MODULE SIX

UNIT ONE

Indicators and Characteristics of School Effectiveness

Introduction

Schools and education authorities have become increasingly aware of the need to be effective. This is partly due to the pressures for accountability brought about by governments at the federal, state and local government levels and the parents, and by the economic down turn and resulting reduced resource allocations. At the same time a realisation of the importance of the issue has grown as school heads and staff have sought to increase effectiveness in the school setting as a part of the development of professionalism. In this unit, you will focus on the concepts and characteristics of learning and teaching effectiveness, and consider your role in the process of monitoring school effectiveness.

Individual study time: 3 hours

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit you should be able to:
• explain the concepts of effectiveness, monitoring, evaluation, accountability, assessment and performance in the school setting
• identify the characteristics of an effective school
• describe when and how learning and teaching are effective in the school setting
• state the characteristics of effective guidance and counselling for school pupils
• outline the qualities of a good head as a leader
• explain how school ethos and policies contribute to school effectiveness.

Terminology

In order to avoid ambiguity in the interpretation of the contents of this module, the following definitions are suggested:

Monitoring: This can be defined as collecting information at regular intervals about ongoing projects or programmes within the school system, concerning the nature and level of their performance. Regular monitoring provides baselines against which to judge the impact of inputs.

Effectiveness: This is the extent to which the set goals or objectives of a school programme are accomplished. Such effectiveness can be seen in relation to either the quality, quantity, equity or equality of educational instruction given in a school.

Efficiency: This is the extent to which the inputs produce the expected output in a school setting. Increased efficiency means achieving the same or better outputs with fewer or the same inputs.

Accountability: This is the process of justifying to others our job performance in relation to agreed goals and targets.

Evaluation: This is a formal process, carried out within a school setting and designed for particular educational purposes. It involves asking questions, gathering information and forming conclusions. The evaluation could be formative or summative in nature.

Assessment: This involves the measurement of performance against a set of criteria.

In the above list of terms a simple definition of effectiveness was given; but what exactly does this mean?

What is effectiveness?
In discussions to determine what we mean by 'effectiveness' we find that a number of terms and concepts will constantly crop up, including efficient, improvement, quality, development, evaluation, monitoring, reviewing, professional, appropriateness, accountability, performance, etc. This shows us that the concept of effectiveness is very broad, ranging over purpose, effort and accomplishment. Measurement may be used but it also involves judgement. The determinants are manifold and complex. Thus, the head may perceive the school's effectiveness as the pupils' performance in the external examinations. The parents may perceive the school's effectiveness in the way the pupils behave at home, and perform at national examinations. Society may perceive the school's effectiveness in terms of the good moral behaviour of the children. The government may use a combination of indicators. For example, the Federal Government of Nigeria's Policy on Education focuses on the following indicators of the school setting:
• internal performance indicators
• operating indicators
• external performance indicators
• staff productivity indicators.

These are summarised in Fig 1.

Fig 1 Indicators for measuring school effectiveness

1 **Internal performance indicators**	2 **Operating indicators**
Average length of study	Class sizes
Success rate: graduation rates	Staff/pupil ratios
Distribution of pupils	Pupil workloads
Market share of applicants	Resource usage
Teaching performance	Space usage
Pupil learning outcomes	Assets and equipment

3 **External performance indicators**	4 **Staff productivity indicators**
Acceptability of graduates	Publications
Destination of graduates	Contracts
Employer/community feedback	Invitations
Awards and honours	Citations and qualifications
	Membership in professional bodies

Activity 1.1
List ten ways in which you can recognise that your school is effective.

10 minutes

Comments
It will be useful now for you to compare the list you have made with the one below, and then attempt to make some assessment of your school's effectiveness on these indicators:
• purposeful leadership of the staff by the head
• the involvement of the heads of department
• the involvement of other teachers
• structured lessons
• intellectually challenging teaching
• work-centred environment
• maximum communication between teachers and pupils
• efficient and accurate record-keeping
• parental and community involvement
• positive climate
• consistency among teachers
• productive division of labour among teachers
• good parental report.

It is clear that there are very many ways of judging an effective school and your list may have been somewhat different. However, heads often overlook many of these factors, and it would be useful for you to examine some of them more carefully, and for you to reflect on the effectiveness of your school.

Effective learning and teaching
The quality of learning and teaching should take precedence over other factors of school effectiveness. This is because effective learning and teaching determines the perceptions of everyone who is interested in the quality of your school. Because effective learning and teaching start from the classroom, let us see how pupils learn effectively in a classroom situation. Pupils learn effectively when they:
• are motivated
• understand the purpose and relevance of their work
• are set about tasks in an orderly way
• are able to use available resources and know where and when to ask for help

• show consideration for one another and for the teacher
• rise to the challenge of working and show commitment
• have first-hand experience and are able to observe, estimate, record, measure, collect, classify and interpret
• formulate and test hypotheses
• acquire key information and are able to recall it in new contexts
• plan, choose and take responsibility for their learning
• acquire study skills and use resources well
• revise and practise to improve performance
• receive feedback on their progress from teachers and from other pupils
• present good work for others to see or hear
• undertake tasks in their own time and out of school
• work co-operatively in groups
• read, write, listen and discuss in a variety of contexts
• experience the creative aspects of individual subjects.

Activity 1.2
(1) Which of the above factors overlap?
(2) Which of these factors would you suggest may be found in your school?
(3) Can you add to this list?

20 minutes

The following tabulation format might assist you in recording your answers to the above exercise; you may adopt a different method if you wish.

Exercise(1)	Exercise (2)	Exercise (3)
1 2 3 4 5 6		

Comments
It is an accepted fact that really effective learning requires a good teacher. This implies that there are certain key qualities of an 'effective teacher'. You may find it useful to consider the answers you gave to the above activity in relation to the following qualities of an effective teacher:

patience, firmness, enthusiasm, calm control, tolerance, ability to generate an atmosphere of purpose, understanding,
seeing learners as individuals, ability to communicate effectively, a genuine interest in pupils, valuing pupil contributions, encouraging, emotionally stable, physically stable, willingness to praise, fairness.

Activity 1.3
(1) Can you suggest other qualities that an effective teacher should have?
(2) Identify the qualities of teachers in your school in relation to their ability to teach effectively.
(3) Which qualities, if any, would you suggest are generally lacking amongst your teachers?

20 minutes

Comments
Before a teacher can be effective, he or she must plan and organise their teaching well. The following are guidelines for an effective teacher in planning and organising teaching:

1 Be clear about the objectives both for each lesson and for the whole programme.
2 Plan each lesson well, anticipating where questions, explanations and feedback will be appropriate.
3 Allow learners to reach outcomes in different ways.
4 Provide resources in such a way that allows learning to progress with little interruption.
5 Use learning groups of different and appropriate sizes.
6 Match methods and tasks to the abilities of pupils.
7 Use the space available to best advantage including the use of displays.
8 Set tasks in varied and imaginative ways.
9 Be aware of other approaches to learning used by colleagues.
10 Put the children's interest first.

The collection of information about teaching styles and the extent to which they are successful becomes crucial if teachers in your school are to improve their learning and teaching processes. Observation of classroom practice and the systematic collection and reporting of data about the quality of teaching is essential.

For effective monitoring, the head should try to check on a day-by-day and week-by-week basis what learning has taken place. Here, the main judgements about effectiveness will be in terms of the quality, the quantity and the variety of tasks engaged in by pupils.

Effective guidance and counselling
One aspect of school effectiveness is the extent to which the head introduces and manages a programme of guidance and counselling of the children. This involves ensuring good relationships between teachers and pupils, meeting the needs of individual pupils and working with all the teachers to create a generally caring atmosphere. For effective guidance and counselling, the school head should note:

• the need for effective organisation structures in the school
• the need for effective communication.

Effective organisation structures
The school organisation structure and procedures should ensure the effective care of the pupils. They will vary from one type of school to another, but in general for effective guidance and counselling the following requirements are essential:
• appropriate information on pupils
• appropriate confidentiality at all times
• sound advice and reassurance for pupils and parents at important times of transition
• appropriate counselling sessions with the pupils and parents on a regular basis
• prompt responses in crises
• continuity of procedures for a pupil moving through the school
• effective forms of records and of record-keeping
• a policy in which all teachers and promoted staff are involved in information and review of the school policies.

Communication
Effective communication is an essential tool for the head in managing the school and ensuring that staff are aware of the pupils' needs at the right time. In respect of this the following guidelines for ensuring effective guidance and counselling are suggested:

1 Make a clear statement of policy which preferably all staff have the opportunity to formulate and review.
2 Apportion and describe jobs and relevant tasks.
3 Link guidance and counselling with the academic systems so that an all-round view of the pupil is available.
4 Give all staff an appropriate and satisfying role within the school's activities.
5 Ensure a flexible system which allows teachers to maintain an interest in a child rather than handing a case totally to a colleague.

In addition, there should be a regular review of the progress of pupils with specific problems, formally conducted interviews and general discussion on important issues affecting the school pupils. In some schools, a special office is created for counsellors.

Finally, it is important to consider effective communication with parents. This may be through the form of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings or during the visiting days.

Activity 1.4
Plan a visiting day for the parents of your pupils during which the parents and teachers can receive reports on the progress, problems and prospects of their children. You should list areas of interest to you, including those which fall within the area of guidance and counselling. Your objectives for the Open Day should be clearly stated in the plan. You might consider such questions as:
- what should the parents see and why?
- what should the role of the teachers be?
- how can all the pupils play some part in the programme?

School leadership

Leadership has been defined as 'The work a manager performs to cause people to take effective action'. The head is the leader in the school setting and he or she is involved in five main management activities:

Decision-making: arriving at conclusions and judgements;
Communicating: creating understanding;
Motivating: encouraging and inspiring people to take the required action;
Selecting people: choosing people for positions in the school;
Developing people: helping people to improve their knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

Effective leadership is essential for the achievement of results. The head's leadership strengths or weaknesses affect the performance of the entire school. He or she can:
• clarify or confuse objectives, the extent to which the curriculum is oriented to jobs, and criteria for measuring performance
• stimulate or inhibit optimum performance
• encourage or retard the use of his or her subordinates' best abilities, skills and interests
• provide or withhold incentives for growth and development
• enhance or undermine job satisfaction and morale.

Activity 1.5
(1) As a school head how would you answer the following questions:
- how democratic am I, and should I be?
- how much do I involve my staff in group participation?
- does this participation provide results or is it just a waste of valuable time?
- how do I use my authority without arousing resentment?
- how do I prevent my orders from being distorted by staff?
- are there some groups of staff who seem to respond differently to my leadership than other groups of the staff and, if so, why??
(2) As the head of your school list some of the characteristics you think you need to develop to improve the effectiveness of your leadership.

Comments
Your list will probably have included personal attributes such as: awareness, sensitivity and an understanding of human relations; skills in the techniques of ascertaining the cause of personal problems; mastery of the art of changing behaviour; and skills in on-the-job coaching. You might like to compare your list with the following summary of leadership characteristics.

The effective head:
• adds value to the resources of the school
• is a prime mover

• energises staff
• promotes the satisfaction of subordinates' needs
• builds a committed and cohesive work group
• sets an example to staff
• is a resource expert
• is a change agent
• is an essential link between staff and pupils.

School ethos
Most schools have traditions for efficiency, effectiveness and quality, which are reflected in the pupils' behaviour, dress, discipline or the school motto. Parents often choose a particular school because of their belief in its ethos as reflected in the teachers' attitude to pupils, the teachers' skills in developing relationships with pupils and general evidence that good relationships prosper.

As a school head can you suggest some other aspects? The following are identified as factors associated with a good school ethos:
• the general well-being of pupils
• teacher commitment and morale
• positive attitudes of teachers to pupils
• recognition of the motivating effects of praise
• a sense of identity and pride in the school
• suitably high expectation of academic progress and behaviour
• the quality of teaching
• the way the management supports the staff
• opportunities for pupils to participate actively in their own learning
• the range and quality of co-curricular activities and the opportunities to assume responsibility
• an appropriate degree of both co-operation and competition
• a concern to establish good relations with parents and the wider community
• staff consensus on the mission and values of the school
• pleasure in learning
• a sense of belonging
• courtesy
• firm but fair classroom management
• care for the fabric of buildings
• support from the government
• a functional and supportive former students' body
• sound school policies relating to such areas as the curriculum, teaching styles, assessment, guidance and counselling, provision for pupils with learning difficulties, discipline, resource management, management structure and procedures, homework and staff development.

An examination of school policies in each of the above areas will tell us a lot about a school's prevailing ethos.

Although there are common basic policies in schools, most vary from school to school; but differences occur also in the nature of policies themselves. Some policies are documented, while others are traditions and a part of the school ethos. There are administrative policies which differ from statutory/government ones. But having a policy is one thing, ensuring that it is implemented is quite another, and here, the head's role is crucial.

Activity 1.6

Indicate at least five areas in which your school has a clear policy available in writing, and using the format below, state whether or not and how you monitor those policies.

Policy	Monitoring method
Teachers must be in school at least ten minutes before assembly each day.	I stand at the entrance to the school with a stop-watch and record their arrival on a form!

20 minutes

Comments
The means you adopt to monitor the implementation of school policy will of course vary, depending on the nature of the policy. The important point is that monitoring and evaluating are essential for an effective school system, and may involve many agents and elements, and especially all the staff at different levels. In sum:

1 Each school has policies and practices which require monitoring and evaluation across all aspects of school life.
2 Individuals should monitor and evaluate their own practices, taking their pupils' views into account whenever appropriate.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing, therefore, are features of what should go on in every school. Everyone engaged in the process at whatever level, should seeking to improve the effectiveness of the school for the benefit of all concerned - staff, parents, the community, and potential employers. The various characteristics and features of effective learning and teaching and of the effective head have been explored in this unit. Subsequent units will look in more detail at how evaluation may be undertaken.

Summary
We started our discussions in this unit by looking at a few concepts, the major one being that of effectiveness. Some indicators of school effectiveness were identified (Fig 1), but there is no doubt that the effectiveness of the school is closely tied to the existence of some key school management characteristics. These include sound teaching and learning, functional school organisation, good personal relations, effective guidance and counselling, a good school ethos and effective leadership, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. The latter can be considered a defining characteristic of effective management.

A self-evaluation exercise
(1) As a school head, and using the knowledge acquired from this unit, write a brief account for your education ministry of the effectiveness of your school.
(2) Classify the various policies of your school and explain why some are more weighty and significant than others.