

School Effectiveness: Concepts, Indicators and Dimensions

Stella Osarhiemen Bello

Osemwende Senior Secondary School, Ohoghobi, Benin City
08035954792; 08054792160

Abstract

School effectiveness is a significant factor in learning by and teaching of students. In the educational system, school effectiveness has developed as a field of practice and research. This is due to the fact that it contributes to the students' output. It is against this background that this study attempted to review some conceptualizations and indicators of school effectiveness. It was therefore, recommended among others that government should promote school effectiveness in schools so as to guarantee sustainable development.

Keywords: Effectiveness, School Effectiveness, Leadership Behaviour, Teachers' Moral, Quality Output.

Introduction

School effectiveness is not one thing, it involves several components such as administration functioning, leadership behaviours, teachers' morale, level of trust, culture and climate, parental involvement, community support, teachers' commitment, loyalty and satisfaction of teachers. According to Ostroff and Schmitt (1993), these variables are difficult to measure.

Researchers generally lack consensus on what constitutes school effectiveness. It has been argued as the input – output perspective (Cheng, 1996) growth in student achievement. Willms (1992), Rutter (1979), Reynolds, Sommers, Stoll, Barber and Hillman (1996) were of the view that effectiveness is dependent on the people and available resources. Hence, the difficulty in defining school effectiveness has to do with people who are forced to choose from competing values.

This paper will therefore, be discussed under the following subheads:

- a. Concept of school effectiveness
- b. Factors of effective schooling
- c. Dimensions of school effectiveness
- d. Indicators of effective schools
- e. Conclusion
- f. Recommendations

Concept of School Effectiveness

School effectiveness involves strong, purposeful principles, shared visions and goals (including collegiality and cooperation among teachers), effective teaching and learning, effective evaluation and monitoring, positive learning environment and effective parental involvement (Nazrol 2001; Levine and Lezotte, 2001).

A school is considered effective when it consistently improves its success history through teachers, principals and students' attitudes to a superlative performance. Teachers behave well in an effective school but the reverse is the case in ineffective schools. What produces this difference could be their way of commitment and school climate. Teachers in effective schools are interested in how well their students master basic skills. In an effective school, there is public display of symbols of academic excellence. The classes begin on time, and are characterized by proper instructional techniques and few interruptions. The classes in the ineffective schools begin late, do not consistently include instructional techniques and are constantly interrupted.

Factors that determine school effectiveness are shown in the diagram

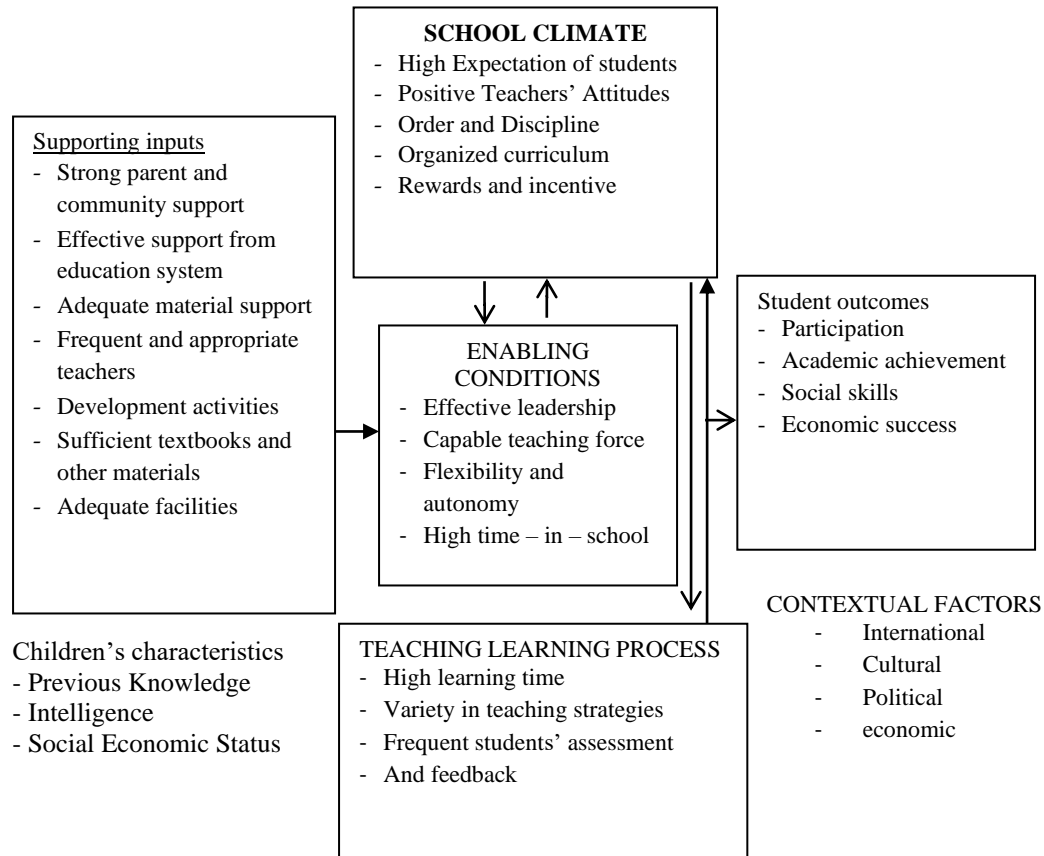


Figure 1: Factors that Determine School Effectiveness

Source: Heneveld & Craig, 1996. “Schools Count: World Bank Project Designs and the Quality of Primary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa”. Washington DC: The World Bank.

This model which was proposed by Heneveld and Craig (1996) showed supporting inputs (School inputs) and children characteristics (previous knowledge, intelligence and social economic status) interacting with the school climate, enabling conditions and teaching process constructs to produce certain student outcomes bearing in mind some contextual factors.

This diagram is focused on economic approaches to school effectiveness and it deals with the question of which malleable inputs can increase outputs. If

there was reliable knowledge available on the extent to which a selection of inputs is related to a selection of outputs, it would be possible to define a function that would characterize the production process in schools. That is, a function that could accurately indicate how a change in the inputs would affect the outputs.

In economics related input-output studies, the school was conceived as a 'black box'. Jencks' (1971) studies on "Equality of Educational Opportunity" said that the distinguishing feature of effective schools' research is the fact that it has attempted to break open the 'black box' of the school by studying characteristics related to organization, form and content of schools.

Factors of Effective Schooling

New effective school findings offer us insights beyond these original five factors of effective schooling:

Early start – The concept that there is a particular age for children to begin school needs to be rethought.

- Focus on reading and Mathematics
- Smaller schools
- Smaller classes
- Increased learning time – more efficient use of time and more graded homework are all proved methods of enhancing academic learning time and students' performance assessment.

The following are the recent factors of effective schooling:

- **Teacher Training** – The best way to improve school effectiveness is by investing in training teachers, stronger teacher skills and qualifications to lead to greater student learning. Conversely, students pay an academic price when they are taught by unqualified and uncertified teachers.
- **Trust** – Trusting relationships among parents, students, principals and teachers are a necessary ingredient to govern, improve and reform schools. As trust level increases, so does academic performance.
- **Technology** – Schools and government are hesitant to spend funds on training teachers, class size reductions, or early childhood education programmes. Nevertheless, they are quick to invest significant sums in computers and upgraded technology. It is a sad commentary that the glamour of cyberspace is more persuasive than decades of research.

(Source–<http://www.education.com/reference/articles/Ref-what-makes-school>)

Dimensions of School Effectiveness

The underlying dimensions of school effectiveness, according to Uline, Miller and Tschanen Moran (1998), are instrumental and expressive functions. Instrumental activities serve as a means by which a school adjusts to external demands, sets goals and mobilizes the resources necessary for a response. Academic achievement, resource acquisition and the teaching/learning process are usually functions of the instrumental activities of a school.

Expressive activities clarify and reinforce the norms and values of a school. These activities are significant in that they develop a sense of social cohesiveness (cooperation and collaboration) to build organizational culture. Parson (1960) posited that social systems survive according to their ability to exercise four critical functions: adaptation, goal achievement, integration and latency. He applied this idea to organizations, claiming that as social systems, formal organizations must also adapt to their external environment. An organization adjusts to environmental demands by transforming external conditions where necessary.

Also, the organization must set and attain goals, define objectives and mobilize the resources to obtain them. Furthermore, an organization seeks to integrate all its separate parts, working to maintain a certain level of social solidarity. In the school situation, it requires the loyalty of the teachers and principals to maintain a strong internal culture and value system.

Etzioni (1975) compressed Parson's (1960) four functions into two broad categories. Etzioni identified the first as instrumental activities which include "input" and "allocation". That is what Parson called adaptation to environment and achievement of goals. Etzioni's second category is the "expressive activities". These include social and normative forms of integration. This is what Parson called integration and latency.

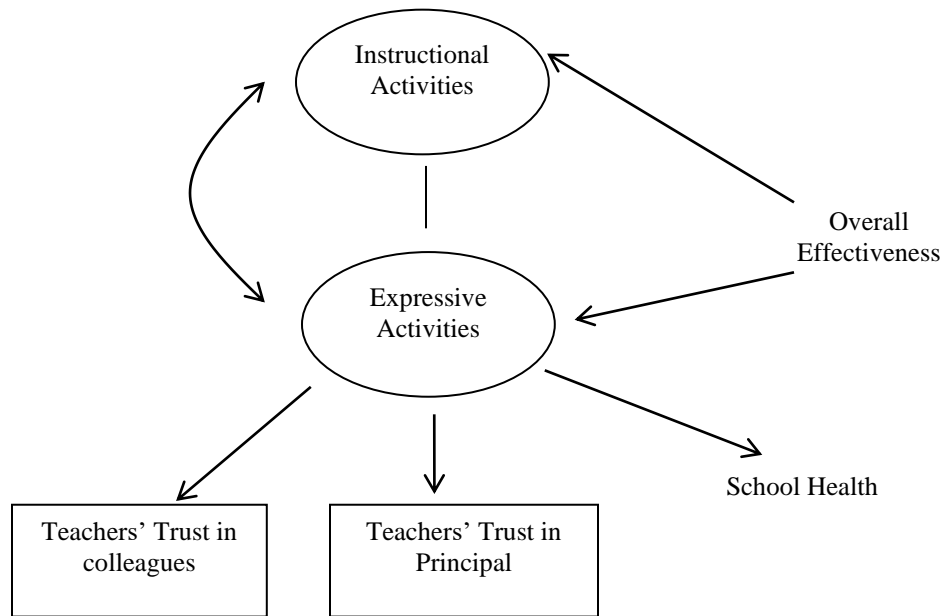


Figure 2: Perspective of School Effectiveness

Source: Educational Administration Quarterly (1998: 469)

Effectiveness is a multifaceted construct that involves instrumental and expressive activities demonstrated in the notion of teachers' trust in colleagues, teachers' trust in principal and school health (Etzioni, 1975; Hoy & Miskel (1982).

Hoy and Miskel (2008) identified a list of indicators across the four dimensions of effectiveness as derived from Parson's critical functions. They distinguished between activities that move in the direction of organizations' adaptability, achievement and productivity as compared with those that result in satisfaction, loyalty and motivation. The analytic distinction between instrumental and expressive activities shows that both are necessary parts of a whole in any social system.

Indicators of Effective Schools

Effective schools, according to Levine (1991), are those that can demonstrate students' learning and allow substantial staff development time (some of which takes place during the regular workday). In these schools, improvement goals are sharply focused, attainable, and valued by staff members

who receive in-class guidance and support from specialists. Effective schools are managed by effective leaders or individuals who provide the leadership necessary to create a strong curriculum and a safe environment in which students can achieve academic success. According to Stone, Bruse and Hursh (2007), effectively managed schools have a common practice which involves the use of student progress data to guide instructional decision-making. It also involves the use of student progress data to improve the performance of teachers whose students perform below expectation. These include mentoring and other resources.

The schools keep parents informed about their children's progress and strengthen their involvement with the children's schooling experience. Their routine achievement testing is a well-known feature of effective instruction. Teachers in these schools have faith in the integrity of the principal. Even in difficult situations, teachers in these schools can depend on one another.

Lezotte (1991) emphasized seven common correlates that are characteristics of effective schools. These include: clear school mission, high expectation for success, instructional leadership, opportunity to learn and time on task, safe and orderly environment, positive home-school relation and frequent monitoring of students' progress.

These correlates are the means to achieving high and equitable levels of student learning. It has been found that when school improvement processes based on the effective school are implemented, the proportion of students that will achieve academic excellence either improves or at the very least, remains the same (Association of Effective Schools, 1996).

Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995) and Reynolds, Sammons, Stoll, Barber and Hillman (1996) identified eleven factors of effective schools.

- Shared leadership (Firm, purposeful, participative –the leading profession)
- Shared vision and goals (Unity of purpose, consistency of practice, collegiality and collaboration).
- A learning environment (An orderly atmosphere and attractive environment);
- Concentration on teaching and learning (Maximization of learning time, academic emphasis, focus on achievement);
- High expectations (All round, clear communication of expectations, providing intellectual challenge);
- Positive reinforcement (Clear and fair discipline, feedback);
- Monitoring progress (Monitoring pupils' performance, evaluating school performance).
- Pupils' rights and responsibilities (High pupil self-esteem, positions of responsibility, control of work);

- Purposeful teaching (Efficient organization, clarity of purpose, structured lessons, adaptive practice).
- A learning organization (School based staff development)
- Home-school partnership (Parental involvement)

Hammond (1999) related school effectiveness to teachers' knowledge about teaching and learning. Studies done by Fergusson (1991) and Thomas (1989) concluded that teachers' qualification, that is, knowledge, education and experience, account for a larger share of the variance in students' achievement more than any other single factor.

Conclusion

Effective schools are a viable path to recognizing, reaching, teaching and assessing each child. Effective schools will create a star generation that will uphold national development. This star generation will not only prove that they have gone through the school by proving their proficiency of knowledge and skills essential for success, but will be a proof of the worth of the school. It can, therefore, be concluded that effective schooling is inevitable if we must reap the benefits of education.

Recommendations

In order to ensure effective schooling, the following recommendations are proposed for policy options:

- There is the need for government to promote school effectiveness by providing the materials and equipment needed for students' learning. Government should, as a matter of urgency, employ and supply teachers to schools to fill vacant positions so that teachers will be able to do what they were trained for.
- Parent and teacher associations should be encouraged in our schools. This will enable stakeholders to have the necessary feedback with which management can improve their excellence. This will also enable parents to be aware of the duties and expectations from them.
- Schooling can be made effective when policy makers, government, teachers, examining bodies and other stakeholders can interact in workshops, seminars and symposia to learn new ways of tackling challenges and how their expectations can be resolved in teaching and learning.

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