Understanding Parents' Decision-Making Experiences in Private School Selection Towards the Development of Parent Educational Navigation (PEN) Framework

Josephine M. Roxas
https://orcid.org/0009-0002-9108-7123
Email address: josephine.roxas@csta.edu.ph
Colegio de Sta. Teresa de Avila, 1177 Quirino Highway, Brgy. Kaligayahan, Novaliches, Quezon City 1124, Philippines
St. Theresa's School of Novaliches, 7 Kingfisher St., Zabarte Subd., Brgy. Kaligayahan, Novaliches, Quezon City 1124, Philippines
Philippine Christian University, 1648 Taft Ave., Malate, Manila 1014, Philippines

Abstract

This qualitative study interprets the lived experiences of parents navigating the private school selection process in Novaliches, Quezon City, and culminates in the Parent Educational Navigation (PEN) Framework. Existing scholarship ranks the determinants of school choice but not how the choice is sequenced, experienced, and resolved by parents themselves; this study addresses that gap. Grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology and Heidegger's Interpretive Phenomenological Theory (1927/1962), it examines school choice not as an economic transaction but as a high-stakes journey shaped by protective instincts, logistical constraints, and the search for institutional safety. Twenty-one (21) parent-participants, selected through criterion-based purposive sampling and recruited until data saturation, took part in in-depth interviews analyzed through the Five-Step Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis (van Manen, 2016). Eleven themes emerged. The search begins reactively (Reactive Initiation), proceeds through digital and physical verification (Discovery and Validation), and is settled collectively (Familial Integration). Parents contend with Geographic and Logistical Constraints, Institutional Trust Ruptures, Financial Unpredictability and Fee Opacity, Facility-Marketing Mismatch, and Special-Needs Inclusion Access Barriers. These hurdles are negotiated sequentially: emotional safety operates as an absolute threshold, strategic pragmatism rations scarce resources, and relational partnership supplies the confirming signal. The essence of the experience is a thrown yet caring negotiation. The resulting PEN Framework operationalizes these findings as a dual-component, three-phase model: a Parent Navigation Workbook for families and an Institutional Alignment Protocol for administrators, transferable to comparable private education markets.

Keywords: Educational Management, Parent Educational Navigation Framework, Parental Decision-Making, Institutional Safety, Special Needs Inclusion, Private School Transition, Hermeneutic Phenomenology, Novaliches, Quezon City, Philippines