

School Effectiveness – An Area of Research in Teacher Education

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The term ‘school effectiveness’ has been widely used since 1960s. It was frequently related with the school effort to make changes toward improving the students’ level of achievement. In an effective school, the goal is to teach basic skills and appropriate behaviours to all students. Besides, in such a school, an optimum learning environment is created by supporting the cognitive, affective, psychomotor, social and aesthetic development of the students. Effective schools are those that successfully progress the learning and development of all of their students. There is no simple recipe for an effective school. In the most general sense, ‘school effectiveness’ refers to the level of goal attainment of a school. Many factors combine to make each school what it is, and each school is unique. However, it is possible to identify a set of factors or characteristics that contribute to school effectiveness.

Identifying effective and ineffective schools is a dominant issue in education in light of the increasing concern for achievement and accountability. The effective schools movement continues gaining momentum among school personnel whose primary responsibility is to meet the challenge of providing each student with the opportunity to develop to the fullest potential. In the last decade, educational research efforts concerning effective schools have focused on identifying the characteristics of an effective school and establishing specific criteria for measuring effectiveness. Reviews of the effective schools literature reveal that there is no consensus on the definition of an effective school.

Effectiveness, according to **Webster's New Riverside University Dictionary**, is a noun related to producing a desired or intended effect. In order for a school to be termed as effective, it needs to have certain characteristics.

Brookover (1979) emphatically stated that the characteristics of an effective school are not isolated components, but that they are integrated and must be considered as a whole. Definitions of effectiveness should encompass qualitative variables (i.e., school climate, instructional leadership, high expectations, etc.) as well as quantitative variables (public achievement scores).

Bloom (1982) in his book, ‘**Human Characteristics and School learning**’ identified three interdependent variables essential to any investigation of school effectiveness:

- 1) Cognitive entry behaviours - prerequisite cognitive skills
- 2) Affective entry behaviours - interests, attitudes, and motivations
- 3) Quality of instruction - degree to which the presentation, explanation, and ordering of the elements of the task to be learned approach the optimum for a given learner.

Researchers (**Kitchen, et al., 2004**) for the University of New Mexico (UNM) studied nine distinguished nine high achieving schools serving low-income communities throughout the United States that were part of a Hewlett-Packard (HP) funded project. The study identified seven characteristics common to schools where poor children were succeeding in Mathematics. The initial research findings demonstrate that the nine highly effective schools that serve low-income communities shared some common characteristics. The common themes that emerged included:

- 1) Teaching and learning are prioritized to support high academic expectations,
- 2) Supplemental support is provided for student learning,
- 3) A strong and well defined sense of purpose among the faculty,
- 4) Faculty collaborate and support each other,
- 5) Explicit focus on test preparation,
- 6) Teaching resources are available, and
- 7) Teachers have regular access to professional development opportunities (Kitchen, et al., 2004).

Another research on high performing but high poverty schools in Florida (**Tilley, 2011**) identified four contributing factors to school success – a) additional academic support through use of personnel (tutoring), b) an academic program (AR), c) a web-based instructional program, and d) an instructional method (small group and differentiation). The study also revealed that following items are fundamental to student achievement:

- ❖ the principal’s motivation, expectations, and instructional leadership,
- ❖ a culture of excellence
- ❖ purposeful programs and student support

Perhaps the best known summary of the characteristics of an effective school is provided by **Ronald Edmonds (1982)**. He identified five distinct characteristics in high achieving schools:

- 1) Strong administrative leadership, particularly in the area of curriculum and instruction;
- 2) An orderly, safe environment conducive to learning;
- 3) A pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus emphasising a commitment to basic skills;
- 4) Teacher behaviours that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery; and
- 5) The use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis of program evaluation. (p.4)

Based on research and consultations with parents, nine characteristics of effective schools have been identified:

- strong and professional principal
- strong and professional teachers
- clear positive philosophy
- environment conducive to learning
- effective student welfare system
- strong organisational framework
- broad, balanced curriculum
- meaningful assessment and reporting on student progress
- support for parent and community participation.

Purkey and Smith (1983) paint the portrait of an effective school, differentiating between organizational components that can be implemented administratively, and process components, which follow organizational components and define a school’s climate and culture. Table - 1 enumerates these components:

Table – 1: Components of an Effective School

Organizational Components	Process Components
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ School site management—leadership and staff ❖ need autonomy to address how to increase achievement ❖ Instructional leadership ❖ Staff stability ❖ Curriculum articulation and organization: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ purposeful programs of study ➤ School-wide staff development, ➤ focused on altering attitudes and behaviours and providing ➤ staff with new techniques and skills ➤ Parental involvement and support ➤ School-wide recognition of academic success ➤ Maximized learning time ➤ District support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Collaborative planning and collegial relationships ❖ A sense of community ❖ Clear goals and high expectations that are commonly shared ❖ Order and discipline

Source: Preston et al., 2017, p. 527

Basic Components for an Effective School

While the characteristics help to define an effective school, the presence of some basic components ensures school effectiveness. The components for an effective school are defined by the researchers as follows:

1. Clear School Mission

In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated school mission through which the staff shares an understanding of and commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability. Staff accepts responsibility for students' learning of the school's essential curricular goals. The focus is on achieving a shared vision, and all understand their role in achieving the vision. The focus and vision are developed from common beliefs and values, creating a consistent direction for all involved.

Indicators:

- ❖ All participants can articulate the common purpose.
- ❖ The use of time, materials, and professional development activities are aligned with common focus.
- ❖ Learning goals are developed and prioritized according to district and local guidelines.
- ❖ There is a commitment to long-range, continuous improvement.
- ❖ The common focus is directly related to assignment of staff time and resource allocation.
- ❖ All staff can articulate how the school is improving student learning.
- ❖ Professional development reflects the standards of the relevant professional

2. High Expectations for Success

In the effective school, there is a climate of expectation in which the staff believe and demonstrate that all students can attain mastery of the essential content and skills, and the staff also believe that they have the capability to help all students achieve that mastery.

Indicators

Instruction is focused on high expectations that implements powerful teaching and learning strategies including action inquiry, in-depth learning, and performance assessments.

- ❖ Staff is consistent and purposeful in cross-grade-level conversations that result in an alignment of the curriculum within and among the content areas.
- ❖ Staff focuses on commonalities that cut across grades and subjects.
- ❖ All students participate in and can master academically rigorous courses.
- ❖ There is a clear link between student assessment and instructional activities.
- ❖ Teachers focus on competence, not coverage.
- ❖ Students are aware of expectations, produce quality work, and present to real audiences.
- ❖ Expectations connect to the real world, and students are role models and peer educators (Partnership for Learning).
- ❖ Staff and students articulate their belief in their capacity for success.
- ❖ Instruction is personalized and encompasses a broad, concerted, and systematic emphasis on motivation as well as knowledge and skills.

3. Instructional Leadership

In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates that mission to the staff, parents, and students. The principal understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional programme. The planned and actual curriculum is aligned with the essential academic learning requirements. Research-based teaching strategies and materials are used. Staff understand the role of classroom and state assessments, what the assessments measure, and how student work is evaluated.

Indicators:

- ❖ Curriculum is aligned with state and local requirements.
- ❖ Adopted curriculum materials and models are research-based.
- ❖ Instruction is focused on high expectations.
- ❖ Instruction materials There Instruction is a clear link and is modified based models are research-based.
- ❖ personalized and between student on student achievement data.
- ❖ encompasses assessment broad, concerted curriculum and instructional activities.
- ❖ Students are directly involved in the assessment of their learning

4. Frequent Monitoring of Student &ogress

In the effective school, student academic progress is measured frequently. A variety of assessment procedures are used. The results o\$ the assessments are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional programme.

5. Opportunity to Learn and Student time on Task

In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential content and skills. For high percentage of this time students are engaged in whole class or large group, teacher-directed, planned learning activities.

6. Safe and Orderly Environment

In the effective school, there is an orderly, purposeful, businesslike yet joyful atmosphere which not oppressive and is free from conducive the threat to teaching and learning.

7. Home-School Relations

In the effective school, parents understand and support the school's basic mission and are given the opportunity to play an important/ role in helping the school to achieve that mission.

Ten Principles of Effective Schools (New Visions for Public Schools, New York)

- 1) ***Clear focus and high expectations*** for staff and students are defining features of an effective school. They motivate the entire school community and inspire its members to strive constantly to ensure the success of every student. Clear focus and high expectations are the foundation on which the school's culture of collaboration and inquiry rests.
- 2) ***A rigorous instructional program*** provides equitable opportunities to learn and enables every student to master challenging content, skills, and learning strategies. The school community is engaged in a dynamic process of assessment, reflection, and innovation to inform curriculum development and instructional strategies, meet student needs, and address achievement gaps.
- 3) ***A personalized learning environment*** is characterized by knowledge of each student's learning style, social and family conditions, strengths, aspirations, and needs. Each student enjoys strong relationships with other students and a close, continuous relationship with one or more adults in the school community; at least one adult helps coordinate the support needed by the student throughout the high school years to prepare for higher education, employment, or other productive postsecondary plans.
- 4) ***Instructional leadership*** by the principal and other school leaders is characterized by a school wide focus on student achievement; support for improving and enhancing school culture, teaching, and learning; and effective collaboration among school leaders, teachers, parents, students, and partners in the community. The principal and other school leaders demonstrate and inspire an unwavering commitment to fulfilling the vision of the school among all members of the school community.
- 5) ***School-based professional development*** and a culture of professional collaboration improve instruction and student achievement and cultivate adult learning communities within the school. Effective professional learning communities feature continuous reflection and assessment of student work and teacher practice.
- 6) ***Meaningful assessment of student learning*** occurs continuously and gives students a variety of opportunities to demonstrate that they meet content and performance standards and can apply their learning. Teachers use assessments as diagnostic tools to identify student needs and improve instruction. The school communicates and analyzes assessment results to inform school improvement.
- 7) ***Partnerships with organizations*** strengthen the ability of the school to serve the academic and developmental needs of its students and to forge bonds with students' families or caregivers. Effective partnerships help keep the school in touch with the

wider community and professional networks, enable it to capitalize on opportunities and resources that support student success, and increase its sustainability.

- 8) ***Parent and caregiver engagement*** is an ongoing process that integrates families into the life of the school in a variety of ways. The result is a partnership, driven by parent demand and cultivated by the school community, in which parents and caregivers have voice and power to shape all components of the school. The school assumes that any person trusted by the student’s family can be a partner for achieving youth success.
- 9) ***Student voice and participation*** ensure that students have significant opportunities to collaborate with school staff, exercise leadership, and make choices and decisions. Students have clear areas of input and participation and are actively involved in decisions regarding their classrooms, school, campus, and community.
- 10) ***Integration of technology into teaching and learning*** allows all students to access and analyze information, communicate ideas, and express themselves creatively. Teachers have adequate equipment and professional development to enable them to implement technology-enhanced lessons. Students learn to navigate diverse information sources, including print, visual, and audio materials, through the explicit teaching of information literacy skills.

Current View and Position

Jaap Scheerens (2000) of the International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP), UNESCO, aptly stated, “School effectiveness refers to the performance of the organizational unit called ‘school’. The performance of the school can be expressed as the output of the school, which in turn is measured in terms of average achievement of the pupils at the end of period of formal schooling”. In this organization, the relationship between the individuals is strong and all peers are working in co-operation. The organization aids the students in developing their fundamental skills while on the other hand providing them with critical thinking skills. A more-or-less established model of school effectiveness consists of five factors (**Scheerens and Stoel, 1988**):

- a) strong educational leadership;
- b) high expectations of student achievement;
- c) academic goal consensus;
- d) emphasis on basic skills; and
- e) safe and orderly climate.

This is known as five-factor model of school effectiveness. However, research on effective school has been carried out largely in primary schools. In more recent contributions to effective schools research became more integrated with education production function and instructional effectiveness research in the sense that a mixture of antecedent conditions was included. Scheerens & Bosker (1997) made a summary of the main components of fourteen effectiveness – enhancing factors as presented in the Table – 2. These fourteen factors may be a platform for school effectiveness research in our country.

Table – 2: Components of 14 Effectiveness-Enhancing Factors

Factors	Components
Achievement, Orientation, High Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear focus on the mastering of basic subjects • High expectations (school level) • High expectations (teacher level) • Records on pupils' achievement
Educational Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General leadership skills • School leader as information provider • Orchestrator of participative decision-making • School leader as coordinator • Meta-controller of classroom processes • Time educational/administrative leadership • Counsellor and quality controller of classroom teachers • Initiator and facilitator of staff professionalization
Consensus and Cohesion among Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types and frequency of meetings and consultations • Contents of cooperation • Satisfaction about cooperation • Importance attributed to cooperation • Indicators of successful cooperation
Curriculum Quality/Opportunity To Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way curricular priorities are set • Choice of methods and text books • Application of methods and textbooks • Opportunity to learn • Satisfaction with the curriculum
School Climate	<p><i>(a) Orderly atmospheres</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance given to an orderly climate • Rules and regulations • Punishment and rewarding • Absenteeism and dropout • Good conduct and behaviour of pupils • Satisfaction with orderly school climate <p><i>(b) Climate in terms of effectiveness orientation and good internal relationships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities in an effectiveness-enhancing school climate • Perceptions on effectiveness-enhancing conditions • Relationships between pupils • Relationships between teacher and pupils • Relationships between staff • Relationships: the role of the head teacher • Engagement of pupils • Appraisal of roles and tasks • Job appraisal in terms of facilities, conditions of labour, task load and general satisfaction • Facilities and building
Evaluative Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation emphasis • Monitoring pupils' progress • Use of pupil monitoring systems • School process evaluation • Use of evaluation results • Keeping records on pupils' performance • Satisfaction with evaluation activities
Parental Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on parental involvement in school policy • Contacts with parents • Satisfaction with parental involvement
Classroom Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships within the classroom • Order • Work attitude • Satisfaction

Effective Learning Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of effective learning • Time • Monitoring of absenteeism • Time at school • Time at classroom level • Classroom management • Homework
Structured Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of structured instruction • Structure of lessons • Preparation of lessons • Direct instruction • Monitoring
Independent Learning	No sub-components
Differentiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General orientation • Special attention for pupils at risk
Reinforcement and Feedback	No sub-components

Sources: Scheerens & Bosker, 1997; Scheerens, 2016, pp. 116-117

Concluding Remarks

An effective school is defined in the literature in a variety of ways. Pupil achievement is generally recognized as the primary variable used to measure school effectiveness. A good and efficient school is one with well trained teachers and highly motivated and effective teaching methods.

The global concept of school effectiveness and its sub-ordinate concept of teacher effectiveness are the contesting ground for the researchers as in modern age delivery of quality learning to all is a global campaign. Therefore, teacher education must take into account the idea how to build effective school fitted with effective teachers.

Here we have discussed the various criteria that the purpose is to equip you with necessary inputs to improve your school and make it effective. We will, once again recapitulate the criteria that have been identified as being important in the development of an effective school.

- A clear mission statement, clear goals and objectives, a vision for the school.
- Resources that include strong, sustained financial investment and effective use of resources.
- Opportunities provided, during the school day, for high academic standard I mastery.
- Assessment programmes that include multiple measures.
- Strong parent, family, community and business involvement.
- Continuous staff development.
- High expectations for students and staff across the entire school promoting open communication and collaboration among all staff.
- Available support services like health care, food etc.
- Safe environments with zero tolerance for drugs and weapons. Respect for diversity.
- Adequate facilities with regard to space, classroom dimensions and technology.
- Governing boards of community, parent partners on all decision-making levels.
- Principal acts as Instructional Leader.
- Classroom time on learning, teacher directed.
- The school may have a single instructional priority: i.e. Literacy / problem solving etc

Activity:

- ❖ **What do you by school effectiveness?**
- ❖ **Critically explain the concept of school effectiveness. Analyse the various factors that improve effectiveness of schools in our country.**
- ❖ **Discuss different effectiveness – enhancing factors of schools with the help of research findings.**
- ❖ **Elucidate the characteristics of an effective school with the help of research findings.**