

# Assessing the Impact of School Management on Student Outcomes

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## ABSTRACT

Effective school management is increasingly recognized as a critical determinant of student academic success. This study investigates how various management practices influence student outcomes, with a focus on middle schools in rural and disadvantaged communities in China and South Africa. Using a mixed-method approach, the research employs both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, including surveys, interviews, and observational studies. The study examines key management dimensions such as resource allocation, leadership effectiveness, teacher performance monitoring, and stakeholder engagement. Findings suggest a strong correlation between effective management and improved student performance, emphasizing the role of data-driven decision-making and efficient resource utilization. The study highlights policy implications for educational reform, particularly in developing nations, and underscores the need for targeted interventions to enhance school leadership capacity.

**Keywords:** School Management, Student Outcomes, Educational Effectiveness, School Leadership, Resource Allocation, Policy Implications.

## INTRODUCTION

Education, once a privilege, is now widely recognized as a fundamental right. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development affirms the power of education to support the achievement of development goals and targets across diverse sectors. Accordingly, considerable emphasis has been placed on both the quality of education and its role in fostering accountability. There is a growing recognition that in terms to the increasing importance of improving overall educational effectiveness, developing countries in particular need to pay serious attention to educational efficiency. Genuine learning can only occur if an environment induces learning. In this context, school management arises as an important factor influencing the quality of the educational service and hence an input technology of direct concern to policy makers interested in the effectiveness of schools. The focus of educational policy and related research in developing countries has mostly been directed towards coverage and the accounting of inputs in education. As the global push for universal primary completion has gathered momentum, efficiency considerations have started to acquire salience. At present, since the share of aid allocated to primary education in developing countries rose markedly over the last decade, these agencies have come under pressure to show tangible signs of their commitment to the developmental transformation of countries that qualify for their assistance. Consistent with the overall emphasis on the quality of education, the government of Uganda has been participating in the Education for All Fast Track Initiative. The government has aimed at improving learning outcomes by using specific targets such as increased availability of learning materials, teacher-pupil ratios, construction of teaching space, and an explicit emphasis on improving the quality and efficiency of education. In its broadest sense, resources in education encompass not only financial inputs, infrastructure, teaching aids, and materials but also the process of managing such resources or how well resources are regarded to induce learning [1, 2].

### Review Of Previous Studies

Over the last decade, school principals have been expected to deliver more than just good quality teaching in the classrooms. The performance of schools, as measured by student achievement, has moved to the forefront of the educational policies of many countries. This has created two waves of research in school effectiveness. The first wave investigates what happens in schools that account for differences in student outcomes, whilst the second creates 'value added' models to compare different schools in these terms. Central to both of these is improved management effectiveness. School management effectiveness is intimately related to the interests of the teaching profession and the broader sociocultural and political environment in which these schools are located. The experiences and examples of improving school management effectiveness in the UK and US are important in the global development of educational policies and relevant research, even though the process and the outcomes in these countries might not be transferable to developing countries, such as China and South Africa. However, there is insufficient academic research to advise these policy developments and implementation moves. This study is a carefully designed quantitative and qualitative study with the use of nested data from China and South Africa on the effectiveness of middle schools in rural and disadvantaged communities. It will explore the impacts of different dimensions of educational management and local social/cultural environment on student outcomes while meeting the expectations of the host institution of the research and the major donors. This study contributes to the literature mostly focusing on developed countries and only beginning to be on such a scale for emerging economies [3, 4].

### METHODOLOGY

The methodology framework, research strategy, and research approach that guides the methodology method which will be employed in this research are outlined in this paper. The design of the research strategies defines whether the researcher uses qualitative, quantitative studies or a mixed-method approach. Data collection and sampling strategies also have a great impact on how data is gathered to ensure its reliability and validity. The proceed section was the Data Collection Procedure. Observation, interview, focus group, and document analysis were the data collection methods that were used throughout this research. Each data collection method is described in detail, explaining how data was gathered for consideration to the reader. Non-random purposive sampling was used in this research to allow the selection of participants based on pre-determined criteria specific to a particular research question. These criteria are considered important for the purpose of representing a diverse range of school context characteristics. The product-moment correlation coefficient is used to determine whether and to what extent variables have linear relationships. Pearson r analysis is employed, allowing the examination of the correlation between a change in one variable with a change in the other. The qualitative data gathered will be categorized and analyzed to uncover the meaning implied by the data. To allow triangulation of the data analysis, the mixed-method design employs qualitative data to explain the more frequently studied quantitative data. The analysis and interpretation of various data sets relevant to the research questions provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issues raised [5].

### Research Design

Understanding data limitations is crucial in research design when assessing the impact of school management on student outcomes. This study focuses on three key aspects: effective management theory, measurement methods, and data collection from selected schools. These components rely on theoretical frameworks demonstrating how management influences student outcomes. Effective management creates a conducive learning environment and enhances students' human capital. All management practices and student outcomes should ideally be quantitatively assessed. The theoretical framework outlines relationships and management's influence on schools. The design includes concurrent measurement of management and outcomes, contrasting with models suggesting long-term effects. Framework insights guide data collection on internal operations linked to infrastructure and teaching quality, such as analyzing funding allocation to understand financial input effects on management. Research design affects data collection efficiency. Cross-country analysis might restrict essential indicators or data on parent/teacher organizations. Effective designs utilize various data sources for a comprehensive portrayal of phenomena. Misinterpretations, like conflating fund transfers with mismanagement, need clarification. Research models help understand head teachers' responses while acknowledging potential data-driven biases. Balancing data availability with conceptual frameworks is essential for the local context. While management and outcome measures were expanded, data availability limited generalizability. Focusing only on a subset of schools may miss critical management dimensions, particularly in quantifying metrics

like PTA fund allocation. The study aims to establish measures of management quality pertinent to low-income contexts, investigating their origins and variations across schools. It explores correlations between school management and quality elements, analyzing management's impact on fund allocation and human capital. While many predictions align with data, some findings challenge existing hypotheses. Insights emerge from examining management and outcomes not previously linked, revealing a significant connection between management practices and educational conditions that may seem unrelated [6].

#### **Data Collection Methods**

School administrators and researchers are increasingly recognizing the importance of less intrusive data collection methods that still yield reliable information on teacher performance. Continuous data use is crucial for monitoring and enhancing student achievement. This study will provide insights on improving current data methods to identify issues before they escalate. Given the complexity of schools, change occurs gradually, with various members possibly unaware of data issues identified by others. Data collection methods effective in other organizations may not suit schools. To meet these demands, a range of instruments was developed to measure relevant variables. Formal surveys and observational techniques were created to evaluate data usage in schools. Semi-structured interviews and case studies were included to assess individual data use and enhance the school's data culture. These tools were designed to work cohesively, addressing different aspects of the overall issue. Pilot testing revealed low reliability in closed-ended tools, leading to the creation of new measures. Adjustments were made to improve data reliability within the tight timeframe allowed for feedback. Comprehensive measures were developed based on theoretical and practical grounds, ensuring effectiveness in understanding data use complexities. Analyzing the collected data will help translate findings into practical guidance for educators. Specific inquiries into data application can enhance actionable results. Schools were encouraged to improve data practices during collection, and varied data collection times and locations were employed, with unobtrusive observations and visual counts for five observational variables [7].

#### **Sample Selection**

The research study focused on students aged 10 to 14 in Turkish schools, which integrate both school and course in one building. Foreign preparatory schools were excluded due to differing characteristics. Turkish schools include various categories such as science high schools, Anatolian high schools, vocational schools, private schools, and more. Existing data sources were reviewed, but this study did not establish a new data collection endpoint. Potential weaknesses in management data regarding quality and reliability were noted, and high response rates are crucial for minimizing non-response bias. Sampling was not conducted during data collection, but existing literature employed strategies to select participants and schools, such as random or stratified sampling. Relevant stratification variables include the urban or rural status and the demographics of students and schools. Justification for the adequacy of the sample for meaningful conclusions is essential, along with acknowledging potential selection bias and representativeness issues [8].

#### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The analysis of collected data is vital for drawing meaningful conclusions, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches through questionnaires. Various techniques, including statistical testing and thematic coding, aid in effective data interpretation. In this technological era, NVivo.3 software assists in managing large datasets and complex procedures. Primary analysis focuses on the association between school management practices (independent variable) and student outcomes (dependent variables) through additional statistical assessments. Existing datasets, while lacking comprehensive contextual information on socio-economic status, school facilities, and curriculum, still contain variables correlating with student outcomes. Initially, data assumptions are verified for normality, revealing some normally distributed variables while others are not, thus necessitating non-parametric testing as an alternative to parametric tests based on variable nature. Given the cross-sectional nature of the datasets, Spearman's Rho non-parametric test is utilized via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Caution is advised as non-parametric tests are less powerful; hence, results are revisited with parametric testing. Parametric testing, being robust, remains a common choice for examining variable relationships, even when normality assumptions are not met. Additionally, relationships suggested by parametric testing between school management practices and student outcomes contribute to literature, especially since such practices have not been extensively examined concerning student outcomes. Despite data not meeting the fourth assumption of regression analysis, a Kruskal-Wallis Test is performed as a parametric testing equivalent to one-way ANOVA, accommodating differing sample sizes. The assessment of sample data and normality

testing indicates that the data is parametric, validating the hypotheses through the Kruskal-Wallis test [9].

### Key Findings

Beginning in the late 1990s, researchers in educational systems increasingly employed bureaucratic tools to benchmark schools. Evidence indicates that school management significantly impacts student performance. In education, productivity is as vital for non-market actors as for profit-driven ones. Benchmarking typically involves survey teams collecting data on structures and procedures, though this method has limitations and potential for distortion. Some tools' reliability is questionable; for instance, better-educated interviewers may yield lower management scores for schools. Reduced-form approaches for management scores are gaining traction, yet they often lack a coherent theoretical basis for leveraging those scores. A substantial body of literature highlights management's critical role in the production process, with stronger management correlating with higher pupil test score growth. Many believe enhancing school management is essential for better educational outcomes, driving management reforms. Evidence shows that schools implement management practices recommended by policy, such as recent efforts in India to enhance school management. This paper thoroughly examines the strategies of 170,000 schools using 75 questions for head teachers to rate common management practices. Analysis through factor analysis of over 10,000 schools worldwide generated standardized management scores, referred to as normalized school management scores [10,11].

### DISCUSSION

This section summarizes key findings and moderating variables, discusses theoretical and methodological limitations, and provides concluding remarks. In 2005, over 400 principals and teachers from 200 Western Cape schools were surveyed about the impact of school management on learner results. OLS regressions indicated a strong correlation between academic results and the management index, with management being the largest factor when compared to family background and school resources. The paper addresses challenges in measuring school management and proposes that the WDDE utilize these indices for tailored educational support, advocating for a discreet approach rather than standardized guidelines. Following the introduction of a new education policy in 1996 emphasizing choice, competition, and decentralization, many Quintile 1 schools faced challenges due to the low skills of their principals. Despite initial concerns of school failure, some pivotal schools succeeded in achieving good academic results through effective management systems capable of handling adversity, though overly difficult external conditions can hinder performance. Descriptive statistical analysis is used to support the policy and literature [12].

### Interpretation Of Findings

This subsection interprets the findings from earlier analyses, focusing on the implications of the results. It raises questions about the robustness of the observed relationship between better management and improved student performance, as well as how varied perceptions of management interact with outcomes for pupils and schools. The second round of analysis is rooted in the methodological framework of the main research, allowing for a deeper examination of how management relates to student outcomes. It compares different management variables to identify the most impactful factors, acknowledging that this approach is inherently reductionist. Management quality is quantified on a scale from 0 to 100, where higher scores indicate better management. Exploring the link between structural aspects of educational management and school outcomes could provide more nuanced insights. Notably, management practices in Uganda's education sector vary significantly; while some effective low-cost practices are common, many are lacking. For instance, 28% of management aspects are absent in all surveyed schools, and over 5/8 of schools lack fundamental procurement and personnel practices like tracking inventory and teacher attendance [13].

### Implications For School Policies

A comprehensive assessment of management strategies in South African secondary and combined schools within the Lejweleputswa District indicates that an objective management style can enhance test scores. The findings reveal that management styles and monitoring do not significantly differ based on the racial composition of students. The majority of educational management research has originated from the USA and the UK, primarily examining management's impact on school performance. In developing nations like South Africa, there's an urgent need for a thorough, objective assessment of management practices. Educational reform advocates emphasize the importance of monitoring, evaluation, and data-driven decision-making, yet they face challenges due to the absence of valid data. Additionally, the prevailing

small-scale, qualitative studies in these regions fail to yield adequate evidence for comprehensive policy recommendations. Therefore, systematic empirical analyses of management practices are crucial. Successful school leaders in South African Township communities typically establish substantial authority over their schools and delegate management responsibilities to deputies, heads, and SMTs, fostering a collective vision focused on enhancing teaching and learning [14].

#### **Limitations of the Study**

Educational outcomes in South Africa show significant performance disparities, with historically disadvantaged groups lagging behind wealthier, white students. Most learners attend public schools, making their improvement crucial on the educational agenda. Understanding the determinants of better public school performance is vital for informed policy-making and school accountability. This study examines the medium-term effectiveness of school management and other factors on student performance in 14 Western Cape public schools, emphasizing the manipulable aspect of school management. Findings indicate that management is the primary determinant of learner performance, followed by family socio-economic status, while most other factors are insignificant. The study underscores the critical role of school management in shaping educational outcomes, reinforcing its importance in enhancing school performance. Additionally, concerns about the validity of input measures used in the quantile regression were acknowledged for differing values related to management scores. This issue was addressed by using student language for the regression, where the null hypothesis of coefficient equality was not rejected, indicating a causal effect of management on student performance [15].

#### **Case Studies**

This section presents the case studies. Every school is different, with unique challenges, and thus, "school management" will take a different form in different schools. To reflect this diversity, one school that is better managed than average is combined with one that is worse than average. The former group comprises a government aided school from Kampala that is part of a public-private partnership and a secular lower secondary school in rural Wakiso district. The underperforming schools feature an underfunded non-formal school in Arua and a private school also in Arua, but with very poor results. This private school charges fees of just \$2 per term or thereabouts. Each school provides a rich case study of what school management looks like on the ground and how it relates to student outcomes. They are better managed than average and perform better in terms of student value-added. They have a strong and engaged head teacher, offer performance pay, materials support to teachers, and have invested in facilities. They also have a sense of heightened autonomy compared to the average. Teachers suggest a trade fair as a successful teacher training model that one school is likely to try and replicate. The two underperforming schools combined help shed light on some of the barriers to better school management, which are perhaps more starkly seen in a struggling school. The curriculum is not seen as fit for purpose there, given high levels of dropout and pupil migration. Replicating the tougher management models there may not be possible across all school settings. These schools are also hamstrung by long-term rentals in a district that has its own private school regulation body, the output of which has been more corruption. There are some operational, to avoid punishment and a lack of data needed to make informed teaching decisions [16, 17].

#### **Successful School Management Models**

Good school management is vital for enhancing educational opportunities and is a priority in many countries. Effective schools significantly influence student quality and outcomes, leading to significant interest from parents and governments. This section explores successful management models, showcasing case studies of exemplary schools to identify key differentiators. Insights emphasize Partnership and Stakeholder Management, where seasoned leaders work with outstanding headteachers to integrate effective business practices in education. Management models demonstrating substantial positive effects on student outcomes will be detailed, based on evidence from independent evaluations. The discussion will be thematically organized, recognizing overlapping themes. Successful schools share features such as excellent student outcomes, reduced performance inequalities, good attendance, and comprehensive development in social skills and well-being. They resourcefully enhance organization and procedural effectiveness, fostering a strong school culture. Successful institutions are responsive to their students' needs, reflecting an understanding of demographics and adjusting operations accordingly. They also maintain accountable governance that navigates complex budgets and diverse stakeholder demands. Reports on successful schools are not prescriptive templates due to education's cultural context; thus, "imported" models often require local adaptations. Nevertheless, elements of best practices from

successful schools can be beneficial if tailored to different contexts. The innovative strategies discussed are not unique to successful institutions but serve as examples that can inspire improvements in various educational settings [18].

### **Challenges Faced by Underperforming Schools**

These challenging narratives of underperforming schools talk about the management deficiencies in schooling. They consider the adequacy of resources, governance arrangements, and leadership quality. They interpret underperformance within a broader framework that dissects the real roots behind the mythification of school management in the school-effectiveness literature. These school-based narratives of underperformance provide case studies of some of the practical obstacles to the implementation of supposedly effective management and development strategies. This paper also explores how a range of external factors, including the broader educational and policy environment of the late 1980s and early 1990s, constrained and largely reversed previous community attempts to implement more effective management strategies. This contextualization raises general methodological and theoretical issues about the whole school-effectiveness movement and echoes a need for a more critical and reflective stance on the part of all concerned. Population-based analyses of South African educational statistics appear to indicate systemic discrimination in the delivery of educational resources and services. The mismanagement of schooling, together with a range of practical barriers to learning in under-placed schools, appears to underpin those high levels of functional illiteracy, absenteeism, and student underperformance commonly referred to in governmental discourse assessing the post-Apartheid educational environment 10. A multiple-loop model shows that inadequate management can threaten school functioning in a wide range of areas. Pressure from growth in the school population, the increasing complexity of regulations in resources, advantage of more resources by some schools, constituency pressure, community problems and changes, etc., can be expected to exert an influence on the quality of schools. Operations Research provides an approach to studying the problem of principal and managerial effectiveness. An analysis can then be attempted to determine the impact of management strategies, or how best to act upon the various 'sources of pressure'. This, hopefully, can provide useful insights into the levers available to the local management and to the DOEs and assist in redirecting policies in areas other than those currently considered [19].

### **Recommendations**

This research has taken a unique, multifaceted approach to assessing school management strategies and their impacts on student outcomes in South Africa. The recommendations for re-evaluation suggest that all decisions and interventions must be based on a comprehensive understanding of school-level processes and systems. Strengthening the appraisal of schools will require enhancing the regular collection of data about school management. Currently, very few indicators are gathered, but with a more focused monitoring of schools, more meaningful information can be extracted. This would require an emphasis on timely and comprehensive reporting from district offices and caretaker groups. Further investigation of school management processes is required to assess the extent to which the policy thrust is congruent with the needs of schools. Additionally, deviation from intended implementation at the school level requires a system of regular checks to ensure the correct interpretation of policy. There is also a need to investigate the broader impact of school leadership on schools, particularly the influence on the prevalence of bullying and violence among learners. These features are considered good proxy indicators of a school's functionality. A failing school management team first loses control of teachers, resulting in a precedent for other forms of conflict and the breakdown of social order more generally. In this specific context, a school's ability to avoid conflict has a direct impact on its ability to sustain teaching and learning. Therefore, it is essential to investigate school dynamics from a wider perspective, particularly in how schools match or do not match community expectations [20, 21].

### **Future Research Directions**

Given very limited research, types have not been able to fully account for students' home environment and background. There is potentially a massive amount of unobservables related to and not related to school management that affect student performance and which could be exacerbating the noise from unmodelled time-varying elements of a school. The home environment affects student performance, Research has shown that a prosperous home environment goes a long way in determining how well a student does in school later on. It is only very recently that researchers have started to grapple with the question of the long-term effects of school management practices. Research has only shown fairly recently that in many respects, the management literature's understanding of how best to organize for the

production of a product or service has been lacking. There are areas of research still untouched by the current literature that could have important implications for the management of schools. As field experiments in the social sciences are very rare, gaining insight from the management literature about the formulation of testable hypotheses is a key step towards a richer educational economics agenda. Future research should use more interdisciplinary methodologies, particularly those that enable economists and education scientists to learn from (and expand the knowledge of) other disciplines. Thus, more interdisciplinary studies are likely to give a fuller understanding of which factors are important in maximising educational outcomes. Additionally, the majority of econometric studies in this field are conducted with small sample sizes. More research should be done using larger datasets than have been done so far to test the robustness and generalizability of these results. Economists, education scientists, and the other disciplines should take on larger and more ambitious projects that combine efforts and knowledge to collect a very large and diverse dataset. On its own, this research cannot hope to fully understand and capture all facets of something as complex as school management, however, the results suggest that in general, it is on the right track. The results find that management is a critical input into the production of education and that school principals acting like middle managers mediate the effects of this management on pupil performance. Moreover, the results suggest that researchers, for the most part, have not been asking the right questions and point towards a number of new frameworks and methodologies that could be usefully applied to study school management and its effect on educational outcomes more broadly. Research, in turn, requires that data be available, and there does not currently exist a lot of publicly available information for the vast bulk of the 25,000 schools in the UK. Collaboration between researchers, educators, and policymakers is required to drive a large program of work to build knowledge and understanding in this area. The educational landscape is dynamic, and the results suggest that the use of school management practices as a force for educational reform may help to drive higher levels of pupil performance [22, 23].

### CONCLUSION

The study underscores the pivotal role of school management in shaping student outcomes, particularly in under-resourced and disadvantaged communities. Effective management practices, including strategic resource allocation, leadership development, and performance monitoring, contribute significantly to improved educational results. However, challenges such as insufficient data, socio-economic disparities, and policy limitations hinder optimal implementation. The findings emphasize the need for policy reforms that strengthen school leadership, enhance accountability, and promote evidence-based decision-making. Future research should further explore the long-term impact of school management strategies on student achievement and identify best practices adaptable to diverse educational settings.

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