learning Style

David Kolb (1971) developed the learning style Inventory (LST) to evaluate the individual's different learning style. From his research, he proposes four different styles which are diverging, assimilating, converging and accommodating. Each learning styles have different characteristics and the learning style identified from the researcher is accommodating. According to Kolb (1971), "individual with accommodating learning style rely on people for information rather than technical analysis". This research is primarily based on participant's own experience rather than logical analysis and cannot be performed without the involvement of individual participation. As Kolb stated, the researcher style of methodology and data collection shows that this dissertation is performed by adopting accommodating as the learning style.

1.5.   Recipients of the Research

The recipients for this research are Dublin Business School where the researcher is doing his master's program, Liver Pool John Moore's University where the researcher will be awarded the master's degree on successful completion of his research, his supervisor and mentor Dr. P.J. Paul who has guided him throughout his research and finally the management and employees of public and private schools. This research finding will help the schools to identify their need and evaluate their management system.

1.6.   Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into number of chapters starting from Chapter 1 consisting of abstract and introduction which outlines the aim and scope, rationale for study, background and suitability of the researcher. Chapter 2 explains the use of theories and models in the research supporting the aim and objective. Chapter 3 explains the methodology to pursue this dissertation and discusses the rationale for choosing particular methods in this research. It also includes the sample selection, data collection and analysis, ethical issues etc. Chapter 4 will illustrate the findings of each case separately along with various themes. Chapter 5 will analyze different cases and perform cross case analysis with different perspectives. Chapter 6 will summarize and draw general conclusions and compares and relates the theories in literature. It also gives result of this research and provides recommendation for future studies. Chapter 7 explains the self-reflections on own learning and performance of a researcher throughout the research. There will also be a reference section along with appendix which includes references used throughout this research and documents such as Introductory mail, Interview Guide, Interview Questions and Consent form.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Role of Technology in Education

According to Michael Porter, strategy is defined as "being different and deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value". Although porter's analysis is related to industrial development, it can also be related to service sector (Teisberg *et al*, 1998). Educational institutions have entered into commercial competition like other businesses due to the increasing environmental forces and growing demand. Hence Continuous development is needed for long term sustainability. Technology plays a major role in identifying a problem in a management, structuring the system and identifying alternative solutions. These technological tools help the management in the strategic development of problem solving, monitoring human resources, maintaining staff and student profile, online marketing, media promotions etc. Technology is also related to education and it is an important criterion for growth and development of a country (Bhattacharya and Sharma, 2007). Technology in education enhances the human resource capital for economic upliftment. It increases the skilled professionals which in turn increases the country's economy. Thierry and Deborah (2000) also explains the importance of technology in education by analyzing factors like teaching effectiveness, interaction, students attitudes etc. The result shows that the students were not frustrated to use the technology and wish to spend more time in interactive learning. This technological enhancement improves the relationship between students and teachers by modifying traditional class room interaction and black board teaching and made the teachers available more time for mentoring. According to the author, technology plays a major role in developing interaction and also easing the way of learning. In 1968, Mexico launched its first television based learning called Telesecundaria to help people get education in rural areas and distant communities. Kless, McAnanys, and Mayo (1975) stated that even though Telesecundaria enabled schools had untrained and fewer classrooms than conventional schools, this system was more cost efficient for the management in enhancing the knowledge of student's community. According to Perraton (2000) although the cost for students is high in using technology compared to conventional schools, it provides a better model for alternative learning. Within few years this model reached many people and was successful to advance with satellite

broadcast. Likewise, Philippine universities have used a combination of radio, audio and video recording for distance education. It also introduced mobile learning by providing mobile material for teaching local population. But the country faced challenges to synchronize the urban and rural population through technological learning (Bandalaria, 2007). Rao (2006) explains the similar technological improvements in Indian education scenario. In 2002, there were 10 universities in India providing distance education through radio and TV broadcasts. This was similar to Mexican case where the technology was used to help unemployed population in rural areas who are unable to attend classes and uneducated housewives. This was advanced by few universities to provide third level learning through Internet. This increased the number of people enrolling in higher education from remote places. Later this technology was adapted by many other educational institutions in the recent years. This success made the Government to take several initiatives to enable IT learning in schools and colleges and as a result $104 million was sanctioned by Ministry of Human Resource Development for further improvements. The traditional library system was replaced by online library and this led to the launch of Indian Training and Education Network for Development (INTEND). INTEND focuses on providing internet and e-mail services, downloading lectures from online, E-library, video conferencing etc. These advancements made the students to use the library resources at its best and provided quality education and improved results in India. With these innovations, Indian educational sector has made a joint venture with foreign universities and started providing classes from remote places using EDUSAT (satellite developed by Indian government for education). The first Indo-US class started in 2006 with lectures provided by University of Illinois and Buffalo. Sorensen and Vidal (2002) states that these improvements in technology have a great demand in teaching curriculum of secondary schools through virtual classrooms, interactive hub and online sessions. The traditional learning system which includes class room teaching doesn't provide continuous learning. With the advancement of E-learning, students have access to material 24/7 and can make effective learning. It improves student's ability to communicate and develops thinking skills (Jenkins, 2009). It provides flexibility in learning and better outcome. For strategic positioning, E-learning is an important tool for improving creativity and increasing the competition among the students. E-learning has been adapted by many institutions and community service centers are started all over India to reach the remote places to improve the quality of education. As an initiative of

Indian government, 50 online libraries have been set up in all primary and secondary schools in India. Several such initiatives have been taken by the government to improve the quality of teaching in India. But still it is not effectively utilized by the public schools and in some states the students are not aware of this technology. This is a result of lack of management practice which is continued for several decades in public schools in India. At the institutional level, many private sectors have launched their virtual class rooms and E-learning centers much beyond the government schools and produced better results. These literatures show the importance of technology in higher educational institutions for long term growth and competitive advantage. There is also a great need of technological advancement in the public schools to improve their standard of teaching.

2.2. Management tools

Beard (2009) states that due to increased competition, emerging technologies and resource constraints, management tool like balanced scorecard (BSC) are being used in educational institutions. According to Kaplan and Norton (1996), "BSC translates an organization's mission and strategy into a comprehensive set of performance measures that provide the framework for a strategic measurement and management system". It is a management tool which measures performance on financial, customers, internal business process and learning and growth. In educational institutions, students and stakeholders are the customers. Students and teachers performance are continuously monitored and reported to higher management which helps to identify the root cause of a problem. BSC helps the management to follow the mission and vision and translates the organizational strategy into operational objectives. These tools have been implemented in many private schools to monitor their performance and improve their efficiency. Similarly Total Quality Management (TQM) which has been used in business and industry sector has been introduced in educational institutions to deliver high quality standards. According to Sallis (2002), TQM is defined as the "philosophy and methodology that assist institutions to manage change and set their own agendas for dealing with external pressures". Countries like USA, UK and Japan have adapted and implemented the TQM concept in their educational system. In India, it has been recently implemented and resulted in great improvements. Educationalists see this concept more effective and believe that improving the quality of student's education can result in high success rates. According to Agarwal

et al., (2011), strict implementation of system like 100% attendance, using innovative class rooms like virtual teaching, PowerPoint presentation, video conferencing and feedback system between students and teachers and vice versa are the key factors for quality improvements in schools. In addition to this, availability of skilled professionals, encouraging extra-curricular activities like sports, soft skills are the part of TQM in educational institutions. Success of an organization also depends on effective utilization of available resources and retention of skilled employees by providing performance incentives, medical and holiday assistance, in house training etc. For improving management capabilities, TQM also works on standardizing the procedures, periodic reports analysis, appropriate benchmarks etc. (Agarwal *et al*., 2011). Ramaiah Institute of Management studies (RIMS) in India is an example for using TQM as a management tools for strategic growth. It is a private college and was selected as the finalist in National Quality Education Conference held in Rosemont, US on November 2010 for implementing quality tools like Ishikawa diagram, Pareto analysis, affinity diagram, scatter diagram etc. in their management practice (Walters, 2011). This shows that the continuous development is achieved through implementation of these management tools in practices. These tools are effectively used only in few private higher secondary institutions and there is a lack of management tools in public owned institutions especially in the primary and secondary schools in India. This is one of the major reasons for the downturn of public schools in India.

2.3.   Schools in India

2.3.1. Current Scenario

According to Parasuraman *et al* (1988), service quality is defined as "the degree and direction of discrepancy between customer's perception and expectation". The competitive advantage of an organization can be achieved by increasing the service quality. Muralidharan and Michael (2006) states that there is nearly 50% growth in the number of private schools every year in rural India due to the poor performance of public schools. Most of the population in rural areas prefers private schools due to high level of quality offered by them. Though the pay for private school teachers are less compared to public schools, the private school teachers engage in teaching activities 6 to 9 % more than public schools. The attendance rates and test score rates of children's are higher than

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public schools. One of the major advantages of private schools is that they start teaching English in early age. The disciplinary actions like dismissals are carried out in private schools when a teacher undergoes repeated absenteeism. On the other hand, a survey states that out of 3000 public schools, only 1 school reported the dismissal of teacher because of regular absenteeism. The author compares the competitive advantage of various private schools with public schools in terms of teacher characteristics, student characteristics and infrastructure. 20 states in India were selected and 10 districts for each state were selected using geographically stratified random sampling. Various tests were conducted on students and teachers to analyze their performance and characteristics. The result shows that the service quality provided by the private schools is high compared to public schools in all the factors taken in to account.

Another study conducted by Nandamuri and Rao (2012) on teachers performance at secondary level in Andhra Pradesh (India) indicates that around 62% of public schools and 32% of private aided schools were providing training to their teachers. The result shows that 84% of teachers from private schools who attended the training were able to improve their teaching performance whereas only 30% were able to improve their skills in public schools. The finding shows that the planning framework is non-existent or inactive in many public schools. This outlines the effective management of private schools and lack of management efficiency and ineffectiveness of training in public schools even though they have been fully funded by the state government. This in turn resulted in the poor performance level and increasing failure rate among the students in public schools. Michael, Nandamuri and Rao have analyzed the quality of private schools and all the results shows that they are better over public schools in management system and in house training. Moreover the above literature explains the quantitative analysis of different management system in few states of India. This shows the existence of contextual and methodological gap in secondary schools of Chennai (India) and this helps the researcher to pursue his further research.

2.3.2. Quality of Education

A research conducted on performance of public and private schools in Orissa by Goyal (2009) states that the quality of learning in public schools are very low compared to private schools. For the study, 6 public and 2 private schools in urban and rural areas are chosen and evaluated in the form of comprehensive testing. The result shows that about 90% of parents sending their children to private schools are literate who knows the ground reality where the quality of education delivered in private schools is better than public schools. Most of the students who study in private schools have wealthier background and most studying in public school is from rural background. It emphasizes on the greater outcome of learning from private schools and dominates the public school in most of the states in India. The quality of education is related to the management practice of these schools and involvement of the staffs. Dorathi (2011) states that service orientation of the teachers are directly related to quality of teaching and overall performance of the school. Hence the attitudes of teachers towards the organization are analyzed in this research. 240 teachers from 10 government and private schools were selected as samples and factors like scope of advancement, Grievance handling, monetary benefits and welfare facilities were tested. Among all these factors, private schools provide more benefits to the teachers than public schools. Dorathi has analyzed the single criteria (teacher's attitude) for determining the performance of schools which again confirms the result of Michael, Nandamuri and Rao emphasizing on the high quality output from private schools. Another research by Dwivedi and Trigunait (2011) have analyzed the efficiency of government and government aided secondary schools in Jharkhand state in India. For this research, 37 nationalized schools have been chosen in different districts and factors like number of classes, teachers-student ratio, facilities; number of students passed is considered and evaluated using Data Envelopment Analysis Tool. The result shows that out of 37 schools, 7 schools were efficient, 10 were likely to be efficient. This research shows a large percentage of government and government aided schools in Jharkhand have inability to produce quality education which again strengthens the research output shown by other authors.

2.4.   Value Chain Models

2.4.1.   Importance of Value chain

According to Porter (1985), the value chain is defined as the chain of interdependent activities. It is the series of activities which convert input into output in an effective way to gain competitive advantage (Walters and Lancaster, 2000 and Hines and Rich, 1997). Every product passes through these chains of activities and gains some value at every activity. It is the base tool to analyze organization's activities. A firm or an organization gains the competitive advantage by implementing strategies in these activities to attain differentiation from its competitors. Value chain can be categorized into two types. One involves series of activities within the firm to manufacture a product or render a service. An organization gets an input, processes it and produces the output. Other type involves series of activities across the firm where the output of one firm becomes the input of other. Value chain is being perceived as effective cost cutting measures for many firms. Resources are utilized with maximum efficiency and raw material waste is reduced drastically (Acharyulu and Shekhar, 2012). According to Balsmeier and Voisin (1996), Value chain helps the organization to formulate strategies and plans to take market benefits and sustainable position. Another research by Cinquini and Tenucci (2010) explains the use of variety of strategic management accounting practices, including value chain analysis which helps to increase the profit and reduces the wastage. Bardy (2006) from his research identified that there is new challenges for management accountants. He also suggests that inter relationship between value chain activities and customer/supplier in a management should be improved. Cadez and Guilding (2007) conducted a research which also evaluated the importance of value chain costing in Slovenia. Among various strategic management accounting techniques, the author found that the value chain costing ranked second. All these shows that value chain plays a major role in attaining competitive advantage in the external environment.
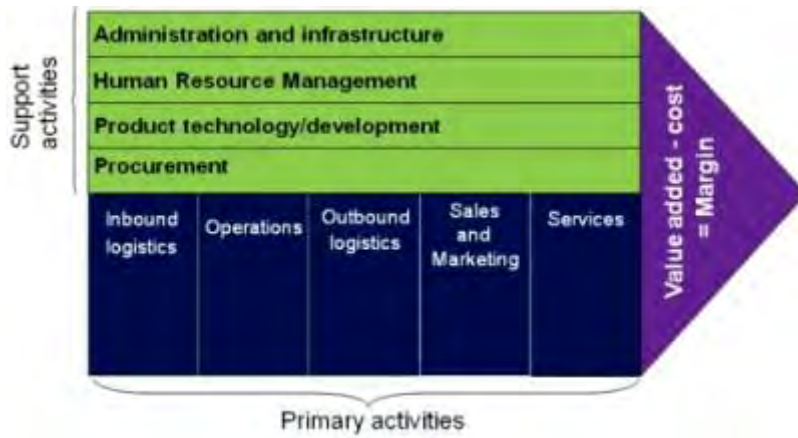
Figure 1: Value Chain Model 1, Adapted from Porter, M.E. (1985) *Competitive advantage: creating and sustaining superior performance*

2.4.2. Value Chain Models in Education

Value chain analysis in the context of various universities has been researched by Elloumi (2004). The author follows Porter's model and groups university activities with porter's model. But however, a general model for value chain analysis in the universities was not developed by him. Lee and Zhang (2001) have researched on the value chain of a non-profit organization. They have analyzed the importance of internet within the organization by considering the activities in value chain. Various advantages have been outlined in administration, procurement, logistics, human resource, teaching, marketing etc. The result shows that the use of Management Information Systems (MIS) framework in value chain operations helps to achieve competitive advantage in public sectors. It is evident that the effective strategy in value chain leads to the competitive advantage of any firm. In order to sustain in the competitive environment, modern concepts of management in value chain is necessary. The research of Lee and Zhang in analyzing internet in value chain management have been advanced by Makkar *et al* (2008) who has implemented the value chain concept in higher education by comparing cases of higher education sector of Tanzania and India. He proposed a new model which has been modified from porter's value chain model which incorporates the management functions of educational institutions.
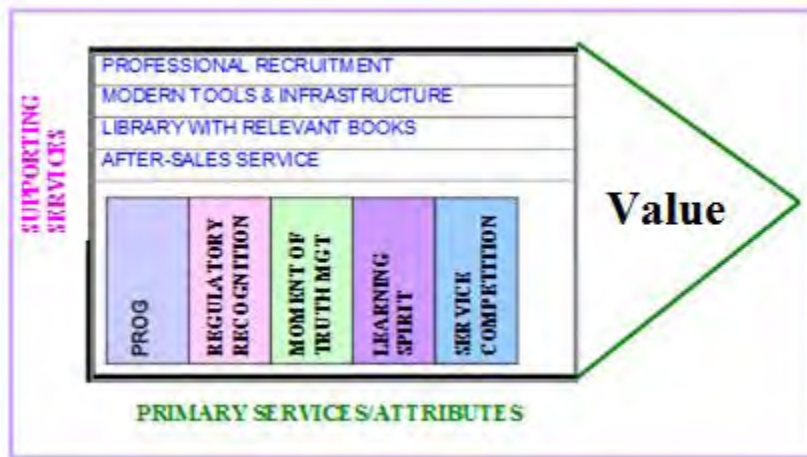
Figure 2: Value Chain Model 2, Adapted from Makkar *et al* (2008, p.188)

The secondary attributes are similar to porter's model but the primary attributes include competition, regulatory terms and various programs which differ from Porter's model. These attributes along with effective management strategies were used in education sector to attain competitive advantage. It also helps the organization to understand the customer requirements, improve the process and provide harmony in the process to achieve the strategy (Popescu & Dascălu, 2011). Groves *et al.* (1997) also proposed a model for higher education where the primary activities/attributes refers to teaching, secondary activities refers to what the university offers to their customers. In his model he proposed an intermediate dimensions for the activities which generate income for the firm. Von Alberti (2003) made several changes on the Groves model. Firstly staff was not taken into account in Von model as the demand is less in education fields. Secondly groves considered quality as a choice but Von Alberti (2003) suggest that quality is an underlying notion in the value chain. Both the models were amended into one model by Hutaibat where the attributes are tested and formulated from the research conducted in higher education sector in Jordan (Hutaibat, 2011). According to the author, value chain in higher education sector is a useful tool for identifying core competences and acts as a success factor to develop competitive advantage. This is a generalized model proposed by the author and it can be adapted to any scenario in public or private schools. Likewise all the models proposed earlier, this model also highlights the strategic and financial context of an institution.

S - u - p - p - o - r - t

University Infrastructure
Academic support services/Student services
Administration/Professional services
Academic staff support
Intermediate activity: Divisional management

P - r - i - m - a - r - y

Academic recruitment

Student recruitment

Managing Research

| Topic Identification | Obtaining Funds | Undertaking Research | Marketing for publication and/ or |
| | | | Research spin-off, consultancy, training courses |

Managing Teaching

Preparing Teaching	Providing Teaching	Examining	Career Placement
Tutoring and supervising			
Being taught Learning Researching		Being examined	

Institution, Industry, Publication media, HE sector, Society
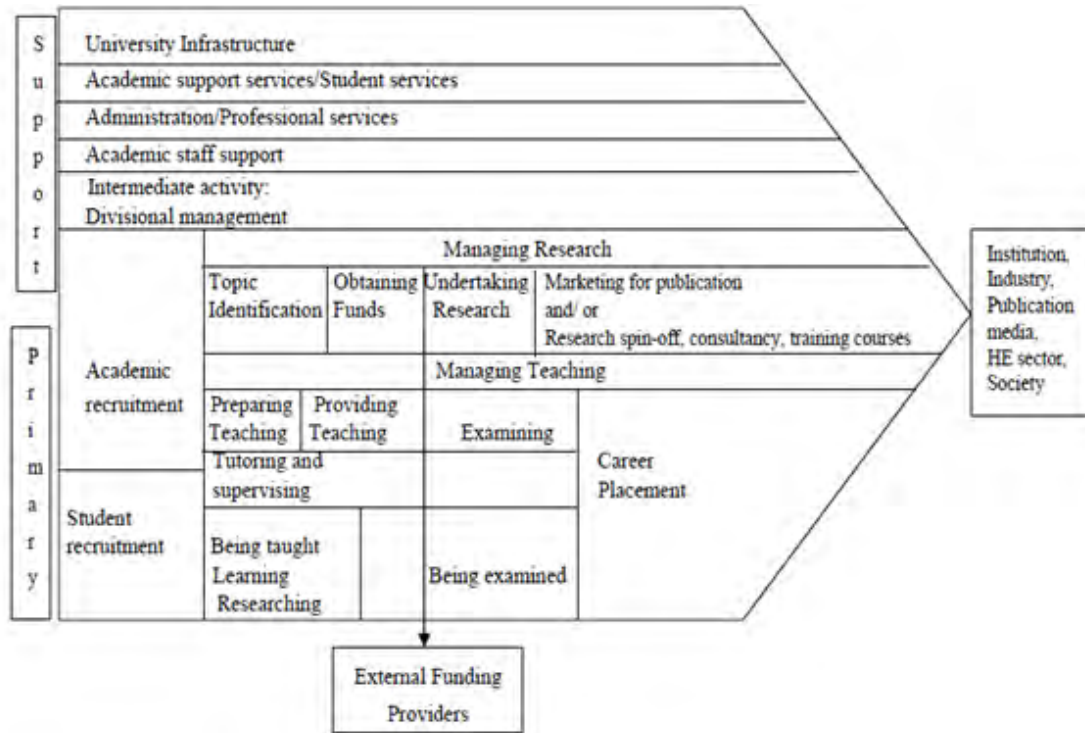
External Funding Providers

Figure 3: Value Chain Model 3, Adapted from Hutaibat (2011, p.218)

It is understood that the strategic implementation in the primary and secondary attributes is the basis for organizational growth and this has been adapted by few private schools in India leading to increased performance. On the other hand, public schools are not in the game as the management system is not effective to monitor and improve attributes in the value chain. The above models can help the researcher to further study and analyze the value chain of secondary schools in India.

2.5.   Gaps in Literature

From these literature reviews, it is evident that the past researches have been done in emphasizing importance of technology, management tools used in schools, quality of education, value chain in private schools etc. There is no comparative study on the overall value chain of public and private schools which incorporates all these tools, technologies and strategies to attain competitive advantage. There is also a need of study on current management system followed by different public and private schools in India. Thus a proper benchmark needed to be in place to follow and enhance the management system of some schools which lack the strategy in action. Secondly there is also a

contextual gap where the study is not done in a city called Chennai in India. Thirdly the past researches in analyzing the systems in value chain have been done in quantitative approach. This research will address these methodological(qualitative) and contextual(Chennai, India) gaps by interpreting data from perception of top management of 4 different private and public schools about their effective value chain management and conducting cross case analysis to study their system in value chain. Hence this research will study the value chain management of these schools and propose the existing system by comparing the findings to draw generalized conclusion of effective and ineffective management practice among the public and private schools in India.

2.6. Research Question

The main research question taken into consideration is the effectiveness of value chain management among public and private schools. The research questions are formulated in such a way to address all the key areas and conclude with practical observations. This study will include the following sub-questions.

1. Explain the available infrastructure and facilities in the school and also different ways of managing the resources?

The objective of this question is to know various infrastructure facilities and to evaluate the efficiency of schools to manage these resources.

2. Discuss the role of technology and innovation in various stages (Resource management, infrastructure, staffs etc.) of value chain management?

This question answers the use of technology in different systems within the organization for quality improvements.

3. Explain the operations in practice to deliver good results among students?

The aim of this question is to identify the key reason behind the success rate of schools in producing better results.

4. Explain how the overall performance and quality of your schools are evaluated and improved? Discuss any model if used?

This question outlines the effective management strategies and tools to evaluate and monitor the performance of the school.

5. Explain the different marketing strategies used to attract consumers (students and parents)?

This question outlines the different modes of marketing strategies employed by the schools to attract their target market.

3. Methodology

The main objective of this research is to study the different value chain attributes of the private and public school in South India in terms of factors like marketing, service, effective resource utilization etc. This section explains the proposed methodology to analyze and interpret the data, types of data sampling, data collection and also outlines the personal bias and ethical implication while doing this research. It also explains the rationale for choosing a particular research methodology to collect and analyze the primary data in this research. It also helps to narrow down the research findings with effective methods and approaches. Considering each layer of research Onion will help to outline the reason for particular methods used in this research.
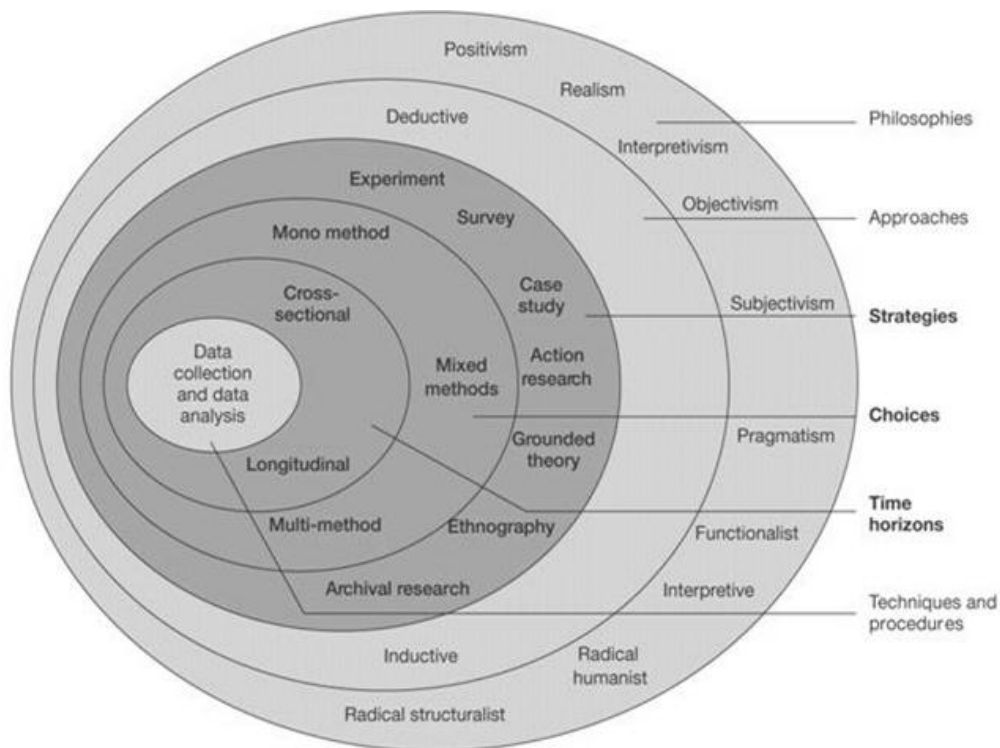

Figure 4: Research Onion, Adapted from Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, p.108)

3.1. Research philosophy

The way of thinking the research philosophy can be categorized into 3 types: epistemology, ontology and axiology. The research philosophy revolves around these types and this research needs to find the suitable philosophy to conduct further research.

Epistemology

The epistemology chosen for this research is **Interpretivism**. According to Hansen (2004), Interpretivism or constructivist is a type of epistemology philosophy which believes that the "reality is constructed in the mind of the individual rather than being a single entity". The subjective understanding of an individual is dependent on their experience, social environment and interactions (Creswell, 2009, p.8). This differentiates the people from object. This research deals with the top management perception which is related to their experience, belief and expectation rather than object. The data is first interpreted by the researcher and then interpreted by the reader from the final report. This research involves multiple interpretations and hence the research philosophy used here is Interpretivism. This philosophy is also chosen because of the fact that this research can be studied only from top management perception and gives an understanding of how they interpret their value chain management. This philosophy also helps to analyze this study in detail by observing the participants during the interview process.

Ontology

The ontology philosophy chosen for this study is **subjectivism**. Ponterotto (2005) states "ontology is concerned with nature of reality and being". By analyzing four different cases, there will be four different interpretations resulting in multiple realities depending on individual perception rather than object. There will be different realities of value chain from different participants depending on the system they manage and experience in their schools. Thus the ontology for this research is subjectivism. Positivism and realism was not considered in this research because the researcher feels that it does not have any impact on this study.

3.2. Research approach

The next layer of research onion is the type of approaches used in this research. According to Maxwell (2012), Deductive research deals with the method of testing the core theory and Inductive research deals with building theory. This research starts with **inductive** approach because the patterns for research will be generated from bottom up method with the context where the researcher can establish comprehensive set of themes for analysis. By observation from the participants, theories are generated. It also allows the participants (top management) to shape the theme that emerge from the process. It also supports the philosophy chosen and the method of study undertaken. Magnani (2001) states that there exists another approach called abductive which forms a hypothesis from the collected data and seeks to explain it from relevant evidence. This research starts by analyzing the literature to frame interview questions from researcher understanding of past research. As the questions are framed from existing literature rather than researcher perception and studies the participant's data to generate a new theory, this research ends in **abductive** approach. As participants are major parts of this research and less need to generalize findings, this research will be abductive which is between inductive and deductive.

3.3. Research strategy

The third layer of research onion consists of different strategies that can be used in a research. This research incorporates case study strategy as the study is conducted to understand the management process from individual perception of four different schools. Stake (1995) states that case study is a type of research strategy which is used to explore in depth analysis of a program, event, activity, process or one or more individuals. Researcher chose case study as a strategy because of in depth understanding of value chain system needed in this research. Case study approach studies the existent scenario and analyzes the real patterns which helps the researcher to understand the in depth system of practice in private and public schools. According to Yin (2002), single case study designs are vulnerable and the result will be more powerful in multiple case studies than single case. Since four different schools are studied, this research will use **multiple**

case study strategy to interpret four different data and perform **cross case analysis** to compare and contrast the findings with the existing literature.

3.4.   Research Choice

The fourth layer of research onion is the different methods used in a research like mono method, multi method and mixed method of data collection. Mono method involves any one type from surveys or interviews or focus groups. Mixed method involves mixing methods from both quantitative and qualitative like using survey, interviews and focus groups. Multi methods use more than one method either in quantitative or qualitative approach. This research will involve **mono method** as **interviews** are the best tool to identify individual perception. This will give more detail than any other method of data collection and makes people more comfortable than filling out surveys (Boyce and Neale 2006, p. 2- 3). Another reason for selecting mono method for this research is time constraint. As the research needs to be completed in short period, interviews will be best tool to conduct this research because multiple methods involves more time. Mono method in this research helps to allow the conversation to flow between the participants and researcher and helps the researcher to know more about the value chain strategies. Saunders *et al* (2009) classified interviews into structured interview, semi-structure interview and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews comprises of predetermined and standardized set of questions in which the researcher need to limit his expectations within the questions. In semi structured interviews, the researcher will have a theme and set of questions but can go beyond the questions and formulate new themes depending on the interviews. While conducting interviews with the higher management of schools, participants can modify or expand the questions and can make the research more interactive. Value chain management varies from school to school and has several attributes which can be better understood from semi- structured interviews. It also helps the participants to answer on their own perspective of understanding. Thus this research will employ **semi structured interviews** to have a deeper understanding about their views and exploring new ideas.

3.5. Time Horizon

According to Saunders *et al* (2009), time horizon plays an important role in the research. It can be divided into cross sectional and longitudinal based on the duration taken to collect the data. Cross sectional is considered as snapshot where the data is collected within a particular time. Longitudinal can be termed as diary model where the data collection and analysis takes more time than cross sectional data collection. Since this research is carried out in a particular time constraint and predetermined deadline (16th August 2013), this research is based on **cross sectional time horizon.**

3.6. Techniques and Procedures

There are two types of techniques employed in performing a research. It can be quantitative research involving large number of respondents or qualitative research involving small number of respondents or both in some cases. Quantitative research is objective and uses survey/questionnaire to collect data. Qualitative research is more subjective and uses interviews and focus groups for data collection. The technique employed in this research to collect and analyze data is **Qualitative method**. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is an exploratory phenomenon where the researcher explores the topic to draw a conclusion. It helps the researcher to understand and explore the participant's knowledge or belief on value chain management. Thus qualitative method helps the researcher to build the study with holistic approach and analyze the perception from semi structured interviews and personal interactions. The secondary data is collected by accessing journals and academic articles from library databases, Google scholar etc. From the secondary data, literature review has been formulated and gaps have been identified to frame the research questions. Then primary data are collected for each school by emphasizing the value of participant's contribution and expressing their importance in this research. The results will be studied separately and after analyzing all the data, cross sectional study will be carried out and final findings will be recorded. Tools like audio recorders are used during the interviews to record and interpret the data. Thus these results will be useful in formulating an in depth study based on the management perception on strategic advantage of value chain management in the private and public schools.

The steps involved in the data collection and analysis of this research is shown below,
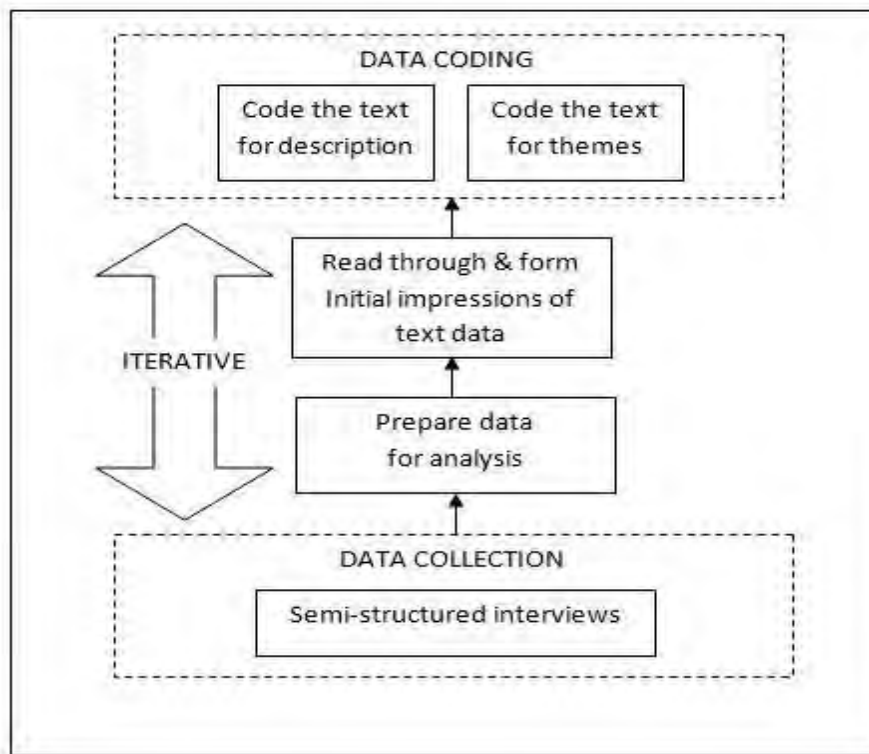

DATA CODING

| Code the text for description | Code the text for themes |

Read through & form Initial impressions of text data

ITERATIVE

Prepare data for analysis

DATA COLLECTION

Semi-structured interviews

Figure 5: Data Collection & Analysis Process, Adapted from Research design, Creswell (2008).

Data Collection Procedure

Interviews: The initial step in data collection is collecting data from semi structured interviews. Participants are approached with the assistance of gate keepers who are the first approving authority of schools. Gate keeper in this research will be the senior admin staff or office administrator who will fix an appointment with the principals or correspondent. The researcher needs to explain the importance and need of this research to the gate keeper and gate keeper will get the approval from participants. If the participants agree for the interview, then the gate keeper schedules for the interview. Researcher will give a formal introduction about him and explains the importance of participant's role in this research. During interview process, the gate keeper may not be present. Since the interview is semi- structured, participant's involvements are given high priority. The research question consists of 20 interview question which may last for 45

minutes to 1 hour depending on the information provided by the participant. The demographic information like Name, age and designation will also be collected from the participant. Informed consent and other confidentiality agreement will be given to the participant before starting the interview. All the necessary instruction related to this research will be provided by the researcher.

Non- Participant Observation: According to Lear (2010), the objective of non- participant observation is to gain additional information by observing events and activities from the participants. The body language and expressions plays a major role in supporting their views. Since this research deals with participant's belief and experience of management system in schools, non- participant observation will also be taken in to account by the researcher. Non- participant observation will be carried out by the researcher after the interview and recorded in the note taking form

Documents: The documents used in this research will include papers and notes used in the interview process and also transcribing the audio data into final document. All these papers can be photo copied for data analysis and any corrections or editing can be done in this document. Then the final document is photo copied for future reference.

Reflective Journal: The final type of data collection is reflective journal where the researcher describes his experience throughout this research. The limitations and biases will also be added to this reflective note which helps the future researcher to know the practical difficulties. It helps in further learning as field notes are more effective in data analysis. This has been added in the final chapter of this research.

Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data is transcribed into Microsoft word and non- English conversations will be translated to English. The narrative text includes some direct quotes to express the participant's emotion and perception (Patton, 2002). The transcribed document is stored in a separate web folder to protect the data from loss and malware. The participants were given access to verify the transcribed document. The non- standardized data collected from the interviews are summarized and categorized for further analysis. Rossman and

Rallis (2011) states "coding is the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing valuable meaning to information". The data is coded and separate themes were identified from different patterns. The coding used in this research is descriptive coding to explain the separate process of each case study and data's from each interview are categorized into appropriate themes. Here the researcher will code the data by meaning rather than coding through sentence and paragraphs. Coding can be done either using software like ATLAS.ti, MAXQDA or manually by researcher. In this research, coding is done through manual methods since researcher believes that manual analysis can give detailed themes compared with software. Then the themes are grouped by merging and analyzed to make the cross study analysis on the value chain management of four different schools. Final stage involves providing narrative description and interpretation of each theme and providing generalized conclusion to this research.

3.7. Sampling Method

There are two types of sampling method which are non-probability and probability sampling. Probability sampling uses random selection whereas non probability sampling doesn't use random selection. Probability sampling should be carried out with some process and procedures to choose samples with equal importance in a population. This research uses **non probability sampling** due to the mode of study. This sampling is chosen by the researcher due to the case design as four different cases are chosen in the absence of definite probability in samples. Further it can be divided into convenience, purposive, snowball and quota sampling depending on the criteria to select the samples. This research will involve **purposive sampling** because the samples (top management) are chosen based on specific purpose to understand the case detail on effective value chain management. This research cannot be done entirely on teachers or students. Only the top management personnel's know more about the overall system in schools. Thus purposive sampling is used and totally four top management personnel's like principal or correspondents are chosen from different schools. The samples can be either 2 male: 2 female or 1 male: 3 female or 3 male and 1 female or all male or female depending on the availability. Four different locations in South India will be chosen depending on the researcher.

4. Plan

4.1. Practical Efforts

First the researcher need to approach the gatekeeper (individuals providing access for collecting data) of different schools and request them to get the initial permission. This is the important phase as the researcher needs to convince the gatekeeper by providing necessary information about the research and relevant confidentiality terms. Initially a requisition letter from college will be provided to the gatekeeper to gain primary access. Then briefly talking with the top management about the research and asking for volunteer participation. If in case management doesn't approve, principals are contacted through public forums or selected from known samples and request their availability for interviews. Preparing interview guides, transcribing, coding, follow up can be the other practical efforts in this research.

4.2. Validity and Reliability

According to Gibbs (2007), validity is defined as accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures by the researcher. To ensure validity in this research, the transcribed data can be shown to the respondents. Thus this research uses triangulation and member checking procedure to ensure validity. In terms of external validity, this research is not valid to generalize the findings. Reliability indicates whether the researcher approach is consistent across different researches and project. Reliability in this research can be achieved by cross checking the transcripts and themes analyzed by the researcher.

4.3. Research Limitations

This study doesn't generalize the findings due to limited samples and place. However in this research, analytic generalization can be determined from the conclusion. Some author claims that interpretive research can also be generalized within specified limits and generalization in a research is inevitable (Williams, 2009, p.209). Other implications can be due to samples as not all the participants are equally articulate and perceptive. The research philosophy can be another limitation in this research as Interpretivism involves

multiple interpretations starting from researcher to the interpretation made by multiple readers resulting in multiple views of the case study.

4.4. Researcher Bias

According to Collier and James (1996), bias is a "systematic error that is expected to occur in a given context of research". The bias in a research can affect the validity and reliability of the findings. In this research, bias can be caused from researcher personal experience and belief because of past experience studying from the public school. This makes the researcher to interpret the data of public school from his past experience which affects the accuracy of finding. The bias can also be from sample selection. Samples are selected by the researcher in such a way that they are convenient to his location which is unavoidable due to time constraint. This may limit the effectiveness of the findings in general environment. The researcher experience as a student may interpret the data in different way as the system followed in the management is different for different schools. During interviews, researcher presence may bias the responses (Creswell, 2009, p.179). This bias can be applicable to this research as some respondents are not comfortable in a face to face interview.

4.5. Ethical Implication

The ethical implications for this research are carefully planned during the design phase. Informed consent was obtained from the participants by ensuring them the confidentiality agreement and rationale to these research findings. In this research, participants are requested to sign the **consent form** detailing the volunteer ship and right to withdraw at any stage. The researcher needs to make it clear that the information provided by the samples are used only for dissertation and will not be used in any other document. The details of the institution and respondents can be kept confidential to protect the identity. The transcribed data (synopsis and not the detailed description) will be sent to the participants E-mail for their review to check the accuracy of this research. The ethical stance for this research is **Situation Ethics- The end justifies the means** as there will be some need to break the ethics during the data collection process to collect the required information. In situational ethics, we would never know about some social phenomenon

unless we break the ethics in some cases (Dalton, 1959). This research involves in depth analysis of value chain where there will be a need to break the ethics to make participant answer the particular question in detail which involves their management strategy. In such case, question may be formulated indirectly to get the answer. The risks to the respondents are nil as the data collection takes place at their institutions and presented with the requisition letter from the researcher school. The data protection and storage methods will be explained to the respondents and the data is password protected to maintain the confidentiality.

4.6. Cost of Primary Research

This research was done in the home country of the researcher and hence the cost incurred is less. Some of the cost involved in this research is given below,

Travel	₹. *1000* (€.13) approx.
Food	₹. *1500* (€.20) approx.
Printing and Binding	₹. *2000(€.26)* approx.
International Courier charges to Dublin, Ireland	₹. *4000(€.52)* approx.
Total	₹.*8500* (€.111) approx.

Table 1: Cost of Primary Research

4.7. Time Allocation

The time taken to complete this dissertation is given below.

Activity	Start Date	Finish Date
Searching for secondary data	February 4th 2013	February 20th 2013
Reading secondary data	February 21st 2013	March 24th 2013
Creating data collection instruments	June 2nd 2013	June 10th 2013
Administrating data collection instruments	June 15th 2013	June 25th 2013
Analyzing primary data	June 28th 2013	July 8th 2013
Writing the early drafts	July 9th 2013	July 18th 2013
Analyzing comments on drafts by supervisor	July 19th 2013	July 23rd 2013
Revisions of drafts	July 24th 2013	August 5th 2013
Printing and binding	August 6th 2013	August 10th 2013

Table 2: Time Period

5. Findings and Analysis

5.1. Introduction

This chapter starts with general description of the interviews that was carried out during July 2013 and then analyses the important themes under cross case analysis section. An additional section has been added called observational analysis where the data collected from researcher observation was analyzed. Totally four different schools were chosen in which two schools were public schools and the other two were private schools. The participants represented for the semi structured interview was principal/ Headmistress, correspondent and chief advisor of the schools. Few students and teachers were also involved in this research. But it was not interviewed formally or audio recorded. It was a type of additional data collection tool done by the researcher. There were totally 20 questions and the participants were given the interview guide and consent form was signed before starting the interview process. Brief introduction along with necessary guidelines were told to the participant. Average time taken for the interview was about 40 minutes. The collected data was organized into themes for further analysis. Usage of codes in this research was limited and in some case it was not necessary because the entire interview was audio recorded. Non participant observation was noted and included in the analysis. The participants were also given the college requisition letter which also contained the important themes to be discussed. The themes addressed in the interview was,

- Information on available infrastructure and resources
- Role of technology in value chain management
- Effective system in schools
- Evaluating performance and usage of any model
- Different types of marketing strategies in schools

Participants added few data's and showed interest towards some areas and those data's were also added in the findings along with the pre-written interview questions.

School 1	Private School
School 2	Private School
School 3	Public School
School 4	Public School

Table 3: Types of school and their legend

Available infrastructure and resources

First school interviewed was a private school which was opened in the year 1978. Name of the participant is Ms. Blessy Faith Pauline and she was the principal of the school. She has been working in the school for past 3 years. School 1 consists of 70 teaching and Non- teaching staffs with a student's strength of about 1250 (both boys and girls). School 1 has 4 buses and it is directly managed by the school with a separate staff in charge to look after transport services. By assigning separate staff, the management is able to maintain its vans and bus effectively and provide uninterrupted service to the students. In case of any problem or damage to the bus or van, the driver informs the bus coordinator and he makes sure that it has been rectified as soon as possible. School 1 believes in "education through technology" learning called education through cinema where the students were shown a video and make them to interact in the class rooms. This system attracted more customers (parents and children's) after the year it was introduced and made the students to show more interest in learning. It also helped the slow learners to concentrate in studies. School 1 has 4 rest rooms in each floor (i.e. 1 rest room per 25 students) and others facilities includes staff room, food courts, multi facility hall, auditorium, indoor stadium, smart classes, modern libraries, computer labs and other labs. All the rooms and rest rooms are cleaned regularly and maintained in the registry kept in the administration office. These facilities help the staffs to work in safe and comfortable environment. School 1 also provided the maximum infrastructure facilities to the students to make them love the school campus. Co- curricular activities in school 1 includes sports, martial arts, music, dance, yoga, abacus etc. Individual coach and instructors train the students and they are sent to various tournaments every year by the school management. Management structure in school 1 starts from Founder and correspondent at top, administrator, principal, vice principal, directors, Head of Departments and teaching

and non-teaching staffs. Founder and correspondent assign the policy and rules to be implemented in the school. Role of Administrator is to manage the infrastructure. Principal and vice principal will make sure the policies and rules are met and manages the learning curriculum. Teaching and Non- teaching staffs will follow the learning curriculum and manages the internal duties. This hierarchy is strictly followed and flow of information is very much systematic. School 1 doesn't call for interviews or allow walk in interviews. Instead they believe in placements where the management goes to the college directly and recruits the staff. They also believe that fresher's work more effectively than experienced staffs in primary classes and in higher classes, experienced staffs are mandatory to show good results. All these data show that school 1 follows the standard system throughout the management and effectively uses its resource.

School 2 is a private school and it was started in the year 2006. Participant name is Mrs. Shamim Rajagopalan and she is the chief advisor and CEO of the school since 2006. Initially the staffs and teachers were less and it was gradually growing by later years. Presently teaching and Non- teaching staffs in school 2 comprises of 30 and 10 respectively. Total strength of students in school 2 is 550 (approx.). School 2 has 5 vans and planning to get one more by this year. Every van has a driver and attenders who take's care of the students during travel and management has given a separate time for different classes to board the van so that the students can be taken safely and be a hassle free travel for them. It has been managed by a separate staff appointed by the management and he monitors the buses and vans at regular basis. An information sheet is given to each driver and attender where the details of expenses or actions is noted down and submitted to the staff in charge. He checks and approves the payment for the travel. School 2 has a spacious class rooms with limited number of students not exceeding 25 students in each classes. This makes the teacher to concentrate on each and every student individually and takes good care of the overall performance. Separate staff rooms for ladies and gents are provided by the management. School 2 has required number of rest rooms in each floor which is cleaned and maintained regularly. It has a huge hall which is used for graduation and other internal celebrations. Library and lab facilities are also available for the students. It has been taken care by individual staff in charge of each department. Every year the equipment's are checked and purchased depending on the requirement. A list of available equipment's has been prepared and photocopies have

been given to lab in charge, administration office and chairman office. By this way, they are able to manage their available resources effectively. Co-curricular activities in school 2 include karate, silambam (martial arts), music, abacus, dance, sports etc. All these are taught along with the learning curriculum which makes students active and improves their memory power by easing their mental stress. Co-curricular activities are organized by the management in a way that the student's talents are exposed individually. First two months are termed as monitoring period where the class teachers analyze the student's activities and starts entering the data in the observation sheet. This is done for each student's separately. Special coaching has been given for students for securing good marks in the examination. Higher class students are made to stay back in the evening and made to write the practice exams regularly to familiarize with the subjects. Management structure in school 2 comprises of Correspondent/Chairman at the top and then Advisor following them is principal, coordinators for each department, teaching and non-teaching staffs. Roles and responsibilities vary from top to bottom of the management structure. Chairman assigns the duties to advisor and advisor makes sure that it has been completed by the principal. Principal manages the entire teaching and non-teaching staffs and assign them with respective duties. School 2 gives advertisement in the daily for staff requirement. Staff will directly contact the management and they will be made to show a demo of how they teach and after a personal interview, they are assigned with proper designation depending on the qualification and experience.

School 3 is a government owned public school which was started in the year 2004 and the participant interviewed was the head mistress of the school. In Chennai (India), public schools have different management structures and system. Here the head mistress is equal to principal in private schools. The participant has been working in this school for past 8 years. Initially, the strength of teaching and non- teaching staffs was 25 and at present it is 38. Around 1000 students are studying in school 3 and the important information obtained from this interview is that there are 5 more vacancies to be filled out for office staffs, but government has not taken any initiative to fulfill it until now. School 3 has no separate buses or vans since it has been run by the government and the students travel every day in government buses which accompanies more number of students along with other people who board the bus. The total number of buses travelling towards school is very few and there has been a huge crowd inside the buses. Maintenance is mediocre and

no safety for the people during travel. Infrastructure in school 3 is also less compared to school 1. The only facility available for students is playground. Apart from this, the classrooms, labs, staff rooms, restrooms are not maintained properly and even the fans and lights are not functioning. Canteen, auditorium and other facilities are absent in school 3. Even the top management staffs in government schools are not provided with separate rooms and they need to sit in the vacant labs or classrooms. The shocking part is that there are only 4 restrooms for 1000 students and it has been not cleaned for many months. Co- curricular activities in school 3 is basic since the management is not organizing any competitions nor the students are interested to participate in any competition other than sports. The prize given in school 3 is pen, calculator, writing pad and it has been purchased by the staff and not by the management. Management structure in school 3 starts from headmasters/ headmistress then assistant headmasters and finally teaching and non-teaching staffs. The responsibilities are not known to many staffs and this imposes a great challenge to manage the school system effectively. Staff recruitment in public schools are done by a special government board where the staffs are selected from written exams and asked to show a role play on how they teach in classrooms and finally selected with personal interviews.

School 4 is government owned public school which was started in the year 1980. The participant name is Mrs. Beena Thomas and the designation held is Head mistress. She started her career as Teacher in 1998 and currently holds the position of head mistress. When she joined the number of teaching and non- teaching were 15 and at present it has grown to 45. Similarly the student's strength was less than 400 and at present it is 3000. Infrastructure was basic initially and even now there seems to be not much improvement. This is because of changing management personnel's quite often and government is not ready to fund for the school infrastructure. There are no buses or vans for the students in public school. As stated earlier, students and staffs board the government buses which are in bad condition. According to State Transport Corporation of India, the allowed capacity of passengers in each bus is 36 excluding driver and conductor (Tnstc.in, 1975). But from the experience of students and staffs, there will be a minimum of 70 people inside each bus making the travel difficult. Among these crowds, students were not able to either read their books or relax. There are no staff room facilities for the staffs and students are crowded in the class rooms. The rest rooms are not maintained properly and from the

interview it is known that many girl students hesitate to go to the rest room which leads to many health issues. The number of rest rooms is also limited. For a population of 3000 students and 40 staffs, the available rest rooms are 6 (both boys and girls) and 2 for staffs. The other facilities like library, labs and cafeteria are present but not maintained or cleaned properly. The equipment's in the labs are not renewed and there is a great difficulty for students to attain practical knowledge. Due to these inadequate labs, most of the time students are not allowed to do their lab sessions. There is no auditorium facility and general meetings will be held in the open ground. Co-curricular activities are limited in school 4 which includes sports and few internal competitions. From the interview, it is known that appreciation and Student participation has also reduced in school 4 in recent years. Management structure in school 4 is framed as head master/ head mistress at top, following them are assistant head master/ head mistress and then teaching and non-teaching staffs. There are no proper flow of information and system in school 4. Most cases decisions or discussions are taken at the top level and not communicated to the bottom level and vice versa. Similarly any change in policies or management system is not known by most of the teaching and non- teaching staffs. This leads to most of the problems in management. Recruitment process in school 4 is similar to school 3 which follows the government process. But in school 4, many staffs are recruited through a recommendation which lowers the efficiency of government recruitment process.

Role of Technology in schools

School 1 is using a "Smart school management system" to manage their staffs and administration works. Smart school management system is personalized software designed to monitor the daily activities of staffs and assign prioritized work to be completed by the staffs. They also use SMS system to send regular and test updates to the parent's mobile number instantly. This work is carried out by the admin staff who is in charge of overall school administration. School 1 uses biometric attendance for staffs so that mal practice is avoided and student's attendance is also maintained in a separate database by the class teachers. They use smart classes and virtual labs where the learning syllabus is made into videos and slide presentation which makes students to concentrate and interact more in the classrooms. School 1 also encourages the students to participate in online objective test which is designed by the subject faculties and continuous assessment is carried out throughout the academic year.

Technology plays a lead role in managing administration and staffs in school 2. They use an automated system to register the details of staffs and students. Whenever needed, the data is retrieved and managed. School documents are also saved in cloud storage. Similarly attendance for staff is maintained through biometric access along with manual entry. But student's attendance is still manual based which is going to be automated soon in school 2. Fees and other important documents are saved in online storage by purchasing online package for institutions. School 2 also uses SMS management system like school 1 to send information to parents. It also uses smart classes where teaching is done through virtual media by using videos, pictures and slideshows. Teachers are given proper training for 1 month by the management to use these technologies in teaching.

Technology plays a minor role in school 3 as there are no smart class rooms like school 1and 2 and no biometric attendance. Lack of technology in school 3 lowers their standard and following the system becomes tedious. Staff and student attendance are done manually and some staff indulges in malpractice by signing the absent days. There is no punishment or serious action taken so far in school 3 in terms of attendance and discipline. Role of technology in education is nil in school 3 as they follow the traditional way of teaching in black boards.

Role of technology in school 4 is very limited. In administration and staffing, all the details are manually stored and retrieved. Attendance, staff and student application and school documents are also done in the similar way. The only technological advancement in school 4 is online payment of salary. Apart from that there is no development in the technology usage even in teaching. Resources are not managed properly and lack of technology affects the efficiency and academic performance of school 4. The overall pass percentage of school 4 in 2012- 2013 is 67%. Since the parents are uneducated in most public schools, they fail to evaluate the quality of education through technology and support this mode of learning.

Effective system in school

The school infrastructure is maintained by the administrator and he will appoint separate staff to look after each activity. Annual maintenance program is carried out by school 1 which employs additional staffs to clean each class rooms and plan the items needed to be purchased for the school. All the items like tissues, toiletries, A4 papers, staplers, pins and other office accessories will be purchased prior and maintained in a store room for the entire academic year. It will be taken care by admin staff and he organizes the product purchase accordingly. Periodic cleaning is done by the floor staff and it is cross checked by floor manager. To attain good academic results, school 1 train the students in a way that the syllabus is completed few months before the exams and thorough revision is given on important question pattern taken from the past five years exams. Students are made to stay back till 8 p.m. and regular assessment is carried out. By implementing these systems, school 1 manages to attain 100% result for the past 2 years. Discipline is monitored by the discipline in charge and school uniform plays a major role in private schools. Uniforms should be neat and tidy and proper dress code should be followed. Failure to do will be made to pay a fine. School 1 allows the staff to take 2 days of casual leaves per month and exceeding this or absence without prior permission will not be paid for the day. Non disciplinary actions by students are strictly monitored and serious actions will be taken and students will be sent to home or suspended from the school for 5 days. In some cases, student will be dismissed from the school with immediate effect.

Infrastructure maintenance is done by separate coordinator for each department in school 2. A teacher also takes care of the class rooms and lab. If there is a need for any attention, teachers inform to the coordinator. He/ She manage all the works and in case of serious issues, it is taken to the top management. In most of the cases, the coordinator solves the issues and satisfies the need. Staff tries to complete the syllabus as soon as possible and does as many number of revision to get good results. Academic results of School 2 for past 5 years have been 100%. It shows tremendous performance in its coaching by using its resource effectively. Discipline is mandatory in school 2. Primary objective is usage of English among staff and students inside the school campus. India being a multicultural country, students in most places speak regional language which has been a hindrance for learning English. By implementing this rule, school 2 was able to develop confidence and good vocabulary among the students. Failure to speak English in campus will be strictly

punished. A basic disciplinary action is also taken care on uniforms and behavior. School 2 maintains the relationship with parents regularly by having monthly meeting and sharing the performance of students directly. This makes parents to keep long trust on school management and system. Staff discipline is also given high priority in school 2. Dress code, behavior, relationship with colleagues, performance and attendance has been monitored by the management regularly. If any compliant arises, the teachers are called for enquiry and given warning with loss of pay. Continuous complaints will be taken seriously and have been dismissed from the school.

Infrastructures are not managed separately like school 1 and 2 but subject teachers take care of lab and library. But involvement and dedication is very low compared to private schools. School 3 divide the students depending on their learning capacity and teach them accordingly. Weak students or slow learners are made to sit in the school till 5 p.m. but time utilized for studying is not optimum. Regular exams are conducted by management but students attending the classes are very less. Due to these factors, school 3 achieved pass percentage of only 64%. Discipline is not considered as an important factor for public schools. There are no proper dress codes, timings, system, lack of staffs and infrastructure etc. Parents meetings are not conducted in school 3 and parents lack the knowledge of student's situation in school. All these tend to make the staffs and students to show less involvement in school activities.

Managing the available resources is the least consideration for school 4. Since the government is funding for the maintenance, the management in charge of the school 4 seems to be less involved. There are no proper hierarchy and staff coordinator for library, class rooms, labs, rest rooms etc. It seems that even the staffs are not ready to take any initiative for school development. There is no special care taken on student's education in school 4. No special classes and most of the students don't attend the normal classes. There is no trace of discipline among staffs and students. There is a dress code and uniform for staffs and students. But it is not followed and no punishment has been given so far. Attendance is also taken into granted by the staffs and students. There are no records of loss of pay or punishment taken in school 4 for disciplinary actions. No proper rules and regulation insisted by the management. All these tend to lower the standard and academic result of school 4.

Performance Evaluation

School 1 evaluates their staff and student performance by individual assessments. Once in a month, principal attends the classes and observes the way of teaching. After the observation, principal gives the feedback to the staff and asks to modify or change the way of teaching by next observation. Similarly students are evaluated by seeing their performance in internal exams and talking with them separately. Students are motivated by recognizing and honoring their talents by giving prizes. Initiators are encouraged by the school management and make the students to get involved in extracurricular activities like reading competition, essay writing competition, drawing, quiz, sports etc. Staffs are motivated by performance appraisals and given prizes for showing good results. Every year best staff award is given to the staff for overall performance and this in turn motivates other staffs to reach that position. Staffs and students are taken to amusement parks and day out twice a year which helps to relieve their work stress.

School 2 also uses similar system like school 1 to evaluate the performance of staffs. They use an appraisal form to fill out their achievements and area of improvement. Also observation will be carried out by the management to evaluate the teaching efficiency. Staff with full attendance and high performance will be motivated with prize money and appreciation. Staffs are given cross course training where they can learn new course during part time at free of cost. Students are evaluated by the exams and co-curricular activities performance. They have been awarded cash prizes and also given scholarships for higher studies.

Regular performance measures are not taken into account by school 3 and school 4 but sometimes general feedback is given by the headmaster or headmistress which may not be adapted by the staffs in most cases. Since there is no fear of punishment or loss of pay by the management, the staffs are been so lethargic and irresponsible towards general school principles. Student's performance in school 3 and school 4 are also similar. Regular examinations are not given priority but from the final examinations, the performance of each student can be evaluated. Staffs and students are motivated by the government directly and not by the management who manages the school. When a student achieves good percentage of marks or a staff performs well in their duties,

government honors them by issuing award and cash prizes. These are done by a register maintained in the school where the achievements and performance are noted. But these have been not maintained properly in school 3 and school 4 regularly. As stated earlier, these schools show less involvement towards student's education and discipline. Both in school 3 and school 4, only few teachers show involvement towards student's education and discipline. These factors are common in most public schools which affects their overall performance.

Marketing strategies used in schools

School 1 is not interested in spending more money for marketing their brand. They believe in word of mouth which is spread through the parents and alumni group. Apart from that they market by name boards and flyers. Schools 1 don't care about retaining a skilled employee. They believe that there are large numbers of staff waiting for the jobs and they are confident about training them and making them skillful.

School 2 markets their name by giving advertisement in newspaper, places hoarding and banners at important places, distributes brochures and pamphlet's to students etc. They also involve in direct marketing by sending their representatives for having direct word with the parents. School 2 also plans to give television advertisement in near future. School 2 retains its skilled employee by proper motivation and giving yearly appraisals. They also recognize and appreciate the performance of staffs which makes the staff to work effectively for the school welfare.

School 3 doesn't involve in direct marketing because the school is owned by the government and staffs are also paid by the government. Hence the management of public schools need not care about attracting customers. Word of mouth from the alumni students helps the students to choose school 3 and even in those cases school 3 doesn't market their school. Student enrollment in school 3 is mainly due to free education and free food. But the standard and quality is compromised in school 3. Since the school is managed by the government, retaining a skilled employee depends on the government requirement and Head mistress/ Head master has no control over it.

There is no particular marketing strategy for school 4 since it is owned by the government. Normally in public schools enrollment occurs for free education and free food like school 3. So the parents and students expectation for quality has also reduced in past years. Retaining a staff is also not important for the people managing the public schools. Since there are lots of employees waiting to work for government schools due to more salary and no pressure from management, retaining an employee is not given priority in school 4.

5.2. Cross Case Analysis

Available infrastructure and resources

Private schools have more number of teaching and non-teaching staffs compared to public schools. On the other hand, student population in school 3 and school 4 is more compared to school 1 and school 2. This shows the management involvement and dedication of private school to motivate and educate their students by hiring more staffs for limited students per class. By this way, the staffs in private school can able to monitor each student's separately and guide them properly. This was lacking in both the public schools which was interviewed. Transport facilities in school 1 and 2 were properly managed by individual staffs who maintain the vehicles properly. He also makes sure the safety of children's by limited number of students boarding per vehicle. This system is almost similar in both the private schools. But there are no separate buses for public school students and staffs which makes their travel more difficult during school hours. As per the statistics taken by Government of India on Road accidents in 2010, about 10.3 % of total populations killed during road accidents are due to buses (Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, 2013, p. 19). In the city called Chennai where the interview was taken, it is worse where 104 accidents have happened with just 3500 buses in 2012. Government accepts that the accidents are mainly due to lack of maintenance and Quality of manpower (Hemalatha, 2013). Other facilities like auditorium, labs, separate staff room, rest rooms and cafeteria are available in school 1 and 2. It is managed by separate employees and duties are divided accordingly. Any complaints or suggestions are taken seriously and immediate resolution is taken from the management. The school infrastructure is cleaned and maintained properly by proper employee system. But in school 3 and 4, cleanliness is the biggest concern and also the availability of resources is

less. As stated earlier, the rest rooms are less for the total population of students and staffs in school 3 and 4. It is also not taken care by the management to clean it regularly. All these tend to lower their standard of management efficiency. Co- curricular activities are given equal importance to education in school 1 and 2. This is because they believe that student participation in other activities relaxes their mind and psychologically makes them concentrate more on education. But school 3 and 4 has not employed any special coach or staff to organize those activities. Because of these students involvement has been reduced day by day. Also there is no proper management structure in school 3 and 4 like school 1 and 2. School 1 and 2 have systematic hierarchy of structure where the information or policies are communicated properly. But in public schools, there is a huge gap among the employees and management structure is totally collapsed. Because of this loss of information, there is no proper system to manage the resources. Each private school has different recruitment process and they select according to the pre-determined system. In school 3 and 4, it is primarily based on recruitment board but varies according to the management person responsible for recruitment and also on recommendations.

Role of Technology in schools

Technology plays a major role in managing the resources and teaching the students in both school 1 and school 2. They almost use the technology in similar way. For managing the staffs and student detail, they maintain a separate database in online and retrieve the information whenever needed. They use biometric finger print verification for staff attendance where the malpractice can be avoided. But in school 3 and 4, technology is least used. They still maintain the manual records and manual register for storing details and attendance. To send any information or update to parents, school 1 and 2 uses SMS system where the parent's details are taken from the stored database. Using special subscription package from the network providers, school 1 and 2 send the information to the parent's mobile number. School documents and other documents are also scanned and stored in the cloud sharing. By this way, the important documents are secured and saved from physical damage. In public schools, no proper communication is made between the management and parents. Most parents are illiterate in public schools which also makes this system difficult to use in practice. Regular parents teachers meeting is conducted in private schools. But in school 3 and 4, it will not be conducted regularly. School 1 and 2 uses smart classes and online test to improve student's memory power and concentration.

From the interviews, it is known that student enrollment has increased 40 % more than the previous year by using these technologies in school 1 and also they show more involvement towards virtual learning. On the other hand, technology usage towards teaching in school 3 and 4 is nil and there is no remarkable increase in their total student's enrollment. Government also shows less interest to develop these infrastructure and facilities. These changes are mandatory for the student's development. About 47 % of graduates struggle to get a job in India (The Times of India, 2012) and it is more difficult for these public school students to compete in this growing external environment.

Effective system in school

School 1 and 2 appoints separate coordinator or staff in charge to manage each resource separately. For example, school 1 has an administrator who looks after the class rooms, staff rooms, rest rooms, labs, auditorium, library etc. Under his supervision, there are floor managers, floor staffs and assistants who maintain and clean the room and auditorium. Similarly school 2 has a systematic procedure to maintain their infrastructure. But in school 3 and 4, there are no separate employees to manage the resources and in some cases the class teachers are asked to manage. But their involvement seems to be less as the rooms are in very bad condition. Large number of students per class rooms, minimum resources in labs and library, untidy restrooms, non-availability of staff rooms and auditorium raises a question about the efficiency of management system of school 3 and 4. School 1 and 2 teaches their students effectively by training them in special classes apart from school hours. Weak students are taught accordingly and made to achieve good results. These classes are not conducted by school 3 and 4 and the students are also not regular in their attendance. Discipline is also a biggest concern for school 3 and 4. No staff to monitor and advice the student and staff. They never follow the dress code or other system framed by the management. A survey conducted on school dropouts in 2013 reveals that on an average about 192 students in each zone in a city are dropped out every year from the public schools (The Hindu, 2013). Due to the lack of management system and non-disciplinary actions in public schools, students get diverted and they lose their interest towards studies. This increases the number of drop outs in every public school in India. But in both the private school, discipline is strictly followed. Severe actions are taken on irregularities and regular observations are done on uniforms, cleanliness and

behaviors. It is also applicable to staffs and in case of any irregularities they were given loss of pay and dismissed from the school in serious issues.

Performance Evaluation

School 1 and 2 have mandatory observation and feedback sessions which are done by the principals or headmasters. Staffs are evaluated through this method and students are basically evaluated from their exam results. After each exam, students are called by their respective staff and feedback is given for improvement. Follow up actions are also taken to ensure that students have taken the feedback accordingly. School 3 and 4 have no particular evaluation methods to measure the performance of staffs and students. This also makes the staffs and students to change their attitudes towards management and result in lack of system in practice. Similarly motivation and recognitions are less in school 3 and 4. But private schools motivate their employee by giving incentives and prize money. Awards are also given for students for outstanding performance, discipline and full attendance. These activities motivate the staff and students to work hard and perform well in their duties. Motivational factors are high in school 1 and 2 compared to the other two public schools. School 1 has given a data that every year the staff and student performance is improving which is reflected from the past years 100 % academic result of their school. Similarly school 2 secured 100 % results for the past 5 years which is the result of their effective system. But the overall pass percentage of school 3 and 4 in 2012 – 2013 is 64% and 67% respectively. They tend to maintain the same level and there is no remarkable improvement in their result for the past few years.

Marketing Strategies used in schools

School 1 and 2 market their schools through advertisement in dailies, hoarding, word of mouth, banners etc. These private schools also contact the marketing consultant to frame their ideas into actions. They use innovative tag lines and different strategies to reach the customers. From the interviews, School 1 spends 10% and school 2 spends 15 % (approx.) of their annual income every year in marketing their product to attract these customers. But on the other hand, school 3 and 4 does not involve in any marketing methods particularly because of their free education. Every parent knows about free

education and free food which makes them to eliminate the need for marketing their schools.

5.3. Observational Analysis

Apart from the data collected from the interviews, some information's have been gathered by the researcher during the visit to the schools. It is entirely based on observation and informal interviews with students and staffs. From the researcher observation, it is seen that many staffs and students in school 1 and school 2 are happy and more involved in attending the classes. The attendance percentage of staffs and students in both the schools are almost 96%. Even though the salary for staff in private schools is less compared to public schools, they outperform well due to the fact that their appraisals and incentives are totally based on their performance. But in public schools, there is no such monitoring system to evaluate their performance and hence they get saturated with their work. Training is also not given for staffs in public schools which lowers their quality of education. Students and staffs in school 1 and 2 are well trained and motivated to do their work. Due to these motivational factors, staffs and students are regular to private schools. During interviews, School 3 and 4 didn't share much about their infrastructure and available facilities. But from the observation, it is seen that there are no drinking water facilities, no proper lights and fans in each class rooms and no sitting table for students. In both the public schools, students are made to sit in the floor. Students are asked to do some of the personal jobs of teachers during class hours. Main problem in school 3 and 4 is the unavailability of skilled and experienced staff. Mode of teaching is in the regional language for all the classes in both the public schools. This makes the students difficult to speak or write in English. Also speaking with some of the staffs and students in school 3 and 4, it is understood that they are not proficient in their subject knowledge.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter will summarize the findings and draw general conclusion from the analysis done by the researcher. It also relates the research findings to the concepts, theories and discussions raised in the literature. First section in this chapter is findings and relation to literature where the findings are related to the literature studied at the beginning and second section includes recommendation which will be helpful for future study.

6.2. Summary and relation to literature

A main criterion to assess the performance and quality of schools depends on the available infrastructure. From the interviews, it is found that both the public schools (i.e. school 3 and 4) have minimum infrastructure facilities and the basic amenities like water and lights were also not available. As Dwivedi and Trigunait (2011) stated, all these factors like minimum number of class rooms and resources, poor infrastructure etc shows the inability of public schools to provide good education. But on the other hand, private schools have required infrastructure, smart classes, special trainers, proper system of maintenance etc. They use different strategies in value chain to attain competitive advantage and also reduce raw material wastage. This contributes the effective management of value chain emphasized by researchers like Acharyulu & Shekhar (2012) and Balsmeier & Voisin (1996). Technology use in education increases the concentration and eases the way of learning (Thierry and Deborah, 2000). This has been identified in both the private schools where the involvement and creativity increased by E-learning and smart classes. School 1 also stated that it increased the student's enrolled to nearly 40% than the previous year by implementing smart classes in education. This relates to the research done by Vidal (2002) which emphasis on the importance of technology in education which in turn increases the demand. Jenkins (2009) also stated the importance of technology in education from his research which showed the advancement in student's

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ability to communicate and improve creative thinking. Technology usage in both education and managing administration is nil in school 3 and 4. This should be analyzed by the government and proper measures needed to be taken to improve their standard of education. Management system in school 1 and 2 improves their quality by implementing 100% attendance, proper training and feedback, infrastructure maintenance, co-curricular activities and innovative teaching methods. As Agarwal *et al* (2011) stated these systems in practice improve the quality and reputation of an organization. This forms the integral part of TQM and public schools should also implement these systems in their management practice. School 1 and 2 showed almost 96% attendances whereas public schools have no proper mechanism or strict system to monitor the staffs and students attendance. They have large percentage of absenteeism off the record but by improper management, it was not registered or recorded. Also the training provided by private schools is effective and teachers show more interest and involvement to improve their skills. This supports the research findings of Nandamuri and Rao (2012) which shows the high performance of private school teachers in training compared to public school teachers. School 1 and 2 motivates their employees through incentives and appraisal system based on their performance. This again complements the research done by Dorathi (2011) where private schools provide more benefit to their teachers than public schools. Overall quality of education in both the public school is very low and it is similar to the study done by Goyal (2009) in a state called Orissa in India. School 1 and 2 spend a small percentage of their annual income towards marketing their product and also achieve competitive advantage by increasing their quality of education (Parasuraman *et al*, 1988). In summary, there is a need of attention from the government to improve the infrastructure of these public schools and enhance the quality of education by using smart classes and skilled employees. All these findings support the available literature and emphasis on the effective management practice in the private schools in India. This study in a city called Chennai shows the similar situations in private and public schools like most other cities in India. Thus this study showcased the importance of system in private and public schools and also the current scenario in both the type of schools.

6.3. Recommendations

The problems in public schools in India have been growing rapidly in recent years and there is no proper measures taken by the government to improve its quality and performance. From the study, it is found that there is no proper system, no technology up gradation and lack of infrastructure in public schools. These issues should be taken to the public forum and valuable feedbacks from various people should be taken in to consideration. The first recommendation suggested by the researcher is to perform a more detailed study on this current issue in upcoming years. Due to sample limitation and time constraint, the sample size was limited in this study and the findings could not be generalized for a larger population. Hence a quantitative research is also needed in Chennai like other states in India. Also a benchmark needed for the public schools to follow for their effective management of resources and infrastructure. Thus a framework of effective system for value chain management needs to be formulated and any advancements or improvements can be appended to the proposed system in future.

7. Self-Reflection

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher records his individual learning related to his master's programme and completion of his master's thesis. This reflective report focus on researcher's personal learning that has occurred during the dissertation process and also the learning style that has been adapted or applicable in practical life. Pedler *et al* (1986) stated that "reflective learning should include feelings, thoughts, ideas and behavior in addition to learning itself". Similarly this reflective report will include the researcher's experience, feelings, thoughts, limitations and skills developed throughout his master's course.

The researcher is an Indian student with an engineering degree. His parent owns a small private school and he have a close connection with the management practice by associating with them. The initial thought to do master's in abroad came when he was studying in his under graduation. He had few friends and relatives who did their masters in abroad and they shared their experience which made him to dream about doing his masters in abroad. Also the lifestyle and way of teaching impressed him to a greater height. But due to financial constraints, he started to work in a private company after finishing his under graduation. This was the period where the interest of pursuing master's in business module got implanted in his mind instead of science. The top management personnel's either hold a master's degree from reputed universities or have long years of experience. So he decided to uplift his career and also pursue his dream by joining an MBA degree from a well-known university. Choosing Ireland as a study option was a complete luck. He applied to many UK universities and only one Irish college which is Dublin Business School. Since the fee was increased in UK and also he had the necessity to come back to his country, he finally chose Ireland which was a sudden decision. Before coming to Dublin, he had a mediocre thought about the college and place. But after reaching the country, it was broken and he started to love the place, people and college environment. The college had the best faculty and adequate infrastructure facilities for students. He had many memorable moments during these few months of study in DBS.

Skills learned during master's curriculum

There was an ample of opportunities for the researcher to learn several skills during his college life in Dublin Business School. Initially it was a difficult task for him to understand the lecture and people in Ireland since everything was new for him. By regular observation and attention to classes made the researcher to understand the lectures. He lived in a county called portmornock in Ireland which was too far from his college and it took nearly an hour to reach college every day. During his travel, he used to see different people in Dublin bus and the way they talk and respect each other, especially old Irish people impressed him a lot. He learned how to respect others and how to make a friendly conversation from them. This was his primary learning towards developing his interpersonal skills and it eliminated his fear towards new people and he never felt alienated during his stay in Dublin. It seems to be a second home town for the researcher. He is not a native English speaker and he lacked the confidence of speaking before joining DBS. But now he is confident to make the better communication with new people. It is because of the learning curriculum where the researcher was grouped with different people from different countries for his assignments. This has also improved his team building skills by talking with different people and performing different task for his assignments. Learning curriculum also enhanced his skills to adapt to new environment and also to forecast the views about global competitive environment. It was a new learning experience and he learned more new information's from experienced people. This is the stage where his communication and confidence level increased gradually. The researcher is really thankful to his faculties and friends who have helped him throughout this course. The structure and way of classes scheduled was in a great phase to learning. It did not disinterest him in any case. The classes were so interactive and he had an opportunity to discuss different global issues with his faculties and friends. The mode of assessment was very interesting and it gave the practical edge to view the global economy. The course material and case studies was helping in greater extent to explore the global management. All these were so helpful to initiate his individual learning on his final research. Group presentations in classes improved his communication and analytical skills. The submission deadline for assignments was strictly followed in DBS. Even a minute delay in time frame will be penalized and it made him to complete his assignments on time. It also helped him to prioritize the work and manage time

efficiently. As stated earlier, education in India is more theory based and doing an individual research was entirely a new experience. Individual reports enhanced his research skills to a greater extent. Referencing or paraphrasing was never done before in his under graduation and he learned it when he started to do the individual assignments. Now the researcher can feel the real standard of research by including those attributes and also by reading multiple scholarly articles. He understood that these are the initial learning for doing his dissertations successfully.

Selection Process

As the researcher was working on his dissertation topic, initial idea came into his mind was to choose Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as a research topic. When he was seeing a debate show, this topic was discussed and it seems to be more interesting because of the political issues on FDI in India. So he chose a topic on student's perception of FDI in India. But when he submitted his sample proposal in class, his faculty gave the feedback that this research will be time taking and difficult process since college students will not have deeper understanding about FDI. Also interviewing finance experts will be difficult because of getting their appointments. Then the researcher started to think on the alternative idea. Being in the educational family background, he decided to think about the topic on schools in India. He thought that this research will help him to understand the current scenario. This decision was taken to fulfill both his personal as well as his professional expectations. As he had the basic idea of school management and also to improve his school, this topic seems to be more comfortable. So he decided to read articles on school management and found few important issues in public schools in India. After having a deeper insight, there seems to be a huge difference in management system between the public and private schools. There was no proper system or quality of education in public schools even though the percentage of public schools is more in India. This made the researcher to do a qualitative study on effective value chain management in private schools. Initially he thought of doing a research in private school so that their system of management can be studied. But later he decided to do a cross case study which will be more effective for his research. Hence this topic was chosen and the study has been conducted on both public and private schools.

Dissertation formulation and Individual learning

Initially the researcher found it very difficult to get the key points and start of the research. Then when he was looking into his course materials in Moodle, he found a description on "Analyzing a case study". It had many key points about analyzing a case study and it was so helpful for him to start his research. It was a tedious task to find the reliable source and online materials. At that time library classes were very helpful to search the relevant articles and also to evaluate the standard of research articles. This was started by searching the articles in the ABS list of journal ranking and trusted websites like JSTOR, EBSCO host, oxford journals etc. Regular classes were conducted by the library and the explanation was simple and clear which helped him to save more time on secondary data collection. After reading the articles, he found that many quantitative researches on school have been done in many places of India. By considering the contextual and methodological gaps, he decided to choose a city called Chennai in India to conduct his research. The strategy during primary data collection was simple. The researcher had a college requisition letter which was helpful at the time of contacting the school management and DBS also had a good reputation since it was affiliated to Liverpool John Moore's University. So it was an easy task to get the initial permission. At the time of recording the first interview, he was nervous and his confidence was reducing gradually. But the person whom the researcher interviewed understood his situation and made him to relax by talking in a friendly manner. Then he started his interview and there was another challenge during this stage. Getting the deeper information was a difficult task and participants had little time for interviews. But luckily he managed to collect as much data he can and also visited again to talk with some teachers and students apart from formal interview. After his first interview, he started practicing regularly in front of the mirror to regain his confidence. This has helped him a lot and after the second interview, he felt more confident and the remaining interviews came out well. The interview process took nearly 5 days and all the data was ready to be transcribed. During interviews, unknowingly his listening skills was stabilized and improved to a better level. This was evident from one of his under graduation examination where he needs to deliver a viva voice based on the questions. Every time he attends this viva voice, his listening skills will be very bad and he used to answer

incorrectly and lose marks. This was a great challenge for him from his childhood. But now the difference can be felt and he is very confident to conduct an interview.

Transcribing and analyzing the data was another difficult task for him. Since the teaching methods in his under graduation were totally different from master's degree, it was a tedious task to do a master's level thesis. He used to contact his supervisor and friends for regular guidance and feedback. Every week he will send his updates regarding the dissertation and ask them for the suggestions. They used to spend time in motivating and guiding him to the appropriate methods. They were very helpful and this gave him confidence to pursue his research further. Initially he started transcribing all the data in the final document. Then themes were identified and analysis was made for each themes. Statistical and direct quotations were used in suitable places. Cross case study was also conducted and there was not much surprise because the findings were similar to the research done in other places. This was already considered during study of literature review and this research was done to further test the study in a particular city called Chennai where this study was not conducted. Generalized conclusion was provided along with recommendations for further study. From his perspective, the interview questions seem to be simple and descriptive. But the analysis made it important by examining their management system and comparing it with the literatures. An additional section was included in the research called observational analysis where the observations were taken into consideration. This played a major role in data analysis. This was quite surprising which gave researcher more information apart from the existing literature. The findings supported his expectation as the current scenario in most public schools was known by him. The time period to complete his dissertation was very crucial. Starting from secondary data collection to transcribing and analyzing the collected data, it was a challenging task to complete within the specified time period. His supervisor was very helpful by scheduling the time table for each section before starting his analysis. According to that the researcher did his work and he was able to finish his dissertation before the deadline. Time management played a major role in completing this thesis and it also gave him an opportunity to learn the skill to submit on specified submission deadlines. Few limitations were understood by the researcher during this process. First limitation was sample selection where the best sample did not have adequate time to answer the questions and in some cases, it was difficult to get the deeper knowledge

about the process. But repeated visits and interviewing additional participants helped the researcher to complete his analysis. Second limitation was in the data collection method. Since interview was chosen as collection method and samples were limited due to time constraint, the findings could not be generalized to a larger population. If the researcher had an opportunity to modify the process in future, he will use mixed method comprising both surveys and interviews for deeper understanding of the system. But due to time constraint, mixed method was not possible at this stage.

Conclusion

The skills stated above like communication skills, listening skills, analytical skills, research skills, time management, interpersonal skills, team building skills was not just a statement. It was truly learned and inherited by the researcher during his course. Some of the skills were learned during assignments and lectures. Some were learned by conducting his master's thesis. Some were used during primary data collection and analysis. This has given him a confident to take up a topic and do an individual research on his own. The researcher believes that all these skills help him to be independent in his work and showcase his individuality. This was the huge difference that he can feel after his master's course. Also other skills will help him to attain a senior management position in a good company and give satisfaction in his work. Master's degree in DBS is a great milestone in his career and learning from each stage of his life will be added to his existing knowledge which was gained from his master's course. The researcher wish that the knowledge should be shared and spread to many people in this world by voluntary participation in further research and show dedication towards upliftment of human community.

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Appendices

Introductory E-mail

Subject: Research Request: Praveen Kumar Perumal

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Praveen Kumar Perumal and I am currently pursuing my Masters programme in Business Management from Dublin Business School, Ireland. I have completed all the taught modules and am now in a position to begin my dissertation. My dissertation topic is focusing on the value chain management of public and private schools in India.

In order to complete my research, I would like to visit your school over the coming weeks (June/July 2013) and spend time interviewing some of your top management staff members. The interview would be of a confidential nature and the actual name of the school will not be specifically mentioned in the final paper unless you wish to publish it. I would also like to mention that the interviews are recorded for analysis purposes and that the recording would be retained so that my findings could be confirmed. The average duration of the interview is about 40 minutes and it depends entirely on the participant's information.

I would appreciate if you could consider my request and please let me know if it will be possible to meet my request.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,
Praveen Kumar Perumal

Interview Guide

This research will study the attributes of value chain and analyze the effectiveness in managing those attributes in public and private schools. The findings will be correlated and cross case analysis will be performed by the researcher. Data is collected from the semi-structured interviews which last for 45 minutes to one hour and will be audio recorded. Researcher will take interview notes and non- participant observations will also be recorded. The collected audio data will be transcribed and analyzed to identify the major themes and patterns. Personal details of the participants like Name, designation, location may be kept confidential and any usage of information in the research will be approved only by the participant with their complete knowledge. The interview will start with general introduction about the researcher, rationale for this research, outcome and role of participants in this research. The participants can withdraw the interview at any stage without prior permission. After completing the interview, final review will take place where the collected data will be briefly discussed with the participants. Participants can add or remove data during the review process and researcher will request the participants e-mail to send the transcribed document (synopsis) to ensure validity and reliability. Finally the researcher will thank the participant for spending their time and helping in this research.

Interview Questions

Name of the School:

Location: **Age:**

Participant Name & Designation: **Date:**

1. When the school was opened and how long have you been working for this school?
2. What was the designation initially and at present and what was the resource (No of staffs, students, infrastructure etc.) available when you joined?
3. Could you please tell us how many students and employees (teaching and non-teaching) currently enrolled in this school?
4. How many school buses or vans is there and how it is managed?
5. Explain the available infrastructure for students and staffs?
6. What are the other co-curricular activities involving students?
7. Can you please explain us how is the management structured in this school?
8. Explain the different process followed during staff recruitment?
9. Discuss the role of technology in managing administration and staffs?
10. Explain the use of technology in managing students?
11. What are the technologies used by the staff in teaching?
12. Explain the different ways of managing the school infrastructure (reception, class rooms, auditorium, library, labs, equipment's, toilets etc.)?
13. Explain the system used to attain good academic results in your school?
14. What is the procedure employed to measure the performance of teachers and students in your school?
15. How discipline is incorporated among staffs and students in your school?
16. How staffs and students are trained and motivated in your school?
17. Explain the different marketing techniques used to attract customers (students/ parents)?
18. Explain the different techniques used to retain a skilled employee?
19. How your school differs from other school in terms of overall performance?
20. Is there anything more you would like to add concerning this subject?

Thank you for your cooperation.

Consent Form

Project Title: Study on effective value chain management of public and private schools; Empirical case study from South India

Name of the Researcher: Praveen Kumar Perumal

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated dd/mm/yyyy for the above project which I may keep for my records and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have.

I agree to take part in the above study and am willing to have my involvement in the interview recorded.

I understand that my information will be held and processed to be used anonymously for internal publication for a master's project and submitted for assessment with a view to being reviewed by others.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.

Name of Participant	**Date**	**Signature**

Researcher	**Date**	**Signature**