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Accountability and trust: Two sides of the same coin?

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Abstract

Trust and accountability are often positioned as opposites, the argument being that accountability is based on distrust and correction of identified deficiencies. Yet, trust is also important in order for accountability to lead to improvement; only when teachers and principals are open about the quality of their teaching and their school can there be a meaningful discussion about change. How can we overcome this dilemma? This paper will address the inextricable interaction between trust and accountability, presenting examples from a study in South Africa of how external control in a setting of distrust can undermine agency and improvement, and how high levels of trust can promote more effective accountability relationships. Our study provides relevant insights into why some education systems are unable to generate, evaluate and scale innovations in learning when a lack of trust and capacity leads to strong opposition to external accountability, and when strong bureaucratic accountability creates further inefficiencies in pressurizing educators across the education system to report and monitor on various aspects of education where these efforts do not actually improve the quality of teaching in the classroom or provide information on good practices.

Keywords Accountability · Trust · System reform

Introduction

'For an accountability approach to be truly responsible for the outcomes our children deserve and our communities require, it must support a system that is cohesive, integrative, and continuously renewing. It should enable schools to offer high-quality education, reduce the likelihood of harmful or inequitable practices, and have

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means to identify and correct problems that may occur.' This statement by Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2015, p. 3) is part of a wider debate on 'intelligent accountability' and how to design systems which promotes learning in schools and across the education system, and preserves and enhances trust among key participants. The question is particularly relevant for South Africa, which long history of oppression and apartheid have led to great inequalities, despite the country's classification as upper-middle income (World Bank 2008). 26 years after the fall of apartheid, the systematic racial segregation practiced under apartheid, in conjunction with an overtly white supremacist ideology still has a profound impact on South Africa's society as well as its education system (Spaull 2012). Howie (2012) explains how South Africa struggles with a widening performance gap between rich and poor students and high levels of drop out, particularly among black Africans. The distribution of resources and capital still privileges white South Africans, according to Nattrass and Seekings (2001) and Spaull (2012) and essentially divides the country and the education system into 'two nations'.

Trust and accountability seem to be major causes of the lack of improvement and high inequality. Spaull for example explains how the national, provincial and local levels of government are not held accountable for their use of public resources, and how there are few (if any) tangible consequences for non-performance. The lack of accountability is further evidenced in Eddy-Spicer et al. (2016) systematic review which points to school-based registers of teachers' attendance not being checked and how national government fails to sanction teachers who are often absent.

Lack of trust seems to inhibit the implementation of effective accountability: teacher unions, for example, reject inspections of teachers and block the publication of assessment data as these are perceived as punitive measures to blacklist underperforming schools and humiliate and subjugate teachers (Jansen 2001); a practice that was prevalent under Apartheid, particularly for black schools and teachers. The lack of accountability and trust seems to render the system powerless and a better understanding of how both are related is needed to understand how to come to the kind of 'intelligent accountability' needed to improve learning outcomes. This paper presents findings from a systematic literature review to explore:

> How do trust and accountability interact to prevent sustainable and scalable capacity for improvement in South Africa's system of basic education?

South Africa: A history of apartheid and the promise of education reform

South Africa's system of Apartheid ended in 1994 but the legacy of the segregation of people according to four racial groups (White, Black, Indian and Coloureds) is still present. Under Apartheid, black people lived in ethnic 'Homelands', or in urban townships areas to prevent them from living in the White urban areas of South Africa, and separate school systems were created for each of the racial and ethnic groups. Each of these systems had its own administration and education department with considerable levels of disparity in teacher qualifications, teacher–pupil ratios,

per capita funding, buildings, equipment, facilities, books, stationery, and also in the proportions and levels of certificates awarded. White schools were far better resourced and supported than any of the others. Under apartheid, education was one of the main tools of oppression such as through the prescription of an impoverished curriculum of rote learning, and examination criteria and procedures which were instrumental in promoting the political perspectives of those in power. Teachers were allowed very little latitude to determine standards or to interpret the work of their students.

After the abolishment of apartheid in 1994 and the constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996, the schooling system was considered to be one of the key areas for reform and one of the core building blocks towards a well-functioning democracy. The South African Schools Act (1996), for example, aimed to establish a uniform system for the governance and funding of schools, recognizing that a new national system for schools was needed to redress past injustices, supporting the rights of learners, educators and parents and setting out the duties and responsibilities of the State. The Act for example required the Minister of Basic Education to determine national quintiles for public schools according to the level of poverty in surrounding areas, and these quintiles were then used to redistribute resources to schools in the most deprived areas. Subsequent reforms sought to modernize the curriculum, develop teacher capacity, introduce assessments and quality assurance systems. The current South African curriculum, which is encapsulated in the National Curriculum Statement and the Curriculum and Policy Statement (CAPS), has been rolled out since 2011.[1]

While transforming the education system to achieve equality of opportunity has been an important policy within the post-apartheid agenda, the institutional memory of the former school departments is however still causing significant differences between schools along racial lines (e.g. Van der Berg 2007; Van der Berg et al. 2011; Taylor and Spaull 2013; and Yamauchi 2011). Former black schools with large populations of disadvantaged students not only have to contend with poorer schooling conditions, but also with a lack of general well-being (e.g. malnutrition, insecure living environment), which is reinforced by peers who face similar conditions (Taylor and Yu 2009; Smith 2011). Most of the children in these schools are not able to read for meaning by the end of grade 4, according to Van der Berg et al. (2016). As the entire curriculum is taught in English from grade 4 onwards, this poses a real problem for children who must switch from mother tongue instruction as they struggle to engage with the curriculum and will most likely develop further learning gaps across all subjects. The problem is compounded by the departmental progression policy which stipulates that no learner can spend more than 4 years in one phase. Thus, if a learner has failed one grade in a phase, they cannot fail again and will be automatically progressed to the next grade, creating cumulative learning deficits when learners can't access the teaching in higher grades, particularly in subjects that are vertically demarcated, such as mathematics and science (Schollar 2018; Mthiyane et al. 2018). By contrast, schools that historically served white

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[1] https://www.education.gov.za/Research,MonitoringEvaluationReports.aspx.

children produce educational achievement that is far closer to the norms of developed countries (Yamauchi 2011).

Various forms of accountability have aimed to address these inequalities such as through performance measurement and whole-school evaluation, but their implementation has been patchy at best with constant changes in type of measures and monitoring, strong opposition of teachers and teacher unions and little impact on school improvement. This paper aims to understand the lack of improvement through the lens of accountability and trust between the various stakeholders in the system. Below we present our conceptual framework and understanding of trust and accountability and their interaction.

Conceptual framework

Since the mid-1980s the development and implementation of strong accountability systems has been one of the most powerful trends in education policy in the UK, USA and many other countries according to Barber (2004). Here, we conceptualize accountability as a *system* to hold educators accountable through monitoring, inspections and/or standardized external assessments, and as a set of *relationships* between actors where an organisation or person is holding someone else to account.

Accountability systems

Anderson (2005), describes how educators work mostly within three types of accountability systems, often simultaneously. In the first (compliance-oriented) system, they are held accountable for adherence to rules and accountable to the bureaucracy. The second (professional accountability) system is based upon adherence to professional norms where educators are held accountable by their peers, such as through peer review, whereas in the third (performance-based accountability), educators are accountable for student learning and outcomes to the general public. The various concepts reflect different types of relations in terms of who holds whom to account, the types of measures and evaluations to inform these relations, the judgements and decisions from these evaluations and the resulting consequences.

Accountability relationships

Pritchett (2015) describes relationships as building blocks of human systems, constituted of a collection of actors (individuals and organizations) which are, in an education system, typically citizens/parents/students, the executive apparatus of the state, organizational providers of schooling, and teachers. According to Pritchett (2015), each of these actors has objective(s) or goal(s), possible actions, and actors have direct and indirect relationships with each other in ways that provide feedback loops both informational and consequential for their objectives (Pritchett 2015, p. 13). Klijn and Koppenjan (2014, p. 264) choose a more narrow definition of accountability relations as 'the extent to which actors (accounters: those rendering accounts) are

held accountable for their behaviour and performance by other actors (accountees: those to whom account is rendered)'.

In compliance-oriented systems, relations are vertical and situated in a hierarchy of command and control, such as when the state introduces a set of regulations on school curriculum, assessment or targeted levels of student outcomes and expects schools to comply and meet these standards; control and monitoring is introduced to measure the level of compliance (e.g. through inspections). In professional and performance-based accountability, relations are also horizontal and directed at how schools and teachers conduct their profession and/or at how schools and teachers provide multiple stakeholders with insight into their educational processes, decision making, implementation and results. Hooge et al. (2012, p. 8) explain how such horizontal accountability is premised on the development and evaluation of shared expectations amongst students, teachers, school leaders and other local stakeholders about learning outcomes and service delivery. Peer review and school self-evaluation are typically part of horizontal accountability, informing relations within schools and between schools and their learners and parents.

The accountability relationships in South Africa's education system are predominantly vertical and situated in a compliance-oriented system where teachers are accountable to their principal and school management team. Schools are held accountable by their school governing body, and districts monitor the quality of schools and teachers. Further up the hierarchy, provincial departments of education are accountable to the national Department of Basic Education through a set of performance targets and measures.

External to these vertical accountability relations, we find the South African Council of Educators (SACE), a body responsible for the registration, management of professional development and inculcation of a code of ethics for all educators. They uphold the professional accountability of teachers by developing teaching standards and dealing with complaints over teacher (mis)conduct. External monitoring also includes the evaluation and monitoring of schools by the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU), and (up to 2015) the Annual National Assessment (ANA), developed by the Department for Basic Education and monitored by the South African Qualifications Authority (Van der Berg et al. 2011). NEEDU's scheduled evaluations for 2017–2021 include system-wide monitoring of a sample of schools on the use of workbooks and allocation of tuition time to inform policy. The ANA was administered and marked by schools (with verification of scores and moderating procedures in a national sample) and there are no consequences for outcomes; the ANA introduced an element of performance-based accountability although the test was halted in 2015 after strong opposition from teacher unions. (South Africa yearbook 16/17).

Trust and accountability

The relationship between trust and accountability is much disputed in the field of organizational management and particularly studied in manager-subordinate relationships and in business alliances and supplier-customer relationships, according

to Six and Verhoest (2017). Authors from these fields look at trust and control in exchange relationships and how both lead to high performance, either separately or combined; control is conceptualized as 'producing information about a partner's performance and intentions, such as through formal modes of governance and overt monitoring (Gundlach and Cannon 2010). Whereas trust is 'a trustor's willingness to take a risk based on assessments of a trustee's competence, benevolence and integrity' (Mayer et al. 1995; cited in Addison 2015, p. 156). These three dimensions are further described by Oomsels and Bouckaert (2017, pp. 82–88) as:

- Competence: perceived ability, or expectation that the other party has competence to successfully complete its task.
- Benevolence: expectation that the other party cares about the trustor's interests and needs.
- Integrity: expectation that the other party will act in a just and fair way.

Vulnerability occurs, according to Gillespie (2015, p. 234) when someone relies on another's skills, knowledge, judgements or actions, including delegating and giving autonomy (reliance), or when someone shares work-related or personal information of a sensitive nature (disclosure). Where there is no requirement to rely on someone else, there is also no need for trust, according to Gillespie (2015). Control and monitoring is seen as an attempt by partners in an exchange relation to address the vulnerabilities inherent in trust by producing relevant information on someone else's competeces and intentions. Gundlach and Cannon (2010) however argue that this violates the underpinning principle of trust and that you cannot control someone you trust, stating that control stems from a position of distrust. According to Mills and Rubinstein Reiss (2017), formal control is based on a contract or institutional rules and is therefore enforceable, whereas trust presupposes generally accepted social norms where norm-conform behaviour is motivated through observation of behaviour and an informal acknowledgement that one confirms with or deviates from these norms.

Lewicki and Brinsfield (2015) and Ostrom (2010) further argue that trust reduces the need for effortful monitoring and frequent reanalysis of a situation or relationship as it enables people to make intuitive judgements and evaluations on the basis of one or a few simpler rules or cues. Monitoring by an external authority is unnecessary and costly when there is a setting of high trust and clear goal commitment.

Barrera et al. (2015, p. 253), Mills and Rubinstein Reiss (2017) and Näslund and Hallström (2017) however argue that one can build on, or reinforce the other, such as when control confirms initial (positive) assumptions of someone's (perceived) trustworthiness. In this case, control and monitoring and being accountable to someone else will (when implemented and enacted in a fair and just way and introduced in a collaborative setting) ensure that trust becomes a social reality, or an established feature of the relationship. As Näslund and Hallström (2017) explain, formal control may promote trust when those being regulated perceive the monitoring and sanction/reward process as a sign of good intentions and benevolence on the part of the regulator and when they interpret the monitoring as a signal of interest and credible concern.

The risk and level of vulnerability and need for trust will vary across the vertical and horizontal relations previously described, as actors have different roles and responsibilities with various levels of (formal/informal) power, and within which the nature of the interaction and the type of activity actors collaborate on varies. External accountability may introduce additional risks or vulnerability and reduce trust when one of the actors faces consequences for failing to perform. On the other hand, having an external accountability framework may equally reduce risks and improve trust when structuring the interaction around a clear set of standards and stabilizing the relationship over time. As Poppo et al. (2008) explain, trust is a dynamic concept which develops over time when a trustor updates his/her assessment of a counterpart's trustworthiness after an initial interaction. Interactions with unknown others are in the first instance informed by an initial perception of someone else's trustworthiness and often based on 'hearsay' and judgements of others, personal histories ('shadow of the past') and tend to be more favourable towards members of one (socio-cultural, organisational, role) group (Kramer 1999), and where there is an expectation of continued interaction ('shadow of the future'). According to a number of anthropological studies South Africa's history of Apartheid is likely to strengthen a positive predisposition to trust someone from the same racial background, socio-economic group or union membership but be suspicious towards members of other groups (Rex and Mason 1988; Sissener 2001). These mind-sets will undoubtedly impact on how accountability either builds or destroys trust. As Näslund and Hallström (2017) explain, in a collaborative setting, control induces cooperation which positively affects trust (and which in turn promotes cooperation), while a control system implemented in a distrustful relation is likely to lead to an escalation of distrust. Table 1 summarizes our conceptualization of trust and accountability and the various perspectives on how they interact in interpersonal/interorganisational exchange relations.

We are interested in how trust and accountability feature in the relationships in South Africa's system for basic education. Below we first present the methodology used to review the literature on trust and accountability in general, and within the relations in South Africa's education system.

Methodology

Our systematic literature review started with our previous conceptualization of 'trust' and 'accountability'. We identified six key sources which include recent meta-analyses or systematic literature reviews in each of the two areas (see "Appendix 1"). The reference lists from these sources, as well as a search of sixteen journals, published between 2010 and 2017, and a number of preselected websites and sources (OECD, RISE) informed our phase 2 in which we searched for sources which would present findings on interactions between trust and accountability. This resulted in a set of 554 unique references. Abstracts were extracted for each reference and coded according to type of study (empirical/conceptual), type of sector (education/other/non specified), type of country (South Africa, low/middle/high income/non specified), and type of variable (trust, accountability, or interaction).

Table 1 Accountability and trust conceptualized

System	Accountability systems: • Compliance-oriented, professional, performance-based • A culture of transparency and morality General trust/distrust: • A predisposition to trust unknown others • Level of suspicion in society	
Interpersonal and inter-organisational relations	• Accountability relations: the extent to which actors are held accountable for their behaviour and performance by other actors (through measures: inspections, testing, monitoring) and the consequences for low performance • Interpersonal trust: willingness to take a risk based on an assessment of a trustee's competence, benevolence and integrity • Interorganisational trust: the extent to which the members of a focal organisation trust the members of a partner organization	• Complementary perspective: trust and control can build on, or reinforce one another, such as when control confirms initial (positive) assumptions of someone's (perceived) trustworthiness. • Substitution perspective: control is positioned as a substitute for trust, saying that, in the presence of trust, control mechanisms are redundant and inefficient and resources for surveillance and monitoring can be put to better use. • Inverse perspective: control reduces trust between partners when collaborative actions or competent/benevolent/integer behaviours are attributed to the existence of these measures (when these incentivize and enforce collaborative behaviour), instead of a partner's innate trustworthiness.

In the third phase, the team read the 554 abstracts to select papers for full reading. The selection of 111 sources were first marked by all three team members as including (1) empirical findings or conceptualizations on the interaction between trust and accountability, or (2) papers which were situated in South Africa's education system. Of these 111, only 38 met both criteria in addressing interactions between trust/accountability of/in South Africa's education system. These 38 sources were used to write about accountability/trust relations in this paper (phase 4).

Given the exploratory nature of our research questions on potential interactions between trust and accountability, a topic which has not been studied in education as of yet, nor in a context of a developing country, our selection of papers for phase 4 was purposefully broad and included sources on the basis of relevance to our research questions. Relevance was defined, following Pawson (2006) as:

- Focus: does the source focus on the interaction between trust and accountability/control, does the source include (conceptual/empirical) findings on the functioning of the South African education system which explain interactions between trust and accountability/control in this context?
- Theoretical contribution: to what degree does the document address (elaborate and/or contradict) some aspect of our conceptual framework?

As we included both conceptual and empirical studies, our papers vary in the extent to which they could be considered methodologically robust. Inferences drawn from the papers in our findings section therefore need to be viewed as an initial exploration and contextual elaboration of our conceptual framework. As part of our synthesis, we therefore added a round of validation where we checked our main findings in three focus groups: one with a group of 10 experts (academics and practitioners working in the field of school and district improvement in South Africa), 10 teachers from primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal (2 from each quintile), and 10 district representatives from Kwazulu-Natal (5 subject advisors, 5 circuit managers).

Figure 1 presents a summary graph of the various phases.

Findings

Various authors paint a picture of an overly dysfunctional accountability system in South Africa where generally strong opposition to any kind of evaluation and monitoring is supported and mobilized by teacher unions, particularly SADTU, the largest and arguably the most powerful union in the country. Volmink et al. (2016), the ministerial committee on a NEEDU (2013) and Patillo (2012) explain the rejection of any kind of control and monitoring through reference to the lack of support from teachers and principals to address weaknesses, while also arguing that the historic context of resistance to Apartheid has led to generalised distrust in any measure of control and accountability. Witten and Makole (2018) explain the historic context of Apartheid, where centralised control and authoritarian practices in schools and districts was commonplace, is still embedded in how good leadership is understood and in the type of management styles developed
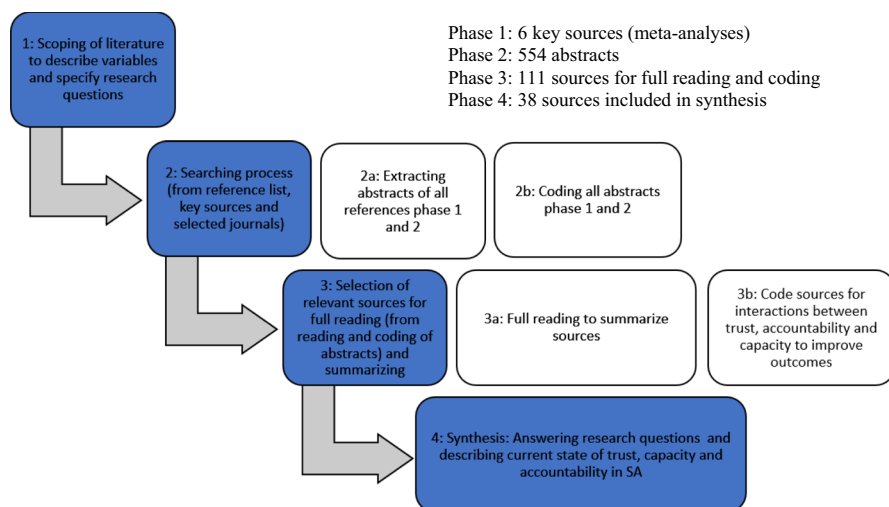
Fig. 1 Phases of the literature review

in response to uncertainties of decentralization. The culture of the education system is highly hierarchical and authoritarian with relationships dominated by command and compliance, and fault-finding, according to Metcalfe (2018).

In the section which follows, we describe the interaction between trust and accountability between the various actors in the system, following Døssing et al. (2011, p. 24), Levy (2018) and Cameron and Naidoo's (2018) summary of the main actors of South Africa's education system at the national, provincial and local level and the relationships between these actors. Cameron and Naidoo (2018) situate the system for basic education as a hierarchy of a national government which sets the service conditions for educators and education policy, provincial departments which employ teachers, with further deconcentration of education to eight districts, which are divided into forty-nine circuits. Døssing et al. (2011, p. 24) picture the system as a set of regulatory, vertical relations, also including the school governing body and school management team, depicted in Fig. 1. In our overview we add horizontal accountability relations in South Africa's education system between teachers, teacher unions and SACE, and between school governing bodies and parents (Fig. 2).

The accountability relations between these actors is supposed to be informed by the following measures and interventions:

1. System-level planning and monitoring according to:

   a. annual plans and targets are set by the national Department for Basic Education for each province, with further planning and monitoring for districts, and schools (including performance contracts and educational management information systems).
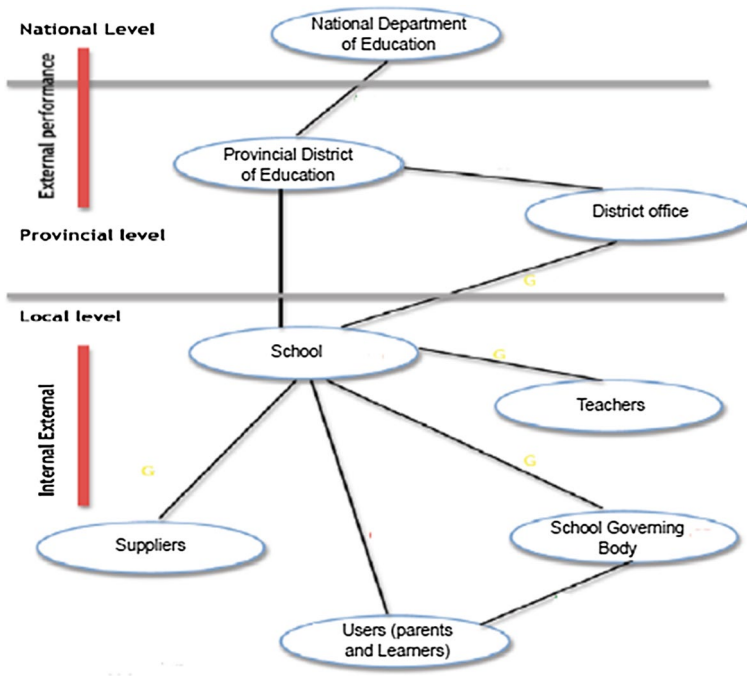
Fig. 2 Vertical and horizontal relations in South Africa's education system. *Source* Døssing et al. (2011)

b. Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) which outline instructional activities and assessments to be implemented by teachers and monitored by heads of department and the district and in national surveys.

2. Integrated Quality Management System, including developmental appraisal, performance management, and whole school evaluation, based on national standards, national accreditation of provincial supervisors and a national scheme for the evaluation of schools, where implementation of school evaluation is delegated to provinces and districts and information is collected through teacher and school self-evaluation and educational management information systems.
3. Local accountability and democracy: elected school governing bodies who are in charge of school fee policy (quintile 4 and 5 schools only), language policy, appointment of principals.
4. Professional accountability to improve professional standards through the South African Council of Educators (SACE).

Below we present the findings from our literature review to describe how these accountability measures inform each of the relations in South Africa's system of basic education.

National government and provincial departments of education

The National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) brought into law the policies, and legislative and monitoring responsibilities of the Minister of Education, as well as the formal relations between national and provincial authorities. The Department for Basic Education (DBE) is responsible for determining policy, and education strategies and to monitor and evaluate the development of education by the nine provincial departments of education. The Department for Education for example sets out the standards and timetabling for school evaluations as part of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), trains and accredits provincial supervisors in charge of the evaluation, and then delegates the implementation to the province, who in turn, delegate most of the monitoring and support of schools to district offices.

The South African Schools Act 1996 states that the DBE defines the norms and standards for education planning, provision, governance monitoring and evaluation, but it is ultimately the responsibility of each province to finance and manage its schools directly, including allocating teachers to schools within the strategy outlined by the Department for Education (South Africa yearbook 16/17; Døssing et al. 2011, pp. 17–24).

Provinces receive a block grant from the Department for Basic Education and can allocate their budgets based on the number of schools and students in the various districts. Although provinces don't have to spend a particular proportion of their own budgets to meet national priorities, they do have to keep with the framework of the Departments of Education's annual performance plan. The annual performance plan includes indicators and targets for each province (e.g. on number and percentage of learners who complete the whole curriculum each year[2]) and these are translated into individual performance agreements with each province's deputy director general, the highest ranking official who is elected through party-list political representation for a period of 5 years. He/she signs a performance agreement where his/her term in office is only renewed when targets have been met (Smith and Ngoma-Maema 2003).

Provinces also have to report annually to the Minister on the schools they have identified as underperforming and on the support systems they have put in place for these schools; additional quarterly reporting is in place on 'other areas of service delivery' (e.g. progress made in addressing the infrastructure challenges through the National Education Infrastructure Management System, NEIMS[3]). The Department for Basic Education checks the accuracy of reported information by cross checking against other documentary evidence, and by sending monitoring teams to a sample of schools. Individual performance agreements with the province (deputy) director general are monitored by 'provincial time series statistics', according to the Research Unit of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa (2017).

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[2] https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/25767/.

[3] Research Unit of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa (06 March 2017), Overview and Analysis of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) Report on Provincial Education Departments' Reporting Systems.

The relationship between the Department for Basic Education and provincial departments of education is grounded on delegation where targets are set and monitored in various ways. Such delegation supposes a level of trust as provinces are granted the autonomy to develop and implement policy and decide on how to spend their budget within a national framework. In reality, such trust seems to be lacking as indicated by the parliamentary research committee report (2018) which states that some provincial education plans (which translate national goals into provincial performance indicators and policy plans) have not been confirmed due to opposition from the province.

Various studies report of complex and time-intensive reporting and monitoring procedures up the chain of command (schools to districts, districts to province, and province to department of education) where reports are not followed-up with support for the implementation of priorities, or changes in the allocation of resources. Moloi (2014) and Mthembu (2014) for example talk about the continuous changes in curricula which cause high levels of frustration and confusion in schools and districts and act to incapacitate the provincial departments that are expected to implement the changes, causing, for example, the late delivery of teaching and learning materials. The lack of stability and organisational capacity impacts on how accountability is organized further down the system with an inefficient system of evaluation and monitoring of classroom practices, and an unwillingness to implement and be held accountable for continuous changing policies by those who are affected by them (Moloi 2014).

Given the resistance to the Annual National Assessments (ANA)[4] and resulting lack of information on student outcomes, monitoring and reporting by the provinces to the department for basic education concentrates on input and process indicators with little information on how these improve student learning.[5]

Provincial departments of education and district offices

Provincial departments of education redistribute funding to districts, based on the number of schools and students in their area. Districts are administrative sub-units of the provincial education department (PED) as they implement provincial policy and have little decision-making power of their own, according to Smith and Ngoma-Maema (2003). The South Africa yearbook 16/17 and Levy et al. (2018) describe their role as the province's main interface with schools Their functions include ensuring that all teaching posts are filled, that teachers are teaching, that governing bodies are working properly, that schools receive adequate support, that relevant training is provided, and that performance information is used to inform efforts to improve school performance (Levy et al. 2018, p. 108) District offices are central to the process of gathering information and diagnosing problems in schools, but they also perform a vital (administrative, professional and managerial) support to schools

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[4] https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/25767/.

[5] http://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/Success%20by%20Numbers_June%20 6_E-VERSION.PDF?ver=2014-07-24-054722-000.

and organize training for personnel. Their role furthermore entails dealing with funding, resourcing bottlenecks, and solving labour-relations disputes.

Døssing et al. (2011) present a picture of a lack of coordination between provinces and districts, causing delay in allocating budgets and grants to schools, schools receiving less money than their confirmed budget and inadequate management of school buildings, particularly of poor fee paying schools that depend on receiving their funding in a timely manner. The relationship between the province and district is one which seems to lack accountability as Døssing et al. (2011) find inadequate implementation and enforcement of rules and regulation in districts, as well as integrity and transparency deficits with many opportunities for non-compliance. Døssing, et al. (2011) reference a report of the Auditor General (2009) and interviews with school principals who refer to embezzlement of funds in the procurement of textbooks, remuneration of staff and construction of school buildings, and rigging of tenders. Approximately a third of principals in their study reported of corruption pertaining to staff discipline, promotion and posting at the district level.

The lack of accountability between the district and the province is accompanied by, or perhaps even leading to, deficits in capacity and instability in policy-making. According to Døssing et al. (2011), budget priorities at the provincial level are constantly changing, information is not shared well with districts and district offices are generally considered over-burdened and under-resourced. The structure around individual performance contracts of provincial deputy director generals also prevents a sense of collective accountability as these officials are encouraged to work in silos to deliver on their own targets sometimes at the cost of colleagues meeting their targets. Døssing et al. (2011) also talk about a 'blame game' between districts and provinces who assign failure to manage and support schools to the other partner and who are unable to collaborate in delivering allocated budgets to schools, supporting school improvement and implementing policy.

Provincial departments of education and schools/teachers

Provincial departments are in charge of teacher allocation and redeployment and calculate the quota to which each school is entitled (so called 'post provisioning compliance norms and policies'). Teachers above the quota are placed on a redeployment list (Lemon 2004). Provinces are also responsible for implementing whole-school evaluation where a national sample of schools is assessed on a set of national criteria (e.g. on quality of teaching, leadership, learner achievement and school infrastructure) as part of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). Schools have to submit a self-evaluation that is expected to inform the external evaluation (once every 3 years) by a provincial supervisor. Supervisors have to be accredited by the Ministry and should be deployed to the province to visit schools that are in another district as the one they are stationed in. Whole school evaluations are expected to inform school improvement plans (which need to be approved by District Head) and district, provincial and national planning of support of schools. Provinces are required to provide schools with budget to respond effectively to the recommendations made in the evaluation report and are required to put in place contingency

plans for dealing with schools that need urgent support. The term 'evaluation' was purposefully chosen to emphasize the developmental nature of the exercise and distinguish it from inspections under the Apartheid regime.[6]

Additionally, each province is expected to sign performance contracts with principals,[7] and principals must submit an annual report on school performance to the provincial head of department and an audit statement that needs to be checked by the province before a grant for the new school year is given to the school (Døssing et al. 2011).[8] This process often fails as Moloi (2014) and Døssing et al.'s (2011) studies indicate. According to Moloi (2014), some of the provinces have little management capacity; their constant changes in budget priorities and inadequate sharing of information causes huge backlogs in school infrastructure (e.g. lack of toilets, running water, textbooks), and late or inadequate transfer of funding and resources to schools, particularly in rural areas, aggravating the high inequality in the system. Schools report how their school planning is negatively affected, where one principal in Døssing et al.'s (2011) study talks about 'running the school with his credit card'.

The lack of capacity to adequately resource schools sits uneasily with the accountability required of schools where they have to submit audit statements, attendance data and performance reports to the province which also expects them to outline improvements in case of underperformance. Where their lack of improvement is caused by the province to whom they are also accountable, this creates a sense of unfairness and would be a cause for a lack of trust or a breakdown of trust. Gunningham and Sinclair (2009) and Zaheer et al. (1998) for example emphasize that people who feel they have been treated fairly will be more likely to trust that organization and be more inclined to accept its decisions and follow its directions; their definition of trust has fairness as one of the focal components in the exchange.

Døssing et al. (2011) study also indicates that accountability is largely absent between provinces and schools. Performance contracts between provinces and principals are blocked by the unions and not regular practice[9] (Heystek 2014; Parliamentary research committee 2018), schools' audit statements are often only ticked off by the province instead of being properly checked, while schools' request for additional funding to the province often go unaddressed. A report by a parliamentary research committee (2018) indicates that attendance data is often inaccurate. This has for example led Gauteng province to employ 150 clerks to check school records on site and ensure the province has accurate data on school performance. In most cases however, the accountability exercise seems to have little meaning to both province and schools, while taking up valuable time and resources on both ends.

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[6] Department of Education (2002). The National policy on whole-school evaluation. Government Gazette Vol.433, No. 22512 of July 2001, Pretoria.

[7] https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/25767/.

[8] Government Gazette Vol.433, No. 22512 of July 2001, Pretoria; National policy on whole school evaluation.

[9] https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/25767/.

District office and (primary) schools (school management teams and teachers)

The general functions of district offices are to support curriculum provision at schools, to monitor and support schools in complying with policy, and to enhance the provision of quality education. Each district has seven sub directorates that are aligned to the different branches at the provincial level (e.g. circuit management, curriculum services, governance, human resource management, special need education services, infrastructure management, finance and supply chain management). Most of the districts which are responsible for large numbers of schools also have smaller organisational units called 'circuits' or 'clusters' to organize a more local presence in schools.

Mhtembu explains how each district is managed by the district manager; the circuits are the next tier which carry out the above mandate on the ground in schools. The functions at the circuit level are divided between monitoring and support of school management by a circuit manager and monitoring and support of curriculum implementation by a subject advisor. According to Metcalfe (2018), circuit managers are 'to engage with schools to identify and solve key problems around the management of curriculum coverage', whereas subject advisors are 'to train and support heads of department to supervise and support teachers in curriculum coverage. Subject advisors must have more expert knowledge about curriculum issues and capacity to create programmes that are geared to support teaching and learning in schools.

Both the circuit manager and subject advisor are expected to visit schools in order to monitor and support schools in complying with (national and provincial) policy and in their curriculum provision, and also support schools in the implementation of recommendations from provincial whole school evaluations. Monitoring visits are to check curriculum implementation and attendance registers and are part of the integrated quality management system (IQMS) As part of the IQMS, schools implement education management information systems on the SA School Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS) software platform, or via paper-based methods, in which they report teacher, student attendance and capture learner marks which need to be checked by districts and provinces.

Døssing et al. (2011), Taylor (2017) and Christie Monyokolo explain how the large size of districts (both geographically and numerically), together with poor levels of resourcing and insufficient staffing, make professional interactions between district officials and schools almost impossible, as well as regular school visits, clear monitoring practices and professional conversations based on evidence, even within the more local circuits. Subject advisors are unable to visit the large number of schools assigned to them, sometimes up to 200 per advisor, or support teachers directly in their classrooms. Their capacity to support teachers is further inhibited, according to Taylor (2017), by a paucity of transport subsidy inhibiting them from visiting schools, the fact that they have to provide support in multiple subject areas while only having expertise in one or two at most, and that the province often requires them to undertake additional tasks (e.g. developing curriculum material).

McLennan et al. (2018) talk about how the legacy of apartheid continues to influence the work processes in districts which are excessively bureaucratized

and where previously separate education departments are still working in silos. Subject advisors and circuit managers both have separate reporting lines, where subject advisors report to the province and managers to their district official. Given the high level of suspicion between the two district departments, there is little collaboration between the two roles in how they monitor and support schools, according to Metcalfe (2018), causing school principals to face multiple reporting requirements. Subject advisors would for example duplicate visits of curriculum managers when they don't trust the validity of their reports.

Where support is provided to primary schools, it is infrequent and also of low quality. Van der Berg et al. (2011, 2016) describe how only 45% of foundation phase teachers were visited in the year of their study and how subject advisors are often appointed on other conditions then merit and lack a relevant subject or teaching background to provide any relevant advice. A similar situation is described by Døssing et al. (2011) for the checking of school accounts by district officials. Almost a third of the principals in their study report that there are no sanctions if they don't comply with national legislation and codes of practice relating to financial management.

Various studies also describe the highly bureaucratic and overloaded nature of the IQMS and underlying (curriculum) standards where principals and teachers have to meet and are monitored on the implementation of the national curriculum and annual teaching plans. Van der Berg et al. (2011) and Døssing et al. (2011) reference principals who express concerns about the IQMS creating an increase in paper work, policing the work of teachers, undermining their competency and creating a culture of scoring and monetary incentives. The IQMS is viewed as an imposed form of accountability which primarily serves the interests of government and not necessarily the professional interests of teachers in addressing their students' needs and interests. Chisholm et al. (2005) quote Biputh and McKenna (2010: 284) who state:

> 'IQMS results in an emphasis on accountability over development which increases teacher resistance by evoking their memories of the inequitable inspection system of the past thereby restricting the system's ability to enhance the quality of South African education'.

Multiple indicators which requiree excessive reporting with no follow-up support and labour laws which prevent any real consequences for teachers and principals who are employed on permanent contracts, limits any meaningful accountability through the IQMS, according to Van der Berg et al. (2011) and Døssing et al. (2011).

School governing bodies and school staff

The South African Schools Act (1996) introduced a system of school governing bodies (SGBs) for all schools, as well as forms of school based management. The aim was to strengthen local democracy and community schools by giving elected parents (and a representation of teaching and non-teaching staff) control over their

schools. Enhanced participation of the local community in schools was expected to transform interactions at the school-level, strengthening accountability and commitment to results, and more broadly foster mutual solidarity and a learning-oriented culture (Levy 2018). The mandate of the school governing body is to determine the admission policy, appoint staff and determine the school budget and fees, formulate internal school policies on instructional language, behavioural policy and policy on school fees in quintile 4 and 5 schools (Van der Berg et al. 2011; South Africa year book 16/17); school governing bodies also select the principal of their school (Levy et al. 2018).

School governing bodies delegate the overall management of the school to the school management team which has the formal responsibility for organising and administering all learning and teaching activities, including managing staff, planning the curriculum, and assessing the performance of learners and educators. School management teams usually comprise heads of departments, the deputy principal and the principal. The principal of a public school is entrusted with day-to-day management, including implementing educational programmes and curriculum activities; management of staff and learner teacher support materials; and safe-keeping records. The principal is expected to render all necessary assistance to the school governing body so that it can perform its functions effectively.

Various authors however explain how school governing bodies have suffered from a lack of trust, both from the Department of Education and from their local community. In some cases this has meant that they have not been able to ensure accountability in the system, particularly in poor communities. Deacon et al. (2010), Moloi (2010) and Van der Berg et al. (2016) explain how the department has been reluctant to decentralize power and capacity to the lower levels of the bureaucracy and have continued to produce new policies, often with a large amount of intangible and immeasurable priorities and continuous interference in school governance. Deacon et al. (2010) refer to a number of court cases where the department was challenged on its interference in local governance (particularly at the school level) and how this impaired its credibility.

The lack of capacity of school governing bodies to hold schools accountability and effectively govern their schools is one of the reasons for the continuing discussion about their roles and delegated powers. According to Bush and Heystek (2003a, b), Mestry and Khumalo (2012a, b) and Ngidi (2004), many parents in poor communities are ill-equipped to fulfil a policymaking role on the school governing body. Parents are unfamiliar with educational practices and procedures and may lack confidence in their ability to engage with disciplinary problems in the school or participate in designing and enforcing an effective code of conduct. A report by Corruption Watch (2017) also talks about school governing bodies and principals manipulating parents when trying to cover up corruption and theft of school funds.

In some cases, the malfunctioning of school governing bodies appears to have exacerbated levels of inequality in the system, particularly when school governing bodies have power over the school's language, fee and admission policy to exclude certain learners from accessing the school, or from doing well at school. Nordstrum (2012) for example found that some school governing bodies tended not to ensure that parents understood either the funding processes or their rights relative to fees,

demanded fees in an ad hoc and hidden manner, even when not being allowed to raise fees (e.g. no-fee schools).

The lack of accountability of school governing bodies creates a vacuum which can, according to research in this area, allow for collusion and corruption by the local community, and misuse of power by parents who sit on the school governing body (see for example Ikejiaku 2009). Døssing et al. (2011) present an example of one of the townships in the North West, where some parents with influence and experience in the workings of school governing bodies formed a syndicate with the aim of controlling the maintenance of school building budgets in all local schools. Members of the syndicate lobby made themselves available to be elected onto schools governing bodies, in particular as chairpersons, and when successful used their influence to ensure tenders for (maintenance of) school buildings were awarded to fellow members of the syndicate in other schools. Although the South African Schools Act envisioned a system where schools would be democratically controlled by their communities, in some schools the reality is that dominant groups take control. This phenomenon is not unique to South Africa, but appears as a leitmotif in the governance literature (Farrell and Law 1999; Bush and Heystek 2003a, b).

These findings suggest that accountability, in a setting of high distrust between societal groups potentially aggravates such distrust, particularly in a context of high inequality where groups vary in their capacity to access good schools or lack the competence and skill to affect change in a democratically constructive manner.

School management team (principal and heads of department) and teachers

Teachers are allocated to schools by the provincial department of education; administrative allocations (on the request of principals) can be made under certain conditions but the process is cumbersome. School governing bodies of schools in quintile 4 and 5 who can charge fees also have budget to appoint teachers outside provincial control and principals can advise the SGB to do so, giving them informal power over the employment of teachers in their school.

The Education Laws Amendment Act 2007 (Act 31 of 2007) and the South African Standard for Principalship Policy (2015) regulate the functions and responsibilities of school principals, authorizing them to assure quality and secure accountability in their school (Moloi 2007; South Africa year book 16/17) by keeping a teacher attendance register, reviewing workbooks of teachers and monitoring their implementation of the curriculum as part of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). Under the IQMS teachers initially engage in a process of self-evaluation where they set developmental goals and score themselves against these goals, after conversations with a self-selected peer. The principal moderates their scores on an annual basis with a school staff development team and is expected to provide training where needed. The scores are expected to inform teacher pay and grade progression.

Furthermore, the school management team is responsible for monitoring what was taught, what was assessed and what percentage of learners performed at a level that is adequate (Metcalfe 2018). Principals are supposed to record attendance data

in the education management information system and send these records to the provincial head of department for monitoring, while heads of departments (in charge of subjects and/or school phases; or principals where schools have no head of department) should monitor teachers' curriculum coverage and implementation of activities and assessments as prescribed in the Curriculum and Assessment Statement (CAPS) and national workbooks. They are required to sign off each teacher's record of completed activities and assessments, while national monitoring surveys (including the Department of Basic Education's 2011 School Monitoring Survey) check on the tasks completed and assessed, with physical checks of learner workbooks (Christie and Monyokolo 2018; Metcalfe 2018).

As teachers are deployed by the province, principals however have no formal authority over recruitment decisions. Only in fee-paying schools can principals influence their school's governing body budget allocation to hire additional staff from raised fees (Moloi 2007). The lack of incentive implies that principals have little incentive secure accountability in their schools, according to Van der Berg et al. (2011) and Døssing et al. (2011). They report of teacher attendance registers not being up to date and how this enhances teacher absence.

Various studies also point to the lack of time for principals and heads of department to monitor their teachers. Principals and heads of department often have a heavy workload, according to Taylor (2017), which leaves them little time to work with teachers on instructional improvement. The role of the head of department is particularly problematic as they are often responsible for overseeing a number of subjects, while having specialised in only one or two of them. The lack of subject expertise and excessive bureaucratic monitoring demands placed on heads of department prevents them from providing in-depth instructional support to teachers and seems to reduce the role to one of 'ticking off' the implementation of the national curriculum. Taylor (2017), Van der Berg et al. (2011) and Døssing et al. (2011) for example describe how principals and heads of department merely manage their school and learner discipline and spend little time on aspects of instructional leadership or performance management of their teachers. Mthiyane et al. (2018) quote a head of department who complains about the overload of monitoring tools they need to complete, particularly for heads of department who oversee a large number of teachers, sometimes across a range of subjects. For each teacher they need to moderate assessments papers, monitor curriculum implementation, keep a management, supervision, assessment and staff development file, noting that 'paperwork ahead, child is behind'.

The compliance-oriented nature of the monitoring is further informed by the excessive bureaucratic nature of the formats and tools to monitor teachers, as well as their lack of capacity to meet the targets set on curriculum implementation and assessment. Metcalfe (2018) and Christie and Monyokolo (2018) explain how the pace and congestion of activities in the tracker sheets aligned with CAPS is unmanageable, particularly for teachers with slow learners or multi-grade classrooms. As heads of department are required to sign off on completed and assessed instructional tasks and send these reports to the district for further monitoring, teachers feel they have little flexibility to alter the calendar or allow extra capacity (time/resources) to catch up (Christie and Monyokolo 2018). One way in which teachers try to meet

unmanageable reporting requirements is by inaccurate completion of curriculum and assessment trackers; a situation that is endorsed by their heads of department, according to Mkhwanazi et al. (2018). The 'tick box approach' to monitoring of the curriculum reinforces a mindset of compliance, according to Taylor (2017), with little concern for the actual depth of student learning. More in-depth monitoring of curriculum implementation would also only lead to a constant assessment of incomplete coverage, according to Mkhwanazi et al. (2018).

The integrated quality management system was expected to offer more professional support and accountability to, and of teachers on the basis of their self-evaluation. As these self-evaluations are tied to pay rises, the tool is more about 'money-making' than a mechanism for development, according to Taylor (2017). 'Teachers give themselves high scores because they want the money and are not interested in development. And teacher development is not necessarily informed by IQMS' (p. 77).

Teachers to teachers (SACE and teacher unions)

Horizontal accountability relations between teachers in South Africa are organized by the South African Council of Educators (SACE). SACE is the professional council for educators and responsible for promoting professionalism amongst all educators in South Africa, by developing professional standards for teaching, a Code of Professional Ethics, and by overseeing the teaching profession (Van Onselen 2012). The SACE Act (Republic of South Africa 2000) defines its role and responsibility as advising the Minister on matters relating to the education and training of educators, including but not limited to[10]:

- the minimum requirements for entry to all the levels of the profession
- the standards of programmes of pre-service and in-service educator education
- the requirements for promotion within the education system
- educator professionalism.

The Council can caution or reprimand educators, impose a fine and remove the name of an educator from its register, either for a specified period or indefinitely (or subject to other specific conditions). The Council is appointed by the Minister and consists of representatives of the main stakeholders in the system, such as teacher unions and school governing bodies, lecturers and principals from a variety of schools (see also Taylor and Robinson 2016[11]).

Teacher unions, and particularly the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU), dominate the work of the Council, according to Van Onselen (2012). The unions act on behalf of teachers in mediating their accountability towards the

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[10] Republic of South Africa (2000). South African Council for Educators Act, Act 31 of 2000. Government Gazette, Vol 22 No 21431, 2 August 2000.

[11] SACE. (2016a). *Unpublished*. Enhancing Teacher Professionalisation: Second Draft Discussion Document, 30 January 2016. South African Council for Educators.

province and the Department for Basic Education. SADTU, the largest union in the country for example has at its core aims the political commitment to *develop an education system which is just and the expression of the will of the people,* campaigning for better salaries and the job security of teachers, developing a professional programme, and building a strong organization with effective structures to mobilize teachers (e.g. through in-school union representatives) (SADTU 2030 Vision). 76% of teachers in South Africa are a member of one of the six teacher unions (Van der Berg et al. 2016), where union membership is still largely distributed along racial lines.

The unions derive their authority from the Education Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act 66 of 1995) which gives them a formal position on the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), a role in dispute prevention and resolution, and collective bargaining with the Department for Basic Education as the employer of teachers.

Van Onselen describes how conflicts of interest and a lack of independence from the teacher unions have however prevented the Council from functioning effectively, leading to a lack of professional accountability where educators, even in cases of severe misbehaviour are seldom dismissed or struck of the register. Van Onselen (2012) explains how the largest union, SADTU, holds key positions on the board of SACE and effectively blocks any meaningful accountability of teachers.

The key role and informal power of SADTU extends to wider governance of the education system. As Spaull (2015, p. 135) explains, almost all teachers in South Africa belong to organised and politically powerful teacher unions, enabling them to speak with one voice and command considerable political influence. Examples are provided by Van Onselen (2012), and de Clercq (2013) of SADTU blocking principals' and teachers' performance contracts, opposing national policies implying forms of monitoring or control of teachers' work, even where accountability systems are disconnected from punitive measures. Cameron and Naidoo (in Levy et al. 2018) provide another example of how SADTU resisted the introduction of the whole-school evaluation programme, the precursor to the current IQMS, as managerial, punitive and containing minimal developmental content for teachers, and encouraged its members to boycott whole school evaluation-supervisors and refuse them access to schools. SADTU's argument was that the evaluation programme was too focused on fault finding and eroding the autonomy of schools and teachers, taking too little account of the underlying causes of poor performance at the school level caused by under-investment by the state.

Various authors (e.g. Døssing et al. 2011 and Carnoy et al. 2012; Volmink et al. 2016) also explain how teacher unions are highly influential in the appointment of administrators at the district, provincial and national level where they have tried to ensure that provinces appoint teachers who are union members. Lack of union affiliation can, according to Van der Berg et al. (2016), result in bullying or dismissal without just cause. According to Wills (2016), the organisational structure of the largest union, SADTU, facilitates an on-site presence across almost all

school districts and the majority of schools; that is used in strike action to intimidate schools that remain open or teachers and principals that resist industrial action. School management teams are generally also member of the same union as their teachers, closing the school for frequent union meetings, sometimes without approval from the Department for Basic Education (Parliamentary research committee 2018). Cameron and Naidoo (in Levy et al. 2018) provide an extensive account of how the political strength of organized labour and their strategic interaction with public officials in the bureaucracy and the ANC in South Africa has resulted in policies for performance management in basic education which, beneath the surface, fail to have any robustness. A lack of joined up administrative capacity and teacher development in and between provinces provides a vacuum which appears, as a consequence, largely filled by teacher unions who are, according to Van der Berg et al. (2016) and Levy (2018), in the majority of provinces effectively run schools. As a result, any perceived lack of engagement by the unions tends to lead to delayed and sometimes derailed processes and a lack of policy implementation.

Conclusion

This paper considered the relations between actors in South Africa's education system and how trust and accountability interact within and across these relations to improve learning outcomes. Our interest is situated in recent discussions about 'intelligent accountability' which positions trust as a key element in holding someone accountable. Following Crooks' (2003) definition, 'intelligent accountability' is a system which preserves and enhances trust among key participants. Trust and accountability are however often positioned as opposites, saying that accountability is based on distrust and correction of identified deficiencies. Our systematic literature explored the question of how trust and accountability interact in South Africa's system of basic education. The question is particularly relevant for this country, given the high inequality, distrust and generally high opposition to external accountability.

We positioned accountability as both a system in which people are held accountable, as well as a set of relations between the various actors in the system. Trust was also positioned at the system and interpersonal level as a disposition to trust unknown others and a willingness to rely on others. Our review highlighted how the roles and responsibilities of various actors in the system, their lack of capacity and low levels of trust, with further structural and cultural constraints across the system, leads to a wide felt lack of accountability. Particularly how:

- The accountability is viewed as unfair and met with strong opposition across the system because of (1) the lack of support for schools who fail to meet accountability targets due to lack of capacity, (2) a lack of expertise of those who monitor schools (district subject advisors and heads of department) and are unable to provide relevant support and advice, and (3) a lack of a shared view on goals underlying the accountability exercise. These three causes can be viewed as a lack of trust in the accountability exercise; they reflect the competence, benevolence and

integrity dimensions of our trust definition, which were described as conditions for someone to place trust in someone else. We argue that these three dimensions are also required for effective accountability relations.

• The lack of capacity to implement monitoring and evaluation (e.g. by districts, heads of department), combined with a lack of capacity in schools to meet accountability targets reduces the accountability to a tick box and form filling exercise.

Below we explain and discuss these headline findings in more detail.

Capacity as a precursor for trust and accountability

South Africa has a highly hierarchical system where responsibilities are transferred down the line of command and where a large number of mostly top-down bureaucratic controls are put in place to ensure compliance. Our findings indicate that, across the relations in the system, poor coordination and organisational capacity is the leitmotif. The formal accountability structure is largely one-sided and lacks reciprocity and, as a result, fails to build trust when those who are held accountable are not provided with resources to meet accountability targets set by actors who need to provide those resources in the first place. A case in point are schools who are held accountable for the implementation of the national curriculum by the province and district, but where the province fails to allocate and deliver school budgets and textbooks on time, needed to teach the curriculum; or where, due to the implementation of provincial norms of teacher allocation, schools end up with large multi-grade classrooms which create highly unfavourable conditions to deliver the national curriculum according to the prescribed timetable.

As this, and other, examples from our review indicate, capacity is one of the main conditions for accountability to build trust between people and organisations. When people and organisations are held accountable on standards and targets for which their counterpart needs, but fails to deliver resources, the trust relation brakes down and the accountability becomes a tick box exercise where data is sometimes manipulated to seemingly comply to external demands.

Accountability without support or capacity violates benevolence and integrity

Our review indicated how a lack of support and capacity in a context of strong accountability in some cases also breaks trust as it signals a lack of benevolence and creates a sense of unfairness. When the monitoring of teachers implementation of CAPS for example indicates teachers' lack of expertise in certain subjects, or how they fail to follow the timetable because of large multi-grade classes, there is often no follow-up to address these incapacities. As our review indicated, many districts don't have the capacity to train and support teachers or subject advisors don't have the necessary subject-specific skills or knowledge to train teachers when appointed on political affiliation instead of merit.

In some districts, the lack of capacity seems to be due to a lack of trust and collaboration between curriculum managers and subject advisors who work in separate divisions, each with their own reporting line. Our findings indicated how their monitoring and support of schools sometimes overlaps and how this, in a context of understaffing, leads to poor implementation of monitoring and support where performance targets become meaningless. Spaull (2015) describes the lack of support from monitoring as a 'dead-end' as increasing accountability without increasing support, and increasing support without increasing accountability creates a situation where improvement is impossible. In the case of the former, schools cannot mobilise resources they do not have and, in the latter, teachers have no incentive to mobilise themselves or the resources at their disposal.

Where schools find the accountability exercise meaningless for lack of follow-up or support, the reporting seems to create a vicious cycle of increasing control and decreasing capacity. Gauteng is a case in point where inaccurate or missing attendance reports led the province to employ 150 clerks to check school data, thereby reducing the available capacity for school support and improvement. Levy et al. (2018) equally quote a provincial minister for education saying that the integrated quality management system (IQMS) does not add real value, but costs a fortune to administer and is time-consuming'. Aligning the structures of accountability and support is a requirement to create a sense of fairness and integrity where monitoring is perceived as meaningful and in the best interest of those who are held accountable.

Structural and cultural constraints

The lack of alignment in accountability and support and how this affects relations between the actors in the system leads us to reflect on how the education system is organized and how power is distributed and enacted. Here our findings suggest that a level of trust is also required to reach consensus on accountability measures and how to hold educators to account. Cameron and Naidoo (2018) and Levy et al. (2018) account of how basic education is governed, for example indicated how the strong opposition to performance management of teachers by the largest teacher union (SADTU), or any form of school evaluation reflects a lack of consensus over strategies for reform. The lack of trust between partners, needed to negotiate a common solution, resulted in a watering down of any policy to implement some form of results-based management or accountability.

Our review highlighted how a lack of consensus and constant change in policy priorities that are seldom fully implemented leads to a sense of fatigue or indifference. In South Africa, every year between 1998 and 2014, there has been at least one grade which was implementing an important new curriculum document, according to the National Department of Education action plan 2019. The lack of organisational capacity of the state, province and district to collaborate and allocate resources where needed down the hierarchy seems to have opened up space for other groups, such as teacher unions to take control over the system and reshape the formal accountability structure in South Africa. Varous authors describe how it enabled the largest teacher union to use its bargaining power, strong local presence and

influence over decision-making at all levels of the system to create a parallel system of governance and accountability where union membership determines people's careers and access to resources. This parallel structure builds on strong inner-group trust but seems to reinforce distrust of others who are for example members of other unions, racial groups or social classes; it even allows organized teachers to block formal vertical accountability. A similar situation occurs on the local level where a lack of knowledge and skills of parents and local communities enables powerful school governing bodies to use their authority over school budgets and admission, language and school fee policies to exclude vulnerable groups or engage in corrupt activities where their practices go unaccounted for.

The only way forward, according to Moloi (2014), is to shift the way people relate to each other and to their environment, their attitude towards each other, and the way resources are deployed and utilized to address capacity constraints and move towards a more equitable and productive education system. Intelligent accountabiltiy can only come about when partners are competent to organize and deliver their work, when those who are not acting in the best interest of learners are held accountable, either by building their capacity when they are unable to do so, or through more punitive measures when they are unwilling to improve. Sustainable, large-scale improvement needs a context of informed trust in which quality monitoring and evaluation (e.g. through performance management, assessment, or inspection) informs the accountability relationship between actors, where they have the capacity to evaluate their quality of their work and are supported in using evaluative feedback for improvement.

Our framework of trust and accountability provides a lens to understand why some education systems are unable to generate, evaluate and scale innovations in learning when a lack of trust and capacity leads to strong opposition to external accountability. And when strong bureaucratic accountability creates further inefficiencies in pressurizing educators across the system to report and monitor on various aspects of education, where these efforts do not actually improve the quality of teaching in the classroom or provide information on good practices. 'Intelligent accountability' not only preserves and enhances trust, it also needs to start from a position of trust where educators have a positive expectation of the benevolence and integrity of the exercise and of the competences of those holding them to account.

Appendix 1. List of six key sources

Accountability

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