

ABSTRACT

The research aimed at determining parents' criteria in selecting the suitable public school to enroll their children. The three problems highlighted in this research based on the literature review were; the location of school in the remote area without accessibility to public transport (Beaumont and Pianca, 2002; McKoy et al., 2008; Bukhari et al., 2010), a school that is far from the residential area that leads to increased distance between home and school (Cullen et al., 2003; US Environmental Protection Agency, 2003; Ewing et al., 2004; The Oregon School Siting Handbook, 2005), and the traffic safety problems around the school area (De Boer, 2005; Mustafa, 2005; Vigne, 2007; Masuri et al., 2011). The study proposed to identify the distributions and catchment areas of public schools in the case study areas, to examine the requirements and planning standards or guidelines of public school development, to assess the parents' criteria in selecting public schools for their children in the case study areas, and to propose improvement for the development of public schools in Gombak district. According to the literature, there are various factors underlying the decision of parents in selecting a school, such as academic performance of the school, school location, school distance, school facilities, school's environment, and extra-curricular activities (Beavis, 2004, Bernal, 2005; Denniss, 2004; Wilkinson et al., 2004, ISCA Research Report, 2008; O'Mahony, 2008; Burgess et al., 2009; Chakrabarti and Roy, 2010; Yusuf and Adigun, 2010; Dahari and Mohd Sabri, 2011). The data for this research were collected through site observations of the selected schools. This includes the physical conditions of the schools and facilities. Survey questionnaire was distributed to 400 respondents, and interviews with the administrators of the selected schools to validate the findings of the site observations. The study also found that the academic performance of the school was the most important criteria perceived by the parents when selecting schools for their children, followed by school location, school distance, school facilities while the extra-curricular activities were the least important criteria for them. The recommendations for the study are to provide allocation for physical expansion in the high performance school to cater its demand and capacity. The school with lower academic performance to be provided with trained and quality teachers to improve the academic achievement. The problem of unsuitable school location can be solved by locating the school in the strategic area with the availability of public transportation system. The security measures need to be enhanced in order to improve the safety level of the children. Finally, this research is hoped to benefit the local authority in the planning of the school, as well as the parents and their children in choosing the suitable public school.