






Identifying Dimensions and Components of Functional Performance Evaluation in Effective Schools with a Grounded Theory Approach

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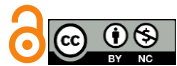
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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this research is to identify the dimensions and components of functional performance evaluation in effective schools using a grounded theory approach.

Methodology: This qualitative study utilized the snowball sampling method to gather opinions from 15 experts and specialists in the field of education in Tehran, as well as university professors.

Findings: The research results indicated that six central factors, ten main categories, and thirty-eight subcategories play a significant role in the performance evaluation model of effective elementary schools in Tehran. Additionally, the research's paradigmatic model consists of causal factors, including physical and technological factors, environmental health assurance, and individual health assurance for students; the central phenomenon includes active participants and the teaching-learning process; contextual conditions include components and elements of performance evaluation; intervening conditions include the principles and values of effective schools and educational organizations and policymakers; effective strategies for performance evaluation in effective schools include preparation for evaluation implementation; and the outcomes of performance evaluation in effective schools include achieving scientific and practical accomplishments.

Conclusion: Overall, this research has identified and analyzed these dimensions and components, providing a comprehensive model for evaluating the performance of effective schools in Tehran, which can help improve educational quality in this city.

Keywords: Performance Evaluation, Effective Schools, Managers, Elementary Level

1 Introduction

Performance evaluation of schools is one of the main pillars in improving the quality of education and enhancing the academic level of students. Performance evaluation involves the precise measurement and analysis of the current status of schools and their performance using specific criteria and indicators. This process assists educational managers and administrators in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of schools and in formulating improvement and development plans based on real data and information (Singerin, 2021). Performance evaluation not only aids in improving the quality of teaching and learning but also enhances managerial levels and the efficiency of human and financial resources (Rusdiyani & Kholidah, 2023).

The importance of performance evaluation in schools is noteworthy for several reasons. Among these reasons are ensuring the quality of education, continuous improvement of educational processes, increasing teacher motivation and job satisfaction, active parental involvement in educational processes, and ultimately enhancing student learning levels (Mehraban Helan et al., 2021; Moradi & Aminbeidokhti, 2019). Performance evaluation of schools should be designed to encompass all educational and nurturing aspects and provide a comprehensive picture of the current status of schools. These evaluations should be based on reliable and valid data to enable accurate and evidence-based decision-making (Englund & Frostenson, 2017).

Previous research on school performance evaluation has examined and analyzed various indicators. For example, a study by Pirhayati et al. (2023) examined the problems of Iran's educational system. This research indicates that the educational system's focus on information storage rather than the creation of new ideas has led to a decrease in the knowledge and skills of graduates and considers this one of the most significant shortcomings of the country's educational system (Pirhayati et al., 2023). Cheng (2024) emphasizes the importance of adapting student needs to environmental changes. He believes that given the rapid changes in environmental conditions, schools should enhance their performance in both content and teaching methods to align with new changes (Cheng, 2024). Another study by Javed et al. (2021) shows that many performance evaluation systems are inappropriate and have inefficient patterns. This research underscores the importance of establishing appropriate criteria for performance evaluation and the necessity of validating and prioritizing these criteria

(Javed et al., 2021). Therefore, effective school performance evaluation is an important and practical topic in the field of education, where determining appropriate criteria and indicators for evaluation, validating, and correctly using the evaluation results are key issues. Despite numerous studies and research, there are still weaknesses in the field of school performance evaluation. Most previous research has examined only specific aspects of performance evaluation and has neglected to provide a comprehensive and practical model for evaluating the performance of effective schools. The absence of a comprehensive model for school performance evaluation can lead to issues such as failure to accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of schools, a decline in the quality of education, and the wastage of financial and human resources. Additionally, the improper use of evaluation results and the lack of follow-up on necessary reforms based on the obtained results can contribute to the inefficiency of the educational system.

Consequently, there is a need for comprehensive research that addresses all dimensions and aspects of school performance evaluation and can provide a comprehensive model for evaluation. This model should encompass all significant and influential indicators on school performance and offer practical solutions for improving the quality of education. Accordingly, the innovation of this research lies in providing a comprehensive model for effective school performance evaluation based on a grounded theory approach. This research uses qualitative methods and expert opinions to identify and categorize central factors, main categories, and subcategories.

2 Methods and Materials

The present research is applied in terms of its aim, descriptive in terms of inference method, and qualitative-exploratory in terms of the nature of the data. The research population includes all experts and specialists in the field of education in Tehran, as well as university professors. These individuals were experts in the relevant research topic. The method for selecting participants in this study was snowball sampling. In other words, the researcher selected individuals from a spectrum of potential participants who could enrich the data pool required for theory construction. The criteria for selecting sample members in the qualitative section included:

- Holding a relevant degree in Educational Sciences and Educational Management.

- Having at least five years of experience in the field of education.

In this study, interviews with experts continued until no new information was obtained from new individuals, reaching theoretical saturation. Consequently, 15 interviews were conducted with experts. Additionally, interviews and grounded theory methods were used for data collection and analysis in this research. To ensure the reliability of the interview results, initial coding was performed and reviewed within a short period. Furthermore, the Cohen's kappa coefficient method, or inter-coder agreement, was also used. One of the experts was requested to collaborate as a co-coder in the research, being fully proficient in the research method. The researcher, along with the expert, coded three interviews, and the percentage of inter-coder agreement, which serves as a reliability index for analysis, was calculated.

The total number of codes registered by the expert and the researcher was 66, with a total agreement of 39 between these codes. The reliability between coders for the interviews conducted in this research was calculated to be 1.1% using the mentioned formula. Since this reliability level is higher than 60%, the coding reliability is confirmed.

3 Findings and Results

As mentioned in the methodology section, the present study utilized interviews for data collection and grounded theory for analysis. To collect qualitative data, a framework for interview questions was developed after reviewing the literature related to the research topic. Subsequently, 15 experts from universities and education specialists in Tehran were selected using the snowball sampling method. In the second phase, the interviews were coded using grounded theory. During the familiarization stage, significant verbal evidence was identified and extracted from the interview texts. To illustrate this stage, excerpts from some interviews are presented:

For instance, participants indicated that in addition to the indices of specialized characteristics and planning and organizing tasks, attention should be paid to timely identification and provision of needs and adherence to Islamic ethics when evaluating managers' performance. Regarding specialized characteristics, Interviewee 2 stated, "Managers must be present at the school before the students arrive and remain until after all students and staff have left." Concerning planning and organizing tasks, Interviewee 1 mentioned, "Setting rules and job descriptions for staff and

teachers, scheduling classes, organizing daily school programs, training and guiding staff and teachers for educational activities are essential tasks of managers in an effective school." Fulfilling these duties impacts the quality of managers' performance and helps them achieve high evaluation scores.

Furthermore, according to Interviewee 6, managers must be able to timely identify the conditions and needs of the school and take necessary measures. Managers need to be fully aware of what is happening in the school to respond to educational, administrative, and financial needs promptly. Adherence to Islamic ethics is another criterion highlighted by interviewees regarding effective managers. Interviewees 5 and 7 stated, "Having a neat appearance and appropriate attire in line with professional standards and Iranian-Islamic cultural values is mandatory for managers. They must respect the dignity and honor of teachers, students, and parents."

An effective school essentially produces effective students, meaning that students can achieve high levels of academic and personal growth. In this regard, students' academic motivation, self-efficacy or procrastination, and the acquisition of skills and knowledge are indicators influencing their performance. Interviewee 12 remarked, "In an effective school, students should reach an acceptable level of self-efficacy and personal growth, and their procrastination should decrease." Interviewee 2 added, "Student performance evaluation should clarify their literacy, skills, and knowledge acquisition." Interviewees 3 and 6 believe effective students should actively participate in school administration through involvement in study groups, celebrations, student organizations, and health ambassadors: "Student membership in organizations, councils, and group activities such as the student Basij, Red Crescent, Islamic associations, student councils, health ambassadors, and study groups impacts their performance" (Code 3). "Student participation in educational and religious activities such as communal prayers and ceremonies should be considered" (Code 6). Additionally, Interviewee 9 emphasized that students should engage in local cultural and sports institutions such as mosques, public libraries, cultural and artistic centers, sports clubs, and research centers to contribute to the community's progress: "Student membership in local cultural and sports institutions such as mosques, public libraries, cultural and artistic centers, sports clubs, and research centers is crucial" (Code 9).

Based on the above, significant verbal evidence from interviews was extracted, and their concepts were identified

as part of the initial coding stage. Subsequently, based on the existing concepts, subcategories and main categories were determined. Table 1 summarizes the results of open coding,

including the identification of verbal evidence, determination of concepts, and main and subcategories.

Table 1

Summary of Research Findings in Open Coding

| Main Category | Subcategory | Concepts | Quotation |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Active Participants | Effective Managers | Specialized Characteristics | "Managers must be present before students arrive and stay after everyone leaves." (Code 2) |
| | | Planning and Organizing Tasks | "Setting rules, scheduling classes, organizing daily programs, training staff and teachers." (Code 1) |
| | | Timely Identification and Provision of Needs | "Managers should identify needs promptly and take necessary actions." (Code 6) |
| | | Adherence to Islamic Ethics | "Having a neat appearance and respecting the dignity of teachers, students, and parents." (Code 5, 7) |
| | Effective Students | Academic Motivation | "Students' motivation impacts their learning and academic performance." (Code 2) |
| | | Personal Growth | "Students should achieve acceptable self-efficacy and reduce procrastination." (Code 12) |
| | | Practical Skill and Knowledge Acquisition | "Evaluation should determine students' literacy, skills, and knowledge acquisition." (Code 2) |
| | | Active Participation in School Administration | "Student membership in organizations and group activities impacts performance." (Code 3) |
| | | Role in Community Progress | "Student membership in local cultural and sports institutions is crucial." (Code 9) |
| | | | |
| Effective Learning and Teaching Process | Effective Content | Coordination and Consistency of Educational Resources | "There should be consistency between educational goals and content." (Code 1) |
| | | Content Based on Scientific and International Standards | "Content should be effective and based on scientific and international standards." (Code 2) |
| | | Challenging and Practical Curriculum | "Curriculum should be problem-based, interactive, situation-based, research-based, and action-based." (Code 4, 7) |
| | Effective Teaching | Updating Educational Resources | "Educational books and databases should be optimized and updated." (Code 4) |
| | | Cooperative Learning | "Enhancing cooperative learning through student grouping is effective." (Code 1) |
| | | Goal-Oriented Teaching | "The school should focus on goal-oriented teaching, not just rote learning." (Code 2) |
| Preparation Evaluation Implementation | for Defining Evaluation Steps | Notification of Evaluation Guidelines | "Workshops should explain evaluation steps and guidelines." (Code 1, 10) |
| | | Monitoring Program Progress | "Identify indicators and evaluate progress." (Code 1, 4) |
| | | Collecting Performance Data | "Collect evaluation results and document them in the system." (Code 1) |
| | | Analyzing and Diagnosing Performance Data | "Analyze quantitative or qualitative outputs and improve performance." (Code 1, 10) |
| Economic Provision | Capital | Financial Support | "Educational policies should prioritize financial support for schools." (Code 1) |
| | | Payment to Evaluation Executors | "Provide financial resources to evaluation executors." (Code 4) |
| Utilizing Professional Human Resources | Training Specialists | "Strengthening and training specialized personnel for school evaluation." (Code 15) | |
| | | Cooperation Among Groups | "Establishing cooperation mechanisms for effective school evaluation." (Code 7) |
| | | Forming Advisory Groups | "Forming advisory groups for proper program implementation." (Code 9) |
| | | Utilizing Experiences of Previous Managers | "Using the knowledge of previous planners and managers for better evaluation." (Code 7) |
| Purposeful Planning | Setting Annual Goals | "Annual school goals should be well-defined and documented." (Code 1, 2) | |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | | Collecting and Aggregating Data | "Collecting comprehensive data on school performance is mandatory." (Code 1) |
| Utilizing Scientific Standards | Global | Attention to Scientific Factors | Global | "Consider globally accepted scientific factors." (Code 2) | |
| | | | | Using Global and Local Approaches | "Utilize global expertise and local organization potentials." (Code 8) |
| Physical and Technological Factors | | Information and Communication Technology | and | Skill in Using Electronic Tools | "Staff and teachers' ability to use IT is essential for effective school management." (Code 5) |
| | | | | Smart Schools | "Smart schools significantly impact performance." (Code 7) |
| | | Facilities and Equipment | | Classroom Equipment | "Classrooms should have sufficient desks, teacher platforms, appropriate boards, etc." (Code 3) |
| | | | | General Equipment | "Schools should have workshops, libraries, healthy nutrition centers, etc." (Code 12) |
| Ensuring Health | Environmental | Safety Adherence | | School Safety Standards | "Adhering to safety standards like fire extinguishers, standard wiring, etc., minimizes risks." (Code 1, 15) |
| | | | | Identifying Safe Areas | "Identifying safe areas and educating students for emergencies is essential." (Code 12) |
| | | General Health | | Sanitary Facilities | "Sufficient sanitary facilities and cleanliness are important." (Code 8) |
| Ensuring Health of Students | Individual | Physical Health | | Conducting Medical Exams | "Screening tests, vaccinations, and self-care classes are essential." (Code 10) |
| | | Mental Health | | Assessing Negative Emotions | "Assessing stress, depression, and anxiety levels is recommended." (Code 11) |
| | | | | Assessing Self-Control Skills | "Evaluating self-control and anger management skills is necessary." (Code 13) |
| | | | | Assessing Positive Emotions | "Evaluating self-confidence, self-awareness, and satisfaction levels is crucial." (Code 15) |
| Educational Organizations and Policymakers | | Establishing Educational Justice | | Ensuring Comprehensive Education Coverage | "Promoting educational justice and providing facilities in all regions is important." (Code 15) |
| | | | | Promoting Awareness About Performance Evaluation | "Evaluation is a relatively new concept and needs promotion to overcome resistance." (Code 4) |
| | | | | Providing Proper Guidance for Evaluation | "Guidelines and instructions for evaluation methods, data collection, analysis, and reporting should be provided." (Code 8, 12) |
| | | Awarding Top Schools | | Incentive Measures | "Educational policymakers can adopt incentive measures like rewards and additional resources." (Code 7, 11) |
| | | Communication and Coordination | and | Facilitating Relations Between Schools and Evaluators | "Educational authorities can coordinate evaluation processes through meetings and technical support." (Code 15) |
| Achieving Scientific and Practical Outcomes | | Meeting Stakeholders' Needs and Expectations | | Meeting Society's Expectations | "Proper evaluation ensures educational activities meet societal expectations." (Code 12) |
| | | | | Meeting Ministry of Education Expectations | "The Ministry can use evaluation results for better school management." (Code 11) |
| | | | | Meeting Parents' and Students' Expectations | "Ensuring practical education increases parents' and students' satisfaction." (Code 8) |
| | | | | Meeting Teachers' and Managers' Expectations | "Performance evaluation ensures teachers' and managers' satisfaction and welfare." (Code 4, 10) |
| | | Continuous School Improvement | School | Providing Improvement Suggestions | "We can propose appropriate improvement solutions based on evaluation results." (Code 14) |
| | | | | Guiding Educational Programs | "Evaluation results help guide current and future school programs." (Code 3) |
| | | | | Facilitating Decision-Making Processes | "Performance evaluation accelerates decision-making processes in schools." (Code 13) |
| | | | | Increasing Preparedness in Crisis Situations | "Evaluation results prepare schools for unexpected problems." (Code 3) |
| | | | | Providing Models for Other Schools | "Providing accessible and executable models to other schools is a key outcome." (Code 10) |
| | | | | Reviewing Educational Laws and Content | "Evaluation results play a significant role in revising educational laws and materials." (Code 11) |
| | | | | Optimal Use of Resources | "Performance evaluation ensures optimal use of school resources and staff." (Code 15) |

Subsequently, and according to the grounded theory method, axial coding and categorization of categories into core dimensions were performed. Accordingly, Table 2

presents the components of the research model through identified relationships between the main and subcategories (open codes).

Table 2

Results of Axial Coding from Interviews

| Axial Coding (Dimensions) | Main Category | Subcategory |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Central Phenomenon | Active Participants | Effective Managers |
| | | Effective Teachers |
| | | Effective Students |
| | | Effective Parent-Teacher Associations |
| | | Effective Local Communities |
| Teaching and Learning Process | Effective Content | Effective Teaching |
| Contextual Conditions | Components of Performance Evaluation | Determining Standards and Evaluation Criteria |
| | | Determining Evaluation Methods |
| | | Identifying Evaluators |
| | | Determining Performance Evaluation Areas |
| | | Identifying Evaluation Tools |
| | | Scheduling Implementation Timeline |
| | | Setting Evaluation Conditions |
| Causal Conditions | Physical and Technological Factors | Information and Communication Technology |
| | | Facilities and Equipment |
| | Ensuring Environmental Health | Adherence to Safety |
| | | General Health |
| | Ensuring Individual Health of Students | Physical Health |
| Intervening Conditions | Principles and Values of Effective Schools | Mental Health |
| | | Conformity with Iranian-Islamic Standards |
| | | Wisdom |
| | | Establishing Balance and Cohesion |
| | | Respecting Educational Actors |
| | Educational Organizations and Policymakers | Foresight |
| | | Ensuring Educational Justice |
| | | Promoting Awareness about Performance Evaluation |
| | | Providing Proper Guidance for Evaluation |
| | | Awarding Top Schools |
| Strategy | Preparation for Evaluation Implementation | Communication and Coordination |
| | | Defining Evaluation Steps |
| | | Securing Economic Capital |
| | | Utilizing Professional Human Resources |
| | | Purposeful Planning |
| Outcome | Achieving Scientific and Practical Outcomes | Benefiting from Global Scientific Standards |
| | | Identifying Current and Desired Educational Status |
| | | Meeting Stakeholders' Needs and Expectations |
| | | Continuous School Improvement |

According to the results, the effective school performance evaluation process involves active participants, including managers, teachers, students, parent-teacher associations, and local communities. These participants, along with the teaching and learning process, which includes effective content and teaching, are considered central phenomena in the performance evaluation of effective schools. Therefore, it is necessary to precisely understand each of these components during the evaluation process. The performance of these factors is influenced by multiple elements referred

to as causal conditions. These causal conditions in this study include information and communication technology, facilities and equipment, school building safety, and health and safety principles. The synergy of these factors affects the performance of active participants in the school and the teaching and learning process. According to the model, evaluating the performance of active participants and the teaching and learning process requires professional and specialized human resources, economic capital, purposeful planning, defining evaluation steps, and utilizing global

scientific standards. These factors can be considered strategies for implementing the performance evaluation of effective schools. Additionally, attention must be paid to the components and elements of performance evaluation. Before conducting an evaluation, it must be determined who will conduct the evaluation, with what tools, by which methods, at what time, and based on which indices and criteria. Accurate identification of these elements ensures proper and precise evaluation execution. The role of principles and values of effective schools and the role of educational organizations and policymakers cannot be overlooked, as each influences the evaluation process in its way. Ultimately, accurately conducting performance evaluation yields positive outcomes, the most important of which include achieving scientific and practical accomplishments, continuous school improvement, meeting stakeholders' expectations, and identifying the current and desired educational status.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

The present research has identified various dimensions and components for evaluating the performance of schools. Using the grounded theory method, this study has identified and analyzed key components that play a significant role in improving school performance.

One of the most important identified dimensions is effective management. Results indicate that experienced managers with high managerial skills can significantly improve teaching and learning quality. Managerial indices such as planning, organizing, directing, and controlling were examined in this study, showing that effective management increases coordination and efficiency in schools. Parent involvement is another key component addressed in this research. Results suggest that active parent participation in school programs and continuous interaction with teachers lead to improved student academic performance. This component shows that parents, as key partners in the educational process, can play a crucial role in supporting and encouraging students.

Adapting student needs to environmental changes is also identified as a significant factor. Given the rapid changes in environmental conditions and varying student needs, schools must enhance their performance both in content and teaching methods. This adaptation helps increase the flexibility and responsiveness of schools, ensuring education aligns more closely with students' real and current needs. Teaching quality is another critical dimension identified. Teaching

quality depends not only on teachers' skills and knowledge but also on the use of modern teaching methods. This research has shown that improving teaching methods and using new technologies can enhance student learning. Additionally, support and resource provision are highlighted as vital dimensions. Providing adequate and appropriate resources for schools, including financial, educational, and technological resources, plays a crucial role in increasing school efficiency and effectiveness. Without sufficient resources, even the best programs and teaching methods cannot be properly implemented.

Student participation is the last important component identified in this research. Active student participation in educational processes and school decision-making can increase their motivation and engagement, facilitating improved academic performance. Students should be considered the primary stakeholders in the educational process and be given opportunities for active participation in decision-making.

The results of this research align with previous studies (Budak et al., 2020; Cheng, 2024; Englund & Frostenson, 2017; Javed et al., 2021; Liskayani et al., 2019; Lyu et al., 2020; Mehraban Helan et al., 2021; Moradi & Aminbeidokhti, 2019; Pirhayati et al., 2023; Rusdiyani & Kholidah, 2023; Sanusi et al., 2020; Singerin, 2021; Syihabuddin & Abidin, 2020; Udit et al., 2020). For instance, Cheng (2024) emphasized the importance of adapting student needs to environmental changes, stating that schools should enhance their performance both in content and teaching methods to match new changes. This study also emphasized the importance of this component, showing that adapting student needs to environmental changes helps improve educational quality (Cheng, 2024).

Overall, this research has identified and analyzed these dimensions and components, providing a comprehensive model for evaluating the performance of effective schools in Tehran, which can help improve educational quality in this city. Using this model can assist planners and educational managers in identifying schools' strengths and weaknesses and planning for performance improvement. However, one limitation of this study is its primary focus on schools in Tehran, and its results may not be fully generalizable to other cities and regions. Environmental, cultural, and economic conditions in different areas can create differences in school performance and needs that this study did not address. Therefore, future researchers are recommended to conduct more comprehensive and extensive studies, including schools from various regions across the country. These

studies can examine the functional differences and similarities of schools in urban and rural areas, regions with different economic levels, and communities with diverse cultures. Such studies can help develop more comprehensive and suitable performance evaluation models for various school conditions and needs nationwide, facilitating generalization of results and providing more effective solutions for improving educational quality across all areas.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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