

Analyzing the Landscape of School Effectiveness: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This literature review examines the concept of school effectiveness and its measurement in educational landscapes. The study explores different perspectives on school effectiveness, including its definition, factors contributing to it, and approaches for assessing it. Key characteristics of effective schools are identified, such as a positive school culture, strong instructional leadership, clear mission statements, frequent monitoring of student progress, and high expectations for students. The review also discusses theoretical views on organizational effectiveness in schools. The findings highlight the need for further research to develop a universally accepted definition of school effectiveness and explore the interaction between internal and external factors in shaping effective schools. Generally, this literature review contributes to our understanding of how schools can promote student performance and improve educational outcomes through effective practices.

Keywords: School Effectiveness, Student Performance, School Culture, Instructional Leadership

Introduction

School effectiveness is a fundamental concern in the field of education as it directly impacts student performance and overall educational outcomes. The concept of school effectiveness itself is multifaceted with varying definitions across different researchers. Some view it as achieving goals and objectives, while others emphasize measurable academic outcomes. A lack of universally accepted definition makes it difficult to determine what encompasses effective schooling. School culture has emerged as another important factor contributing to school effectiveness. Understanding the factors that contribute to school effectiveness is crucial for educational leaders and policymakers in order to develop strategies and initiatives that promote positive learning environments and improve student achievement. Therefore, this literature review aims to explore the concept of school effectiveness, its measurement, and various factors that influence it. Different approaches to assessing school effectiveness are examined on the complexities of this multifaceted concept.

Methodology

The study used a systematic method to review the previous literature related to school effectiveness. The study provides summarize and synthesize the existing research and identify areas where further research is needed in the current understanding of a research.

Conceptualization of School Effectiveness

School effectiveness is a complex concept, as indicated by (Akay & Aypay, 2016). Different researchers have defined 'school effectiveness' in different ways. An effective school as one where students make more progress than expected based on their initial abilities (Jennings, 2015). In contrast, an ineffective school sees little improvement in student outcomes compared to their starting point (Scheerens, 2016). School effectiveness is often viewed as the school's ability to achieve its planned goals and objectives (Cobanoglu & Yurek, 2018). Additionally, the success of a school is typically assessed based on the extent to which it reaches its goals (Akay & Aypay, 2016). The importance of measurable academic outcomes is a key indicator of school effectiveness, while also

acknowledging the significance of social outcomes Day and Sammons (2013). On the other hand, (Laila, 2015), points out the lack of a universally accepted definition of school effectiveness, suggesting that any definition should take into account student learning and teacher performance. Therefore, school effectiveness can be viewed through the lens of internal and external factors, inputs, processes, and outputs within a school setting (Ali & Zaman, 2017). The term 'effectiveness' pertains to an organization achieving its particular goals (Bryson, 2018). Therefore, school effectiveness can be defined as 'the school achieves its goals'. School effectiveness is thus seen as a unique feature of a successful school. The notion of 'school effectiveness' can be interpreted in various ways, leading to a global discussion as pointed out by Cheng, (2022). A crucial sign of effective schools is their impact on students' academic accomplishments, such as standardized test scores or exam results. An effective school is one where students exceed expected progress (Lipsitz, 2019).

School effectiveness is consistently working to address the issue of students' educational outcomes (Sun & Jong, 2007; Petty & Green, 2007). One enduring challenge in this area is determining methods to assess student progress or success that distinguish the school's impact from other variables like student capabilities, background, and socio-economic conditions. Alongside this, there is a growing demand for schools to be held accountable, often resulting in academic performance being the primary measure of school effectiveness, with other factors being overlooked. Consequently, academic achievements, typically assessed through tests and/or exams, have remained the primary focus, overshadowing other forms of assessment. Exam results are indicative of academic progress; they do not provide a comprehensive evaluation of a school's academic performance and offer limited insights into other aspects. (Cheng, 2022) aim to emphasize that the concept of school effectiveness is founded on three separate discourses: leadership, management, and organization. Government intervention in assessing school effectiveness through tools like checklists and inspections may not always improve effectiveness, but rather focus on evaluating student achievement.

There is a clear distinction between internal and external school effectiveness as outlined by (Knapp & Feldman, 2012). Internal school effectiveness refers to the technical efficiency of the school if its outcomes are confined to activities within or immediately following schooling (such as learning behavior, acquired skills, and shifts in attitude). On the other hand, external school effectiveness pertains to the beneficial influence of the school's outcomes on society or individuals' lives (such as social mobility, earning potential

and work productivity). A school's ability to excel in all aspects simultaneously may be limited, but it can strive to achieve harmony among all criteria over time. School effectiveness is the school's capacity to navigate internal and external challenges and accomplish its various objectives in the long term (Knapp & Feldman, 2012). In essence, different dimensions of school effectiveness can coexist and synergize if schools embrace a culture of learning, adaptation, and growth.

Another pertinent concept in relation to school effectiveness is that of 'school improvement'. While these concepts are often seen as distinct from each other, the literature highlights a close connection between the two. (Walker et al., 2019) suggest that school effectiveness emerged due to societal inequalities, leading to a push for universal education. Schools that continuously improve their performance become more confident, self-critical, and knowledgeable about learning processes. It is commonly assumed that school improvement contributes to school effectiveness, indicating that these two concepts, despite their differences, are interconnected in terms of their objectives and aims. The diverse contextualization of school effectiveness reveals multiple understandings, suggesting that the definition of school effectiveness may not be definitive due to the influence of context. For that matter, school effectiveness will be defined as the school's ability to function properly in all areas and achieve high levels of student attainment.

The identified gap in the literature is the lack of a universally accepted definition and conceptualization of school effectiveness. While there are various perspectives and definitions proposed by researchers, there is no consensus on what constitutes an effective school. This gap creates challenges in measuring and assessing school effectiveness, as different studies may use different criteria or indicators to evaluate schools. There is a need for further research on the relationship between internal and external factors of school effectiveness. While some studies focus on internal factors such as leadership, management, and instructional practices, others emphasize the impact of external factors like socioeconomic conditions or community support. Understanding how these factors interact and influence each other can provide a more comprehensive understanding of school effectiveness.

School Culture and School Effectiveness

School culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, symbols, and understanding among the members of a school (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018). It plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of a school (Leithwood & Sun, 2018). Research has shown that a positive school culture has a significant impact on students, staff, and the overall school system (Jamaludin & Sumantri, 2019). It influences student achievement and contributes to the overall effectiveness of the school (Parker, 2015). The outcomes of a school, including students' attitudes and achievements, teachers' performance, and the functioning of the entire school system, are all influenced by the school culture (Pervez & Maryam, 2017).

Research studies have consistently found a strong correlation between school culture and school effectiveness (Ali et al., 2017; Duan et al., 2018). Successful schools tend to have a well-defined school culture that emphasizes tangible aspects such as rituals, ceremonies, and traditions, as well as intangible aspects like beliefs, values, norms, vision, and goals (Karadag & Yilmaz, 2014). Positive school cultures have been found to contribute to improved student achievement, increased teacher collaboration, and greater teacher autonomy (Yasin & Basri, 2017). Specific dimensions of school culture, such as professional development and learning partnerships, have been shown to have a significant impact on student achievement (Hammond, 2018).

Professional development programs in schools facilitate collaborative learning among teachers, influencing their beliefs, attitudes, and practices, thus shaping the school culture (Dimmock & Dinh, 2021). A positive school culture benefits students as staff work together to enhance the quality of education. Effective schools are typically led by leaders who establish positive cultures promoting effective teaching and learning environments (Bhengu & Mthembu, 2014). When individuals within an organization share common values and traditions, it impacts their collaboration and ultimately affects the quality of the school culture, influencing how teachers and administrators provide learning opportunities for students (Pearson, 2015). The literature review highlights the significance of school culture in contributing to the overall effectiveness of a school, with collaborative culture being a key factor for school success (Liu & Gumus, 2020).

Measures of School Effectiveness

There is no universally accepted standard for measuring school effectiveness, but there are common characteristics that are often used to define an effective school. A key figure in the study of school effectiveness, identified as strong administrative leadership, emphasis on fundamental skills, high expectations for student achievement, regular monitoring of student performance, and safe and organized school environments as key characteristics of effective schools (Beare et al., 2018). Effective schools are characterized by a safe and organized atmosphere, high expectations for success, instructional leadership, a clear and focused mission, ample learning opportunities, consistent monitoring of student progress, and strong home-school relationships. These correlates work together to create school effectiveness, ultimately leading to student success (Talebloo & Asimiran, 2018). The unique correlates of effective schools are seen as essential for achieving positive outcomes for students and have been recognized by various researchers as key indicators of school effectiveness (Herman, 2017).

When examining literature regarding school effectiveness, it becomes evident that there are numerous commonalities among the key factors identified. (Dos & Savas, 2015) outline the essential characteristics of an effective school as: strong leadership, efficient classroom management, well-structured curriculum, high expectations for both students and teachers, belief in the potential of every student to learn, assessment and feedback, orderly school environment, and involvement of families. Similarly, (Ghani, 2013) argues that effective schools can be attained through indicators such as: establishing a supportive atmosphere, emphasis on the teaching and learning process, maintaining high expectations for students, ongoing assessment and evaluation of students, and fostering strong collaboration between the school and home.

The Factors of School Effectiveness

Several researchers have measured factors of school effectiveness through different means, yet certain key indicators consistently emerge. These include teachers' training, the quantity and quality of teachers' advanced studies, guidance and counseling for teachers, parental support and involvement, curriculum, communication, and organizational structure within the school (Cheng, 2022). It can be inferred that the level of effectiveness assessed through these indicators is likely to impact students' academic performance. Upon examination of academic literature focusing on school effectiveness, it is evident that

the academic performance of students is impacted by the pedagogical features of the educational institution they attend. Research comparing schools has explored how variations in teaching methods, such as individualized instruction and small group learning, contribute to differences in student achievement (Akiri, 2013). These suggest that the factors play a significant role in determining the overall effectiveness of a school and the academic success of its students. .

Approaches to School Effectiveness Assessment

There are many different approaches for the conceptualization, formulation and measurement of school effectiveness. The following seven indicators are the framework of the assessment approach to school effectiveness (Botha, 2010)

The Goal Indicator

This indicator assumes there are clearly defined and universally accepted objectives that are relevant and significant to both teachers and the school. It states that a school is considered effective if it can achieve its stated goals with the given resources (Madani, 2019). These goals or objectives are measurable, established by either authorities or the school itself, and can be evaluated against predetermined criteria such as those outlined in school development plans and academic performance in tests and/or examinations. This indicator is widely utilized in schools for evaluation purposes because the goals and responsibilities assigned to teachers are clear and specific, and the outcomes of their performance can be easily observed. Additionally, the standards used to measure teacher effectiveness are explicitly stated. However, a limitation of this indicator is its reliance on quantifiable aspects, which can often be difficult to determine.

The External Resource Indicator

The assumption made by this indicator is that in order for schools to become more effective, they require scarce and valued resource inputs. As a result, the acquisition of resources becomes the main criteria for measuring effectiveness, replacing goals (Sammons, 2007). An instance of this indicator is the financial support received from sources outside the school. However, this indicator has limitations as it overly focuses on obtaining inputs from external sources and fails to consider the efforts made by the school itself to sustain its effectiveness.

The Internal Process Indicator

The effectiveness of a school is assumed based on the effectiveness of its internal functioning. Internal school activities, including leadership, communication channels, participation, adaptability, and social interactions, are often used as criteria to determine school effectiveness. However, this indicator has some drawbacks, such as being challenging to monitor and placing excessive emphasis on the methods of achieving school effectiveness.

The Satisfaction Indicator

An effective school is defined by this indicator as one where all stakeholders are satisfied to at least a minimal extent (Lopes & Oliveira, 2020). It is assumed that the primary task of the school is to meet the needs of the principal, teachers, school management teams, governing body learners, and the public. According to this perspective, satisfaction serves as the fundamental measure of effectiveness. However, this indicator may not be suitable if the demands of the stakeholders are contradictory to one another.

The Legitimacy Indicator

Based on this measure, a school is considered effective if it can successfully withstand unchallenged and lawful promotional efforts (Miotto et al., 2020). This measure is relevant only when the school has had to work hard to establish its credibility in a competitive setting. When a school consistently produces positive outcomes such as high graduation rates, it enhances its legitimacy in terms of effectively preparing students for future endeavors.

The Organizational Indicator

It is assumed by this indicator that both environmental changes and internal barriers to school functioning are unavoidable. According to this perspective, a school is considered effective when it is capable of learning how to make improvements and adaptations to its surroundings. The organizational indicator of school effectiveness refers to the extent to which a school is well-organized and effectively managed in order to achieve its goals and fulfill its mission (Demir, 2020). It encompasses various aspects of the school's internal functioning, structure, and processes

Characteristics of Effectiveness Schools

Various attributes of successful schools are mentioned in the literature. Based on the provided literature, it can be asserted that certain characteristics of effectiveness schools, which are cited as examples, are widely shared. The following discussion elaborates on these common attributes of school effectiveness (Zgenel, 2019).

Safe and Orderly Environment

Although there are no major acts of violence or explosions threatening school security, persistent disciplinary issues hinder the effectiveness of the learning environment. Securing schools is a crucial step towards promoting desired behavior. Effective schools aim to reduce such incidents, even if complete elimination is not possible (Sprague & Walker, 2021). There is the link between a perceived safe environment and student academic performance (WHO & UNESCO., 2021). The study concluded that students' learning experiences suffered when they were not in a well-organized, safe environment.

Instructional Leadership

Schools require competent leaders who can effectively communicate the school's mission and vision. These leaders establish a shared sense of purpose by emphasizing the school's mission and fostering a set of common core values among the teaching staff. This shared sense of purpose and common core values serve as guiding principles for all members of the teaching team, ensuring they stay focused on the objectives at hand (Dutta & Sahney, 2022). Effective leaders in schools possess certain characteristics that contribute to a conducive school environment (Horng et al., 2010). They prioritize success, develop effective teaching strategies, regularly monitor and evaluate student progress, coordinate and support education and training initiatives. An effective leader is not confined to their office but actively engages in communication, welcomes new ideas and projects, and strives for the overall development of the school. By spreading their efforts throughout the school, they create a positive climate. Numerous studies have explored the impact of school leadership on school effectiveness, revealing a direct or indirect correlation between the two (Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Hofman & Hofman, 2011; Yilmaz, 2010).

Clear and Focused Mission

Effective schools have a clear school mission and a supportive school climate from all stakeholders who understand and endorse school goals. Conversely, many unsuccessful

schools lack a strong strategic plan or have a weak existing one (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Furthermore, research has shown that schools with a strategic plan but without programs that assess the achievement of objectives through objective research methods and student-teacher evaluations tend to be unsuccessful (Nyagosia & Njuguna, 2013).

School-Family Relations

The academic achievement of students is not determined by the social status or income of their families, as noted by (Özer & Suna, 2022). Rather, it is influenced by the extent to which families create a supportive home environment that fosters learning. Parental engagement in school-related activities has a positive impact on children's success. Schools experience greater success when parents actively participate in school events, meetings, and activities (Park et al., 2017). Regular visits by parents to the school help children perceive a strong connection between home and school, making the school an integral part of the family's life.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

In effective schools, students are frequently assessed using objective evaluation tools, with the outcomes being analyzed. This process not only enhances student behavior and performance but also drives the development of the educational curriculum based on these findings (Stronge & Xu, 2021). Teachers in effective schools are responsible for evaluating students. The assessment for learning strategy is designed to monitor each student's progress consistently and ensure they achieve the desired learning objectives (Akram, 2019).

Climate of High Expectations

Teacher expectations have a positive impact on student performance. Students are assigned challenging tasks based on their learning situation and are expected to excel. Effective school atmosphere in which teachers continue their professional development, become involved in the vision of the school, and where teachers turn towards excellence within and outside the school can help children achieve their goals (Wang et al., 2018). In this sense, it is suggested that there is a strong relationship between school effectiveness and teacher performance.

Theoretical Views on Organizational Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the organization cannot be described in a straightforward manner. Instead a pluralistic attitude is taken with respect to the interpretation of the concept. It is assumed that the interpretation chosen depends on organizational theory and the specific interests of the group posing the question of effectiveness (Hatch, 2018).

Economic Rationality

The economic definition of effectiveness is rooted in the idea that organizations function logically, with clearly defined goals (Scheerens, 2013). These goals, measurable as outputs to aim for, serve as the basis for determining criteria for effectiveness, including variables to evaluate results like student performance. Economic rationality is evident when objectives are identified as outputs of the school's primary production process

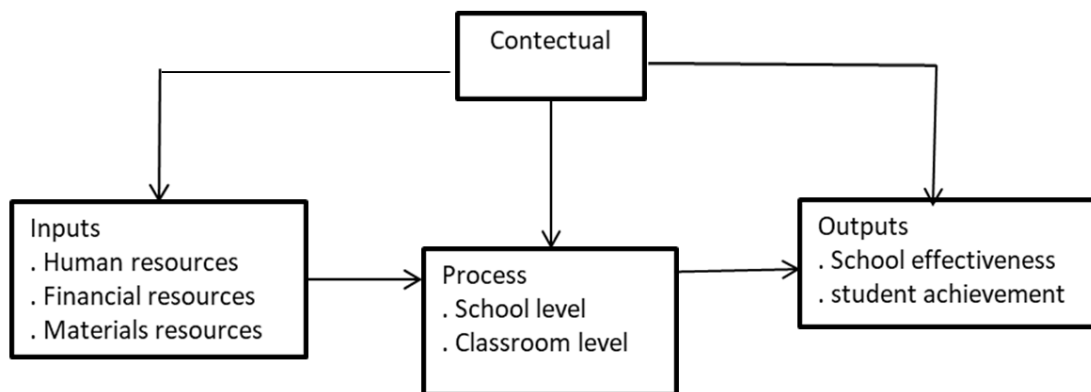
The Organic System Model

According to the organic system model, organizations can be likened to biological systems that adapt to the environment. The key feature of this approach is that organizations are seen to openly interact with their surroundings (Brief et al., 2013). This suggests that organizations must be flexible to obtain necessary resources and other inputs.

The Human Relations Approach of Organizations

This approach emphasizes the well-being of individuals within an organization, highlighting the importance of consensus, collegial relationships, motivation, and human resource development (Sias, 2008). Job satisfaction and employee involvement are key criteria for assessing the organization's most desired characteristics.

Conceptual framework of School Functioning



Conclusion

This literature review has provided insights into the concept of school effectiveness by examining its various dimensions, characteristics of effective schools, and approaches for assessing it. The findings highlight the importance of a positive school culture, instructional leadership, and clear mission statements, frequent monitoring of student progress, strong home-school partnerships, and high expectations for students as key components contributing to school effectiveness. The assessment approaches presented offer diverse perspectives on evaluating school effectiveness based on goals attainment, resource acquisition, internal processes, satisfaction levels, legitimacy, and organizational adaptability. However, despite efforts made by researchers in defining and conceptualizing school effectiveness, a universally accepted definition remains elusive. Further research is needed to explore how internal and external factors interact with each other in shaping effective schools. Moreover, future studies could delve deeper into understanding how cultural contexts impact perceptions and measures of school effectiveness. Ultimately, the ultimate goal should be creating an inclusive educational system where all students can thrive academically through an effective schooling experience.

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