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## The Race to Leadership Effectiveness: A Study on School Organization for High and Low Performing Georgia Schools

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### Cover Page Footnote

**Acknowledgments** This article is based on a study within the 2019 dissertation of Willie Batts. The important findings from that study need to be shared because it is clear that organizational structure is likely to make a difference when it comes to performance results. From the dissertation and this article, it is possible to see current trends in research about organizational theory and future research possibilities.

### Authors

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## **The Race to Leadership Effectiveness: A Study on School Organization for High and Low Performing Georgia Schools**

Georgia schools, now more than ever, are sites of increased scrutiny, pressure, and funding. There is the No Child Left Behind Policy (NCLB), which has increased the amount of accountability in schools since 2001 (Yoon et al., 2007). There are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which help develop standards for student performance in core areas of learning (e. g., Math and Language Arts). For students to be college and career ready, there exists the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI). This is a tool that helps to determine if students are being fully prepared each year for the next level of education in terms of content mastery, progress, closing achievement gaps, readiness, and graduation rate (Steed, 2019). On top of that, there is the Race to the Top (RTT) Initiative. This initiative was originally developed in 2009 through a 4.35 billion dollar grant under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Howell & Magazinnik, 2017). RTT, when implemented on the district level, seeks to address six key areas:

1. Improve state capacity and supports for school improvement.
2. Adopt standards and assessments for college and career readiness.
3. Build state-level data systems for student growth and instruction.
4. Improve the effectiveness of teachers and principals.
5. Turn around schools that are known as low performing schools.
6. Encourage conditions for charter school success.

Even with these measures in place, it is somewhat unclear the relationship between what is found in these initiatives and what is found in performance-based outcomes (Dragoset et al., 2016). What is seen today, especially in Georgia schools, is not keeping up with the expectations

placed on students to succeed. Georgia students are still falling behind. There are multiple contexts to account for in schools, and there is a clear gap that exists between policy and practice (Dragoset et al., 2016; Scheerens & Creemers, 1989; Steed, 2019). This problem requires more research in order to find key areas for improvement that will help performance outcomes match the policy-based demands placed on schools today. One area of research that is useful for this particular situation is optimal organization performance, otherwise known as organizational effectiveness. Organizational effectiveness is a part of school culture. Organizational culture can vary between high and low performing schools (Danielson, 2002). The use of small group sizes, system diversity, teaching teams, performance-based feedback, high expectations, goal-setting, accurate class schedules, and a flexible mindset are generally known to be conducive to high student performance (Danielson, 2002; Dreger, 2017; Swindlehurst et al., 2015; Vining et al., 2019). These and other areas of organizational culture are starting points for this correlational research study.

The purpose of this study is twofold: (a) to determine if a significant difference in organizational structure scores exists between high and low performing elementary schools in Georgia and (b) to determine the relationship between school organizational effectiveness and school performance, particularly within Georgia elementary schools. After reading the findings of this study, one can determine if there exists essential factors to student organization that increase the likelihood for student success. Awareness of these factors would help stakeholders develop organizational structures that actually work for all involved.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework centers around organizational structure and organizational behavior theory. The overarching premise is that school organization is a key influence on

environment and culture. Student behavior and performance are influenced by environment and culture, which logically connects organizational structure to student behavior and academic results. For concepts pertaining to organizational structure, the School Culture Survey provided multiple themes that were used for quantitative research purposes. The School Culture Survey was originally developed by Saphier and King (1985). It was modified by Edwards et al. (1996). The survey made by Edwards et al. (1996) is the more modernized of the two when it comes to organizational themes (McLeod, 2012). The change was proposed because five of the original items had poor factor loading and misfit existed during the Rasch analysis that was performed (Edwards et al., 1996; McLeod, 2012). Edwards et al. (1996) made sure to clarify the acceptable themes and scales for school culture. The survey organizes school climate and school organization as well. For the purposes of this study, school organization is defined in terms of its effectiveness, which is further delineated into 10 major themes found in the survey: (a) collaborative decision-making, (b) continual school improvement focus, (c) leadership, (d) management of excellence, (e) concern for school and stakeholders, (f) professionalism, (g) teaming, (h) empowerment, (i) human resource needs, and (j) intent and direction (Batts, 2019; Edwards et al., 1996). School performance is operationally defined as a combination of scores from (a) comparative school data and (b) student achievement test scores in math and reading.

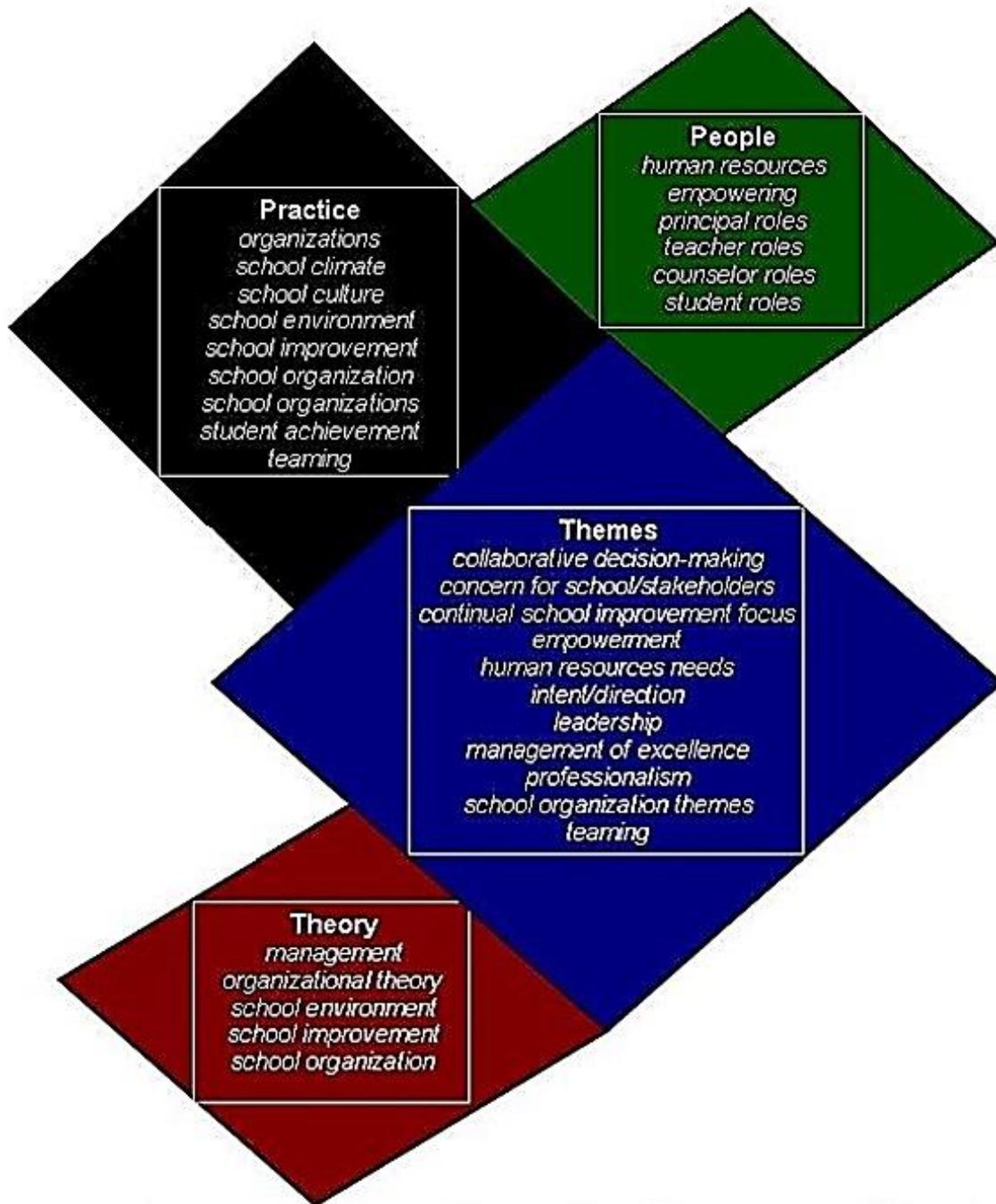
Further explanation of school culture, behavior, performance, and organization was derived from organizational behavior theory. Organizational behavior theory is a systemic approach to behavior and science that is concerned about the practices of individuals, groups, organizations, and processes within those organizations. Its earliest origins can be traced to the Sumerians in 5000 BC (Onday, 2016). Important organizations, supervisory practices, and divisions of labor were documented on clay tablets (Onday, 2016). Other notable names of

contributors to the theory are Socrates, Adam Smith, Frederick Taylor, Max Weber, Daniel McCallum, Henri Fayol, and Abraham Maslow (Ferdous, 2017; Onda, 2016). Classical approaches to organizational theory have focused on static physiology and mechanics of organizations, whereas modern approaches have focused more on the dynamics of mutual interactions, decentralized structure, informal communications, system goals, system outcomes, and processes within systems (Ferdous, 2017; Onda, 2016; Ott et al., 2008; Vining et al., 2019). Present perspectives on organization theory create a challenge for traditional perspectives since they do not put emphases on traditional, bureaucratic structures (Vining et al., 2019).

The actual search for literature about these concepts required a mapping out of search terms. Figure 1 shows the list of terms used and how they were organized when searching for important literature. This map helped to establish essential keywords about theory, themes, practice, and people. The first three areas are sorted in alphabetical order to show a uniformity in approach. The Theory area covers general concepts that are important to organizational theory. The Practice area details terms that would be a realistic part of the school setting, such as school environment and student achievement. The Themes area discusses key themes about organization that can be made into searchable terms. These themes are covered within the School Culture Survey. The words in the People area, however, are sorted from general descriptors to specific roles that would be played in a school. This separate ordering system demonstrates that there can be distinct formal and informal roles for people, even when they are united within one organization.

**Figure 1**

*Concept Map of Important Terms*



*Note.* This is a conceptual mapping about important search terms relevant to this study.

## **Methods**

The study design is correlational in nature, meaning that the primary objective is to establish whether or not a relationship exists between or among different variables (Creswell, 2013). Correlational research is non-experimental research that can include numerical data and/or operationalized themes about data. This design was selected because it could establish relationships within survey data while also accounting for differences in scores. It helped to sufficiently answer any noteworthy areas of investigation for the study while also providing efficiency in finding the answers needed for the research. The data gathered were primarily quantitative in nature since scores were determined from both survey data and Georgia Department of Education archives to find out if statistically significant trends exist in the data.

There were 16 elementary schools surveyed, and teachers participated as respondents during survey administration. They gave responses concerning metaphors or general statements on organizational themes. The survey itself contained 50 items. A Likert scale from 1-5 was included in the survey, where 1 = Almost Never and 5 = Almost Always (Batts, 2019). The Likert scale, for the purposes of this study, was an approximately interval, continuous measure where a quantifiable score was obtained. Actual achievement scores discovered from archives were interval, continuous data. This allowed for comparisons with less chance of statistical error during data analysis because both were already measured on the interval scale.

Informed consent was gathered from participants and from school administrators to access the data necessary for the study. There were 20 schools that had Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, but it was later determined that 16 out of the 20 principals (80%) employed within them actually gave consent to be part of the study. The School Culture Survey, along with demographic items, was administered to 382 teachers from the 16 Georgia elementary

schools. The teachers were employed in the public school system. They taught what were typical, core subjects in elementary school, such as math, language arts, science, and social studies. Teachers answered items about their behavioral norms, shared beliefs, and core values. These three areas are actual sections within the survey. Organizational effectiveness scores were later derived from the 10 themes found in the survey, which were within the three areas listed.

Convenience sampling was used to gather participants. In quantitative research, convenience sampling is often frowned upon due to the fact that parametric testing assumptions often include the need for independent, true random samples. Not everyone, however, uses the assumption of true, fair random sampling to justify testing procedures (Yu, 2008). According to Yu (2008), truly random samples without systemic interactions cannot actually exist in practice or in terms of the interpretation of data. Given that the conceptual framework does not recognize hypothetical, system-free structures as a basis for significant analyses, the assumption of random sampling does not apply. Moreover, de Winter and Dodou (2010) say that for Likert items, the parametric *t*-test and nonparametric equivalents, such as the Mann-Whitney test, do not differ much from each other. When it happens in rare circumstances, it is likely a statistical power issue or a significant non-normal distribution that would impact the procedures (de Winter & Dodou, 2010). As long as the sample size is sufficient for data analysis, the *t*-test would generally hold up even if data were slightly non-normal (de Winter & Dodou, 2010). The assumptions that do apply to practicum-based parametric testing for this study are outlined in the Results.

Archived data from the Georgia Department of Education were used to collect information for comparisons about schools, as well as performance scores for math and reading. The archive had score data available that documented performance from three years ago to the time of study implementation. School performance data were ranked in order to develop overall

performance scores that were based on scores in the archive. From the school performance scores, two groups were determined: high performing schools and low performing schools. Each group contained eight schools. Data were analyzed between the two school subgroups in order to establish if significant thematic differences existed. Then data were analyzed in aggregate to determine if any relationship existed between school organization and school performance.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Two essential aspects to this study are validity and reliability. Validity can be internal or external (Creswell, 2013). Internal validity pertains to (a) whether or not a cause-effect relationship can be established and (b) how much rigor and control exists to account for what is not part of the actual study. Although this correlational study is not designed to establish cause and effect, there are controls in place that would be necessary for all quantitative studies to have. The schools, for instance, had an organizational structure already in place before performance ranks and scores could be calculated. This helped establish if any trends existed for the data where an independent variable could be associated with a dependent variable. Additionally, the variables could occur so that both varied at specific times. In other words, it was possible for the researcher to see variations in the data for both variables after the information had been gathered for a specified time period. It was not possible to fully account for what respondents would say or how any of the data was sorted in the archives; however, identities remained anonymous so that there would be an unbiased, systematic collection of data where all available participant data would be used.

External validity refers to how well the results can be generalized to people and situations outside of the study. It can be said that the School Culture Survey has been successfully used, replicated, and tested in other studies. It can also be said that this is not the first time

performance records from the Georgia Department of Education have been used in a study about Georgia schools. It cannot be said that the way the survey has been administered in this study is exactly the same as in the past because there still exists a gap in the research between organizational theory and organizational practice. This study was created to investigate problems that currently exist in an ever-changing educational climate. The sample size was robust enough for parametric testing, but it had limitations in terms of making inferences about the overall population. More discussion on limitations is provided in the Limitations section of this article.

Reliability refers to consistency with testing, observations, and methods over time. This can include establishing internal consistency with instruments or testing instruments multiple times (Creswell, 2013). There was test-retest reliability that has been established on the archived performance data since the performance scores available for schools and students contained data for three consecutive school years. The measures used to gain the information involved standardized tests and assessments that were repeated each year. The School Culture Survey was not retested on the same participants, but it was used for other studies besides this particular one. There was also internal consistency reliability that was established for the School Culture Survey via Cronbach's alpha. The subscales of norms, beliefs, and core values had a high internal consistency score between .81 and .91 (Edwards et al., 1996). This indicates that the items within the subscales are consistent indicators of the constructs they are supposed to measure. There is a problem with consistency in terms of ratings, since there are different definitions of high and low performance available in education today. This is discussed more in the Limitations section.

## **Results**

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 25 was used for statistical analyses. Preliminary analyses required three parametric assumptions to be tested: normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Normality was determined through skewness and kurtosis measures. Skewness measures did not indicate severe skew in the indicators for school organization (-0.12 to 0.91), nor did kurtosis measures indicate significantly narrow distributions (-1.32 to 0.90). Ideally, skewness and kurtosis measures should not be lower than -1 or higher than 1; however, slight outliers can be kept in cases where (a) there is not severe skew and (b) there are other indicators of a construct that do not indicate severe skew (Hair et al., 2017). Each thematic construct for the School Culture Survey showed no severe skew in the data. Scatterplots of the independent and dependent variables indicated linearity in the data, and Levene's test showed equal variances between three of the ten constructs ( $p > .05$ ): (a) continual school improvement focus, (b) concern for school and stakeholders, and (c) intent and direction. Those that violated this assumption were still tested using the same version of  $t$ -test for independent samples, but the statistical results were based on equal variances not being assumed. The means, standard deviations, and mean differences for the low and high performing schools utilized for this study are in Table 1 below. The low performing schools, on average, scored the lowest in Empowerment ( $M = 48.22, SD = 3.43$ ) and the highest in Concern for School/Stakeholders ( $M = 53.54, SD = 7.51$ ). The high performing schools, on average, had their lowest score in Empowerment ( $M = 64.65, SD = 10.69$ ). Their highest score was in Concern for School/Stakeholders ( $M = 53.54, SD = 7.51$ ). Each set of scores for the 10 themes shows high performing schools doing better than low performing schools.

After assumption testing, independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to determine if significant differences in organizational effectiveness existed between high and low performing schools. The use of *t*-tests in this manner is recommended by Slavin (1992) and Mertler and Vannatta (2005). Results showed that there were significant differences in all 10 themes. High performing elementary schools scored significantly higher than low performing elementary schools in the following areas: collaborative decision making ( $p = .004$ ), continual school improvement focus ( $p = .001$ ), leadership ( $p = .002$ ), management of excellence ( $p = .001$ ), concern for school and stakeholders ( $p = .002$ ), professionalism ( $p = .002$ ), teaming ( $p = .002$ ), empowerment ( $p = .001$ ), human resource needs ( $p = .001$ ), and intent/direction ( $p = .001$ ). Table 2 shows additional information pertaining to *t* values, degrees of freedom, mean differences, standard error, and confidence intervals. Out of the themes listed, the areas with the lowest significance values were continual school improvement focus, management of excellence, empowerment, human resource needs, and intent/direction ( $p = .001$ ).

To determine if relationships existed between organizational effectiveness and school performance, Pearson's correlational analysis (Pearson's *r*) was used. This is recommended by Mertler and Vannatta (2005) for correlational testing with parametric assumptions. Results from the Pearson *r* correlations indicated statistically significant negative relationships between school organization and school performance within all 10 themes. Correlation coefficients ranged from -.67 to -.74. As the score for school performance went up, the score for organizational effectiveness went down. High student performance gave schools low numbers in terms of comparative ranks. The highest significance value was found within collaborative decision-making ( $r = -.67, p = .004$ ). The second highest *p* value was found within professionalism ( $r = -.70, p = .003$ ) and teaming ( $r = -.70, p = .003$ ). The most frequent *p* value was .002, which was

found for leadership ( $r = -.71$ ), management of excellence ( $r = -.72$ ), concern for school/stakeholders ( $r = -.71$ ), human resource needs ( $r = -.72$ ), and intent/direction ( $r = -.72$ ). The lowest  $p$  values were found within the areas of continual school improvement focus ( $r = -.74, p = .001$ ) and empowerment ( $r = -.73, p = .001$ ).

Collaborative decision-making, continual school improvement focus, leadership, and management of excellence are classified as norms according to the School Culture survey. Concern for school and stakeholders, professionalism, and teaming all describe beliefs. Empowerment, human resource needs, and intent and direction all are contained in the area of core values.

### **Discussion**

The organizational effectiveness of high performing elementary schools was significantly better in norms, beliefs, and core values. The culture of the high performing schools tended to be more helpful to student performance outcomes. When looking at the significance values within the  $t$ -test results as depicted in Table 2, lower significance values typically had higher gaps in terms of mean differences. The highest mean difference was -18.55, which was found within Continual School Improvement Focus. The lowest mean difference was -14.20, which was found within Collaborative Decision-Making. This means that high performing schools showed the most significant gains when they had a Continual School Improvement Focus. Low performing schools had the least pronounced gap in the area of Collaborative Decision Making. While all themes show significant gains with high performing schools, they do not have the exact same amount of gains. The amount of difference changes for each theme, and these differences would need to be recognized in order to know what works for schools. If a teacher knows that Leadership does not generate performance gains like Management, then the organizational

**Table 1**

*Descriptives of Thematic Scores for Low and High Performing Elementary Schools*

Organizational Theme	Low Performing Schools*		High Performing Schools*		$M^{diff}$
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
<b>Collaborative Decision-Making</b>	51.85	2.37	66.05	11.30	-14.20
<b>Continual School Improvement Focus</b>	49.20	7.22	67.75	10.05	-18.55
<b>Leadership</b>	49.89	3.65	66.52	11.39	-16.63
<b>Management of Excellence</b>	50.98	5.84	69.47	11.50	-18.49
<b>Concern for School/Stakeholders</b>	53.54	7.31	69.80	9.52	-16.27
<b>Professionalism</b>	52.29	3.93	68.39	11.51	-16.10
<b>Teaming</b>	50.02	2.39	67.44	13.10	-17.42
<b>Empowerment</b>	48.22	3.43	64.65	10.69	-16.43
<b>Human Resource Needs</b>	50.66	3.32	68.80	12.56	-18.14
<b>Intent/Direction</b>	51.94	8.94	69.57	8.69	-17.63

*Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation;  $M^{diff}$  = Mean Difference; Bold = Norms; Blue = Beliefs; Gray = Core Values.*

*\*n = 8.*

**Table 2**

*Independent Sample t-Test of Differences in School Organization Effectiveness Between Low and High Performing Elementary Schools, Sorted by Theme*

	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	<i>M Dif.</i>	Std. Error Dif.	95% Conf. Int. of the Dif.	
						Lower	Upper
Collaborative Decision-Making	-3.48	14	.004	-14.20	4.08	-22.96	-5.45
Continual School Improvement Focus	-4.24	14	.001	-18.55	4.38	-27.93	-9.17
Leadership Management of Excellence	-3.93	14	.002	-16.63	4.23	-25.70	-7.56
Concern for School/ Stakeholders	-4.05	14	.001	-18.49	4.56	-28.27	-8.71
Professionalism	-3.83	14	.002	-16.27	4.24	-25.37	-7.17
Teaming	-3.75	14	.002	-16.10	4.30	-25.32	-6.88
Empowerment	-3.70	14	.002	-17.42	4.71	-27.51	-7.32
Human Resources Needs	-4.14	14	.001	-16.43	3.97	-24.94	-7.92
Intent/ Direction	-3.95	14	.001	-18.14	4.59	-27.99	-8.29
	-4.00	14	.001	-17.63	4.41	-27.08	-8.17

*Note.* Adapted from Batts (2019).

\*Significant at level of significance of .05.

culture needs to emphasize better management skills over better leadership skills. Both need to be improved, but there would be priority in terms of management.

The correlational analyses indicated a general trend: as the organization score went up, the school score for performance went down. As the significance number increases, the Pearson correlation coefficient decreases in magnitude. The direction, which is negative, stays the same. The stronger the magnitude, the stronger the negative association is between the variables. For instance, a school that was high in Empowerment was more likely to have a low number in terms of ranks. When compared to Empowerment scores, schools that had a high Teaming scores were more likely to have a low number as well. The difference was that the chances of Empowerment playing a role in performance were higher than the chances that Teaming had anything to do with it.

When the school performance score from the archives goes down, it means that the rank score goes up. In other words, the school performance score was converted from the individual, student level to the school level. A high student score would indicate a low number in terms of school score. This would allow for analyses because the unit of analysis was the same. A school that had a 1 would be a top performing school, even though the number was low. A school that had a 14 would be a low performing school, even though the number was high. This explains why a negative correlation existed that had positive implications for schools, teachers, and students.

Additionally, it is important to remember that correlation does not imply causation. Not every good performance outcome is the result of good organization. There are other factors or themes that can attribute to results. It can be said, however, that elementary schools in the dataset

that performed in the top eight were more likely to have high organizational effectiveness when compared to the other half of the schools ranked in the study.

The results are supported by the conceptual framework. Trends exist to indicate a strong association between school organization and school performance. The participating school received a rank according to student performance and how well they did in comparison to other schools. When looking at each theme within school organization, each contributes to the culture of a school. They, once established, become part of the day-to-day operations of the schools. This, in turn, would set important trends about effectiveness where students perform well in a school culture that actually addresses their needs and the needs of the school as an organizational system. An organization is based on what key people do. Those key people can be teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, and students. The study focused on what teachers said about their school effectiveness, how well students performed in reading and math, how Georgia elementary schools compare to one another in terms of performance, and how trends existed concerning school effectiveness and school performance. Results about organizational effectiveness can only apply to the themes that were tested. If there is a construct that falls outside of what is discussed in the survey, then one cannot definitively say whether or not the conceptual framework was supported. For instance, political and religious affiliation could be a part of culture. They are not labeled as part of the 10 major themes within the results; therefore, discussion would not take place that would emphasize results based specifically on political and religious affiliation. More explanation is provided in the sections below about the results as they apply to the three subscales of norms, beliefs, and core values.

## **Norms**

As previously stated, norms cover four themes: collaborative decision-making, continual school improvement focus, leadership, and management of excellence. Collaborative decision-making would indicate working together with others to make important choices, especially pertaining to school management and teacher expertise (Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Sarafidou and Chatziioannidis, 2013). A school low in this would have decisions being made without much discussion or teamwork involved. This would be problematic for the school climate because collaboration fosters school growth (Malinen and Savolainen, 2016). Continual school improvement focus would mean that there is a school-wide effort for improvement. There could be a desire for teachers and administrators to improve instructional activities or to include more professional development opportunities for teachers and leaders. (Jones & Yarbrough, 2013; Pourrajab et al., 2015; Watson, 2014). Low focus then would be an inadequacy in improvement desires or opportunities as a whole. Leadership means that important stakeholders in education are a point of management, collaborative teamwork, and authority (Cook, 2014; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Ross & Cozzens, 2016; Talebloo et al., 2015). When leadership is clearly present, the practices and rules of a school are established, maintained, and improved no matter what obstacles those in an organization might face (Cook, 2014). A low amount of leadership structure would indicate lack of guidance, inconsistent responsibility, and lack of accountability on key issues. Management of excellence pertains to the creation of complex systems and relationships that build over time so that improvements can be made. Performance and stakeholder commitment are supposed to thrive with good management strategies (Connelly, 2013). School organization culture that has low management of excellence would usually have significant implementation issues that conflict with overall expectations.

## **Beliefs**

Beliefs are classified as follows: concern for school and stakeholders, professionalism, and teaming. Concern for school and stakeholders, when high, encourages organizational behaviors that get people involved from different levels of decision making. Key decision-makers and participants emerge because there is a concern for the well being of everyone (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Student performance is likely to go up (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Somech, 2016; Talebloo et al., 2015). The opposite would be accurate to say if there were little to no concern for what happens with school and stakeholders. If there is no need to worry about the condition of what is happening, then the results are less likely to matter as well. Professionalism involves the development of consistent organizational citizenship behaviors that increase the quality programs, ethics, standards and courtesies that are displayed (Batts, 2019). Being a professional is not always seen within school culture, and the lack of role models for it can encourage disruptive or indifferent behaviors to persist to the point where performance suffers. Teaming refers to teachers working and collaborating with others, including teachers and administrators (Baeten & Simons, 2016). This has the added benefit of gaining more ideas about what works for students (Mandel & Eiserman, 2016). High teaming ability means more unique opportunities for growth and challenge. It brings about more positivity to the school climate (Bullough, 2015). Teachers can coordinate lessons and organizational frameworks so that students can receive supports within and across classrooms. Not all teachers have this opportunity, and a low teaming culture would have most teachers working independently without the opportunity to network with other professionals.

## **Core Values**

Core values within school culture focus on empowerment, human resource needs, and intent and direction. Empowerment can describe an ability to feel responsible within job roles and have authority because of information access, resources, and decision-making within an organization (Vining et al., 2019). High levels of empowerment would allow any participant the ability to be who they want to be and have the inner strength necessary to reach their goals. It would not just stop at an individual level. The belief that people can make a difference would also be shared as an organization, which in turn can provide the fuel needed for improving student performance (Lee & Nie, 2017). Low levels of empowerment mean a lack of confidence and competence for all involved. Addressing human resource needs has been shown to be crucial in developing school culture and school performance (Boudreaux, Martin, & McNeal, 2016). Addressing human resources at an average or high level would mean that students, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders have the necessary supports available for success in an organization (Rania et al., 2014). The expectations and standards would actually reflect the people involved (Boudreaux et al., 2016). Low levels would indicate that everyone is on their own and they cannot tap into their potential beyond what they currently have. There would be a lack of recognition of the critical role that everyone plays in school improvement, which would encourage people to just do what they have always done. Finally, intent and direction indicate that there are shared beliefs about the course of action for an organization (Edwards et al., 1996). High levels of intent and direction require a high amount of shared purpose to the point where group responsibility and accountability are not feared. This increases the likelihood of performance success (Batts, 2019). Knowing what to do and agreeing with others about it takes away stress and pressure that would exist if everything was placed on the shoulders of just one

person. If a problem occurs, it can be solved in a way that makes everyone even more supportive of one another moving forward. Low levels would cultivate more irresponsibility, more ego-driven decisions, and more incoherence in terms of organizational purpose.

### **Limitations**

The generalizability is limited only to the elementary schools that were part of the study. The type of convenience sampling done was efficient in gathering data, but it was based on whoever was available given the time, money, and protocol restrictions. The researcher had to use 16 approved schools within the state of Georgia, which limited the pool of respondents available and the chances of other schools being selected. From there, only teachers took the survey, which further reduced the amount of possible participants. Archived data access was also limited to the permissions given by IRB and school administrators. Despite the constraints, a great amount of data was available for analyses.

Also, the responses during the survey were based on teacher representations of school organization. In order to get a picture of organizational effectiveness, the organizations themselves would have to be represented by the characteristics given to them within the responses. This is similar to how school performance is represented by the student performance scores. There is a possibility for issues in responses or in archived data.

Furthermore, it is clear that a great amount of coordination and teamwork were needed for data collection, but it is unclear to what extent the analyses or instruments for this study were verified by other researchers or similar peers. It is known that past researchers have found the School Culture Survey to be useful within their research. There were IRB approved protocols in terms of how the study needed to be conducted and how data should be treated during analyses and reporting, so there was verification and consistency available for most of the procedures.

Finally, school culture, school climate, and school organizational effectiveness are all defined according to the School Culture Survey. How high performing and low performing schools are defined may differ from study to study or from location to location. This could affect reliability of the results. If a researcher defines high performance as receiving a school rank in the top six or receiving a certain grade point average, this could potentially affect the results of a study because the way in which students are grouped would be determined by whatever definition is used. In this study, the top eight elementary schools out of the sixteen were labeled as high performing, and the bottom eight were classified as low performing schools. If going by CCRPI scores for the elementary schools, there was only one high performing school and five low performing schools. Performance had to be redefined in a practical manner so that there could be sufficient data analyses for the study.

### **Recommendations**

First of all, correlational studies are not causal in nature. To get more information on cause and effect, more research would have to be done that addresses whether or not school organizational effectiveness influences school performance. A quantitative or mixed methods study that includes an experiment or quasi-experiment would help to investigate this further. Consideration should also be given to a qualitative or mixed methods study that explores definitions of important constructs through interviewing. A sample of teachers and administrators could be interviewed about their experiences. They could provide descriptions on what organizational effectiveness and high performance mean to them.

Secondly, convenience sampling was the preferred method for gathering participants, but a variety of sampling techniques could be used in addition to convenience sampling that helps strengthen the design in future research. For instance, the survey could be administered in

multiple sessions, and there could have been a random selection of which respondents would have been administered the survey for each session.

Thirdly, there are different ways to operationally define school culture, climate, and effectiveness. Future research can be done comparing the results using different instruments, creating replication studies with different grade levels, or seeing if significant differences in effectiveness scores can be found between teacher respondents and other types of respondents. Student performance results could be further sorted according to grade level, learning style, teaching beliefs, or demographic information.

Moreover, there were different reliability techniques employed for the study, especially where the testing instruments were concerned. Future research about this topic would benefit from the use of inter-rater reliability techniques, where peers or researchers would give a score or rating to certain aspects of the study. For example, determining the high and low performing schools could have required two or three people to create individual scores. This score could be combined to determine a final score or rank for the 16 elementary schools in the study so that each school could be sorted accordingly. Future research could also benefit from using equivalent forms within one or more sessions of survey dissemination. Using similar but alternative versions of a survey would give more protection and authenticity to participant responses.

Finally, it varies from resource to resource as to what is acceptable within parametric and nonparametric testing. It could be possible for future research to compare results based on different assumptions, such as those presented in parametric vs. nonparametric testing, ideal organizational structure vs. practical organizational structure, or classical management vs. behavioral management.

## **Conclusion**

Students are not improving in terms of performance as fast as expected. Answers for why this is must be determined. One possibility is that significant differences in school organization may exist between high performing and low performing schools. The other possibility is that there may exist some relationship between school organizational effectiveness and school performance. Within the context of this study, it was determined that high performing elementary schools had significantly higher organizational effectiveness than low performing elementary schools in the following areas: (a) collaborative decision-making, (b) continual school improvement focus, (c) leadership, (d) management of excellence, (e) concern for school and stakeholders, (f) professionalism, (g) teaming, (h) empowerment, (i) human resources needs, and (j) intent and direction. It was also determined that a negative correlation existed between school effectiveness and school performance. This actually turns out to be a good thing because a high ranking in terms of school performance has a low number. Therefore, high effectiveness can be linked to better student performance. This study and its results would interest policy makers and stakeholders in education who need to know more about organizational culture, organizational structure, management systems, evidence-based practices, and correlational research.

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