

Exploring Practices Determining School Effectiveness: A Case Study in Selected South African Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT When parents choose a school for their children to attend, especially a secondary school, they usually look for an 'effective school' so that their children can receive what they regard as a good, quality education. In this process, it is most common that parents evaluate or assess the effectiveness of secondary schools on the basis of the school's academic results or outputs. But what other factors, apart from academic results, constitute school effectiveness? From the research literature it is evident that a number of approaches had been applied in the school context to evaluate the effectiveness of schools in general. But the question remains: what particular practices determine school effectiveness? Since 1994 a number of legislative frameworks had been put into place in South Africa to deal with school effectiveness. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 laid the foundation for how a school should be effectively managed and governed in its quest for school effectiveness. This paper, based on an exploratory qualitative study conducted in selected South African secondary schools, explores some of the practices determining the effectiveness of secondary schools. It indicates that there are various factors, apart from academic results, such as effective management structures, a strong school governing body, a healthy school environment or climate, good infrastructure, motivated learners and good educators that determine school effectiveness. The study concludes with an Index for School Effectiveness. Derived from the study, the index can be a useful tool in assessing school effectiveness