SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS: CONCEPTUAL AND RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES[1]

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Quality Education for all is a global mission and to realise this, quality educational institutions are needed. Several programs have been initiated for enhancing educational access and equity and measure have been taken to enhance enrolment in schools. The challenge before the education system is to create a good schools to inspire young minds to learn and grown in a happy and democratic environment. Everyone has the right to receive education of a high quality. The World education forum in Dakar (2000) strongly emphasized the need to achieve education of high quality available to all. According to Article 28 of the Convention of the Right of the Child, it is the right of the child to get quality education and it is the responsibility of the State to ensure it. Good schools aim at providing quality education. NEP (2020) has envisaged the same way, the need for quality education for all at all levels of Indian education system and recommended various strategies to enhance the standards of education.

The definition of a school of good quality largely depends on the purpose, time and circumstances under which it is situated. Good schools usually include the concepts of an effective, good-quality and best-performing schools. Precisely the effective schools represent the parents‟ choice for their children education and this choice is on the basis of good educational services for holistic learning. It is also important to understand that a school is an organisation which acts in an ever-changing and complex social environment in which different people engage at different levels, as educational management at macro, meso and micro levels, teachers, students, parents and society at large. All these interested groups may have different expectations with respect to the activities carried out by school; moreover they could also influence the educational services offered by the schools getting involved into it. However, „Schooling‟ is considered as an important process for educating children in a formal organizational setup with well-structured learning experiences. It aims at the transfer of

accumulated knowledge, cultural heritage, skills and values from one generation to another in a systematic process in a place called "School". There are host of factors influence this process and affect the learning outcomes. Positioning properly these essential factors in the functioning of the school as an organization would certainly give positive outcomes.

Several researchers have been making attempts to understand the dynamic nature of schooling process. Some have opined that school effectiveness is a vital mechanism for the development of existing conditions at school level. Here, the existing variables include all the contextual variables related with school, like, teaching-learning process, administration, student"s motivation and involvement of community (Scheerens, 2004). Early studies on school effectiveness put emphasis on enhancing the existing conditions of schooling and output measures, among which achievement of the students was stressed.

This explanation for school effectiveness was considered narrow and expanded the scope by stating that the school effectiveness is more than mere academic achievement. The present definition of school effectiveness do involve various other factors as well, such as classroom behaviour of learners, participation rate of learners in school and in different co-curricular activities, and learners" attitudes towards learning (Rutter, 1983; Sammons et al., 1996). The success of a school needs to be determined and evaluated based on the whole performance of the institution. School contexts influence individual and teaching and learning methodologies. School is believed to be a social unit in which every decision of the administrator influences all the internal and external variables.

Early researches in this direction, focussed on the quality indicators for good schools by establishing the correlations between the factors that contribute quality in educational services. McCarthy (1980) in his research study on school success, put forward the importance of four variables in the school context. Any one of these variables, or a combination of any two or more could impact the success of the school, which are, achievement of the students, attitude of the students toward the school, attitude of the teachers toward the school or the learners, and attitude of the community or parents towards the school. These factors directly or indirectly transform school into effective school in which all of the students essentially acquire the basic skills and other desired behaviour. Further, the effectiveness of school is the correlation conducive teaching environment, having high achievement level of learners and equitable levels student learning. Schools should make provisions for all children to get knowledge and

skill regardless their socioeconomic background and varied characteristics (Kirk and Jones, 2004).

Educational researchers tried to identify the possible causes of school failure or burnout schools. Stoll (1995) identified variables responsible for destroying the school effectiveness. The variables include lack of vision, inefficient leadership, dysfunctional relationships among co-teachers and staffs, and outdated classroom practices as mechanisms through which the effectiveness of schools can diminish. However, Chyu, K and Timar, T (2010) discussed, on other hand, the reasons for the low performance of schools and how these institutions become sick of work. Unsatisfactory work content, faulty work practices and procedures and personal problems of the employees are some of them. Corallo, Christopher; McDonald, Deborah (2001) explored common features of low-performing schools, such as economically backward community, less motivation on part of the school for enhancing learner"s achievement, high teacher absenteeism, and turnover of teachers at a high rate, all combined together.

Schools that succeed despite the presence of these aforementioned factors, maintains a stronger focus on the instructional program, planning process, improving student achievement, and in creating a collaborative culture among teaching staff and administration. Therefore, Smith (1999/2000) opined that, a dedicated, long-term and sustained commitment is essential for improving school effectiveness. According to him, three strategies could be effective for retaining the development of school, which are- a) development of a common vision and mission, b) fostering cooperative environment among the teachers and staffs, guided by distributed leadership at all levels and c) motivating the teachers to update their professional skills.

According to Teddlie $ Reynolds (2000), School effectiveness characteristics consist of;

- Effective leadership
- A focus upon learning Outcomes
- A positive school culture
- High expectations of students and staff
- Monitoring progress at school, classroom and student level
- Involving parents
- Generating effective teaching
- Professional development of staff
- Involving students in the educational process

The School Education Quality Index (SEQI-2019) was developed by NITI Aayog to evaluate the performance of States and Union Territories (UTs) in the school education sector in India with two broad categories-Outcomes and governance process aiding outcomes. Similar framework has been developed by CBSE- School Quality Assessment and Assurance (SQAA) Framework. The indicators include -Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment (40%), Infrastructure (10%), Human Resources (10%), Inclusive Practices (10%), Management and Governance (10%), Leadership (10%) and Beneficiary Satisfaction (10%). State Boards of School Education in different states are also in this direction to design a framework for school quality. Identification of school effectiveness indicators have eventually resulted into school quality evaluation and monitoring.

Reviewing the existing literature and reflecting on the current policy and programs on school quality, it is evident that improving the quality of schools is very much possible by working on the core quality indicators continuously and consistently. School Effectiveness essentially deals with the following three core areas;

- **Administrative Effectiveness**- School based vision, policies, code of conduct, values, culture etc.
- **Leadership Effectiveness**-Transformational leadership of the school principal
- **Teacher Effectiveness**- Teacher performance and innovation

It is indeed a complex task to define an effective school and find out standardized ways to measure school effectiveness in the context of greater diversity. However, administrators, teachers and parents are supposed to work hand in hand to develop a school based strategy and implement it with great rigor and commitment. The paper highlights the conceptual understanding of school effectiveness, research base on the factors contributing to school effectiveness and the current developments in the quality school movement in India on the lines of quality assurance

Questions for Reflection:

1. How a standard framework of quality indicators fit for all schools?
2. How can we enhance accountability of school leadership for quality assurance?
3. What are the recent pandemic experiences of schooling and effective schools?
4. How the digital technology is shaping the school and its quality? **Suggested**

Readings

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