

An effective school environment essay sample

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My ideal school would be an attractive, modern, well-equipped building with a garden where pupils can relax when the weather is good. I would like to have a swimming pool, a sports hall equipped for different kinds of sport, not just football and fitness but more unusual and enjoyable sports such as dancing, squash and archery. I think there should also be coaching for sports away from the school available such as horse riding, water sports and mountaineering. There should be a lounge area where pupils can relax and study and a pupil kitchen equipped with modern, easy to work appliances, where we could cook our own meal rather than settling for unhealthy, convenient fast food. I would enjoy cooking my own meal and it would help promote healthy eating as well.

Everyone agrees that successful schools are desirable. In an effective school, students will probably achieve the highest standards of knowledge and education that will make them effective members of their society. Effective taught students would help progress and build an effective and producing society.

The effectiveness of any school is built on many factors. An effective schools has many characteristics such as; effective leaders, effective teachers and an effective environment. Each and every one of these factors has its own features and ideas. In the following pages, we will have a brief look at each characteristic and explain it. We will try to identify the main features of the effective school and which factors are the main ones in improving our schools.

School effectiveness needs a definition. It was defined by Georgopoulos & Tannenbaum (1957: p. 534) as ' the extent to which any (educational) organization as a social system, given certain resources and means, fulfils its objectives without incapacitating its means and resources and without placing undue strain upon its members'. While Mortimore (1991: p. 9), also defines effective schools as ' ones in which pupils progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake'.

There is little doubt in our minds that effective schools are those that successfully progress the learning and development of all their students. Also the main focus of any school is the student achievement; they are built and work to produce well educated people. ' The good school is a community of learning. It produces well-educated people' Ungood-Thomas (1997: p. 3). The classroom is the crucial site in the school where school effectiveness is achieved or not.

There is no definite definition to school effectiveness. However, we can identify some characteristics that contribute to school effectiveness.

Brighthouse and woods (1999: p. 11) mention that there are seven processes that encompassed most activities of school life:

- The practice of teaching and learning
- The practice of management and organization
- The practice of collective review
- The creation of an environment most suitable for learning

- The promotion of staff development

Also, Peter Mortimore and others listed the characteristics of successful schools as:

- Maximum communication between teachers and pupils

- Positive climate (1998: p. 10)

Further more, Sergiovanni (1995) identified some of the characteristics of effective schools as,

- Provide instructions that promote student learning

Sammons et al. (1995: p. 31) identify the most important eleven factors of effective schools:

- Concentration on teaching and learning

Smith and Tomlinson (1989: p. 10) both guide us to the characteristics of successful schools as:

- Leadership and management in the school by:

- Teacher involvement in decision making (in curriculum, methods, organizations use of resources, whole school policies).

- Climate of respect (teachers-teachers, pupils-pupils, pupils-teachers, teachers-parents, ect), including respect for other cultures, languages, religions, ect.

·Positive feedback to the treatment of pupils.

To start with, effectiveness research mentions “ strong educational leadership” as an important factor in school effectiveness’, Reynolds, Bollen, Creamers, Hopkins, Stoll & Lagerweij (1996: p. 15). Effective schools need good leaders and dedicated managers. The principal should be qualified, competent and experienced. He should provide good leadership and vision for the school community and strive to improve the school. He should be a wise manager of resources and works co-operatively with staff and students. ‘ The educational leader of the school seems to be a key person in the integration of school effectiveness’, Reynolds, Bollen, Creamers, Hopkins, Stoll & Lagerweij (1996: p. 15).

The National Commission on Education (1993: p. 229) agreed that ‘ good leadership is one of the key features of successful schools’. Effective schools should have leaders who create and communicate a vision for the school that is because schools today want leaders who have vision.

Increasingly, vision is seen as a core leadership task that must be mastered by all leaders (Lashway, 2000). Under the leadership of the school principal, the school mission and goals are clearly stated and regularly reviewed. In the effective school there should be a clearly articulated school mission through whom the staff shares an understanding of and commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability. Also, Leaders have to be good motivators. Inspirational motivation occurs when leaders motivate and inspire followers by providing meaning and challenge to their work; for example, giving inspirational talks,

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communicating vision and acting in ways that encourage enthusiasm (Awamleh and Gardiner, 1999).

Collegiality among the teachers and staff of the effective school is also an important factor. Collegiality maintains support between the school staff and the exchange of experience. Teachers would share the new ideas and methods of effective teaching. The relationship between staff should be built on trust, moral, intimacy and friendly social relations.

A strong and professional teacher is another important factor in the effective school. The teachers in an effective school should be those that are qualified, competent and highly educated. They have positive attitudes and high morale. They should elicit optimal student achievement and develop students' critical thinking, problem solving and creativity. They are sensitive to individual students needs and maintain effective discipline. They should also welcome parent's participation in the learning process. Effective teachers are those who recognize individual students' needs and provide additional academic assistance whenever possible.

The effective school exhibits a climate of high expectations in which the teachers demonstrates the belief that all students can attain mastery of basic skills and the staff has the capability to help all students attain this mastery.

It is clear that school effectiveness is mainly determined by classroom effectiveness, which brings the teaching/learning process into the centre of the improvement process. The teachers' role is a very important variable

in the determination of effectiveness. But the other side of the coin is that the teachers' role should change. 'Improvement towards effectiveness will have to lean upon teachers' willingness to adopt a different cultural, as well as organizational, view on their own profession, Reynolds, Bollen, Creamers, Hopkins, Stoll & Lagerweij (1996: p. 11).

'Looking at the strategic planning phase, school effectiveness knowledge will help strategic planners to keep in mind that, ultimately, the effectiveness of the school has to be delivered at the classroom level and in particular in the actual teaching/learning process. School effectiveness knowledge illuminates what is the core activity in schools and what is conditional for it to improve. Planning for effectiveness will be inadequate without that focus', Reynolds, Bollen, Creamers, Hopkins, Stoll & Lagerweij (1996: p. 15)

'To make the effective school work, we need improvement strategies that will mould teachers' cultures and behaviours in such a way that pupil behaviour will change. The effective school is, in the end, characterised by the effective behaviours of its learners.

The teachers can be held responsible for that, and the school has to create and sustain the climate and the culture in which an effective teaching learning process will flourish', Reynolds, Bollen, Creamers, Hopkins, Stoll & Lagerweij (1996: p. 11)

The sum of all students' academic achievement is usually regarded as a measure of a school's effectiveness (Good & Brophy, 1986). Therefore, one of the major concerns among educators is to enhance the students'

academic achievement. Teachers and students work in an environment of continuous assessment and evaluation of students' progress.

In the effective school student academic progress is measured frequently through a variety of assessment procedures. The results of these assessments are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program.

Adequate facilities with regard to classroom size and dimensions, technology, school budget and teacher training should be provided. These, such as computers, will provide an inducement to develop the teaching/learning process.

Parent participation and community involvement are two essential factors in the effectiveness of a school. The school environment should encourage parents and carers to visit and participate in school life. School staff and the parent community should work together to achieve the goal of an effective learning school.

The parents should recognize that the partnership between them and the teachers lead to better learning outcomes. In the effective school parents understand and support the schools basic mission and are given the opportunity to play an important role in helping the school to achieve this mission. Therefore, parents are engaged in their child's education.

Kathleen Cotton (1995) mentioned some key factors in support of student success. These include, efficient planning and clear goals, validated organization and management practices, strong leadership and continuous

improvement, positive staff and student interactions, a commitment to educational equity, regular assessment, support programs, and positive relationships with parents and community members.

The relationship between students and their teacher is the teachers' responsibility, so she/he should seek to create a special relation with the students. Teachers should be friendly, honest. He should have high considerations for the students through encouraging, supporting and involving them in the classroom activities and overall in the school activities.

School staff and teachers should accept responsibility for students. The good or bad achievement student's gain is due to the support and care given by teachers and staff to students. Students want to feel that they are in a secure climate that will help improve their achievement.

Teachers should create and foster learning environments where all children are challenged to learn. In the effective school there is an orderly, purposeful, business like atmosphere, which is free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.

The climate of an effective school is safer, quieter, cleaner and more orderly than that of a non-effective school. The term " safe environment" refers not only to the physical condition of the school, but also means that it is a place which is free from physical or verbal aggression, harassment or discrimination. Students must feel secure in their school community so that their energies can be applied to learning.

Every successful school develops an environment that nurtures student achievement and personal development:

- Student settings, either class size or student population, are small.
- Ground rules set the tone for respectful behaviour.
- High expectations and clear consequences are articulated to students frequently.
- Structured daily and classroom routines provide stability and direction.

School effectiveness is an important issue when trying to decide which schools are effective. We have looked at the most important factors to consider when determining the effectiveness of a school.

Effective leadership is an important factor as well as the effective teachers themselves. The safe and warm environment student learn in certainly participates to their learning achievement. The curriculum taught and the parent's involvement in their child's education and activities are also important factors of effective schools. Given these factors, nowadays school effectiveness is easier to determine than it was before.

This reaction paper addresses the question of what my ideal school would be like. My ideal school would be consisting of a really good learning environment where students want to learn and teachers want to teach. It would be a diverse school with students of different cultural backgrounds builds on respect for one another. I have always admired and respected

people of various cultural backgrounds and I would like to learn from my fellow students as well as my teachers.

My ideal school must have knowledgeable and motivated teachers who know how to effectively communicate their knowledge in the classroom. Knowing the information means nothing if the teacher is not able to communicate this information to the students. In my ideal school a good teacher takes the knowledge and presents it in such a way that the students will readily understand it and be able to utilize the information. On the other hand, a bad teacher will make it almost impossible to understand even the simplest things.

In my ideal school the teachers will seek to find new and interesting ways to present material to the students (even on an individual basis), and they will help to motivate their students and show them that the material they are learning is relevant. The most important responsibility of a teacher in my ideal school will be to ensure high academic achievement for all students.

In conclusion my ideal school will consist of students who want to learn and teachers who want to teach. This school will be a partnership between the students and the teachers. It will be a positive and friendly environment for everyone involved and everyone who is there will want to be there.