

# School Effectiveness Literature: Theories and Models

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## Abstract

School effectiveness refers to the extent to which an institution achieves its established goals while addressing challenges that may impede its operations. In China, the assessment of school effectiveness frequently relies on a singular statistical metric, such as students' scores on a certain examination, as a benchmark for assessing institutional performance. It is also less likely to consider the influence of students' familial background, school enrollment outcomes, and variables such as teacher quality, financial resources, and geographic location on school effectiveness. A scientific evaluation method is essential for assessing school effectiveness. This paper elucidated the concepts of school effectiveness, the contribution of social system theory to its enhancement, and models of school effectiveness. This study's conclusions will offer insights and recommendations for the education department, administrators, leaders, and instructors, thereby enhancing the realisation of school effectiveness. And this paper helps leaders to recognise teachers' knowledge and skills and set common goals.

**Keywords:** School Effectiveness, Social System Theory, School Effectiveness Models

## Introduction

In July 2021, the Chinese government issued the "Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Campus Training for Students in Compulsory Education" (hereinafter "Double Reduction"), which promoted significant improvements in educational quality and teaching effectiveness in schools, thereby optimizing the primary function of schools in achieving work objectives. In order to implement the "Double Reduction," provinces and municipalities have introduced initiatives to improve quality and efficiency and have clearly defined the requirements for improving school effectiveness. Improving school effectiveness has become the most critical issue. An effective school is very important in providing quality education to the population and preparing young people to become useful, prepare for work, and achieve their goals. Consequently, enhancing school effectiveness and delivering high-quality instruction is the main obligation and essential objective of the institution's leaders, educators, and society.

According to research on School Effectiveness (SE), most definitions assert student academic achievement based on socioeconomic status and family background (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). The concept of school effectiveness has been defined as both character development and academic achievement. A definition incorporating both elements is considered the most acceptable (Ekundayo, 2010). The most common measure of school effectiveness is a standardized assessment of student academic achievement (Ololube, 2005). SE includes the factors or school characteristics that will lead to academic achievement (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000).

However, other studies have shown that SE focuses not only on academic achievement but also considers factors such as differences in attitudes toward learning, classroom behaviour, and student engagement rates (Kirk & Jones, 2004). SE refers to conditions that enhance all contextual variables in schools, such as school leadership, effective instruction, and community involvement (Scheerens, 2013a).

School effectiveness hinges on achieving a diverse set of school goals. Consequently, the more targets accomplished, the more efficient the school will become (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Effectiveness depends on personnel and available resources. In other words, effectiveness is the extent to which organisations achieve their goals by using their resources without putting any pressure on their members (Reynolds, 2010). The effectiveness of a system is the extent to which goals are achieved. Therefore, effectiveness aims to measure the level of achievement of goals (Ensley, 2014). SE is defined as a school's capacity to enhance its performance, attain its objectives, and inspire teachers to perform effectively (Alfahad, 2015). Therefore, according to the above-mentioned submission, SE pertains to the degree to which an institution accomplishes its objectives regarding the amount, quality, and equity in education and instruction.

Another viewpoint on school effectiveness is grounded in the common characteristics of schools. School effectiveness hinges on the principal's leadership in guaranteeing high instructional quality and prioritising teaching and learning, fostering a safe and orderly environment supportive of education, and promoting instructional practices that establish the expectation for every pupil to attain no less than a minimum level of competence. Frequent monitoring of pupil accomplishment for program evaluation is also necessary (Edmonds, 1982). An effective school is characterised by strong principal leadership, common objectives and goals, cooperation and teamwork among staff members, and a clear mission. It also features successful education and learning, assessment and supervision, a positive atmosphere for learning, an emphasis on professional development, and parental engagement in school activities (Mozia, 2011).

Different perspectives define SE differently. However, the review suggests that effective schools can be distinguished from non-effective schools; however, there has not been agreement on the components of effective schools (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

### *Social System Theory*

Social systems refer to events in which members of a group interact for a common goal (Thien & Razak, 2012). Schools exhibit the fundamental traits of a social system, with diverse individuals who interact with each other for the common goals of the school and help each

other. However, the school as a social structure, is interconnected with its environment. Because the connections between schools and their surroundings or environments described by open systems theory are always the same (Katz & Kahn, 2015), Scott and Davis' (2007) open social systems theory is probably the best support for defining a model of school effectiveness. (Scott & Davis, 2007) argue that schools are open systems and are able to be seen as social systems created to achieve successful learning for everyone (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

#### *Open Social System Theory*

Open systems theory assumes that organizations are combinations of members with interdependent relationships and are open to interaction with the external environment (Burke, 2017). According to (Blau & Scott, 2003) and (Scott & Davis, 2007), all schools are open systems consisting of inputs, transformation processes, outputs, feedback, and environments (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

Hoy and Miskel (2013) state that input criteria encompass worker, student, and environmental funding, along with other pertinent aspects like individuals, physical, economics, or information sources. The transformation process refers to the process of effective functioning within the school. Educational transformation processes include the structure and content of the curriculum, the health of the interpersonal climate, the level of student and teacher motivation, the level of teacher and administrative leadership, instructional quality and quantity, harmony and foresight, studying time, school and classroom environment, cooperation, and academic confidence (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Similarly, Scheerens's school effectiveness transformation process model in open systems theory consists of nine dimensions: effective leadership, effective teaching, and consideration of learning. Creating a positive school culture that considers high standards for all students, student accountability, and tracking progress across all levels. Enhance staff competencies and foster connections between families and schools (Scheerens, 2013a).

In addition, important outputs for students include academic achievement, creativity, self-confidence, aspirations, expectations, graduation rates, and dropout rates. Important outputs for teachers are work contentment, absenteeism, and attrition rates. Moreover, the open system's outputs for leaders consist of satisfaction with work, balanced finances, and devotion to the institution. The open system's outputs indicate, a school is effective based on its goals if it performs at or above its goals (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

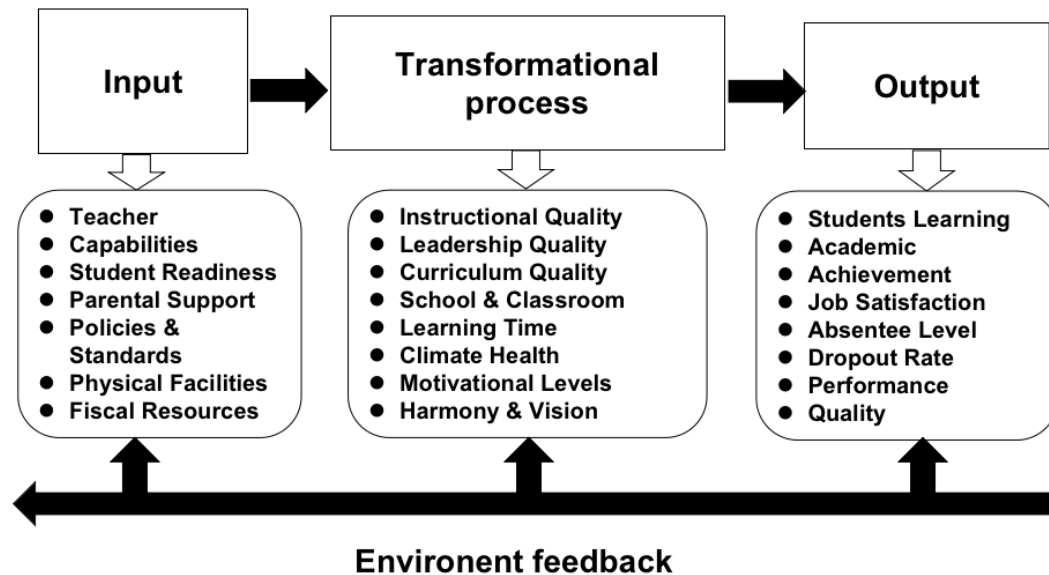


Figure 2.1 School effectiveness and open social system  
(Source: Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Scheerens, 2013)

Hoy and Miskel's (2013) framework based on Scott's (2003) and Scott & Davis' (2007) open social systems theory definitions, the transformation process emphasizes five internal subsystems, namely technological, structural, cultural, personal, and political systems.

Structural systems are defined based on formal bureaucratic expectations that are predefined to achieve organizational goals. In schools, the positions of principal, teachers, and students are basic, and each position is defined based on a set of expectations. Individual systems, where members have their own needs, beliefs, and cognitive insights about their jobs. It is believed that an effective way to understand students, teachers, administrators, and individuals in the school as a social system is to examine their needs, beliefs, goals, and motivations (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

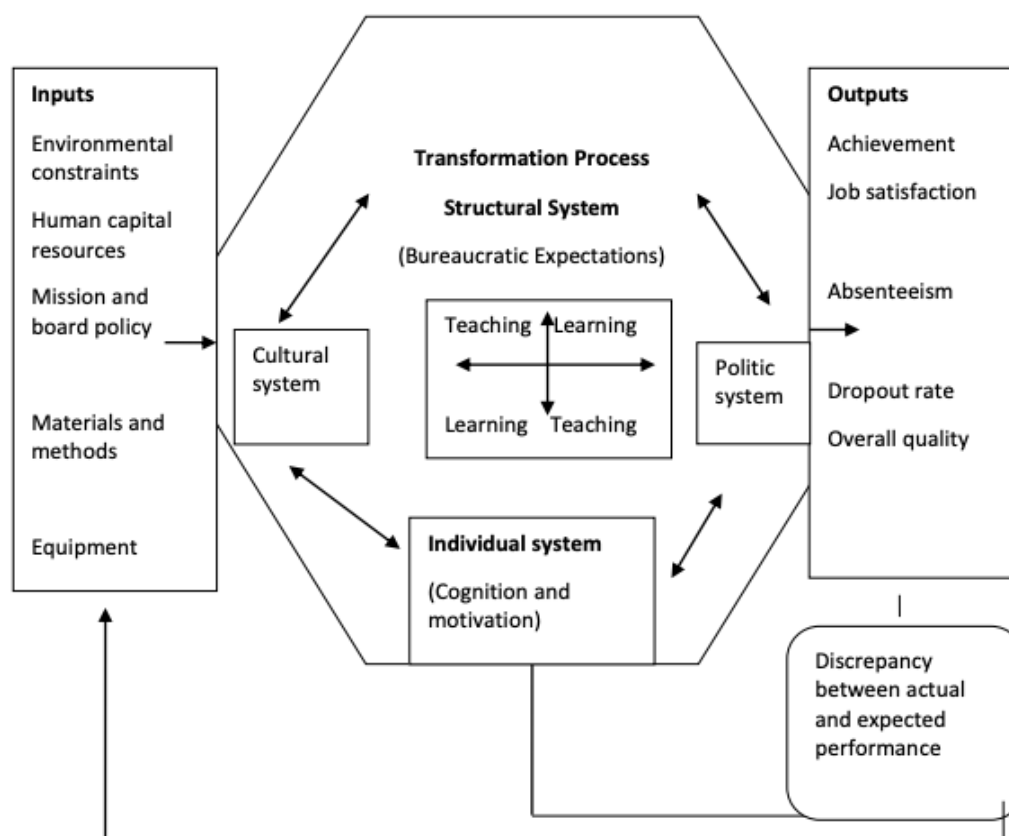


Figure 2.2 Open social system framework for school effectiveness  
(Source: Hoy & Miskel, 2013)

Cultural systems are defined as the dynamic relationship between the demands of bureaucratic roles and the individual work demands that bring people together. Therefore, organizations must cultivate distinct cultures. School culture is defined by shared values, conventions, beliefs, and ways of thinking among instructors, which greatly influence their conduct. Organizational culture distinguishes one organization from another and provides members with a sense of organizational identity (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

A political system is defined as an informal system of power relations. In contrast to people working within structural, cultural and personal systems that usually contribute directly to the needs of the organization, politics is usually informal, clandestine and illegitimate. It is illegitimate because it is an act that usually comes at the expense of the organization. As a result, most politics is divisive and conflictual, pitting individuals and groups against each other and against the organization as a whole. Therefore, to understand organizational life, formal and informal forms of power must be considered (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Technical systems are systems of organizational activities that produce the actual products of the organization (Talcott, 2013). Similar to organizations, technological processes in schools are demonstrated through classroom instruction and education. Therefore, the technology function is the teaching and learning process that is the heart and soul of all educational organizations (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). The inner parts of the social system are coordinated in the dynamic process of constructing efficient schools (Tarter & Hoy, 2004). Therefore, the overall effectiveness of a school is positively correlated with the functioning of the internal elements of the social system.

*School Effectiveness Models*

The following are summaries of the characteristics of effective schools by various authors: Edmonds' (1979) five-factor model of school effectiveness features incorporate (1) strong educational leadership (2) orderly climate (3) academic expectations (4) acquisition of basic skills, and (5) monitoring of students' progress. As explained by Scheerens and Bosker (1997), Edmonds' five correlates of effective schools have served as a framework for thinking about school effectiveness for a decade (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997).

Twelve characteristics of school effectiveness were summarized in studies of school effectiveness by Mortimore (1988) in England and Teddlie & Stringfield (1993) in the United States. These characteristics include purposeful leadership, vice principal involvement, teacher involvement, parent involvement, intellectually challenging instruction, accurate record keeping, reliability, a structured day, a supportive environment, and a positive climate (Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, & Ecob, 1988; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993).

Levine and Lezotte (1990) introduced a different model of school effectiveness that has been commonly utilized as a basis for school effectiveness studies. They identified seven crucial aspects of excellent schools. (1) productive climate and culture, (2) focus on core learning skills, (3) appropriate supervision, (4) practice-oriented staff development, (5) strong leadership, (6) significant parental involvement, and (7) high expectations and demands.

In addition, Scheerens (1992) identified nine crucial features of school effectiveness. Some dimensions are situated at the school level while others are at the classroom level. These nine aspects are impactful. (1) leadership, (2) effective teaching, (3) consideration of learning, (4) creating a positive school culture, (5) consideration of high expectations for all, (6) student responsibility, (7) monitoring progress at all levels, (8) developing staff skills, and (9) home-school relationships (Scheerens, 2013a).

In addition, Marzano (2000) proposed five levels of school effectiveness, namely (1) strong leadership, (2) high expectations for students, (3) orderly climate, (4) emphasis on basic skills, and (5) effective monitoring of student achievement. The five indicators of school effectiveness reflect the latest ideas on issues at the school level. (Marzano, 2003). Purkey & Smith (1983) suggested 13 influencing factors: achievement-oriented policies, collaborative climate and orderly environment, clear goals for basic skills, frequent evaluation, in-service training/staff development/strong leadership, time on task, intensive learning groupings, high expectations (Purkey & Smith, 1983).

In China, Wu Qingshan (1997) suggested 10 influencing factors: (1) school environment planning (2) quality and methods of teacher teaching (3) student discipline performance (4) student administrative communication and coordination (5) student academic performance (6) teacher job satisfaction (7) school curriculum (8) parent-school relationship (9) teacher-student relationship (10) principal leadership (Qingshan, 2003). Meanwhile, Tang and Wu conducted a survey in 1996 on the factors influencing school effectiveness among principals in Shanghai, Zhejiang, Guangxi, Gansu, Hunan, Fujian, and Henan provinces, and summarized 17 factors, namely, teacher quality and professionalism, staff cohesion, cooperation and communication, clear school goals, principal leadership, a safe, harmonious, and well-organized school environment, and a school environment where Tang linchun (2005)

examined the impact of the following dimensions on the quality and professionalism of teachers, staff cohesion, cooperation and communication, clear school goals, leadership of the principal, safe, harmonious and well-organized school environment, making school goals clear to staff and students, school rules and regulations, teachers' qualifications and teaching ability, school conditions, curriculum and materials, parental and community support and cooperation, staff satisfaction, realistic staff development and training, staff participation in school management and decision-making, frequent monitoring of student progress, extracurricular activities, and high expectations of students (Linchun, 2005). Wen Hengfu (2007) identified strong instructional leadership by the principal, high expectations for student accomplishment, focus on fundamental skills, a secure and organized educational environment, regular evaluation of student academic progress, school organizational climate, and curricular and academic development as the dimensions that influence school effectiveness. Organizational climate, curriculum and instruction, and school culture and values are characteristics of high performing schools (Henghu, 2007).

After reviewing many models of school effectiveness variables, it was discovered that many of these characteristics are shared and linked to student achievement. Lezotte and Snyder (2011) seven factors of effective schools are common across all models of school effectiveness. Therefore, the model has been developed as a guide to help teachers achieve a lasting school improvement system through the use of seven relevant factors for effective schools (Talebloo, 2015).

According to Lezotte & Snyder (2011), an effective school means that interconnected components work together to make school a learning destination for all. The definition is as follows.

(1) Instructional Leadership: More important to school effectiveness is the instructional leadership of the principal, which should communicate the school mission to parents, students, and school staff (Talebloo, 2015). Furthermore, the principal should be familiar with the traits of school effectiveness, instructional leadership should mention providing collaboration to create the same focus, enhance problem solving throughout the school, and support database decisions, share best practices mentioning observation of teachers' guidance (Abdullah & Ghani, 2014), the principal being the advocate of a school is quite important to the effectiveness of the school. Leaders must make everyone have a common goal and the same understanding of core values and organizational mission. Schools need leaders who are enthusiastic about the educational goals, familiar with the school's customs, and willing to address challenges inside the institution. (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011).

(2) Clear and Focused Mission: An effective school should possess a well-defined school vision that the staff comprehends and is dedicated to, encompassing the school's objectives, evaluation methods, priorities, and responsibilities. Staff at an effective school are accountable for ensuring that students achieve the school's fundamental curriculum objectives. Principles of successful schools Clarify and specify the mission, concentrate on it, and engage stakeholders in establishing goals. (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011).

(3) High Expectations for Success: An effective school fosters an environment of high expectations, where teachers can exhibit and have faith that all kids can proficiently learn the

required content. They can also assist schools in mastering the curriculum. High expectations are necessary for effective schools because organizations and individuals move forward with their beliefs. If teachers believe that students cannot succeed, then negative outcomes seem to be achieved (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011).

(4) Safe and Orderly environment: An efficient school maintains a purposeful and organized environment that is devoid of physical threats. Teachers prioritize student development and the educational environment is favorable for education (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011).

(5) Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress: In an effective school, student progress on necessary goals is frequently monitored, and the results of these assessments are used to improve student performance and behavior, as well as overall curriculum improvement. Assessment results can provide information on individual student performance and expand instructional programs (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011).

(6) Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task: It is critical to school effectiveness that teachers dedicate a substantial portion of classroom time to teaching crucial curriculum subjects. During this time, a significant number of pupils are participating in teacher-led, structured learning tasks (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011).

(7) Positive Home-School Relations: According to Epstein et al. (2002), The role of parents in a student's instruction encompasses parenting and volunteering, communication, assisting students with homework at home, and community collaboration. In an effective school, the school informs parents about the student's progress. In addition, parental involvement needs to be considered regardless of demographic, cultural, and socioeconomic status (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011).

An analysis of the effective school literature indicates that numerous types of effective schools exist, the seven factors associated with effective schools are generally recognized (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011). Lezotte's effective school model is acknowledged as a comprehensive approach due to it has been applied to a large number of effective school studies. Furthermore, Lezotte's seven correlations model of effective schools considers the seven correlations as interdependent, which explains effective schools as a system (Scheerens, 2013b). Therefore, all correlations need to function at a good level at the same time.

#### *Open-Social System Theory and School Effectiveness*

The seven correlates of effective schools are crucial for the school's sustainability as a system as they provide key markers of beneficial influence on the education of students. Each of the seven correlates is essential for fulfilling the three standards of an effective school, which are (1) having a clear goal and mission (2) being easily manageable (3) have a diverse team dedicated to accomplishing the objective (Dahiru, Basri, Aji, & Asimiran, 2018)

In addition, Scott states that all schools are open systems. Thus, schools and classrooms can be viewed as a social system. Open systems consist of inputs (such as labor, students, and financial resources from the external environment), an educational transformation process (involving the quality, quantity, and consistency of internal processes that convert inputs into outputs), outputs (improving student performance, learning outcomes, and teacher

satisfaction), feedback, and the environment (Scott & Davis, 2015). School output is determined by the interaction of teaching and learning in the transformation process, where transformation pertains to the internal operations of effective schools as an open system, as stated by Hoy & Miskel (2013). According to Hoy & Miskel's (2001) comprehensive model of organizational effectiveness, specific indicators of the transformation process in open social systems are constructal leadership, learning time, curriculum quality, school and classroom climate health, harmony, and vision. These indicators are derived from each stage of the OSS model cycle.

Educators should concentrate on leading indicators, which are elements that impact productivity or performance, rather than lagging ones, to enhance school effectiveness. Therefore, educators need to implement adjustments in the factors that are associated with effective schools in order to improve school productivity. When these correlations are integrated school-wide, they enhance student learning more effectively than a single teacher operating independently (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011). Effective school correlations depict an organizational structure that aligns student learning experiences with principles of human education in the school setting. Thus, as per Deming (1993) and Lezotte & Snyder (2011), school effectiveness and student performance will improve if schools successfully modify the leading indicators (the seven correlates of effective schools).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Scott (2007), states that all schools are open systems. Thus, schools and classrooms can be viewed as a social system. Open systems consist of inputs (such as labor, students, and financial resources from the external environment), an educational transformation process (involving the quality, quantity, and consistency of internal processes that convert inputs into outputs), outputs (improving student performance, learning outcomes, and teacher satisfaction), feedback, and the environment (Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Scott & Davis, 2015). School output is determined by the interaction of teaching and learning in the transformation process, where transformation pertains to the internal operations of effective schools as an open system, as stated by Hoy & Miskel (2013). According to Hoy & Miskel's (2001) comprehensive model of school effectiveness, specific indicators of the transformation process in open social systems are constructal leadership, learning time, curriculum quality, school and classroom climate health, harmony, and vision. These indicators are derived from each stage of the OSS model cycle. Therefore, the study suggests that implementing the elements of the social system in schools will enhance school effectiveness and student achievement (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011).

Based on the seven correlates of the SE model developed by Lezotte and Snyder (2011), a successful framework for continuous improvement in schools relies on the active participation of the school's teachers and other stakeholders. In order to achieve this objective, the school administrator needs to engage more personnel by establishing a professional learning team for each corresponding area. To develop an inclusive and collaborative framework of school effectiveness, a leader should initially anticipate each professional team to determine the most effective method of completing their assigned task. Furthermore, the leader must effectively execute and oversee the factors associated with the school and ultimately provide recommendations for any necessary modifications pertaining to these factors. Therefore, to ensure the effective implementation of related measures and increase staff dedication to

adopting strategies for change, principals should create an atmosphere of trust. (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011).

This research contributes to government policy. Firstly, the National Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) explicitly states that improving the school effectiveness should be the top priority and explicitly identifies the quality of education as one of the guidelines that will lead China's education reform in the next decade (Xin, 2016). The school effectiveness running is related to the overall quality of education and the educational quality and pedagogy in schools. This research asserts that social system theory is a crucial aspect that directly impacts school success. Social system components at a school include well-defined reward systems, supervisory behaviors, work policies, and supporting organizational structures, which are crucial for creating an effective working environment. A clearly defined work role for teachers, with understanding of school goals and expectations, sufficient supervision, involvement in decision-making chances, professional and competent connection flows, and strong teamwork, enhances school effectiveness and leads to beneficial and superior work outcomes. Teachers are highly motivated to enhance their abilities and expertise and are eager to match their own goals with those of the school and community for the overall benefit of the school. Leaders must recognize the importance of the social system in establishing school effectiveness (Dahiru et al., 2018).

The modernization of education requires the enhancement of school effectiveness, which is essential for the development of schools. It will enhance the effectiveness of school instruction and foster advanced competencies aligned with contemporary demands. It provides a solid theoretical basis for subsequent scholarly discussions on school effectiveness. The outcomes of this study will provide insights and recommendations for the education department, administrators, leaders, and instructors, thereby improving the realization of school effectiveness.

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