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Exploring Staff, Student, and Parent Perceptions: Implications for Improving School Quality



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ABSTRACT

- This study examined student, parent and school staff ratings of factors that contribute to school quality in four suburban Utah secondary schools (6th through 9th grades) over a period of three years.
- The findings indicated that student ratings of aspects of school quality varied according to grade in school, gender, and ethnicity. Parents, students, and school staff also differed in their perceptions of school quality.

BACKGROUND

- Understanding stakeholder perceptions might prove to be a relatively easy, cost effective, and time efficient method to evaluate school quality and effectiveness (Heck, 2000).
- Positive perceptions of school quality are related to higher academic performance (Heck, 2000).
- When individuals perceive that they have a high level of control and influence, are given reasonable expectations, and believe that they have good social support from their colleagues and managers, they tend to be more productive (Karasek & Theorell, 1990).
- Specifically, students perceptions of their autonomy, expectations, and support from their teachers and fellow students may be related to academic outcomes (Samdal et al., 1999).
- Few studies have addressed differences in stakeholder perceptions. When examined, such differences were typically a tangential feature of the research (e.g. Heck, 2000; Samdal et al. 1999; Tymms, 2001; Townsend, 1997).

RESEARCH AIM

- This study attempted to augment and enrich the literature on perceptions of school quality by exploring potential differences between stakeholder perceptions in greater depth.
- In addition, this study explored paths that future researchers may take to work towards greater understanding of differences in stakeholder perceptions.

RESULTS

Teachers and students tended to rate their schools higher than parents.

ANOVA and Post Hoc Response Group Comparisons of Overall ISQ Means

Year	N			F	Group Comparisons (Tukey's ^a)
	Parents	Teachers	Students		
2004	1104	149	3130	46.03*	T, S > P
2005	889	150	3208	18.02*	T, S > P
2006	1300	179	2987	25.59*	T > S > P

^aNote 1: P, T, and S represent Parent, Teacher (Staff), and Student groups respectively.
^aNote 2: *All comparisons including the symbol ">" indicate that the group preceding the symbol rated their school higher. These comparisons yielded statistically significant differences ($p < .001$).

White students rated their schools higher than Non-White for all three years.

T-test White Only/Non-White Comparisons of Overall ISQ Means

Year	Non-White		White		df	t	d
	M	SD	M	SD			
2004	3.74	.67	3.85	.58	608	-3.30*	-.07
2005	3.71	.71	3.87	.61	631	-4.47**	-.10
2006	3.76	.66	3.87	.61	649	-3.23*	-.07

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Girls rated their schools higher than boys for all three years.

T-test Gender Comparisons of Overall ISQ Means

Year	Female		Male		df	t	d
	M	SD	M	SD			
2004	3.91	.57	3.78	.61	2697	5.88*	.16
2005	3.89	.59	3.79	.66	2758	4.14*	.11
2006	3.91	.59	3.81	.64	2554	4.01*	.11

* $p < .001$

Lower grades tended to rate the school more positively.

ANOVA and Grade Comparisons for Overall ISQ Means

Year	N				F	Grade Comparisons (Tukey's ^a)	
	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th			
2004	779	539	820	790	41.65*	6 > 7, 8, 9	7 > 8
2005	923	801	689	588	64.22*	6 > 7, 8, 9	7 > 8, 9
2006	879	769	559	581	55.29*	6 > 7, 8, 9	7 > 8, 9

^aNote: *All comparisons including the symbol ">" indicate that the group preceding the symbol rated their school higher. These comparisons yielded statistically significant differences ($p < .001$).

SAMPLE

Demographics of Students Enrolled in the Four Schools across Three Years (2004-2006)

	Year					
	2004		2005		2006	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Number of Students	4758		4874		4818	
Gender						
Male	2488	52	2547	52	2479	51
Female	2270	48	2327	48	2339	49
Special Education	536	11	528	11	495	10
Reduced Lunch	1407	30	1331	27	1429	30

	Year					
	2004		2005		2006	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Ethnicity						
Caucasian	4346	91	4447	91	4340	90
Hispanic	301	6	308	6	356	7
African American	23	<1	29	<1	27	<1
Asian	17	<1	15	<1	16	<1
Pacific Islander	35	1	38	1	31	1
Native American	36	1	37	1	48	1

INSTRUMENT

- Indicators of School Quality (ISQ; Taylor, West, & Smith, 2006) is comprised of three parallel surveys of stakeholder perceptions (parent, student, and school staff).
- Seven domains of interest are addressed by the items: parent support, teacher excellence, student commitment, school leadership, instructional quality, resource management, and school safety.

DISCUSSION

- The results of this study indicate that various response groups did in fact differ in their perceptions of the schools, although effect sizes (d), where calculated, were relatively small.
- Researchers and administrators might benefit from surveying stakeholders and taking differences into account—particularly when planning school-wide interventions.

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Experimental research examining causes for shifts in stakeholder perceptions would be informative.
- Survey comparisons can also provide impetus for qualitative studies examining perceptions at a specific school in more depth.

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