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Comparing the Four Phases of School Effectiveness Research Across International Schools: Identifying Commonalities and Differences

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Abstract

This paper provides a literature review on the use of School Effectiveness Research (SER) in international contexts. SER is a valuable tool for identifying characteristics that contribute to school effectiveness and improving student learning outcomes. The review examines the definition and evolution of SER, the four phases of SER, and the application of SER in international schools. It also discusses the characteristics of effective schools in different countries and cultures, the advantages and disadvantages of each phase of SER, and the challenges and opportunities of conducting SER across international contexts. The review suggests that using a holistic approach that takes into account all four stages of SER can provide a more full view of school effectiveness. The review concludes with implications for future research and policy, limitations and suggestions for future studies, and a call for educators to recognize good practices from many cultural contexts to increase cross-cultural understanding and improve educational achievements for all children.

Keywords: School Effectiveness Research (SER), phases, international schools

1. Introduction

School Effectiveness Research (SER) is a field of study that aims to identify the factors that contribute to effective schools in terms of student learning outcomes and long-term impacts on student success (Chapman & Pykett, 2019, 33) and involves four phases: input, process, output, and outcome (Muijs, 2010, 37). International schools, which cater to students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, offer a unique context for studying SER. These schools have different characteristics and challenges compared to schools in a single cultural context, and therefore require different approaches to SER (Duru-Bellat & Sushaut, 2011, 506).

SER research in foreign schools is essential because it may give insight on how effective schools operate in a variety of cultural contexts. Educators may obtain a better grasp of what variables contribute to school effectiveness and how to enhance student outcomes by finding commonalities and variations in the four phases of SER. The goals of this article are to (1) examine how the four stages of SER relate to international schools, (2) identify similarities and variations across international schools, and (3) assess the benefits and drawbacks of each phase in the international environment.

2. School Effectiveness Research (SER)

Chapman & Pykett (2019, 33) defy School Effectiveness Research (SER) as a branch of education that seeks to uncover the elements that contribute to effective schools in terms of student learning outcomes and long-term effects on student performance. According to Muijs (2011, 38), early studies on school effectiveness focused on student success as the major indication of efficacy. He continues to say, later studies expanded to take into account additional aspects such as school atmosphere, leadership, and teacher quality. Today, SER is a vast area with several techniques and theories.

SER is often divided into four stages. The input phase focuses on the school's and its resources' qualities, such as

the physical environment, instructor credentials, and student demographics. The process phase investigates relationships between teachers and students, as well as classroom teaching and learning approaches. The output phase examines student learning outcomes such as standardized test scores and graduation rates. The outcome phase takes into account the long-term influence of education on students, such as their capacity to obtain work or advance their education (Muijs, 2010, 37).

According to David P. Baker, research on SER in international schools has identified several factors that contribute to school effectiveness. These include school leadership, teacher quality, parental involvement, and cultural sensitivity (Educational Research and Innovation the OECD Handbook for Innovative Learning Environments, 2017, 180). However, applying SER in international schools presents unique challenges due to the diversity of students and cultural contexts. For example, some studies have found that student achievement is influenced by cultural factors such as parental expectations and attitudes towards education (Duru-Bellat & Sushaut, 2011, 508).

Research on SER in different countries and cultures has identified several characteristics of effective schools. For example, a study in the United States found that effective schools have strong instructional leadership, high expectations for student achievement, and a safe and orderly learning environment (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, 296). In contrast, a study in Japan found that effective schools prioritize the development of students' social skills and moral values (Shimahara, 2002, 164). These findings highlight the importance of considering cultural context when identifying factors that contribute to school effectiveness.

Each phase of SER has its advantages and disadvantages. The input phase provides information about the resources and characteristics of the school, which can help educators identify areas for improvement. However, it does not provide information about how these resources are used in the classroom. The process phase provides insight into teaching and learning methods, but can be difficult to measure objectively. The output phase provides concrete data on student learning outcomes, but may not capture the full range of skills and knowledge that students acquire. The outcome phase provides information on the long-term impact of education, but is often difficult to measure (Muijs, 2010, 37).

Conducting SER across international contexts presents several challenges and opportunities. Challenges include language barriers, cultural differences, and the difficulty of comparing data across different educational systems. Opportunities include the ability to identify effective practices from different cultural contexts and to promote cross-cultural understanding among educators and students (Educational Research and Innovation the OECD Handbook for Innovative Learning Environments, 2017, 179).

To summarize, SER assists educators in identifying school effectiveness characteristics and improving student learning outcomes. Cross-cultural differences and possibilities make SER challenging but valuable. Each SER phase has pros and cons, but a comprehensive approach offers a complete view of school effectiveness. By recognising good practices from diverse cultural contexts, educators can increase cross-cultural understanding and improve educational outcomes for all children.

2.1 Input Phase: Comparison of School Resources and Infrastructure Across International Schools

In the input phase of School Effectiveness Research (SER), school resources and infrastructure are examined to understand how they contribute to student learning outcomes and can give useful insights on the similarities and differences between different cultural backgrounds in the context of international schooling. For example, Gurr and Drysdale (2014, 480) discovered that higher levels of resourcing, such as higher levels of teacher credentials and lower class sizes, resulted in improved student learning outcomes in Australian schools. However, they discovered a considerable variance in funding levels between schools, highlighting the need for more fair resource allocation.

Effective schools, according to Leithwood et al., (2004, 134), are distinguished by a variety of factors, including strong leadership, a clear vision and goals, a safe and orderly atmosphere, and high levels of teacher professionalism. However, the authors suggest that inputs alone are insufficient for school performance, and that the process of teaching and learning, as well as student results, must also be considered. For educators to increase student learning outcomes and promote good school outcomes, a holistic approach to school effectiveness that takes into consideration all of these aspects is required.

2.2 Process Phase: Comparison of Instructional Practices and Teaching Strategies Across International Schools

The process phase of SER includes investigating school-based teaching and learning processes, including instructional techniques and teaching methodologies. This phase can give useful insights on the similarities and differences in teaching across different cultural contexts in the context of international schools. For example, in a review of school effectiveness studies, Sammons et al., (1995, 5-11) highlighted numerous critical features of effective teaching, such as high expectations, clear objectives, and good feedback. They did, however, remark that good teaching can be difficult to define and that what makes effective teaching may vary depending on

culture.

Correspondingly, Lee (2010, 204) found that effective teaching was characterized by an emphasis on student-centered learning, interactive teaching approaches, and the use of technology in a case study of teacher professional development in Hong Kong. She did, however, mention that these methods were not uniformly embraced or adopted by all instructors, emphasizing the importance of continued professional development. Overall, I feel that it is critical to understand the cultural context and to give continual professional development to teachers in order to guarantee that they have the skills and knowledge to apply successful teaching approaches.

2.3 Output Phase: Comparison of Student Learning Outcomes Across International Schools

The output phase of SER entails investigating students' learning outcomes inside schools, including academic success and attitudes towards learning. This phase can give useful insights on the similarities and differences in student results across different cultural contexts in the context of foreign schools.

Sammons and Bakkum (2011, 3) compared the learning results of pupils in Latin America, England, and the Netherlands. They discovered that excellent schools in all three nations had traits including high levels of student involvement and good leadership. They did, however, discover disparities in the precise tactics used by schools to accomplish these results.

Kariya et al. (2016) also evaluated the learning results of students at Japanese schools abroad. They discovered that foreign school students had higher levels of English proficiency and cultural awareness than their Japanese peers. They did, however, highlight that international schools struggle to combine the needs of global curriculum with the demands of local cultures. Overall, it is critical to analyze the unique tactics employed by effective schools and to ensure that international schools are capable of balancing worldwide curriculum needs with local cultural expectations.

2.4 Outcome Phase: Comparison of Long-Term Impacts of Education Across International Schools

The outcome phase of SER entails investigating the long-term effects of education on students after they leave school, such as their post-secondary education and job results. In the context of international schools, this period can give useful insights about the manner in which different educational systems prepare children for success in a globalized society.

Sammons et al. (1995) conducted a research that looked at the long-term results of pupils who attended successful schools in England and the Netherlands. They discovered that these pupils were more likely than their counterparts who attended less successful schools to attend university and pursue higher-paying occupations.

Teddlie & Reynolds (1999, 77) conducted another study that looked at the long-term results of pupils who attended successful schools in the United States. They discovered that these adolescents were more likely to participate in civic activities and demonstrate good behaviors like volunteering and joining community groups.

Ultimately, the SER outcome phase can give useful insights on the long-term effects of education on the lives of students. These studies' findings indicate that good schools may have a favorable impact not just on students' academic achievement, but also on their postsecondary education and employment achievements, as well as on their civic participation and community involvement.

3. Discussion of Commonalities and Differences Across International Schools

When the findings of SER studies from different foreign schools are compared, they might indicate both similarities and variations in school efficiency. Several studies have demonstrated that effective leadership and a positive school culture are important in encouraging student achievement. Dimmock and Walker (2005, 20), for example, discovered that effective school leadership was connected with greater levels of student accomplishment in various nations, including Australia, China, and England.

However, there are variances amongst foreign schools. Kariya et al. (2016, 109) discovered that foreign schools in Japan confront particular obstacles, such as the need to combine local and global viewpoints in the curriculum and the difficulty in attracting skilled instructors from outside.

Another distinction may be seen in the cultural contexts of various countries. According to Sammons and Bakkum (2011), effective schools in Latin America lay a large emphasis on building a pleasant school atmosphere and encouraging social and emotional development, whereas schools in the Netherlands focus more on academic accomplishment and performance.

Regardless of these disparities, SER can give useful insights into effective techniques that can be tailored to various cultural and environmental circumstances. Researchers can uncover successful ways for promoting student performance in different environments by comparing outcomes across foreign schools.

4. Advantages and Disadvantages of Each Phase of SER, and Challenges and Opportunities of Conducting

SER Across International Contexts

Each phase of SER has its own advantages and disadvantages in the context of international schools. The input phase can help identify disparities in school resources and infrastructure across countries, which can inform policies and resource allocation. However, some argue that resource differences between countries should not be viewed as deficiencies, but rather as unique features of each education system (Muijs et al., 2004, 151).

The process phase, which focuses on instructional practices and teaching strategies, can identify effective teaching practices that can be adapted to different contexts. However, some argue that the process phase can overlook the importance of cultural factors and context-specific teaching practices (Minkov et al., 2010, 5).

The output phase, which assesses student learning outcomes, can give useful information on the effectiveness of educational systems in fostering student success. Some contend, however, that standardized test results may not accurately reflect the whole spectrum of student learning outcomes and may be impacted by circumstances outside of the educational environment (Cizek, 2001, 50).

Finally, the outcome phase, which examines education's long-term effects, can give useful information on the role of education in facilitating social and economic mobility. Some contend, however, that the outcome phase might neglect the significance of short-term outcomes such as student involvement and well-being (Tierney & Findlay, 2010, 52).

Conducting SER across international contexts can also present challenges and opportunities. One challenge is ensuring that SER is culturally responsive and takes into account context-specific factors. Another challenge is the need for cross-national collaboration and data sharing, which can be complicated by language barriers, different data collection practices, and privacy concerns. However, the opportunities presented by SER in the context of international schools include the ability to identify effective practices across diverse contexts, and the potential for international collaboration and knowledge sharing to drive educational improvement.

5. Conclusion

The current study looked at School Effectiveness Research (SER) and its use in foreign schools, with a special emphasis on the four stages of SER. The examination of the literature found that there are similarities and variances in how foreign schools handle SER, with some schools emphasizing different phases more than others. The input phase, for example, is vital in ensuring that international schools have the resources and facilities necessary to provide excellent education, but the process phase is critical in establishing successful instructional techniques and teaching methodologies.

The research also found that each step of SER has advantages and disadvantages, and that performing SER in different international contexts brings new problems and possibilities. In summary, this study adds to our understanding of SER in foreign schools and emphasizes the need for more research on the subject. The findings have major policy and practical implications because they imply that foreign schools can benefit from a holistic approach to SER that includes all four stages and takes cultural and contextual issues that impact school success into account.

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