Chapter 17
Approaches towards Measuring Success in Public Elementary Schools

Maciej Brzozowski
Poznan University of Economics and Business, Poland

Eyal Jacob Keydar
TAMAR Regional Elementary School, Israel

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines new directions in theory and practice of measuring schools' success. Relevant literature is synthesized to provide a holistic picture of current knowledge of the topic, highlighting meanings, principles and consequences. The chapter discusses the nature of success in schools. The major aim of the research is to analyze the most popular approaches towards measuring the success of schools, including effectiveness, efficiency, performance, and accountability. This chapter suggests measuring the success in public elementary school, based on extended set of measures and indicators. The expanded set of measurements could increase the validity of inferences about schools' effectiveness as well as efficiency and offer relevant information to principals and teachers about how to improve the school's performance.

INTRODUCTION

In addition to academic achievements, public elementary schools have other important goals, including: preparation of students for life after school, focus on social and behavioral outcomes, nurturing values (universal, national, local, organizational) among the students, promote values of assuming personal responsibility, ameliorate the ability to work in teams, cultivate civic awareness, strive to good physical health and the avoidance of addictive substances. Developing such a set of indicators of these additional goals will provide a reliable and useful set of information for those working to make schools better, such as policy-makers, educators, parents, and the public stakeholders. Equipping citizens with a wide range of skills is necessary to achieve their full potential, participate in an increasingly interconnected global

economy, and ultimately convert better jobs into better lives is a central preoccupation of policy makers around the world (Achiron, 2013). Considering the fact that the quality of local public schools also plays an important role in community satisfaction, homebuyers consistently identify school quality as one of the most important factors influencing decisions about where to live (Neal & Watling Neal, 2012).

The potential benefits of an expanded set of measures are that they could make provisions for:

- Allowing an accurate assessment of a wide range of school's characteristics.
- Promote more valid inferences about school's performance by offering opportunities to compare performance on multiple overlapping dimensions.
- A more balanced set of incentives to teachers and principals to improve the performance in multiple areas.

Schools may track interim progress and ultimate outcomes related to both school environment (including school culture, connectivity, and teacher and leader engagement and effectiveness) and student performance (including student progress and student outcomes) (Kutash et al., 2010).

The objectives of this chapter are to open a wider perspective on the way public elementary school's effectiveness, efficiency and performance are evaluated and their success measured in a variety of fields and according to a wide range of goals.

The nature of success in schools will be discussed in this chapter. The most popular approaches towards measuring the success of schools, including effectiveness, efficiency, performance, and accountability will be analyzed. This chapter tries to build a discussion, associated with educational outcomes and the strategies for reaching those outcomes, by using a recognized dichotomy of efficiency vs. effectiveness from the general management field and afterwards goes on to discuss the terms of school performance, in the tradition of public performance papers from the field of public administration, esp. the New Public Management.

BACKGROUND

Target achievement has become the main focus of organizations. When only some of the goals can be measured and rewarded, people will focus most of their attention on the rewarded goals to the detriment of the other goals (Ohemeng & Mccall-Thomas, 2013).

It is widely spread in most of the education systems around the world that the reason for performance measurement is to identify, how to improve student performance mainly by his or her academic achievements. It is associated with a desire to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of schools (Maddocks et al., 2011). Assuming students achievements imply on schools' success, a central component of standards- based reform is the assessment of students to ensure that they are meeting the expectations set out for them, to identify the schools that have students who are relatively successful (or unsuccessfully) in meeting these expectations, and to encourage them (Figlio & Loeb, 2011).

The school indicator system is generally dedicated to serving four main purposes:

- **Monitoring:** A school indicator system can be used as a way for policymakers or the public to get a clear picture of how schools are doing in terms of outcomes and processes.

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