

## Teachers' Perceptions of the Organizational Effectiveness of Private Secondary Schools in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT** This study analyzed the perceptions of 600 teachers in some selected private secondary schools in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria to determine the most important characteristics and indicators of school (organizational) effectiveness. A set of questionnaire was administered in which four characteristics of school effectiveness out of eight were probed: leadership, expectations, mission and climate. These characteristics were used as indicators for this study. Of the eight characteristics, four were used for the analysis. The creation of a positive learning climate was ranked highest amongst the characteristic. At the level of indicators, top rankings were given to student – oriented concerns. For example, care about students as people, pride in the school's and students' successes, listening to students, providing an enjoyable environment, care of students in a professional manner. In conclusion, these findings indicated that a balance of school effectiveness characteristics and indicators are required to render an overall quality programme for the benefit of the students. It was recommended that owners of private schools should learn to create a conducive climate and purposeful leadership within the school that will provide healthy learning; ongoing revision to clarify the school's philosophy and mission. Finally, staff and students should expect that at the end of the day they go home fulfilled. This can easily be achieved by helping students and staff to develop their abilities to their highest potential.

### INTRODUCTION

School effectiveness has been a concern of educators in North America for the past two decades. The recent literature on school effectiveness by Purkey and Smith (2002) concludes that differences among schools do affect students' academic achievement. From the early seventies to the present, much of the research on school effectiveness has been in the characteristics of school effectiveness (Durosaro 2003). The literature pertaining to school effectiveness has developed into a rapidly emerging body of research and related literature. Ayodele (2003) grouped the dimensions of the effective school or education under 3 main groups as leadership, sufficiency and effectiveness and classified each group as main and ancillary elements. Nwankwo (2004) gave the features of the schools which have educational effectiveness to include: powerful educational leadership, the expectation of student's success, an orderly school climate but not oppressive and taking into account the students' acquiring of fundamental school skills.

Zigarelli (1996) opined that, the fundamental features that build up an effective school are tested on students' success. These are: selection of qualified teachers, participation and satisfaction of teacher, leadership feature and relations of the school manager, strong school culture, positive relations, high family participation

amongst others. This implies that the basic objective of every kind of changes executed in educational organizations is a better effective education. By reviewing theoretical fundamentals of the effective school media and the researches carried out in this respect, he tried to show that the school can be rendered effective for all the students. He stated that, the effective schools have prominent features from the point view of management, student, teacher, education-teaching procedure, school culture and atmosphere, school environment and parental dimension.

Girmen (2001) evaluated the manager, teacher, and student perceptions according to director, teacher, school environment, student and parent dimensions. The dimension that is considered as most effective as a result of student and teacher perception is school management dimension. The less effective dimension that is found is school environment and parents. Differences are observed between school management and student perceptions regarding teacher dimension. According to this, the perceptions of school managers are more positive. The school manager and student perceptions with respect to school environment and parents dimension has almost completely overlap.

Suffice to state therefore, that the dimensions identified were; the support of the environment, professionalizing of teacher, orientation of quality in every field of the school and high expect-

tations with respect to success. The intent of this paper is to study the teachers' perceptions of the factors of organizational effectiveness in their private schools and how they relate to the literature on school effectiveness. Therefore, the major thrusts of the paper include: To determine teacher perceptions of the organizational effectiveness in Nigerian Private Schools and to identify and establish the top indicators of school effectiveness?

In addressing the major thrust, answer to the following questions will be established.

1. What are the characteristics of effective schools as defined by the literature?
2. What are the top 10 indicators for effectiveness, when their extent of use within the school is considered?
3. What are the top 10 indicators for effectiveness, when their importance to quality schooling is concerned?
4. Is there any discrepancy between ranked scores of the ten indicators on Importance (I) to quality schooling and the ratings of the same indicators for Extent of their use (U).
5. In what order of importance are the four categories of school effectiveness characteristics ranked in Private Secondary Schools in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

### **Organizational Effectiveness Characteristics**

In the late sixties, the US President's Commission on School Finance, funded the Rand Corporation to conduct an interdisciplinary study to answer some policy questions. For

example, what resources, processes and organizational arrangement affect student outcomes in school? The key proposition of the Rand Study (1972) was that, research had not identified factors that were consistently related to students' educational outcomes. As a result of the Rand conclusion coming after the Coleman Report, the identification and analysis of effective schools has been the focus of attention since the early 1980's. Yorke (1997) noted that recent studies have incorporated methodological improvements that have allowed researchers to study the relationship between school resources and the quality of education. In light of earlier research in the 1970's based on large sample correlational studies of schools, the next

type of studies emphasized the descriptive case studies of individual schools that exhibited success in student achievement beyond the predicted socioeconomic status of their student population.

Edmonds (2000) research and reform movement focused on effective schooling for children from socioeconomically disadvantaged homes. As a result of the search for instructionally effective school, studies (for example, Edmonds 2000) began to generate a consensus of factors or characteristics of schools such as: strong administrative leadership, a climate of expectation for satisfactory student achievement, a focus of pupil acquisition of basic school skills, a system of continuous monitoring of pupil progress, and resources that could be focused on fundamental learning objectives of the school. Mackenzie (2003) in his opinion, drew a distinction between what is known as the 'core' and 'facilitating' and the frequency each element was reported in the school effectiveness literature. This in addition to Purkey and Smith's (2002) research on the 'culture of schools, their organizational and social structure' has led to the rapid growth of the effective schools' movement.

The 'Effective Schools Model' is a school reform framework based on evolving research from both empirical analysis and case studies of schools across the United States that have been effective in teaching the intended curriculum to all their students. Out of that research, two criteria for measuring effectiveness have evolved: Quality and Equity. The quality standard assures that the level of achievement in a school is high. The equity standard assures that high achievement does not vary significantly across gender, race or socioeconomic backgrounds of the student population. Schools that successfully address the standards of quality and equity have been shown to possess eight characteristics. These include: strong instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, climate of high expectations for success for all students, an emphasis on teaching basic skills, opportunity to learn and adequate time spent on academic tasks, frequent monitoring of student progress, an enjoyable learning climate and positive home-school relations.

In making evaluation of school effectiveness some impediments emerged (Kleeman and Richardson 1985). For example, educational

satisfaction of students, academic development of students, professional development of students, personal development of students, Job satisfaction of lecturers, professional development of lecturers, system's clarity and environmental interaction, ability to acquire source and organizational health. However, in Cameron and Smith (1998) study, the four basic fields of evaluation of educational effectiveness were defined as academic, morale, adaptation to the external environment and outside program. In the academic field, evaluation can be done via academic development of students' professional development of teachers' ability to acquire source. For moral and outside programme the educational concern should pursue educational satisfaction of students and job satisfaction of teachers' organizational health; and personal development of students respectively. Finally, for external adaptation, educational institutions can engage in professional development of students system's clarity and environmental interaction.

Most of the research on effectiveness, for example, Girman (2001), Bryk and Driscoll (2002), Good and Brophy (2003) and Mackenzie (2003) has been correlational. These have shown the presence of similar characteristics in effective schools. The notable amongst them are:

*Leadership:* This characteristic links the leadership of the principal as an instructional leader and the instructional effectiveness determinant of the teachers. Teachers recognize the need for coordination and support in effective schools. They look to and expect their principals to be instructional leaders. As a result, principals feel a sense of responsibility to the teachers are closer to the day-to-day instructional program, closely monitor pupil progress, and provide feedback on goal attainments throughout the year (Cameron 2000). Alimi et al. (2011), opine, the principal is the leader and chief executive of his school who is expected to perform certain professional and administrative roles in order to ensure proper teaching and learning. Be it big or small, public or private, it is the leader who usually provides direction towards goals attainment (Robbins and Judges 2007). According to Pounder (2006), leaders who can "navigate the structures of schools, nurture relationships, model professional growth, encourage change and challenge the status quo is what is required in school effectiveness"

*Expectations:* Generally, teachers in effective schools demonstrate less variability in their

expectations of students. This understanding makes it clear what they expect from their students. The most significant difference between the effective and less effective school is found in the staffs' perception of the learning potentials of its students. Also, teachers believe that all students can learn and that they can teach them. Good and Brophy (2003) examined systematically the role of teacher expectations in the classroom. They developed a model which underlines how teachers may influence their students' behavior and achievement. Teachers vary their behavior toward low and high achieving students in a variety of ways: low achieving students are seated further from the teacher, teachers pay less attention to low achievers in academic situations, teachers call on low achievers less often to answer questions, criticize low achievers more frequently, teachers give low achievers less feedback and teachers demand less work and effort from low achievers than high achievers. As a result, low achievers become increasingly passive, teachers should therefore participate in training programs involving behavioural skill training, classroom observation and appropriate teacher expectations which in turn will result in better student attitudes and achievement in the classroom.

*Mission:* Mission as a characteristic deals with school focus, instructional emphasis and institutional mission. In a school setting, the key variable would be the number of staff in a school who can answer consistently the question: What does this school care most about? In an ineffective school the answer would be varied, whereas in an effective school, the staff would be clearly aware of the school focus whether they agreed with it or not (Bryk and Driscoll 2002).

*Time on Task:* The effective school's staffs believe that the societal expectations for schools center around the essential skills. They believe that the institution will develop students to master basic cognitive skills. Since the early 1970s, educational researchers have asked questions regarding teaching and learning as it relates to instructional time (Good and Brophy 2003). These studies and others have led to three measures of time:

*Allocated time defined as the time a teacher provides for instruction in a content area... Engaged time ... time a student is attending to instructions and Academic learning time ... engaged with instructional materials.....*

*Monitoring:* This characteristic concerns school use of student performance on standardized achievement test as a basis for program evaluation. In effective schools, pupil performance on standardized test is closely monitored and tied to the instructional curriculum. In addition, effective schools develop systems for carefully and continuously evaluating pupil progress (Phi Delta Kappa 2000). Above all, each instructional program is developed around a set of objectives that identified skills and minimum competencies.

*Basic Skills:* Today, responsive curriculum needs in schools require expansion to include mathematics, written and oral communication, computer science and science, in addition to higher level skills in critical thinking, comprehension and creativity. This characteristic is based on the concept of preparing students to be life-time learners. Coleman et al.'s (2006), findings indicated that private schools emphasized and encouraged mastery of both written and spoken English, academic performance through better attendance, more homework and more extensive academic demands.

*School Climate:* School climate conducive to learning is described by the literature as environment which is supportive of the learning process: as a purposeful, orderly, and cooperative environment. It is difficult to escape the conviction that order, sense of purpose, relative quiet and pleasure in learning play a role in their achievements. Effective schools structure the physical environment to reenact the building of positive goal-oriented philosophy. Well-kept interiors and administrative attention to the schools' appearance appeared to be representative of effective schools. Effective schools promoted a positive physical appearance and involved both students and staff in developing the appearance. Such successful schools maintained high standards of cleanliness and plant maintenance (Girman 2001).

*Parent/Community Participation:* In effective schools, community parental participation is generally high. Parents can influence their children through their expectations, involvement and support on instruction (Kealy and Rochel 2001). Compared to parents in lesser achieving schools, parents of students in effective schools were perceived as more interested and concerned about their students' school work. In addition, they found a positive correlation between pa-

rental involvement in the school and achievement. In effective schools, the principal periodically send memos to parents that listed ways which the parents could help their children improve their basic skills. In summary, parent involvement in almost any form improves students' achievement. Programs designed with strong parental involvement produces students who perform better than students whose parents are less involved or not involved at all (Nwagwu 2000). In other words, children whose parents help them at home and stay in touch with the school score higher than children of similar aptitude and family background whose parents are not involved (Dye 2005).

## METHOD

This study analyzes private school teacher's perceptions of private secondary schools in selected states in the Niger Delta Region to examine their views on characteristics of organizational effectiveness in schools. This study utilized a quantitative approach using descriptive statistical methods. The total population consisted of private secondary schools in region that had over 100 students as the unit of analysis. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) schools from each state. Each school had a total of ten (10) questionnaires administered. Four of the characteristics namely; leadership, expectations, mission and climate were tested. Each characteristic had a minimum of ten questions (indicators of effectiveness). It contained two scales to determine the existing (use in school) and preferred (importance to quality schooling) conditions in the school as perceived by the teachers. The two interval scales utilized a linear rating scale of one to six scored using the categories: does not apply (0); none (1); some (2); to extremely high (6). The validity of the instrument was determined by using the expert judgment of the quality assessment questionnaire adapted from the Illinois Quality Schools Index by H.J. Eager (1987). A reliability index level of 89.5 percent was realized. 600 questionnaires were administered, of this number, 84 percent were completed and used for the analysis. The tool used in the analysis was SPSS version 16 to compute the ranks, weighted mean and other statistical indices used in the result analysis.



## RESULTS

The data and analysis relating to teacher's perceptions of the school effectiveness indicators in the questionnaire administered are presented.

**Research Question 1:** What are the characteristics of effective schools as defined by the literature? The answer to this was covered in the discussions under organizational effectiveness characteristics

**Research Question 2:** What are the top 10 indicators for effectiveness, when their extent of use within the school is considered?

Table 1 identifies the top 10 ranked indicators for effectiveness. Of the top 10 indicators, 7 were student oriented (Items 105, 308, 401, 402, 403, 409 and 410 in Table 2); two were program related (see items 130 and 309); and one was parent oriented (Items 203). It is interesting also to note that at least an item in the four categories for school effectiveness characteristics were represented within the top 10 indicators relating to use within the private secondary schools.

**Table 1: The top ten indicators of school effectiveness indicators for extent of use within schools as related to the four characteristics for school effectiveness**

Item No.	Characteristic category and item	Rank
<i>Leadership</i>		
105	Being ready to help students outside of class time	4
130	Finishing tasks that are started.	9
<i>Expectations</i>		
203	Communicating properly to parents when a student is beginning to develop a pattern of poor grades.	10
<i>Mission</i>		
308	Being proud of the school's and students' successes	1
309	Believing that "We are an effective school".	6
<i>Climate</i>		
401	Showing the students they care about them as people	3
402	Developing a total school program to which the students are proud to belong (sports, arts and music).	5
403	Taking the time to listen to students.	7
409	Giving students means of identity with the school (school symbols, ceremonies, clubs)	2
410	Showing a personal caring interest in each student	8

Source: Authors' compilation of SPSS 16 Result, 2011

The largest category of the top 10 indicators was the characteristic of climate with five indi-

cators. The second largest category was leadership and mission which had two indicators each. Expectations had only one. The emphasis on climate seems to indicate a strong people – oriented focus is prevalent for use within the schools among indicators for school effectiveness in Private Secondary Schools.

**Research Question 3:** What are the top 10 indicators for effectiveness, when their importance to quality schooling is concerned?

The top 10 indicators considered for their importance to quality schooling showed an even greater emphasis on student – oriented items than for those items perceived to be used (Scale A). The student-oriented items for importance to quality schooling included 5 indicators (Items 401, 402, 403, 201 and 404 in Table 2).

**Table 2: The top ten indicators of school effectiveness indicators for importance to quality school as related to the four characteristics for school effectiveness**

Item No.	Characteristic category and item	Rank
<i>Leadership</i>		
102	Providing ongoing revision to clarify school's philosophy using faculty input of shared values.	1
106	Working together to achieve consensus in establishing a school behavior/discipline code.	7
<i>Expectations</i>		
201	Helping students to develop their abilities to their highest potential.	6
<i>Mission</i>		
309	Believing that "We are an effective school"	8
310	Practicing fair and objective governing and decision making procedures.	2
<i>Climate</i>		
401	Showing the students they care about them as people	3
402	Developing a total school program to which the students are proud to belong (sports, arts and music).	4
403	Taking the time to listen to students.	5
404	Asking thought-provoking questions which stimulate students' creativity and critical thinking.	9
410	Showing a personal caring interest in each student	10

Source: Authors' compilation of SPSS 16 Result, 2011

The findings for importance to quality schooling showed that there were four program-oriented indicators (Items 102, 310, 106 and 309). The most important indicator was providing ongoing revision to clarify school's philosophy using faculty input of shared values. Also, showing a personal caring interest in each student which is a school climate indicator was

ranked 10th. The four categories for school effectiveness characteristics were represented regarding importance for quality schooling. School climate was the most important area considered by teachers in the schools.

**Research Question 4:** Discrepancy between ranked scores of the ten indicators on Importance (I) to quality schooling and the ratings of the same indicators for extent of their Use (U).

Furthermore, Table 3 outlines the discrepancy between the ranked weighted scores of the top 10 indicators perceived by teachers to the importance of quality schooling and their use in Private Secondary Schools.

**Table 3: Discrepancy between ranked scores of the ten indicators on Importance (I) to quality schooling and the ratings of the same indicators for extent of their Use (U)**

Item No.	Indicator	Rank		Difference
		I	U	
102	Providing ongoing revision to clarify the school's philosophy using input of shared values	1	15	-14
310	Practicing fair and objective governing and decision making procedures	2	42	-40
401	Showing the student they care about them as people	3	3	0
402	Developing a total school program to which the students are proud to belong (sports, arts and music).	4	5	-1
403	Talking the time to listen to students	5	7	-2
201	Helping students to develop their abilities to their highest potential	6	21	-15
106	Working together to achieve consensus in establishing a school behavior/discipline code	7	50	-43
309	Believing that "We are an effective school"	8	6	2
404	Asking thought-provoking questions which stimulate students' creativity and critical thinking	9	20	-11
410	Showing a personal caring interest in each student	10	8	4

Source: Authors' compilation of SPSS 16 Result (2011)

There was a large discrepancy of rank between the items of importance to quality schooling and use in the school. This may be attributed to other factors which were not within the scope of this study. However, the four programme – related indicators perceived important to quality schooling were all present in the top 10 indicators.

**Research Question 5:** In what order of importance are the four categories of school effectiveness characteristics ranked in Private Secondary Schools.

The rankings for both use within the schools and importance to quality schooling were based on means of the weighted scores within each category of school effectiveness for both Scale A (use within the school) and Scale B (importance to quality schooling).

**Table 4: Rankings for each of the four categories of school effectiveness characteristics for use within the schools and for importance to quality schooling in the private secondary schools**

Characteristics	Scale A		Scale B		Difference
	Used within school		Importance to quality schooling		
	Rank	Mean of weighted score	Rank	Mean of weighted score	
Climate	1	4.6653	1	5.1861	0
Expectations	2	4.3843	2	4.9099	0
Leadership	3	4.2889	4	4.9192	-1
Mission	4	4.0533	3	4.8424	1

Source: Authors' compilation of SPSS 16 Result, 2011

There were no significant differences in rank placement when the results for Scale A and Scale B were compared, except for the category of Leadership. This characteristic moved from third place for use within schools (Scale A) to fourth position for importance to quality schooling (Scale B). Mission was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in Scale A and ranked third in Scale B. In addition, the Spearman Rho Rank Correlation Coefficient of  $R = .762$ , shows a significant and positive relationship between rankings for each of the four categories of school effectiveness characteristics relating their use within the schools and importance to quality schooling.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to find out what teachers in Private Secondary Schools in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria perceived to be the top indicators of school effectiveness. The common characteristics identified included; Leadership, Expectations, Mission, Time on Task, Monitoring, Basic Skills, Climate and Parent / Community Participation.

Climate had the highest ratings of the top 10 indicators for high use. School climate ac-

counted for five of the top 10 indicators listed for high importance to quality schooling. For example, showing the students they care about them as people, developing a total school program to which the students are proud to belong (sports, arts and music programs) amongst others. The two most important indicators for importance to quality schooling were providing ongoing revision to clarify the school's philosophy using faculty input of shared values and practicing fair and objective governance and decision-making procedures. Of all the identified four categories of school effectiveness characteristics used, ensuring a good climate for learning and leadership was ranked as the most important in use and in quality schooling.

There are several implications for administrators and teachers who are searching for ways to improve the effectiveness of private schools. The schools in this study emphasized priority on creating a positive learning climate over emphasis on the other three characteristics. The three basic priorities in school climate are: care for the student, providing a purpose-oriented curriculum and addressing the needs of the child. Finally, schools interested in school effectiveness should focus on placing students at the center of the program above concern for the program within the school.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Owners of private schools should learn to create a conducive climate within the school that will provide healthy learning. It should not be the situation of just erecting miniature buildings or renting an uncompleted building and it is called a school. Secondly, the type of leadership being exhibited in private schools school should provide ongoing revision to clarify the school's philosophy using faculty input. It should promote team work to achieve consensus in establishing a school behaviour/discipline code.

Schools should develop and establish their own mission statement. When this is done, both the staff and students would be able to work towards the attainment of the of school goals. By and large, practicing fair and objective governance and decision making procedures are step in the right direction. Finally, in every undertaking in life there are usually great expectations, it is recommended that both staff and students should expect that at the end of the day they go home fulfilled. This can easily be ach-

ieved by helping students and staff to develop their abilities to their highest potential.

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