

The School Environment in the Effective and Ineffective Schools: Principals' Perspectives

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The principal and the School

- **Educational leadership**
- **People centered and achievement oriented**
- **Creating distinctive learning environments that predict teacher retention and school effectiveness** (Brown & Wynn, 2007)

Theoretical Foundation of School Environment

Field Theory:

Human behavior is the function of both the person and the environment. (Lewin, 1936).

$$B = f(P, E).$$

Leadership = f (principal's traits, the school environment)

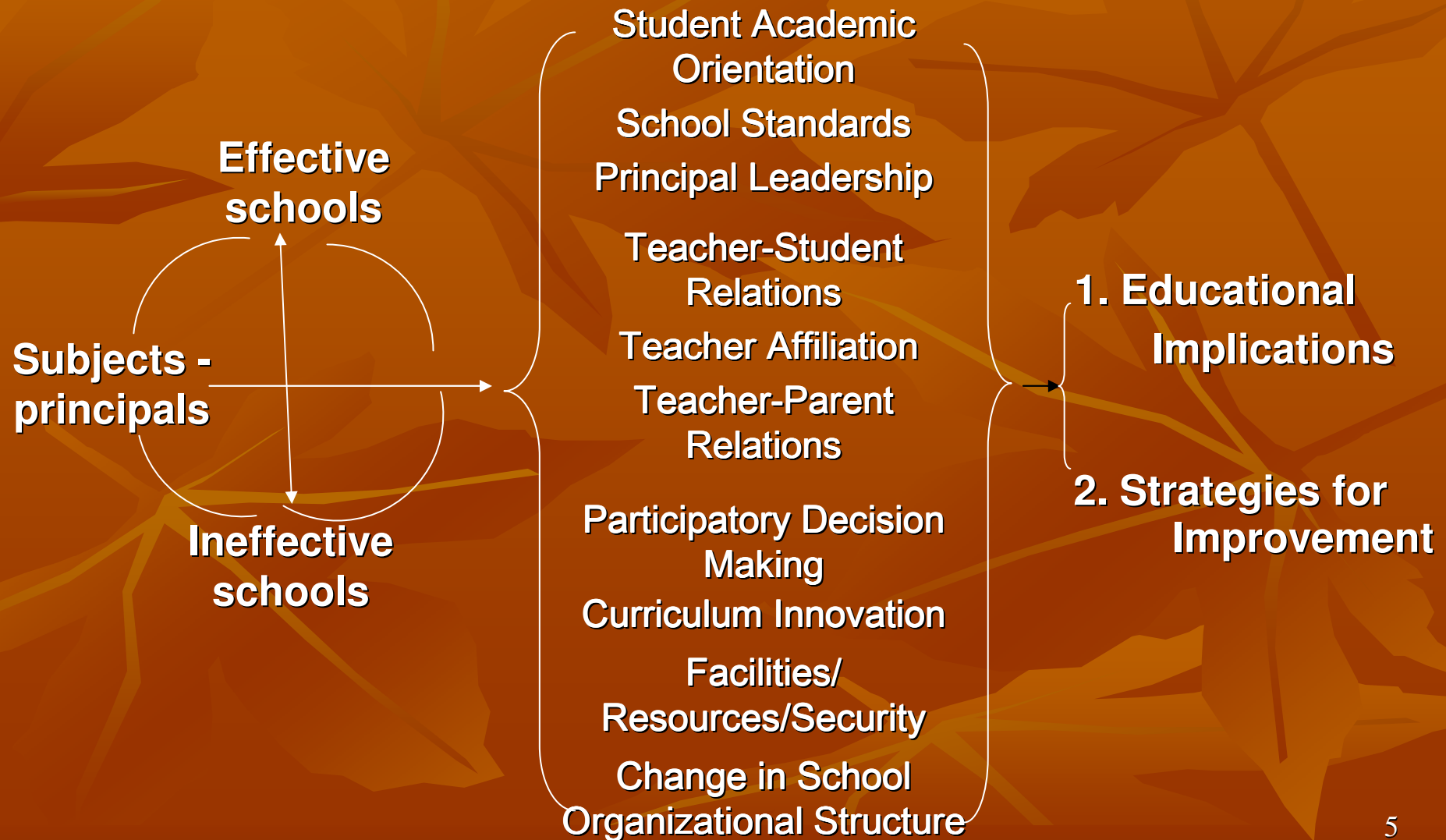
Two approaches:

Observation vs. perceptions

Conceptual Framework

- **The study adopts Moos' three dimensions model in Work Environment Scale (1981) :**
 - (a) the Personal Growth,**
 - (b) the Relationship, and**
 - (c) the System Maintenance and Change .**
- **The criteria for the classification of effective and ineffective schools :**
 - (a) the rating of schools by education experts, &**
 - (b) standardized test scores.**

A School Environment Model



Research Questions

- (1) Are there significant differences between effective and ineffective school principals' perceptions of their school environments?**
- (2) Do the two principal groups differ in their support of change in school organizational structures?**
- (3) What are the professional profiles of these two principal groups?**



Methods

Participants

**22 secondary public school principals in Taiwan,
11 each in effective and ineffective schools**

Instrument:

**School Level Environment Questionnaire for
Principals**

**10 scales, and each item was rated on a 5-point
Likert-type measure**

Table 1. Descriptions of the SLEQP Scales, Moos' Dimensions, and Sample Items (1)

| <i>Scale</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Sample item</i> |
|---|--|--|
| Student Academic Orientation (P) | Students are interested in learning and working hard. | Students are interested in learning new things (+) . |
| School Standards (P) | The school has realistic standards and high priority in learning. | The school places a high priority in learning (+) . |
| Principal Leadership (P) | The principal motivates teachers and lets them know what is expected of them. | I try to motivate teachers to work to their full capacity (+) . |

Table 1. Descriptions of the SLEQP Scales, Moos' Dimensions, and Sample Items (2)

| <i>Scale</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Sample item</i> |
|--|---|--|
| Teacher-Student Relations (R) | Teachers get along well with students, show interest and make students feel important . | Students get along well with teachers (+) . |
| Teacher Affiliation (R) | Teachers encourage and accept each other. | Teachers feel accepted by other teachers (+) . |
| Teacher-Parent Relations (R) | Teachers inform parents and think of parents as partners in educating children. | Teachers notify parents promptly about problems and needs of the student (+) . |
| Participatory Decision Making (S) | Teachers are often asked to participate in administrative decisions and work | Teachers have very little to say in running schools (-) . |

Table 1. Descriptions of the SLEQP Scales, Moos' Dimensions, and Sample Items (3)

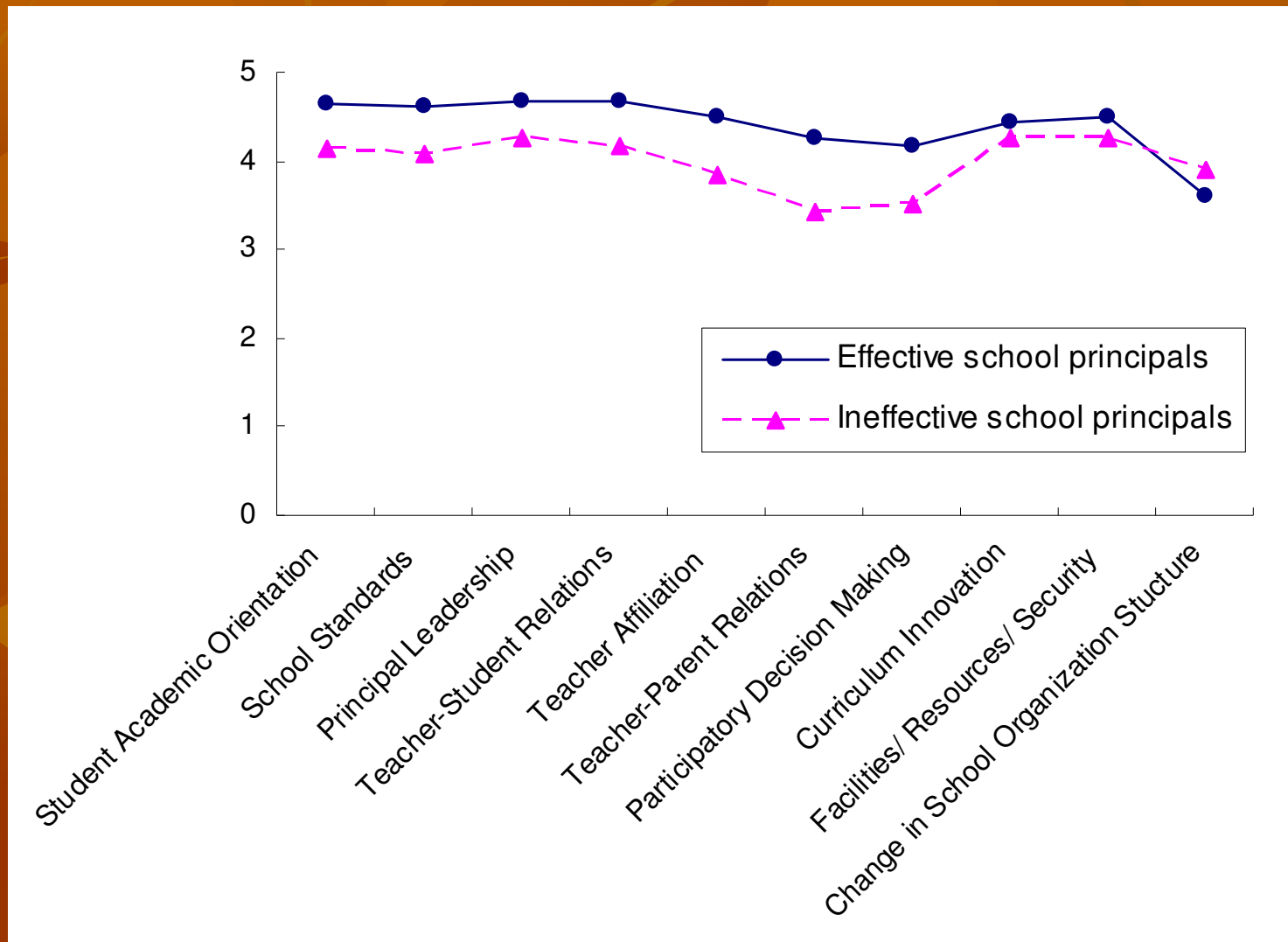
| <i>Scale</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Sample item</i> |
|--|---|--|
| Curriculum Innovation (S) | Creativity and innovation are encouraged and new courses implemented . | Teachers are encouraged to be innovative in this school (+) . |
| Facilities / Resources / Security (S) | The school is safe and its facilities and resources are adequate | Students usually feel safe in the school (+) . |
| Change in School Organizational Structure (S) | The school evaluates programs and opens to parent or student suggestions; school staff is effective in introducing changes or proposing improvement. | Our administrators and teachers are open to student or parent suggestions (+) . |

Table 2. Principals' Perceptions of Their School Environments in Effective and Ineffective Schools

| Scales | No. of items | Alpha Rel. | Effective M | Effective SD | Ineffective M | Ineffective SD | Effect size |
|---|--------------|------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| Student Academic Orientation | 3 | .64 | 4.63 | 0.25 | 4.13 | 0.48 | 1.31** |
| School Standards | 3 | .69 | 4.60 | 1.00 | 4.08 | 0.32 | 0.70* |
| Principal Leadership | 3 | .70 | 4.67 | 0.47 | 4.25 | 0.32 | 1.04** |
| Teacher-Student Relations | 3 | .86 | 4.67 | 0.47 | 4.17 | 0.33 | 1.23** |
| Teacher Affiliation | 3 | .84 | 4.50 | 0.64 | 3.83 | 1.11 | 0.74* |
| Teacher-Parent Relations | 3 | .89 | 4.25 | 0.57 | 3.42 | 0.96 | 1.05** |
| Participatory Decision Making | 3 | .68 | 4.17 | 0.92 | 3.50 | 0.84 | 0.76* |
| Curriculum Innovation | 3 | .84 | 4.42 | 0.57 | 4.25 | 0.57 | 0.30 |
| Facilities/ Resources/Security | 3 | .70 | 4.50 | 0.33 | 4.25 | 0.74 | 0.44 |
| Change in School Organizational Structure | 5 | .95 | 3.60 | 1.60 | 3.90 | 0.26 | -0.26 |

* *Effect size* > 0.50. ** *Effect size* > 0.80.

Figure 1. Principals' Perceptions of Their School Environments in Effective and Ineffective Schools



Discussion

The study identifies school environment variables that differentiate effective and ineffective schools :

**Effective school principals >
Ineffective school principals**

1. teacher interpersonal relations with students, colleagues, and parents,
2. students academic orientation and school standards,
3. confidence in their leadership,
4. teachers participate in decision making,

The Principal profile

Effective school principals >

Ineffective school principals :

- *having longer experience in teaching,*
- *serving longer as a principal at the current school, and*
- *reporting greater intention to continue as a principal for another term.*

Implications for School Effectiveness

Principal's perceptions of school environments reflect school effectiveness.

- As effective school principals had **stronger professional background**, strategies and policies may be developed to enhance principals professional competency.
- Effective school principals demonstrated certain **leadership traits** like promoting collaborative decisions, and setting high school standards. Principal preparation programs must develop these leadership traits.
- The **feedback** helps principals to understand better the strengths and weakness of their school environment, and reflect on their own leadership style for improvement.

Educational Implications

Theory & Policy --

Add to the goodness-of-fit of principals and school environments.

Practice --

Identify trait of effective leaders to guide improvements in principal preparation programs.

Future Research --

Increase participants and add qualitative data.

Explore other factors associated with principals' perceptions of the school environment.

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Thank you for your attention