PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

IN A CANADIAN AND UKRAINIAN SCHOOL:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The intention of this study was to examine parental perceptions in one Canadian and one Ukrainian high school as to what parents view as an effective school and also to compare the views of parents of both countries. A secondary purpose was to ascertain the characteristics that parents view as important for school choice. This study tried to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors do parents of one Canadian and one Ukrainian school define as elements of an effective school?

2. What school characteristics determine parents' choice of schools in both countries?

Data collection consisted of surveying one hundred parents of Grade 9-10 students in one school in Saskatoon, Canada and one hundred parents in a school in Chernivtsi, Ukraine. Parents were asked to complete a questionnaire which was developed based on the ten characteristics which Renihan and Sackney (2001) identified as elements of effective schools. Parents were also asked to indicate to what extent their choice of school was influenced by the suggested 17 factors, which were identified based on the findings in research literature. Also, they were asked to list three to five important reasons for their choice of school. These findings were analysed and the most frequently mentioned reasons were identified.

In this study, both the Canadian and Ukrainian parents agreed that the following characteristics identified in the literature are elements of effective schools, including school vision and purpose, leadership, a positive climate, academic emphasis,

professional community, instructional expectations, feedback, parental involvement, student involvement, and physical environment and resources.

Additional themes related to school effectiveness were identified by the participating parents, such as promoting/ preparation for postsecondary education and career information. This suggests that parents of students as early as in Grade 9 and 10 are concerned about their children's future and want their children to be prepared by the school for lifelong learning. The majority of the Ukrainian parents perceived physical environment and resources, including medical services, to be a very important element of effective schools.

With respect to the second research question, examination of the data revealed that the majority of both Canadian and Ukrainian parents identified the same factors as highly influencing the choice of school. These factors included opportunities for higher education, child(ren)'s happiness, high expectations for learning, academic standards, quality of teaching and reputation. Reputation was the most mentioned reason for school choice by both Canadian and Ukrainian parents. Parents in both schools commonly identified positive atmosphere as a factor in school choice. Canadian parents employed situational and family-related factors, whereas Ukrainian parents based their choice of school on key qualities of the school and preparation for university.

Parents' perspective on school effectiveness should be given more voice as parents are stakeholders in creating successful learning communities with student success at the centre.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to examine what parents in one Canadian and one Ukrainian high school perceive as an effective school and the differences in their perceptions. A secondary purpose was to assess what criteria parents used to choose their children's school. What does it require on the part of a school to be called "an effective" or "a good" school? All parents ultimately want the best for their children, so what is their view of "the best"? How are the factors identified by educational researchers as describing an effective school reflected in parents' choice of school for their children?

Generally, parents share common views and concerns in their desire to provide the best for their children. It is universal, and it simply seems to be the nature of parenting. The researcher intended to find out not only what characteristics parents sought in schools, but also how different these characteristics were for parents from two different countries, and even from different hemispheres. Coming from Ukraine and having lived in Canada for a few years, the researcher has had the opportunity to observe differences in the organization of educational systems and attitudes towards education in both countries, which appear to be rather considerable.

This study had a personal interest for the researcher since, along with learning more about Canada, it also gave her a chance to learn about the attitude of parents towards education in a post-Soviet independent Ukraine. With radical changes taking place in the political and economic environment in Ukraine, the current system of education has also been experiencing changes. With the introduction of the market economy at the beginning of 1990s, the way of life

and the philosophy of Ukrainian people have changed. Some values that had been around for decades have faded; some new attitudes are emerging.

The system of education in Ukraine is at the transformative stage today. It receives the necessary state and public support, but the economic crisis, a significant decrease of the GNP, and cuts of educational budget have affected the development of education in a negative way.

The idea that thinking about education is significantly affected by other economic and social developments, finds support in Levin and Young (1994, p. 300). Schools respond to changes in society and such developments always present interesting ground to investigate. Studying the current values and attitudes of people towards education, which was reflected in determinants of parents' definitions of an effective school, seemed rather appealing as it had personal interests for the researcher.

Although education, formal and informal, has existed in various forms for as long as man has lived, still there is not complete and unanimous agreement among people on what is the purpose of schools. Our current perception of education dates back to ancient Greece--in particular, Athens, where it was fashionable for the boys of wealthy citizens to attend schools for the purposes of instruction. From those early days, there has developed a tension between schools that focused on the development of the mind as fundamental to achieving the good life and those that instructed students in things thought immediately useful.

In the public eye, schools are viewed nowadays as being both the problem and the solution (Steller, 1988). On one hand, they are blamed for contributing to a multitude of social, economic, and political ills. On the other hand, they are viewed as major and sometimes the only institution capable to solve national problems. Reed et al. (2000) also said that the public looks more to its schools as a source of stability; it seems to want the schools to fix its problems and to

produce a society that is intellectually and emotionally healthy. The approaches and attitudes towards schools vary significantly. Some, according to Levin and Young (1994), see schooling as being primarily about developing individuality; others regard schools as training grounds for the job market; still others see schools as professional organisations.

This case study intended to examine how the surveyed Canadian and Ukrainian parents perceived the concept of an "effective school." What do researchers in Canada and Ukraine identify as "effective schools?" How has the school effectiveness research evolved over the decades? What are parents' perspectives on school effectiveness? Some researchers state there is no cross-cultural agreement on the subject of school effectiveness (Reynolds & Cuttance, 1992). For example, instructional leadership, which is considered to be of great significance in North American factors of school effectiveness, is not as important factor determining school effectiveness in greater part of Dutch research in this area (Creemers et al., 1989).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to examine parents' perceptions in a Canadian and Ukrainian high school as to what parents view as an effective school. A secondary purpose was to ascertain the characteristics that parents view as important for school choice.

The purpose was addressed through the following research questions:

1. What factors do parents in one Canadian and one Ukrainian school define as elements of an effective school?

2. What school characteristics determine parents' choice of schools in both countries?

Significance of the Study

The study is interesting and helpful as each school system may benefit from learning about experiences of the other. This can be useful in terms of enriching and discovering new

perspectives on issues that draw the attention of people in all parts of the world. The importance of these issues cannot be underestimated because our attention and thoughtful appreciation of them today may influence the quality of our tomorrow.

The findings of school effectiveness research can be applied in many areas, such as administration, curriculum and instruction, particularly in local school services and education department initiatives, such as evaluation studies. Schools may use the school effectiveness research findings to improve their own practices.

Another category of individuals with a stake in this topic is the actual consumers of education: parents and students. Finding a balance between what parents want and expect on one hand and what schooling can offer on the other hand can be quite challenging and is not always implemented in reality. Studies like this may be useful in moving towards establishing the balance since they would help us better understand those who are involved. It not only portrays the situation and differences in its interpretation within one country but also expands through views and perceptions expressed and discovered in another country with a dissimilar social, economic and political conditions – namely, Ukraine.

Delimitations

Several parameters dictated the context of this case study:

1. This study was delimited to two high schools: one high school in Saskatoon, Canada, and one in Chernivtsi, Ukraine.

2. The study was delimited to a survey of a random sample of parents from each of the schools.

3. This study was delimited to examining the parents' view on school effectiveness and determinants of school choice without attempts to evaluate the performance of these particular schools.

4. The study was delimited to concepts identified in the survey.

5. Survey data was collected from December 2002 to October 2003 in Canada and Ukraine.

Limitations

The following limitations applied to the study:

1. This study involved parents or guardians and not the views of others involved in the educational process, such as students, teachers and administrators.

2. The responses to the surveys were limited by the willingness of the participants to answer openly and honestly.

3. Generalisation of the research findings and conclusions were limited by a case study of two schools. There were clearly limitations to the validity of data generated in this way. The data could not provide a generalisable account of the views of all parents in Canadian and Ukrainian schools.

Assumptions

1. It was assumed that the data supplied by parents represented their true and accurate feelings.

2. It was assumed that parents had views of school effectiveness.

3. It was assumed that translation of parent questionnaires (from English into Ukrainian) and Ukrainian participants' responses (from Ukrainian into English) was accurate.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study the following terms were defined:

Culture - A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, as cited in Firestone & Louise, 1999, p. 299).

Effectiveness – a measure of the disparity between expectations and performance, or the extent to which an output accords with a stated goal (Dejnozka, 1983, p. 58).

Effective school - one in which pupils progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake (Mortimore, as cited in Stoll & Fink, 1999, p. 27).

Leadership - the proactive integration of an organization's people, materials, and ideas such that activities and efforts are directed towards realization of institutional goals. The willingness of an organization's members to be led is regarded by many as a function of the leader's personal qualities (Dejnozka, 1983, p. 94).

School effectiveness correlates – process qualities that have been determined by a body of research to exist in schools characterized by high levels of student achievement (Renihan).

Organization of the Study

This case study was intended to provide an insight into the parents' perceptions of effective schools. Some background to the problem and the purpose of the study were discussed in Chapter One. Delimitations, limitations, assumptions, definition of terms and an outline of the remaining chapters of the study were also discussed in this chapter. A review of literature concerning school effectiveness is presented in the second chapter.

A design of the study and procedures used in collecting and analyzing the

data are presented in Chapter Three. Data gathered from the study, data analysis, and the findings

are presented and discussed in the fourth chapter.   A summary of the study, conclusions, and

recommendations for the future research are made in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter was designed to provide a general review of the literature pertaining to school effectiveness. An attempt was made to define effective schools in terms of their characteristics or correlates. The first section of this chapter provides a historical overview of the school effectiveness literature; the second part contains a presentation of various characteristics of effective schools and the problems with research on school effectiveness, and the last section presents some of the criteria parents use for choosing a school for their children.

School Effectiveness Research: Historical Overview

The "effective school" is an ideal that educators strive for and parents seek. The beginning of research in the area of school effectiveness as a measure of school reform originated in the 1960s. Over the years, a considerable amount of research has accumulated that helps to identify the factors that characterize effective schools. One of the first studies investigating school influences on student achievements was conducted by Weber (1971). He studied four inner-city schools in New York that were performing above the national norms on standardized tests. A number of factors were identified that contributed to the achievements at higher than expected levels. These included the tone the principal set for the school, high expectations, quiet, pleasant learning atmosphere, acquisition of reading skills, evaluation of pupil progress, additional reading personnel, phonics instruction, and individualization of instruction. In subsequent school effectiveness research, the last three factors have not been validated (Steller, 1988, p. 9).

Rutter (1979) and his team conducted a longitudinal study of 12 inner-city schools in London. The researchers studied four student outcomes: achievement, attendance, behaviour, and

delinquency. All of the 12 schools had similar input variables, but the outcomes were quite

different. The researchers identified seven characteristics that accounted for the differences.

These were academic emphasis, skills of teachers, teachers' instructional behaviours, rewards

and punishments, student climate, student responsibility and participation, and staff

responsibility and participation.

Purkey and Smith (1983), in their comprehensive review of school effectiveness research,

presented a portrait of an effective school, which included organizational/ structural variables

and process variables. The organizational variables were:

1. School-site management
2. Instructional leadership
3. Staff stability
4. Curriculum articulation and organization
5. Schoolwide staff development
6. Parental involvement and support
7. Schoolwide recognition of academic success
8. Maximized learning time
9. District support

The process variables they mentioned were:

1. Collaborative planning and collegial relationships
2. Sense of community
3. Clear goals and high expectations
4. Order and discipline. (pp. 442-46)

Since the mid-1980s there has been increased interest in school effectiveness and school

improvement among researchers, policy makers and practitioners. As Bolen (1996) suggested,

this area of knowledge is trying to find answers to two primary questions:

1. What do effective schools look like?
2. How do schools improve over time?

Bennett and Harris (1999) talked about one of the characteristics of school effectiveness

research tradition. They believed its protagonists have established clearly what they consider as

"effectiveness". They have taken for granted that schools are rational, goal-oriented systems, that the goals are clear and agreed upon, that the goals relate to student achievement, and that achievement should be measurable. Effectiveness is directly related to achievement. Hence, effectiveness can be measured by comparing the level of achievement in these targets in order to identify in which schools students are achieving more, and which ones achieve less.

The other key characteristic of school effectiveness research has been its attempt to link the quality of performance with particular characteristics of the school. It focused more on the internal functioning of schools than the earlier tradition of input-output studies. A wide range of school characteristics has been identified and correlational research has been undertaken to link particular characteristics with higher student performance. The list of effectiveness factors developed by Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995) relates to school-wide and classroom-focused concerns, with a strong focus on leadership, unity, order and high expectations (p. 535). These characteristics are closely related to the factors that Steller (1988) earlier found consistent across studies in this area. They were:

1. Strong instructional leadership by the principal
2. Clear instructional focus
3. High expectations and standards
4. Safe and orderly climate
5. Frequent monitoring of student achievement

Levin and Lezotte (1990) suggested the following list of school and instructional characteristics that matter as far as reaching relatively high educational outcomes is concerned:

1. Productive school climate and culture
2. Faculty cohesion and collegiality
3. Focus on student acquisition of central learning skills
4. Appropriate monitoring of student progress
5. Practice –oriented staff development at the school site
6. Outstanding leadership
7. Significant parent involvement
8. Effective instructional arrangements and implementation

9. High operationalized expectations and requirements for students
10. Other possible correlates (e.g., student sense of efficacy, rigorous student promotions policies and practices).

Certain factors are repeatedly mentioned over the decades of research. This fact only stresses their importance as contributors for school effectiveness. Such attributes as effective leadership, positive school climate, high expectations, active student and parent involvement are often used to describe successful schools.

Effectiveness of classrooms and schools is a multifaceted phenomenon, which cannot be easily explained. The number of theory-driven publications emerged and there are now several models of effectiveness that can form a theoretical basis for generating hypotheses and research to test these hypotheses (Creemers, 1994; Scheerens, 1992). Although others believe that despite study after study producing effectiveness correlates, the school effectiveness field is nowhere nearer the goal of providing an adequate model of how schools function (Bennett & Harris, 1999).

Since schools do not exist in a vacuum, the social factor (in some researchers' opinion) cannot be disregarded. Reynolds and Cuttance (1992) believed that what is effective may vary in accordance with the context of the social environment of the school's catchments area and with the stage of development of the school itself. Scheerens (1992) also emphasized the importance of environmental or contextual factors on school effectiveness. This hypothesis is supported by the general notion of contingency theory from the field of organizational studies. It basically states that the effectiveness of organizational structures depends on the fit with environmental characteristics and the consistency of internal organizational configurations.

Schools today hope that together with acquiring basic academic skills students will achieve adequate self-concepts and positive attitudes towards learning. Schools want their students to acquire social skills.

Nikiforuk (1993), who holds a critical point of view, argued that society is demanding more of schools because schools have lost sight of what schooling means: "…they have forsaken their duty to uphold a public virtue that has always sought to evaluate its participants not on the basis of feelings, but on the quality of individual performance measured against standards of excellence" (p. 81). Although the definition of effectiveness has already been presented above, it is necessary to keep in mind that effectiveness can best be determined when a system does not involve a human factor. It is much harder to analyse the performance of people when evaluation, and particularly quantitative evaluation, is complicated by many circumstances.

Educational Goals of Ukraine

The goals can vary between individual schools and between societies according to different ideologies, so it is important to recognize that "effectiveness" is not a technically neutral or factual term (Harber, 1992).

As far as education in Ukraine is concerned, it needs to be looked at within its political and historical context. Fundamental changes in all the aspects of life in Ukraine, since it gained its independence in 1991, outlined new tendencies in development of education. The society's need for creative, active, intellectual citizens, the restoration of the national identity and longing for cultural renaissance gave life to introducing new concepts of school and alternative educational institutions. The goal of Soviet schooling was "a general development of individuality" which turned into social utopia since most students were overwhelmed by the very ideological, formal and overloaded education.

Today, the goals of basic secondary education in Ukraine, as defined by The Law on

Education (Constitution of Ukraine), include:

1. Upbringing of the citizens of Ukraine;

2. Developing of individuality of students, developing their abilities and talents as well as their scientific outlook;

3. Fulfilling the demands of the National Standard for secondary education by preparing students for further education and work;

4. Developing in students the feeling of respect for the Constitution of Ukraine, its national symbols, human rights and freedoms, promoting a sense of dignity, legal responsibility for their acts, awareness of their duties as humans and citizens;

5. Providing students with the right to free political opinions and worldview;

6. Promoting respect for their families, national folk traditions and customs, official and native language, other peoples and nations;

7. Developing in students a conscious attitude towards their health, promoting a healthy lifestyle, maintaining and strengthening their physical and psychological health. (Constitution of Ukraine, on-line)

These goals are reflected in the mission of the Lycee in Chernivtsi, which was the focus

of the Ukrainian part of this particular case study. It is an alternative educational institution that

identifies its tasks as teaching and upbringing students who will be able to act independently in

dynamic, non-standard situations and preparing the students for self-education and self-

development. The Lycee principal, A. Sigitov (1998), stressed that self-analysis, self-efficacy

and self-motivation are seen as crucial factors in developing individuality.

Defining Successful Schools

Definitions of successful schools as understood by students, teachers, parents may differ.

Haughey (1997), in an extensive study of 21 successful schools in Canada, revealed multiple,

overlapping definitions of success. One of the definitions meant completion of a grade 12

diploma and the promise of a future career. Another definition stressed the importance of student

acceptance of the culture of the school; student attendance, appropriate behaviour and a cooperative attitude were important in many schools. Haughey concluded that, although it received particular emphasis, academic success was only a part of a school's definition of success. The social curriculum was also important and teachers were identified as crucial in providing experience for student success.

Research conducted by Cheng (1999) in 64 schools in Hong Kong once again proved that the profile of effective schools was contrastingly different from that of ineffective schools. Effective schools were strongly associated with a "…commitment style environment consisting of a balanced principal's leadership style and open and autonomous social interactions" (p. 24). In the research literature (Louise, Toole & Hargreaves, 1999), the key leadership skill is described as the ability to unleash intelligence, creativity, insight, and self-initiated activity throughout the organization and to focus school improvement efforts on purposes such as authentic instruction and learning for its own sake. It was not the intent of this study to focus on the area of school improvement. However, school effectiveness and school improvement are two closely related fields of research and sometimes cannot but be mentioned together.

Hargreaves (1995) suggested that the head of an effective school does not necessarily have to be "the strong visionary head with a blueprint for travelling the journey of change towards a clear goal, but perhaps a pragmatic leader who continually steers the school carefully away from the dangerous rocks of the extreme positions" (p. 29).

Renihan and Sackney (1999) also identified leadership as crucial. As a basis of the school effectiveness review they used the following characteristics that construct effective schools:

1. Vision and purpose
2. Effective leadership
3. A positive climate
4. Academic emphasis

5. A professional community
6. High instructional expectations
7. Consistent feedback
8. Positive parental involvement
9. Student involvement
10. An appropriate and clean physical environment.

Stoll and Fink (1999) present a similar set of eleven school effectiveness factors:

1. Professional leadership
2. Shared vision and goals.
3. A learning environment
4. Concentration on teaching and learning
5. High expectations
6. Positive reinforcement
7. Monitoring progress
8. Pupil rights and responsibilities
9. Purposeful teaching
10. A learning organization
11. Home-school partnership. (p. 31)

The factors mentioned above and consistent throughout the school effectiveness research are important in making up an effective school. However, there are obstacles to the successful operation of these factors in different contexts. Harber (1992) described his studies of head teachers in Ghana, where the leadership role, although regarded as very important throughout research, could not be so crucial. A principal in that country is busy attending to other problems that are remotely connected with education and prevent him/her from providing inspired leadership and supervision of staff. Administrators in Ukraine are quite often in a similar situation.

Ushakovski (1999), when talking about successful educational organizations noted that:

1. Successful management of an organization includes analysis of the leaders of the organization, their personal characteristics, views and beliefs.

2. Process-orientation is more effective than result-orientation.

3. The key problem in developing of school organizations is a lack of cooperation and collaboration among the staff.

4. There is no best way of management – there are management ways that
   are adequate and inadequate to circumstances. (p. 114)

After the collapse of Soviet Union the need to rethink the goals and structure of Ukrainian education awoke great interest in foreign experiences in the area of school effectiveness. The research articles by Lezotte, Brookover, Rosenshine, Bloom, Hunter can often be found in Ukrainian education journals and newspapers. The newspaper "Osvita" offers the articles by Adam Urbanski (2000) who attempted to answer the question why some schools are better than others and what the common characteristics of effective school are. He found the following points as important in ensuring school effectiveness:

1. There has to be a consensus and understanding of what the students are required to know and what they are required to be able to do.

2. Schools need to be rather small in size, which will enable students to get to know one another. It can be schools within schools, satellite schools within other organizations, or other structures. But every school has to be a community, a learning community with outlined responsibilities for its members.

3. There has to be an active learning process that reflects life. Students need to study at the pace that they can manage, they need to work in groups; they need to use original sources rather than textbooks when studying literature. They need to develop the following skills: How to think rather than about what to think; how to build their own understanding; how to see the connections and reflect on experiences; how to solve problems and make decisions.

4. There has to be a diverse evaluation system that would reveal not only what the students know but also what they can do.

5. Teachers must be qualified for their jobs. They must know their subject and how to teach

it. They need to understand that the learning process will not be successful in isolation, but

only in cooperation.

6. All the decisions on school dynamics must be shared by all who are involved – teachers,

parents, administration, and students (in high school). Everybody's voice must be heard.

7. Safety and discipline are important. Effective teaching and learning is not possible in an

atmosphere of fear and disorder. Self-discipline is essential.

8. Schools need to work closely with the students' families, involving parents more. Medical

and social services must be provided to students when necessary.

9. A system of rewards and punishments must be employed, but it has to be very individual

and never controlling.

10. Finally, students and parents must have a right to choose schools. Schools, in their turn,

must have a right to introduce certain standards for behaviour and level of instruction. (p. 11)

Sigitov (1998) believed that the relations of the school and external environment factors

determine school effectiveness characteristics. These external factors are influenced by the

family, a group microclimate, and so on. Among the most important factors are general

tendencies of development of the society, financial, technical and staff provisions, current need

of highly qualified professionals. Sigitov (p. 9) also stressed the dependence of school

effectiveness factors on changes in the social and political structure of Ukraine and the prospects

of its development. He tended to consider the following factors as important in building an

effective educational institution:

1. Strong leadership (continuous process of self-improvement, consistency of purpose:

every student's success, management style)

2. Effective organization of teaching (attending to students' interests, teachers' genuine interest and morale, well-defined goals of teaching)

3. School climate (relations among staff, attitudes towards their work, job satisfaction, shared understanding of goals and common efforts in that direction, culture of teaching)

4. Academic emphasis (high expectations of students, supporting their successes, student cooperation, managing time and resources, use of instruction plans)

5. Measuring students' success (standardized national tests, well-defined testing criteria, evaluating the progress after each section of the program, continuous use of the results for further correcting and adapting the program, feedback)

6. Instructional materials (necessary textbooks and handbooks provided, instructional materials in consistency with the goals of the learning process, adapting materials to the goals of instruction and abilities of students, use of diverse instructional materials). (p. 10-11)

Problems with Research on School Effectiveness

School effectiveness research faces difficulties due to the complex nature of its subject, and, in this study, it is interesting and challenging to approach it, since an effective school is examined as defined by participants with different cultural backgrounds, European and North American in this case.

Among the problems with effective school research, which can be considered global, Cuban (1983) identified the following:

> Tied narrowly to test results in mostly low-level skills in math and reading, school effectiveness ignores many skills, habits, and attitudes beyond the reach of paper-and pencil tests. Educators and parents prize outcomes of schooling that reach beyond current definitions of effectiveness: sharing, learning to make decisions, developing self-esteem, and acquiring higher-level thinking skills (analysis, evaluation, etc.) and aesthetic sense (p. 695).

This point of view is supported by Scheerens (1992), who agreed that in the school effectiveness research school characteristics are often linked to output data. The most commonly employed output data are test results in basic skills such as languages and mathematics. Sometimes the focus is on financial input and organizational characteristics like a school's size. Sometimes other characteristics are studied, such as school leadership, aspects of curriculum and teaching methods. Associating these last three characteristics and output data is usually done by means of calculating correlations, which are totals that indicate how much high or low scores of a group of schools or students on one variable converge with similar high or low scores on another variable.

The fact that most of the school effectiveness research is correlational presents problems for the interpretation of results. While it is usually assumed that school characteristics are the causes and levels of achievement are the results, sometimes the opposite is true. Scheerens (1992) described several studies, which established that in schools where teachers have high expectations for students, the level of achievement was higher. He then argued that the high expectation characteristic can be both a cause and an effect of high level achievement.

As this particular case study explored the parents' views on the concept of an effective school in different countries, which are characterized by dissimilar cultural settings, another problem could emerge. Do all the characteristics apply to both countries and do they carry identical connotational meanings? The school effectiveness literature shows that the concept of school effectiveness has presented researchers with challenges. Macbeath and Mortimore (2001) pointed out that as school effectiveness studies have become more international the researchers have become more aware of those aspects of effective schools that "travel "across cultures and those that don't. They referred to the study of Postlethwaite and Ross, who compared 27

countries on 51 indicators, drawing the essential lessons: "one, no matter how thorough and controlled the study, the findings are necessarily exploratory and tentative; two, there was considerable difficulty in using indicators which meant the same thing in different cultural and linguistic contexts" (Macbeath & Mortimore, 2001, p. 15). They discovered, for example, that leadership did not appear as a significant factor in Switzerland or the Netherlands. That is explained in part by differences in conceptions of "leadership" and, in part, explained by structural factors. Researchers may too easily equate leadership with the head or senior management team, ignoring shared leadership in flatter, more democratic organizations. In the Postlethwaite and Ross study, for example, "educational leadership" was evaluated on four variables, all to do with the behaviour of the principal in consulting with staff and evaluating teachers' work. On the structural side, decentralization to regions, and the wide variety of practices within countries, should alert the researchers to the inherent dangers of generalization (p. 15).

Among the factors that make a difference from one country to another Macbeath and Mortimore (2001) identified the following:

1. The high standard of teachers and the recruitment of high-achieving students into teaching
2. Religious traditions and cultural aspirations that place a high value on learning and education
3. Confucian beliefs on the role of effort, striving and working hard
4. High aspirations of parents for their children
5. High levels of commitment from children keen to do well
6. The prevalent belief that all children can acquire core skills. (p. 15)

Parental Choice of School

In order to understand how schools are performing, it is necessary to listen to parents' views. The goals of education as formulated by educational institutions need to correspond as

much as possible with those that parents hold for their children and those that students see for themselves. Agreement on the goals and tasks provides for achieving better results. Stoll and Fink (1999) emphasized that "parents and teachers need to be 'reading from the same page' to promote pupil learning and development" (p. 135). They noted that contemporary education and what is happening in schools is often characterized by a high degree of uncertainty and in some cases misinformation. It only supports the importance of communicating meaningfully with parents, not only on the progress of their child, but also in terms of educational issues.

It is assumed that parents know what is best for their children. They need to be well-informed in order to make choices and act in the best interests of their children, most especially "in seeking out schools which will be characterized by good order, successful teaching resulting in good examination results, and with good records of pupils moving successfully into higher education, further training or employment. Good schools will be approved of by parents and flourish, others will not, and will have to improve or perish" (David, West & Ribbens, 1994).

The process of parents' choosing schools for their children has been the focus of attention of various studies by Edwards et al. (1989), West (1992), David et al. (1994), West, Noden and Edge (1998), and Ogawa and Dutton (1994). The voice of parents ought to be listened to as the schools of the future are shaped. Ogawa and Dutton (1994) noted that proponents of current choice initiatives in the United States argue that schools would perform better if they were "controlled by on-site professionals responding to parental preferences rather than by public bureaucracies governed by elected representatives" (p. 272).

Studies of parents' choice behaviour suggest that parents who do actively select schools for their children employ different criteria. Various findings on what factors parents look for in schools came from studying the reasons parents have for choosing either private or state schools

and for transferring their children (West, 1992; West et al., 1998; Edwards et al., 1989; Ogawa and Dutton 1994). Scheerens (1992) noted that private schools appear to be more effective, even in countries where both private and public schools are financed by the state. One explanation is that "parents who send their children to these schools are more active educational consumers and make specific demands on the educational philosophy of schools" (p. 17). This particular study did not aim to focus on specific kinds of schools differentiating between private and public sectors; however, the factors that influence the choice are this study's main concern.

Edwards et al. (1989), in their evaluation of the Assisted Places Scheme, examined the factors influencing parents' choice of secondary school. They compared parents with children in the state and private sectors and found that widespread importance was attached to the academic aspects of school choice, to examination results and the ladder of opportunity to higher education and "good" jobs". That orientation was relatively weaker among comprehensive school parents who were correspondingly more inclined to mention social aspects like "learning to mix with children from different backgrounds", and especially prominent among parents of children in maintained grammar schools (pp. 190-191).

West (1992) and West et al. (1998) looked extensively at the reasons by which parents explained their school choices for their children. The researcher suggested that middle class parents and/or parents with academically able children are not only looking for schools they perceive as "well disciplined" with an atmosphere conducive to work, but are also looking for schools providing a high quality education and in which there will be high expectations of what their children will achieve. Ogawa and Dutton (1994), in their turn, concluded that parents in their study, regardless of income or educational level, also held high educational expectations for their children.

The study conducted by West (1992) focused on the parents of children attending primary school in an inner London borough, who had considered sending their child to either a private senior school or to a secondary school in another borough. Among the characteristics the parents liked about the chosen schools were atmosphere/ethos/philosophy of the school (56%), school's environment/location/buildings and the staff, including the headteacher, (30%), and available subjects/facilities (14%). For both groups of parents the most important factor was the quality of education/academic excellence. This finding differs from that found in other research studies. West and Varlaam (1991), for example, found that good discipline was the most important factor and Hunter (1991) concluded that good discipline and emphasis on good examination results were the most frequently mentioned factors. It needs to be mentioned again, however, that West's 1992 study included predominantly middle class parents.

Four studies conducted by Ogawa and Dutton in 1994 indicated that, although parents uniformly emphasize educational quality as the characteristic that they seek when choosing a school, different groups of parents also base their selections on different criteria. Both public and private school parents cited school quality factors, emphasizing academic quality, most frequently. However, public school parents also cited situational factors, financial factors, and convenience or proximity, whereas private school parents emphasized moral and religious instruction and school discipline. The survey of parents who transferred their children between public and private schools in Montgomery County, Maryland described by Ogawa and Dutton (1994) revealed that those who transferred to private schools did so for reasons linked to academic program quality, sensitivity of administrators and teachers, and discipline and structure.

The atmosphere or the environment of the school is an important factor in the choice process. A school in which children are well behaved and actively engaged in their work will give a positive impression about that school to parents who visit it. Parents, who feel that their children are academically able or who are concerned that their potential should be fulfilled, need to know that there will be a "work ethos" within the chosen school. The principal and staff also play a crucial role in determining how the school presents itself to parents; particularly for those who have high expectations about their child's achievement (West, 1992).

A very important factor that parents look for, as found by West et al. (1998), is the children's happiness. However, the researchers suggested that the child's happiness may refer, in some families, to the child not being upset or being content, while in others it may be more linked to the child being able to fulfill parental expectations and ambitions.

Summary

The review of the literature was intended to provide a context in which to examine the questions of this study, namely "What is parents' definition of "school effectiveness"? and *"*What school characteristics influence parents' choice of schools in both countries"? The chapter also presented the educational researchers' definitions and findings on the issues of school effectiveness and school choice.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the research methodology is described, including the purpose of the study, research design, research methods, data collection, and analysis, and research ethics.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to examine parents' views on effective schools in Canada and Ukraine and to study what influenced parents' school choice. A case study methodology was used to examine the outlined research questions. Denzin & Lincoln (1998) identified three types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. In this particular study an instrumental case study method was employed, in which usually "a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory" (p. 88). The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else: "The case is often looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, but because this helps us pursue the external interest" (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 88). The case study may be seen as typical of other cases or not. The choice of case is made because it is expected to advance an understanding of that other interest.

Although single or a few cases are poor grounds for advancing generalization, a single case can establish limits to present grand generalizations. Case researchers try to find both what is common and what is particular about the case, but the end result usually presents something unique. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), uniqueness is likely to be pervasive, extending to the nature of the case, its historical background, the physical setting, other contexts, including economic, political, legal, and aesthetic; other cases through which the case is recognized, those informants through whom the case can be known

In this case study the researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to seek out and describe the parents' perceptions of the concept of school effectiveness and school choice. Quantitative research designs are well suited for identifying general trends in populations (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996, p. 585). Gall et al. defined quantitative research as "inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that features of the social environment constitute an objective reality that is relatively constant across time and settings. The dominant methodology is to describe and explain features of this reality by collecting numerical data on observable behaviours of samples and by subjecting this data to statistical analysis" (p. 767). The qualitative methods that were used support the qualitative paradigm that "assumes that there are multiple realities – that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception (Merriam, 1988, p. 17). These types of research are different in nature, so the question may arise, whether one approach is better than the other and whether they produce conflicting data. Gall et al. (1996) stated that qualitative and quantitative research can compliment each other by playing the respective roles of discovery and confirmation.

<center>**Research Methods**</center>

In this case study, the researcher looked at two high schools, one in Saskatoon, Canada, and the other one in Chernivtsi, Ukraine. Surveying parents together with examining the contexts of these particular schools was intended to help better understand the parents' perspective on the concept of school effectiveness, which was the researcher's interest, and to answer the main research questions.

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher and was designed as a survey instrument to elicit the parents' views. The data received from surveying parents provided both quantitative and qualitative information on the research questions. Gall et al. (1996) advised that

it is helpful to vary in some way the approach used to generate the finding the researcher intends to corroborate. For that purpose, open-ended questions were included in a parent questionnaire. The researchers call this process "triangulation". It is the process of using multiple data-collection methods, data sources, analysts, or theories to check the validity of case study findings. Triangulation helps to eliminate biases that may result from relying exclusively on any one data-collection method, source, analyst or theory.

Two research methods that were used in this case study in order to examine the main research questions are generally used in two different types of research. The questionnaire is more commonly used in quantitative research, because its highly structured design is compatible with this approach. The open-ended questions are more commonly used in qualitative research, because they permit exploration of topics by respondents. However, both methods can be used in either type of research, complementing each other and providing rich findings.

The quantitative data were obtained by offering parents a list of 30 statements that dealt with elements of an effective school (See Appendix A). The respondents were asked to respond to statements on a five-point Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. They were asked to select one of the following response alternatives: *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Neutral*, *Disagree*, *Strongly Disagree*. The statements were composed based on the 10 themes suggested in school effectiveness research literature by Renihan and Sackney (2001) as "building blocks" for school effectiveness. They were:

1. school vision and purpose
2. leadership
3. a positive climate
4. academic emphasis
5. professional community
6. instructional expectations
7. feedback
8. parental involvement

9. student involvement
10. physical environment and resources.

These ten school effectiveness characteristics were also used as a guide in conducting a thematic analysis of the qualitative data.

The qualitative data was gathered in addition to quantitative data in order to more fully answer the first research question "*What factors do parents of one Canadian and one Ukrainian school define as elements of an effective school*?" Parents were asked to provide their answers the following open-ended question "*Please indicate the factors that in your opinion make a "good"/ "effective" school. (Write as many as you consider to be important)."* It was planned to examine whether the parents' answers would correspond with the ten school effectiveness characteristics on which the survey was based and whether new additional factors would appear. Parents' answers to this question were analyzed and organized under themes. The additional factors were also analyzed, coded and grouped into themes.

With respect to the second research question, parents in both countries were asked to indicate to what extent their choice of school was influenced by the suggested 17 factors. These factors were composed based on the findings in literature on school choice. Parents were offered three response alternatives: high, medium and low to indicate their degree of influence.

In addition, the respondents were asked to identify three to five important reasons for the choice of their child's school. These responses provided qualitative information on this issue. Another opportunity for written responses was provided in an open-ended question in the last section of the questionnaire, asking the respondents to share any other comments they had. Comments were recorded and used to enhance the presentation of data and to compliment the discussion of the findings. In order to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents the questionnaires were not coded.

Data Collection

Two high schools provided data for this study: one school in Chernivtsi, Ukraine and another one in Saskatoon, Canada. The fact that both schools represented different educational systems provided interesting grounds for comparison.

The high school chosen for the study in Ukraine was a Lycee, which offers a specialised program. The fact that the school follows the curriculum with the emphasis on certain areas, and welcomes students from the whole city implies that students and their parents chose the school intentionally. This presented favourable grounds to the interest of this particular research. The high school chosen for the study in Canada was a Collegiate embedded in a suburban neighbourhood, offering Grades 9-12. It also welcomed students from the whole city.

Permission to survey parents was obtained from the principals of both schools. A letter requesting permission to conduct the study was sent to each principal (Appendix B). A random sample of 100 parents of Grade 9 and 10 students in each school was asked to complete the questionnaire with detailed instructions. In October 2003 the researcher delivered the questionnaires to a Canadian school, where they were distributed by teachers to the randomly selected students. Teachers encouraged students to have their parents complete and return the promptly. One questionnaire per household was to be completed by a parent. The completed questionnaires were returned to children's school where they were collected by the researcher.

As to the Ukrainian school, the researcher translated the parent questionnaires into Ukrainian since they were first composed in English. Then they were mailed from Canada to Ukraine directly to the school principal who organized the process of distribution and collection of returned questionnaires, which were then mailed back to the researcher. In December 2002 the

surveys were distributed in Ukraine. The findings provided by 61 returned questionnaires were translated back into English.

Data Analysis

In order to analyse the data obtained from a questionnaire, descriptive statistics methods was used. Statistics are mathematical techniques for analysing numerical data to accomplish various purposes. Descriptive statistics are mathematical techniques for organising and summarising a set of numerical data.

Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated. Data analysis was performed using the SPSS computer software package. Frequency analysis method was employed. Upon completion of the data collection, a comprehensive analysis of parents' responses to open-ended questions and additional comments found at the end of the questionnaire was performed in order to identify notable themes or ideas. The responses were analyzed, grouped and coded as they emerged.

Ethical Guidelines

Research design addressed ethical requirements. Ethical guidelines were followed to ensure that all the participants of the study were treated with respect and consideration. Before proceeding with data collection and analysis, approval was sought from the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research. Application for permission to conduct the questionnaire and interviews (see Appendix C) was directed to the same committee.

Permission was obtained from the administrative personnel of the participating schools. The cover letter for the questionnaire informed the participants about the purposes and procedures of the study. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and

they were free to withdraw from the study any time. Every effort was made to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, including removal of names and details from quotes and descriptions that may reveal the identity of an individual, and using pseudonyms when quoting the participants' statements. The University of Saskatchewan's Ethics Committee decided that the intended study complied with the required criteria and approved this research on July 15, 2002.

Summary

This chapter contained a description of the research methods that were used to obtain information about what parents considered an effective school and to understand how they chose a school for their children. A description of procedures used to ensure validity of these instruments has also been presented. The data were gathered from parents of two schools, one in Canada and another one in Ukraine. This study consisted of a questionnaire, which collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The data analysis techniques were outlined in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to examine parental perceptions in one Canadian and one Ukrainian high school as to what parents view as an effective school. A secondary purpose was to ascertain the characteristics that parents view as important for school choice.

The following questions served as a guide in this research:

1. What factors do parents of one Canadian and one Ukrainian school define as elements of an effective school?

2. What school characteristics determine parents' choice of schools in both countries?

The surveys were randomly sent to 100 parents of Grade 9 and 10 students in Saskatoon, Canada and to 100 parents of Grade 9 and 10 students in Chernivtsi, Ukraine. In Ukraine, sixty-one usable surveys were received by the researcher, which represented 61% of the Ukrainian parents' sample. Sixty usable surveys were returned in Canada. This represented 60% of the Canadian parents' sample. The return rate in both countries (60%) was satisfactory for the research purposes. The analysis of the data commenced in September, 2005. Summative data collected from the surveys are presented in tables. A brief discussion follows the results of each table.

Elements of an Effective School

In order to examine what Canadian and Ukrainian parents identify as elements of an effective school, both quantitative and qualitative data was obtained. The quantitative data, which is presented first in this section, was obtained by offering parents a list of 30 statements, that dealt with elements of an effective school. Parents were asked to express their opinion

regarding the statements by choosing one of the following response alternatives: *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Neutral*, *Disagree*, *Strongly Disagree*. The statements were composed based on the 10 themes suggested in school effectiveness research literature by Renihan and Sackney as "building blocks" for school effectiveness.

These ten school effectiveness characteristics were also used as a guide in conducting a thematic analysis of the qualitative data. The quantitative data was analyzed using an SPSS package. Mean and standard deviation were calculated.

The qualitative data presented further in this section was gathered in addition to quantitative data in order to answer the first research question "*What factors do parents of one Canadian and one Ukrainian school define as elements of an effective school*?" Parents were asked to provide their answers the following open-ended question "*Please indicate the factors that in your opinion make a "good"/ "effective" school. (Write as many as you consider to be important)."* It was planned to examine whether the parents' answers would correspond with the ten school effectiveness characteristics on which the survey was based; and also, whether new additional factors would appear. Parents' answers to this question were analyzed and organized under themes. The additional factors were also analyzed, coded and grouped into themes. 58 out of 60 Canadian and 59 out of 61 Ukrainian parents provided their responses to the question. It should be noted that any mentioning of "Canadian parents" or "Ukrainian parents" refers only to those who participated in this study.

The findings received from Canadian parents are presented first. Data obtained from the Ukrainian parents are then presented following the same structure.

Canadian Parents

Vision and Purpose

School vision and purpose are fundamental school effectiveness characteristics. In order to define this characteristic, Renihan and Sackney's interpretation of the school vision and purpose element was used, which suggested that in an effective school all the key stakeholders take part in developing and pursuing the shared goals and priorities. School decision-making is focused on improved student learning and believing that the staff can make a difference in the lives of students.

The findings presented in Table 4-1 indicate that a large proportion of Canadian respondents agreed that school vision and purpose, manifested in common sense of purpose, developing each child's potential, and all the involved parties pursuing the same goals, are elements of an effective school. The frequencies under each response option ranged form 89% to 93.3%, which reflected a prevailing majority. With respect to "teachers and parents pursue the same goals", 93.3% of the surveyed parents recorded *strongly agree* or *agree* and, therefore, regarded it as an important practice in an effective school. It is notable that there were no recordings of *disagree* or *strongly disagree* response alternatives to any of the three statements dealing with vision and purpose.

Table 4-1. Vision and purpose: Canadian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)	N
5. A common sense of purpose is important.	4.4	.66	89.0	10.2	0	59
11. The school develops each child's potential.	4.5	.65	91.7	8.3	0	60
13. Teachers and parents pursue the same goals.	4.4	.61	93.3	6.7	0	60

The significance of school vision and purpose was further supported by the findings provided by an open-ended question. When Canadian parents were asked to list factors that they considered being important for school effectiveness, the factors relating to school vision and purpose were mentioned 16 times. "Strong school spirit", "spirit", "traditions", "good values" were recognized by the parents as important for school effectiveness. One of the respondents recorded that in an effective school "pride in school, community and self are reflected in school philosophy". This view was supported by another response that stated in an effective school "students are proud of their school". It was also noted that it is important for the school to display "an effort to be innovative and progressive". The concept of "structure" appeared in two responses. "Promoting good school/ team spirit" was suggested as a factor that makes an effective school. Another respondent noted that in an effective school "runnings of the school (procedures, communication, etc) are known +practiced by everyone".

Leadership

Parents were offered three statements concerning leadership. In this case study, leadership, as one of the school effectiveness characteristics, was viewed as strong, visible, fair and assertive. Renihan and Sackney identified leadership as a team quality, which is shared, collaborative and empowering in effective schools.

As the findings presented in Table 4-2 demonstrate, Canadian parents generally perceived leadership as an element of school effectiveness. The great majority, 90% of Canadian respondents, *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that in an effective school administration is accessible, with only 8.3% recording *neutral* as their response, thus indicating that accessible leadership is a non-influential element. Further, only 1.7% *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with this statement believing that in an effective school leadership does not have to be accessible.

One of the statements, concerning leadership (*the quality of leadership in the school does not necessarily have an impact on the school's effectiveness*) was composed as a reverse statement. The findings illustrate that 81.6% of the Canadian parents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with this statement perceiving the quality of leadership as impacting school effectiveness.

Table 4-2. Leadership: Canadian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)	N
4. The administration is accessible.	4.3	.70	90.0	8.3	1.7	60
19. Leadership is strong.	4.4	.61	96.7	1.7	1.7	60
27.The quality of leadership in the school does not necessarily have an impact on the school's effectiveness.	1.8	.93	3.3	15.0	81.6	60

Leadership as one of the elements that make a good school was mentioned by 17 out of 60 respondents in an open-ended question. The respondents pointed out the leadership qualities that are also viewed as important in school effectiveness research. One of the responses stated that an effective school displays "strong overall leadership by administration (principal, board officials, etc.)". This opinion was supported in other responses that mentioned that an effective school has "good", "supportive" administration, "principals that care and get involved", "professional leadership (principal)", "approachable staff", "strong administrative team". It was also noted that administration should be "available and effective", "professional" and "efficient and focused on the goal and quality". One of the respondents pointed out that among the elements that make an effective school is "strong leadership "velvet fist in iron glove" sort". "Quality of administration" demonstrating an "efficient organization", and "leadership and respectful attitude from the "top down" were mentioned as factors helping to establish an effective school.

Positive Climate

Four statements in the survey dealt with positive climate as another element of an effective school. They were consistent with the view employed by this case study when designing the survey, that in effective schools a positive climate is created striving to establish a "safe, caring and attractive environment in which students can enjoy school and the relationships they experience within it." Climate is also related to the nature of school discipline and consistently enforced rules and regulations.

As indicated in data in Table 4-3, 96.7% of the Canadian parents believed that positive climate is necessary for an effective school, and 95% believed that students enjoy going to "an effective" school. In regard to statement "strict discipline makes a better school", there was no common agreement among surveyed parents. The responses were spread out. Nearly half or 48.3% of Canadian parents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with this statement, with 15% strongly agreeing, while 23.3% of respondents *strongly disagreed* or *disagreed* that strict discipline is an important element of school effectiveness. Almost 30% of the surveyed parents recorded *neutral* as to the influence discipline has on school effectiveness. As far as safety is concerned, according to the data, presented in Table 4-3, the great majority represented by 94.9% of respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that "students feel safe" in an effective school, which suggests that they viewed safety as an issue of great importance and concern.

Table 4-3. Positive climate: Canadian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree / Disagree (%)	N
1. Students feel safe	4.6	.64	94.9	3.4	1.7	59
7. Students enjoy going to school	4.6	.72	95.0	3.3	1.7	60
24.Strict discipline makes a better school	3.4	1.10	48.3	28.3	23.3	60
30.Positive climate is necessary for an effective school	4.5	.62	96.7	1.7	1.7	60

From the above presentation of findings, it was clear that Canadian parents believed that positive climate, in which students enjoy safe positive experience with school, is a necessary element of effective schools. However, there was a certain degree of disagreement regarding strict discipline as essential in achieving school effectiveness, perhaps a function of responses to the term "strict"

Factors relating to positive climate were mentioned 83 times (the highest number of responses) by the Canadian parents when they were asked to list factors that make an effective school. It was seen in the responses that how their children feel at a school was important for the parents. Two of the respondents identified the importance of "comfort level" at an effective school. Another parent mentioned "student comfort". And another shared this view by recording that students feel "comfortable in fitting in". Other responses indicated that an effective school is "a place where all children feel welcome", "students feel good about themselves", and children "feel happy at school".

In regard to the atmosphere at school, Canadian respondents pointed out the following as contributing to the establishing of an effective school:

well being,

school climate,

good learning atmosphere,

feeling at home,

happy, fun, enthusiastic environment, happy surroundings, fun atmosphere

respect/ healthy environment,

organized and pleasant surroundings,

positive environment, positive atmosphere; positive, supportive, encouraging environment, positive environment in classroom – teacher and students, positiveness, friendly students. One respondent pointed out "humor" as one of the elements of effective schools.

Discipline, as one of the elements of an effective school, was mentioned 23 times by the Canadian respondents. In this case study discipline was viewed as one of the constituents of positive climate at a school. Six parents mentioned "discipline" in their responses. There were recordings of "good discipline", "strict discipline", "effective discipline", "strict discipline for violence, bullying and drugs", "high value placed on respect – prompt discipline". In three instances zero tolerance was pointed out, demonstrated by the following recording: "zero tolerance for antisocial behavior".

A few respondents called attention to "rules" at schools, "rules and regulations", "clear rules of behavior", "nice behavior". "Strict attendance control" was mentioned by one parent. One of the Canadian respondents pointed out that in an effective school it is necessary to have "strong effective process in place to deal with major student discipline issues (major concern of any parent is that in most high school there are likely to be at least a few students who have serious tendencies to use violence in certain situations as a response to the situation)". Safety was an issue that was mentioned by the respondents as relevant to school effectiveness 28 times. Typical of this was a response which stated that in effective schools "students feel safe and looked after". A majority of parents mentioned "safety", "safe school" and "safe environment".

Academic Emphasis

It was intended to examine through the three statements presented in Table 4-4, whether Canadian parents' perceptions were consistent with school effectiveness research literature,

which identified academic emphasis as one of the elements of effective schools. Academic

emphasis includes focus on academic skills, reasonable and fair homework assignments

providing students with opportunity to work on individual projects, teaching them how to solve

problems.

As the findings in Table 4-4 below indicate, 90% of surveyed Canadian parents perceived

academic emphasis as crucial in an effective school, while only 3.4% disagreed, and 6.7%

selected *neutral* as their response alternative as to the influence this factor has on school

effectiveness. A large proportion or 93.3% of respondents indicated that they *agree* or *strongly*

agree that "a climate of achievement is present" in an effective school, with no *disagree* or

strongly disagree responses recorded.

As presented in Table 4-4, only 25% of Canadian respondents considered test results to

"speak best for the effectiveness of the school", while 36.6% *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*

with this statement, and 38.3% indicated *neutral* in regards to test results demonstrating

effectiveness of a school.

Table 4-4. Academic emphasis: Canadian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)	N
3. Academic emphasis is crucial	4.5	.83	90.0	6.7	3.4	60
15.A climate of achievement is present	4.4	.62	93.3	6.7	0	60
28. Test results speak best for the effectiveness of the school	2.8	.98	25.0	38.3	36.6	60

It was clear from the findings shown in Table 4-4 that most Canadian parents agreed that

academic emphasis with climate of achievement created and maintained, is an element of an

effective school. On the other hand, there was no consensus as to relying on test results for

school effectiveness.

When asked to indicate the factors that make an effective school, the Canadian respondents recorded 24 factors dealing with academic emphasis. Even though they all referenced to the same characteristic, it was interesting to mention the following factors exactly as they were recorded by the parents: "academic focus", "focus on academics", "emphasis on academics", "an emphasis on the foundations of reading and writing", " academic activities", "education", "proper education", "quality education", "good education". Parents mentioned that effective schools "teach solid base in the Basics (English, Math)", and "teach the basics well i.e. Math, Science, History". One of the respondents recorded: "Football is not everything. More emphasis on education". In regard to curriculum, one of the respondents mentioned that in effective schools it is necessary to have "curriculum that covers a broad subject matter". Another respondent suggested "well-rounded curriculum, but not too many other classes that don't really seem important". It was also noted that a "balanced curriculum", or "effective curriculum based on national standards", is necessary. Parents also mentioned that "atmosphere of excellence", "promotion of learning", "learning environment", and "quality of instruction" were among factors that make an effective school. These findings suggest that Canadian parents want the schools to focus on academics and provide their children with solid base for life-long learning.

Professional Community

There were three statements listed in the survey that related to professional community as another one of the ten school effectiveness characteristics. Creating a professional community is important for establishing an effective school since it accounts for high work life in school, continuous professional development and collaborative work of the school. The frequencies in this group of statements ranged from 71.7% to 98.3%.

The findings presented in Table 4-5, indicated that 98.3% of the surveyed Canadian parents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that in an effective school "support for learning is at the heart of school policy and planning". In respect to an effective school being "a professional community where students, teachers and parents have rights and responsibilities", 96.7% of parents indicated that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.

As far as the statement suggesting that "school effectiveness is all about good teachers" is concerned, 71.7% of respondents perceived it as true; however, 11.7% *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* and 16.7% selected *neutral* as their response alternative suggesting that good teachers are not the only contributors to school effectiveness.

Table 4-5. Professional community: Canadian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)	N
2. Support for learning and teaching is at the heart of school policy and planning	4.7	.56	98.3	0	1.7	60
21. School effectiveness is all about good teachers	3.7	.90	71.7	16.7	11.7	60
22. An effective school is a professional community, where students, teachers and parents have rights and Responsibilities	4.4	.56	96.7	3.3	0	60

The responses of Canadian parents to the statements pertaining to professional community, as presented in Table 4-5, showed that the majority of respondents perceived professional community, where all have rights and responsibilities and are dedicated to learning and teaching, as an element of school effectiveness. They indicated, however, that achieving school effectiveness does not solely lie on good teachers.

Factors relating to professional community were recorded by the Canadian parents in 51 responses, and were among the factors that were mentioned most frequently in regard to school

effectiveness. It was mentioned that an effective school becomes "a place where all partners work toward common goals", "a place for everyone to learn and grow", where "effective teaching/ effective learning" takes place, with "motivated staff/ teachers who feel valued by administration, students and parents". One of the respondents supported this opinion by stating: "Teachers/ parents/ children working toward common goal! High involvement from everyone."

The importance of teachers' professionalism was pointed out in a few responses. It was recorded that in effective schools "teachers are effective/ approachable and are required to have regular evaluations to meet these standards". A few other responses echoed this opinion by noting that effective schools have "teachers with good knowledge base", "teachers who know their material thoroughly", "good teachers – skilled and effective and approachable" and "teachers who love to teach and enjoy the company of children". One respondent pointed out "consistency between teachers and curriculum" as necessary for school effectiveness, another parent mentioned "good communication between teachers". "Cohesive atmosphere between staff" was also mentioned as one of the factors that make a good school. Other responses contained "efficient staff", "supportive staff", "friendly staff", "caring staff", "knowledgeable staff", "cohesive and communicative staff", "staff that respects students". One of the respondents mentioned "competence of non teaching employees at school (one gets the sense that, in general staff enjoy their work & display a positive outlook and attitude)". Some parents noted that "consistent team approach to standards/ discipline from staff", "standards met by staff & students – inspected by whomever is responsible", accountability – students and teachers". These responses support their view that in effective schools all have rights and responsibilities.

Instructional Expectations

Three survey statements were designed to explore parents' views on how high instructional expectations which teachers hold for students relate to school effectiveness. The findings presented in Table 4-6, indicate that the majority of the Canadian parents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that in an effective school expectation are appropriately high. Only 3.4% of the surveyed parents did not support this statement, recording *disagree* or *strongly disagree* as their response option. According to the findings, nearly half of the Canadian respondents believed that "high instructional expectations always result in school effectiveness". At the same time 23.7% of respondents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with this statement, while 30.5% selected *neutral* as their response alternative. Over 78% of the surveyed Canadian parents indicated *disagree* or *strongly disagree* in response to the reverse statement about class size being "irrelevant for school effectiveness", while 15% perceived class size as not influencing school effectiveness.

Table 4-6. Instructional expectations: Canadian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree / Disagree (%)	N
20. Expectations are appropriately high	4.3	.69	94.9	1.7	3.4	59
23. The size of the classes is irrelevant for school effectiveness	2.0	1.21	15.0	6.7	78.3	60
29. High instructional expectations always result in school effectiveness	3.3	1.03	45.8	30.5	23.7	59

From the above presentation of findings, it was obvious that the surveyed Canadian parents viewed instructional expectations as an element of effective schools, and perceived it to be of significant importance. However, there was no common agreement on how relevant class size is for school effectiveness. The data described above illustrated that not only was there no

consensus that high instructional expectations always result in school effectiveness, but almost a third of the parents indicated *neutral* regarding this relation.

Factors related to instructional expectations were mentioned 38 times by the Canadian participants in responses to an open-ended question. One respondent stated that "reasonable expectations" are necessary. The quotes that reflected the views of the most respondents best were "academic standards are high with support from parents and teachers", "high standards/ expectation to succeed", "challenging classes", "high expectations for student work ethic and behavior", "high expectations for learning", and "encouraging and pushing child to do better" Class size as a factor contributing to school effectiveness was mentioned 9 times. Typical responses here were: "class size acceptable according to subject demand", and "small teacher/student ratio".

In reference to using a variety of teaching, it was pointed out that to create an effective school "teachers need to present their materials in an interesting way or current methods to keep up with the changing times". Other respondents recorded that it is necessary to "accommodate differing learning styles", and to use "multi-faceted approach to learning". A few parents mentioned that "teachers need to be approachable and available to assist students with assignments".

Feedback

There were three statements relating to feedback as another element of school effectiveness composed in this survey. Feedback includes "constructive, consistent, continuous and fair assessment of student work", and should be helpful to parents in understanding their children's progress. The frequencies in responses to each of the statements on feedback ranged from 90% to 95%, which represented the considerable majority of respondents. As presented in

Table 4-7, 95% of surveyed Canadian parents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that in an effective

school "parents are informed about their children's learning on a regular basis" and "teachers let

parents know when their child is having difficulty". Also, the majority of the Canadian

respondents supported the view that in effective schools "parents feel confident that problems

will be dealt with and appropriate feedback given".

Table 4-7. Feedback: Canadian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)	N
6. Parents are informed about their children's learning on a regular basis	4.4	.72	95.0	3.3	1.7	60
9. Teachers let parents know when their child is having difficulty	4.6	.64	95.0	3.3	1.7	60
17. Parents feel confident that problems will be dealt with and appropriate feedback given	4.4	.71	90.0	8.3	1.7	60

It was clear from the presentation of findings in Table 4-7, that there was a common

agreement among surveyed Canadian parents in considering feedback on children's learning and

social experiences at school to be an important element of an effective school.

When they were asked to indicate factors that make an effective school, the Canadian parents

mentioned factors related to feedback 25 times. ". Typical of the recordings pertaining to

feedback were the following responses: "frequent communication to students and parents about

progress and difficulties", and "great communication (parents/teachers)", or "good school-parent

communication". Five parents mentioned "fairness" as one of the factors relevant to school

effectiveness stating that characteristic of an effective school is "fair grading and marking at all

times" and "fair learning environment for both males and females".

Parental Involvement

      Parental involvement as an element of an effective school takes place when parents monitor and comment on their children's homework, communicate with teachers and feel as valued contributors who are welcome in the school. According to the findings presented in Table 4-8, 88.3% of the Canadian parents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that parents feel welcome in an effective school, while only 10% indicated *neutral* as their response alternative. As the data indicated, 85% of surveyed Canadian respondents agreed that in an effective school parents feel that their contribution is valued. The majority of Canadian parents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that parents monitoring and commenting on their children's work relate to school effectiveness.

      As presented in Table 4-8, 80% of Canadian respondents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the reverse statement that "parent-teacher meetings are not necessary" for effective schools. Only 3.4% *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement, while 16.7% selected *neutral* as their response, stating that parent-teacher meetings do not impact school effectiveness.

Table 4-8. Parental involvement: Canadian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)	N
8. Parents feel welcome in the school	4.3	.80	88.3	10.0	1.7	60
12. Parents feel that their contribution is valued	4.0	.64	85.0	13.3	1.7	60
14. Parents monitor/ comment on their child(ren)'s homework	4.2	.74	86.6	10.0	3.3	60
16. Parent-teacher meetings are not necessary	1.9	.88	3.4	16.7	80.0	60

      As the findings presented in Table 4-8 illustrated, the majority of surveyed Canadian parents agreed that parental involvement is an element of effective schools. Overall, they agreed that to establish an effective school it is important for parents to participate in parent-teacher

meetings, to monitor and comment on their children's homework, to contribute and to feel as welcome contributors.

Factors relating to parental involvement were mentioned 9 times by the Canadian parents as helping to create an effective school. A few parents identified "parental/ guardian involvement" as one of the factors that make an effective school. It was mentioned a few times that in an effective school "parents are welcome", or the school is "welcoming to parents-enquiries encouraged". Some parents stated that in an effective school "parents are called if there is a problem", or "parents involved when problems arise". "Involvement of parents in students' learning" was mentioned as important for school effectiveness. One of the parents noted: "This is a very difficult area but [there has to be] a sense that the school has appropriate training in dealing with upset or emotional parents of students".

Student Involvement

Parents were offered two statements relating to student involvement as an element of effective schools. They were composed based on school effectiveness research that indicated that increased student involvement leads to improved student behavior and learning. It was apparent from the data presented in Table 4-9 that the surveyed Canadian parents considered student involvement to be an element of effective schools. As the findings indicated, 88.3% of respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that in effective schools "children's point of view is listened to", while only 1.7% *disagreed,* and 10% indicated *neutral* as their response option. In regards to students being "actively involved in school life decisions", 78.3% of surveyed Canadian parents viewed it as relevant to school effectiveness by recording *agree* or *strongly agree* as their response. 16.7% of parents selected *neutral* as their response to this statement,

which indicates that they believed that the degree of student involvement does not necessarily influence school effectiveness.

Table 4-9. Student involvement: Canadian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)	N
10. Children's point of view is listened to	4.3	.70	88.3	10.0	1.7	60
18. Students are actively involved in school life decisions	4.0	.87	78.3	16.7	5.0	60

Factors that relate to student involvement were mentioned 40 times by Canadian parents among those that make an effective school. Eleven responses referenced to participation of students in school life. Typical of this were the following responses: "students are encouraged to be heard and involved", children are listened to", "respect for the opinions of students", "opportunities for participation", "strong student body". It was interesting to note the response of one of the Canadian parents here: "the views and opinions of the students are truly considered (not necessarily acted out but there is evidence that when students do provide good suggestions, that at least some component of the suggestion is taken into action that occurs)". Involving students in physical education classes and sports activities was mentioned 10 times represented by the following recordings: "a variety of sports activities", "physical activity encouraged and developed", "physical education classes". Involving students by offering extracurricular opportunities and providing activities for variety of interests was mentioned 19 times. The following quotations were typical of the responses: "provide choice in extracurricular activities", "to experience lots of new subjects, activities"

Physical Environment and Resources

Physical environment is an important school effectiveness element that enhances the key qualities of school work. It relates to the condition and maintenance of school facility as well as availability of resources and instructional materials.

There were two statements related to physical environment and resources composed. The fact that frequencies were 78.4% and 86.7% suggested that respondents considered them to be important elements. As the data presented in Table 4-10 indicates, 86.7% of parents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that "lack of resources negatively influences school effectiveness" with 10% selecting *neutral* as their response. As far as condition or quality of school facility is concerned, 78.4% of Canadian respondents agreed that it impacts the effectiveness of the school, while only 10% *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*, implying that a school can be effective regardless of the poor condition of school facility. As shown in Table 4-10, 11.7% of surveyed Canadian parents recorded *neutral* as their response alternative, which suggests that they viewed quality of school facility as unrelated to school effectiveness.

It was clear from the findings presented below in Table 4-10 that a large proportion of the Canadian parents agreed that physical environment and resources are elements of effective schools.

Table 4-10. Physical environment and resources: Canadian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)	N
25. A poor school facility impacts on the effectiveness of the school	4.0	.89	78.4	11.7	10.0	60
26. Lack of resources negatively influences school effectiveness	4.2	.73	86.7	10.0	3.3	60

Twenty-five factors related to physical environment and resources were listed by Canadian parents in regard to elements that make an effective school. Respondents typically mentioned "facility", e.g.: "good/clean facility". As one parent pointed out, an effective school has "good overall facilities i.e.: clean, warm, has a gym, clean working bathrooms etc". A few parents also mentioned that necessary resources should be available. Here typical recordings for factors that make an effective school were: "available resources", "resources updated all the time", "updated materials and methods", "adequate equipment/ space", "proper resources".

Additional Themes

There were additional factors that emerged in the Canadian parents' responses. The factors that did not belong to any of the ten school effectiveness characteristics were grouped separately. It is notable that five parents emphasized providing "career information" as necessary in effective schools. One of the respondents noted that school should "help children in deciding about their future goals". Others continued this issue by recording that schools should have "career counselors", "be connected to postsecondary schools", and "provide direction for future development opportunities and promote higher education".

Three respondents mentioned "dress code" as associated with school effectiveness. Two parents mentioned "tolerance/ inclusion" and "inclusion/ accepting" as one of the factors that make an effective school. Other less frequently stated factors can be considered incidental. Here the respondents mentioned credits for college, appropriate counselling available, open door policy, mix of variety of backgrounds, encourage national pride/ patriotism, speakers, transportation and offering no junk food for sale at schools.

Summary: Canadian Parents

Overall there can be an observation made that the views of Canadian participants expressed in this case study corresponded with the findings in school effectiveness research literature. There was a considerable amount of agreement among parents that the factors utilized in the survey were relevant to school effectiveness. The percentages of parents selecting *agree* or *strongly agree* response alternatives were noticeably high.

As the findings demonstrated, the majority of the surveyed Canadian parents strongly agreed that the following factors are elements of an effective school:

1. vision and purpose
2. leadership
3. feedback
4. positive climate
5. academic emphasis
6. professional community

Frequencies were in the 80s- 90s for all survey statements relating to these school characteristics. Most of Canadian respondents viewed *positive climate* as an element of school effectiveness, but they did not commonly perceive strict discipline as crucial for school effectiveness. The majority of surveyed parents viewed *academic emphasis* as an effective school characteristic, but there was no agreement about test results speaking best for school effectiveness. The Canadian respondents demonstrated almost unanimous perception of professional community as a school effectiveness element. Over half of surveyed parents thought that "school effectiveness is all about good teachers".

The findings also demonstrated that the Canadian respondents were quite definitive in their responses, either agreeing or disagreeing with the statements rather than selecting *neutral* response alternative. The number of *neutral* responses was generally in 1.7%-16.7% range.

When they were given the opportunity to list the factors that contribute to establishing an effective school, Canadian parents were rather expressive providing a total of 347 recordings. The findings demonstrated that (1) *positive climate*, (2) *professional community*, (3) *student involvement*, (4) *instructional expectations* and (5) *feedback* were perceived by the surveyed Canadian parents as crucial for school effectiveness. The respondents mentioned factors that were associated with all ten school effectiveness characteristics that were used in the survey. The lowest number of factors relating to *parental involvement* suggested that the Canadian respondents viewed it as least influential. Additional themes emerged in Canadian parents' responses, including c*areer information* and *emphasis on higher education*.

Ukrainian Parents

Vision and Purpose

As far as views of Ukrainian parents on vision and purpose as elements of an effective school are concerned, they were explored through the following three statements, presented in Table 4-11. According to the findings, 86.9% of Ukrainian respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that an effective school "develops each child's potential". The majority of surveyed Ukrainian parents agreed that in effective schools "teachers and parents pursue the same goals". 60.6% of parents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that in effective schools "common sense is important", although 36.1% recorded neutral responses on this item, which suggested that they did not consider having "common sense of purpose" as significant for school effectiveness. The findings presented in Table 4-11 below suggest that, in general, Ukrainian respondents agreed that vision and purpose are elements of effective schools.

Table 4-11. Vision and purpose: Ukrainian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)	N
5. A common sense of purpose is important	3.9	.93	60.6	36.1	3.2	61
11. The school develops each child's potential	4.3	.81	86.9	8.2	4.9	61
13. Teachers and parents pursue the same goals	4.1	.82	81.9	14.8	3.2	61

When asked to indicate factors that make an effective school, 8 Ukrainian parents'

responses to this open-ended question related to vision and purpose. It was pointed out that one

of the elements of effective schools is "developing and maintaining school traditions and rules".

It was also mentioned that "promoting moral values" should be among priorities of effective

schools.

Leadership

As the findings in Table 4-12 below demonstrate, 85.3% of Ukrainian respondents

agreed or *strongly agreed* that in effective schools "the administration is accessible". In regard to

the importance of having a strong leadership for the school to be effective, 57.3% of surveyed

Ukrainian parents indicated *agree* or *strongly agree* as their response alternative and 31.1%

selected a *neutral* response option. As the data show, the responses to the reverse statement

about the quality of leadership having an impact on school effectiveness indicate that 57.4% of

respondents believed that quality of leadership does influence school effectiveness, while 29.5%

think that it does not necessarily have an impact.

Overall, it is clear from the presentation of findings in Table 4-12, that many Ukrainian

respondents agreed that leadership is an element of an effective school; however, there was no

strong unanimity as to recognizing it as essential in establishing an effective school, which was

demonstrated by 29.5% of respondents viewing quality of leadership as not decisive for school effectiveness.

Table 4-12. Leadership: Ukrainian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)	N
4. The administration is accessible	4.3	.89	85.3	8.2	6.6	61
19. Leadership is strong	3.7	1.12	57.3	31.1	11.5	61
27. The quality of leadership in the school does not necessarily have an impact on the school's effectiveness	2.7	1.24	29.5	13.1	57.4	61

The responses to an open-ended question included five references to leadership by the Ukrainian respondents. It was mentioned that relevant to an effective school is "professional administration", or "effective administration", or "strong trusted administration".

Positive Climate

According to the data presented in Table 4-13, 95.1% of Ukrainian parents who provided their responses to this statement *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that "positive climate is necessary for an effective school", and only 4.9% selected *neutral* as their response. It is noteworthy that there were no *disagree* or *strongly disagree* responses recorded.

In regard to the issue of safety, 83.6% of respondents agreed that students feel safe in an effective school. As seen in Table 4-13, there were varied responses to the statement concerning students enjoying going to school as relevant to school effectiveness. Over 50% of parents agreed with this statement, while 14.7% disagreed and 32.8% indicated *neutral* as their response, demonstrating that in an effective school students do not necessarily have to enjoy going to school.

As far as discipline is concerned, the reverse statement that parents were offered suggested that "strict discipline makes a better school". The findings presented in Table 4-13

show that 44.3% of Ukrainian respondents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with this statement, suggesting that there does not have to be strict discipline at school for the school to be effective. Also, 16.4% responded with the "*neutral*" reply indicating strict discipline as non-influential for school effectiveness. Further, 39.4% of Ukrainian parents agreed that strict discipline makes a better school. As previously mentioned, the parents may be responding to the implications of the term "strict".

The findings presented in Table 4-13 showed that Ukrainian parents agreed that positive climate is a necessary element of an effective school. Only a little more than half of the Ukrainian respondents, however, believed that it is important for students to enjoy going to school and only 39.4% thought that strict discipline makes a better school.

Table 4-13. Positive climate: Ukrainian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)	N
1. Students feel safe	4.3	.79	83.6	14.8	1.6	61
7. Students enjoy going to school	3.7	1.09	52.5	32.8	14.7	61
24.Strict discipline makes a better school	3.00	1.34	39.4	16.4	44.3	61
30.Positive climate is necessary for an effective school	4.5	.59	95.1	4.9	0	61

Responses to an open-ended question provided the highest number of recordings associated with positive climate. Fifty-three Ukrainian parents mentioned factors relating to positive climate as an element of effective schools. There were recordings of "good atmosphere", "pleasant, cozy environment", "positive attitude towards students", "positive attitudes", "healthy relations at school".

A few respondents indicated that respect for students is shown in effective schools. Typical of this was the comment: "students are treated with respect". Positive climate at school is

achieved when the discipline is appropriate. Eight parents referred to discipline as one of the

factors that make an effective school. Parents mentioned "discipline", "order and discipline"

here. It was also noted that schools "should have influence on bad habits". Safety, as one of the

school effectiveness factors that helps to create positive climate was mentioned by nine parents

in such recordings as "children feel safe", "safety at school", or "safe school". "Honesty" and

"unprejudiced attitude towards students" were also mentioned among factors that make an

effective school.

Academic Emphasis

As far as academic emphasis as another element of school effectiveness is concerned,

77% of Ukrainian respondents regarded it as crucial in effective schools. As presented in Table

4-14, in reference to the statement that suggested that "a climate of achievement is present" in

effective schools, 59% indicated that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with it.

As seen in Table 4-14, 55.7% of Ukrainian parents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* that "test

results speak best for the effectiveness of the school", while 29.5% of parents considered tests

results to be the best indicators of an effective school. It is clear from the above presentation of

findings that Ukrainian parents regarded academic emphasis as a crucial element of school

effectiveness, but more than half expressed that test results were not the only indicators of an

effective school.

Table 4-14. Academic emphasis: Ukrainian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)	N
3. Academic emphasis is crucial	3.8	.73	77.0	16.4	6.6	61
15.A climate of achievement is present	3.5	1.36	59.0	9.8	31.1	61
28. Test results speak best for the effectiveness of the school	2.7	1.26	29.5	14.8	55.7	61

As to the findings gathered from an open-ended question, 33 Ukrainian respondents mentioned factors pertaining to academic emphasis, when asked to indicate factors that make an effective school. It was pointed out that "academics" are important, that "providing good knowledge" or "providing solid knowledge base for future learning" is necessary. It was indicated that in an effective school the "atmosphere is encouraging for learning". Eleven Ukrainian respondents stressed the importance of "quality education" to school effectiveness. It was also mentioned that schools should offer "well-rounded curriculum" and "encourage independent work".

Professional Community

Professional community as another important school effectiveness element was represented by three statements in the survey part of the study. The frequencies for this group of statements ranged from 77.1% to 93.4%. The majority of Ukrainian respondents, 93.4% *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that "an effective school is a professional community, where students, teachers and parents have rights and responsibilities. According to the data presented in Table 4-15, 77.1% of parents agreed that support for learning and teaching "should be at the heart of school policy and planning". As the described data suggest, a large proportion of responding Ukrainian parents consider professional community to be an element of school effectiveness, and recognize the importance of all the stakeholders having rights and responsibilities in an effective school.

Table 4-15. Professional community: Ukrainian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)	N
2. Support for learning and teaching is at the heart of school policy and planning	4.0	.90	77.1	14.8	8.2	61
21. School effectiveness is all about good teachers	4.3	.96	85.2	4.9	9.8	61
22. An effective school is a professional community, where students, teachers and parents have rights and responsibilities	4.4	.67	93.4	4.9	1.6	61

There were 40 recordings of factors relating to professional community in Ukrainian parents' responses to an open-ended question. It was mentioned that "professionals working at school" or "community of professionals involved at school" contribute to school effectiveness. This is supported by the statement that having "professionals working towards the same goal" is important for effective schools. Typical of recordings referring to professional community was "team of professionals". There were many responses indicating that having "professional", "highly-qualified" "experienced" "talented" teachers is important for creating an effective school. One of the respondents pointed out that a teacher should be a "true pedagogue".

Instructional Expectations

This factor implies that challenging experiences need to be implemented to have each student reach their potential. According to the data presented in Table 4-16, 80.3% of surveyed Ukrainian parents believed in importance of having appropriately high instructional expectations for establishing an effective school. However, 13.1% of parents disagreed and 6.6% recorded *neutral* as their response alternative, suggesting that high expectations are non-influential factors. There were varied responses in regards to the suggestion that "high instructional expectations always result in school effectiveness". More than half, or 67.2% of respondents either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement, while 11.5% *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*, stating that

high expectations do not always result in school effectiveness. 21.3% of Ukrainian respondents

selected "*neutral*" option implying that school effectiveness is not influenced by high

expectations exclusively.

The responses to the reverse statement regarding size of classes being irrelevant to school

effectiveness were quite significantly varied. As the data in table 4-16 indicate, 52.5% of

surveyed Ukrainian parents believed that class size influences school effectiveness, while 39.3%

indicated that class size is irrelevant in establishing an effective school with 8.2% selecting

"neutral" as their response alternative.

The presentation of findings in Table 4-16 shows that surveyed Ukrainian parents agreed

that high instructional expectations are elements of effective schools, with more than half

(67.2%) believing that when expectations are high, the school is effective. Also, there was little

agreement as to the class size having an influence on school effectiveness. This is reflected in a

high standard deviation for this item.

Table 4-16. Instructional expectations: Ukrainian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)
20.Expectations are appropriately high	4.0	.97	80.3	6.6	13.1
23. The size of the classes is irrelevant for school effectiveness	2.9	1.44	39.3	8.2	52.5
29. High instructional expectations always result in school effectiveness	3.7	1.01	67.2	21.3	11.5

Among the factors that make an effective school, in response to an open-ended question

Ukrainian participants recorded 20 factors relating to instructional expectations. It was indicated

that having "high standards", or "high expectations", or "high expectations for learning" at

school is relevant to school effectiveness. It was also noted by one of the respondents that having

"moderate expectations" is important. It was also pointed out in a few responses by Ukrainian parents that "small student-teacher ratio" is among factors influencing school effectiveness, as well as having an "optimal schedule" and using "creative"/ "individual approaches in teaching".

Feedback

Feedback as an element of school effectiveness received varied results. The frequencies ranged from 65.6% to 78.6% agreement on this correlate. As indicated in Table 4-17, 78.6% of parents agreed that in effective schools "parents are informed about their children's learning on a regular basis". Over 60% of parents agreed that "teachers let parents know when their child is having difficulty" in an effective school, while 31.1% replied with "*neutral*" response option, suggesting that this does not relate to school effectiveness.

It is clear from the above description of findings presented in Table 4-17, that Ukrainian respondents perceived feedback as an element of an effective school. However, there was no unanimous agreement as to the significance of this element in establishing an effective school. The data may suggest that many parents trusted the school in dealing with problems the student(s) may experience, even without involving parents.

Table 4-17. Feedback: Ukrainian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)
6. Parents are informed about their children's learning on a regular basis	4.0	.90	78.6	14.8	6.5
9. Teachers let parents know when their child is having difficulty	4.1	.97	67.2	31.1	1.6
17. Parents feel confident that problems will be dealt with and appropriate feedback given	3.7	.93	65.6	21.3	13.1

As to the responses to an open-ended question, it is notable that only three recordings by Ukrainian parents related to feedback as a school effectiveness characteristic. All three responses

related to fairness. It was indicated that "fair evaluation" or "objective evaluation" is among factors that make an effective school.

Parental Involvement

As far as views on parental involvement are concerned, they were provided by parents' responses to four survey statements. According to the data presented in Table 4-18, 73.7% of parents agreed that parents feel welcome in an effective school. 65.6% agreed that in effective schools parents feel that their contribution is valued, however 26.2% selected "neutral" response alternative, which indicates that they did not connect parents' contribution to school effectiveness. In response to the reverse statement suggesting that parent-teacher meetings are not necessary in an effective school, 65.5% of surveyed Ukrainian parents either *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*. There was high standard deviation on the item regarding parents monitoring student homework.

The description of findings in Table 4-18 indicates that the majority of responding Ukrainian parents perceived parental involvement, when parents feel welcome at school and participate in parent-teacher meetings, as an element of effective schools. It is important to note, however, that a considerable number of parents did not relate parental involvement to school effectiveness.

Table 4-18. Parental involvement: Ukrainian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)
8. Parents feel welcome in the school	4.0	.95	73.7	19.7	6.5
12. Parents feel that their contribution is valued	3.9	.98	65.6	26.2	8.2
14. Parents monitor/ comment on their child(ren)'s homework	2.9	1.29	32.8	27.9	39.3
16. Parent-teacher meetings are not necessary	2.5	1.15	19.6	14.8	65.6

In response to an open-ended question, in which parents were asked to indicate factors that make an effective school, only one respondent indicated that "active parental involvement" is relevant to school effectiveness.

Student Involvement

The two statements regarding student involvement received considerably spread out responses. 52.5% of Ukrainian parents, as indicated in Table 4-19, *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that in effective schools "children's point of view is listened to", while 19.7% disagreed. 27.9% viewed student involvement as irrelevant to school effectiveness by recording *neutral* as their response alternative. As far as actively involving students in school life decision is concerned, 64% regarded it as relevant to school effectiveness, but 26.2% selected a "*neutral*" response suggesting that it does not influence school effectiveness.

The data presented in Table 4-19 suggest that even though more of the surveyed Ukrainian parents viewed student involvement as an element of an effective school, they did not perceive it as a significant element. It is notable that around 30% of respondents did not relate involving students in school life decisions with school effectiveness.

Table 4-19. Student involvement: Ukrainian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)
10. Children's point of view is listened to	3.6	1.17	52.5	27.9	19.7
18. Students are actively involved in school life decisions	3.8	1.04	64.0	26.2	9.9

Findings obtained from responses to an open-ended question offered 19 items dealing with student involvement. It was mentioned that it is necessary that the "students are listened to" and "encouraged". It was also pointed out that providing "extracurricular activities", "group activities" and "interest clubs" relate to school effectiveness. As it was recorded by the

Ukrainian respondents, "having strong extracurricular program" or "providing choice in extracurricular activities is necessary. Having students participate in "various sports activities" was also mentioned.

Physical Environment and Resources

As indicated in Table 4-20, the two statements dealing with physical environment and resources have received a high number of *agree* or *strongly agree* responses. The frequencies were 93.4% for each statement. Over 90% of parents emphasized the importance of this school effectiveness element by indicating that they *agree* or *strongly agree* that "a poor school facility impacts on the effectiveness of the school" and that "lack of resources negatively influences school effectiveness".

The responses to the statements referring to physical environment and resources, as presented below in Table 4-20, demonstrate that very large proportion of Ukrainian respondents viewed physical environment and resources as elements of an effective school. They were strongly consistent in opinion that a poor school facility and lack of resources have a negative impact on school effectiveness.

Table 4-20. Physical environment and resources: Ukrainian parents

Statement	Mean	SD	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree/ Disagree (%)
25. A poor school facility impacts on the effectiveness of the school	4.5	.62	93.4	6.6	0
26. Lack of resources negatively influences school effectiveness	4.5	.67	93.4	4.9	1.6

Thirty-four responses to an open-ended question also demonstrated that Ukrainian respondents regarded factors relating to physical environment and resources as important for school effectiveness. It was frequently mentioned that having "appropriate resources" and "updated materials" is necessary for establishing an effective school. Only three recordings,

however, related to the school facility. It was mentioned on many occasions that having an "updated" "good" "rich" library "with a wide selection of materials" is necessary. Eight responses referred to providing necessary "financing" for schools as relevant to school effectiveness.

Additional Themes

There was a number of other factors mentioned by Ukrainian parents as factors that are relevant to school effectiveness. These factors did not represent any of the 10 school effectiveness characteristics described above, and therefore were grouped separately into additional themes. Providing appropriate "medical services" at school emerged as the additional theme mentioned in 10 responses. "Promoting / preparing for higher education" at school was mentioned by 4 respondents. "Screening students" was pointed out as necessary by 3 parents. Having a "dress code" at school was suggested by 2 parents as important for creating effective schools. Importance of "school's good rapport with the community" was mentioned twice. Factors that were mentioned once were "zero tolerance", "bribing not tolerated" and "hot lunches".

<div align="center">Summary: Ukrainian Parents</div>

The quantitative data described above demonstrates that there was a general agreement among the surveyed Ukrainian parents in perceiving the ten school characteristics to be elements of effective schools. It is notable that there were only three elements that received over 90% of *agree* or *strongly agree* responses. They were:

1. positive climate
2. professional community
3. physical environment

Ukrainian parents believed that positive climate is necessary for an effective school, but only a little over half of the respondents thought that students should necessarily enjoy going to school. The data showed that there was no agreement whether strict discipline makes a better school. The data suggested that surveyed Ukrainian parents did not strongly view parental involvement as crucial for school effectiveness. Less than half agreed that parents' monitoring or commenting on children's work relates to school effectiveness. Student involvement was only regarded by small majority of respondents as an element of effective schools.

There was no indication of complete unanimity in Ukrainian parents' responses. Typically, frequencies concentrated in the range of 60% -70%. However, it does not mean that the rest of parents disagreed with the statements. It is necessary to mention that very often the participants opted for a *neutral* response alternative.

Ukrainian parents listed a total of 240 factors in response an open-ended question. Factors relating to (1) *positive climate*, (2) *professional community*, (3) *physical environment*, (4) *academic emphasis* and (5) *instructional expectations* were mentioned most frequently. The factors associated with *parental involvement* were recorded the smallest number of times. As to the additional themes that emerged in Ukrainian parents' responses, the following have to be pointed out: *medical services*, *promoting/ preparing for higher education*, *screening*, *school's good rapport with the community*.

Factors Influencing Choice of School

In order to answer this research question, parents were asked to indicate to what extent their choice of school for their child(ren) was influenced by the suggested 17 factors. The factors were composed based on the findings in research literature on school choice. Parents were

offered three response alternatives: *high*, *medium*, *low*. The numerical results of the Canadian parents' responses are presented in Appendix B and of Ukrainian respondents in Appendix C.

Parents were also asked to identify three to five reasons for their choice of school. In this section findings provided by Canadian and Ukrainian parents are presented below separately. First, Canadian parental responses to the suggested factors are presented, followed by their responses to an open-ended question. Then, data collected from Ukrainian parents are presented in a similar way.

Canadian parents

An analysis of parental responses indicated (as illustrated in Table 4-21) that the factor that influenced the Canadian parents' choice of school the most was *opportunities for higher education*. The majority recorded that it had a *high* influence on school choice. *Child(ren)'s happiness* was a second factor that received a large number of *high* responses. There were 41 recordings of *high* response alternative. Among other factors that received a significant number of *high* responses were *high expectations for learning, academic standards, quality of teaching and reputation*.

According to the data presented in Table 4-21, 38 Canadian respondents indicated that *high expectations for learning* highly influenced their choice of school. As far as *academic standards* are concerned, 36 parents stated that the influence of this factor on their choice of school was *high.* In reference to *quality of teaching*, 35 surveyed parents recognized it as a factor that highly influenced the choice of school. *Reputation* was another factor that was regarded as having a high influence on school choice by 32 parents.

Table 4-21. High Influence on School Choice: Canadian Parents

Factor	High	Medium	Low
Opportunities for higher education	42	14	4
Child(ren)'s happiness	41	16	2
High expectations for learning	38	19	3
Academic standards	36	20	4
Quality of teaching	35	21	4
Reputation	32	26	2

It is needed to indicate the factors that received a majority of *medium* responses in respect to the influence on school choice. They were: *good discipline*, *the kind of resources*, *atmosphere/ ethos of the school*, *condition of facility* and *examination results*.

Table 4-22. Medium Influence on School Choice: Canadian Parents

Factor	High	Medium	Low
Good discipline	18	34	8
The kind of resources	22	34	4
Atmosphere/ ethos of the school	25	32	3
Condition of facility	12	32	16
Examination results	11	31	18

In this study the characteristic that received the largest number of *low* responses from Canadian respondents was *financial factors*. It was mentioned by 40 parents, which suggests that financial factors were the least important for Canadian parents in determining the choice of school. Perhaps it was due to the fact that the expenses associated with sending children to this school are reasonably low.

In response to the question "*Please mark whether your choice of your child(ren)'s school was determined by the following factors*", 12 parents indicated *other* school characteristics that determined their choice of school. It is notable that factors mentioned by parents related mostly to the programs or selection of classes offered by the school, extracurricular opportunities and leadership of the school, as well as strong impression from a school tour.

Parents were also asked to rank three to five important reasons for their choice of school. Fifty-six out of 60 Canadian parents provided answers to this question. These answers accounted for providing qualitative data on the question of school choice determinants.

As presented in Table 4-23, five reasons that received the highest number of responses were *reputation*, *location, peers or siblings attending*, *academic standards* and *positive/ welcoming atmosphere*. Reputation was the reason mentioned by the Canadian parents most frequently. Reputation also included recommendation, mentioned by 9 respondents, as well as tradition and school history, mentioned by 3 surveyed parents. Then followed location and peers or siblings attending the school. Academic standards were pointed out as important by 23 Canadian parents, including 4 recordings of atmosphere of excellence, and 2 recordings of excellent academic record, both relating to academic standards and therefore grouped together. Positive/ welcoming atmosphere was the fifth most frequently mentioned reason and included 9 responses in which parents mentioned safe environment, 2 recordings of discipline, and 1 occurrence of school spirit, all of which relate to positive atmosphere.

Table 4-23. Most mentioned reasons for choice of school: Canadian parents

	Themes	№ of times mentioned
1	Reputation	34
2	Location	29
3	Peers, siblings attending	23
4	Academic standards	23
5	Positive, welcoming atmosphere	22

Among other reasons mentioned by the Canadian responses as reasons for their choice of school were academic programs offered by the school, sports programs, administration and staff, child's preference and happiness, strong teaching staff, opportunities for higher learning, quality teaching and accessibility.

Ukrainian Parents

The data in Appendix E present the findings from Ukrainian parents' responses in regard to the influence the factors in the table had on their choice of school. The factors that received a large number of *high* responses can be considered as influential for parents in determining the choice of school.

As the data presented in Table 4-24 demonstrate, the school characteristic that was mentioned most often as having a *high* influence on school choice was *quality of teaching*. The factor that was second most frequently regarded as having *high* influence was *opportunities for higher education*. According to the data presented in Table 4-24, it was followed by *reputation*, *academic standards* and *high expectations for learning*, regarded by 48, 45 and 41 respondents respectively as having *high* influence on determining the choice of school. *High expectations for learning* received 41 recordings of *high* response alternative. Next was *child(ren)'s happiness* with 38 recordings. *Atmosphere/ ethos of the school* and *the kind of resources* were other characteristics that were marked as having *high* influence by the majority of the Ukrainian respondents.

It is interesting to note that the number of *high* response alternative to the above described eight school characteristics ranged from 32 to 55, which suggests that the majority of Ukrainian parents considered these characteristics as important for school choice.

Table 4-24. High Influence on School Choice: Ukrainian Parents

Factor	High	Medium	Low
Quality of teaching	**55**	6	0
Opportunities for higher education	**49**	10	2
Reputation	**48**	9	4
Academic standards	**45**	16	0
High expectations for learning	**41**	15	5
Child(ren)'s happiness	**38**	18	5
Atmosphere/ ethos of the school	**33**	15	13
The kind of resources	**32**	19	10

There was no indication of the majority of the Ukrainian respondents selecting *medium* response alternatives. The factors that were mentioned most often as having *low* influence on choice of the school were *close to home location* and *friends that attend the school.* As presented in Table 4-25, close to home location was marked with *low* response alternative 33 times, and friends that attend the school – 31 times. This demonstrates that these two characteristics were the least important for Ukrainian parents in making a decision on choice of school.

Table 4-25. Low Influence on School Choice: Ukrainian Parents

Factor	High	Medium	Low
Close to home location	13	15	**33**
Friends attend this school	12	18	**31**

There were two factors that received no recordings of *low* response alternative in respect to influence on school choice. According to data in Appendix C, they were *academic standards* and *quality of teaching.* This supports the observation that these characteristics were among those influencing choice of school the most. Ukrainian respondents were also asked to list *other* factors that determined the choice of school. Two parents indicated factors that related to the academic programs offered by the school.

Ukrainian parents were also asked to indicate three to five important reasons for their choice of school. Fifty-nine out of 61 parents provided their responses. Five reasons that ranked highest among Ukrainian parents are presented in Table 4-26. Reputation was the most frequently mentioned reason for school choice. Under this theme reputation was grouped together with recommendation mentioned by three parents, and prestige mentioned by two Ukrainian respondents. Quality of instruction ranked second in Ukrainian parents' responses. Programs offered were pointed out as a reason for school choice by 23 respondents, ranking third. The fourth and the fifth factor, good preparation for university and positive atmosphere

were each mentioned 18 times. Discipline was mentioned 8 times and was included into 18

responses referring to positive atmosphere.

Table 4-26. Most Mentioned Reasons for Choice of School: Ukrainian Parents

N	Themes	# of times mentioned
1	Reputation	34
2	Quality of instruction	24
3	Programs offered	23
4	Good preparation for university	18
5	Positive atmosphere	18

Among other reasons mentioned by the Ukrainian respondents as reasons for school choice were

academic standards, high expectations, highly qualified professional teachers opportunities for

better learning. Family life, negative experience with previous school, facility and available

resources were also mentioned.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter begins with a brief summary of the study, including the purpose, background, significance, methodology, and analysis of the data. A summary of the findings of the study is provided, followed by conclusions and implications identified from the study.

Summary of the Study

The intention of this study was to examine parental perceptions in one Canadian and one Ukrainian high school as to what parents view as an effective school and also to compare the views of parents of both countries. A secondary purpose was to ascertain the characteristics that parents view as important for school choice. This study tried to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors do parents of one Canadian and one Ukrainian school define as elements of an effective school?

2. What school characteristics determine parents' choice of schools in both countries?

Data collection consisted of surveying one hundred parents of Grade 9-10 students in one school in Saskatoon, Canada and one hundred parents in a school in Chernivtsi, Ukraine. Parents were asked to complete a questionnaire which was developed based on the ten characteristics which Renihan and Sackney identified as elements of effective schools. Sixty Canadian and sixty-one Ukrainian surveys were returned. Parents were asked to indicate where they agreed or disagreed with the 30 statements pertaining to school effectiveness characteristics. Their responses which represented quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS computer software package. Also, parents were asked to list the factors that make an effective school. Their

responses to this open-ended question were analysed and grouped into themes using the

Canadian framework developed by Renihan and Sackney (2001). The additional factors that

emerged in the responses were analysed, coded and grouped into additional themes.

In regard to the second research question, parents in both countries were asked to indicate

to what extent their choice of school was influenced by the suggested 17 factors, which were

composed based on the findings in research literature. Also, they were asked to list three to five

important reasons for their choice of school. These findings were analysed and the most

frequently mentioned reasons were identified.

Conclusions of the Study

This study illustrated that, overall, both Canadian and Ukrainian parents agreed that the

following characteristics identified in literature are elements of effective schools: school vision

and purpose, leadership, a positive climate, academic emphasis, professional community,

instructional expectations, feedback, parental involvement, student involvement, and physical

environment and resources. There were similarities in perceptions of parents in both countries,

even though some researchers state that there is no cross-cultural agreement on the subject of

school effectiveness (Reynolds & Cuttance, 1992). The findings demonstrated that, overall,

Canadian and Ukrainian parents involved in this case study perceived the statements that were

utilized in the questionnaire as relevant to school effectiveness characteristics. General parental

agreement in seeing these characteristics as pertaining to school effectiveness once again

validates the utilized framework.

Although a Canadian framework was used with respect to effective schools, based on

research conducted by Renihan and Sackney (2001), both Canadian and Ukrainian parents

expressed strong agreement in viewing key qualities of schools as crucial for school

effectiveness. Specifically, parents in both countries expressed strong agreement in perceiving

positive climate, professional community and instructional expectations as elements of effective

schools. It was observed that, even though both Canadian and Ukrainian parents viewed parental

involvement as an element of effective schools, they perceived it to have the lowest influence on

school effectiveness. This study involved parents of Grade 9 and 10 students. It is possible that

age of students played a role in parental involvement regarded as less significant.

The thematic analysis of the factors recognized by the participants as helping to establish

an effective school resulted in the identification of a few additional themes not related to any of

the ten school effectiveness characteristics. One of the findings of this study was that among the

additional themes that emerged in responses of both Canadian and Ukrainian parents were

promoting/ preparation for postsecondary education and career information. This suggests that

parents of students as early as in Grade 9 and 10 are concerned about their children's future and

want their children to be prepared by the school for lifelong learning. Also, the two schools

involved in the study were mostly attended by students from middle class families, who most

likely wanted their children to pursue higher education. This theme can be identified as another

element of effective schools. This finding supports to a certain degree the ideas by Levin and

Young (1994), that some see schools as training grounds for the job market, some see schools as

professional organizations.

In a number of responses to an open-ended question, Ukrainian participants referred to

providing medical services at school as relevant to school effectiveness. This was another finding

of this case study that emerged as the thematic analysis was conducted. This finding is indicative

of the lack of basic infrastructure support in Ukrainian schools. This may also be seen when

Ukrainian respondents often mentioned access to Internet, updated library and adequate instructional materials among factors contributing to school effectiveness.

This demonstrates that Ukraine as a young democratic country, often facing underfunding of education by the government, is still in process of developing an adequate infrastructure for school operation. The majority of the surveyed Ukrainian parents perceived physical environment and resources related to catalytic conditions facilitating school effectiveness, to be a very important element of effective schools.

There was an observation made in respect to the character of parents' responses. Both Canadian and Ukrainian parents were asked to list factors that, in their opinion, make an effective school. Canadian parents listed 93 factors more than Ukrainian parents. Generally, Canadian parents' responses were longer and more detailed, whereas Ukrainian parents' recordings usually were merely briefly stating the factors. Perhaps, it was due to the fact that in Ukraine participating in parent surveys is not a common practice which has only started recently.

Another observation was made that dealt with the character of parents' responses. Canadian parents were more definitive in their responses, selecting a *neutral* response alternative occasionally, whereas the Ukrainian parents' selection of this response alternative was quite frequent. For decades Ukrainian parents were not asked for their responses. They are only now getting accustomed with being surveyed and asked for their opinions. Perhaps that is the reason why Ukrainian parents were somewhat hesitant when responding to survey questions.

Examination of the data revealed that the majority of both Canadian and Ukrainian parents identified the same factors as highly influencing the choice of school. They were: opportunities for higher education, child(ren)'s happiness, high expectations for learning,

academic standards, quality of teaching and reputation. Reputation was the most mentioned reason for school choice by both Canadian and Ukrainian parents.

Parents in both schools commonly identified positive atmosphere as another reason. What appeared different was that alongside with key qualities of the school (academic standards), reasons for school choice for Canadian parents were also situational or family-connected factors.

The choice for Ukrainian parents was based on key qualities of the school as well as good preparation for the university. It is necessary to mention that parents' reasons for school choice are not necessarily the factors they identified as factors of school effectiveness. Parents want the school to be effective, but the choice is often based on other circumstances, such as family life and convenience of proximity.

Implications for Theory, Practice and Research

This study reinforces the importance of the parental perspective as outlined in school effectiveness literature. Recent establishment of parent councils in Saskatchewan highlights the role that parents can play in the functioning of effective schools. This current development has implications for government, administrators and students. Increased specificity and precision in the effective school terminology is required, particularly when a cross-cultural study is being conducted. Concepts should share a common meaning.

Implications for practice in this study may include conducting career seminars at schools, providing more information about future possibilities. Recent school graduates can be surveyed to determine their level of satisfaction with preparation that schools provided for continuing education.

Comparative studies similar to this particular one can be beneficial for all parties involved as they provide exchange of experiences, and the look at similarities and differences in

views and perceptions. Examining of experiences in two different settings can provide a better understanding of each case, can help to identify and better understand the problems that research faces, and to determine what needs to be done to solve them.

This study revealed that in different parts of the world effective schooling is all about positive outcomes. The quality of effective schools is an important issue that enjoys attention around the world. Parents want their children to be educated in effectively performing schools. Parents' perspective on school effectiveness should be given more voice as parents are stakeholders in creating successful learning communities with student success at the centre.

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APPENDIX A

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

October, 2003

Dear Parent:

Enclosed is a questionnaire concerning parental perceptions of school effectiveness and factors influencing school choice. This questionnaire is a part of a research project that I am conducting as a requirement for a Master's of Education degree under the supervision of Dr. Larry Sackney, at the University of Saskatchewan.

The questionnaire asks you to share your personal opinions on the concept of school effectiveness. It also asks you to share on what you were looking for when choosing your child(ren)'s school and what influenced your choice.

I would like to invite you to complete the five-part questionnaire following the directions for each part. The questionnaire requires only a few minutes to complete and any additional remarks and comments are welcome. Your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous.

After you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to school through your child(ren).

Thank you for you participation in completing this questionnaire. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by telephone at the following number: 664-0048, or e-mail address: ira_dudka@yahoo.com

Sincerely.

Iryna Dudka
Dr. Larry Sackney (advisor)

Parent Questionnaire

I   *Please indicate what you expect from your child(ren)'s school.*

II   *Please indicate the factors that in your opinion make a "good"/ "effective"*

school. (Write as many as you consider to be important).

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

III *For each of the following statements about an effective school, please mark the circle that indicates your level of agreement.*

Strongly Disagree (SD) ①	Disagree (D) ②	Neutral (N) ③	Agree (A) ④	Strongly Agree (SA) ⑤

In an Effective School:

	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. Students feel safe.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2. Support for learning and teaching is at the heart of school policy and planning.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3. Academic emphasis is crucial.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4. The administration is accessible.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5. A common sense of purpose is important.	①	②	③	④	⑤
6. Parents are informed about their children's learning on a regular basis.	①	②	③	④	⑤
7. Students enjoy going to school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
8. Parents feel welcome in the school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
9. Teachers let parents know when their child is having difficulty.	①	②	③	④	⑤
10. Children's point of view is listened to.	①	②	③	④	⑤
11. The school develops each child's potential.	①	②	③	④	⑤
12. Parents feel that their contribution is valued.	①	②	③	④	⑤
13. Teachers and parents' pursue the same goals.	①	②	③	④	⑤
14. Parents monitor/ comment on their child(ren)'s homework.	①	②	③	④	⑤
15. A climate of achievement is present.	①	②	③	④	⑤

16. Parent-teacher meetings are not necessary.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

17. Parents feel confident that problems will be dealt with
and appropriate feedback given.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

18. Students are actively involved in school life decisions.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

19. Leadership is strong.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

20. Expectations are appropriately high.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

Please, mark whether you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree (SD) ①	Disagree (D) ②	Neutral (N) ③	Agree (A) ④	Strongly Agree (SA) ⑤

	SD	D	N	A	SA

21. School effectiveness is all about good teachers.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

22. An effective school is a professional community, where students, teachers and parents have rights and responsibilities.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

23. The size of the classes is irrelevant for school effectiveness.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

24. Strict discipline makes a better school.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

25. A poor school facility impacts on the effectiveness of the school   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

26. Lack of resources negatively influences school effectiveness.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

27. The quality of leadership in the school does not necessarily have an impact on the school's effectiveness.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

28. Test results speak best for the effectiveness of the school.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

29. High instructional expectations always result in school effectiveness.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

30. Positive climate is necessary for an effective school.   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

IV *Please mark whether your choice of your child(ren)'s school was determined by the following factors:*

	High	Medium	Low
•Academic standards_____	①	②	③
•Quality of teaching _____	①	②	③
•Reputation _____	①	②	③
•Close to home location_____	①	②	③
•Financial factors _____	①	②	③
•Condition of facility _____	①	②	③
•High expectations for learning _____	①	②	③
•Opportunities for higher education _____	①	②	③
•Examination results _____	①	②	③
•Good discipline _____	①	②	③
•Opportunities to mix with children from different backgrounds_____	①	②	③
•Atmosphere/ ethos of the school _____	①	②	③
•The kind of resources (materials, books, computers, equipment, etc.) _____	①	②	③
•Type of students _____	①	②	③
•Friends attend this school _____	①	②	③
•Friends' recommendation _____	①	②	③
•Child(ren)'s happiness _____	①	②	③

•Other (please specify) _____

_____

_____

V   *Please, rank the three to five important reasons for your choice of the school.*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

VI   *Please, comment on any issues covered by the questionnaire if you wish.*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your cooperation

APPENDIX B

PRINCIPAL'S LETTER OF CONSENT

PRINCIPAL'S LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear:

I am writing this letter to request your consent to conduct a research study in your school. I am currently enrolled in the Master's (thesis) degree program in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan.

My thesis topic concerns the perceptions of parents regarding the concept of school effectiveness. The purpose of this study is to examine parental perceptions of school effectiveness in a Canadian and Ukrainian school. A secondary purpose is to ascertain the characteristics that parents view as important for school choice.

The subjects of the Canadian part of this study will be the parents of students from your school. The participation of these individuals would be on a voluntary basis and I can assure you that their responses would be treated as strictly confidential and anonymous. The research has been approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Sciences Research Ethics Board on the following date: June 15, 2002

This study will comprise a questionnaire that will be administered to 100 parents, randomly selected from the high school, followed by a representative sample of ten follow up interviews. I will be the interviewer for each of these interviews.

If you have any questions or concerns with respect to this study, I can be reached at the following numbers: 664-0048 (home)
                    ird051@mail.usask.ca (e-mail at University)
                    ira_dudka@yahoo.com (e-mail at home)
For further information, please feel free to contact my research advisor, Dr. Larry Sackney at his office number, 966-7626 or research services, 966-7265.

        I am excited about the opportunity to carry out this research study in your school. I believe this study will yield useful information pertaining to differences in Canadian and Ukrainian parent' perception on school effectiveness. I am seeking your permission to approach the parents. Thank you for your time and effort in considering this request.

Sincerely,

Iryna Dudka
Graduate Student

APPENDIX C
ETHICS PROPOSAL

University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research

Application for Approval of Research

1. <u>**Name of Researcher/Supervisor/Department:**</u>

Researcher – Iryna Dudka

Supervisor – Dr. Larry Sackney

Department – Educational Administration, College of Education

1a. <u>**Type of Study:**</u>

Master's Thesis

1b. <u>**Timeline:**</u>

The study will begin on August 25, 2002 and will be completed by February, 2003.

2. <u>**Title of Study:**</u>

Parents' Perception of School Effectiveness in Canada and Ukraine: A Comparative Study.

3. <u>**Abstract:**</u>

The purpose of this study is to examine parental perceptions in a Canadian and Ukrainian school as to what parents view as an effective school. A secondary purpose is to ascertain the characteristics that parents view as important for school choice. The purpose will be addressed through the following research questions:

1. What factors do Canadian and Ukrainian parents' define as elements of an effective school?

2. What school characteristics determine parents' choice of schools in both countries?

4. **Funding:**

No funding in place.

5. **Participants:**

Parents of students in two high schools (one in Saskatoon, Canada and one in Chernivtsi, Ukraine) will be involved in this study. Permission to survey parents will be obtained from high school principals. Completing the questionnaire will be voluntary and anonymous. (A copy of the questionnaire attached).

6. **Consent:**

Completed questionnaires will indicate parents' consent to participate in the study. A letter of consent will be provided to the parents who will be willing to participate in individual interviews at the beginning of the research study. Signing the letter will indicate consent to participate. The letter of consent will explain that participants may withdraw from the study at any time and may refuse to answer individual questions, and that they also have the right to confidentiality. The letter of consent is attached to this application.

7. **Methods/Procedures:**

A case study methodology will be used to examine the outlined research questions. Both quantitative and qualitative methods will be employed. The study will use a questionnaire as an instrument of data collection. Questionnaires will be distributed to parents in both schools (one in Saskatoon and one in Chernivtsi). Permission to survey parents will be obtained the principals of both schools. A letter requesting permission to conduct the study will be sent to them. A sample of 100 parents in each school will be asked to complete the questionnaire with detailed

instructions. The teachers will be asked to distribute the questionnaires to the randomly selected students and encourage them to have their parents complete and return them promptly. The completed questionnaires will be returned to children's school. The "questionnaire box" will be available at the secretary's office where they will be collected by the researcher.

The last part of the questionnaire (on a separate sheet of paper, and envelope will be provided) will ask parents to participate in an interview. They will be asked to provide contact information (name and phone number) in case they are willing to be interviewed. Ten parents in each school will be selected to participate in the interviews. They will be contacted and the meetings for interviews will be arranged. Prior to the beginning of interviews parents will be provided with consent forms and asked to sign them. Interviews will be transcribed for data purposes. A comprehensive analysis of parents' comments found in interviews will be performed in order to identify notable themes or ideas. The data provided will present Canadian and Ukrainian parents' views on school effectiveness. The researcher who will be conducting the interviews is originally from Ukraine, and is fluent in Ukrainian. All documents will be translated into Ukrainian for the Ukrainian sample.

8. Storage of Data:

Data will be kept at the University of Saskatchewan in the care of my supervisor. It will be locked and stored for a period of time as mandated by University of Saskatchewan Ethics guidelines.

9. Dissemination of Results:

The results of this study will be shared with the faculty of the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. They will be used to complete requirements for a thesis in the Master of Education degree in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. The results may further be used for conference presentations and journal publications.

10. <u>Risk or Deception:</u>

The researcher does not foresee or anticipate any risk resulting from participation in this study. Participation in this research study is voluntary. Volunteer participants may withdraw at any point in the study and their anonymity will be assured. There is no deception involved in this study.

11. <u>Confidentiality:</u>

The participants will be assured that their anonymity will be protected. The schools and parents will not be identified in the study. Aggregate questionnaire results will be reported. Confidentiality will be further assured through the use of pseudonyms when the participant's statements need to be quoted. Individual interviews will use pseudonyms for participants.

12. <u>Debriefing and Feedback:</u>

The participants will have an opportunity to review the interview transcripts and will have the right to request that information that might identify them be deleted from the final report.

The schools will receive a copy of the study upon completion.

13. <u>Signatures:</u>

_____   _____

Department Head: Date

_____   _____

Advisor: Dr. Larry Sackney   Date

_____   _____

Applicant: Iryna Dudka   Date

APPENDIX D

INFLUENCE ON SCHOOL CHOICE: CANADIAN PARENTS

Influence on School Choice: Canadian Parents

Factor	High	Medium	Low	N
1.Academic standards	36	20	4	60
2.Quality of teaching	35	21	4	60
3.Reputation	32	26	2	60
4.Close to home location	27	22	11	60
5.Financial factors	4	16	40	60
6.Condition of facility	12	32	16	60
7.High expectations for learning	38	19	3	60
8.Opportunities for higher education	42	14	4	60
9.Examination results	11	31	18	60
10.Good discipline	18	34	8	60
11.Opportunities to mix with children from different backgrounds	11	29	20	60
12.Atmosphere/ ethos of the school	25	32	3	60
13.The kind of resources	22	34	4	60
14.Type of students	20	28	12	60
15.Friends attend this school	25	15	20	60
16.Friends' recommendation	18	23	19	60
17.Child(ren)'s happiness	41	16	2	59
18. Other				12

APPENDIX E

INFLUENCE ON SCHOOL CHOICE: UKRAINIAN PARENTS

Influence on School Choice: Ukrainian Parents

Factor	High	Medium	Low	N
1.Academic standards	45	16	0	61
2.Quality of teaching	55	6	0	61
3.Reputation	48	9	4	61
4.Close to home location	13	15	33	61
5.Financial factors	22	13	26	61
6.Condition of facility	17	17	27	61
7.High expectations for learning	41	15	5	61
8.Opportunities for higher education	49	10	2	61
9.Examination results	17	17	27	61
10.Good discipline	22	24	15	61
11.Opportunities to mix with children from different backgrounds	22	18	21	61
12.Atmosphere/ ethos of the school	33	15	13	61
13.The kind of resources	32	19	10	61
14.Type of students	18	25	18	61
15.Friends attend this school	12	18	31	61
16.Friends' recommendation	23	24	14	61
17.Child(ren)'s happiness	38	18	5	61
18.Other				2