

Charecteristics of an effective secondary school in kenya's context

[Profession](#), [Teacher](#)



CHARECTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE SECONDARY SCHOOL IN KENYA'S

CONTEXT Introduction Contrary to earlier research that argued that schools do not have any effect on students' behaviour (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, Mcpartland, Mood, Weinfield & York, 1966), there is currently a growing acceptance that schools have a significant impact (Reynold & Creemer, Firestone, 1991). School effectiveness (SE) concern is that schools do have major effects upon children development. This is reflected by the interest various stakeholders have in schools. However, it is widely recognised that there is no simple combination of factors which can produce an effective school (Sammons, Hillman & Mortimore, 1995) because of varied societal needs. This paper discusses the characteristics commonly associated with an effective school in Kenya's context. It will provide the rationale for these indicators and analytically examine the appropriateness of each.

Characteristics associated with ES in Kenya's Context a) Academic

Performance Schools' academic performance stands out in Kenya as one of the major indicator of an effective school. Almost all education stake holders: parents, students, teachers, education officials all agree that a school with good academic performance is an effective school while the one with poor academic record is an ineffective. The rationale for this, perhaps, could be traced to Kenya's capitalistic ideology which encourages stiff competition in both social and political areas. As a result of this, it is the only the best who survive. Consequently, good academic performance in Kenya is relied on for students getting opportunity for higher learning, job placement and even teachers' promotion. A study by Tomlison (1989) on ES found out that exam entry policies was a key in SE while Goodlad (1984) rightly notes that most

school effectiveness studies have focused on academic achievement in terms of exam results. Although academic performance could be a good indicator of SE, focusing on it in isolation or narrowly as it is the case in Kenya is inappropriate. This is because, as in Kenya, schools may end up designing unorthodox means of getting good exam results. Some cheat, others drill students for exams, while others have commercialised the whole teaching and learning process through heavily charged extra tuition. I suggest that the focus need to go beyond exam results and consider how other students' learning out comes relate to ' reality of students' lives outside schools (Rettalick, 2009). This could include a consideration of learners acquisition of relevant societal skills, values and attitude. Achievements in co curricular activities should also be considered. Furthermore, the emphasis should not be on the score obtained per see but should be on the ' value added' by the school because as Mortimore (1991) posit effective schools add value to students outcome in comparison with other schools serving similar intake. b) Strong and Professional Leadership Retallic (2009) study on effective schools in Pakistan advises appropriately on leadership: ' the world need to pay attention to personal qualities of the people who would be the principals of schools' (p. 210). He suggests qualities such as commitment, caring, openness, tolerance, vision, and broad education as some of the requirement of a good leader. Perhaps this could be the reason why Kenyans consider good leadership as an indicator of an effective school. Schools with strong and firm principals who appear to be in charge: are able to manage well school's human and non human resources are considered as ES. The head is expected to work cooperatively with staff

and students. He is also supposed to create good working relationship between the school and the community and encourage parents' participation in school activities. It is appropriate to consider leadership as a characteristic of an effective school because both my teaching experience and research (Retallick, 2009, Dalin, 1994,& Sammons et al, 1995) show that good leadership is important in initiating and maintaining school improvement. Success is associated with a leader who focuses on strength of purpose, involve staff and even students in decision making coordinate and support roles and he/she is a professional authority in the process of teaching and learning (Sammons, 1995 & Dalin.). We can aptly say that leadership is an appropriate indicator of SE because leaders are not only pacesetters of school activities but they are also agents that promote good relationship in schools. However, despite all these important roles played by principals, it is unfortunate that some of the appointments to this position are sometimes ethically or politically inclined. Similarly, apart from KESI which offer short optional courses on school management, there are no clear formal courses to prepare heads to this important yet challenging position. c) Enough Teaching and Learning Resources Availability of enough teaching and learning resources is also a major factor in considering an effective school in Kenya. Both material resources such as school buildings, well equipped science and computer laboratories, library and text books among others and availability of enough professional teachers in all curricular areas is also considered. This has become important in the recent past since the government froze teacher employment. This concurs with Dalin et al. (1994) findings that the availability of the needed resources in a school is an

indicator of SE in developing countries. The rationale behind this indicator is the assumption that enough resources will enhance the quality of teaching and learning process which is the core business of the school and eventually increase the schools' performance in national exams. Nonetheless, from my experience as a teacher I cannot rule out prestige especially on the side of students and parents as a rationale for this factor. This could explain the fact that in the recent past there has been unprecedented rush to acquire luxurious resources such as state of the art buses and modern multi purposes hall, which add very little value to the teaching and learning process. A study by Rutter et. al (1979) reports that a school with ample resources and in good state of repair and maintenance results in higher standards of academic attainment and behaviour. This could be explained by the fact that an attractive and stimulating working conditions tend to motivate and improve learners' morale because such conditions epitomize what the learners would want to own or see in their future live (Rariera Med class discussion). However, other scholars (Sammons et al, 1995 & College of education, 2001) are of the opinion that there is no evidence to suggest that simply increasing resource level will automatically translate into improved school effectiveness. I therefore, suggest that instead of Kenya's education stakeholders only considering the availability of resources as an indicator of school effectiveness, they should go further and look at their management and utility in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. d) School Value Norms and Behaviour Schools that have a tradition of producing well behaved students are regarded as effective schools in Kenya. Parents would normally consider schools that do not have strikes, have no or

less students pregnancy cases and students who are smart and respectful. Most of these attributes are mostly associated with missionary sponsored schools, high cost private schools and some national schools. The aspect of looking at this as an indicator of an effective school could be born out of the fact good manners- decorum, etiquette disciplined and morally upright individuals -are respected and recognised societies. These virtues are necessary for peaceful co existence of especially in a multi ethical country like Kenya. The current social political situation in the country where we have political hatred, violent groupings, and a situation where adults and students agitate violently for their right, considering the schools values and norm as an indicator of effective school are in order. Rutter (1979) is of the view that consistency with which teachers in the whole school approach issues like punctuality, behaviour attendance, learning tasks among others determines the value and norms of the school and this has strong effect on pupils' behaviour. References Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E., Hobson, C, Mcpartland, J, Mood, A., Weinfield, F. & York, R. (1966). Equality of educational opportunity. Washington: Us Government Printing office. Creemer, B. P. M. (1994). The history, value and purpose of school effectiveness studies in D. Reynolds et al (Eds). Advances in school effectiveness research and practice. Oxford: Pergamon. Dalin et al (1994): How school improveAn international report. New York: cassel. Firestone, W. A. (1991). Introduction chapter 1 in J. R Blish, W. A Fire stone and E, Richards (Ed) Re thinking effective schools: Research and Practice. Englewood cliff, New Jersey Prentice Hall. Goodland, J (1984). A place called school: Prospects for the future, New York: McGraw Hill. Mortimore, P. (1991). The nature of findings of school effectiveness research

in primary sector in S. Ridell & S, Brown (Ed) : School effectiveness research: Its message for improvement. London: HMSO. Ninan, M. (2006). School climate and its impact on school effectiveness: A case study. A paper presented at international congress for school effectiveness and improvement at Fort louder-dale, Florida-USA on Jan, 04, 2006. Retallic, J. (2009). Successful schools: What can we run from them? In R, QURESHI AND F, Shamim (Ed). Schools and schooling practice in Pakistan: Lessons for policy and practice. New York: Oxford. Reynold, D. (1982). The search for effective school: School organistion. 2 (3): 215-237. Rutter, M., Maughan, B Mortmor, Pand Ouston, J (1979). Fifteen thousand hours: Secondary schools and their effects on children. London: open university. Sammons, P, Hillman, J. & Mortimore P (1995). Key characteristics of effective schools: A review of school effectiveness research. London: Office for Standards in education.