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**Accountability of Primary Schools in the Seychelles: a
Stakeholder Analysis**

by

Veronique Rose-Helene Figaro

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Warwick, Institute of Education

May 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	ii
Tables and Figures	xiii
Abbreviations	xvii
Acknowledgement	xviii
Abstract	xix
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Historical and Geographical Background	1
The Education System	2
Education Transformation in Seychelles	3
Current Education System	4
Non Formal Early Childhood Education	7
Primary Education Programme	8
Secondary Education	9
Further Education and Training Programme	9
Adult Learning and Distance Education	9
Teacher Education and professional Development	10
Education Statistics	10
Administrative Structure	11
The National Curriculum	13
The Policy Context	14
External Quality Assessment	15
School Improvement Programme	17

School Governance	18
School Council	19
Parents Educators Council	20
Parents Teachers Association	20
De-streaming Policy	22
Primary Schools Context	23
Curriculum	24
Theoretical Context	25
Conceptualising Accountability	26
Creating Accountability at School level	27
Educational accountability	28
Models of accountability	29
Issues and Concerns	30
The Accountability Context: Seychelles	31
Centralisation	32
Resources	33
Development Planning	33
Student Performance	33
Aims of the Research	34
Research Questions	35
Objectives	38
Overview	39
Chapter Two: Literature Review	40

Introductions	40
Definitions	41
Why should schools be accountable?	46
Who is expected to provide an account?	47
The Accountability of the School	48
The accountability of the Teacher	50
To whom is an account owed?	51
What is to be accounted for?	54
The physical and emotional well-being of students	55
Student learning	55
Teacher Learning	56
Equity and Access	56
Improvement	56
By what means should schools be held accountable?	57
What are the consequences of providing an account?	59
Formal constructs of accountability and Normative Models	62
Market Competition Approaches	63
Decentralisation of Decision-making Approaches	64
Professional Approaches	65
Managerial Approaches	67
Other Models of accountability	68
International Research on Accountability	69
United Kingdom	70

Germany	72
United States	74
Australia	78
Hong Kong	80
Seychelles	82
Key Concepts	84
Overview	88
Chapter Three: Methodology	90
Introduction	90
Research Paradigms	90
Quantitative Research	91
Qualitative Research	92
Mixed Approaches	94
Broad Approaches to Research	95
Surveys	95
Questionnaires	101
Piloting	109
Case Studies	114
Interviews	123
Observations	130
Documentary Analysis	139
Insider Research	143
Data Analysis	145

Survey	145
Case Studies	146
Authenticity, Reliability and Validity	147
Authenticity	147
Reliability	147
Validity	149
Triangulation	150
Overview	151
Chapter Four: Main Survey Findings	153
Introduction	153
Headteachers' Survey	154
The Participants	154
Concepts of School Accountability	155
Accountability of the potential stakeholder group	158
Accountability Constructs and Functions	160
Reporting, Consequences and Sanctions	164
The Involvement of Stakeholders	167
Subject Coordinators' Survey	168
The participants	168
Perceptions of school and teacher accountability	168
The accountability of the stakeholder	172
Accountability Constructs and Functions	174
Reporting, Consequences and Sanctions	179

Teachers' Survey	183
The participants	183
Perceptions of school and teacher accountability	185
The accountability of the stakeholder	190
Accountability Constructs and Functions	192
Reporting, Consequences and Sanctions	195
Involvement of stakeholders in decision-making	199
PTA Chairpersons' Survey	199
The participants	199
Perceptions of school and teacher accountability	200
Accountability at school level: constructs and functioning	201
Reporting, Consequences and Sanctions	206
Comparison of large and small schools	208
Overview	214
Chapter Five: Case Study Findings	216
Introduction	216
Case Study One: St. John's primary school	217
Context	217
Documentary Analysis	219
Job descriptions	219
Development Plan	222
Minutes of Meetings	222
Interviews	224

Perceptions of accountability	225
The Accountability of Teachers	226
The scope of accountability	228
Who is the school accountable to?	230
How does accountability function?	232
The Effectiveness of accountability mechanisms	234
Consequences of accountability	235
Are others accountable at school?	236
Internal accountability demands	237
External accountability demands	238
Observations	240
Discussions	241
Involvement	242
Obligations	242
Reporting	242
Decision-making	243
Relationships	243
Case Study Two: St. Michael's primary school	244
Context	244
Documentary Analysis	245
Job descriptions	245
Development Plan	246
Minutes of Meetings	246

Interview	249
Perceptions of accountability	250
The Accountability of Teachers	251
The scope of accountability	255
Who is the school accountable to?	256
How does accountability at St. Michael's function?	257
The Effectiveness of accountability mechanisms	258
Consequences of accountability	259
Are others accountable at school?	261
Internal accountability demands	262
External accountability demands	263
Observations	264
Discussions	266
Involvement	266
Obligations	266
Reporting	267
Consequences	267
Relationships	267
Cross-Case Comparison	268
Overview	273
Chapter Six: Discussion	275
Introduction	275
Perceptions of accountability	275

Why accountability?	279
To whom is an account owed?	281
Who provides an account?	285
Accountable for what?	290
Operationalisation and Functioning of accountability	292
Constructs	295
Levels of accountability	296
Accountability by what means?	300
Internal versus external accountability demands	301
What are the consequences of providing an account?	305
An Accountability Model for Seychelles	310
Overview	314
Chapter Seven: Conclusions	316
Introduction	316
Overview of Findings	316
Answering the Research Questions	318
How do stakeholders understand the concept of accountability in education?	318
Who provides accountability in the Seychelles schools?	318
What is the scope of accountability in Seychelles primary schools?	319
To whom are school leaders and teachers accountable?	321
School leaders	321
Teachers	321

What is the nature of accountability in the Seychelles?	322
How accountability is constructed	322
Mechanisms through which schools are held accountable	323
Consequences of account giving	324
What are the implications for school leaders in exercising accountability?	326
Significance of the study	328
Empirical	328
Theoretical	330
Implications for policy and practice	333
Policy	333
Practice	335
Implications for the researcher	337
Overview	338
References	340
Appendices	348

TABLES AND FIGURES

Tables

- 2.1 Comparison between Scott (1980) and Leithwood and Earl (2000)
- 4.1 Headteachers' perceptions of who they should be accountable to
- 4.2 Headteachers' perceptions of what schools should be accountable for
- 4.3 Headteachers' perceptions of how schools should held accountable
- 4.4 What headteachers are actually accountable for
- 4.5 Responses for the existence of features of accountability
- 4.6 The level of accountability
- 4.7 Evidence of adequate accountability
- 4.8 Explanations for considering reporting as an accountability process
- 4.9 Penalties/Consequences following reported accounts
- 4.10 The extent to which headteachers agree that a school or teacher should be sanctioned or penalised
- 4.11 How both a school and a teacher can be sanctioned
- 4.12 Subject coordinators' perceptions of school accountability
- 4.13 Subject coordinators' perceptions of who schools should be accountable to
- 4.14 Subject coordinators' perceptions of what schools should be accountable for
- 4.15 Subject coordinators' perceptions of how schools should be held accountable
- 4.16 What subject coordinators are actually accountable for
- 4.17 Who subject coordinators are actually accountable to
- 4.18 Responses for the existence of accountability features at school level
- 4.19 Evidence for different levels of accountability at school

- 4.20 The extent to which subject coordinators agree t a school being sanctioned
- 4.21 How a school can be penalised or sanctioned
- 4.22 The extent to which subject coordinators agree to teachers being sanctioned
- 4.23 Involvement of stakeholders in decision-making
- 4.24 Teachers' perceptions of accountability
- 4.25 Teachers' perceptions of who they should be accountable to
- 4.26 Teachers' perceptions of what schools should be accountable for
- 4.27 Teachers' perceptions of how schools should be held accountable
- 4.28 Teachers' perceptions of why schools and teachers should be accountable
- 4.29 What teachers are accountable for
- 4.30 Who teachers are actually accountable to
- 4.31 Distribution of responses for the existence of accountability features
- 4.32 Accountability constructs at school level
- 4.33 Accountability levels at school
- 4.34 The extent to which reported accounts are valid
- 4.35 The extent to which teachers agree to a school being sanctioned
- 4.36 The extent to which teachers agree that a teacher should be sanctioned
- 4.37 Teacher responses for how a school can be sanctioned
- 4.38 Involvement of stakeholders in decision-making
- 4.39 Parents' perceptions of what schools should be accountable for
- 4.40 Parents' perceptions of who schools should be accountable to
- 4.41 Distribution of responses for the existence of accountability features
- 4.42 Accountability constructs at school level

- 4.43 PTA chairpersons' responses as to the accountability of teachers
- 4.44 PTA chairpersons' responses about the accountability of teachers
- 4.45 How parents see accountability at school level
- 4.46 PTA chairpersons' responses for whether schools should be sanctioned
- 5.1 Job descriptions

Figures

- 1.1 Structure of the Education System
- 1.2 Organisational structure of Schools Division
- 1.3 Organisational structure of the Curriculum
- 2.1 Heim's (1995) accountability Model
- 3.1 Observation grid
- 3.2 Documentary Analysis instrument
- 4.1 Who headteachers are actually accountable to
- 4.2 Accountability constructs at school level
- 4.3 Existing accountability relationships at school level
- 4.4 Accountability at school level
- 4.5 Accountability relationships at school level
- 4.6 Levels of accountability

ABBREVIATIONS

ALDEC. Adult Learning and Distance Education Centre

GM. Grant Maintained Schools

LEAs. Local Education Authorities

LMS. Local Management of Schools

NCC. National Council for Children

NCD. National Council for the Disabled

NCLB. No Child Left Behind

NYS. National Youth Service

OFSTED. Office For Standards in Education

PDF. Professional Development Facilitator

PEC. Parents Educators Council

PTA. Parents Teachers Association

QA. Quality Assurance

ROA. Records of Achievement

SIP. School Improvement Programme

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ABSTRACT

While school accountability continues to gain national prominence in the highly centralised Education System of the Seychelles, concerns have been raised as to how accountable school leaders and teachers are in the primary schools. Through a mixed-methods approach using questionnaires, interviews, observations as well as documentary analysis in two case studies, the study uses a conceptual base to examine school leaders and teachers' accountability from the perspectives of five stakeholder groups: headteachers, subject coordinators, teachers, schools' PTA chairpersons and students. In the primary schools, job descriptions have a significant influence on the understanding of accountability, where it is mostly taken to mean responsibility. Accountability in the primary schools is problematic in many aspects, particularly in the use of reporting as an accountability mechanism, recording preceding account giving, consequences, responding to demands of accountability from stakeholders because of their various interests and the lack of reciprocal accountability from parents and students in decision-making.

The study also indicated some positive trends emerging in schools, including professional accountability where mechanisms in place enhance highly collaborative relationships among teachers and school leaders.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Historical and Geographical Background

‘The republic of Seychelles, in the Southwest Indian Ocean, is one of the smallest sovereign states’ (Shamlaye, 1994:5445). The state comprises 115 islands covering a land mass of 455 square kilometres. Before Independence in June 1976, the Seychelles was first ruled by the French, then by the British. The first settlers arrived in Seychelles from the island of Mauritius in 1770. At the end of the revolutionary wars between Britain and France, Seychelles and Mauritius were ceded to the British under the Treaty of Paris in 1814 (Barnard, 2004). In 1903, Seychelles became a crown colony, detached from Mauritius. In March 1975, a new constitution was drawn up and a coalition Government was established. This was done in preparation for Independence in June 1976. Following a Coup in 1977, Seychelles became a one-party state. Multi-Party Democracy was restored in 1993. The population of around 80, 000 (Barnard, 2004) are mixed African, Asian (Indian and Chinese), and European; being descendents of original French settlers, African slaves, liberated slaves and some British settlers. This melting pot has been enriched by traders from India and China. That population is concentrated on the four main islands of Mahe, Praslin, La Digue and Silhouette.

Seychellois Creole is the mother tongue of virtually the whole population and is the first of three national languages. The two others are English and French. English is the main

language of business and government and also the main medium of instruction after the first five years of schooling.

The development of Seychelles by the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s was guided by the policies of the 1977 government which had as aims: maintaining the country's independence, improving the living standards, respecting human rights and guaranteeing equality and dignity of all, using natural resources of land and sea for development and following a policy of non alignment in foreign relations (Shamlaye, 1994). The government brought significant changes in the social, economic and cultural life of the country. Even if the government changed from being a one party state to multiparty democracy, it maintained the principles upon which its programmes have been based.

The Education System

'Education, seen as a key factor in the transformation of society, has itself undergone major changes' (Shamlaye, 1994:5445). During the French Administration (1770-1814), there were no schools in the Seychelles. Schools were gradually established, through efforts by the Catholic Church. By 1871, the Government had started giving grants to schools. The Catholic Schools, together with two elite ones; the college and the convent, were described as excellent and thus were recognized by the British Government (Catholic Church, 1999), as being able to provide the same level of education as provided in England at that time. The school managers were priests and nuns who saw to it that parents sent their children to school even if no law concerning compulsory education existed. With time the classification of teachers was introduced; qualification based on

standards set in England (Catholic Church, 1999), and the Teacher Training College. The curriculum was shifted from the French medium to English.

Eventually the college and the convent adopted the Cambridge Local Examinations and scholarships were granted to candidates from low-income district schools to access those two, and or to later follow courses abroad.

Before 1977, Seychellois children's educational opportunities continued to be dependent on their parents' capability to pay for schooling though by the time of Independence in 1976, access to six years of free primary education and three years of secondary schooling were well established. Fee- paying grammar schools (still Church controlled), and post secondary training institutions were also in existence (Purvis, 2004). After the setting up of new political structures in June 1977, the dependence of educational opportunities on economic status was eliminated. Major reforms took place; among them: the abolition of school fees, eventual closure of grammar schools, the zoning of primary schools pupils and the expansion as well as the upgrading of all schools in the country.

Educational transformation in Seychelles

A structured reform of the education system began in 1978 (Purvis, 2004). This came as a result of the Government's programme for social and economic transformation. It involved primary schooling being extended from six to nine years and becoming free and compulsory. A zoning policy required students to attend school in their respective

districts. In 1981, a two year residential National Youth Service (NYS) was established for students wishing to continue at Secondary level, whereas in 1983, the Seychelles Polytechnic, regrouping the former upper secondary and vocational schools, was opened. More structural reforms occurred in 1991. Primary schooling changed back to six years, provided in 25 districts. That was followed by four years of secondary education offered in ten regional secondary schools. The NYS then lasted only one year.

Increased provision of and equitable resourcing of schools resulted in education at all levels being accessible to young people regardless of socio-economic background. These changes together with changes in society generally, resulted in new challenges (Shamlaye, 1994). The need to diversify and broaden the curriculum to suit the comprehensive nature of the school population, and to respond to the demands of the developing economy, continued to attract the attention of administrators, curriculum developers, and teachers.

‘The Seychelles Education System is still undergoing a process of reform’ (Khosa et al, 2002:2) with the aim of consolidating policy achievements and bringing about other developments. With the launching of the National Curriculum Framework in 2001, curricular reform was initiated (Leste et al, 2003) and the Ministry became preoccupied with implementing strategies to improve the quality of education. The School Improvement Programme (SIP) had been launched in 1995, with the aim of improving pupils’ learning outcomes. The Quality Assurance Service, set up in 1999, with the object of supporting schools’ self-evaluation and carry out external evaluation of schools, is also indicative of the Ministry’s commitment to set standards and increase the effectiveness of the education system (Leste et al, 2003).

The current education system

Education policy in Seychelles is guided by the main principles of: ‘Equity, Quality and Accountability relating to the operational goals of education programmes while Education for Empowerment, Education for Productivity, Education for Social Cohesion

and Education for Global Participation’, relate to the terminal goals (Ministry of Education, 2002). This is in line with the Government’s commitment to providing all Seychellois with the opportunity to achieve their full potential consistent with their abilities and interests as well as the needs of the society. Educational programmes aim to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes for personal development as well as for participation in society. At the higher level, the education system aims to meet the labour force requirements of the country.

For the last twenty-five years, the education system in the Seychelles has been characterised by a comprehensive, co-educational system (Leste, et al, 2003), offering ten years of compulsory schooling from the about five or six (primary One) to around sixteen. Compared to school systems worldwide, Seychelles schools and further education institutions are fairly well staffed with pupil-teacher ratios of 15:1 in primary, 20:1 in secondary and 10:1 in post secondary institutions (Purvis, 2004).

Preceding the ten years of compulsory education, pupils may spend two years at pre-primary level, known as the Crèche. Though not compulsory, the Crèche is also attended by almost all children. At the end of the final year in secondary schools, there is the option system for post secondary education where students undergo a selection process and are admitted, based on their IGCSE, ‘DELFI Scolaire’ (French) examination results and their Records of Achievement (ROA) into academic, technical or vocational institutions. There is also a system of further and higher education, which is available to all Seychellois students who meet the selection criteria for the courses, locally offered by the now University of Seychelles (2010) or abroad.

Among the most recent changes (2005) is the introduction of ancillaries or assistant teachers to ensure that pupils receive the kind of support they need in order to respond to the curriculum. This innovation is in practice in Cycle One, that is, Crèche to P2. The ancillaries work alongside the class teachers to support pupil learning in key areas of literacy and numeracy.

Since the beginning of 2006, there have also been Subject Coordinators, introduced to replace Studies Coordinators. The difference between them being they are allocated a combination of subjects instead of a cycle. There are three different combinations: Maths and Science, Languages and the vocational subjects such as Religion, Art & craft, etc. There is also one Coordinator responsible for Special Needs Education.

According to Leste et al (2003: 6), 'Seychelles is also characterised by a highly centralised education system, with a common curriculum framework', common textbooks and learning and teaching materials'. Schools are regulated by the Ministry of Education through the head teachers. It also controls the facilities, resources, staffing and budget allocation, with the intention of providing equal opportunities and equitable distribution of resources.

Because education is given a high priority in Seychelles, it has maintained a budget of 13 to 17 % of the total national budget since 1990. (Leste et al, 2003). With such a considerable investment, the Ministry has needed to set up monitoring mechanisms and streamline its policies in relation to primary education through the elaboration of the three main principles:

- Equity not only in terms of access, but especially in terms of conditions, inclusion and redressing gender imbalance in performance;

- Quality through quality assurance, institutional planning and development;
- Accountability by developing processes to evaluate outcomes, provide reliable information on learners' achievement and guide future planning.

(Leste et al. 2003:6).

Furthermore, in the recent revision of the educational principles, greater emphasis is also now being placed on 'education for empowerment, for productivity, for social cohesion and for global participation' (Ministry of Education, 2002), with more focus on quality through policies that enable schools to cater for a wide range of abilities. The structure of the education system is shown in Figure 1.1. The levels shown in the figure will be modified with the addition of the University of Seychelles from 2010 and changes in the secondary education structure.

Non-formal early childhood education

Early childhood education is provided in registered day care centres, up to three and a half years old followed by the Crèche Education programme, which lasts for two years and is not compulsory. The goals of early childhood education are to lay the foundations for attainment and learning. Parents are encouraged to collaborate closely with the school during this early stage of their children's development. The curriculum emphasizes pre-reading, pre-writing, and pre-mathematics skills, socialising and fostering good habits and attitudes with Creole as the medium of instruction.

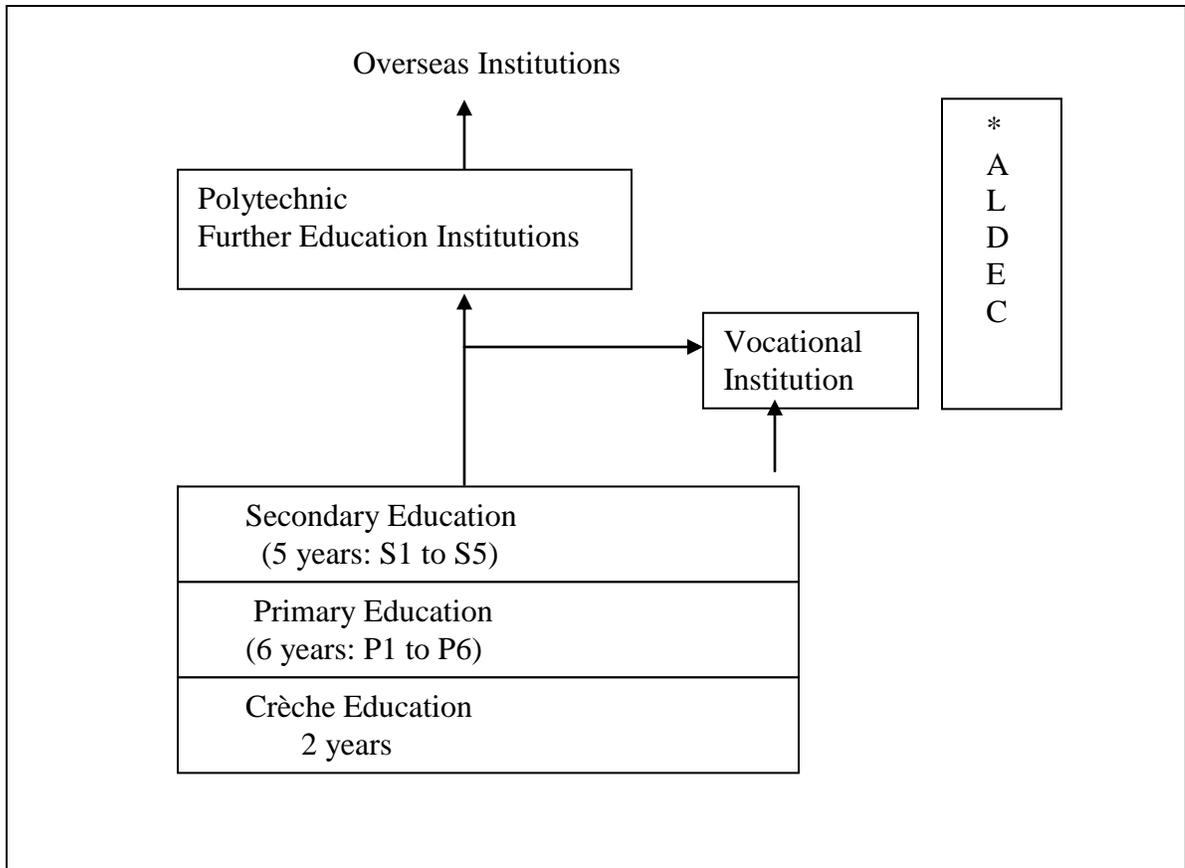


Figure 1.1: Structure of the Education System (Purvis, 2004).

* ALDEC is the Adult Learning and Distance Education Centre.

Primary education programme

This is the first six years of formal, compulsory education, which is based on general academic education and there is usually a 100 % enrolment. The programme at this stage emphasises process and skills development over the acquisition of knowledge. The overall goal is to instill in the child a love for learning and the confidence in his/her ability to learn. It is also to ensure that the child acquires a proficiency level in the main medium of instruction and equipped with basic skills in arithmetic (Ministry of Education, 2002).

Secondary education

This programme comprises four compulsory years (S1-S4) and one optional year (S5), catering for students aged from 11+ to 16+. The primary programme is extended into the first three years of secondary, to include a technical studies curriculum. The aim is to offer a balanced and progressive education through the offer of certain subject combinations which prepare the students for work and further training.

Further education and training programmes

These consist of a broad range of courses in a number of training institutions. Courses are open to Secondary Four and Five (S4 and S5) school leavers, young people and mature students in post-secondary schools. Those courses are offered to enable the students to acquire vocational and technical qualifications as well as continue the process of physical, intellectual and moral development, anticipate and adapt to real work situations and plan for career development. With the advent of University of Seychelles in 2009, some courses which were offered abroad are currently given at the University. Courses are accredited jointly by the University of Seychelles and the University of London.

Adult learning and distance education (ALDEC)

This section of the Ministry is responsible for coordinating and developing much of the ‘education for life’ principle. There is a network of provision, which encompasses adult literacy, business related skills courses and distance education approaches. It aims at providing a ‘flexible and affordable’ alternative for upgrading the skills of workers overtaken by the pace of change in a ‘technologically driven environment’ (Ministry of Education, 2003:17).

Teacher education and professional development

In order for the education system to achieve its goals, a coherent system of pre-and in-service teacher training aims at empowering the teacher to master his/her subject discipline, employ a range of teaching strategies appropriate to age, ability, interests, needs and experiences of students, initiate and or participate in action research, contribute to school-based curriculum development, acquire skills to assume leadership responsibilities and demonstrate openness to change and creativity (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Education statistics

The school population is approximately 21,000 and is largely concentrated on the main island, Mahe, where most of the economic activities take place. The statistics from 2006 are shown in Table 1.1.

Type of School	No. of schools	No. of Teachers	No. of Pupils/ Students
Crèche	32	186	2823
Primary	25	692	8910
Special Education	1	25	63
Secondary	10	590	7756
Post secondary	9	194	1931
Total	80	1687	21483

*Table 1.1: Number of teachers and pupils by type of school (State Schools)
(Education Statistics; 2006: 2)*

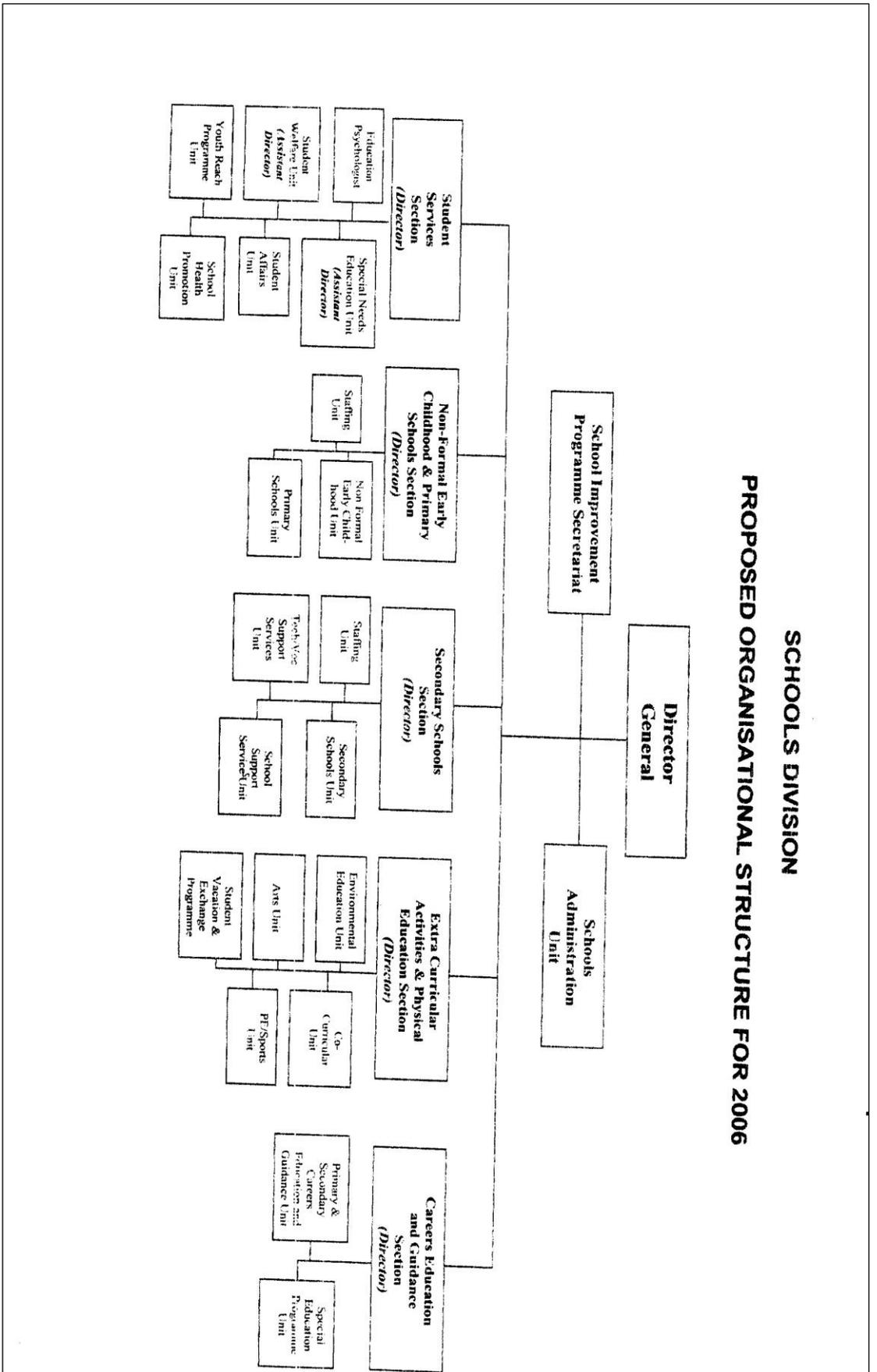
The statistics in table 1.1 do not include Ancillaries (assistant teachers). Each level (Crèche, Primary and Secondary) in the private schools (Ecole Francaise, International School and Independent School) is treated as a separate school for the purpose of the

statistics. Also post secondary non-tertiary education offered in one private school is treated as a separate school.

Administrative structure

The administration of the education system is headed by the Minister for Education. The system is divided into four main divisions: Schools, Education Planning and Resources Management, Administration and Finance, and Technical and Further Education. Each of those four divisions is headed by a Director General, with a Director at the head of each section under their division. All schools fall under the Schools' Division, which comprises five sections: Student Support Services, Quality Assurance Section, which covers Non-Formal Early Childhood and Primary, Secondary, Extra curricular Activities and Physical Education, and Careers Education and Guidance (See Figure 1.2):

SCHOOLS DIVISION PROPOSED ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR 2006

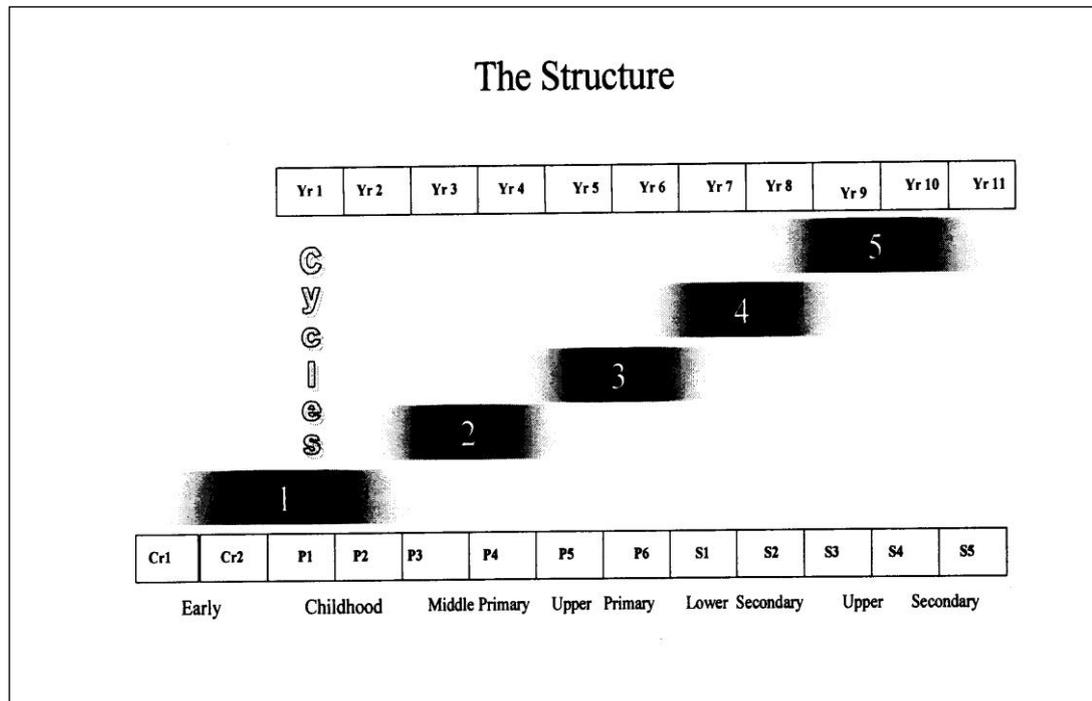


The National Curriculum

The Seychelles National Curriculum provides a coherent framework for learning and assessment in all state schools. It is set out in a number of documents comprising a Curriculum Framework Document, a series of subject based curriculum documents and sets of programmes of study for each subject. The framework specifies the content of the curriculum in terms of learning areas. It also outlines the essential skills, attitudes and values to be promoted through the curriculum. Eight learning areas have been derived:

- The Languages
- Mathematics
- Science
- Technical Studies
- Social Studies
- The Arts
- Personal and Social Education Physical Education.

There is a greater degree of integration of the different learning areas at the primary level, with a gradual move towards various subject specialisations in the secondary sector (see figure 1.3):



*Figure 1.3: The Organisational Structure of the Curriculum
(Curriculum Framework in Ministry of Education: 2001: 6)*

The Policy Context

Accountability is a significant feature of the Seychelles education system. This is due to the fact that increased competitiveness and rising expectations from both parents and the community result in a corresponding pressure from the Ministry to be more accountable for the provision of education and outcomes. In its Policy Statement; ‘Education for a learning society’, the Ministry stresses that accountability to those who have an interest in education should lead to:

The development of more open and transparent systems for providing regular information on all aspects of the young person’s education, and acknowledge the rights of both learners and their parents to be kept informed and consulted on matters which affect them’ (Ministry of Education, 2002:10)

The Ministry also conceptualises accountability through ‘developing a culture of self-evaluation, planning and target setting which will permeate all educational institutions’ (Ministry of Education, 2002:10). This is with the aim of providing an

open, transparent system to measure performance against and share the responsibilities for improvement among all the stakeholders in education. The Ministry of Education values ‘school accountability’ as:

- Partnership with parents and the community.
 - Establishing contacts through target setting and development planning.
 - Transparency in providing feedback on performance and reporting on achievements.
 - The integration of assessment in curriculum, teaching and school evaluation
 - Financial accountability through efficient use of resources
 - Development of professional attitudes of accountability, in both teachers and pupils.
- (Ministry of Education, 2002)

External Quality Assessment (EQA)

Formally known as the Quality Assurance Service, since its inception in 1999, it aimed at strengthening the school’s capacity to ‘evaluate their own performance and take appropriate action in a planned, focused and systematic manner’ (Ministry of Education, 2004:1), in order to improve the quality of education they offer. This is done by helping schools to conduct self-evaluation; carrying out independent and external assessments and giving feedback to schools; working with schools to address major weaknesses; and ascertaining whether actions taken have really brought about anticipated improvements. The service was changed during the reform initiatives of 2009/2010 to External Quality Assessment (EQA). Like its predecessor, it aims to audit schools against established standards and indicators set out in the 2010 document, ‘Looking at our school: a framework for school evaluation’. The assessment is designed to answer three questions:

- How well are students performing?
- How effective is the school in achieving its aims and targets?
- How well is the school managed?

Initially the evaluation was carried out in the belief that feedback, though vital to learning and organisational development, impacts most positively when it does not engender fear, defensiveness or loss of morale (Ministry of Education, 2002). The EQA is situated in a wider context of accountability to students, parents, society, employers, education authorities and others with a stake in education, through its aim of preparing periodical reports about the state of education in Seychelles. As a consequence, decisions may be taken nationally about priorities for development and policy review (Ministry of Education, 2004).

The process of External Quality Assessment involves investigation into six key areas of school life: Teaching, Learning, Support, Guidance and Student Welfare, Ethos, Liaison and Community Links, Resource Development and management and, Management, Leadership and Quality Assurance. After the evaluation, this lasts for two weeks, the 'team' then issues a report to the school. This highlights key strengths and main points for action. Before its publication, the report is presented to the school and other stakeholders. During that presentation, the school is allowed only to clarify points in the report. The school then draws up specific improvement action plans, together with monitoring and support plans to address the recommended points for a stipulated length of time. Support is also provided by Education Officers, who advise on possible avenues for the improvement plans and monitoring their implementation.

The school is obliged to submit a progress report at the end of the given time, detailing actions taken and stating their improvement. Apart from highlighting its achievements, the school is also required to comment about circumstances which may have influenced the outcomes. A follow-up or 'return visit' (Department of Education, 2010:2) is then carried out. Findings are again communicated to the school and other relevant parties. The report comments on the level of progress made and whether further actions are required.

A yearly form for Self-Evaluation is completed by all schools. The EQA uses those forms to guide its choice of schools for a whole school, or partial, evaluation.

School Improvement Programme (SIP)

The SIP was launched in 1995 and is acknowledged as one of the key school based strategies to bring about improvement in quality. The overall aim of the programme is to bring about better student outcomes by creating a culture of collaborative planning in schools and empowering staff to manage change and reform within their own schools, with support from external agents (Khosa et al, 2002). More specifically, the SIP was introduced for two main reasons:

1. Schools in Seychelles, through better training of headteachers and staff, were ready to take on a leading part in improving the quality of education given the right kind of support.
2. A school improvement programme could help to transform the management structures and school ethos to provide a more favourable climate for the promotion of teacher participation, professional growth and enhanced moral commitment (Khosa et al, 2002).

Within the introduction of the SIP, the school is expected to take on a new role as initiator of change, with students' learning and experience being the primary focus for change and improvement through the process of Development Planning. It is believed greater attention should be paid to monitoring and evaluation throughout the school, and accountability for the outcomes of school development planning should be emphasised through the periodic sharing of information together with progress and evaluation reports (Khosa et al, 2002).

School Governance

The pre-reform period was characterised by central governance of schools. The Ministry of Education controlled most aspects of Education; the facilities, resources, staffing and budget allocation as well as dictated expenditures under budget allocations. Staffing was handled by the Ministry, which appointed teachers and school managers. Schools were simply informed of decisions taken.

The major challenge still facing schools in Seychelles today is the provision of access to 'appropriate and meaningful education for all' (Department of Education, 2010). In a context that ensures greater transparency and accountability, School Governance has been a major component of the 2009/2010 Education Reforms. Roles and responsibilities have been specified. In line with global trends, the education system is moving towards greater decentralization of school management and governance. More autonomy has been given to schools in some aspects of education, but maintaining the focus on students and learning. The new model of school governance aims to bring about better decision-making, and management of school matters, greater sense of ownership and better participation of school staff. A

higher level of accountability of teachers to management teams and their school community is expected. Consequently there should be more accountability of teachers and school leaders to the Department of Education and the community. Improvement in student performance, and the resourcing of schools, is regarded as two major aims of the new model too.

The school's management team has now been given more autonomy in administering their internal assessments, budget and school fund management. Under the new management model, the headteacher is responsible for the management operations of the school and is accountable to the Department of Education for the provision of overall leadership, the promotion and fostering of conducive environments for learning, ensuring efficient organisation and administration of the school, and ensuring effective collaboration with the School Council.

The Department of Education wanted to encourage strong school/parent partnerships and, in 2010, added School Councils to the Parents Teachers Associations and Parents Educators Council, two existing mechanisms. Within the priority area; 'Improving the Governance of Educational Institutions' of the current reform initiatives, the Council is to be the structure through which schools take greater responsibility and accountability for their own development and boost the participation of the community in school life. The model calls for 'collaborative working relationships (Department of Education, 2010:2) between school management, the Department of Education and the School Council.

School Council

Each individual primary or secondary school has a School Council, whose chairperson is appointed by the Minister. It works with the senior management of

state schools; ensuring the school provides the best quality of education required for different age groups, abilities and needs of students. It also ensures that schools attain and maintain national standards in education and contribute towards their improvement. It is responsible to the Department of Education for the provision of quality leadership, support and guidance to schools in specified areas; implementing national policies and plans, maintaining and developing the school's ethos in relation to:

- Curriculum implementation
- School environment
- Pastoral care, including student behaviour
- Resourcing of the school
- Student performance
- Endorsing school-based policies and plans
- Promoting parents' participation in school life

(Department of Education, 2010)

For its part, the school is expected to report regularly to the Council; and together take decisions about the running of the school.

Parents Educators' Council (PEC)

This council was launched in early 2001, as a national association, with a vision to help in 'building a responsible, resourceful, sustainable, dynamic, prosperous, civil and democratic Seychellois society' (Ministry of Education, 2001:1), it was formed to provide a forum for parents and educators with the following objectives:

- Develop, monitor and assess strategic plans and interventions to respond to various issues and situations that may arise in schools.

- Provide a forum for parents to discuss and make suggestions regarding new policies being developed by the Ministry of Education.
- Provide information to all persons, groups and organisations about the management and activities of PTAs.

The council is comprised of all chairpersons of PTAs at school level, the Minister for Education, who is also the chairperson, representatives from the National Councils for Children (NCC) and the Disabled (NCD), and the Family centre.

However, with the introduction of the School Council, PEC seems very likely to phase out, since they apparently share similar functions.

Parent-Teachers' Association (PTA)

Each school has a PTA, which comprises of parents, management team members and teacher representatives. These associations have existed for a number of years in the Seychelles education system; with parents and teachers collaborating to support children through their school life. The PTA provides a forum for teachers and parents to meet, to discuss educational matters, and to work together through organizing events and activities, with the following aims:

- Strengthening the links between schools and the community
- promoting unity, shared responsibility
- stimulating both parties' interests and encouraging their full participation in school improvement
- promoting teachers' knowledge and understanding of community needs
- using expertise, skills and knowledge existing in the community in school activities
- guiding parents in efforts to support their children

-promoting and instilling positive parental attitude to their children's performance and behaviour, and

-providing a communication's channel between parents, teachers, students, Parents Educators Council and the Department of Education.

(PTA Constitution, 2000:2/3).

These arrangements suggest that the PTA, through its chairperson, would liaise with other parents to organise activities related to the aims above. However, most PTAs appear to be dormant and are active only when the school initiates an activity or for a few months after election.

De-streaming policy

In Seychelles the practice of streaming, although not endorsed by the Ministry of Education, was a feature of the primary school education programme before 2004. In an attempt to reduce the selective effect of streaming, a circular in 1988 requested schools to stream only at Primary Five and six levels (Ministry of Education, 2004). The implementation was not monitored and streaming based on teacher judgment and tests results continued. Whole class teaching prevailed.

Towards the end of 2003, with accumulated research evidence on the divisive effects of streaming and its adverse impact on achievement (Leste et al, 2003), the Ministry of Education, noting that its principles emphasise equity, inclusion and social cohesion, committed itself to changing its position and establishing non-streamed classes. In a Policy memorandum of 2004, it stated:

- Teaching and learning is to be organised in heterogeneously grouped classes.
- Mixed-ability teaching is to be promoted and teachers need to instruct learners of all ability.

- Parental and societal support is to be sought for the practice of non-streaming to ensure access to quality education for every learner and to a high level of achievement.

Beginning in 2005, students admitted to primary schools were grouped by the Ministry of Education. With the reforms of 2009/2010, more emphasis has been placed on student groupings, in terms of no streaming, and with more attention to be paid to differentiated instructions throughout the whole school system (Department of Education, 2010:11). The context of this policy remains that schools become more accountable for student learning and progress.

Primary schools' context

The author's research will be conducted in primary schools only. There are 27 such schools, of which three are in the private sector. Primary schools vary in size, with the smallest having one year group per level and the largest with up to six classes. The average school consists of about three classes per year group, with a ratio of 15 students to one teacher. Most of the primary teachers are trained to the level of the Local Diploma part Two. Figure 1.4 shows a typical primary school structure.

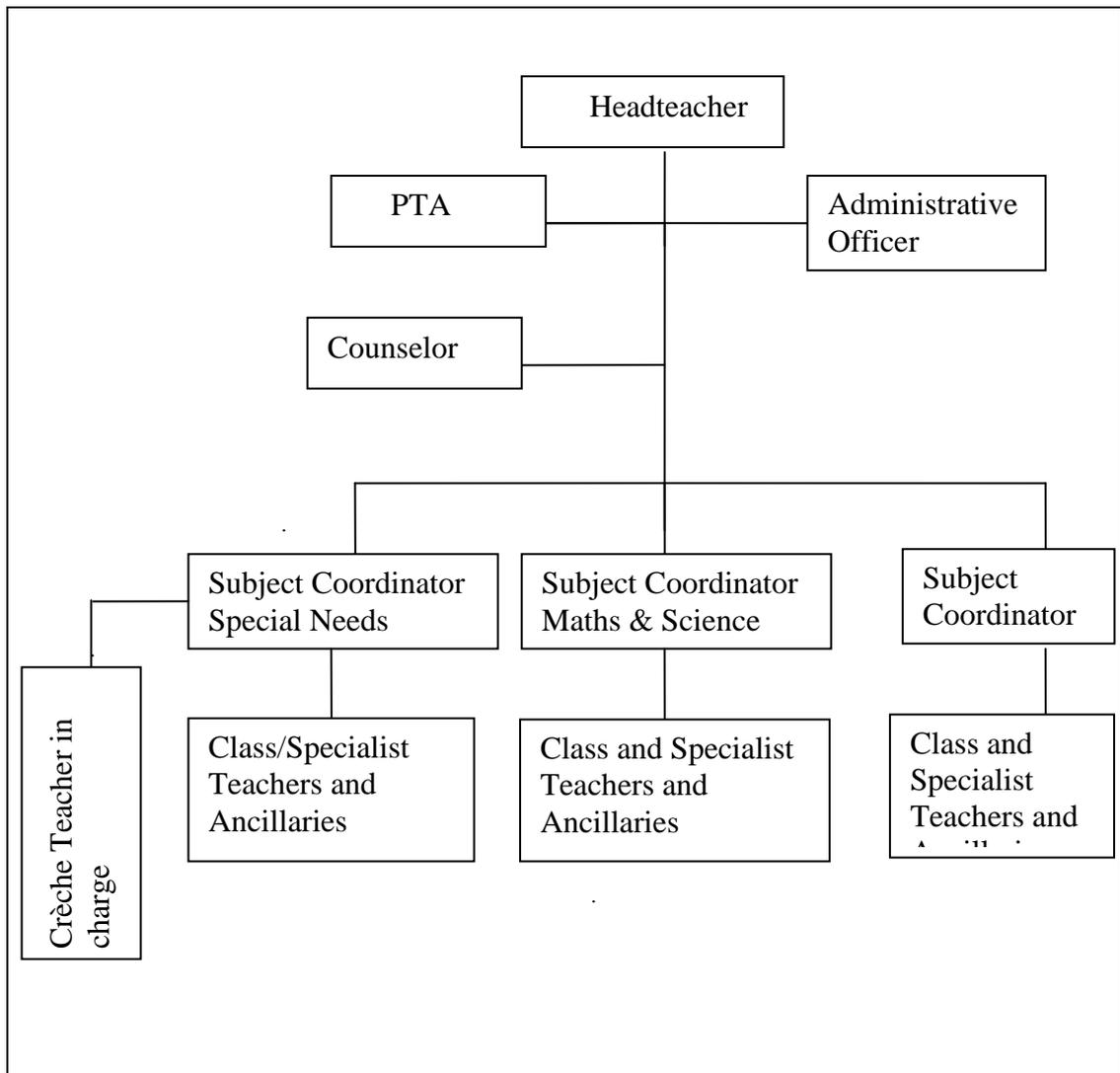


Figure 1.4: Primary School Structure (Ancillary Training Programme, 2004)

Curriculum

A broad- based curriculum is offered throughout the years of primary schooling. This is organised in three cycles: where cycle one covers from pre-primary or Crèche to P2, cycle two from P3 to P4 and cycle three from P5 to P6.

‘The curriculum focuses on communication skills, broad academic skills and personal /social skills’ (Leste et al, 2003:5). Three languages are taught; Creole, the mother tongue, English, the language of business and administration, and French, a cultural heritage. A wide range of subjects of Mathematics and Science, Social Sciences, some Arts, Physical Education as well as Personal and Social Education are taught. While the medium of instruction in crèche, primary one and two is

Creole, English is used to teach from primary three onwards. There is much emphasis on English as a key language in teaching and learning. The ultimate aim of the Ministry of Education is in delivering a curriculum that produces ‘flexible, adaptable international learners as part of the human resource development strategies of a small state’ (Leste et al, 2003:5).

Pupils progress automatically from one year to another and, at the end of the six primary years; pupils sit for a national examination. That is a summative assessment in English, French, Creole, Mathematics, Science and Social Science. There has been some debate about the purpose and use of this examination (Leste et al, 1999).

Theoretical Context

Accountability in education has been high on the agenda of governments and education authorities for many years. The quest for efficient and effective mechanisms of accountability continues. Educators are accountable for whatever they do. ‘Schools are increasingly “coming under the big gun” of accountability (Heim, 1995:13) and the headteacher or school principal as the primary leader is the one to bear the brunt of responsibility in making sure that demands for accountability are met. Leithwood and Earl (2000), and Barber (2004), state that a significant majority of educational reforms have aimed to hold schools more accountable. Attributing those calls to the wider economic, political and social contexts of which schools are a part, some countries have been influenced by ideological perspectives in which a greater accountability is thought to have two end results:

1. better alignment between public aspirations and the purposes schools strive to achieve.

2. improved performance on the part of schools, typically defined by traditional achievement criteria.

Through an accountability system, Barber (2004) stresses that underperformance is brought out in the open and systems face up to failures be it of individuals, whole group or particular schools. Also, teachers benefit much from the development of a powerful accountability system because it clarifies their mission. There is the point that the data generated from accountability is the key to informing professional knowledge of best practices; hence accountability moves the overall concept of professionalism.

Conceptualising accountability

The concept of accountability is quite complex from both a theoretical and practical standpoint (Normore, 2004). According to Heim (1995), applying the concept in education, particularly in the context of recent reforms and re-structuring, is confusing because political leaders, education officials, teachers, parents, community and business leaders all perceive accountability differently. The term is also used to demonstrate compliance with set laws, rules and regulations or standards, or to the distribution of rewards and sanctions, which are linked to results.

Accountability involves responsibility, authority, evaluation and control (Heim, 1995). It is considered as a form of responsibility, involving at least two parties and a mutually acknowledged relationship between them. That relationship is in the form of a delegation of authority to do something, from one to the other. Where no delegation of authority occurs, Heim (1995), stresses that there should not be any expectation for accountability. That authority is delegated conditionally, at minimum, upon performance that is credible. Control is exercised through the

delegation of authority, which may proceed or be withheld, on the condition that performance is credible. Much earlier references to accountability include that of Sockett (1980) who sees it as simply giving an account. It also means being obligated to give an account as well as being able to do so (Bush, 1994). The principle usually means being responsible for outcomes and results while, in certain professions, it is the responsibility for abiding by codes of practice, rather than results.

Creating accountability at school level

Darling-Hammond (1989) states that an accountability system is a set of commitments, policies and practices designed to:

- increase the use of good educational practices.
- reduce the use of harmful or wasteful practices.
- create internal mechanisms to identify, diagnose and change courses of action that do not lead to learning.

Who is accountable to whom and for what?

There are several parties with an interest in the provision of education. These include teachers, pupils, middle managers, headteachers and support staff, parents, Ministry officials, the community, industries and other agencies make up the group with such interest. These groups have varying interests, involvement, objectives, power and relationships (Hawkins, 2005).

Where teacher accountability is concerned, Sockett (1980) stressed that teachers ought to be accountable to the following groups whether or not they acknowledge and abide by these levels of accountability: individual pupils and parents, the community, teachers' employers, providers of resources, professional both inside and

outside of school, other relevant educational institutions, the public and industries. If the school is taken as the unit of account, one of the views which is widely accepted is that of Elliot (1979:69), who claims that:

the school is accountable to all those groups who have a legal or moral right to know about and influence its work. (Elliot, 1079:69)

Educational accountability

A common theme which is highly influential on accountability systems is the:

‘devolution of financial and managerial control to more local levels, either to municipalities and schools, as in Sweden, or more commonly away from Regional and District levels to individual schools as in . . . England and Wales, the ‘direct resourcing’ experiment in New Zealand and the USA Charter Schools Initiative. Another common characteristic is the promotion of parental rights to choose schools, sometimes articulating with changes to funding formulae, when the money follows the pupils, resulting in a move towards quasi-markets in education (Scott, 1999).

However, it is evident that the liberalizing reforms are being implemented alongside others which consolidate power within central governments, at national and state levels. In particular, centrally defined goals concerning what schools should teach, and how their performance should be assessed, are becoming commonplace (ibid).

School leaders are said to be very familiar with the problems posed by rules and expectations, particularly those that pertain to the procedures in accountability systems (Heim, 1995). The main groups of expectations are bureaucratic, legal, political, professional and market-based (Darling-Hammond, 1989, Heim 1995).

These authors explain that those expectations are derived from different philosophical bases, traditions and settings.

Models of accountability

Scott (1999) refers to the epistemology of different models of accountability and control, where each model assumes a different form of knowledge:

- *Central control* models are underpinned by an outcomes model in which schools as a unit are judged in relation to past performances, or standards achieved in other countries, or some projected ideal about what they should be achieving.
- *Consumer dominated* systems, where the intention is to allow parents to make choices between schools, and to demand aggregated judgments between schools, usually in published league table form.
- *The evaluative state* model demands accountability at the level of process and output and is predicated on a notion of how schools should be organized.
- *Self-evaluative* models are less concerned with cross- school comparisons and are more concerned with schools providing accounts of their practice which enable them to make progress, not in any absolute sense, but in how they perceive their situation and what is deemed to be expert opinion.

As these accountability systems have different epistemological bases by which judgments are made, the desire to exchange one for another is guided by the various views of knowledge about educational institutions and systems. Therefore, systems boasting external accountability and control are more prone to subscribing to views emphasizing determinacy, rationality, impersonality and prediction whereas systems of accountability and control which stress local

knowledge and devolved systems of authority are more likely to be holistic, interpretive, descriptive and ideographic (Scott, 1999).

Issues and concerns

Schools operate partly as accountability systems in their own right (Abelmann and Elmore, 1999) and ‘who is responsible for what to whom is a ‘rather powerful organizing concept’ (Heim, 1995:16). Educational accountability cannot be achieved without first institutionalizing clear standards. Several accountability issues and concerns are currently at the fore for school administrators (Normore, 2004). Accountability also affects parents, teachers, students, and administrators in different ways and each group typically brings their own anxieties to the issue (Johnson, 2003). It is emphasized that, if the purposes, intentions, roles and expectations are clearly understood at the beginning, the chances for successful accountability systems are maximized.

Furthermore, accountability systems in operation bring forth several concerns which Normore (2004) contemplates:

1. Fairness-if accountability systems favour one type of stakeholder or another.
2. Compatibility- whether performance based accountability systems are incompatible with more ambitious and experimental forms of assessment that reformers advocate as critical for encouraging higher order thinking and problem solving.
3. Relates to the side effects of accountability systems; whether those effects and incentives can be kept to a tolerable level.
4. Focuses on the technicalities of a well–designed accountability system with political and implementation demands.

5. Relates to the internal or external congruence and conflicts on accountability systems. (Normore, 2004)

The Accountability Context: Seychelles

The development of strong accountability systems, since the mid 1980s, has been one of the most powerful trends in educational policy in many countries, including Holland, Australia, Canada, Sweden and Russia (Barber, 2004). Barber's central point is that strong accountability, if well designed, can make a decisive contribution to the achievement of the widely shared moral purpose of improving student outcomes. Together with the growing importance of education, it was recognized that there were limits to the amount of tax people were willing to pay for services, which delivered uncertain outcomes. In response to those pressures, Leithwood and Earl (2000) argue that accountability makes sense. This argument bears significantly on the Seychelles Education System.

Seychellois parents want to know what is happening in the school. They may do so through the Parents Teachers Association (PTA), at parents meetings, through the Parents Educators' Council (PEC), at other forums such as open days and when they collect school reports. The Ministry of Education also calls the school to account, for example through the Quality Assurance Service (QA) , but since recently, EQA, which seeks to assist schools in using data from evaluation to plan for change and improvement (Ministry of Education, 2004) and the newly introduced School Governance which proposes to devolve more autonomy to schools (Ministry of Education, 2010). The Ministry is also emphasizing that 'no parents should be left out' (Minister for Education, 2005), as he urged schools to involve parents more in student learning.

There is also the expansion of private schooling and the emergence of competition between the private and state system (Vidot, 1996). It is argued that there may be conflict or tensions in schools being accountable to diverse stakeholders (Bush, 1994), and this is likely to be particularly significant in a small centralized system like the Seychelles. For example, there is the risk that the comparison between state and private schooling may push the Ministry of Education to adopt an approach to accountability that could be termed ‘accountability as vindication of a system’ (Vidot, 1996:16). The head teachers bear the brunt of the responsibility to ensure that demands for accountability, however it is conceptualized, are met. Hence the need to be clear about accountability has never been more compelling.

Centralisation

It is important to note that the ‘Seychelles Education System is highly centralized’ (Leste et al, 2003:6). As a post colonial government, it aimed at consistency in education provision. Due to the size of the country, system-wide goals are centrally determined to meet national objectives. The main decisions are made centrally rather than being delegated to educational institutions. The curricula are also prescribed nationally. Seychelles schools are organizations ‘with many bureaucratic features’ (Bush, 1994: 36) including hierarchical and vertical organizational structures. Central to this hierarchical mode of leadership, is the concept of accountability. It may be that there is not enough emphasis on relationships in terms of improvement plans for parental involvement or support. Preparing and giving a report with students’ results at the end of term may be more important for parents. However, the reforms of 2010 propose a new model of school governance which aims at ‘locating responsibilities and increasing accountability’ (Ministry of Education, 2010:1). The model suggests

the degree of autonomy that can be devolved to schools and mechanisms that should ensure greater accountability throughout the system.

Resources

Planning and budgeting is done on a national basis and school leaders are expected to make expenditure within the stated guidelines once they have been allocated their portion of the budget which is disbursed on a quarterly basis for each of the sections. Reconciliation of all budgetary transactions is done monthly, while all accounts are subject to both internal and external auditing, as per financial instructions. Resources are allocated centrally and all institutions follow the same guidelines and regulations for ordering and collection. While this proves to be beneficial in terms of equity, there may be the tendency to waste (Ministry of Education, 1999).

Development Planning

With the introduction of the School Improvement Programme, as well as management training for school leaders, schools in the Seychelles are being asked to implement changes and involve themselves in staff development projects. As a consequence the context of accountability is fast changing. There may be an apparent need to trade increased autonomy for increased accountability. Moreover, schools are being asked to produce their own materials and have more control of the development of the teaching and learning environment.

Student performance

There is an apparent improvement in 'O' and 'A' Level results but a number of concerns remain (Purvis, 2004). A significant group of students have been scoring consistently low marks in core subjects, giving a strong indication that the objectives of the National Curriculum are not being properly met.

It is not easy to explain why a school's performance changes for the worse in the space of a single year (Ministry of Education, 2006). When viewed in the context of

new changes that are taking place, the expectation should be one of improvement and an increased readiness for students to cope with the next education cycle.

It is generally accepted that comprehensive schools have to cater for a wide range of abilities, even though the pace and the content of learning cannot apply equally to all students. The establishment of non-streaming in all primary schools, and the promotion of teaching methods suitable for mixed-ability classes are being emphasized through the following tasks, which are being implemented:

- The development of a monitoring structure to assess learner progress
- Termly reports to Schools Division
- Analysis of achievement data on a yearly basis.

(Ministry of Education, 2004)

The responsibility of the teachers towards their students' performance may not be well established as those are reported formally only after the students have sat for the national examinations and then, there are no formal sanctions or rewards based on the results.

The issue of boys' underperformance compared to girls' remains persistent. Questions still need to be asked: are instructional methods used suitable for the boys as well as the girls, do activities on offer engage boys academically and motivate them, and is parental support the same for both boys and girls?

Aims of the Research

Bassey (1999:38) defines research as a systematic, critical and self-critical enquiry, aiming at contributing to the advancement of knowledge and wisdom. This research is aiming to investigate the accountability of primary schools with particular interest in teacher accountability to diverse stakeholders. This will be done through:

- Examining different accountability systems and their goals
- Investigating who the stakeholders are
- Finding out whether those stakeholders are internal or external to the school
- Examining their perceptions of school accountability and what relationships they have with school leaders and teachers.
- Exploring the types of accountability operating in primary schools and assessing ‘who’ exercises accountability ‘to whom’, ‘how’ and ‘to what extent’
- Exploring what challenges school leaders and teachers face when responding to accountability demands.
- Examining other aspects of school and teacher accountability, such as networking.

Research questions

The questions that frame the research relate to the key features of school and teacher accountability:

1. *What are stakeholders’ understandings of accountability in the context of schools?*

The term accountability is not new in Seychelles. There are many references to it, including the Ministry of Education’s Policy Statement referred to earlier in the chapter. The concept may mean different things to the different stakeholders involved in the education service, so this question seeks to understand their perceptions and work on a possible alignment of understanding.

2. *Who exercises accountability in the Seychelles primary schools?*

The school as the basic unit of education provision is a collection of individuals; pupils, teachers, middle managers, support staff and the headteacher. Schools also operate partly as accountability systems in their own right (Abelman and Elmore,

1999). The question of who is accountable at the level of the school is an important concept. Bush (1994:310) reiterates Sockett's (1989) three central questions in delineating 'accountability':

- Is the school or the teacher accountable?
- To whom should the school or the teacher be accountable?
- For what is the school or the teacher accountable?

These three questions are central to the research.

3. What is the scope of accountability in Seychelles primary schools?

This question relates to the aspects for which schools are held accountable and to what extent. Barber (2004) argues that a strong accountability framework, if well designed, can make a decisive contribution to the achievement of the widely shared moral purpose of improving student outcomes. In contrast, Dunford (2003:8), argues that 'over accountability of schools distorts their aims and de-motivates heads and teachers'; but that an 'intelligent' accountability regime would provide greater freedom for schools to maneuver around their curriculum, use internal assessment more and external examinations less. The question also seeks to find out whether primary schools and teachers in the Seychelles 'lack accountability' (Heim, 1995:17) or there is 'over accountability' (Dunford, 2003).

4. To whom are school leaders and teachers accountable?

Hawkins (2005) describes stakeholders as all those people who have a stake or share in a particular issue or system and they can be groups of people organizations, institutions and sometimes individuals. Since there are different parties or

stakeholders who have an interest in the provision of education in a primary school, the question seeks to investigate to whom these school leaders and teachers are accountable. Furthermore, Heim (1995) groups them into two categories; the providers and the recipients. The question also relates to both internal and external stakeholders. The category of stakeholders may determine the type of accountability within which a school is operating. A stakeholder analysis will help analyze the concept of school accountability through stakeholders discussing their interests, involvement, objectives, power and relationships (Hawkins, 2005).

5. What is the nature of accountability in the Seychelles?

The question focuses on the nature of accountability relationships in schools. They may be either hierarchical or lateral, or both. There is also a distinction between internal and external accountability. All these categories will be examined and compared. The Seychelles Education System being centralized has many bureaucratic features (Bush, 1994:36). Those include a hierarchical structure; which is likely to influence the nature of accountability processes in schools. The question will address which of those categories is most significant in the Seychelles.

Accountability related literature (Heim, 1995:15) contains various types of accountability relationships, sometimes referred to as ‘types’, ‘strategies’, ‘mechanisms’ and even ‘models’ (Bush, 1994 and Scott, 1999), the last considered to be a ‘misnomer’ (Heim, 1995) of accountability. As well as finding out the nature, the question seeks to investigate which type(s) exist in Seychelles’ primary schools.

6. What are the implications for school leaders in exercising accountability?

School leaders and teachers face conflicting accountability demands from different stakeholders. The researcher will seek school leaders’ perceptions of these

conflicting requirements and assess how they reconcile these demands. For example, Scott (1999) states that accountability relationships work more effectively if the relationships are open and those involved understand them clearly. There are several valid ways to view accountability and trying to meet them all becomes a juggling act (Novak, 2005). The question seeks to ascertain whether school leaders are clear about the relationships they are involved in and how they respond to those demands, both internally and externally.

Objectives

The research will also pursue the objective of developing a framework for both school and teacher accountability that can be adopted by a small centralized system like the Seychelles. The framework will be used for:

- Policy formulation for informing and guiding accountability practices in the primary schools, and possibly in secondary schools as well; that will help school leaders and teachers working with staff in building positive accountability relationships with stakeholders both internal and external to the school.
- To inform the implementation and evaluation of accountability practices as well as the impact of accountability processes in order to highlight challenges and demands.
- To help to identify trade-offs between different stakeholders' objectives and the conflicts between them and the units of account, in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness in schools.

Overview

The concept of ‘accountability’ in education is perceived differently among school leaders, teachers and other parties with an interest in education. The literature states that this is because of the complexity of the concept, from both a theoretical and practical standpoint. ‘Accountability’ in Seychelles schools is one of the three main principles of the operational goals of the education system. Central to this research are three questions which would delineate accountability in the primary schools: is the school or teacher accountable? to whom is the school or the teacher accountable? and for what? The study is a stakeholder analysis with a conceptual base, rooted in theories of school and teacher accountability. The author intends that the research should culminate in a framework for both school and teacher accountability, applicable in a small centralized education system like the Seychelles.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Accountability is not a new idea for schools; it has become an integral part of the education system and the day to day practice of educators in many countries around the world. The concept of ‘accountability’ has also emerged as a prominent issue in many other parts of the public sector, including health, social services and the police, where it ‘reflects a fundamental concern in the study of social policies (Munn, 1991: 174/175), that of the actual and desirable relationship between the individual actor and the publicly provided system. In education, as in other public sectors, this has been translated into questions about who would be accountable to whom about what. Indeed, questions about school accountability have ranged along a continuum from that of Sockett (1976), in which he advocates a system whereby teachers are accountable for adhering to a code of practice, through Elliot’s (1981) ‘democratic accountability’, which advocates a process approach in which schools are said to open up their activities to the public, to the ‘output model which focuses on pupil attainment scores as a measure of school effectiveness’ (Munn, 1991:175).

Accountability in education, then, has been high on the agenda for some years now. The search for ‘efficient and effective’ (Forster, 1999: 175) mechanisms of accountability and regular system-wide testing of school children is a reflection of that preoccupation. Although there may be different views about what schools or teachers are accountable for, ‘reflecting no doubt the vested interests of particular

stakeholder groups' (Munn, 1991:175), it is necessary to be clear about what the concept means.

Definitions

The term 'accountability' is said to cover a wide range of philosophies and mechanisms governing relationships between public institutions, governing bodies and society, including the political environment (Kogan, 1986: 25). In education, particularly in the contexts of many reform initiatives and re-structuring, Heim (1995:13), stresses that accountability is 'rather a muddled concept', and explains that one has simply to listen to talks about educational reforms to realize that the concept has many meanings for political leaders, education officials, teachers, parents, community and business leaders as well as the general public. Bush (1994), and Farrell and Law (1997), acknowledge the complexity of the concept, and that it has several interpretations. Bush (1994) explains that at the very least it means being required to give an account of happenings or behaviour in a school or college to those who have a legitimate right to know.

Leithwood and Earl (2000: 2/3) elaborate on this definition to claim that the term 'account' entails 'giving a report on; furnishing a justifying analysis or explanation; providing a statement of explanation of one's conduct; offering a statement or exposition of reasons, causes, groups, or motives; or simply providing a statement of facts or events'. Farrell and Law (1997), claim that to be accountable is to be required to explain or justify one's actions or behaviours. This definition clearly relates to the concept of responsibility, where those with responsibilities are asked to account for them, but Farrell and Law (1997) continue to state that accountability involves more than giving an account, because the information given needs to be

evaluated or the performance assessed for action to be taken if there is no satisfaction. Similarly, Sockett (1980) claims that it involves also being able to provide an account.

Darling-Hammond and Snyder (1992:14) distinguish between 'accounting' and 'accountability'. They explain that though accounting is a prerequisite to accountability, it is not enough. The key difference between them being accountability must be embedded in a 'process of use'. Along the same lines, an accountable school's operations should provide 'internal correctives' in the system to identify, diagnose and change courses of actions that are harmful or effective. Darling-Hammond and Snyder (1992) conclude that accounting is then primarily descriptive while accountability is essentially evaluative.

One definition of accountability, then, concerns the key relationship between evaluation and accountability, where Kogan (1986) specifies that a person cannot be held accountable without another making an evaluation of their performances.

Therefore, evaluation is a pre-requisite for accountability. On the other hand, evaluation may not necessarily be tied to demands for or processes of accountability.

Forster (1999) elaborates on the notion of evaluation, but in terms of self-evaluation. He explains that rendering an account first involves the school in self-evaluation, where the school reflects on its progress towards goals set and these goals too are revisited. Current projects are revised. If progress is evident, it will be acknowledged but, if not, explanations are given, not with the aim of allocating praise and blame, but to understand and influence factors which shape the work of the school. The importance of making sure that self-evaluation involves all staff has become increasingly recognized; it is obviously valuable for each teacher. In addition,

renewing and modifying whole school policies and procedures, which follows the process of self-evaluation are more likely to be effective if teachers who are to implement changes understand what is intended and why.

Heim (1995:14) reiterates his view about accountability being 'multi-faceted'; it involves 'responsibility, authority, evaluation and control'. He provides a working definition of the concept. 'Accountability is the responsibility that goes with the authority to do something. The responsibility is to use authority justifiably and credibly'.

Evidently, accountability is a form of responsibility, which Heim (1995) believes involves at least two parties and a mutually acknowledged relationship between them. Furthermore, that relationship involves a delegation of authority to take some action from one party to another and the delegation of authority is conditional upon performance. It is important to note that, where there is no delegation of authority, there should be no expectation for accountability. Although one hopes for ideal performance, it is credible performance that is deemed sufficient, while control is exercised through the delegation of authority which may be continued or withheld on the condition that the performance is credible.

In providing a simpler definition for the concept of accountability, Bush (1994) perceives it as holding someone to account and also being obligated to do so. The principle usually meant being responsible for outcomes and results, while in certain professions, it meant the responsibility of abiding to codes of practice rather than results. Heim (1995) argues that the confusion which surrounds the concept lies here; and it is because of its fluid and pervasive nature. He supports Bush's (1994) idea that accountability may be directed towards process, how something is done, or outcomes, what results are achieved. For example, if one has been delegated to

engage in some activity, then one is responsible to do it properly, in accordance with prevailing expectations, and that is defined as ‘procedural accountability’ (Heim, 1995:14). On the other hand, accountability is extended to the responsibility for the consequences or results of one’s actions, whether it is intentional or not, or whether it is positive or negative. This focus is called ‘consequential accountability’ (Heim, 1995:14).

Inherent in Heim’s definition is Rothman’s (1995:189) conceptualization of educational accountability in the USA. It is perceived as the ‘process by which school districts and states attempt to ensure that schools and school systems meet their goals’; the focus on processes and goals is central. He further explains that an emphasis on processes asks questions about what stimulates such processes and the accountability mechanisms, whereas a focus on goals shows that the intention of accountability processes is to influence schools and school districts towards the attainment of those goals. Being able to succeed is the most important condition on which their values are judged.

Kogan (1986: 25) argues that accountability is ‘a condition in which individual role holders are liable to review and the application of sanctions if their actions fail to satisfy those with whom they are in an accountability relationship’. He then differentiates between types of sanctions; hard ones like salary, promotion or the provision of continued employment, and soft ones such as disapproval. The author proceeds to say that accountability is a ‘particularly concentrated responsibility of the individual for performance in keeping with the expectations of his own particular role’ (Kogan, 1986: 25/26), thus implying the presence of a judge who is armed with the sanctions mentioned earlier. He also agrees that the term ‘accountability’ is contested but he explains that the contest takes place between narrow boundaries.

Those definitions are broad enough to entail assumptions about the consequences of endorsing or rejecting different kinds of relationships while, at the same time, accountability can be distinguished from other form of pressures on the school. That is to say, it is a public, political and even legal structure compared to the less defined influence that parents might apply in other ways.

Referring to the English context, Kogan (1986) illustrates this through the relationship between electorates and an education committee, or those between a headteacher and a teacher. Consequently, a person or a group may not be accountable to others if the conditions of the definition are not met, even if some other equally important relationship might exist. When viewed in this way, Kogan (1986) stresses that accountability assumes the authority of an institution to call an individual or group to account for their actions. Accountability is to be contrasted with responsibility which is ‘the moral sense of duty to perform appropriately’ (Kogan, 1986:26), where responsibility need not elicit the duty to answer in any legal or contractual setting or to act accountably.

More recently, the concept of accountability has been described as a ‘slippery rhetorical term’ which has at least two meanings (Biesta, 2004:234). In general discourse it has to do with responsibility and carries the connotation of ‘being answerable to’, while in the technical meaning, it refers narrowly to the duty to present auditable accounts. The author observes that originally ‘accountability’ referred only to financial documentation, while the current ‘managerial use’ of accountability is a direct extension of this financial usage where an accountable organization is one that has the duty to present auditable accounts of all its activities.

In reference to school-based management of schools, Glatter (2002: 233-234) distinguishes between two different forms of accountability: ‘contractual’ and

‘responsive’. ‘Contractual accountability’ is explained as being ‘concerned with the degree to which educators are fulfilling the expectations of particular audiences in terms of standards, outcomes and results’ whereas ‘responsive accountability’ refers to ‘decision-making by educators after a process of taking into account the interests and wishes of relevant stake holders’. While contractual accountability is based on an agreement of standards, outcomes and results, responsive accountability focuses on processes and ensuring participation and discussions in order to make decisions which meet needs and preferences, but Glatter (2002) cautions that such differences should not be drawn too sharply.

Bush (1994) suggests that ‘responsibility’ and ‘responsiveness’ may be seen as alternatives to accountability in conceptualizing relationships between schools and their external environment, whereas Scott (1989) does not agree that responsiveness is similar to accountability and goes on to differentiate between them:

Responsiveness describes the willingness of an institution- or indeed an individual- to respond on its own or their own initiative, i.e. the capacity to be open to the outside impulses and new ideas. Accountability in contrast describes the submission of the institution or the individual to a form of external audit, its capacity to account for its or their performance...Responsiveness is freely arrived at; accountability is imposed from outside...the first concept subsumes the other (Scott 1989:17)

Why Should Schools be Accountable?

Barber (2004) emphasizes that schools should be accountable because accountability establishes goals which the public can understand and believe in; it provides them with feedback so that the benefits of their investments are seen, and because it causes

the system to address its weaknesses. It creates continuous improvement, which encourages the public to keep faith. Barber (ibid) also believes that accountability in education motivates students, teachers and administrators to do their best. Forster (1999) adds that schools should be accountable, because, for the school as well as the individual teacher, giving an account is an opportunity for a partnership and collaborative endeavour. As a whole school activity, the account giving process becomes more systematic, as well as formal, moving through the stages of self-evaluation, communication and renewal.

Who is Expected to Provide an Account?

Based on the understanding that there are different levels of accountability, a distinction can be made in various approaches to the concept, by asking whether the level that they require is description, explanation or justification. In delineating forms of accountability, three fundamental questions are asked:

1. Is the school or the teacher accountable?
2. To whom should the school or the teacher be accountable?
3. For what is the school or the teacher accountable?

(Bush, 1994:310)

Leithwood and Earl (2000: 2) claim that the conception is framed as a response to five questions:

1. What level of accountability is to be provided?
2. Who is expected to provide the account?
3. To whom is the account owed?
4. What is to be accounted for? and,
5. What are the consequences of providing an account?

While based on the question of agent formulation, the concept of responsibility (Leithwood and Earl, 2000) is one of two minimum conditions for validating any accountability obligation as well as whatever relationship it may involve. Therefore Leithwood and Earl (2000) conclude that one becomes obliged or responsible to give an account as a result of either an act one undertakes or the role that one holds within an organization.

It is questionable whether a person or an organization should be held solely accountable for matters involving a shared, causal responsibility. Nor is it legitimate to hold a person solely responsible for expected performances requiring a shared influence. Based on this argument about who legitimately can be held accountable, Leithwood and Earl (2000) suggest that distinctions can be made in approaches to accountability in part by the nature of the obligation a person or group is taken to have and the extent to which that obligation is legitimate.

Similarly Heim (1995:16) considers ‘who is responsible for what to whom?’ a very powerful organising concept. In answering ‘who is accountable?’, it is necessary to distinguish between the accountability of the school and the accountability of the teacher and to understand arguments pertaining to each of those concepts.

The accountability of the school

In focusing on the school, reference is made to the professional staff, that is, the teachers and administrators. Forster (1999: 178) explains: ‘since school education is a cumulative process to which many staff members contribute, the school’s accountability is more than the sum of the accountabilities of each member’. As a corporate body, the school is believed to account for both the effective teaching of students overall and for policies made at school level by staff. As professionals,

teachers are collectively responsible for the effective teaching of students, ensuring that the curriculum content is taught effectively, and they also share the responsibility for policies at school level. For example, if a school does not have effective assessment and remediation policies established, and if as a result, the learning difficulties of students are not addressed, then the school is culpable.

Forster (1999) also stresses that schools should be formally accountable, and that the school's community has a right to expect that a school system has adequate procedures to ensure that the institution receives guidance and supervision in carrying out their duties and organising themselves efficiently and effectively and that problems can be identified in good time and addressed. Hill and Lake (no year) also point to the need to receive timely help and support. They emphasise that an accountability system must ensure that schools require advice and hands-on assistance with their courses and improving their materials, as well as upgrading the skills of 'poorly prepared or stagnant' teachers (Hill and Lake, 2002: 9). They also stress that the help they get should be responsive to their problems and must be powerful enough to change the whole school.

Limitations on the accountability of schools

Forster (1999) cautions that the exercise of accountability through testing and publishing student learning outcomes should be done with care, because if external factors delay the progress of students, this affects the school's test results. Therefore the use of results out of context as a way to hold schools accountable is not valid. However, this does not disclaim the school's responsibility for their students' learning outcomes. They should also consider themselves accountable to their

community. If schools acknowledge accountability to their community through giving an account, they should look for richer and more accurate ways in which to do so. Furthermore, parents do not want to hold schools accountable for failure, but to help them preventing it from happening. Accordingly, it is vital that schools demonstrate both processes they have in place to ensure they can carry out their professional responsibility as well as being accountable for the full range of learning outcomes of their students (Forster, 1999).

The accountability of the teacher

Looking at the accountability of the individual teacher, the concept has been distinguished from responsibility, where accountability is said to refer to a formal or legal relationship which is externally determined and links an individual to another having the power to impose sanctions if the expectations are not met, whereas responsibility is perceived as a moral relationship entailing self-regulation; a relationship wherein an individual feels a certain duty towards those who are affected by its actions but are not in a position to exercise authority over it (Forster, 1999). If this distinction is applied to a school setting, teachers would be accountable to the body or system which employs them but, as professionals, they would also have a sense of their moral responsibility for the satisfactory progress of the students they teach. Barber (2004) argues that the confinement of teacher accountability to their moral responsibility is unsatisfactory, because he claims that first, teachers have responsibility for only a portion of the education of a child and that is shared with parents or care givers. Secondly, many people have an interest in the outcomes of education. Among those are the students themselves whose interests are voiced by their parents for a considerable length of their time in school. Contrarily, Bush (1994) supports Sockett's (1980) idea that teachers should be regarded as the unit of

account because only individual teachers can be held accountable for their behaviour and because accountability should have an internal and external dimension, with the internal dimension valid only if individuals are separately accountable to one another as well as to the external community.

Forster (1999) adds that teachers are accountable to their clients in terms of process and relationships. The process is giving an account of the teacher's activities and this happens in the context of a particular set of relationships. The account is given to someone who has a right to know and in some way the teacher is being held to account by that person.

To Whom is an Account Owed?

Leithwood and Earl (2000) state that one of the conditions for justifying a request for accountability is 'entitlement' of the person or group making the request. They further explain that entitlement is a function of whether a legitimate interest can be demonstrated by those expecting an account. There are different degrees of entitlement to an account and this entitlement augments with the degree of valid interest one has in the act for which the account is asked; something which is difficult to determine. Leithwood and Earl (2000) provide the example of the teacher being required to give an account of his/her classroom instructions in the process of performance review. It is clear that both the appraiser and appraisee are entitled to the account. Very few others might have a legitimate entitlement; maybe a Senior Education Official, through the personal file of the teacher, but what about the parent or the student? Instead, the closest parents and students typically get to a formal account of teacher performance is a report of student achievement, and such reports

usually are considered to be more relevant to students than wider issues of teacher accountability. The authors conclude that it is not difficult to justify the pre-eminence of their entitlement, though for reasons not related to entitlement, accounts of teachers' performance are kept away from those whose right to them is greatest. This suggests then that approaches to accountability can also be distinguished by answers to certain key questions:

- To whom is the account to be given?
- Do those requesting an account have a legitimate interest or stake in the act being accounted for?
- Does that stake or interest compete with the interests of others?
- If so, whose interest ought to take precedence?

(Leithwood and Earl, 2000:5-6)

Heim (1995:17) suggests that the 'to whom' component contains numerous providers and recipients of the education service: 'policy makers, funding agents, government agencies, education officials, local school governance bodies, school staff, parents, students, the general public community organizations and special interest groups'. Looked at in this way it is evident that there is an internal and external dimension to accountability since those 'stakeholders' (Hawkins, 2005) are either internal or external to the schools.

Sockett (1980) argues that teachers ought to be accountable to the following; whether or not they recognize and accept all those levels of responsibility:

- Individual pupils and their parents
- Pupils and their parents as part of their community
- The teachers' employers (LEA)

- The providers of resources, both LEA and Government
- Professional peers inside and outside the school
- Other relevant educational institutions, e.g. universities, secondary schools
- The ‘public’
- Industry, including the Trade unions

(Sockett, 1980)

Table 2.1 compares Leithwood and Earl’s (2000), and Sockett’s, (1980) ideas about the concept of accountability:

Points	Sockett (1980)	Leithwood and Earl (2000)
Definition	‘to hold someone to account’- being obliged to deliver an account as well as being able to do so	Giving a report on; furnishing a justifying analysis or explanation
Who?	Teacher as the unit of account	One who becomes obliged as a result of either an act one undertakes or the role one holds within an organisation
To whom?	Teachers accountable to individual pupils and their parents, their community, teachers’ employers, providers of resources, professional peers in and outside the school, relevant education institutions, the public, industries and trade unions.	‘Entitlement’- a function of whether a legitimate interest can be demonstrated by those expecting an account.
For what?	Teachers are accountable for outcomes and the process leading to those outcomes	Features of the organisation and the practices of those within it.

Table 2.1: Comparisons between Sockett (1980) and Leithwood and Earl (2000)

Forster (1999) claims that, since the community entrusts teachers with the responsibility for the education of the young, they are accountable to the community

for what they do. However, they are also accountable to those who are immediately and directly affected by what they do; namely the students and their parents.

Considering the school as the unit, Bush (1994) advocates Elliot's (1979: 69) idea of the school being accountable to all groups and agencies that have a legal or moral right to know about and influence its work. In his presentation of 'A Balanced School Accountability Model', Jones (2004:585) outlines the premises on which a successful accountability system should be based. He also advocates that schools should be answerable to students and their community, all of which make up their primary clients. He stresses that parents, as clients, need to be empowered to make decisions about their children's education and he cautions that should be only in terms of means. However, Dunford (2003) warns that in the 'new accountability', answerability to a wide range of bodies diminishes professional responsibility and thus accountability in a moral sense. While answerability has grown exponentially, school leaders try to maintain their professional accountability. That accountability is defined by their commitment and makes up the basis for school improvement. They are engaged in the change process and school development (Dunford, 2003).

What is to be Accounted for?

In an educational institution what is to be accounted for is, fundamentally, the welfare of individual students. Within the wide range of possible meanings of 'welfare', most agree on the prominence of academic achievement. In current policy and practice, Leithwood and Earl (2000) state that educators are often held accountable for features of the organization and the practices of those within it believed to contribute more or less directly to student welfare. One example is the characteristics of a school, which can be found accountable for variances in its effectiveness, such as collaborative professional culture, high expectations for

student achievements and clear goals. A related issue is being accountable for standards of professional teaching practice. Leithwood and Earl (2000: 7) explain that educators in some contexts are held responsible for:

- Ensuring that specific organizational qualities considered to critical to effectiveness are reflected in their schools or districts.
- Organizational efficiency
- Meeting standards of professional knowledge and skills.
- Meeting standards of moral behaviour.
- Performance of best professional practices or specified duties.
- Skillfully using organizational processes believed to contribute to the successful introduction of change (strategic planning, school improvement planning, and the carrying out of quality reviews).

In discussing his new form of school accountability, Jones (2004: 585) suggests that schools should be held accountable for several aspects of education:

The physical and emotional well-being of students

Similarly to Leithwood and Earl (2000), Jones (2004) emphasizes that the caring aspect of school is critical to high quality education. This is because parents expect that pupils' safety, and their affective and cognitive needs, is met. Learning is also dependent on a caring school climate and positive relations.

Student learning

Jones (2004: 585) claims that student learning is 'complex and multi-faceted' because it involves not only knowledge of subject matter, but also the thinking skills needed in modern democracies.

Teacher learning

Jones (2004) clarifies Leithwood and Earl's (2000) 'meeting standards of professional knowledge and skills' by claiming that schools must have sufficient time and funds to enable teachers to improve their own performance, based on professional teaching standards. This is because having a knowledgeable and skilful teacher is the most significant factor in student learning.

Equity and Access

Schools must be accountable for placing emphasis on improving both equity and access to minority and underserved student populations.

Improvement

Jones (2004) also believes that schools function as learning organizations, which engage continuously in self-assessment and adjustment in an effort to meet students' needs.

Forster (1999) argues that, in a climate where outputs rather than inputs are considered important, it is increasingly being emphasized that teachers should be accountable more for student learning outcomes than their teaching. The author stresses that it should be clear that a teacher cannot be held accountable for the content that students learn at school if that content is prescribed by a curriculum authority outside the school. Demands for teacher accountability must address only aspects of student learning over which the teacher has some control; whether the teacher actually taught the required content to the students and whether it was done effectively.

Forster (1999) queries the legitimacy of holding teachers accountable for their students' learning outcomes, because of the complex relationship between teaching and learning. He goes on to explain that learning is complex and its progress is due to a range of factors. A student's failures may be due to factors beyond the teacher's control, for example those related to the student's background. On the other hand, what the teacher does play some part in determining whether the student learns something. Consequently, the teacher may be called to account for failing to teach effectively and the task falls on the teacher's employer while the parent should have confidence that this duty will be carried out. Referring to Charter schools in the United States, Clinkscales (1997) argues that there is a legitimate debate about precisely what types of student outcomes schools should be accountable for. While most stakeholders seem to agree that student achievement is an important, if not the only goal of charter schools, others argue that schools should be judged on their ability to satisfy their customers.

By what means should Schools be held Accountable?

Multiple measures should be used in terms of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Jones (2004: 585) warns that those measures should take into consideration 'local contexts, responsiveness to student and community needs' and that allowances should be made for local measures which have been customized to meet local needs.

There are various forms of accountability derived from the relationship between the teacher, student and parent. One way is that teachers render an account to parents (Forster (1999: 177) on the actual experience and instruction offered to the student;

where a teacher describes her/his teaching to a parent audience, explaining what s/he does and why. Forster also cautions that, on such occasions, the teacher's response to parent's questions or concerns should neither be dismissive nor deferential, because the accountability relationship entitles both parties to be active participants in the account giving process. The teacher needs to be prepared by considering varying his/her programme or defending it, thus treating the parent as a partner in ensuring the child's best education.

Robinson and Timperley (2000:68) claim, that in the case of reporting, accountability is likely to generate improvement 'when the accountable agent accepts the validity of the judgment made about their performance, accepts appropriate responsibility for improvement and have the capacity to achieve it'. The authors emphasise that validity is central to accountability as it concerns the validity of these judgments. They explain that validity depends first on an adequate match between what is reported and the activity it is meant to represent. There may be a mis-match because the agent's report does not capture what is important, because it is inaccurate, or both. Robinson and Timperley (2000) warn that validity may also be jeopardized through inaccurate reporting, because of technical deficiencies in how or because accountable agents are motivated by the desire to please rather than securing accuracy. 'Such compliance efforts are especially likely when the audience is seen to lack expertise needed to make an independent judgment' (Robinson and Timperley, 2000:69). The essence of accountability, then, 'is not the reporting, but the expectation that the performance will be evaluated. 'The validity of the evaluation depends on the implicit or explicit criteria employed and the skill with

which they are applied to the information reported' (Robinson and Timperley (2000:69).

What are the Consequences of providing an Account?

Heim (1995:19) claims that defining consequences in the context of accountability in public education is both 'complex and controversial', but stresses that they are an essential part of accountability. Leithwood and Earl (2000) suggest that providing an account may result in three responses on the part of the receiving person or group. The one they consider first, but least consequential is when accounting is voluntary. For example, a school district may voluntarily participate in a pilot programme, but the nature of accountability decreases the likelihood of any sanctions. The second type of consequence the authors claim happens when an account is obligatory but no consequences have been formally specified. In that case, it seems likely that some response may occur, but it can be muted and unpredictable. Leithwood and Earl (2000) add that an account may also be considered obligatory on moral grounds, that is, those providing the account may feel that the actions for which they are responsible carry with them the obligation to account by virtue of the specific nature of their responsibility. Finally, there are increasingly common circumstances where an account is required and rewards and punishments for the person(s) providing the account are specified.

This idea of consequences links to Kogan's (1986) view that, when one fails to satisfy those who share an accountability relationship, sanctions should be considered. Heim (1995:20) warns that the imposition of sanctions or consequences, especially high stakes ones that may impact on students' learning or work opportunities or an adult's career, is a serious matter, for if valid information about performance is lacking, or if standards which judge performance are unfair or not

sound, the resistance to the imposition of high stakes consequences is justified. Heim (1995:20) concludes that a serious accountability perspective has to be clear about ‘who is responsible for what to whom?’ about the criteria for performance, what may limit those conditions, valid evaluation of performance and enactment of reasonable and fair consequences, an idea which is summed up as: ‘serious accountability requires disciplined and careful effort’ (Heim 1995: 20). Examples of Heim’s (1995) third category of consequences are found in many US states that collect performance data at school level. If schools miss their achievement targets, schools are placed under review, principals and teachers may be asked to implement specific improvement measures or they may be reassigned to other schools (Leithwood and Earl, 2000). Contrary to Kogan’s (1986) view, Leithwood and Earl (2000) reiterate Wagner’s (1987) view to stress that when there is no requirement or obligation that an account be given, then there is no accountability.

In summary, Heim (1995:18) provides a simple conceptual model for accountability, which encapsulates all the components discussed (see figure 2.1):

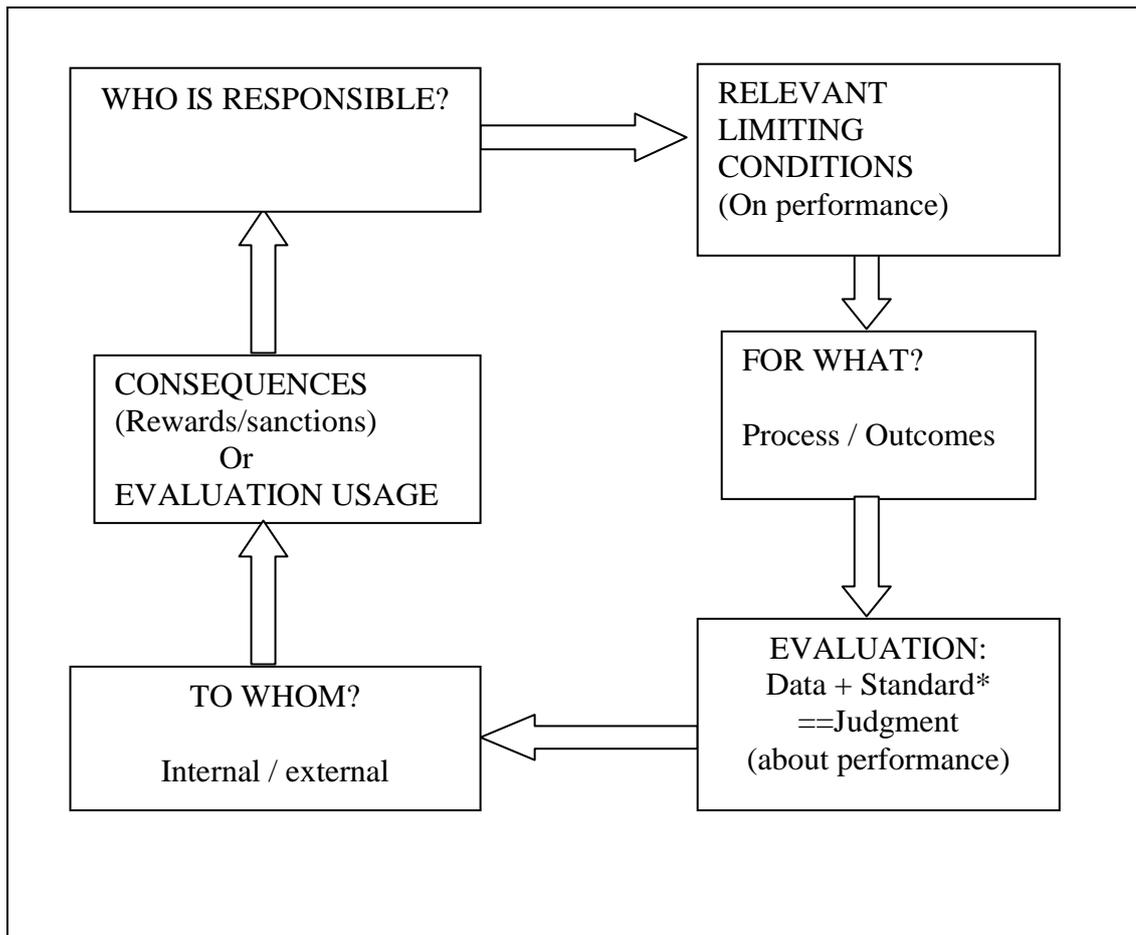


Figure 2.1: Heim's accountability model

Figure 2.1 shows the three elements of the basic accountability question “who is responsible for what to whom?” It can be noted that the focus of accountability ‘for what’ may be on process or outcomes. The controlling party or recipient of accountability ‘to whom’ may be internal or external to the provider; ‘who is responsible?’ The remaining three components of that model are needed to complete the evaluative and control aspects of accountability. Consideration of ‘relevant limiting conditions’ is a necessary adjunct to the ‘evaluation’ component. Judging whether performance is credible means evaluating whether the performance is at least as good as might be expected, given the relevant conditions.

Formal Constructs of Accountability and Normative Models

In education, there are generally three types of accountability systems:

‘a) compliance with regulations

The system demands compliance to statutes and regulations. Schools are viewed the embodiment of constant processes (Anderson, 2005:1). An example of this system is the English Office for Standards in Education, where educators are accountable for adherence to rules and accountable to the bureaucracy. Differences in results are allowed and those are generally attributed to student characteristics.

b) adherence to professional norms,

Anderson (2005) claims that this system has done much to raise education as a profession, through the impact of widespread agreement on principles and practices. The Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for Schools Mathematics in the United States is an example of such a system; ‘educators are accountable for adherence to standards and accountable to their peers’ (Anderson, 2005:1/2) and,

c) results driven (Anderson, 2005:1):

which operate according to sets of principles and use a number of implementation strategies. The system is based on results, defined as student learning; a system which emerged from increased political interference in education (Anderson, 2005). Two examples of the system are ‘No Child Left Behind’ in the United States and the Australian National Education Performance Monitoring Task Force. In these systems educators are accountable for student learning and to the general public. Anderson claims that those three systems often work simultaneously, and educators try to balance the requirements of each. He cautions that, while professional norms may complement both the other two, they may also conflict. The author also claims that current accountability systems focus more on results than on compliance.

The emergence of the accountability issue encouraged the promotion of a range of 'normative models' (Kogan, 1986:25), specific to education. Those models of accountability are based on propositions of what ought to be and are linked to general normative theories about obligations and consent in organizations. Different approaches are examined by Kogan (1986), Bush (1994), Leithwood (1999) and Leithwood and Earl (2000) in terms of formal models; market competition, decentralization, professionalization and management approaches - where each approach responds differently to the questions that define accountability. In addition each of them assumes a certain amount of change in schools, the type of change and how to bring it about. Wagner's (1987) influence on the conception of accountability has led to the prominence of moral sources of authority and control, believing them to be the most basic and most likely to explain variation in both internal accountability practices and local responses to external accountability. However, both systems address a largely overlapping set of issues. This focus on moral sources of authority is most evident in the discussion of who is expected to provide an account and to whom the account is owed. Some elements of these formal models may be similar to those in Anderson's (2005) systems.

Market competition approaches

Leithwood and Earl (2000) claim that this approach which increases the competition for students by schools, is especially prominent. Versions of it are still evident in some European countries, Canada, the USA, New Zealand, Australia and parts of Asia (Leithwood, 1999). In this model, which is also known as Quasi-Market model (Scot, 1989), the emphasis is on the role of the client or customer. The competition among schools for student clients is increased by; opening boundaries within and

across school systems; school privatization plans and the creation of charter schools, academies and other specialized educational facilities. Competition is also augmented by changing the basis for the funding of schools, so that money follows students, and by publicly ranking schools based on aggregated student achievement scores. These tools are often used in combination. However, Scott (1989) cautioned against the limitations of such model; the difficulty of defining the client, the fact that market competition is 'managed' rather than a free market and that there are external benefits which cannot be attributed to individuals. Scott (1989) also warns that this model reinforces social and economic inequality.

Decentralization of decision making approaches

When decentralization or devolution of decision making is used for purposes of increasing accountability, Leithwood (1999) claims that one of its central aims is 'often to increase the voice of those who are not heard or not sufficiently listened to in the context of typical school governance structures' (Leithwood, 1999:3). When this is the goal, a community control form of site-based management is the instrument used for its achievement. The assumption underlying this principle is that the curriculum of the school ought to 'directly reflect the values and preferences of parents and the local community' (Leithwood and Earl, 2000:11), but school professionals are not as responsive to such local values and preferences as they should be. Their responsiveness is said to augment greatly when the power to make decisions about curriculum, budget and personnel is in the hands of the parents/community constituents of the school. In the context of community control and site-based management, the responsibility for giving an account is shared between school professionals and representatives of the parent and the wider

community (Leithwood and Earl 2000). The account is primarily owed to the parent and wider community constituency, themselves. What is to be accounted for is the range of decisions allocated to the school council. The level of accountability is likely to be justification and the consequences are potentially diverse: dissatisfaction with the account could lead to replacement of the elected parent-members of the council, whereas in situations where the council has extensive decision making powers, newly elected members might replace the school administration.

Leithwood and Earl (2000) stress that decision-making, however, is sometimes rooted in a broader reform strategy for public institutions generally. This is referred to as 'new managerialism' by Peters (1992: 269). This concept emphasizes decentralization, deregulation and delegation. Although there are variants on this approach to accountability among countries, they share in common a shift in emphasis from the formulation of policy to management and institutional design, from process to outcomes, from organizational integration to differentiation and from concentrating power to the state to devolving decisions to very practical levels (Leithwood and Earl, 2000).

Professional approaches

One professional model first described by Kogan (1986), considered self-evaluation and self report as two important components. Its objective is responsiveness to clients, where the stronger the professional autonomy of teachers, the more responsive to their clients they are. The school is involved in free and open communication with a number of interest groups. Another model presented by Scott (1989:64) is the professional expert, where decisions are made at different levels of

the system, with each level accountable to the next level up from the classroom teacher to the government minister, but the author warns of this model largely excluding parents and there are also disagreements as to who the experts really are on curriculum development and pedagogy.

Variations and developments have led to two radically different accountability strategies with a professional orientation (Leithwood 1999, Leithwood and Earl 2000). One of those is mostly evident in the implementation of professional control models of site-based management, while the other encompasses the standards movement and applies it to the practices of teachers and administrators. What they both have in common is a belief in the central contribution of professional practice to school outcomes. They are obviously different in choosing which practices they focus on. In the case of professional control site-based management, the focus is on school level decision-making whereas, individual professional practices (e.g. teachers' classroom instructional and curricular practices) are the focus of the standards movement. Professional-control site-based management is said to increase the power of teachers in school decision-making while also holding teachers directly accountable for the school's effects on children. The goal is to use teachers' knowledge in key decision-making areas such as budgeting, curriculum, and, occasionally, personnel. The assumption underlying this strategy is that professionals have the most relevant knowledge for making such decisions and that their full participation in the process will increase their commitment to implementing whatever decisions that are made. Councils associated with this form of site-based management typically have decision-making power, and although many groups (e.g. parents, students, administration) are often represented, teachers have the largest proportion of members.

Consequently this approach to accountability holds teachers, as a group, answerable to parents, students and the district office for the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the school and such accountability is bound to be at the level of justification, but the consequences are not clear. If there is a choice system the consequences could be the school's survival, whereas if that is absent, the most plausible consequences could be parental and district oversight as well as pressure.

Leithwood and Earl (2000) warn that this approach should not be confused with 'new managerialism' but that it involves systematic efforts in 'creating more goal-oriented, efficient and effective schools' (Leithwood and Earl, 2000:13), by introducing administrative procedures which are more rational. The main assumption underlying this approach is that 'there is nothing fundamentally wrong with current school structures'. Nevertheless, their effectiveness and efficiency are improved to the extent that they become more strategic in their choices of goals and more 'planful' and data-driven about means used to attain those goals. The approach encompasses various procedures for 'strategic planning' and multiple procedures for school improvement planning, (for example in Illinois, Florida and Missouri) school development planning (England, Giles 1997) and, monitoring progress (the accountability reviews managed by New Zealand's Education Review Office).

Managerial approaches to accountability

Within the use of this approach, it is the organization as a whole that is held accountable, but with more responsibility attributed to the senior administration. Leithwood (1999) explains that this approach assumes that effective school

leadership conforms to strategic management where the leaders are expected to be skilled at collecting and interpreting data. They are also required to set clear goals and priorities with their staff. Then the school and its senior administrator are most directly accountable to the next level in the organizational hierarchy, such as the district office supervisor to whom the principal reports. Kogan (1986: 32) advocated that the hierarchy may be criss-crossed by collegial styles and matrix structures. Justification is likely to be the level of accountability 'required with the effectiveness of the school in reaching specified goals being that for which the school is held accountable. The consequences of a management approach to accountability are well established and include such responses as administrative promotions, demotions, managerial interventions and employee transfers. In non-school organizations, and increasingly in schools, financial incentives and rewards are common (Heneman and Ledford, 1998).

Other models of accountability

Contrary to the models discussed above, Heim, (1995) discusses five different accountability expectations or sources of accountability:

Bureaucratic accountability uses a hierarchical structure and authoritative superior – subordinate relationships in the enforcement of compliance with rules and regulations. That form of accountability is similar to Anderson's system of compliance with regulations. It promotes equitable resource allocation, equal access, planned management and uniform/ standardized operations. Heim (1995) cautions that this form of accountability is unresponsive to individual client needs and minimizes professional autonomy.

Legal accountability uses ‘statutes to direct compliance and suits injunctions to obtain redress for violations’ (Heim, 1995: 16). It promotes setting up and enforcement of legal rights, but the cost effectiveness of monitoring compliance, its reliance on punishment and its adversarial process are its limitations.

Professional accountability similar to Anderson’s (2005) ‘Adherence to professional norms’ uses review by professional colleagues by using standards of ‘accepted practice’ (Heim, 1995:16). That type of accountability, similarly to Kogan’s (1986), promotes autonomy, which provides services to meet clients’ needs. However, it is expensive to establish elements for developing and maintaining a professional culture.

Political accountability uses elections, political actions and public opinion, which influence or restricts the use of authority. That accountability source promotes ‘democratic control, responsiveness to commitment, inclusiveness’, but public expectations may be vague and unwieldy in diverse, pluralistic communities

Market-Based accountability uses choice of providers within a market to obtain best services and induce quality improvement among providers. It advocates consumer rights, responsiveness to consumer preferences and competitions among providers. However, there is no assurance of equity in access to services of comparable quality and providers are likely to be answerable only to their specific clients.

International Research on Accountability

Fullan (2003) says that a moral purpose shared by educators is to improve students’ outcomes or to aspire to a system which raises the bar and narrows the gap. It is

within this ethical context that, since the 1980s or earlier, development of accountability systems has been one of the most powerful educational policy trends in the UK, the USA and other parts of the world, including Holland, Australia, Canada, Sweden and Russia (Barber, 2004:7). This section discusses research on accountability in the UK, Germany, USA, Australia, Hong Kong, and in the Seychelles.

United Kingdom

The UK has been specifically selected as the literature shows clearly the development of accountability in education in a systematic form over time. Bush (1994) states that school accountability increased in significance in the United Kingdom following former Prime Minister Callaghan's speech in 1976, when he emphasized that 'teachers had a responsibility to explain and justify their decisions to a wider audience, including parents, employers, and the local education authorities (LEAs) and Central Government which fund their activities (Bush, 1994: 309). He adds that the concept received new emphasis in England and Wales by the change to 'autonomous or quasi-autonomous institutions' after the 1988 Education Reform act (Bush, 1994:309). The former type of accountability was replaced by less clearly defined forms, with the introduction of 'Grant Maintained schools (GM), which operated from 1989 to 1999, and Local Management of Schools (LMS).

In the re-structuring of public education in the United Kingdom, new normative accountability models, specific to education, emerged. Those new models were adopted based on an epistemological framework and the manner in which what goes on in the school is perceived. Scott (1999:20) argues that, though those new systems 'undoubtedly have effects on the practice of teaching in schools and colleges, they do

not and cannot preclude arrangements at the local level which do not conform to what is expected’.

The imposition of a National Curriculum in 1988 resulted in changed accountability relations between the schools and various parts of the system. As a consequence, schools were obliged to account for their curricular activities to the policy-makers. Inspections organized by the Office for Standards in Education, (OFSTED) provided a mechanism which forces the various stakeholders to pressurize the schools into changing their practices (Scott, 1989).

Before the Education Reform Act, ‘the accountability ethic was of a professional kind. Schools did their activities on the basis of presumed expertise in curriculum and pedagogy’ (Scott, 1999:21). Poulson, (1996) explains that discussion of accountability was about the responsibility of teachers to themselves, colleagues, professional associates and to pupils, parents and the society at large. Accountability was seen as an integrated part of professionalism rather than as an external demand. Scott (1999) also cautions that this was never absolute, even before the imposition of the National Curriculum, as schools were accountable to LEAs and to Her Majesty’s Inspectorate, even though inspections were not frequent.

The tradition of accountability being seen as a system of mutual responsibility (Biesta, 2004), rather than that of governance, was dominant before the emergence of the technical-managerial approach to accountability. This change from professional and democratic approaches to accountability to the technical- managerial approach is seen in the context of wider reforms in the education system. Biesta (2004:235) states that the ‘new managerialism’ which emerged in England is characterized by a

customer-oriented ethos, in which decisions are driven by efficiency and cost-effectiveness, with an emphasis on competition especially of the free market kind. Accountability and quality assurance are the main instruments of the new managerialism.

The author also suggests that, in understanding the current mode of accountability, one needs to understand the 're-configuration of the relationship between the state and its citizens (Biesta, 2004:237); one which the author describes as being political. Furthermore, he states that in English education, for example, people believe in this current culture of accountability, and points out that its success is due to:

- 'Middle class anxiety', where middleclass parents aspire to a culture of public schools, hence not wanting their children to be left out.
- The fact that parents and students believe in the potential for power and influence over education if they are consumers, and
- The 'quick switch' between the two meanings of accountability, seen earlier in this sub-section. It established that accountability is responsibility, therefore one cannot argue against accountability.

(Biesta, 2004:241)

Germany

The case of Germany exemplifies a bureaucratic accountability system where the Ministry of Education sets general rules for schools by using legal instruments. According to Fussel (2002:128), 'the ultimate accountability and responsibility lies with the Ministry and only with the Ministry'. It sets the regulations and the schools comply with them, but the author explains that the extent, to which this system has worked in education, is debatable.

Fussel (2002), claims that some movement can be detected, towards a new accountability system. Certain key approaches may be seen as leading education towards this reform:

1. a democratic approach
2. a pedagogical approach
3. an organizational approach
4. an administrative approach
5. an economic approach,

Each of these approaches is intended to encourage the school to assume responsibility towards attaining its goals.

Fussel (2002) argues that a new balance between increasing autonomy for the individual school, and the continuing principle of state supervision of the school system, has to be developed. He adds that this remains an uncompleted task in Germany. Both reducing the supervisory role of the state and enlarging the autonomy of the individual school, mean necessarily that the single school must take more responsibility for its functioning. This also means a new balance of responsibility between the state and the individual school.

Responsibility and accountability

In Germany questions remain as to what ‘responsibility’ means; responsibility for what and to whom? Fussel (2002) explains that the legislation is not clear about these questions as it is apparent that mainly moral, rather than legal, responsibility is intended. That may be confirmed by Hamburg’s School Act (Article 51, Para 3):

On the basis of the school programme the individual school reviews regularly under its own responsibility the implementation and the

results of its pedagogical work and reports these results to the Ministry of Education (Fussel, 2002:130).

This description of responsibility indicates that, in German schools, the concept is not clear because it is focused on the single school and relevant for further school development. However, this involves no kind of legal responsibility or culpability by the school. It is also important to note that the individual school in Germany is not regarded as a legal entity, but it has been represented 'by the state, not by the teachers, the head teacher or the governing body'. As a consequence, schools could never be sued for their actions. Having understood this, it is not clear who is personally responsible for failure on the part of the individual school. However, following German Law in general, a teacher 'may be responsible for his/her wrong doing if this was culpable, that means at least negligent, with evidence that there is a direct causal connection between the parties involved.

Fussel (2002:131) concludes that 'accountability of schools from a legal perspective has hitherto not yet fully developed for German teachers, head teachers or school governing bodies, but it is likely that, with the allocation of responsibilities between the state and schools, the situation will change.

United States

Public schools in the USA have been held accountable for financial management and compliance with state and federal regulations since the late 1990s, but the significance of using the USA in this literature review lies with the new form of accountability that has emerged, that of almost all states holding schools accountable for academic outcomes, usually as measured by scores in standardized tests. In this

system, schools are held accountable for student performance as part of a comprehensive set of interlocking and mutually reinforcing policies.

Arens (2005), claims that standards based accountability has become the mainstay of US education and the centerpiece of the ‘No Child Left Behind’ Policy. She argues that, though the end goal of the legislation is equity, it rests on particular tenets and beliefs of accountability.

Until 2002, states differed in the extent to which they held schools and school districts accountable. With the introduction of a new version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; or the ‘No Child Left Behind’ (NCLB) Act in 2002, Anderson (2005) states that schools benefiting from the Act’s funding are required to have accountability systems that hold schools, school districts as well as states accountable for the improvement of students’ academic performance; and schools are also accountable to the general public. Provision includes states administering tests, which are aligned to academic content standards, reporting on progress of students’ proficiency levels and the imposition of specific consequences where there is failure in making adequate yearly progress.

In the US, accountability is also one of the central concepts of the Charter Schools Movement. These ‘quasi-independent’ schools (Evans, 2001) are accountable to any entity or group whose support they are dependent on for survival. Charter schools are simultaneously accountable to parents and teachers for fulfilling promises made about instruction, school climate, and student learning as well as for

operating in ways that maintain those parties' confidence. Unfulfilled expectations may result in charter schools being closed.

Novak (2005) distinguishes between other models which are regulatory and those which focus on performance. The regulatory model requires the school to be responsible for the finance that is allocated to it. The second model, discussed above, is based on standards as well as test results. He cautions that this model causes 'mixed-thoughts' because people support the importance of standards but they are skeptical about national standards that are imposed. One other model elaborated by Novak (2005), that relating to 'No Child Left Behind', which is referred to both by Anderson (2005) and Arens (2005). It pertains to the high level of importance placed on core subjects; reading, writing and mathematics, while at the same time emphasizing that students should be good citizens that is, they are honest, they have integrity, they are trustworthy, they are responsible and they have a 'sense of patriotism'.

Abelmann and Elmore's (1999) study, entitled 'When Accountability Knocks, Will Anyone Answer?' acknowledges that accountability is a highlighted issue in education. The study was focused on how schools conceptualise accountability in order to:

- see how teachers and administrators perceive and respond to accountability demands in schools and externally.
- Joining school level accountability research with research on external accountability systems to understand schools' responses to state and local accountability structures.

The author's research methodology was both exploratory and formative. It was conducted through a number of case studies, where observations of lessons preceded interviews and focus groups. The observations provided the basis to ask teachers 'to whom, for what and how' they are accountable.

Abelmann and Elmore (1999) started with a working theory based on the premises that:

- 1) Schools actually have conceptions of accountability embedded in their daily operations and that individuals and the school must go through a channel to give an account of behaviour,
- 2) School-based conceptions of accountability are 'organic; built out of...human interactions around the work of teaching and learning' and running the organisation' (Abelmann and Elmore 1999:3), and how schools function have an effect on the way teachers, administrators, parents and students perceive accountability.
- 3) In the conception of accountability, participants are active; they either change as a result of external demand or out of intentional actions.
- 4) Formal accountability systems are one of the various which may influence a school's internal conception of accountability.

Findings

Abelmann and Elmore (1999) reported that observations from the exploratory fieldwork were organized in three categories: emergence of collective accountability; expectations influence accountability and internal accountability; the alignment of responsibility, expectations and accountability'.

The authors found that the schools in the study shared a common solution to the problem of accountability. The individual teachers were delegated most decisions about to whom the school is responsible and for what. The concept boiled down to individual teacher's sense of responsibility. All schools had 'a pro-forma' (Abelmann and Elmore, 1999: 16) internal accountability system. They existed within some kind of external accountability structure, that is, charter laws, archdiocese curriculum frameworks, or local curriculum standards, but the authors stressed that these did not exercise any effects on individual teacher's sense of to whom and for what they were accountable.

Australia

In recent times, 'New Right' governments have taken the view that schools' accountability to parents is best exercised through a market model reflected in parental choice of school. While this model seems most clearly evident in the school choice policies of the Conservative Government in the UK, it also has attractions for the current Liberal and national Coalition government in Australia (Forster, 1999: 179). In Australian states, there have been moves to 'dezone' public schools and to publish information about standardized test and examination results at both primary and secondary level. Such policies undoubtedly encourage parents to adopt a consumerist approach to their children's schooling. Forster (1999) claims that parental choice of schools is an adequate form of accountability for several reasons: parents must choose from what is available, which is limited, criteria for making choices are problematic and once chosen there is the possibility that school administrators will assume that in view of the choice the need for further parental participation in decision making is removed.

School accountability and improvement in New South Wales

Forster (1999) explains that some elements of the participatory process of school level accountability is evident in a policy put in place in New South Wales public schools. It comprises school self-evaluation, annual reporting and school reviews. Forster also examines its strengths and weaknesses in order to determine the extent to which it uses the responsive approach to accountability. The policy bears significantly on the current study because of the three elements outlined above and how they work in responsive accountability.

In the process of self-evaluation, the school collects data about its achievements over the past year and uses the data to set improvement targets for the following one. The information from the self-evaluation is included in an annual report produced within departmental guidelines. The report contains the features of the school and its community, the school's achievements, performance data on internal assessments, and the school's targets for improvement (Forster, 1999: 183). That report is intended to (a) help parents make school choice, (b) engender confidence in the school, (c) record publicly school improvement targets for holding the school to account and (d) provide 'hard data' for planning purposes. The author also states that time will tell whether the school annual report is really carrying out all those functions, but the reports are meant to both render an account and be a mechanism whereby they are held accountable. Moreover, the school is being held to account simultaneously by the system on one hand and the individual parent as consumer on the other. Forster (1999) claims that there is a likelihood that school staff regard the 'holding to account' functions of the report as paramount, and concludes that openness and transparency are apparently the 'early casualties' (Forster, 1999:184).

The third component is the school review-which addresses some aspects of a school deemed to require a more thorough evaluation. This review is carried out by Senior Department officers. Forster (1999) acknowledges that the New South Wales policy reflects the tensions currently present in moves for accountability at school level and explains that, if the policy is to promote partnership, collaboration and a shared sense of endeavour, time and effort need to be spent in helping schools to develop skills and attitudes to work effectively towards a responsive accountability, rather than a 'coercive or consumerist' accountability (Forster 1999: 184). The New South Wales policy proposes parents' representatives, which may be empowering for them, but Forster (1999) claims that there is a danger of them becoming an elite and dominating schools.

The exercise for responsive or communitarian accountability may be able to minimize this danger since it begins with the mutually empowering accountability relationship between the individual teacher and the parent. For this reason, 'the rights of individual parents to receive an account from their child's teachers and negotiate for changes in educational practice... must be respected and promoted (Forster, 1999: 184/185). Despite representativeness, teachers in New South Wales should be accountable to parents collectively as through this collaborative process of giving an account, schools and their communities can become school communities reflecting an active and mutually supportive relationship.

Hong Kong

The education system in Hong Kong was mainly modeled on that of the UK, particularly, England. The significance of including Hong Kong in this study stems from the territory's focus on teacher accountability and professionalism.

Morris (2004) traced the processes for encouraging and ensuring the accountability of teachers. He states that the nature of teacher accountability necessitates an analysis of both the development of, and status of, the teaching profession in that territory. He claims that, from the 1960s, the level of professionalism and accountability, either internal or external, was low and that was due to the fact that the situation suited the colonial government, with a low level of legitimacy, that was wary of an emerging strong and unified teaching force. Consequently, the state neutralized any attempts at developing a framework for self-regulation from within the teaching community. He adds that there has been a growing tendency for the Government to use mechanisms to hold teachers accountable that are premised on a perception of a weak level of teacher professionalization and A desire to avoid professionalizing teaching.

Teacher accountability prior to the handing over from British Colonial rule

Teaching in Hong Kong could be defined as a semi- profession. 40% of the people who got jobs as teachers had no qualifications and the conditions which existed contributed to keep teaching as a low status occupation with very few characteristics of a strong level of professionalization (Morris, 2004).The ways in which teachers were held accountable did not come from the Government, but rather from the various charitable and religious bodies which ran the majority of schools. Teachers were regulated directly through ‘Government maintained direct control of the curriculum and the system of public examinations’ (Morris, 2004:112). The combination of this highly competitive and exam oriented system, together with the strong control of the curriculum and weak teaching profession, resulted in a very effective but instrumental and narrow type of accountability. Teachers were judged in reference to, and were held accountable for, their pupils’ examination results.

Teacher accountability in contemporary Hong Kong

Morris (2004) explains that the post handover Government inherited a system of low professionalization and lacking in any specific internal or external processes to promote accountability. Though a system of school inspection was established, it focused on bureaucratic and administrative compliance with regulations only.

Since the handover, policies designed to improve the quality of schooling were put in place and Morris (2004: 116) explains that:

The most notable and contentious accountability measure was designed to assess the language proficiency of teachers of English and Putonghua. To date the absence of a clear statement as to what is expected of teachers has created a vacuum that has been filled with administrative and bureaucratic criteria. This represents a significant step in the professionalization of teaching and provides a framework for processes of accountability to be developed at the individual, institutional and system levels.

Seychelles

The Seychelles shares many characteristics of other small island developing states, including a close-knit, integrated community, with relationships which are highly personalized (Baldachinno, 2002). In discussing school and teacher accountability, the network of personal relationships, which Farrugia (2002) also comments on, may affect the way schools in the Seychelles perceive accountability to stakeholders and how they respond to accountability demands.

As accountability is one of the principles of the Seychelles education service, it may seem that high importance is placed on the concept through the elements outlined by

the Ministry of Education (2000). These elements are partnership with parents, the establishment of development planning, being transparent in reporting on performance and achievement, assessment in curriculum implementation and school evaluation, as well as making effective use of resources and developing professional accountability. These points are all emphasized through the Ministry's declaration that 'the success of any educational programme depends largely on the partnership between parents, teachers, the school itself and the community it serves' (Ministry of Education, 2002: 11), and that accountability should form the bedrock of the entire education service.

The Ministry of Education introduced a Quality Assurance Service (QA), now External Quality Assessment (EQA), with the aim of improving the quality of education (Ministry of Education and Youth, 2004) through schools building the capacity to evaluate their own performance and using data generated to plan the way forward in a systematic way. Through the EQA service, the Ministry conceptualizes accountability in terms of schools giving an account of their achievements, strengths and weaknesses prior to the external evaluation being carried out. Following that, the schools are expected to account for actions taken in response to recommendations made after the evaluation. In addition, the account requires commenting on circumstances which may have influenced the outcomes (Ministry of Education and Youth, 2004). After follow up visits, schools are then expected to maintain areas of progress while continuing to address remaining weaknesses through the processes of school improvement and development planning. The report given relates to the ultimate aim of helping schools to decide what they must do to improve their service, rather than judge or label them. This is ensured through the restricted circulation of

QA reports, thus not exposing schools to public scrutiny, but they are encouraged to share relevant aspects of the evaluation reports with parents and pupils in the spirit of partnership. The report is also shared with those personnel who provide support to the schools.

In the mid-1990s, schools embarked on a programme of School Development Planning within the framework of the national School Improvement Project. Self-Evaluation is pivotal to this process and is the means by which priorities are identified, action planned and progress measured (Vidot, 1996). This author claims that the achievement of targets is judged within a detailed action plan, which ‘lays the school open to evaluation by staff, pupils, parents and the “Ministry”’ (Vidot, 1996:13/14). He adds that, in a sense, school based accountability is taken to be at the heart of the school improvement initiative.

Key Concepts

The literature review has identified some key concepts which are highly significant for the research. These are some of the formal models or types of accountability, the concepts of legitimacy, sanctions and reporting discussed by Kogan, (1986), Bush (1994), Heim, (1995), Leithwood (1999) and Leithwood and Earl (2000). Anderson (2005) also discusses three ideas linked to the more formal constructs: compliance, adherence to norms and being results-driven. Exploration of, and understanding of, those key concepts enabled the researcher to evaluate accountability in the current organisation of primary schools and provide a starting for discussing its existence and operations.

Compliance

According to Anderson (2005), this concept focuses on processes rather than the end results. Schools are viewed as constantly involved in processes, even if there are differences in results. Inherent here is the notion of supervision of policy implementation. Accountability is for complying with rules and to bureaucratic norms. However, the author adds that it is common in this system for one to fail to notice non-compliance if it is in one's interest to do so.

Adherence to norms

This concept has been formed through agreements about principles and practice in education, having to do with how educators do their job (Anderson, 2005). Within this system, one is accountable for adherence to the standards and to fellow educators. Though the system does much to develop educators professionally, it is expensive to maintain such a culture.

Results-Driven accountability

This system is based on student learning, for which educators are accountable, to the general public. However, Anderson (2005) adds that more attention is now being given to student outcomes rather than complying with rules and regulations. Regardless of student characteristics, failed student outcomes are attributed to weaknesses in programmes and in practices.

Legitimacy

The concept addresses the question about 'to whom is an account owed?' The importance of this concept is displayed through Bush's (1994) claim that one needs

to have a legitimate right to an account. It is obvious here that not anyone can demand an account. The entitlement depends on the agent's degree of valid interest in the school or the issue to be accounted for. However, even those with a right to an account may not always receive it, if the relationship is not clear (Leithwood and Earl, 2000). The notion also emphasises the presence of providers and recipients of the education service and those may be internal or external to the school.

Sanctions

Sanctions are actions taken following an unsatisfactory account. Kogan (1986) and Heim (1995) both underline the difficulty in applying such a concept, though it is considered crucial. Sanctions in education are used to pressure schools to respond to demands for performance by higher levels of the system. Sanctions may be hard or soft but the punitive core for schools is apparent; when improvement fails, there needs to be sanctions (Kogan, 1986). Sanctions are said to be credible when they target those responsible for expected outcomes. Conversely, sanctions fail when they produce uncertain or ambiguous outcomes.

Responsibility

Responsibility is sometimes used interchangeably with accountability in the context of relationships schools have with their environment (Bush, 1994). However, it may also be regarded as different from accountability. Kogan (1986:26) regards it as the moral sense of duty to do something. In this case the responsibility comes from within, and bears no legal obligation to answer to anybody. A third notion of responsibility is Leithwood's and Earl's (2000) view that a person gives an account

as a result of the role one holds within an organization. Based on these three notions, perceptions may vary according to context in which it is used.

Reporting

The essence of 'reporting' is that it preliminary to accountability. It is also synonymous to 'giving an account' (Bush, 1994) to various partners. The note of caution inherent in this concept is that emphasis is placed on the validity of the account given for judgments to be made. There needs to be a match between what is reported and the action expected (Robinson and Timperley, 2000:68), because inaccurate reporting compromises the validity of what has been reported on.

Market accountability

This formal model is acknowledged by Leithwood and Earl (2000) as being popular and this may be because of its focus on the client, as well as its support of consumer rights. The discipline of competition is thought to ensure educator responsiveness to parental and student preferences. Because of this feature, such a model may work in cases where schools are not responsive, are unwilling or even are unable to improve their performance. Schools are likely to respond to client complaints because of the threat of parent exit and parents can use this threat to hold schools accountable. However, as Scott (1989) claims, the model is flawed because there is no assurance of equal access of services of comparable quality; schools are responsive only to their clients.

Professional Accountability

This model has varied features, some of which resemble those of the adherence model (see above). In Kogan's (1986) system, self-evaluation and self report are two important aspects of the professional model, which aims to promote the autonomy of teachers. Despite the variations, there is common belief in the vital contribution of educators' practices and decision-making to student outcomes. Teachers are held directly accountable for the school's effects on students.

Overview

This review of literature shows that accountability is perhaps one of the most fundamental tools for bringing about change, development, and improvement. The concept of accountability essentially poses the questions: accountable for what? accountable to whom?, accountable by what means?, and accountable to what ends? There are conceptual difficulties in using the term and in distinguishing it from competing concepts such as responsibility. Related terms are 'relationships', which is the basis on which accountability exists, 'evaluation', which in different forms provides the judgment for actions done, the consequences of those actions, the obligation of providing accounts, and the entitlement of those to whom an account is given.

Where school and teacher accountability are concerned, the school as a unit is obligated to be accountable to different stakeholders, as they provide or receive the service of education. The teacher can also be held accountable as a professional, because of his/her moral responsibility for the progress of students. Leadership in schools may work in different accountability contexts where frameworks may be informal in terms of the relationships existing among stakeholders, or more formal

ones, including four dimensions of accountability (Leithwood, 1999); market, decentralization, professional and managerial, Kogan's (1986), Scott's (1989) and Anderson's (2005) models. The next chapter draws on the themes discussed in this chapter to explain the author's research design and methods, intended to ensure that the research questions pertaining to the accountability of primary schools in the Seychelles are adequately answered.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the form of a stakeholder analysis, the researcher sought to understand the accountability of school leaders and teachers through the stakeholders themselves. A combined approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, was undertaken. The researcher first collected quantitative data then obtained qualitative data to follow up and refine quantitative findings. The data from these methods were combined to enhance triangulation. The methodology was designed to find answers to the author's research questions; establishing perceptions of accountability, who exercises it, the scope of accountability, its relationship with networking, and the implications for educators exercising accountability in the primary schools.

Research Paradigms

Bassey (1999: 39) explains that educational research is:

Critical enquiry aimed at informing educational judgments and decisions in order to improve education action. This is the kind of value-laden research that should have immediate relevance to teachers and policy makers, and it is itself educational because of its stated intention to 'inform'. It is the kind of research in

education that is carried out by educationalists (Bassey, 1999:39).

The author's educational research is a systematic critical enquiry of the accountability of primary school leaders and teachers to their stakeholders. This enquiry aims to contribute towards informing educational decisions about primary school accountability in Seychelles.

Educational research is based on one of two broad traditions; 'positivism and interpretivism' (Morrison, 2002:15-17). Positivism may also be called 'quantitative' research while interpretivism may be called 'relativism' or 'qualitative' research (Morrison, 2002:15-17, Mac Naughton, 2005:52).

Quantitative research

This type of research is 'interested in aggregating data, most of which are assigned numerical values. It relies on certain accepted categorisations which enable the making of generalised statements' (Johnson, 1994:6). A researcher, who takes a quantitative approach to research, aims to learn about it. The study is lead by the belief that 'our knowledge of something increases over time, step by step, piece by piece (Mac Naughton, 2005:52), hence was the case for the researcher in developing knowledge about accountability. This implies asking about a topic of interest that has answers that can be counted. As a consequence, Mac Naughton (2005) claims that a quantitative researcher often works within the positivist paradigm, which portrays the world as a collection of seemingly independent phenomena to be counted, measured and otherwise catalogued as the preliminary to deducing the rules and laws that

underline and give them coherence. Morrison (2002) points out the main features of positivism:

- people are the objects of educational research.
- Only observable phenomena, not feelings, can be considered valid knowledge
- Knowledge is obtained through the collection of verifiable facts.
- Researchers should be objective or 'value-free' (going with an open mind)
- Findings should be capable of generalisation beyond the location of the project.

(Adapted from Morrison, 2002: 15-17)

Hence quantitative research is different from qualitative in these ways:

- The data are usually gathered using more structured instruments.
- The results provide less detail on behaviour, attitudes and motivation.
- The results are based on larger sample sizes that are representative of the population.
- The research can be replicated or repeated, given its high reliability, and
- The analysis of the results is more objective.

(Adapted from Morrison, 2006)

Qualitative research

In contrast, a researcher taking a qualitative approach to investigating a topic aims to make sense of it differently. Generally, qualitative researchers aim to present something's meaning or significance to groups of people (Mac Naughton et al 2005). The basis here is to explain events and actions through the eyes of, and in the words of, the people involved. In a sense a qualitative researcher does not seek to learn about

the topic itself, but how people understand it. As the name implies, this type of research is concerned with the quality of evidence produced, rather than quantity. Consequently, researchers who take a qualitative approach work within the interpretivist paradigm, see the world as the outcome of people's continuing negotiations. In interpretivist methodology, a researcher's task is to understand 'socially constructed negotiated and shared meanings and re-present them as theories of human behaviour' (Mac Naughton et al, 2005:36). These authors continue by explaining that this requires more than just asking people, 'What do you think you're doing?' The researcher needs to actively make sense of people's behaviour, including their own. Morrison (2002) presents some of the features of interpretivism:

- Research is grounded in people's experience.
- People understand events in different ways.
- Research focuses on the meaning placed on events by participants.
- The emphasis is on words rather than on numbers.

(Morrison, 2002, 17-21)

In qualitative or interpretivist research, data are usually collected through sustained contact with people in the settings where they normally spend their time. The two most common ways to collect data are through participant observations and in-depth interviews. The researcher does that by entering the world of the people who are to be studied, getting to know them, making him/herself be known and trusted by them and systematically keeping a detailed written record of what is heard and observed. Other methods, such as documentary analysis and focus groups, are used to supplement the data. The author's research is predominantly within the interpretivist model, as perceptions of accountability were sought from several different stakeholders.

Cutting across the differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches, is the distinction between ‘deductive and inductive’ methodologies (Mac Naughton et al, 2005:53). Deductive research is explained as when the researcher in a ‘top-down’ approach starts with a hypothesis and collects data to either prove or disprove it. In contrast, inductive research is ‘bottom- up’; the investigator collects data with no preconceived view about how the data relate to his/her research idea. Then the researcher sees whether the outcomes form a hypothesis. Rather than test theories, qualitative researchers often inductively analyse their data and develop theories. ‘Purposive sampling’ (Fogelman, 2002:101) is used to select people who will be studied. They are selected because of who they are and what they know rather than merely by chance.

Mixed approaches

Morrison (2002) claims that the educational research landscape has become more diverse and this may be an opportunity to study educational management and leadership from rich, but different perspectives. As such, some studies have the potential of using mixed approaches, not to create a balance, but to ‘help in overcoming such tendencies to what we might refer to as naïve empiricism’ (cited in Morrison, 2002: 24). Consequently, the researcher planned to use qualitative and quantitative approaches in combination because:

- Combination provides triangulation of data.
- Quantitative research can be used to facilitate qualitative research, in terms of using data gathered from the survey to refine interview schedules for subsequent in-depth data collection within the case studies.

- The combination will help to address some of the ‘generalisability’ problems of qualitative research, as it aims to cover the accountability of primary schools; therefore a certain level of generalisability is required.
- The combination may facilitate a better understanding of the relationships between the variables, that is, the relationship between the different categories of respondents as potential stakeholders, the relationship between management structures, expectations and perceptions of accountability.
- Finally, the combination allows an appropriate emphasis at different stages of the research process, which are: working on the survey; collecting data, then doing the interviews, observations and documentary analysis, stopping after each in turn to take stock of what has been done. More decisions may have to be made at each of the various stages.

(Adapted from Morrison, 2006: 3)

However, using mixed approaches to research poses one particular challenge. How does the researcher ensure that even when combination is done, she will not end up with separate pieces of work ‘which proceed in tandem’ (Morrison, 2005), rather than in combination? The researcher was aware of this challenge and responded to it by adopting a rigorous and systematic approach.

Broad Approaches to Research

The two main broad approaches to educational research are surveys and case studies.

The author used both of these approaches and each is discussed below.

Surveys

Surveys are one of two main approaches to educational research:

Typically, surveys gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions that can be compared, or determining the relationships that exist between specific events (Cohen et al, 2000:169).

The author's survey gathered data at a time when there are significant reforms to the education system in the Seychelles, and there are also demands for accountability. Hutton (1990: 8) says that 'survey research is the method of collecting information by asking a set of pre-formulated questions in a predetermined sequence in a structured questionnaire to a sample of individuals drawn so as to be representative of a defined population (Hutton, 1990:8). His definition partly explains how the researcher undertook the survey. It involved some pre-formulated questions but only part of the questionnaire was structured as it contained some open-ended questions as well as closed questions.

Fogelman (2002), and Cohen et al (2000), agree that surveys can vary on several dimensions. These include size or scope, instrument structure and purpose:

Size or scope

The survey encompassed all 19 (100% sample) state primary schools on Mahe, the main island. Adopting a full population survey enabled the researcher to generalise the findings.

Instrumentation

Fogelman (2002), claims that the questionnaire is the most commonly used method of data collection in surveys but also admits that many surveys use other methods of

information gathering. In this survey, the questionnaire had been chosen as the method, as it was used to get 'factual information, attitudinal information or a mixture of both' (Fogelman, 2002:94) of aspects of school accountability based on the knowledge and perceptions of the stakeholders.

Purpose

Cohen et al (2000) claim that a survey has several characteristics and claimed attractions; as it can be utilised to scan a wide range of issues, populations and programmes, so that it can measure or describe any generalised features and, therefore, be used for various purposes. The author's survey aimed to discover how different stakeholders perceive school, school leaders' and teacher accountability; what the relationship is between the different stakeholders, what organisational structure the school has and whether the structures have any effects on who is accountable for what to whom? The researcher also intended to identify cause and effect relationships among those variables (Fogelman, 2002). A survey is appropriate when 'systematic and comparable data are needed, and can be obtained directly from a large number of individuals' (Fogelman, 2002:94). In the author's research, these individuals were headteachers, subject coordinators, teachers and PTA chairpersons from the 19 schools.

The survey was also chosen because of its utility. Morrison (1993:83-84), and Cohen et al (2000; 171) explain that the benefits of surveys are:

- Gathering data on a one shot basis - economical and efficient.
- Ascertain co-relations between variables.
- Presets materials, which are free from the clutter of contextual factors.

- Generates accurate instruments through their piloting and revision.
- Makes generalisations about, and observes patterns of responses, in the targets of focus.

In short, the survey approach had been chosen because of its strengths in terms of breadth, generalisability and descriptive power, and for its suitability in addressing the author's research questions.

The survey also has limitations, which the researcher addressed:

Shallow Coverage

Cohen et al (2000) refer to the tendency for surveys to produce shallow coverage because of the standardised nature of the questionnaire. In order to be able to treat the topic in-depth, the instrument contained both closed and open-ended questions. Other methods of data collection were also used to complement what is collected through questionnaires.

Rapport

Another challenge may be for the researcher to establish a good rapport with the respondents so that they provide factual information and opinion on sensitive issues, such as accountability relationships or how they are accountable to different stakeholders. This proved to be difficult as the questionnaires were distributed at school level and were completed in the absence of the researcher.

Response Rate

One more challenge was to ensure the highest response rate possible for the questionnaires, in order to reduce the possibility of bias and increase the potential for generalisation. Cohen et al (2000) warn that, if the sample is flawed in some way,

generalising from the findings may be misleading. A practical way was to trace unreturned questionnaires, though this in itself might affect the confidentiality aspect. The best way then was for the researcher to guarantee confidentiality by telling the respondents that their answers will only be seen by the researcher and explained to them the procedures, as well as why there had been the need to trace unreturned questionnaires. The researcher also considered coding the questionnaires, through allocating a number to each respondent, so that it was easy for the headteacher to find out who had not responded.

Access

Bell (1987), states that no researcher can demand access to an institution, but rather access has to be negotiated at an early stage. Since the respondents will be doing the researcher a favour, they need to know exactly what their participation will be and to what use the information they provide will be put. Negotiations also help to clear doubts, and convince the respondents of the researcher's integrity and the value of the research before they decide whether to participate or not. Not negotiating access may result in great harm done to participants in the survey, but most important of all the reliability and validity of the survey results will be in question.

The researcher sought formal permission from the Principal Secretary for Education. Informed consent was also sought from the headteachers. Explanations were provided in a primary headteachers' meeting, prior to either the piloting or the actual study. The researcher planned to deliver both letters and questionnaires to the schools personally. Fogelman (2002), stresses that those practical concerns may have an ethical component. For example, the idea of 'informed consent' (Fogelman, 2002:96)

of respondents, mentioned above, was crucial. Addressing the headteachers about the research after permission had been sought from the Principal Secretary and Schools' Division was only 'clearing official channels' (Bell 1987: 53). The researcher needed to ensure that the respondents were willing to answer the questions, after it had been explained to them what the research was about, how it was to take place, and what might be the consequences.

Another issue was for the researcher to assume responsibility for high quality data collection instruments (the questionnaires) and ensure that they were as unobtrusive and inoffensive as possible. Fogelman, (2002) also stresses the need to pilot instruments and that the researcher should not neglect the equally important aspect of piloting the administrative procedures, so that when the actual study takes place, these too will work efficiently. It was of vital importance that those procedures, in terms of the mode of distribution of the questionnaires, the time allocated for the respondents to complete them, and their collection, needed to be tested, in order to provide the researcher with information about what to expect.

Sampling

Cohen et al (2000), state that one of the prerequisites for designing a survey is to define the population to which the investigation is addressed, as this affects the decisions about samples and resources. Fogelman (2002) explains that the population comprises the individuals about whom one would want to generalise, or about which one would want to draw conclusions at the end of the research.

It seemed obvious that the school leaders would encompass headteachers and subject coordinators, and teachers were also an obvious choice, since the research was about school and teacher accountability. The PTA chairpersons were chosen as parent representatives. For the survey then, a ‘purposive sample’, also known as a ‘judgmental sample’ (Fogelman, 2002: 101/102), had been drawn. The researcher applied her own experience and judgment to select the respondents, which were representative or typical of the potential stakeholders as:

There might be a reason to judge that some particular characteristic of your sample members is of such importance ...and that stratified sampling is organising a sampling frame into groups whose members have a common characteristic’

(Fogelman, 2002:101).

Therefore, the sample comprised the headteacher, 3 subject coordinators, 3 teachers; one from each cycle and the PTA chairperson, totaling to 152 respondents in all. These sub-samples accurately represented the population of primary schools. All primary schools on the main island were included and the survey sample of headteachers, subject coordinators, teachers and PTA chairpersons, reflected the population of stakeholders within, and external to, the school.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were chosen for the survey because ‘the essence of the questionnaire, as a research tool, is that it is in the hands of the respondent and is completed by him or her’ (Johnson, 1994: 37). Also,

the questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being

able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straight forward to analyze (Cohen et al, 2000:245).

The reasons for using the questionnaire were:

1. It was an inexpensive way to collect data from a large group of people.
2. Questionnaires could maximise the researcher's limited time
3. The questionnaire was a good way to collect data, which would then be combined with other sources of data collection for corroboration, or confirmation.

Questionnaire design

The design of the questionnaire was critical to its effectiveness, especially as the researcher was not present at the time of completion. Cohen and Manion (1994) stress the importance of having a design that reduces potential errors from those completing it. They add that, since people participate freely in surveys, a questionnaire has to help in keeping their interest, encouraging their cooperation, and generating answers as close to the truth as possible.

The first step in designing the questionnaire was to follow Bell's (2002:159) advice that decisions about 'precisely what you need to find out' have to be made before the questionnaire is designed. Having understood the literature, and the specific purpose of each research question, and dealing with questions about biographical details of the participants, the researcher was ready to set out the questions which were to address the issues that needed investigating, and guarantee questionnaire validity:

What are stakeholders' understandings of the concept of accountability in the context of schools?

This question aimed to find out about whether the respondents knew about the concept. They were asked: “*How do you understand the concept of school accountability?*” and were asked to give opinions about whether schools should be accountable, and for what reason. Participants were also asked who they felt schools should be accountable to, how and for what, to distinguish between their perceptions and reality.

Who exercises accountability in the primary schools? / to whom are school leaders and teachers accountable?

Accountability of schools happens in the context of relationships they have with various stakeholders. Further to finding out who the stakeholders are when answering, ‘*Who are you accountable to?*’ information would be generated about service providers or recipients (Heim, 1995), and whether or not it is felt that those merit an account.

What is the scope of accountability?

In reference to Dunford’s (2003) view that over accountability de-motivates heads and teachers, it was imperative that respondents talk about the level of accountability; whether it is adequate, too much or insufficient. The respondents were given a list of statements representing some of the characteristics of an accountable school (see appendix c), to help them to address the scope of accountability. These included professional development being part of a teacher’s work, reporting on student learning, regular self-evaluation, and prompt changes.

What is the nature of accountability in the Seychelles primary schools?

Questions about describing accountability at school were justifiably asked to discuss both the scope and the nature of accountability; how it operates or functions. Respondents' experiences were vital through their selection of responses addressing expectations, having procedures or having accountability imposed from the outside. Relationships too bear significantly on accountability. It was necessary to know, for example, whether the hierarchical structure influenced the types of relationships or operations, particularly in a highly centralized small Seychelles system. Respondents had to describe relationships and note the most common type. Data about the relationships also shed light on the types or strategies of accountability. The concept of reporting is similar to 'giving an account' (Bush, 1994). As such, the respondents were asked: *'Do you consider reporting as an essential part of the accountability process?'* Respondents were also asked how valid reported accounts were, if performance had to be judged and sanctions applied.

With Heim's (1995) claim that defining consequences in the school context is difficult and problematic, it was imperative that the researcher asked respondents if they were aware of sanctions or penalties and what role they played in primary schools' accountability. In answering *'Are there any penalties or consequences following reported accounts?'* together with explanations about those, would provide more insight into the nature of accountability. Being aware of the existence of penalties or sanctions does not necessarily mean that people are in favour of having them, hence the inclusion of: *'To what extent do you agree that a) a school or b) a teacher should be sanctioned when it or she does not meet with expectations?'* and *'If yes, how can a) a school or b) a teacher be sanctioned?'* Both questions tie up

with Kogan's (1986) view about applying sanctions when there is failure in meeting expectations.

An '*Any other comments*' question was asked as the researcher was hopeful that the respondents would provide casual remarks that have weight, and also covering areas which might not have been thought of, but which they considered critical.

As there were four categories of respondent, four questionnaires were prepared with core questions applying to everybody, with specific questions for each category of respondent. Bell (2002) explains that most questionnaires also gather background data about the respondents. This set of information included gender, age, post title; the length of time the person is in service and the type of school whether it is a large, medium or small one. This is because the background questions would be easily answered at the beginning of the questionnaire and they would ease the participants into completing the instrument. The data in that section were also used to correlate response sets between different categories of people (Bell, 2002). It was also important to see whether there was consistency of responses across groups.

Types of questions

Bell (2002) points out that questionnaire items have to be measurable, that is, moving from concepts to measurable indicators. Accountability is a concept, so the researcher was required to think about the ways in which the respondents indicate or demonstrate being accountable, hence the development of each question above.

In designing the questionnaires, care was taken to 'remove ambiguity, to achieve the degree of precision necessary to ensure that subjects understand exactly what you are

asking, to check that your language is jargon-free, to decide which question type to use and ensure that you will be able to classify and analyse responses' (Bell, 1993:76).

The types of questions included both open and closed formats. Cohen et al (2000) and Bell (2002) agree that, in answering open questions, respondents are free to answer however they choose and they are free from any restrictions. For example, one such question was 'What are you accountable for?

The researcher wanted to obtain subjective data. This is because the range of responses was likely to be wider and 'more truly reflect the opinions of the respondents' (Bell, 2002: 165). As Cohen et al (2000: 248) state, the respondents can explain and qualify their responses and, as such, 'avoid the limitations of pre-set categories'.

However, open questions may create problems as some respondents may answer ambiguously or in a contradictory manner. Such responses would have been quite difficult to code, but the researcher realised that the question structure in this case would have been best for answering the question, in view of the sensitive nature of some of the issues. Furthermore, those questions will invite an honest, personal answer from the respondent and can 'catch the authenticity, richness and depth of response' (Cohen et al, 2000: 255) which would be very relevant in terms of mixed research approaches. In answering those questions, responsibility and ownership of the data were put more firmly (Cohen et al, 2000) into the respondents' hands. Also, authenticity, richness and depth of response, which are the hallmarks of qualitative data, combined with responses from the more closed questions. Quantitative data provided the opportunity for shedding more light on issues pertaining to the perception of the concept.

For closed format questions, the range of responses from which a respondent makes a choice, was prescribed. Those included dichotomous, multiple choice and rating scales which were quick to complete and straightforward to code. However, such questions could have been problematic if they were not well structured and they also did not allow for respondents to add any comments, qualifications or explanations, except maybe in the case of dichotomous questions where a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response was required. Those needed the respondent to take a stance or ‘come off the fence’ (Cohen et al, 2000:250), on an issue. One example of a dichotomous question was:

“Do you consider reporting as an accountability process? The question was also useful as a ‘funneling or sorting device’ for subsequent questions:

If you answered ‘yes’ please explain how.

Another type of closed format question used was multiple choice items in which a likely range of responses were given to statements as:

“How would you describe the level of accountability in your school? Circle the appropriate letter.

- A. There is over accountability.*
- B. There is adequate accountability.*
- C. There is a lack of accountability.*

The researcher was required here to ensure that there was no overlap and that responses were mutually exclusive of one another (Cohen et al, 2000) as well as contemplated covering all possible answers. Rating scales have also been used. Respondents were asked to rate how they view teacher accountability in their school:

“How would you rate the accountability of teachers in your school?” Circle the appropriate number.

Excellent *Very Good* *Good* *Satisfactory* *Less than Satisfactory*
 5 4 3 2 1

Respondents were also asked to rate evidence of some characteristics of an accountable school:

“To what extent are the following characteristics evident in your school?” Circle one number for each statement.

<i>Very evident</i>	<i>Evident</i>	<i>Slightly evident</i>	<i>Not evident at all</i>
4	3	2	1

The Likert scale had also been used for some questions. It had generally been used in matrix questions where several statements had the same set of answer categories.

“To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your school?” Circle the most appropriate number

<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
4	3	2	1

The advantages of using closed format questions, according to Bell (2002), is that, by restricting the answer set, it is easy to calculate percentages over a group or any sub group or to provide data about people’s perceptions of accountability processes at their school.

Inevitably, preparing the question items posed certain difficulties for the researcher. Most difficulty was encountered in question formulation, where the researcher had to go back and forth between literature, that is, the theoretical concepts and the questions, phrasing and re-phrasing, so that they were clear; and there were no

leading, embarrassing or hypothetical questions (Bell, 2002). The questions proved more difficult to formulate in the areas of “To whom are school leaders or teachers accountable?” and “For what are school leaders and teachers accountable?” Those two areas had the tendency to generate leading or sensitive questions. The structure and layout of the questionnaire needed thinking about too, as they both can affect the responses people give. A clear structure and format would help respondents to answer questions accurately and efficiently. To provide the respondents with a clear format, the questionnaire was spread over several pages, thus avoiding clutter. To prevent much writing, ‘tick boxes’ and ‘circle items’ were used in most questions for recording answers.

Piloting the questionnaire

In survey research, questionnaires are often regarded as an inexpensive way to collect data from a potentially large number of respondents. However, they may be also challenging in terms of design and interpretation, particularly when the questionnaires are aimed at collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. This is because qualitative questions require more care in design and analysis. In the author’s research, a number of open format questions have been used. The variety of responses to those was expected to be wider but at the same time more truly reflect the opinions of the respondents.

The draft questionnaires were prepared carefully by the researcher. However, it was necessary to pre-test them before they were used in the full-scale survey, to identify any mistakes that needed correcting and to ensure that the questions were understood in the ways intended by the researcher. Cohen et al (2000) emphasise that the

wording of a questionnaire is of paramount importance, and that pre-testing is crucial to its success. It was important not to lead the respondents or put them off. The researcher undertook this piloting to ‘remove the bugs out of the instrument’ (Bell, 1993, 84/85): to check on the clarity of questions, instructions and layout; to eliminate ambiguities or difficulty in wording; to gain feedback on response categories for the closed questions; to gain feedback on the attractiveness and appearance of the questionnaire; to check time taken to complete it; to generate categories from open-ended responses for possible use as categories for closed response modes; and to identify redundant items (adapted from Cohen et al, 2000:260).

The findings were then used to improve and modify the questionnaires as appropriate. Therefore the purposes of the piloting exercise were clearly to determine:

- Whether the questions had been placed in the best order.
- Whether the questions are understood by all respondent groups; eliminating the chance that the same question means different things to different people, to ensure both validity and reliability of answers.
- Whether additional or specifying questions are needed or whether some should be eliminated,
- Whether the instructions are adequate and clear,
- Bring to light any other problem with layout, wording, and questions dealing with personal or private matters;
- Minimize the risk of bias.

The piloting also aimed at gauging the respondents’ trust, interest and motivation, which would be of vital significance in the main study. In addition, it served to carry

out a preliminary analysis to ensure that no difficulties were met when the main data were analysed.

Piloting Arrangements

The piloting was carried out in three primary schools on two inner islands. These are drawn from the same population as the main sample. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaires, the researcher visited the schools, explaining the process to the would-be respondents. They were also asked, apart from completing the questions, to consider the following issues:

- how long it took them to fill in the questionnaire
- whether the instructions were clear enough
- whether any of the questions were unclear or ambiguous and if so, which ones
- if they objected to answering any of the questions and why
- whether any major topic had been omitted
- if the layout of the questionnaire was clear and attractive.

The second trip to the islands involved the distribution of the questionnaires, while the third required the researcher to collect the questionnaires for processing, editing, recording, coding and analysis.

The sample for the pilot, as for the main study, was the headteacher, three subject coordinators, three teachers and the PTA chairperson of each of the three schools. All the respondents were from state schools. The three schools are all medium sized, with a population of between 400 to 700 students. The response rate was 98%. Only one questionnaire was not returned as the person involved was away on medical leave.

Among the 23 respondents who returned the questionnaires, 21 were female and two were male. Most of them (12) were between the ages of 31 to 45 years; 8 were older and 3 were 30 years old or below.

In the perceptions category, all the questions worked well except for the very first; this should have been asked to all respondent groups, as it concerned how they all understood the concept of accountability. Unfortunately, it was asked only to the headteachers. Arrangements were made to modify questionnaires (see Appendix C). The accountability of the respondents' section required no changes from the original questions as those were straight-forward.

In answering about accountability at school level, the respondents were given a multiple choice question to talk about whether the accountability was adequate, whether it was too much or if there was a lack of accountability. The question seemed to ask the researcher to ask for an explanation of the responses. Therefore, the question was to be extended by 'explain' for the main survey. Only one PTA chairperson responded to the question, saying that there is adequate accountability at his children's school. The researcher reached the conclusion that this question may have seemed sensitive to the parent and compromising for the school. Since parents' views are valued in the study, it was necessary to emphasise the importance of their contributions in the main study. There was also little differentiation across schools, with two of them matching the overall profile while, at the third school, there was reluctance to comment with only two responses, saying 'adequate' and 'lack of accountability'

In the teacher accountability section, the sensitivity of questions came up again; in responding to for example, *'Do other teachers in your school see themselves as*

accountable?' This appeared to relate to concerns that respondents would be implicating colleague teachers, though some did answer the question.

On the subject of sanctions and consequences there seemed to be a bit of apprehension on the part of the subject coordinators. It is important to note that, during an informal interview to discuss the piloting, they claimed that the question about whether there are any consequences or penalties might be compromising even if they did respond to it. They felt it might be a catalyst for the system to actually look into the aspect of sanctions and consequences seriously. The low level of responses for the question about the types of penalties and consequences may have implied they had no awareness of consequences being applied. A few other responses given for the question demonstrated non-comprehension. For the last section, there were no significant problems apart from a few respondents misunderstanding the sequence in which to consider the ranking of the stakeholders given.

Subjecting questionnaires to the piloting process enabled the researcher to test their suitability and certain changes have been made (see Appendices A to D). The researcher was then left with the mechanical task of laying out and setting up the questionnaires in their final forms. The process then involved the grouping and sequencing of questions into an appropriate order, that is under appropriate themes as required by the research objectives and questions. These themes and their corresponding sections are:

Section A: Biographical data of respondents

Section B: Perceptions of accountability including understanding of the concept and perceptions on how it should function

Section C: The accountability of stakeholder respondents

Section D: School accountability; Constructs and functioning

Section E: Accountability Processes; Reporting and consequences

Section F: Involvement of stakeholders.

The questions were then numbered and the researcher's instructions were inserted (Crawford, 1990). Several questions needed re-ordering to fit in with the sections.

Attention was also paid to the possible ways of analysis. Particular attention was given to open-format questions. While they imposed fewer restrictions on the respondent, they could have been challenging to analyse. However, in practice, the responses given provided adequate information about what was asked.

The pilot study also showed that respondents tended to identify with their own roles. The testing of the questionnaire and the analysis helped the researcher to be clear about how to tackle the main study and the subsequent analysis.

Distribution and return of questionnaires

The researcher organised a schedule for personal delivery and collection from each of the 19 survey schools on Mahe, the main island. It was not difficult to reach those schools and several could be covered in one day. Arrangements were made by phone, prior to the delivery and collection dates.

Case Study

Cohen and Manion (1994) define case study research as the examination of an instance in action, where the choice of word 'instance' is significant because of the implication of the goal of generalisation. Scott and Morrison (2005: 17) explain it as:

Research which includes the study of a few cases, sometimes one, in which the intention is to collect large amounts of data, studied in depth. Such data is usually, but not always in alignment with specific approaches to research, namely qualitative and interpretive, with a frequent and specific emphasis on the use of narrative (Scott and Morrison, 2005:17).

Yin's (2003: 13) definition emphasises the scope of the study. A case study is an empirical inquiry that:

investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

He adds that contextual conditions might be highly significant to the topic of study.

The case study enquiry:

1. copes with technically distinctive situations in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and:
2. relies on multiple sources of evidence , with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion and as another result,
3. benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (Yin, 2003:13-14).

The present author investigated the concept of school accountability in its real-life context, that is, how it is applied, lived, interacted, shown or dealt with in the day to day running of the primary schools. The context, in terms of environment, management structure and relationships, is likely to play an important part in the

enquiry. The study relied on multiple data sources; interviews, observations and documentary analysis, which serve to triangulate the data. The researcher regarded case study as directly relevant to her enquiry as it is ‘an all encompassing method’ which ‘covers the logic of design, data collection techniques and specific approaches to data analysis’ (Yin, 2003:19).

Case study research demands rigour, and Scott and Morrison (2005) define an educational case study as an empirical study which is carried out within a localized boundary of space and time, into interesting areas of an educational activity, or programme, or institution or system. The study was carried out in the phenomenon’s natural context, and within an ethic of respect for people. In turn, this was done in order to inform judgments and decisions of practitioners or policy makers, or of theoreticians who are working to such outcomes. This was also done in such a way that enough data were collected for the researcher to be able to do a number of things (Scott and Morrison, 2005).

In the present study, the researcher was able to:

- Explore significant features of the case, that is, how the school leaders and teachers in a specific school, exercise accountability, and the daily functioning of the concept both internally and externally.
- Create plausible interpretations of what was found.
- Test the trustworthiness of these interpretations through triangulation in a mixed method approach.
- Construct a worthwhile argument or story about primary school accountability.

- Relate the argument or story to any relevant research, for example “When accountability knocks, will anyone answer?” carried out by Abelmann and Elmore in 1999.
- Convey convincingly to an audience which possibly might be the policy makers, school leaders and teachers themselves, the argument or the story
- Provide an audit trail by which researchers may validate or challenge the findings or construct alternative arguments.

(Adapted from Bassey, 1999 and Scott and Morrison, 2005)

Types of case study

Bassey (1999) conceives of three main types of case study: ‘theory-seeking and theory testing’, whose outcome leads to ‘more’ and ‘less’ tentative generalisations; ‘story telling and picture drawing’, which emphasizes narrative stories and accounts guided by clear timelines as well as a strong sense of the processual; and ‘evaluative’ case studies which refer to in-depth inquiries into educational programmes, systems, projects or events’ (Bassey, 1999:58) in order to ascertain their worthiness as judged by researchers. The author also claims that each case has to relate its key messages to interested audiences, however defined (Bassey, 1999:58).

Bassey also refers to types of case studies defined by others. Stenhouse (1985) identifies four broad categories; ethnography, evaluative, educational and action research. Ethnographic case studies are where a single case is studied in-depth by participant observations, supported by interview, whereas, The evaluative approach is an in-depth study of one or more cases with the aim of providing stakeholders in education with data to judge the merit and worth of policies, programmes or institutions. Educational case study is where researchers are not concerned with social

theory or evaluative judgments, but instead with the understanding of educational action. Action research is perceived as having to do with feeding back information from the study to the case itself, hence, guiding either revision or refinement of the action (cited in Bassey, 1999:28).

Scott and Morrison (2005) perceive that the terms ‘theory seeking and theory-testing’ are analogous to Yin’s (1994) use of ‘exploratory’ and ‘explanatory’ case study research. The third component of Yin’s categorisation of case studies is ‘descriptive’. Yin (2003) interprets an exploratory case study as one which is aimed at defining questions and hypotheses for a subsequent study whereas the descriptive type presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context and an exploratory case study provides data which bears on cause –effects relationships explaining which causes produce which effects.

Bassey (1999) also refers to Stake’s (1995: 3) distinction between ‘intrinsic’ and ‘instrumental’. In the first case, research is carried out into a specific situation for its sake irrespective of outside concerns whereas, in the second case, research is done in one or more specific situations to try to understand a concern from the outside, transformed into a research question.

Why case study?

In case studies, contexts are unique and dynamic; hence case studies investigate and report the complex and dynamic unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance (Cohen et al, 2000). The researcher acknowledged the advantages such features have over other approaches. Case study has been chosen as one of the two main approaches to the research because the schools’ contexts, though apparently similar, are unique. The way they function in

terms of accountability may differ. The case studies were to investigate and report on all the factors pertaining to school leaders' and teachers' accountability. They were to:

1. be concerned with a rich and vivid description of what happens and which are relevant to the case.
2. provide a chronological narrative of events
3. blend a description of how accountability relationships develop and function, and how activities related to school leaders' and teachers' accountability occur, with the analysis of those aspects.
4. focus on individuals or groups of actors; headteacher, subject coordinators, teachers, parents and students, and will try to understand how they perceive those aspects mentioned in (3).
5. emphasise specific occurrences which are relevant to the case, and
6. make an attempt to portray the richness of the case in writing up about it.

As opposed to survey, which relies on what respondents put on the questionnaire, the case study:

Strives to portray 'what it is like' to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and 'thick description' of participants' lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings of the situations. Hence it is important for events and situations to be allowed to speak for themselves rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher'

(Cohen et al, 2003: 182).

The quote serves to summarise both the researcher's choice and need to use case study as a research strategy, taking into consideration that that approach exists in its own right as a significant and legitimate research method. Furthermore, case studies are used because results generated are more easily understood by a wide range of audiences, they are immediately intelligible; they speak for themselves; they catch unique features which may otherwise be lost in larger scale data; they are strong on reality, they provide insights into other situations which are similar, therefore helping in the interpretation of other cases; they can be undertaken by a single researcher (as in this investigation) without needing a full research team and case studies can embrace and build on unanticipated events and uncontrolled variables (Cohen et al, 2003).

Limitations of case study

Despite the many advantages, the researcher was also conscious of issues of concern or weakness in case study, which might be relevant to the research. First, there is the question of generalisation. Scott and Morrison (2005), and Cohen et al (2003), caution against making generalisations as this may not be possible. While Cohen et al (2003) claim that results of case study may not be generalisable, Scott and Morrison (2005) present the argument that case studies, where they can be generalised, draw on three types of generalisation; logical, theoretical and analytical. Both sets of authors agree that the issue is how readers of case study apply the outcomes and for what purposes. However, (1999:51-52) claims that case study research outcomes can lead to 'fuzzy generalisations', which he explains as having an element of uncertainty, that is, reporting that something occurred in a place and may occur elsewhere. Reading between the lines, there is an invitation to 'try it and see if the same happens for you' (Bassegy, 1999: 52).

Secondly, case studies cannot be easily cross-examined (Cohen et al, 2003). Therefore, they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective. The researcher was required to ensure that respondents were clear on what they were supposed to do and how to do it. Truthfulness also needed to be emphasised, but most important of all, the researcher needed to approach data collection with an open mind.

Thirdly, there was the role that theory plays in the case study. Scott and Morrison (2005) claim that case study researchers have different perspectives on the uses of theory. They explain that for some it may be a theory that makes sense of the case, as a bounded system, and for others the analytical task is to see the use in terms of the wider social context. The author's research was focused on a conceptual framework of accountability of school leaders and teachers as seen through their stakeholders. Yin (2003) states that, for some topics, existing work can provide a rich theoretical framework for designing a specific case. In other research, the appropriate theory may be a descriptive one under which the researcher is clearly aware of the purpose of the description, the range of topics that might be considered, a full description of what is to be studied and the possible topics, which form the description. Answers to those questions guided the researcher in the design of the case study.

Designing the case study

The design of the case study involved the 'logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial question, and ultimately, to its conclusions' (Yin, 2003: 20). The first decision was whether to use a single case study or 'multiple cases'. Yin (2003) claims that, although all research designs can result in successful case studies, multiple case designs may be preferred over single case designs. The

researcher chose a multiple design, comprising two case studies, for her research. The analytic benefits from having two cases may be substantial, whereas a single case, which Yin (2003:53) describes as ‘putting all your eggs in one basket’, is more vulnerable. Using two cases also had the advantage of direct replication as conclusions independently emerging from the two cases, would be more powerful than from one case only. Another reason for choosing two cases was that the contexts are likely to differ to some extent, but the researcher might still manage to draw some conclusions from both, hence expanding the generalisability of the findings (Yin, 2003), especially within the centralised Seychelles system.

The researcher deliberately selected two cases because they offered contrasting situations; St. Michael’s, which is a large state school, and St. John’s, a small one. These two schools are also different in that St. Michael’s, which used to be among the top five schools in terms of academic performance, had been declining at the time of the research. In comparison, St. John’s had been gradually improving. Yin (2003) explains that, if there are contrasting findings, the outcomes would represent a strong start towards theoretical replication and, as such, would greatly enhance the external validity of the findings.

Multiple case designs have clear-cut advantages in comparison to the single case study, as the evidence from the multiple design is said to be ‘more compelling and the overall study is regarded as being more robust’ (Yin, 2003:46).

Preparation

Bassey (1999) outlines seven stages in case study design. First, the researcher was required to identify the research purposes. Those had already been established through the survey. Bassey (1999) stresses that questions should be in a form that set

the immediate agenda for research while Yin (2003) claims that the case study strategy is most likely to be appropriate for the 'how' and 'why' questions, but the nature of the questions already formulated were not in accordance with this advice. As a result the researcher was required to re-look at the questions and organise them into propositions that could be studied within the scope of the study. Then the research instruments were chosen and schedules prepared; interviews, observations and documentary analysis, followed by addressing the ethical issues. The other steps to be followed were the piloting of all instruments, data collection, deciding on the units of analysis, then linking the data to the propositions set to be studied in terms of 'generating and testing analytical statements' (Bassegy, 1999:119). In doing the linking, the researcher planned to systematically work through the statements and try to align them with the data collected. This was to help in deciding whether more specific data were needed. The next stage was then to interpret the data, discuss it and make judgments. The final stage was to discuss the outcomes and writing the case reports. The next section discusses the research tools which were used within the case studies.

Interviews

The interview is regarded as 'the basic research instrument' (Nesbit and Watt, 1984:82) in case study research. Those authors also stress that case study interviews are much more loosely structured than the survey interview. Cohen et al (2003) draw on Kitwood's (1977) three perceptions of case study interviews:

- A potential means of transferring and collecting pure information.

- An inevitably biased transaction, which needs to be acknowledged and controlled.
- An encounter, which necessarily shares many features of every day life.

Johnson (1994: 43) explains that ‘any interview is a social encounter, but any social encounter is not an interview’. This is because interviews have a particular focus and purpose. They are initiated by the interviewer, with a view to gathering certain information from the people being interviewed. Mahoney (1997) adds that the use of the interview as a data collection method begins with the assumption that the participants’ perspectives are meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit, and that their perspectives affect the functioning of the concept.

In the author’s research, the main method of data collection from the case study schools was the interview, assuming that the respondents’ perspectives of school leaders’ and teachers’ accountability are meaningful. Those perspectives, and how they affect the operationalisation of school accountability, needed to be explained. The interviews were also used to validate other data gathered from observations and documentary analysis, as well as from the survey questionnaire. The interview had been selected because it is a fruitful source of data due to the interpersonal contact, and the opportunities for follow up of interesting issues important for the researcher.

Types of interviews

Wragg (2002) refers to three types of interviews:

- Structured; similar to questionnaires but administered by the interviewer.

- Semi-structured; these utilise an interview schedule, but there is more scope for participants to express themselves at greater length without rambling.
- Unstructured; designed to suit the participants' needs. Such interviews are often used in in-depth enquiries for they 'roam freely and require great skill' (Wragg, 2002:149). They are often used by researchers working within the interpretive paradigm.

The researcher chose to use semi-structured interviews, to allow for wide-ranging but focused replies. The respondents were allowed the scope to express themselves freely about the concept and practice of accountability. The researcher maintained a measure of control that prevented rambling away from the topic. Such control was required so that the researcher could collect broadly comparable data in order to facilitate analysis.

The researcher was constantly aware of the importance of the in-depth element of the research. Mahoney (1997) defines an in-depth interview as a dialogue between a skilled interviewer and interviewee, with the goal of eliciting rich detailed material for analysis. Such interviews are characterised by extensive probing and open-ended questions. The dynamics of the interview are such that the researcher becomes an attentive listener who is to shape the process into a familiar and comfortable form of social engagement (Mahoney, 1997), and ensure that high quality information is obtained.

In the author's research, in-depth interviews with the headteachers, subject coordinators, teachers, PTA chairpersons and students of the case study schools were appropriate for:

1. Discussing complex subject matter, such as how the headteachers respond to the Ministry's call for accountability.
2. Finding detailed information about what the respondents are accountable for and how.
3. Discussing highly sensitive subjects such as whether there are any consequences or penalties arising from their accountability.

Mahoney (1997), and Cohen et al (2003), describe a special case of group interview, the 'focus group'. In such interviews, the interviewer guides the group, which discusses the topics raised. In the author's research, focus group interviews were held with students at the case study schools. The discussion was carefully planned in order for the researcher to obtain perceptions on the subject of school accountability, in a permissive, non-threatening environment. Group members influenced each other by responding to ideas and components in the discussion (Kruger, 1988). The data emerged through the interactions. A focus group of students, ten from each case study, were chosen to gain a broader understanding of school accountability. The focus group had the possibility to yield students' insights that might not have come out in a straightforward interview (Cohen et al, 2003). Pollard (2006) claims that the focus group is also useful to investigate well defined issues from the perspective of specific types of group, or to discover and explore unanticipated aspects of an issue, in answering such questions as:

'Who is accountable for your learning?' or 'As a student, is anyone accountable to you?'

Using a focus group of students was also advantageous to the researcher as focus groups are economic on time and produce a large amount of data in a short time. The researcher did not foresee any difficulties as such recruitment was fairly straight

forward in schools, or the researcher might have ended up with chaotic data collection. The data analysis might be difficult but the focus group interview is flexible in its design, quick in collecting data and the results are believable and easy to understand (Pollard, 2006). The chosen sample of ten was not too small to allow 'disproportionate effect' (Cohen et al, 2000:288) and not too large for it to become difficult to manage. The non-probability sample of five boys and five girls from primary four to six classes were chosen systematically. They were also likely to be the most articulate ones who can take part in a group interaction. The group was representative of the pupil population in the case study schools; it provided an insight into students' opinions on accountability issues. The researcher met with subject coordinators for a brief interview. They were in a better position to know about the pupils, but the researcher then randomly picked any five boys and girls from the lists supplied by them; by taking every fifth boy or girl.

Interview design

Wragg (2002) states that designing an interview schedule is a highly skilled endeavour and that the researcher is required to list areas in which data are needed; a process which Cohen et al (2003) explains as translating the research questions into ones that will make up the content of the schedule. The researcher did not find this task easy. By reading back and forth through the literature and research questions, together with adaptations of some questions from Abelmann and Elmore's (1999) research schedules, the researcher was able to develop the variables that needed investigation.

In order to gain in-depth data on accountability at school level, and how schools respond to external accountability demands, it was necessary to have a variety of

questions which would generate some facts, opinions and attitudes; in-depth or specific information. The researcher needed to bear in mind the specific needs of the respondents, for example in respect of their level of education. The researcher decided to start all the schedules; for the head teacher, subject coordinator, teacher, parent and students, with the same 'grand tour' question:

'What do you understand by the term accountability?'

Specific questions were then directed to each of the categories. The schedules included other similar questions. For example,

'What do you think a teacher is accountable for?'

Other questions to provide in-depth information:

'What are the processes or structures that exist to ensure accountability?'

The question format was also important in terms of the type of information they would generate.

Interviews were often characterised by open-ended questions. Open-ended questions, like the three examples given above, were chosen to offer the advantage of flexibility. They were to provide the researcher with the opportunity to probe, so that more depth could be attained. There was also the opportunity to clarify anything that might be relevant to the data. Furthermore, Cohen et al (2003) state that those types of questions test the limit of the respondents' knowledge, encourage co-operation and help establish the rapport between respondent and interviewer. The less controlled and predictable nature of open responses means that they are far more likely than data collected from closed questions to challenge the prevailing paradigm or to shed light on something previous researchers have missed.

Closed format questions were also used. For example:

'Do you believe teachers understand clearly what they are held accountable for?' to which the only answers would be 'yes' or 'no'.

Such questions had been chosen because they help to achieve some form of uniformity of measurement for some aspects of the data and, hence, greater reliability (Cohen et al, 2003).

Piloting the interviews

Wragg (2002) suggests that researchers should take note of two important things; to pass it on to experienced people for their comments and then to pilot the interview. The researcher asked a colleague to read the interview schedules to ensure clarity. The interviews were then be piloted in the schools other than those from the main case study sample; on the Island schools of Praslin and La Digue as all the schools on the main island will be part of the main study. The purpose was to ensure that the instruments were free of bias and contained no redundant items (Wragg, 2002).

Ethical issues

Since interviews concern interpersonal interactions (Cohen et al, 2003), they have an ethical dimension. This includes the aspect of informed consent, where the researcher had to explain the interview process to the respondents. The explanation included issues of confidentiality, anonymity, non-identifiability and non-traceability of reported accounts to the respondents. When interviewing children, Cohen and Manion (1994) point out that consent from the parents is required and that students should not be coerced into participating in the focus group. They should also have the right to opt not to participate at any time, if the interviews make them feel uncomfortable or if they feel that they are risking being harmed. This initial

explanation was done through a personal letter sent to the participants and pupils' parents, a week before the interviews were scheduled. When the researcher arrived at the case study schools, informed consent was also sought on an individual basis.

Recording the interviews

Cohen et al (2003) claim that an audio-tape recorder might be unobtrusive but might constrain the respondents too. They add that it might be less threatening not to have any mechanical means of recording, but also warn that the reliability of the data may depend on the researcher's memory only. Taking their advice, the researcher planned to make notes and use audio-tape too during the interviews, at the time counting on a trade off between collecting as much data as possible and avoiding a threatening environment. Unfortunately due to malfunctioning and the expense that would be incurred in purchasing a new machine, audio-recording was not undertaken. Prior to the interviews the respondents were advised about how they would be recorded.

Observations

Foster (1996) claims that observational data is often combined with information from conversations, interviews and documents to provide an in-depth picture of the perspectives and cultures (Foster, 1996:4). Mahoney (1997) defines observational techniques as ways in which an individual obtains data directly on programmes, processes or behaviours that are being investigated.

The accountability of primary schools was being studied to see how schools construct their own conceptions of accountability, to observe the language of accountability as it was operationalised, to observe how school leaders, and teachers, parents and students, think about and behave towards accountability issues in

schools. The purpose of those observations was to ‘probe deeply and analyse intensively’ (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 106) the operations and activities listed above. By observing them, the researcher could develop a holistic perspective of primary schools’ accountability in the Seychelles, that is, an understanding of the context within which the concept operates.

Since the researcher was given the opportunity to look at what is taking place ‘in situ’, she was able to be ‘open-ended and inductive’ (Cohen et al, 2000:305), to see things that participants were not aware of or might not talk freely about in interviews.

Why observations?

Observations had been chosen because, in the quest for an understanding of how accountability functions, this research tool can:

- Give direct access and insights into complex social interactions and physical settings.
- Provide permanent and systematic records of those interactions and settings.
- Enrich and supplement data gathered by other techniques in order to allow triangulation.
- Be used to address such research questions as: “*Who exercises accountability in Seychelles Primary schools?*”

Observations had been decided upon for data collection due to the advantages they offer. Foster (1996) and Mahoney (1997) outline some of the most significant benefits relevant to this study:

1. Observations avoid relying on what participants might tell us about their schools in interviews, on questionnaires or in written accounts, as the researcher recorded what she saw happening as it happened.
2. In cases requiring evaluative judgments, it would be inappropriate for the researcher to rely on what participants say, rather the judgments were based on observations made by the researcher.
3. Observations provided good opportunities for the researcher to identify unanticipated outcomes.

Morrison (1993:80) also claims that observations enable one to gather data on:

- 'The physical setting'- that is, the school or class environment and how they are organised.
- 'The human setting'- which is about how the staff are organised and their characteristics as well as the people to be observed; the head teacher, subject coordinator, teachers, parents and students.
- 'The interactional setting'- that is, the interactions about accountability that take place, whether formal, as in the report of end of term exams, or informal, like discussing a child's progress between a teacher and a parent.
- 'The program setting'- which explains how resources are organised, the pedagogical styles, and how curriculum is organised.

All those components bore significantly on the observations as I one way or another they affected the ways in which accountability is made operational.

However, carrying out observations could also present the researcher with some problems. Foster (1996) cautions that it might not be possible for the researcher to observe the phenomenon of interest. In other words, the setting may not present the

researcher with any interactions about accountability, thus rendering the time spent wasted. Observations also provide only a partial view of the functioning of the concept, but the researcher had taken the precaution to combine data collections methods for a fuller picture. This combination would be vital to substantiate the representation of reality, which was ‘inevitably filtered through the eyes of the observer’ (Foster, 1996:14). It might have happened, too, that the participants would have consciously or unconsciously alter their behaviour because of the observations. In addition, observation ‘places high demands on time, effort, resources and the researcher’s sustained commitment’ (Moyles, 2002:174), and the wealth of data collected needs to be categorised and analysed. The researcher was called upon to manage time effectively, sustain commitment through implementation of a meticulous working plan, and be really clear about how the data is to be organised.

Forms of observation

Moyles (2002:175) refers to two types of observations; ‘naturalistic’ approaches advocated by Guba and Lincoln in 1987 and ‘formal’ approaches advocated by Croll in 1986. In the first approach, the researcher is also a participant in the activities or interaction with or without the awareness of those being observed. In the second, the researcher is non-participatory and often uses systematic observation tools as a means of data gathering. That approach pre-determines the observation’s focus and can be quantified by, for example, noting the number, frequency or timing of particular events. In the present study, the researcher entered the scene as a non-participant, armed with the knowledge of what she wanted to observe and why.

Cohen et al (2000: 305) claim that observations range from ‘unstructured to structured, responsive to pre-ordinate’. The author explains that a researcher doing a highly structured observation will know in advance what she is looking for and have

the categories worked out beforehand. In qualitative research, the researcher was drawn into ‘the living complexity of the phenomenon of interest’ (Cohen et al, 2000: 306) that is, the world of accountability of schools and teachers, which included processes, operations and relationships. As ‘situations unfold, connections, causes and correlations can be observed’ (Cohen et al, 2000:306) as they occurred. The qualitative researcher sought to catch the dynamic nature of those processes and events by looking for intentions, trends and patterns over time.

It is worth noting that the non-participation of the researcher had anticipated some difficulty, as the observer, had previously been a teacher, subject coordinator and primary school headteacher, even she was no longer at the time of the study. Moyles (2002) also claims that it is probably true to say that the context of practitioner based research, as in the case of the present study, makes it very difficult for the researcher not to be too involved. At the same time it might have been useful that the researcher was armed with ‘insider’ knowledge to understand what to look for and how to analyse data to be collected.

Preparation of instruments

For the collection of data, a decision had to be made about which techniques to be used and what instruments to prepare. Mahoney (1996) emphasises that observations are carried out using a carefully developed set of steps and instruments where the observer comes to the scene with a set of concepts, definitions, and criteria for describing events.

To guide the decision, it was important to re-consider Mahoney (1996)’s remark about observations being guided by a structured protocol which can range from a narrative describing events to a checklist or a rating scale of specific behaviours

and/or activities that address the study's questions. Field notes may also be used to provide in-depth background, or help the observer to remember salient events, if a form is not completed at the time of observations. Having considered all those options, and the research questions, the researcher decided that the observations needed to yield systematic data, but also details of events. A combination was used to ensure a fuller picture. Therefore the researcher decided on two possible frameworks: a form of time sampling matrix or grid, and a running record.

a) Time sampling

This is described by Rolfe (2005) as a record whereby 'occurrences of the behaviour(s) of interest are recorded for set time periods' (Rolfe, 2005:228). Cohen et al (2000) refer to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) 'chronologs', where each separate behavioural episode is noted together with the time it happened, or recording an observation at regular intervals. The researcher decided to adopt blocks of fifteen (15) minutes (see figure 1), where the observations are taking place; that is, at school level.

<i>Time</i>	<i>What to observe /Observations</i>						
	<i>S. Meeting</i>	<i>I. Meeting</i>	<i>T. Meeting</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Management Meeting</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Parents Visits to school</i>
8:00							
8:15							
8:30							
8:45							
9:00							

Figure3. 1: Observation grid. (Adapted from Rolfe, 2005)

This technique allowed the researcher to observe events, where there is the potential for generating much data about school accountability. The framework also allowed the researcher to measure the relative frequency of occurrences of accountability behaviours, which will provide data about the culture of the school. The design of the instrument proved to be difficult as the researcher was still uncertain whether to note what to observe (the focus) or simply write down what happens during those 15 minute blocks. The second option might have resulted in having irrelevant data; whereas the researcher needed to understand accountability processes well in order to accommodate the first option. She decided on the first choice, but all the time being aware of the need to be selective. Therefore, the researcher used the grid to note down accountability-related processes, events or activities that occurred during the observations, but did not cover management or SIT meetings as it was found that minutes recorded from those meetings sufficed as data of proceedings.

b) Running record

A running record is one of the most obvious forms of qualitative data collection methods (Rolfe, 2005), as it involves narrative descriptions. This technique was chosen by the researcher for the purpose of shadowing the headteacher of the case-study schools for a day. The researcher was to observe interactions with teachers, subject coordinators, parents and students. The observer wrote down everything that occurred (Rolfe, 2005); a combination of both time sampling and running record; for example what the headteacher, the subject coordinator, teacher, parent or student do or say, that constitutes exercising accountability. Recordings took place at 15 minutes intervals.

Moyles (2002) warns that the process of shadowing itself needs careful planning. The author also acknowledges that it was difficult to control observer effects on a situation. Being observed may affect the behaviour of the subjects. These may include abnormal behaviour of subjects, such as avoidance of a meeting or other activity or adverse responses to being observed. The researcher felt that planning the observations meticulously, and providing adequate explanation of the aims and processes of the study, who and what were to be observed and why, might reduce those negative effects.

The recording was in the form of field notes (Cohen et al, 2000), in combination with recordings of events on the grid. They included descriptions which, when put together and written out, formed a 'comprehensive and comprehensible' account of what happened. To facilitate categorisation and analysis, Cohen et al (2000) suggest that four sets of data should be kept; 'live' notes, expanded notes made after observations, journal notes recording issues, ideas, difficulties, etc. and a tentative running record of on-going analysis and interpretation, which the researcher

undertook with the intention of systemising observations and thus increasing their reliability.

The observations were combined with other methods so as to validate findings through triangulation (Moyles, 2002). In observational based-research, there are two types of validity (Cohen et al, 2000). To ensure 'external validity', the researcher planned to rigorously enhance subjectivity so that results may be applicable to other situations. On the other hand, 'internal validity' depended on the researcher's efforts to dispassionately, involve herself in the observations so that results were genuine, or represent 'the real thing'. The highest level of credibility, of both the processes and the instruments by which data was to be collected, was to be sought as well. The researcher had also made provision for three sets of observations to be carried out, to enhance reliability.

Ethical issues

Mahoney (1997), claims that observational techniques are perhaps the most privacy-threatening data collection methods. Cohen et al (2000) refer to tensions between invasion and protection of privacy, between informed consent and violation in the interest of the wider public. For those ethical and objectivity purposes, the researcher needed to ensure that subjects were absolutely clear about their right to an explanation of aims, procedures, purposes, publication possibilities and the consequences of the research as well as having the right to refuse to take part or withdraw at any stage (Moyles, 2002).

Sampling

In the two case-study schools, three sets of observations spread out over time were be carried out. The 'purposive sample' (Fogelman, 2002) of the headteacher for

shadowing was likely to generate the features of accountability being exercised through the head's actions, or daily transactions. Since there was the possibility of the headteacher interacting with other stakeholders such as subject coordinators, teachers, pupils and parents, those groups of people were considered to be an opportunity sample who may become significant respondents in the study.

Piloting the observations

Moyles (2002:88) strongly advises on the piloting of observations in order to test the instruments as well as 'get the feel for the relevancy of field notes'. Piloting was carried out in a school, which was not part of the case-study group. This piloting also served as training for the researcher for the actual study. It advised the researcher on time management issues too.

Documentary analysis

The analysis of documents offered the researcher another method of data collection. Walker (1985:64) explains that documentary analysis is 'superior in finding out retrospective information about a programme' whereas Duffy (1993) states that most educational projects need the analysis of documentary evidence.

Documents are described as written texts, which relate to some aspects of the social world (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). These authors also point out that there are also visual documents. Duffy (1993: 68) says that the document is a general term for 'impression left by a human being on a physical object', and claims that the most popular documents are printed sources. Those documents range from the most official ones to private and personal records. In the author's research, text-based

documents (Mason, 1996) in the form of School Development Plans, School Improvement Team Meetings' minutes and Management Team minutes were the sources from which data were gathered. Job descriptions of all categories of respondent; headteachers, subject coordinators and teachers, were also used.

The development plans were scrutinised to establish whether, and to what extent, they provide insights into school and teacher accountability. The two sets of minutes also had the potential to throw light on policies and practices relevant to school or teacher accountability. The job descriptions were expected to provide insights into the intended patterns of accountability of post holders.

Why documents?

Documents are used for the generation of data for different purposes:

- Researchers need documents to know about the process by which they are made.
- Data on the phenomena they are working with may not be available in any other form.
- Researchers may wish or need to use documents together with other methods of data collection (Mason, 1996:73).

In the author's research, obtaining data, which are not available in other forms, and using the method to triangulate with others, were the two most significant purposes.

The documents were perused to find information about:

1. The school's intentions in terms of accountability functions, processes and relationships.
2. Records of discussions of accountability issues at school level, and,

3. Records of evidence about responses to internal or external accountability demands.

The data gathered from those documents were combined with other sources to provide a fuller picture of school accountability exercised by the school as a unit and teachers, both internally and externally.

Preparation

The use of documents involves asking oneself questions about what is wanted from the sources. More importantly, Mason (1996) emphasises that a researcher has to be highly selective and needs to be consistent. Having decided on what to find out from the documents, the researcher then proceeded to ‘assess the value and productive potential of the research document (Mason, 1996). Data collection was not easy because it involved keeping a critical awareness of what constitutes data and how to use it. Walker (1985: 64) suggests three ways of doing this:

- ‘Tracking’- which is working through the documents looking for information to confirm some hypothesis.
- ‘Content analysis’- i.e. creating categories to analyse documents.
- ‘Case Study aggregation’- which is a means of aggregating different case studies together using a common conceptual framework so that findings will be cumulative.

Elements of the first two methods above were combined to work through the school documents. ‘Tracking’ was used to go through the documents to establish that there was information about accountability even if not to confirm any hypothesis at this stage. Then ‘content analysis’ was used to ‘focus on the classification of themes’.

Figure 3.2 illustrates the author’s approach:

<i>School: 01</i>				
<i>Document</i>	<i>Themes/Categories</i>			
	Accountability Intentions	Accountability Processes	Accountability Relationships	Accountability Interactions
1 School Development Plan				
2. S.I.T. Minutes of Meetings				
3. Minutes of Management Meetings.				
4. Job Descriptions				

Figure 3.2: Documentary analysis instrument

Information was entered under the different themes or categories. In support of this idea, Duffy (1993) claims that a researcher has to establish categories so that data derived can be systematically analysed.

Access to documents

Access to many documents can be at low cost and those proposed by the researcher could be easily collected and analysed at the schools or away from them. Cortazzi

(2002) stresses that researchers should consider some important questions when handling documents, for example, is there a need to sample documents? The researcher felt there was because the choice of the documents should be the ones most likely to generate data to answer the research questions. At another level, the researcher could not analyse all the minutes for school improvement meetings, for example, because of the sheer volume of such documents.

The researcher decided to access all relevant minutes during a school year while also scrutinising the most recent development plan and the current job descriptions. While the job descriptions provided insights into the roles and functions, the various action plans, targets and tasks extended over one year, provided information in terms of functions and intentions pertaining to accountability. Through the deliberations and decisions recorded in the minutes, a snapshot judgment was made as to what constitutes school and teacher accountability and how those operate.

Another question that Cortazzi (2002) asks is about the nature and social functions of the documents; whether they had been kept for a different purpose; that of keeping a record of the deliberations that took place at a meeting (as in the case of the minutes), and contribute to action, rather than for the retrieval of data about accountability issues. However, since deliberations at both the S.I. team and the management meetings guided the functioning of the school, they had the potential to generate data about school or teacher accountability.

‘Insider’ Research

Bell (1993) claims that, if a researcher undertakes an investigation in his/her own institution and knows colleagues well, one may assume that everyone will be willing

to help. The author cautions that it is not wise to take their cooperation for granted. Similarly, Busher (2002), states that being an 'insider' researcher raises a number of ethical issues. In the actual investigation, the researcher is also a Ministry of Education officer and a very well-known figure in all the primary schools. One issue, which is relevant to being an 'insider', is the perception of participants that information gathered for the purpose of the research might also be used in her capacity as education officer. Another important issue is how much information collected under 'normal rubrics of confidentiality' (Busher, 2000:80) is made available to the researcher? It was doubtful whether participants would be willing to express their views if they thought that the researcher would also use the data for Ministry purposes. In both cases, Bell (1993) suggests that all the respondents have to be convinced of the researcher's integrity and of the value of the research, as the respondents are the ones with the knowledge of the topic being studied. They had to be clear at the outset, before giving their 'informed consent', that the data collected will be used for the purpose it was intended, but that there is always the possibility that it might also be used unconsciously or consciously within the micro-political process of the school or in the management of the education system. The quality and trustworthiness of data that was to be collected may also be compromised as some participants may find it to their advantage to use the researcher as a channel for pursuing other political or managerial agendas (Busher, 2002). To overcome this, the researcher refrained from mentioning anything related to the research in the course of daily work and all data were kept at home rather than office. Work done during the day was strictly done on the researcher's own pen-drive rather than on the office computer. During the interviews, care was taken to keep questioning and probing within the context of the research.

Furthermore, the researcher as an insider needed to be aware of possible bias arising from her 'inside' knowledge of Seychelles schools. She guarded against seeing only data that conform to the researcher's ideas or manipulating data to fit her expectations. Particularly where observations are concerned, it was vital for the researcher to see everything that happened in the study and not only what may have fitted her preconceptions. The researcher needed to understand the context and or setting as a whole in order to make correct interpretations of what was seen and heard (Beloo, 2002). The researcher also needs to avoid interpretations of data based only on her own sense of 'reality' and world view. She needed to ensure that her interpretations and analysis 'ring true' in light of the data being presented as evidence from which conclusions will be drawn.

Data Analysis

Yin (2003) explains that data analysis means examining, categorising, tabulating, testing or otherwise putting together both quantitative and qualitative data to address the study's research questions. He further explains that the analysis of case study evidence is difficult because ways in which to do so have not been well defined.

Survey

The researcher planned to do some pre-coding for closed questions, for example, for the first section with information about gender, age, school size and length of employment. For open questions, the researcher planned to wait for all 152 questionnaires to be returned before coding and recording (Bell, 1993). Cohen et al (2000:265) suggest that the researcher checks whether all questionnaires are completed, all questions have been answered accurately and that respondents have interpreted the questions uniformly; a process known as editing, involving three tasks:

completeness, accuracy and uniformity (Cohen et al, 2000:265). Then ‘data reduction’ is done, that is, coding the survey questions where they will be assigned a number. A random sample of questionnaires will then be used to organise a tally of the range of responses.

In the analysis of qualitative data, from the interviews, observations and documentary analysis, the researcher was geared towards making critical choices about the meanings and values of the data that have been gathered (Watling, 2002). The same author proposes six elements in the analysis of qualitative data: defining and identifying data; collecting and storing data; data reduction and sampling; structuring and coding data; theory building and testing; then the reporting and writing of the research.

Case studies

In case study analysis, evidence can be presented in various ways and using various interpretations. Yin (1994) refers to Miles’ and Huberman’s (1984) alternative analytic techniques. Those may be arrays to display the data, creating displays, tabulating the frequency of events, ordering the information as well as other methods, done in such a way as not to bias the results. Yin (1994) presents three possible analytic techniques; but he explains that generally the analysis will depend on theoretical propositions leading to the case study. He offers:

- *Pattern-making*- an idea put forth by Trochim in 1989, and considered as one of the most desirable strategies. It consists of comparing an empirically based pattern with a predicted one; wherein if the patterns match, the internal reliability of the study is augmented.

- *Explanation building*- This is also pattern matching in which the analysis is done by building an explanation of the case. This may be most useful in explanatory case-studies, but Yin (1994) suggests that that it is also possible to use this approach for exploratory cases and as part of a hypothesis–generating process. The explanation building process begins with a theoretical statement, refines it, revises the proposition and the process is repeated from the beginning, even if the process is known to be fraught with limitations such as a loss of focus, which the researcher should try to avoid.
- *Time series*- analysis which Yin (1994) explains is very popular in experimental and quasi experimental analysis. Yin (1993: 124) explains that the logic underlying time series is the match between a trend of data points compared to (a) a theoretically significant trend specified before the onset of the investigation versus (b) some rival trend, also specified earlier, versus (c) any other trend based on some artefact or threat to internal validity.

Authenticity, Reliability and Validity

Authenticity

The notion of authenticity is important for two reasons:

- In helping to assess the quality of studies carried out by other researchers.
- In helping to determine the author’s research approach and methodology.

(Bush, 2002).

Though the aims and context largely determine research methods, the researcher needed to consider the quality criteria, which would enable her to respond with confidence when explaining the methodology. Validity, reliability and triangulation are all important, but those vary in meaning according to the researcher’s stance.

Advocates of case study stress that it is important to capture reality. This is done through representing the case authentically (Scott and Morrison, 2005), and by using participants' accounts of views and events. The researcher is then called upon to present the reality by giving the participants a voice, while not subduing the researcher's own voice. To ensure that both voices, that is the researcher's and the participants', are considered, the researcher needed to keep the voices separate, as much as possible in the data and decide which voice will be dominant. That decision rested on the researcher who needed to be clear about the purpose of the study, and whose reality she wanted to portray through this research and writing (Beloo, 2002). The author suggests that the etic, that is the researcher's voice, will always be there by way of how she organises the text, the data, what quotes are used and which data are ignored. To ensure that the emic, which is the participants' voice, is heard as well, the researcher was required to keep personal judgments and or interpretations out of the analysis as much as possible.

Reliability

Reliability relates to the probability that repeating a research procedure or method would produce identical or similar results. It provides a degree of confidence that replicating the process would ensure consistency. 'Reliability is the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions. A factual question which may produce one type of answer on one occasion but a different answer anotheris unreliable' (Bell, 1987:51). Yin (1994), states that reliability demonstrates that the operations of a study, such as the data collection processes, can be repeated, with the same results. The concept can be applied to several different research methods.

Validity

The concept of validity is utilised when judging whether research accurately describes the phenomenon, which it aims to describe (Bell, 1987). Three main components, the research design, the methodology, and the conclusions of the research, are needed to consider the validity. If an item is regarded as unreliable then it is also likely to lack validity, but a reliable item is not necessarily also valid. Validity, like reliability, is a notion that is most associated with positivist research and is questioned by researchers favouring qualitative or interpretivist approaches.

Where interviews are concerned, the most practical way the researcher used to achieve greater validity was to minimise bias as much as possible, through going back to check whether findings were dependable (Cohen et al, 2000).

In observations, Cohen et al (2000) propose triangulation of data sources and methodologies which is what the researcher aimed to do. Further to ensure validity in the observations, piloting was conducted to ensure that the ‘observational categories themselves are appropriate, exhaustive, discrete, unambiguous and effectively operationalised the purpose of the research’ (Cohen et al, 2000:129).

In the survey, the researcher foresaw two ways of ensuring the validity of questionnaires: first, by making sure that the questionnaires had been completed accurately, honestly and correctly through editing, that is, checking all the questionnaires for ‘completeness, accuracy and uniformity’ (Cohen et al, 2000:265). Secondly, by seeking a substantial response rate through sending reminders or going back to the school to trace questionnaires.

Triangulation

This is the process of comparing many sources of evidence in order to determine the accuracy of information. It is essentially a means of cross-checking data to establish its validity. Cohen and Manion (1994: 233) define the concept of triangulation as:

The use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour...triangular techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint.

(Cohen and Manion, 1994:233)

Niglas (2000) perceives the concept as more than using multiple measures of the same phenomenon, because in addition to using different sources of data, it involves combining different methods and theories as well as the perspectives of different participants. Among those, two ideas bear significantly on the actual research. Those are methodological triangulation and respondent triangulation.

Methodological triangulation

The use of data from the survey was used to compare with data from the more in-depth interviews, observations and documents of the case-studies. However, Massey and Walford (1999), caution against errors easily made in that type of triangulation. For example, the researcher was required to be cautious about making claims that agreements between the results of the methods prove the validity of the second method or assuming a qualitative statement by a respondent can be accurately converted in such a way as to plot it on the same place on a scale as a respondent would if asked. Triangulation was also done within each of the case studies, by

comparing the three different methods used; interviews, documentary analysis and observations and by using the same methods on different occasions.

Respondent triangulation

This constitutes asking the same questions of many different participants. Data may be both qualitative and quantitative, gathered from different sources at different times. In the study different groups of respondents, headteachers, subject coordinators teachers, parents and pupils, provided data for comparison.

In relation to combining qualitative and quantitative methods of research, it is evident here that the concept of triangulation is based on the assumption that by using several data sources, one can neutralise bias inherent in one particular data source. Another advantage of triangulation is that it can overcome the weakness of a single method (Niglas, 2000). Therefore, if results provide mutual confirmation, then the researcher can be sure that they are valid.

Overview

The researcher's study is a critical enquiry into accountability in primary schools. A mixed approach was undertaken so that the phenomenon of accountability can be explored from different perspectives and that data can be triangulated. The mixed methods approach was also chosen in order to provide the potential for generalisability and allow appropriate emphasis to be put on different stages of the investigation process: the survey, data collection, then the interviews, observations and documentary analysis; taking stock and making decisions. Questionnaires were used for the survey, which encompassed 19 state schools, while two schools were

chosen for in-depth case studies of school accountability. Data were collected through multiple methods, instruments and sources of evidence. Throughout the research, particular consideration was given to all ethical issues, including anonymity, confidentiality, avoiding harm to respondents and the use of data, in order to construct a study that is robust; valid, and reliable. Data were presented through an array of techniques pertaining to both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

CHAPTER FOUR

MAIN SURVEY FINDINGS

Introduction

The principal purpose of the survey was to collect data about accountability in all the Mahe primary schools, looking at perceptions and practice. The central guiding assumptions were concept-based, hence a deductive approach through the use of questionnaires. The chapter has been structured to start with an introduction followed by the presentation of findings from:

- Headteachers' survey,
- Subject Coordinators' survey,
- Teachers' survey,
- PTA Chairpersons' survey and
- An overview of the findings.

The aim was to present quality data so that the researcher could 'share the wealth' (Chenail, 1994) of the data. These consist of both qualitative and quantitative data in the form of both closed and open-ended questions which were organised as governed by the conceptual base of the phenomenon being studied. Those also guided the reduction process and helped to pre-code the data. Some data were arranged along central tendencies, ranking and frequencies. Those were presented in the form of tables giving emerging ideas or themes. Some data were classified into categories through summarising while others included text and quotations. In most cases,

though, data were presented in statistical forms like graphs and percentages. The findings for each respondent group generally follow the structure:

- Information about the participants
- Perceptions of school and teacher accountability
- The accountability of the potential stakeholder
- Accountability constructs and functions
- Reporting, consequences and sanctions
- The involvement of stakeholders in decision-making.

Prior to the data collection itself, permission had been sought from the Ministry of Education and then an introductory discussion was done with all the headteachers, each in turn, during which the researcher was introduced and the study explained. The researcher had to negotiate the time in which to introduce the study and emphasise that respondents had to substantiate their answers through written comments where it was necessary. This had proved to a certain extent to be a problem during the pilot study. Consequently, for the survey, not providing a response was very minimal for all respondent groups. The matrix prepared worked a long way towards tracing schools and respondent groups not returning questionnaires.

The survey included participants from all the primary schools on the main island, Mahe (100% sample).

Headteachers' Survey

The participants

There was a 100% return rate for headteacher questionnaires. Among those, three were male heads and sixteen were female. Eleven heads had been in their present positions for less than five years, and the eight others between six and 15 years.

Concepts of school accountability

First, the headteachers explained how they understood the concept in education and how they perceive it should function. Six school heads (32%) describe the concept by using the language of responsibility, as in ‘being responsible to give information or reasons for any happenings’ or ‘being responsible to ensure that objectives and curriculum programmes entrusted to the school are being implemented successfully’, or ‘responsible to answer for one’s actions’. Four others (21%) explained it as ‘being answerable for the performance of your school alongside the need to have well-founded data about teaching and learning’, ‘the ability to answer to all parties such as parents and the Ministry, about pupil performance results but mainly on teaching and learning’ or simply as ‘being answerable for pupil learning’. Three (16%) were of the opinion that school accountability is being required to give an account of events and behaviour to all stakeholders. The remaining six gave diverse answers such as ‘meeting the expectations of all partners’, ‘it relates to performance and development of systems/structures established in a school to evaluate pupils’, staff and the school. Performance, ‘given the fact that the government is financing the education of children, schools have to show how it is bringing about quality education’ and ‘what it wants the children to know after a certain number of years at school respectively. The variations in the different responses show that the concept is understood in a wide range of ways, but most of the responses contain similar elements to those found in the literature.

All the headteachers believe that schools ought to be accountable and gave further details about who they felt schools should be accountable to. Participants were allowed multiple responses, which were organised in ranking order (see table 4.1):

<i>Schools should be accountable to whom?</i>	<i>Percentage.</i>
1. Community/society	89%
2. Parents	84%
3. Ministry/Officials	80%
4. Students/Pupils	77%
5. Anyone involved in education.	26%
6. School staff/ Teachers	21%
7. Other Agencies	16%
8. Government	11%
9. School Management	5%

Table 4.1 Headteachers' perceptions of who schools should be accountable to

Table 4.2 shows the ranking order for what schools should be accountable. Multiple responses were allowed:

<i>Schools should be accountable for what?</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>
1. For pupils' academic performance- including progress, learning development, results and attainment.	32.5%
2. The school's performance- including the quality the quality of service, ensuring quality teaching and learning	27.5%
3. 3. Staff and pupil welfare-including professional development, behaviour and attitude.	17.5%
4. 4. Providing pupils with equal and best opportunities.	7.5%
5. Discussing the school's achievement and set backs.	5%
6. Teacher programme	5%

7. For budget and other resources that are allocated	5%
--	----

Table 4.2 Headteachers' perceptions of what schools should be accountable for

It was clear from the responses that most heads perceived that schools ought to be accountable for pupils' academic performance which included progress, learning development and results. Consequently they felt that schools ought to be accountable for ensuring quality teaching and learning, highlighting the link between the two.

The headteachers were asked to give their opinions about the means through which schools should be held accountable. Responses were classified as shown in table 4.3:

Support	Reporting	Monitoring	Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conferencing • Mentoring of Teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing accurate and meaningful information to the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders. • Discussions in meetings and other forums • Writing termly progress reports • Sending reports to parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring professional competence

Table 4.3 Headteachers' perceptions of how schools should be held accountable

The majority of headteachers were in favour of being held accountable through 'reporting' methods. Some of them felt that providing support through conferencing and mentoring was also a good way to hold schools accountable. They also

perceived consistent monitoring as well as training people to be competent as ways which would ensure accountability.

Accountability of the potential stakeholder group

Within this section, the headteachers were asked whether they considered themselves accountable. All (100%) responded in the affirmative. Their answers are similar to their perceptions of what they should be accountable for. Again, the headteachers were allowed multiple responses (See table 4.4):

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Headteachers are actually accountable for...</i>	<i>RESPONSES (%)</i>
1	For pupils' performance and learning development	33.3%
2	Staff professional growth, development and performance	24%
3	Meeting pupils' various needs	13%
4	Giving meaningful information to parents about their children's academic progress	5.5%
	Providing leadership for measuring and evaluating school effectiveness and progress for school development	5.5%
	Management of budget and other resources allocated to the school as well as 'school fund'.	5.5%
5	Ensuring the school portrays a positive image and ethos	3.7%
	Everything that goes on in the school	3.7%
6	Effective implementation of the Ministry's policies	1.9%
	Effective implementation of the school's policies and guidelines	1.9%
	Establishing effective structures that promote a culture of accountability	1.9%

Table 4.4: What headteachers are actually accountable for

Table 4.4 indicates that headteachers are actually accountable for more than what they perceived they should be accountable for, but in both cases 'for pupils' performance and leaning development' ranks the top with 33.3%. 'Giving meaningful information to parents' was an aspect for which none of the headteachers felt they ought to be accountable for, but they acknowledged that they do have this

accountability. The headteachers appeared to feel that somebody else, perhaps subordinate to them, had the responsibility to do that.

Most headteachers acknowledged that, in reality, they are most accountable to parents, with seventeen of them naming that stakeholder group first. The second recipient of this accountability is the Ministry of Education and its officials, followed by the pupils/students and the community, respectively. Figure 4.1 shows these findings:

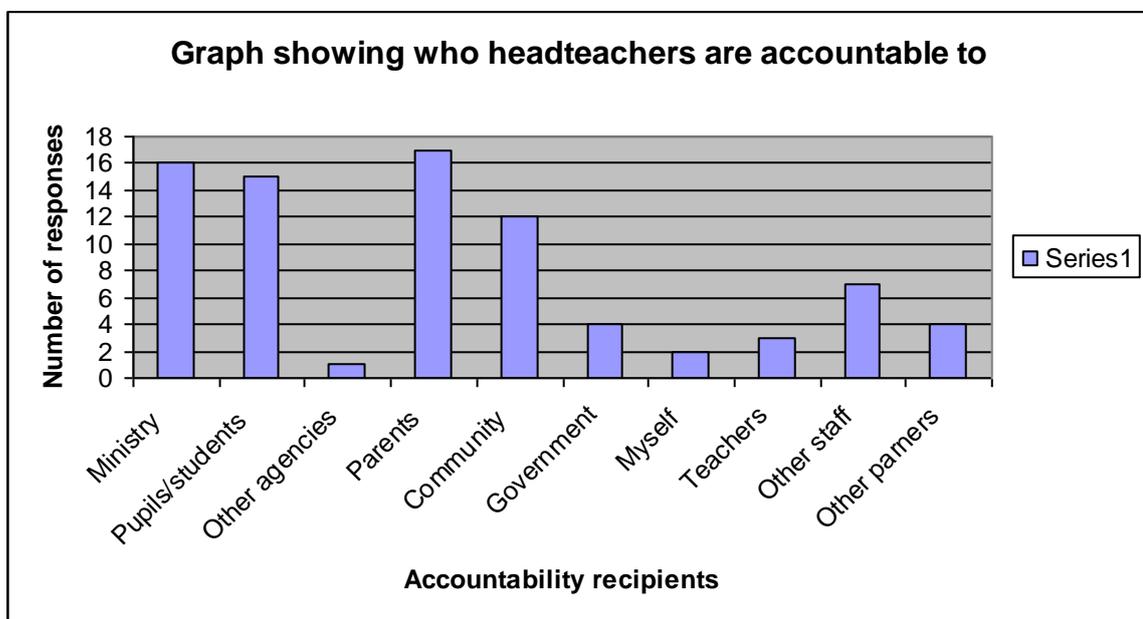


Figure 4.1: Who headteachers are actually accountable to

Based on the organisational structure of the system, it would seem that headteachers ought to be most accountable to the Ministry of Education, but this respondent group claims to be more accountable to parents. The Ministry ranked second on their list.

The questionnaire also sought details of how the headteachers are held accountable. The question revealed divergent opinions, and some surprising responses. Headteachers had not considered budget as something for which they are actually

accountable; it got a low ranking, but it was seen by 58 % of the heads as one of the most frequent way by which they were held accountable. Another frequently reported way of being held accountable was through ‘keeping up to date records on pupils’ progress’ and reporting about it. ‘Reporting to parents on issues pertaining to the school, through reports at the end of each term’, ‘give feedback on development planning’, ‘producing relevant proof to different parties’, ‘discussing strengths and weaknesses’, all are other means through which headteachers’ accountability is ensured. One thing that this list of mechanisms, has in common is that they all have something to do with ‘reporting’. Other responses such as ‘ensuring teaching and learning is taking place’ or ‘ensuring that staff and pupils are safe at all times’ do not really constitute how headteachers are held accountable as explanations as to how this ‘ensuring’ takes place is lacking.

Accountability constructs and functions

The headteachers were asked to discuss some potential features of accountability at their schools, using a modified ‘Likert Scale’. The distribution of responses is displayed in table 4.5, in rank order:

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>SA %</i>	<i>A %</i>	<i>D %</i>	<i>SD %</i>
1	Professional Development is a regular part of a teacher’s work	68	21	11	0
2	Teachers report on pupils’ actual learning experiences	44	56	0	0
3	Adjustments/changes are promptly brought about to improve the school	21	21	37	21
4	Decision-making is guided by procedures to use information	26	63	11	0
5	Children are provided with equal opportunities to learn	18	76	6	0
6	Self-Evaluation is done regularly	25	69	6	0
7	Parents are regularly involved in decision-making	5.3	47.4	42	5.3
	Students are involved in decision-making	0	58	42	0

8	Students are actively involved in committees	10.5	42	37	10.5
9	Teachers report only on pupils' academic performance	21	79	0	0

Table 4.5: Features of school accountability

Almost all headteachers agreed that professional development is a part of a teacher's work, while the lowest response was for 'teachers report only on pupils' academic performance'. This indicates that teachers also report on other things as well. That was supported by high agreement in the presence of the statement 'teachers report on pupils' actual learning experiences', which may indicate the reporting of all learning experiences.

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 shows headteachers' responses regarding headteachers' accountability constructs and relationships at their schools respectively:

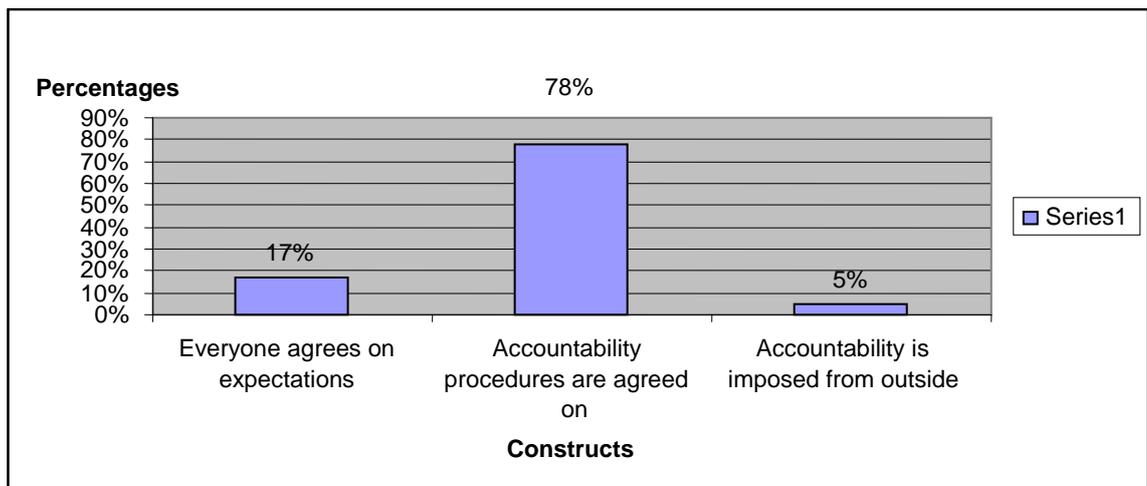


Figure 4.2: Accountability constructs at school level

Figure 4.2 indicates that the majority of heads believed that people agree on what form accountability takes at their school, with the majority considering the form as procedures and the rest taking it as expectations. A minority (5%) claimed that accountability is imposed from outside the school.

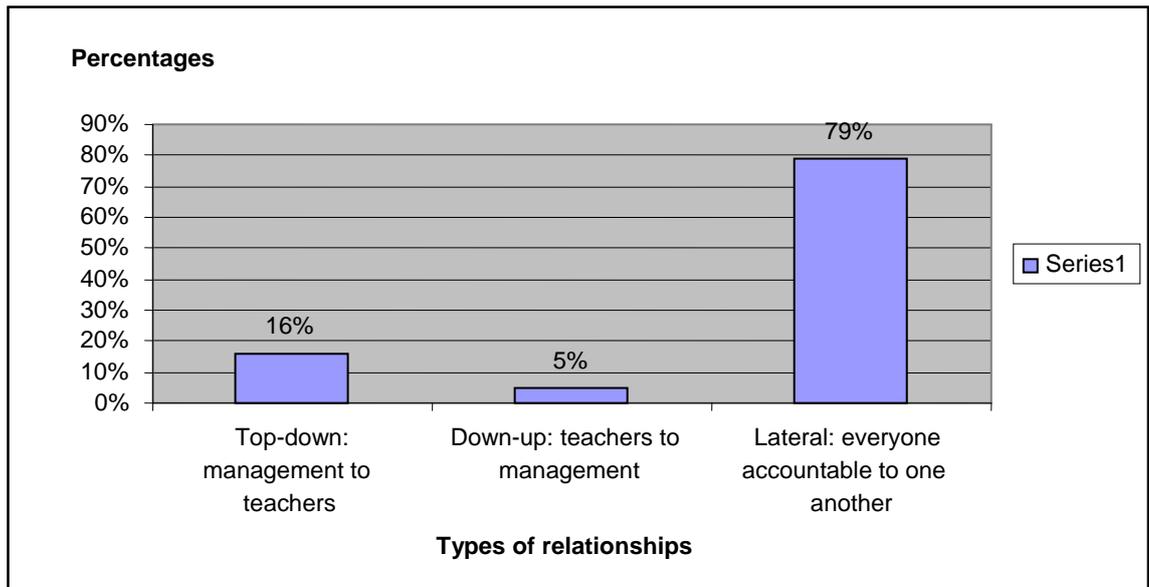


Figure 4.3: Existing accountability relationships at school level

Figure 4.3 shows that the great majority (79%) of headteachers felt that there is lateral accountability where everyone is accountable to one another. This seems to contradict their claim (see Table 4.1) that they do not owe accountability to other members of management. This may suggest that, while there are mechanisms which exist at school level, their functioning may be problematic.

Headteachers were also asked to rate the accountability of their teachers (see table 5.6):

Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Less than Satisfactory
0	0	10	9	0
0%	0%	53%	47%	0%

Table 4.6: The level of teacher accountability

Table 4.6 shows that headteachers viewed their teachers' accountability as satisfactory or good. The respondents were also asked rate accountability of their school, as a unit. None of them claimed that 'there is over-accountability'; the

majority advocated ‘there is an adequate level of accountability. Significantly, more than a quarter (28%) admitted that ‘there is a lack of accountability’.

The headteachers highlighted some interesting issues in terms of illustrating enough or the lack of accountability. For example, those who claimed that accountability was far below the level required, explained that teacher absenteeism was a major concern when it happened constantly without valid reasons. Another problem is that pupils’ performance and results are not up to the expected level and teachers keep blaming that on pupils when called in to answer to these concerns. Another issue raised is that there is not enough evidence to prove that pupils are progressing or if anything is being done on a regular basis to help raise their academic performance.

On the contrary, table 4.7 provides evidence of where accountability is perceived to be adequate or better:

<i>Evidence provided</i>	<i>No. of Responses</i>
Teachers using suitable procedures to give feedback about teaching and learning; their use of data collected from reports and records to measure progress and records kept by teachers	31%
Staff assuming responsibility for following standards of practice; applying the necessary knowledge and skills; gathering data to shape strategies for improvement.	23%
Teachers’ involvement in school life; their participation in decision-making, serving actively on different committees, in the planning of both academic and non academic activities.	15%
Teachers are becoming increasingly conscious of the quality of instruction they provide (features in their reports)	15%
Everyone having the opportunity to discuss work planned and done; reflect on progress and follow-up to improve.	8%
Target-setting by both pupils and teachers; termly performance reviews; subject and progress reports.	8%

Table 4.7: Evidence for adequate accountability

Table 4.7 shows several different aspects but none of them related to parents. Many responses related strongly to the concept of accountability. For example, three headteachers mentioned following standards of practice or teachers giving feedback about teaching and learning.

Reporting, consequences and sanctions

This section focused entirely on the processes of accountability but with an emphasis on the concept of ‘reporting’ as an accountability process. An overwhelming majority (18 or 95%) accepted the need for reporting and consequences. Table 4.8 shows how the participants explained these processes:

<i>Explanation Given</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>
It provides information to all stakeholders, especially parents and ensures that they know what is going on.	28%
One needs to report to the Ministry about the school’s achievements and concerns. They can then make an overall judgement so as to help the school to improve.	17%
It is giving feedback on improvement targets and establishing progress made based on a plan of action.	11%
It is discharging my obligation to share the performance of learners, the effectiveness of the institution and the quality of management and leadership as well as points for action and improvement.	11%
One has to be transparent and share information on the performance of the school in all its aspects.	11%
Reporting ensures that everyone takes his/her responsibilities seriously,	5.5%
Through reporting to teachers, management gets feedback on what is happening, the actual state of things	5.5%
This is because one is providing concrete data on different aspects and justifying oneself about those,	5.5%
Since accountability is ‘giving an account of’ reporting is one of its components.	5.5%

Table 4.8 Explanations for considering reporting as an accountability process

Five headteachers in that group found ‘reporting’ to be a suitable procedure for giving information to different stakeholders, particularly parents. The diverse answers signify the presence of a number of stakeholders involved in school life,

both internal and external. The responses also highlight the importance of record-keeping. At least two heads focus not only on giving feedback to stakeholders but also on what needs to improve.

According to one headteacher, however, nobody pays much attention to the report. Even if one works very hard to attain high standards for one's students, with limited resources, the report sent to the Ministry and parents is quickly forgotten.

The headteachers were also asked whether there were any penalties or consequences following reported accounts. The majority (71%) said 'yes'. These respondents were then asked to provide details about the penalties or consequences. The responses are organized into 'hard' and 'soft' penalties or consequences (see table 4.9):

<i>'Soft'</i> <i>Penalties/Consequences</i>	<i>% of responses</i>	<i>'Hard'</i> <i>Penalties/Consequences</i>	<i>% of responses</i>
Be given recommendations for actions in set time limit	25%	Strict measures: -forfeiture of salary -suspension -dismissal	20%
Can be called in for a talk and ending at that in most cases	15%	Can be referred to the Ministry for further actions to be taken	10%
Be provided with support; mentoring/guidance and professional development	5%	Be branded as having poor leadership skills or management qualities	5%
Can be asked to apologise in writing	5%	Subjected to derogatory remarks about both the school and the headteacher	5%
Maybe asked for clarifications	5%	Can be appraised poorly at the end of the year	5%

Table 4.9: Penalties/consequences following reported accounts

Five headteachers believed there are no penalties, but no headteacher made reference to any positive consequences in cases where the reported account meets with approval. Discussing penalties and consequences within the scope of accountability

is complicated, contested and dangerous terrain. Although the respondents were allowed multiple responses, most of them restricted themselves to one or two. However, those that were listed contained both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ sanctions. The most common penalty was being given recommendations for action within a set time limit, that is, the person involved is given the opportunity to redress the situation.

The headteachers had the chance to elaborate on the subject of consequences and penalties when they discussed whether they agreed with a school or a teacher being sanctioned when expectations are not met .Table (4.10) shows their responses, using a Likert scale:

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	Mean.
School	2	7	5	3	2.47
	12%	41%	29%	18%	
Teachers	2	7	1	3	2.61
	15%	54%	8%	23%	

Table 5.10: The extent to which headteachers agree that a school or a teacher should be sanctioned or penalized

Table 4.10 shows a low level of agreement to both the school and the teacher being sanctioned, with the school having lower level. The ways in which both the school and the teacher can be sanctioned are shown in Table 4.11:

<i>How can a school be sanctioned or penalised?</i>	<i>How can a teacher be sanctioned or penalised?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should take into consideration the agreed targets and follow-up, then a change in leadership for better performance • Discussion with Management and Staff; Evaluation and follow-up. • Set short term improvement targets; writing of regular improvement reports; discussing achievements and short-comings. • By the quality of evaluation reports it gets from external auditors'/ evaluations • Create a time frame for improvement and monitor to ensure that expectations are met. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal warning followed by written for one repeated actions. • Conferencing at the Schools' Division. • Termination for serious cases. • Be made aware of the weakness • Given a deadline to work on improvement targets. • Monitored regularly on work performance. • Support should be given in the form of mentoring

Table 4.11: How both a teacher and a school can be sanctioned

The involvement of stakeholders

The final section of the survey concentrated on the involvement of different potential stakeholders in the decision-making process in the areas of budget, curriculum, staffing and student welfare.

Based on the evidence collected, the Ministry was ranked most involved in at least three of the areas, that is, budget, curriculum and staffing which is highly indicative of the centralized system. For the fourth area; student welfare the school's management was ranked higher, followed by teachers. Surprisingly, that same group (teachers) was ranked third in the decision-making process for curriculum. That shows the presence of a prescribed curriculum which headteachers felt that teachers had no part in developing.

Parents and other agencies were relegated to the lowest ranking in all four areas.

There were no significant distinctions in responses among the headteachers.

Other comments made signal a wish for harder sanctions, incentives for good performance and more involvement from students and parents.

Subject Coordinators' Survey

The participants

Fifty-seven subject coordinators from languages, and the Maths & science subject areas, and the Early Childhood section, were sampled for the survey, but the return rate was 91%. Among those about half (25) have been in this post for less than five years and most of them (32) were between the ages of 31 and 45.

Perceptions of school and teacher accountability

Despite some instances of overlap between the terms, all of the subject coordinators understood accountability in one form or another as shown in table 4.12:

Being responsible- (27%)	Being answerable (15 %)	Provide an account (23 %)	To give necessary data/information (6 %)	Others (29 %)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -to give evidence about school performance -to discharge your roles -to mould the students' future -to implement school policies -for providing students' appropriate education -for all school activities Of the school and liability for its staff -for teaching and learning -to provide evidence of various expectations to justify actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -to parents, students, the community and the ministry for student learning -to questions with regards to students' education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -of a school's or student's results and behaviour to those who have a right to know -on the various aspects of meeting standards of the Ministry of Education, as its obligation to do so -of what schools do -of teaching and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -regarding any issue in the school t its partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -parents outside the school has trust in it -the school should be a place which creates opportunities for the staff and students to develop themselves fully -daily running of the school with regards to policies, rules and regulations set by the ministry and involving parents -the monitoring of teaching practices of teachers and student progress. Teachers should be monitored closely to ensure that they interact constructively with students for better output for both students and teachers

Table 4.13: Subject coordinators' perceptions of school accountability

All respondents were positive that schools should be accountable, meaning that there should be accountability measures for schools. They were also asked to explain who they think schools should be accountable to. The participants were allowed multiple responses in the form of a list. The responses were ranked as shown in table 4.14:

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Schools should be accountable to...</i>	<i>%</i>
1.	Parents	80.7
2.	Students	67
3.	The Ministry	63
4.	The community	50.8
5.	Teachers	21
6.	The society	17.5
7.	Other staff	14
9.	School management	12.2
10.	Support providers	10.5
11.	The Government	8.8
12.	Auditor	1.8

Table 4.14: Subject coordinators' perception of who schools should be accountable to

Table 4.14 shows that parents ranked top in the subject coordinators' perceptions of who schools should be accountable to. Students ranked second, while the Ministry of Education came up third.

The next question asked what schools should be held accountable for. The ranked responses are shown in table 4.15 Multiple responses were allowed:

<i>Schools should be accountable for what?'</i>	<i>Percentage of s/c responses</i>
1. For students' learning progress, achievement and development	54%
2. Implementation of curriculum; for effective teaching and learning	52%
3. Staff performance, welfare development and growth	25%
4. For students' results in national examinations	19%
5. Providing evidence /information about school issues and what is happening	17%
6. Security and safety	13%

Students' behaviour and welfare	13%
7. Management of resources: finances, infra-structure, materials and equipment	8%
8. For meeting needs of society in workforce	4%
School's progress	4%
Decisions made	4%
Innovations	
9. Evaluation	2%
Deployment of staff	2%
Working in collaboration with other partners	2%
Providing support	2%

Table 4.15: Subject coordinators' perceptions of what schools should be accountable for

Table 4.15 shows that subject coordinators considered students' learning progress, achievement and development very important as just over than half of them felt that schools should be accountable first for those. The implementation of the curriculum, and accountability for effective teaching, also seemed important a similar number of respondents mentioned these categories. Those responses also show that subject coordinators perceive the scope of accountability to be wide. Unexpectedly, only 8% of the group felt that schools ought to be accountable for the management of resources, infrastructure, materials and equipment.

Perceptions were also sought in the area of '*by what means*' schools should be held accountable. Responses were classified under for emerging themes: Assessment/ Examinations results, Record Keeping, Reporting and Monitoring, as shown in table 4.16. Again multiple responses were allowed:

<i>Assessment/ Exams results</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Record- Keeping</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Reporting</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Monitoring</i>	<i>%</i>
- through results: exams and classroom assessments.	8%	- what has been recorded in terms of monitoring teaching and learning	2%	- through reporting: appraisals and conferences	8%	- ensuring all partners do what they are supposed to do.	31%
- through students' performance	4%	- official documents kept	17%	- through written reports termly, annually	19%	- by following through the 3 year Development Plan	4%
				- students' termly reports to parents	19%		

Table 4.16: Subject coordinators' perceptions of how schools should be held accountable

Table 4.16 shows that 35 % of the subject coordinators perceived that schools should be held accountable through the process of monitoring, but most of them (46 %) felt that reporting was a good way in which to hold schools accountable. The smallest number (12%) felt that assessment or exams results were an appropriate mechanism through which schools can be held accountable.

The Accountability of the stakeholder

This section called on the respondents to think about and discuss their own accountability. All 52 of them answered that they are actually accountable and they explained for what. The participants were again allowed multiple responses which they had to provide as a list in ranking order, hence the presentation of their answers (see table 4.17):

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Subject coordinators are actually accountable for...</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1.	For ensuring that teaching and learning takes place effectively	48%
2.	For students' learning development and welfare	33%
3.	For achievements and setbacks	25%
4.	Teachers' welfare, performance and training	13%
5.	Teachers' planning and delivery	12%
6.	The responsibilities of my job description	10%
7.	For participating in activities organised by the Ministry, the school and the community	4%
8.	For maintaining parent-school partnership	4%
8.	Monitoring and mentoring of teachers	4%
9.	For decisions made by management which are in line with classroom practices	2%
9.	For curriculum resources related to the subjects I coordinate	2%

Table 4.17: What subject coordinators are actually accountable for

Table 4.17 shows that almost half (48%) of subject coordinators claimed that their number one unit of account is for ensuring that teaching and learning takes place effectively, hence showing congruency with what they felt they should be accountable for. On the other hand, if they are accountable for ensuring the effectiveness of teaching and learning, it seems contradictory that only one respondent (2%) IS accountable for the decisions taken by management concerning classroom practices, or they may have felt that they are individually accountable for what they say they are, but not for decisions taken as a management team. The responses in table 5.16 again indicate a very large scope for accountability. The list of what schools should be accountable for did not differ much from what subject coordinators are actually accountable for, except it was not clear whether that respondent group was accountable for students' security, safety and behaviour, other than a general mention of welfare. They has also listed innovations in the 'should' list which did not feature in 'actually accountable for'.

The subject coordinators were also asked 4.17): The respondents were asked to put in multiple responses:

Rank	Subject coordinators are actually accountable to...	%
1.	Parents	75
2.	Ministry of Education	59.6
3.	Headteacher	50.8
4.	Students	49
5.	Teachers	45.6
6.	The community	36.8
7.	Ministry Officials/Support providers	19.2
8.	Other members of staff	15.7
9.	School Management	12.2
10.	Other partners/	7
11.	Myself	5.3
12.	The government	3.5

Table 4.17: Who subject coordinators are actually accountable to

Table 4.17 shows that the recipients of actual accountability of the subject coordinators did not differ much from whom they felt they should be accountable to. However, it is important to note that in reality accountability to the Ministry of Education ranked higher than to students. Another noteworthy point is that not one of the respondents had felt that they should be accountable to him/herself, but actually three of them acknowledged they are accountable to themselves. Parents remained the top recipient in both cases.

Accountability Constructs and Functions

This section called on the respondents to discuss accountability features, functions and relationships at their school. First the participants were asked to express their level of agreement with the presence of some potential features of an accountable school at their own institution. A modified 'Likert Scale' was used to analyse the responses (see table .18):

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>SA</i> <i>%</i>	<i>A</i> <i>%</i>	<i>D</i> <i>%</i>	<i>SD</i> <i>%</i>
1	Professional Development is a regular part of a teacher's work.	50	42.3	1.9	5.7
2	Teachers report on pupils' actual learning experience.	34.6	55.7	3.8	5.7
3	Children are provided with equal opportunities to learn.	42.3	36.5	15.3	3.8
4	Adjustments/Changes are promptly brought about to improve the school.	25	65.3	3.8	3.8
5	Self- Evaluation is done regularly.	15.3	65.3	15.3	3.8
6	Decision-making is guided by procedures to use the information.	9.6	67.3	13.5	1.9
7	Students are actively involved in committees.	5.7	44.2	5.7	5.7
8	Parents are regularly involved in decision-making	1.9	46.1	38.4	13.5
9	Students are involved in decision-making.	1.9	38.4	50	9.6
10	Teachers report only on pupils' academic performance.	7.6	14.8	51.9	21.1

Table 4.18: Responses for the existence of accountability features at school

(Key: SA-Strongly agree; A - Agree; D - Disagree, SD – Strongly Disagree)

Table 5.18, shows that the statement which elicited the least agreement (only 14 out of 52 respondents- 5.7 %), was 'teachers report only on academic performance' indicating that in most of the schools, and for most of the respondents, teachers did report on other aspects of pupils' performance too. Significant numbers of respondents also disagreed that at their school, both parents and students are involved in decision-making or in committees. Most of the subject coordinators (23.1%) acknowledged that professional development is a regular part of a teacher's work. The respondent group was then asked to describe accountability processes at their school. They were given three possible responses to choose from. Figure 4.4 shows the responses:

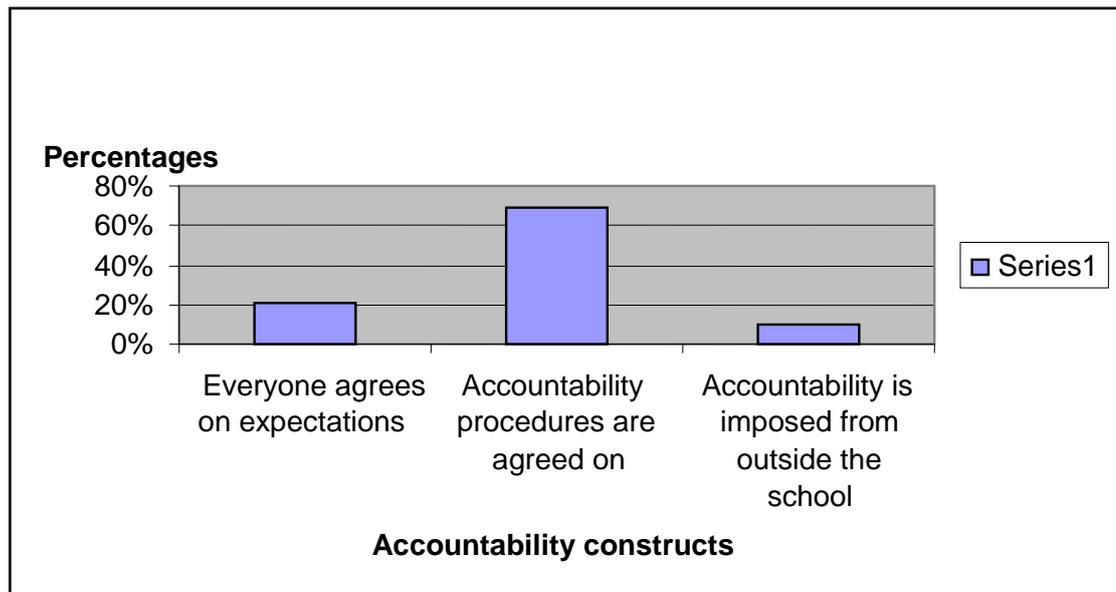


Figure 4.4 Accountability constructs at school level

Most of the subject coordinators (69%) claimed that accountability procedures are agreed on, hence giving highlighting the fact that some form of procedures for accountability exist at school level. Nevertheless 10% of them also felt that accountability is imposed from outside the school. The fact that another significant group (21%) chose ‘everyone agrees on expectations’ may signify that the language used in accountability constructs may be expectations or procedures, but it confirms the existence of some form of construct.

Subject coordinators were also asked to describe the types of accountability relationships they have at school level, with three possibilities offered. The types of relationships are shown in figure 4.5:

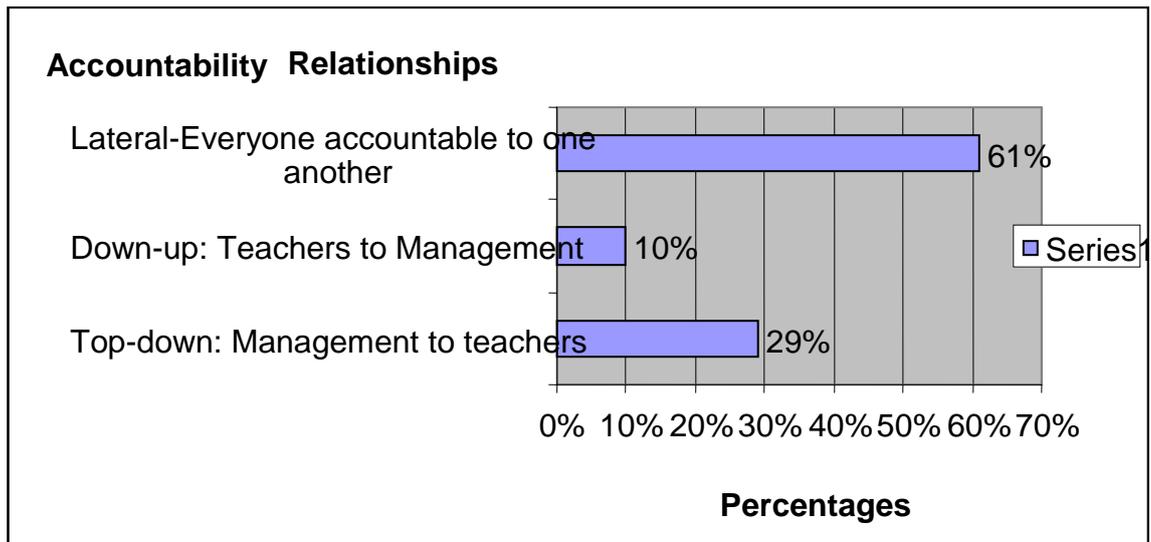


Figure 4.5 Accountability relationships at school level

Figure 4.5 shows the presence of different accountability relationships, but most subject coordinators chose a lateral form of accountability where everyone is accountable to one another. A smaller number of responses indicate a hierarchical relationship. The following question asked about levels of accountability at school level. The responses are shown in figure 4.6:

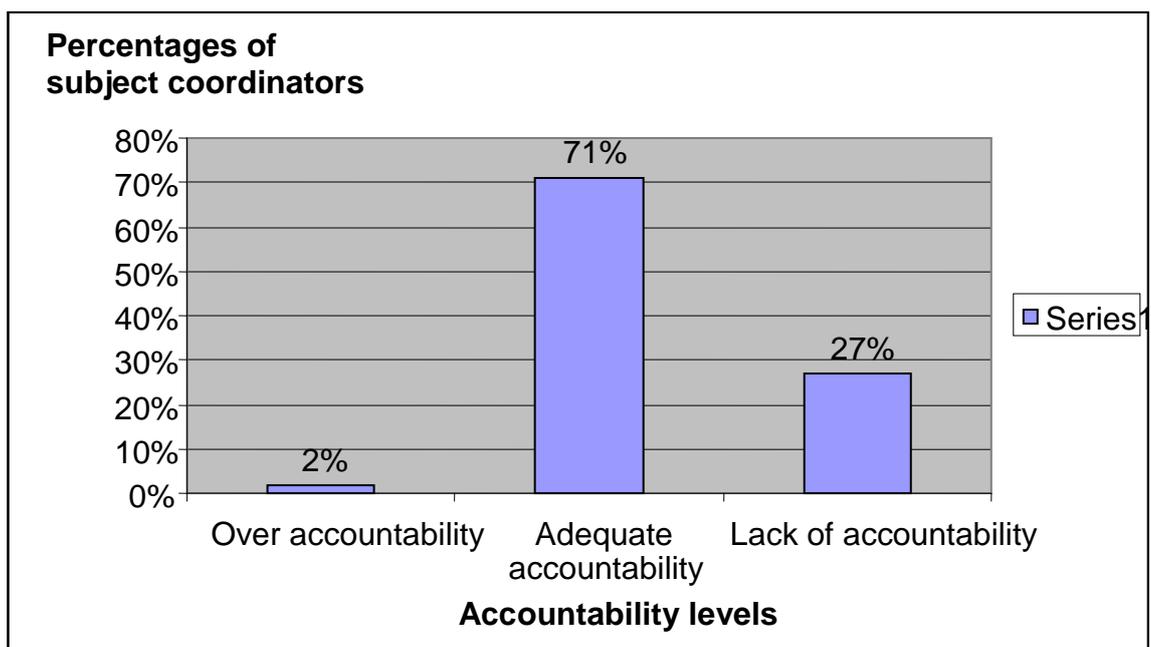


Figure 4.6 Levels of accountability

Figure 4.6 shows that only one respondent (2%) chose to say that there is over accountability. However, more than a quarter (27%) claimed there is a lack of accountability. The majority (71%) considered that there is adequate accountability. The variation in responses may be due to the situation of different schools or even of perceptions within the school. In order to shed more light on the issue, participants were asked to provide evidence in support of their answers. The respondent who chose ‘over accountability’ did not provide any evidence, so only statements linked to the other two themes were recorded (see table 4.19). The main ideas that emerged were monitoring, records, reviews and forums:

	<i>Monitoring</i>	<i>Records</i>	<i>Reviews</i>	<i>Forums</i>
B Adequate	-Monitoring done by management (22%) -Fair distribution of responsibility and checking (10%)	-Teachers’ mark books; remarks written by teachers (4%) -End of term reports, assessment and exams analysis (8%) -Teachers’ attendance and punctuality (6%)	-Appraisal review for teachers at the end of the year and the termly performance reviews (12%) -Conferencing (4%)	-Activities are organised for parents (4%) - Meetings of various types are held (6%)
C Lack of...	-Feedback from observations (4%) -Lack of supervision and consequences (4%)	-evidence of student learning is low (4%) -Management or teachers not meeting deadlines (2%) -Lack of records of student progress (6%)	-	-Lack of forums to focus teachers’ attitudes (4%)

Table 4.19: Evidence for different levels of accountability at school

Table 4.19 shows that, for subject coordinators who said there is adequate accountability, their evidence focused on monitoring and checking aspects happening. 16 % of responses focused on records compared to seven on different reviews that are done. What is clear from the evidence is that there is accountability present and to an acceptable level.

For those reporting a lack of accountability, the range of evidence covered three of the themes, omitting reviews. Most of the evidence dealt with the lack of records and low students' results. The lack of monitoring also was pointed out, in terms of supervision.

Reporting, consequences and sanctions

This section asked the respondents to think about reporting, consequences and sanctions. They were first asked whether they considered 'reporting' as a accountability process. An overwhelming majority of subject coordinators (96 %) responded with a 'yes', while the remaining 4 % responses were negative. They were then required to explain how they saw reporting as an accountability process. Most responses centred around 'reporting' being the 'means' or the 'mechanism' through which feedback is given on tasks done, on issues of learning, keeping everyone abreast with what is happening, and also providing evidence to support one's report.

The clarification focused on reporting as the basis for teachers discussing their work with management, the strengths and weaknesses of their students, or with parents their children's progress. A minority of subject coordinators explained that, through reporting, teachers reflect on their practices. Further comments revealed that reporting is not always good as people might provide untruthful reports.

The next question was whether there were any penalties or consequences following reported accounts. A large majority (81%) of the subject coordinators were affirmative about there being consequences, while the remaining 19 % denied the existence of any. Those who had responded ‘yes’ were required to explain the form of those penalties or consequences. In most cases, conferencing is usually done with the person concerned and targets as well as action plans are drawn up for improvement. Other consequences involve follow-up visits by Ministry officials. The teacher or the headteacher is either verbally reprimanded or advised on how to do better. One subject coordinator explained:

‘I don’t know of any penalties, but I do acknowledge that schools are asked to re-look at their actual practices, reflect on and adopt new ways to improve their current situation’

The next question enquired about the extent to which subject coordinators agree that there should be sanctions or penalties for a school when it does not meet with expectations. As table 4.20 indicates, just over half (53%) of subject coordinators agreed that a school should be sanctioned, while 47% disagreed. A significant minority (11%) are strongly against any penalties or sanctions being administered:

<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
3 6%	21 47%	16 36%	5 11%

Table 4.20: The extent to which subject coordinators agree to schools being sanctioned

The evidence presented in table 4.21 indicates that, though a slight majority of the respondents are in favour of sanctions, they are mostly for ‘soft’ ones. The favoured sanctions are presented in rank order:

<i>Rank</i>	<i>How a school can be penalised or sanctioned</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1.	Through auditing done externally to help identify school weaknesses and come up with solutions.	41%
2.	Through verbal or written warning by appropriate people within the system.	23%
3.	Schools’ management teams should be called in at the Ministry and if nothing improves, then the name of the school should come out in meetings, as no one wants their school to be shown in a bad light.	18%
4.	Schools need to be made aware of their weaknesses and given a time scale within which to improve.	9%
5.	By mentoring the management and setting improvement targets.	4.5%
	Schools should be guided and helped by those at the top in the Ministry in order to improve.	4.5%

Table 4.21: How a school can be penalised or sanctioned

A significant number (18) of respondents did not give any response, hence making it difficult to comment on. However, table 4.21 indicates that most respondents were in favour of having the school audited externally.

One significant outcome is the view that the school as a unit should not be sanctioned, but rather the individual should be held responsible for his/her weakness.

One of the tensions that inevitably arises as a consequence of accountability is that the spotlight may be shifted to the autonomy issue as one respondent brought out: *‘It is rather difficult to penalise a school, considering the level of autonomy it has. Everything is controlled by the Ministry’.*

The same questions were asked about ‘a teacher’. As indicated by the distribution in table 4.22, subject coordinators as a whole were more in favour of teachers being sanctioned, with a total of 83% of them agreeing, with only 17 % responding that they did not support sanctions against teachers.

<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
15 %	68 %	15 %	2 %

Table 4.22: The extent to which subject coordinators agree to teachers being sanctioned

Almost a third of respondents (31%) believe that a reprimand, together with the setting of targets and close monitoring will suffice. Another 19% supported issuing a warning, then suspension if there is no progress. Almost a fifth (17%) opted for forfeiture of salary or annual increment and the same proportion emphasised that teachers should be given support first before being given any warnings. A minority (12%) of subject coordinator respondents explained that teachers should have the opportunity to conference so that their performance can be ‘discussed’ or they should be mentored in different areas of weakness. One subject coordinator argued that teachers who do not meet expectations should not be promoted.

Another subject coordinator felt that ‘a thorough evaluation ought to be done so as to determine the many factors that have contributed to a teacher’s failure to meet expectations, before any sanctions can be imposed’. A different respondent stated that ‘incentives should be given to teachers who are meeting expectations’.

As for other respondent groups, subject coordinators were asked to rank the involvement in decision-making of different potential stake holders in the areas of budget, staffing, curriculum and student welfare (see table 4.23):

<i>Areas</i>	<i>Who is most involved?</i>					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
<i>Budget</i>	Ministry	Management	Teacher	Parent	Student	Other Agencies
<i>Curriculum</i>	Ministry	Management	Teacher	Students	Parents	Other agencies
<i>Staffing</i>	Ministry	Management	Teachers	Parents	Students	Other agencies
<i>Student welfare</i>	Ministry	Management	Parents	Teachers	Students	Other agencies

Table 4.23: Involvement of Stakeholders in decision-making

Table 4.23 shows that the Ministry was ranked first for all four decision areas, followed by Management, reflecting the highly centralised system. Teachers were ranked third in the areas of budget, curriculum and staffing, while parents achieved that same ranking in the area of student welfare. For all four areas, ‘other agencies’ was ranked as the one least involved in decision-making in school matters.

Other comments made raised a number of issues not covered by the other questions. One such example is that, even when visions are shared, others have to be accountable for realising them. Two other points are the Ministry controlling all the decisions and the need for a credible evaluation before a school is sanctioned.

Teachers’ Survey

The participants

Fifty-seven teachers were sampled for the survey and forty-seven replies were received (82.5 %). Five of the respondents were male and 42 were female. Most

(32) of the teachers had been teaching for less than ten years. Multiple responses were allowed.

Perceptions of school and teacher accountability

<p>For the first question, teachers were asked to explain how they understood the concept of accountability. The answers mostly revolved around four themes: responsibility, providing reasons, and evidence/justifications, giving an account and being answerable to (see table 5.24):<i>Themes</i></p>	<p><i>Responses</i></p>	<p><i>Percentage of Teachers</i></p>
<p>1. Responsibility:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The school is responsible for performance of pupils and management of facilities. ● How a school and its staff take their responsibilities. ● Being responsible for whatever is being done. ● A school is responsible for what they are doing. ● When school staff are responsible for what they are doing. ● Being responsible for the effectiveness and quality of the school. ● Being responsible to provide different partners with information. 	<p>51%</p>
<p>2. Providing reasons, and evidence/justifications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide justification to the Ministry. ● Providing evidence of what is happening to teaching and learning. ● To give reasons or explanations about what has been happening 	<p>17%</p>

3. Giving an account:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To give an account of what goes on in the school/classroom ● Give an account of events and behaviours ● Give an account on the performance of pupils. 	15%
4. Being answerable to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The school answers about things going on <p>To be answerable to the headteacher, subject coordinator and other colleagues.</p>	36.4%
5. Other responses,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reporting on things or giving feedback ● what one is expected to do ● being liable for everything ● providing opportunities for achievements to take place 	4.3% 2.1% 2.1% 2.1%

Table 4.24: Teachers' perceptions of accountability

Table 4.24, shows that there was a wide range of responses across schools, but it was obvious that most teachers understood the concept in terms of ‘responsibility’. When they were asked whether they thought schools should be accountable, almost all (98 %) responded ‘yes’. The respondents were also asked to explain to whom they should be accountable, if they answered ‘yes’. The responses are shown in rank order in table 4.25:

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
1.	Parents	26%
2.	The Ministry of Education	23%
3.	The pupils/students	20%
4.	Community and School Staff	12%
5.	Society	8%
6.	Teachers	5%
7.	Headteacher and Government	3%
8.	Other Agencies	2%
9.	Other ministries	1%

Table 4.25: Teachers’ perceptions of who schools should be accountable to

Table 4.25 shows that parents topped the list of whom schools ought to be responsible to, with the Ministry of Education second, and many other stakeholders mentioned. The teachers were also asked to answer for what they thought schools should be accountable and they were allowed multiple responses. Table 5.46 shows the responses in rank order:

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Schools should be accountable for...</i>	<i>% of responses</i>
1.	Learning of pupils/students	22.9
2.	Ensuring continuous academic progress	19.3
3.	Pupils' /students' welfare and well being	13.3
4.	Support and guidance of pupils and teachers	10.8
5.	Everything that is done at school/To give information on pupils' progress	8.4
6.	Ensuring the smooth running of the school	7.22
7.	Resources, materials/Pupils' right to education/Quality teaching /Being responsive to pupils' needs	6.02
8.	Results/Professional Development of school members/For providing evidence	4.8
9.	Transparency/School facilities/Productivity/Improvement	3.6
10.	Following Ministry's rules and regulations/Staff welfare	2.4
11.	Identifying successes and failures and planning ahead/ Pupils' attitude	1.2

Table 4.26: Teachers' perceptions of what schools should be accountable for

Table 4.26 shows that a wide range of aspects were listed as to what teachers perceived schools should be accountable for. However, pupils' learning was the one which topped the list of most respondents, with a percentage of 22.9 %. Unexpectedly, teachers felt that 'following the ministry's rules and regulations' was not worth much attention, as it was almost at the bottom of the list with 2.4 % only. Another noteworthy point is that 8.4 % of teachers chose a convenient cover in saying 'for everything that is done at school'. Such choice may indicate lack of certainty in deciding for what they felt schools should be accountable.

The means through which teachers perceive schools should be held accountable were diverse, but the means that received the highest percentage was 'through report writing' (23%) and the four main ways listed all revolved around keeping records and reporting (see table 4.27): The participants were allowed multiple responses.

<i>Accountable by what means?</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1. Through report writing	23 %
2. Through giving feedback in meetings	22 %
3. Record-keeping	12 %
4. Analysing data about performance	11 %
5. Through professional Development	10 %
6. Through monitoring followed by conferencing	8 %
7. Through providing training sessions	5 %
7. Through visits and open-days	5 %
8. Through assessment results	4 %
9. Through conducting termly appraisals	3 %
10. Responses not relating to 'by what means?'	2 %

Table 4.27: Teachers' perceptions of how schools should be held accountable

The teachers were also asked to explain a) *why should schools be accountable?* and b) *why should teachers be accountable?* Both sets of data are recorded on the same table (4.28), in order to provide insight into whether teachers perceive reasons for both school and teacher accountability differently:

<i>Why should schools be accountable?</i>	<i>Why should teachers be accountable?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ So that everyone knows what is happening in a school: its strengths, weaknesses and achievements (24%) ▪ For school improvement purposes through data collection (19%) ▪ Because school is where parents send their children for an education: to be taught knowledge and skills and they expect that that is done properly (17%) ▪ Schools are responsible for the people who work there, the pupils who study there and the facilities they are using (10%) ▪ Government expects school leaders to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Because they should enhance pupils' knowledge, learning abilities in order to develop fully (30%) ▪ Because teachers are the ones who interact with pupils; their performance depend entirely on teachers (25%) ▪ To ensure that they are really carrying out their duties (17%) ▪ Because parents have left their children in their care and trust; they have confidence in teachers (9%) ▪ Because they have a moral responsibility towards their job, therefore they should do it properly

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do their jobs properly (9%) ▪ To motivate teachers to work hard and improve (9%) ▪ Schools are the focal point for citizens to joint the world of work in the future (7%) ▪ Improving student learning (5%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (9%) ▪ Because teachers need to ensure that leaning is taking place and teaching is effective (6%) ▪ Teachers are responsible to give reliable information about teaching, learning and pupil welfare (2%) ▪ They are civil servants and they are paid for their duties, therefore they need to keep records of what they are doing. (2%)
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Table 4. 28: Teachers' perceptions of why schools and teachers should be accountable

Almost a quarter (24%) of teachers felt that schools should be accountable first because everyone needs to be aware of what is happening in it, including its strengths, weaknesses and achievements. The reasons for teacher accountability were rather different, focusing on enhancing knowledge, interacting with pupils, ensuring learning is taking place, teaching is effective and giving reliable information about teaching, learning and pupil welfare. This last point links with the first ranked reason for schools to be accountable. 'Improving student learning' was the reason for school which got the least percentage (5%), but it was the reason for which teachers should be accountable that got the highest percentage (30%). This is highly indicative of teachers themselves considering this reason as their own rather than that of the whole school.

The accountability of the stakeholder

This section focused on the accountability of the respondent group and they had first to say whether they were accountable or not. Almost all (98%) of them responded 'yes', and were asked to explain for what. From the multiple responses that the respondents were allowed, the most prevalent answer was 'for pupils' learning and finding ways to overcome their weaknesses' (see table 5.29):

<i>Teachers actually accountable for...</i>	<i>% of responses</i>
1. For pupils' learning and performance. Finding ways and means to overcome their weaknesses	27 %
2. For developing each and every child passing through my hands, according to his/her ability	26 %
3. for progress of pupils' education	14 %
4. My classroom, my pupils, my work and my behaviour	11 %
5. For the welfare of my pupils / for the materials I use	7 %
6. For everything that I do at school	5 %
7. for the quality of education I give to pupils; for the values and attitudes they develop	4 %
8. Communicating reliable information to the school and parents	3 %
9. for pupils' safety and well-being	3 %

Table 4.29: What teachers are actually accountable for

The responses in table 4.29 corroborated in ranking as for the things that teachers felt schools should be accountable for. The second larger aspect for which teachers are actually accountable focuses on the development of the pupil, which links to the first aspect. The aspect for which the respondent teachers said they were accountable for was for pupil's safety and well-being, which seems a bit far off from the first two aspects which are related.

Table 4.30 shows teachers' ranked multiple responses for whom they are actually accountable to. For comparison purposes, the responses are again put in ranking order of whom they are actually most accountable to:

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Teachers are actually accountable to...</i>	<i>% of responses</i>
1.	Parents	25.6
2.	The Ministry of Education	17.5
3.	Pupils/Students	16.2
4.	The school's management	14.1
5.	The headteacher	10.8
6.	Subject Coordinators	6
7.	Myself/ My colleagues	4
8.	The school as a whole/ The society/ The community	3.4
9.	Support Providers	1.3
10.	Other Ministries/Other Agencies	1

Table 4.30 Who teachers are actually accountable to

Table 4.30 shows that the first three sets of teachers' accountability were similar to the first three they perceived schools should be accountable to. The number of recipients to whom teachers are accountable is more than those to whom the schools are accountable.

Accountability constructs and functions

Questions pertaining to construct and functions of accountability at school level were then answered. Ten statements constituting potential features of an accountable school were given for the respondents to express their agreement or disagreement, using a modified 'Likert Scale' was used. Table 4.31 illustrates the distribution of responses:

<i>Statements</i>	<i>SA</i> %	<i>A</i> %	<i>D</i> %	<i>SD</i> %
1. Children are provided with equal opportunities to learn	55	33	4	7
2. Professional Development is a regular part of a teacher's work.	71	25	4	0
3. Teachers report on pupils' actual learning experiences to parents	53	45	2	0
4. Self- Evaluation is done regularly	33	56	11	0
5. Adjustments /changes are promptly brought about to improve the school	21	60	15	4
6. Parents are regularly involved in decision-making	7	73	15	5
7. Decision-making is guided by procedures to use the information	7	52	39	2
8. Students are actively involved in committees	11	46	39	4
9. Teachers report only on pupils' academic performance	15	13	45	27
10. Students are involved in decision-making	9	34	57	0

Table 4.31: Distribution of responses for the existence of accountability features
(Key: SA- Strongly Agree; A - Agree; D - Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree)

Table 4.31 shows that most teachers were cautious about discussing the involvement of students in both decision-making and on committees. Levels of agreement for these two statements were low compared with their agreement with children being provided with equal opportunities for learning or that self-evaluation is done regularly, which both received high levels of agreement.

Table 5.32 shows that some form of accountability exists at school level, whether in terms of procedures or expectations. That was shown in 61% of teachers believing that accountability procedures are agreed on and 23% claiming that expectations are agreed on. A significant minority (16%) believed that accountability is imposed from outside, showing that at school level accountability has both an internal and external dimension, but also that those teachers felt they were not bound by measures inside the school.

<i>Statements: accountability constructs</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A. Everyone agrees on expectations	23 %
B. Accountability procedures are agreed on	61 %
C. Accountability is imposed from outside the school	16 %

Table 4.32: Accountability constructs at school level

In describing the level of accountability at their school (see table 5.33), the results showed that most teachers (78%) acknowledged that there was enough accountability; the remaining 22% were divided equally in stating that there is too much or not enough accountability.

<i>Statements: level of accountability</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A. There is over-accountability	11 %
B. There is adequate accountability	78 %
C. There is a lack of accountability	11 %

Table 4.33: Accountability levels at school

Teachers were also asked to justify their statement about the level of accountability. Teachers who were satisfied with the level of accountability said so because they have different records that they keep; homework, assessment reading and then registers. Others explained that after each examination, results are presented and discussed. The school's management team and teachers report and analyse everything, while reports are sent to parents every term.

For others who were satisfied with levels of accountability, it was because attendance and punctuality are monitored as well as teaching and learning, added to the fact that lesson preparation notes are checked on a weekly basis. Another group explained that teachers work as a team for professional development and all matters pertaining to development planning are shared and addressed, hence, all indicating that the level of accountability is enough.

Those who chose to say that the level of accountability was not enough (11 %) illustrated this by claiming that some teachers and other staff lack motivation and seriousness, while others never meet deadlines, are not willing to help or always have poor planning. Others felt that some teachers do not really know their roles, that there is frequent absenteeism and decisions made are not communicated for comments or views. Parents' and students' views are not valued too.

Over accountability was explained as teachers being required to do a lot of paperwork in record-keeping and that sometimes teachers are held accountable for things that are beyond their control. This was illustrated with the example of a teacher being required to write a report of an accident happening during break time.

Reporting, Consequences and Sanctions

Teachers were asked to respond to questions on accountability processes, but with an emphasis on ‘reporting’ and ‘consequences’, where the first question was whether teachers considered ‘reporting’ as an accountability process. The majority of teachers (94 %) responded ‘yes’ and these respondents were asked to explain how. Eleven teachers responded that the concept is a way of sharing the information collected to a targeted group of people so that they are aware what is going on; the strengths, the weaknesses and what decisions or actions to take to improve the school. Other explanations for the rest of the group, included:

- Reporting gives accounts of pupils/students’ performance and behaviour
- Through this process of reporting, the school writes its action plans
- It allows superiors to monitor what one is doing and provide help if necessary
- One has the chance through reporting to voice out his/her opinions and is allowed a fair chance of explaining his/her actions
- Reporting is giving feedback, it is a form of evaluation
- It is a means of communicating successes and weaknesses to other people

To shed more light on the issue of reporting, teachers were asked to comment on the validity of reported accounts. None of the teachers believed that the reported accounts were not valid, but the majority felt that they were valid only to a certain extent. The responses are shown in table 4.34:

<i>To a great extent</i>	<i>To some extent</i>	<i>To a limited extent</i>	<i>Not at all</i>
14 30 %	28 61 %	4 9 %	0

Table 4.34: The extent to which reported accounts are valid

The questionnaire also sought details about penalties and consequences; it asked whether there are any consequences or penalties for teachers following the reported accounts. Almost half (41%) of the respondents produced a 'yes' response, 56 % said 'no' and the remaining 3 % added one more response, that is, 'at times'.

Teachers who had said 'yes' were asked to provide details about the penalties and consequences through listing different types. Five main ideas emerged:

1. Teachers get penalised at the time of appraisal, where they are given some time to work on the problem or they are mentored as they work on it (6)
2. A warning is issued (verbal or written) (5)
3. Teachers are called in to provide explanations for the management (5)
4. The case is reported to the Ministry where a teacher is encouraged to set targets; the teacher is also advised and counseled, (3) and
5. Sometimes a teacher is reprimanded (1)

The response which most teachers named was the fact that the penalty happens at the time of appraisal and following it teachers are given some time in which to improve. Quite common were also 'warnings' or teachers are called in to give explanations. All the sanctions listed are 'soft'.

The respondents were also asked to talk about other teachers' accountability. Only one teacher claimed that her colleagues did not see themselves as accountable. Six of them did not make any comments while all the rest were positive about other teachers being accountable. In support of their answers teacher respondents were asked to provide reasons. Their main ideas were:

1. Teachers knowing what the school expects of them and in return they contribute towards an effective school development (18%).

2. Respect for deadlines, good planning and teachers follow school rules (15%).
3. Every class has records of pupils' progress and reports (15%).
4. Everyone is required to give feedback on his /her work; strengths, weaknesses and recommendations (13%).
5. Teachers always seeking to develop professionally and using new strategies to help improve the overall performance of their pupils (8%).
6. Teachers analysing their classes' results and provide reports of their performance (8%).
7. It is part of a teacher's work and when there is failure, it reflects the teacher (5%).
8. Teachers are concerned about their pupils' well-being. (3%).

The explanations given were varied. One teacher commented that a teacher has to be accountable because it was not a choice but a part of his/her work. To elaborate more on the subject of sanctions, penalties and consequences, teachers were asked to discuss the extent to which they agreed that a school and a teacher should be sanctioned. The distributions of responses for both are shown in tables 5.35 and 5.36:

<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
2	20	12	4
5 %	52 %	32 %	11 %

Table 4.35: the extent to which teachers agree to a school being sanctioned

<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
1	16	13	4
3 %	47%	38 %	12 %

Table 4.36: the extent to which teachers agree to a teacher being sanctioned

The tables show that a slight majority agreed that a school should be sanctioned but, in the case of a teacher being sanctioned, views were balanced. However, four

Teachers strongly opposed the idea of teachers being sanctioned. The teachers had already been questioned about the actual sanctions being administered, but they were then asked how a school or a teacher can be sanctioned, with multiple responses allowed. Both sets of responses are shown on Table 4.47:

<i>How can a) school be sanctioned or penalised?</i>	<i>How can b) a teacher be sanctioned or penalised?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ministry officials should meet with the school's management team to discuss where it requires support (6) ▪ Investigate where the problem is and take action with the people concerned (3) ▪ It is the headteacher who should be responsible. He/she should be given warning letters or have money deducted from his/her salary (2) ▪ Schools should be monitored; constantly reminding to keep records and update them (2) ▪ Ask management teams to answer questions about what has happened (1) ▪ Review the school's targets and include constraints in its 3 year Development Plan to be worked on (1) ▪ Schools should be ranked on a scale system and be given points for their progress or they will lose points if they do not meet with expectations (1) ▪ Transfer of staff (1) ▪ Forfeiture of salary (1) ▪ Warning for the whole school (2) <p>A change of management (1).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers should be met individually and given advice or support required to work on their weaknesses for a probation period (8). ▪ Give warning (verbal /written)(4) ▪ Forfeit salary (4) ▪ Teachers should be put on a mentoring programme by the school's management (2) ▪ The teacher should be transferred to other schools (1) ▪ By being reprimanded (1) ▪ Teachers should be provided with adequate training in order to carry out his/her duties (1)
<p><u>Comments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Sanctions and penalties will only make things worse especially in today's world; teachers do not care.</i> 	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>I don't believe that teachers should penalised, but they should be encouraged to work on weaknesses for improvement, with much help, support from staff within the school.</i> ▪ <i>A teacher should be sanctioned or penalised only if he/she is specialised in a subject; with a sound justifications.</i>

Table 4.37: Teachers' responses for how a school or a teacher can be sanctioned

Involvement of stakeholders in decision-making

The next question required the teacher respondents to rank the involvement of some stakeholder groups in the decision-making process in the areas of budget, curriculum, staffing and student welfare. Data collected revealed that teachers ranked the Ministry as the body most involved in decision-making in all four areas, followed by the management, then teachers (see table 4.38).

<i>Areas</i>	<i>Who is most involved?</i>					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Budget	Ministry	Management	Teachers	Parents	Students	Other agencies
Curriculum	Ministry	Management	Teachers	Students	Parents	Other agencies
Staffing	Ministry	Management	Teachers	Parents	Students	Other agencies
Student Welfare	Ministry	Management	Teachers	Parents	Other agencies	Students

Table 4.38: Involvement of Stakeholders in decision-making

Table 5.38 highlights the decision-making power of the Ministry in the centralised system. It also highlights the non-involvement of 'other agencies' in matters pertaining to the school.

PTA Chairpersons' Survey

The participants

Nineteen PTA chairpersons were sampled, and 15 returned their questionnaire, a response rate of 78.9%. Six were males and the remaining nine females. They all had spent at least two years as the PTA chairperson in their respective schools.

Perceptions of school and teacher accountability

One of the central aims of the research was to investigate parents' views about school and teacher accountability; with parents (PTA chairpersons) as one of the potential stakeholders. Therefore those PTA chairpersons were asked how they perceived 'school accountability'. Despite slight changes in the terms used, most PTA chairpersons saw accountability as being responsible for all that is happening in the school; such as the need to account for all that the government, parents or students contribute to their education, or to report and explain activities to school staff, teachers, students and parents.

One respondent differed from others in conceptualising accountability as 'to follow laid down procedures and rules to achieve the mission of the school, the Ministry of Education and that of the country'. Another understood it as 'to show transparency in all matters related to the school especially keeping records and preparing valuable statistics for decision-making'. Also the concept was seen as 'the school accomplishes the role it is supposed to undertake'. That same parent cautioned that school accountability should not be separate from that of the Ministry.

Within the context of perceptions, PTA chairpersons were asked whether schools should be accountable and all of them agreed. They were asked to provide justifications for saying their responses (see table 4.39):

<i>What should schools be accountable for?</i>	<i>% of responses</i>
1. For education; learning and development of its students.	40
2. For the assets and learning materials as well as controlling wastage	20
3. Financial activities of the school; class and school funds	20
4. Welfare of students/ Security of the children	13
5. For doing things according to policies and codes of conduct	7

Table 4.39: Parents' perceptions of what schools should be accountable for

The main reason given for schools to be accountable was one which defined the whole existence of the school; for education, learning and development of students. The other reasons given complemented this main aim, as they outlined other aspects of school life.

They were also asked to respond as to whom schools should be accountable. The responses are shown in table 4.40:

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Schools should be accountable to...</i>	<i>% of Responses</i>
1.	Ministry of Education as employer	34
2.	Parents	34
3.	Society	10
4.	Students	7
5.	Themselves /Teachers/ headteacher/other partners.	3
6.	Teacher	3
7.	Headteacher	3
	Other partners	6

Table 4.40: Parents' perceptions of who schools should be accountable to
It is interesting to note that parents and the Ministry are considered equal in terms of school accountability by PTA chairpersons.

One parent commented:

'From bottom to top management and vice versa, ensure that there is a two-way communication system where accountability matters are discussed and corrective actions taken where it is not running according to procedures'.

That parent expressed the wish to see accountability working reciprocally within the school.

Accountability at school level (constructs and functioning)

PTA chairpersons were asked about the idea of accountability functions, operations, processes and relationships at school level. For the first question, they were asked

about the potential features of an accountable school, selecting from ten statements.

The distribution of responses is shown in table 4.41:

	<i>Statements</i>	<i>Strongly Agree (%)</i>	<i>Agree (%)</i>	<i>Disagree (%)</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree (%)</i>
1.	Teachers report only on pupils academic performance	46.7	46.7	6.7	0
2.	Teachers report on pupils' actual learning experiences to parents	20.0	73.3	6.7	0
3.	Students are actively involved committees	23.0	53.8	15.4	7.7
4.	Adjustments /changes are promptly brought about to improve the school	35.6	28.6	21.4	14.3
5.	Children are provided with equal opportunities to learn	23.0	38.5	38.5	0
6.	Parents are regularly involved in decision-making	0	69.2	23.1	7.7
7.	Self-Evaluation is done regularly	6.7	53.3	33.3	6.7
8.	Decision-making is guided by procedures to use the information	11.1	44.4	22.2	22.2
9.	Professional Development is a regular part of a teacher's work	6.7	40.0	40.0	13.3
10.	Students are involved in decision-making	7.1	28.6	42.9	21.4

Table 4.41: Distribution of responses for the existence of accountability features

A modified 'Likert scale' was used to calculate the level of agreement- hence, with a mean of above 2.5, corresponding to agreement while below 2.5 constitutes disagreement. The feature with the lowest mean (2.21) was '*students are regularly involved in decision-making*' hence, the level of agreement indicating that PTA chairpersons had low agreement that such a feature was present at their school. The statement which gained the highest level of agreement was '*teachers report only on pupils' academic performance*' (3.40), indicating that most parents agreed that

reports are only of academic performance. This seems to contradict the second ranked statement, that teachers report on pupils’ actual learning experiences.

Parents were then asked about the nature of accountability at their children’s schools.

The responses are shown in table 4.42:

Statements	Percentage
A. Both parents and school agree on expectations	62%
B. Accountability procedures are agreed on	23%
C. Accountability is imposed from outside the school.	15%

Table 5.42: Accountability constructs at school level

Table 4.42 shows that all parents believed that some form of accountability exists at school level. Most of them (62%) believed that at ‘their’ school, both parents and school agree on expectations. Almost a quarter (23%) claimed that accountability procedures agreed on. Two parents (15%) felt that accountability is imposed from outside the school.

Like the other respondent groups, the parents were asked to rate the accountability of teachers at ‘their’ school (see table 5.43):

Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Less than satisfactory
0	5	8	2	0
0 %	33 %	53 %	13 %	0 %

Table 4.43: PTA chairpersons’ responses as to the accountability of teachers

Table 5.43 shows that the responses ranged from ‘satisfactory’ to ‘very good’, with more of the parents acknowledging that teachers’ accountability was ‘good’ To add richness to these responses, the respondents were asked to give reasons for their answers. Responses were classified under ‘very good’, ‘good’ and ‘satisfactory’ and then again under themes highlighted by the responses (see table 4.44):

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Very Good</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>
Teachers' lack of experience		-	-Not that bad, but teachers are quite young and Inexperienced (?)
Parental Involvement	-Meetings are held to inform parents; open days too. -Reports are given and parents are called in to discuss their children's results and progress.	-A lot of effort is made to reach out to parents, but it is not always systematic and sustainable -Teacher gives me suggestions on how to help in my child's learning at home -Teachers try their best, but they will be more accountable if parents are more active and challenging.	-Parents' and students involvement is satisfactory
Meeting expectations	-Every time we have met with teachers, our expectations have been met. -Teacher reports to me on my child's performance at school and regarding his/her discipline		- The issue is not discussed at cycle meetings; they focus more on the academic performance of students
Teachers' roles and responsibility	-The records are well kept -They do their best to educate my kids; they show support and understanding	-Should also be involved with the overall development of the child, apart from his/her learning. -Teachers are doing their best but sometimes things are beyond their control	

Table 4.44: PTA chairpersons' responses about the accountability of teachers

Table 4.44 shows that parents had drawn on personal experiences in order to help them rate their teachers' accountability. The comments made were in the category of 'very good', 'good' and 'satisfactory' and most were under the theme parental involvement. Inherent in those comments, is a call for parents themselves to be more active and challenging. Furthermore, the parent respondents were asked to describe the level of accountability at their children's schools (see table 4.45):

Statements	Percentage %
A. There is over-accountability	0 %
B. There is an adequate level of accountability	85 %
C. There is a lack of accountability	15 %

Table 4.45: How parents see accountability level at school

A large majority (85%) of parents believed that the level of accountability at school is enough. However, a significant minority (15%) claimed that there is a lack of accountability.

The parent respondents were also asked to provide evidence in support of their answers. One of those who said that there is 'a lack of accountability' explained that the class fund is not properly managed and is not used in the interest of the children. The other response was that discussions held with parents are not really worthwhile.

For those claiming enough accountability, their responses mostly revolved around parents' involvement or relationships with the school. For example, matters of concern are discussed with parents, information notes are sent to parents, workshops are held to teach them reading techniques so that they can help their children at home, and interested parents receive good cooperation from the school in regards to their children's performances and abilities. Three parents also cautioned that more can be done in terms of commitment to student learning. They claimed children too

need to abide by school policies, or that the school relies too much on parents for contributions. Other reasons focused on the school which are ready to accept criticisms and on the fact that their children are safe at school. This evidence shows how those parents have lived the experience of accountability but even if there may be general satisfaction, a few maintain that there can be more improvement.

Reporting, consequences and sanctions

Questions in this section addressed the concepts of ‘reporting’, ‘sanctions’ and ‘consequences’. The first question was whether the parents considered reporting an accountability process. A large majority of the parents (87%) responded ‘yes’ and the remaining 13 % said ‘no’.

They were then asked to give reasons for their answers. Those whose answers were negative did not have relevant answers. For those with affirmative answers, the overall idea is that ‘reporting’ helps one to know what is going on helps to keep track of things, a way of getting feedback and tells you whether your child is learning or not. All those responses are encapsulated in one’s parent’s response: *‘A report is the basis for all discussions between/amongst teachers, parents, students and school authorities, for improvements’*. However, responses also highlighted one parent’s concern; that reports should be well detailed, explicit and explain what a child can or cannot do.

Parents were then asked whether there should be any penalties or consequences for schools not meeting expectations. Almost three quarters (73 %) of the PTA Chairpersons responded ‘yes’ and 27% said ‘no’. The parent respondents were also asked to give reasons for their answers. The responses are shown in table 4.46:

<i>'Yes' responses</i>	<i>'No' Responses</i>
<p>-because society relies on schools to educate children to become good citizens, otherwise we end up with frustrated learners who become bad citizens.</p> <p>-Schools are all a big investment; money wasted definitely goes with consequences.</p> <p>-Teachers go through professional formation and there are specific guidelines that they need to follow in order to deliver to their best abilities.</p> <p>-To help them be more responsible and committed.</p>	<p>-Sometimes things are beyond the control of the school and many other factors are involved.</p> <p>-there is no continuity; teachers are moved around too much.</p> <p>- Instead review the way of doing things; what works for one school may not work for another.</p> <p>-Teachers need security, guidance and assistance, both logistical and personal for improvement. But incompetence, negligence and willful wrong doing should be dealt with separately.</p>

Table 4. 46: PTA chairpersons' responses for whether schools should be penalised

Parents who said 'yes' offered justifications relating to society's expectations of what schools should do, big investments made by government in education and the professional training of teachers. Those with negative answers explained that things for which they are accountable is within the school's control or that teachers are transferred too often. They also emphasised that teachers need support and guidance. Those who responded 'yes' were asked what the consequences should be. The answers given by the majority of those parents centred around three issues:

1. Should be given deadlines to correct the wrongs (6)
2. Organising forums for discussions and be reprimanded (4)
3. Forfeiture of salary or annual increment until the situation changes (3)

Two PTA chairpersons emphasised, that before the penalties, one should think of ways to help the leaders in the school improve their situation.

Comparison of Large and Small Schools

A comparison of large and small schools was undertaken to see whether the survey yielded different or similar data. The comparison is presented according to the survey questions.

How do you understand the concept of accountability?

There was no disparity in the most common used term to describe school accountability between large and small schools. It was the use of ‘responsibility’ or ‘being responsible’. Both groups’ responses also contained elements of ‘giving an account’ and ‘daily running of the school’. Both large and small schools had other perceptions too; like a school wanting to provide opportunities for school achievement which the large schools mentioned or the daily running of the school, with regards to policies, rules and regulations

Do you think schools should be accountable? If you said ‘yes’ schools should be accountable to whom?

Respondents at both types of school perceived that schools should be accountable to parents, pupils, Ministry of Education and the community. Both categories also referred to other agencies and the government.

For what?

The most common responses from both types of school ones were for pupils’ learning progress and development. Distinctions could be noted in respondents’ groups rather than between the types of schools. For example, headteachers focused much on ‘the running of the school’ or ‘for ensuring high quality education’. The coordinators and teachers’ responses emphasized pupil learning. As to perceptions of how they should be held accountable, common to both types of schools were

responses relating to termly or annual school reports, student' report cards, and keeping records. Teachers from the smaller schools seemed to concentrate more on the provision of appropriate teaching and providing a conducive learning environment.

Why do you think schools should be accountable?

The notion of responsibility came up strongly from both groups of schools when asked why schools should be accountable. Teachers referred to the responsibility of catering for pupils and staff or for generally educating children. Respondents from large schools tended to use similar phrasing, 'so that there are no problems', while the smaller the smaller schools claimed that the 'Ministry of Education would know what is happening'.

Why do you think teachers should be accountable?

Common to both teacher groups was the notion of responsibility that is assigned to them for teaching the children. The only contrasting response was that teachers from a large school believed that being accountable well help teachers to be more reliable.

As a teacher/subject coordinator/headteacher, do you consider yourself accountable? What are you accountable for?

All respondents from both school categories believed they are accountable, with no significant differences between the two groups. The main idea was being accountable for pupils' learning, class behaviour, expressed in various ways. Among the subject coordinators, there were no marked differences, and the most common responses were for leading effective teaching and learning on the general expression: 'for all in

my job description'. However, for the larger schools, other responses indicated that attention is paid to leadership style, and for the coordinators' own actions, as well as to themselves as professionals. Most of the headteachers in both school groups were most accountable for school and pupil performance. There was also an emphasis on the headteachers' own actions as professionals. A mention of leadership style, and promoting a positive image, was made by a headteacher of a larger school. In comparison, mention of establishing structures empowering staff was made by respondents in one of the smaller schools.

Who are you accountable to?

There were no marked differences in terms of who the respondents were actually accountable to. A number of stakeholders emerged for both school categories; they were answerable to parents, pupils, Ministry of Education, to themselves, the community other school management members and staff.

How are you held accountable?

Pertaining to how headteacher are held accountable, there was disparity between those in the larger schools, when referred to whether one honours or degrades principles that give a headteacher's work its meaning, or by setting good example and being aware of what is going. The heads from smaller schools referred to producing evidence, keeping proper records, regular visits, report writing or working with teachers to increase teaching effectiveness.

How would you describe accountability at your school? How would you describe accountability relationships? How would rate the accountability of teachers at your school?

Most respondents at both small and large schools believed that their accountability procedures are agreed on. Similarly, there were no significant differences in perceptions of the accountability relationship; most believe these relationships are lateral. The same number of headteachers from both categories rated their teachers' accountability as good or satisfactory. That question was only asked of headteachers.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your school?

Most of the responses were similar, but there were a few differences too. Both large and small schools agreed to a large extent that professional development is a regular part of a teacher's work. Similarly both agree that teachers report on pupils' actual learning experiences. There was less agreement by both categories of schools on the fact that students are regularly involved in decision-making or that they are actively involved on committees. More large schools agreed that children are provided with equal opportunities for learning, as opposed to small schools. Also more large schools believe adjustments and changes are promptly brought about to improve their schools.

How would you describe the level of accountability at your school? What evidence do you have to support your answer?

There was little variation in responses about the level of accountability; most respondents believed that to be adequate. Examples of evidence were also similar. Those who said accountability was enough justified their claim primarily through the records that are kept, and the procedures used to give feedback. For those saying that accountability is not enough, respondents from large schools said mainly that there is a lack of teacher motivation, they do not meet deadlines and there is poor planning.

Their counterparts in small schools pointed the lack of records, hence not having enough evidence to support pupils' progress, or what is being done to raise performance levels.

Do you consider reporting as an accountability process? Explain how.

All respondents consider reporting as an accountability process. Explanations provided in both categories were similar. The most common response was about giving feedback on what has been happening.

Are there any sanctions/penalties following reported account? If you answered 'yes' what are these sanctions/penalties?

From both categories of schools, a significant number of respondents (6 and 7 respectively) did not respond to whether there are any sanctions following reported accounts, but most who did responded, in both groups, were affirmative. Most people also commented that the issue would be taken during appraisal time, or the person would be referred to the Ministry of Education Headquarters.

To what extent do you agree that a school should be sanctioned / penalised?

Both groups of schools shared the same feelings regarding a school being sanctioned.

How can a school be sanctioned / penalised?

There were commonalities from both categories of schools, but there were differences too. The most common favoured sanctions were written warnings, and schools being asked to set improvement targets, which would be followed by close monitoring. One headteacher from a small school suggested a change in leadership,

while two from large ones suggested public mention of the school, and forfeiture of managements' allowances, respectively.

To what extent do you agree that a teacher should be sanctioned / penalised?

Responses were balanced from both types of school; most agreeing to sanctioning teachers and few disagreeing.

How can a teacher be sanctioned / penalised?

The idea of supporting teachers, putting them on mentoring programmes, and setting improvement targets, prevailed in schools of both sizes. Among the less common sanctions mentioned were forfeiture of salary and automatic increment being discontinued.

How would you rank the involvement of the following groups in the decision-making process in each of these areas?

The Ministry of Education was found to be the primary decision-maker in the two types of schools, for the four given aspects: Budget, Curriculum, Staffing and Students' Welfare.

In summary, few significant disparities were identified between the small and large schools. There were slight differences in ideas or interpretation in the different aspects of school and teacher accountability but most basic concepts and processes were common.

Overview

The most common understanding of accountability among the four groups revolved around the theme of ‘responsibility’. Headteachers and subject coordinators emphasised on meeting the expectations’ of all partners who are entitled to an explanation. PTA chairpersons’ understanding was distinctive; they mostly conceptualised school accountability as the school accomplishing its roles through adhering to rules and policies.

All four respondent groups believed that schools should be accountable and most said that this should be for school improvement purposes. Subject coordinators and teachers shared almost similar perceptions of who they should be and are actually accountable to. Both groups feel they ought to be and are most accountable to: parents, Ministry of Education and students respectively, compared to headteachers who felt they are most accountable to the Ministry of Education, then to students. Accountability is seen to be operating vertically down-up from teachers to management BY a significant number of participants, particularly headteachers and subject coordinators. The existence of a ‘lateral’ accountability relationship was also noted. A strong, common point was the fact that parents and headteachers want accountability to be reciprocal.

The scope for accountability encompassed a wide range of responsibilities. All stakeholder groups’ responses centred on student learning and development and then each focused on specific aspects related to their respective roles. All four groups believe there is adequate accountability, but also acknowledge the fact that in some cases it is not enough. However, positive developments are also reported; headteachers claimed teachers are more conscious about their practices and staff takes up more responsibilities, while the subject coordinators’ justifications are based

on monitoring done by management. Parents' responses were based on their personal experiences. The most common way through which schools are held accountable is through 'reporting'. All four groups acknowledged the role it plays in schools. Procedures for accountability are agreed on in most cases, but heads of PTA felt that school and parents agree on expectations. Consequences proved to be quite a sensitive issue for all four respondent groups. Significant groups of headteachers, subject coordinators, teachers and parents are in favour of harder sanctions. At the same time, subject coordinators and teachers particularly stressed the need for giving support as well.

The next two chapters present the findings from the case studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

CASE STUDY FINDINGS

Introduction

In order to understand how schools as a unit; head teacher, subject coordinators, teachers, students and parents perceived and acted out accountability issues at school level, the researcher carried out two case studies; one in a large primary and the other in a small primary school. This sample was constructed for the purpose of finding out whether size determines or influences the structures and relationships that exist within the school, and their impact on accountability concepts and processes.

Each of the case studies was undertaken to provide in-depth data in relation to the issues highlighted in the main survey. Responses from there were used as a means of identifying issues and perceptions which could be probed in greater depth during the interviews. Inherent in the cases is how the schools formulate their own conceptions on a day to day basis and whether such operations validate the school's performance, who is involved in the operationalisation and finally, whether through such functions, it is challenged to improve further. In other words, the study had to address contextual conditions in order to build a cohesive picture of school procedures and practices relevant to the research.

The case study reports are based on multiple sources of evidence which also structure the presentation of this chapter: Each case is presented separately, followed by cross-case comparison of the two schools; highlighting differences. Each case is structured as follows:

- Context.

- Documentary Analysis of school documents, such as Development Plans.
- In-depth interviews of school personnel, the PTA Chairperson and a focus group of students.
- Observation of the head teacher, through shadowing.

Case One: St. John's Primary School

Context

Case study one, St. John's Primary school, lies on the Northern coast of the main island of Mahe. It hosts a diverse population of students, from different social backgrounds, of only two hundred and twenty students from pre-school (from three and a half) to primary six level (around twelve). There are 36 members of staff at the school, 28 of whom are teachers. The mission statement, which is highly visible at the school, suggests that there are high expectations of student learning, both in academic and non-academic fields:

‘to promote professionalism where everyone is concerned with teaching and learning’ (St. John Primary School, 2006, 2009)

That conviction seemed also clear in their vision, where the emphasis is on catering for learners of different and all abilities. The statements also articulated the promotion of collaborative work with parents, with whom they apparently are a close-knit family (St. John's, 2009), and each having a sense of belonging to the school.

St. John's primary school's performance in the National Examinations has been considered as ‘good’ (Ministry of Education, 2008) for the last three years. It has scored above the national mean in all six examinable subjects, that is, English,

French, Mathematics, Creole, Science and Social Studies. In English and Creole, it scored up to eight points above the national mean.

The management structure of the case school comprises an experienced female head teacher, three subject coordinators, and a special needs coordinator. Because of the size of the school, the headteacher leads and manages certain subjects; social studies, personal and social education, technology enterprise, the arts and physical education. All five members of the Senior Management team are also members of the School Improvement Team, which oversees the overall implementation of action plans. They are joined by the Professional Development Facilitator (PDF), who has the responsibility of organizing PD sessions at school level. One teacher from each cycle completes the SI Team. In the implementation of its plans, the school claims positive results in what they set out to do in terms of promoting living values at the institution. A particular focus of St. John's was apparently to concentrate on item analysis for both continuous and end of term assessments. Its practice of writing remarks seemed geared towards helping pupils to improve. An apparently unique characteristic of professional development at the school is that a lot of emphasis is put on professional growth through shared reading and discussions about issues having to do with teaching and learning (Progress Report, 2008). The school has also undergone external evaluation by the Quality Assurance Service. Its recommendations for improvement in the quality of assessments were well reflected in the school's preoccupation with item construction and analysis in both assessments and end of term examinations.

Documentary Analysis

Documentary evidence was sought to support data collected through the main survey, interviews and observations. The main purpose was to investigate the school's intentions pertaining to accountability functions, processes and relationships, which in turn would help triangulate data from the other two sources, hence strengthening the validity of the study.

The preparations went as planned, that is spending one whole day gathering data by perusing the documents. In order to select the required and appropriate information, three main sources were used: the job descriptions of respondents that is, the headteacher, subject coordinator and teacher, minutes of both management and school improvement team meetings and the school's Development Plan. Sampling those documents did not present any challenge as those were considered appropriate in terms of records of deliberations at a meeting, the roles and responsibilities of the respondents based at school, as well as the school's intentions in terms of priorities, targets and tasks for improvement plans. In general two methods; 'tracking' and 'content analysis' were used. Even then, tracking was used to locate the data constituting the language of accountability, functions, operations and issues. The range chosen for the minutes covered one term's deliberations. Screening and selecting data then became crucial as the question of validity kept looming. To facilitate data classification, themes were drawn so that data could be recorded in a systematic way; where entries are for each type of document. It is important to note that, since both case schools are state schools in a centralized system, they share the same job descriptions.

Job descriptions

Each job description (see table 6.1), for the headteacher, subject coordinator and teacher, outlines their roles clearly and highlights each one's obligations by which they are bound legally. For example, the headteacher is obligated to supervise or oversee the whole running of the school in three main areas; resources, curriculum implementation, and staff and student support. The subject coordinators are obligated to monitor curriculum implementation and focus on providing pedagogical support and guidance to subject teachers. At the level of the classroom, the teachers' obligations encompass ensuring committed and efficient classroom teaching, recording of, and reporting on, student progress. Put together, those three different levels make the clear distinction of roles and at the same time highlight the different levels of the hierarchy of the school system; from the headteacher, down to the students. It may also suggest that they are answerable for each of those stipulated roles.

Post	Main Purpose
Headteacher	-Managing and supervising the organisation of the whole school in terms of resources, curriculum implementation, staff and student support.
Subject Coordinators	-Monitoring subject implementation, 'providing pedagogical guidance and support to subject teachers and assistant in maintaining a school climate that is conducive to the development of both pupils and staff.
Teacher	-Ensuring committed and efficient classroom teaching, appropriate making and record-keeping, reporting on student progress , effective contribution to School Improvement and Development

Table 5.1: Job descriptions: main purposes

Appendix J shows how these main purposes are broken down into finer themes. The headteacher has responsibility for leadership, administration, monitoring and

evaluating, school ethos and community links, and teaching and learning. Inherent in those themes are the potential stakeholders. One outstanding example is the leadership theme where the headteacher is bound to communicate the Ministry's policies to staff, students and parents as well as ensuring the implementation of those policies. The Ministry, staff, students and parents appear as potential stakeholders to whom the accountability is to communicate the policies; hence they are all involved in an accountability relationship. The ethos and community links are explicit in depicting the headteacher as answerable for the establishment of a good partnership with parents and the community.

The subject coordinators are most involved with the teachers, then the students. They are expected to ensure that teaching and learning happen, therefore feeling the greatest sense of responsibility towards them. For effective teaching and learning to take place, their guidance and support for both teachers and students is important. Their job description also extends the responsibility to the organisation of professional development activities for teachers in their subject areas and also for conducting action research respectively.

For teachers, covering the national curriculum, ensuring effective teaching and efficient use of resources, ought to be what teachers are responsible for, according to their job descriptions. Even if subject coordinators are responsible for organizing, it is the teachers themselves who are required to take charge of their own professional development as well as keeping abreast with new developments in their subject areas. The teachers are also required to ensure that an orderly and disciplined atmosphere prevails in the class and that misbehaviour is dealt with promptly.

Development plan

To facilitate analysis of the school's Development Plan, themes were drawn from the document, and obviously 'intentions' was the most pervasive one. Among intentions, the school aimed to strongly focus on formalizing existing structures for systematic self-evaluation, on maintaining the practice of shared reading, as well as exploring ways to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in the teaching of reading

The plan also brought out the theme of relationships, where emphasis was placed on the collaboration of the parents, teachers and the community, to support one another. The listing of tasks to be undertaken highlighted the teachers' obligations in areas like researching teaching and planning issues, and sharing with others, or doing peer observations for others' professional development.

Minutes of meetings

Management team meeting

While the Development Plan indicates 'intentions', the minutes of meetings at St. John's revealed that teachers were not delivering well on their obligations, for example, in the recording of pupils' progress in reading or in maintaining good behaviour in their classrooms. This indicates non-alignment of expectations and delivery. However, the management proved to be proactive, after judging reports of the short-comings listed above. Decisions were made to identify teachers who were weak in the stipulated areas and provide them with support in class, or put them on a mentoring programme. That level of proactivity vis-a-vis reported accounts was also reflected in other decisions made later, like putting pupils who had completed their programmes in special needs back in the mainstream reading class.

The minutes show that consequences were discussed simultaneously with reported accounts and the minutes also revealed that no hard sanctions were applied. For example, a P3 teacher who was not performing well was give one term in which in which to improve and teachers who were not supervising at lunch time would be monitored closely by the senior management team.

Accounts of what had been happening in different cycles covered a wide range of issues. These pointed out the aspect of reporting as an essential component of giving such accounts. Judging the validity of those accounts seemed to work well at the case school and this was evident in the decisions the management was able to make following the reports.

School Improvement Team meeting

At St. John's, the themes which characterized the management meetings also featured in the improvement team's meetings. The theme of 'consequences' for example was evident in the headteacher's reprimands of coordinators for their inconsistency in checking records of pupils' progress. Here again, the verbal reprimands did not constitute hard sanctions. At different levels of the school 'reporting' featured highly, when each representative reported from their cycles. The reports were about the implementation process of improvement plans in each of the key areas targeted. In turn, the processes appeared to be essential because teacher representatives commented much about those. One example noted in the minutes is that teachers felt there was too much monitoring, but that comment was refuted by the headteacher who claimed that the rigorous process got things done. Another process that came to light was that of writing comments on teachers' lesson plans. While the headteacher had maintained that the practice was required as evidence of

subject coordinators having checked the plans before teaching, the representatives maintained that it made teachers frustrated. No reasons for the frustration were recorded. This scenario may also be indicative of the process or mechanism not always working as intended.

Interviews

The main method of data collection was the semi-structured interview, as the respondents' perspectives and experiences of accountability are central to understanding the meaning and practices of accountability. The interpersonal contact with the headteacher, subject coordinators, teachers, parents and pupils, rendered the interviews fruitful for an interpretive approach.

All respondents seemed to deem the interviews serious enough to require their full attention. As a consequence, no extensive probing was necessary. The interviewer managed to elicit rich, detailed data for analysis, even about highly sensitive subjects such as the consequences or penalties of accountability. Questions generated facts, opinions and attitudes, and reliability was enhanced through some yes/no queries to achieve some form of uniformity for certain aspects of the data (Cohen et al, 2003). In all, three days were required to undertake the interviews at school level. The internal arrangements were made by the headteacher.

For the focus group of pupils, though, it was more difficult to manage ten pupils around a table. They were a lively group of eight to twelve year olds. However, the researcher concentrated on guiding the group to discuss the topic at hand. The ease with which they expressed themselves indicated they were comfortable and

articulate. Pupils' insights came out gradually. However, data recording proved to be challenging, as listening to them, responding to ideas, and noting down answers, was really difficult. Since the pupils were placed around a table, involvement and interaction was encouraged. Eventually the situation organised itself into pupil respondents taking turns to answer. It is also important to note that there were no distractions; the venue provided privacy.

In all the interviews, the researcher did not find herself only asking questions, but proved to be an avid listener in order to secure high level information.

The data gathered through the interviews has been analysed thematically, the themes linking directly to the research questions. The same 'grand tour' question which was: "What do you understand by the term accountability?" was asked of the respondents, but after piloting, that question was amended for the focus group as pupils could not really understand it.

Perceptions of accountability

At the case school, understanding of school accountability revolves around ideas such as being answerable for one's role, as giving an account of things to do with one's role, as giving an account of things to do with one's job and on delivering on some expectations. This preoccupation with their roles, indicated by all the respondents except for the chairperson of PTA, suggests a particular understanding of their responsibilities and ensuring that each role is implemented accordingly. One teacher illustrated that role clearly through the emphatic response that everything that is being done is for the progression of the child, even working on the difficulties. Through such responses, it was clear that the respondents may have reflected on such

issues prior to the interviews, contrary to Bassey's (1999:81) view that they could have been 'constructing their positions during the interview'. In contrast, to be accountable through the eyes of the parent means working well as a team; the management together with the teachers; a portrait that highlights the expectations of the parent: 'the school and the parent working well as a team; the management, the other staff and teachers doing well in the teaching'.

The accountability of teachers

Teachers at the case school were positive about their personal level of accountability. For all, except one teacher, this accountability comes through giving support and guidance to pupils in mixed-ability classes and catering for their needs. Countering this, a teacher claimed that she is more accountable now, as both the headteacher and subject coordinators ask many questions about pupils' progress and she has to provide explanations.

A parent respondent did not deny her responsibility vis-a-vis her child's education but felt that teachers are the ones who should be responsible for the provision of learning experiences in class and, then, the parent will follow the progress from home. Contrary to that view, the students laid the burden of responsibility for their learning on both the teachers and their parents. One expressed: "a good teacher is one who teaches interesting lessons and has time for us". This response was repeated over and over again and sometimes extended with: "one who sometimes jokes and laughs" or "one who discusses when things are wrong". On the other hand, they feel that parents should ensure that they attend school. Others added that their parents ought also to be responsible for coming to school and discussing their progress as well as ensuring that homework is completed. These distinct ideas suggest 'reciprocal

accountability', where each partner is accountable to one another. Two students claimed that, though teachers should be responsible, it is the headteacher who should make sure that they well prepared for their classes and observe lessons to ensure that teaching is being done well and exercise-books are marked. In the light of such remarks, it seems that students' alignment of teacher and parent responsibilities provides for a collective trend geared towards learning.

Subject coordinators do not see teachers as accountable only for teaching and learning. Apart from this fundamental role of ensuring that pupils learn, teachers serve on various committees or are responsible for extra curricular club activities which are held after school hours. As members of the management team, subject coordinators are emphatic about teachers being accountable to them. In turn, subject coordinators monitor what they do through lesson observations of their subject areas or see that they are doing what they have been mandated to do. Added to that, subject coordinators ensure that staff' and pupils' well being are adequately looked after. At the case school, the headteacher sees teachers as required to provide an account of how they use resources. This account is given through inventories of textbooks, equipment and furniture. They have to care for pupils' well being and the environment too.

The subject coordinators say that not all teachers seem to understand their roles clearly, claiming that some teachers disappear for no reason, that is, their absence is noted, but without valid reasons. Others are seen not to seek assistance when they need it or when they are in doubt. The Maths and Science coordinator expressed the view that other teachers do understand but she doubted their ability and willingness to fulfill those roles properly. She claimed that teachers are honest about their

practices, but they lacked a clear focus that can drive the message home that, at the end of teaching, there should be learning. However, all three teachers interviewed felt that this understanding is present; they are concerned even about a child not in their class, but they felt they should more. This echoes the coordinators' wishes of applying themselves to find solutions in their own classes first. In support for teachers' understanding of their roles, the parent expressed happiness at how accountable she sees teachers; they follow students' progress and they are available, even at break times they have been assisting pupils who have difficulties.

Subject coordinators seemed to understand their roles more clearly than teachers do. They attributed this to the fact that, at management level, they operate more as one unit; all planning is done together and feedback is given. Also team observations are often done, for example in reading.

The scope of accountability

The responses of the school's senior management team, and the teachers, suggest a wide scope of accountability at St. John's primary school. As well as being accountable for responsibilities directly related to each person's role, as per their job description, as a school unit the emphasis on teaching and student learning surpasses all other aspects for which each individual is accountable. However, each member's accountability is dissimilar in the sense that each role determines that level. The headteacher, for example, is accountable for ensuring that teaching and learning takes place in the whole school; in other words the headteacher is the overseer, while the subject coordinators concentrate in subject areas as one explained:

"I am accountable for teaching and learning in both Maths and Science, through ensuring that those subjects are supported pedagogically and I

follow up on concerns. I also ensure that feedback is given, training is provided and targets are met.”

Such accountability for teaching and learning does not stand on its own, as the welfare and behaviour of both staff and pupils needs to be accounted for too, by the headteacher, subject coordinators and teachers. This connects with the concern that support for good behaviour is being provided and that there is also prompt management of undesirable behaviour and other social issues.

Professionalism is highly regarded at the case school. This was evident through the constant reference to the terms; presenting a good self image, good interaction with others, providing assistance to other colleagues or developing a learning culture, and being a professional. A teacher who was a representative on the school improvement committee interpreted professionalism as discussing information with other teachers and the committee, and for teaching good, effective lessons to ensure set targets are met.

In highlighting a broad range of units of account, the headteacher is also answerable for the management of all resources; physical, financial and all amenities. In contrast, however, the provision of leadership in the context of development planning, through providing assistance in the process, is an area for which the headteacher did not claim responsibility but was evident in subject coordinators' responses.

Surprisingly, accountability to parents was hardly mentioned. Yet the PTA chairperson's expectations are that the school should be required to share with parents, information about the behaviour and attitude of their children, their progress in terms of whether they are doing well or badly, and their relationships with others.

Students' expectations of what they hope to gain by the end of primary schooling did not align well with what others feel the school is accountable for. Those students' expectations did not seem to highlight a broad range of possibilities; instead responses revolved around three main ideas: moral values, a good level of education and the ability to cope with secondary schooling.

Who is the school accountable to?

Inside the school

The respondents distinguished between who they are accountable to inside and outside the school. Inside the school, professionalism was brought to the fore as emphasis was placed on being accountable to oneself, linked to notions of moral responsibility for one's job. Both the subject coordinators, and one of the teachers, believed that they are primarily accountable to themselves. One Subject Coordinator's explanation focused on the fact that she had been appointed to the school, so something is expected of her in return. Similarly, a teacher explained: "I set my personal target. I have a job to do; I deliver on it". Contrarily, the headteacher did not feel that she owed it to herself to deliver on her responsibilities, before finding herself answerable to all members of staff and pupils. Surprisingly, pupils, whom one might believe to be the main stakeholders, were not ranked first; they were ranked last by the headteacher, a subject coordinator and two of the teachers. Other colleagues' interests took precedence over pupils, but they were still shown to be important, as all respondents named them.

Teachers saw themselves answerable to both the head of the school and to middle leaders as their super ordinates. They also saw themselves accountable to one another and this point to another noteworthy feature, which is the inter-dependency of

teachers, particularly in seeing themselves as a team and doing common tasks for a common goal. Parents apparently did not have much of a stake in the school and they were barely mentioned, showing their limited involvement. That was confirmed by the PTA chairperson who claimed that, though she knows all other parents as a resident of the area, she was not consulted much.

Outside the school

Outside the school, parents gained much more importance; they were ranked at the top and seen as the ones to whom expectations have to be fulfilled. For subject coordinators, for example, expectations included a good education, irrespective of their children's abilities. Parents were also seen as part of the community, in that case, another group with an interest in the school. Ironically, parents felt that they had to wait for the one-off occasions when there are open-days for the opportunity in order to discuss their children's progress.

Since the case school is a government one, it would seem that it would feel responsible to the Ministry of Education. However, this was apparently not the case at St. John's, where only one teacher expressed accountability to the Ministry, as her employer, while a subject coordinator explained that her accountability was towards Ministry personnel who visited the school and provided support. Another group with an interest in education for the interviewees is the Government, where the obligation lies towards their school 'bearing fruits' in return for the large budget that is provided for education by the Government. In this case, the Government has also been used synonymously with the country. The Church is also seen to have an interest in the school and this is because it forms part of the community.

For all those various potential stakeholders, levels of interest were different, hence the degree of sense of responsibility towards them also varied. Teachers, for

example, ranked pupils as requiring their highest sense of responsibility. One teacher, for example, said that she has to be always prepared because her pupils come first and she has to be there for her class. She explained that her second accountability was for the lesson notes to be handed in to the subject coordinator follow. The second teacher claimed: 'I am the one who is supposed to help the children to develop fully and become good citizens', while the third one maintained that she was most responsible to herself, as she thinks that if this is not the case, others will not see her as a responsible person and both her teaching and her pupils' learning will fail. When there are problems, though, parents feel that the school should be answerable first to them as they are closest to their children and know them better.

The subject coordinators felt the greatest sense of responsibility to themselves because of the need to be responsible for a given role.

Parents evoke the greatest sense of responsibility in the headteacher, as she explained that parents link directly to the main clients, and being able to satisfy them equates being able to satisfy the Ministry. That opinion was shared by the teacher of the upper cycle; claiming that what parents say can either make or damage one's image as a teacher. In early childhood, though, the teacher believes that parents should take second place as some parents do not bother about their children's learning and she doesn't get to see those that she really needs. On the other hand, the Ministry takes precedence as it needs to know what she is doing and has the power to ask her to leave if she is not doing well.

How does accountability function?

Accountability at the case school is realised through various mechanisms operating at different levels. First, at Management level, punctuality is rigorously monitored, and

there is monitoring of both teaching and learning, particularly through lesson observations, according to a planned schedule. Mentoring the newest member of the management team, in this case the Early Childhood coordinator was also seen as a process through which accountability operates. Reporting featured highly in the school, as all coordinators explained that they are called on to report on the status of teaching and learning in their cycle or subject areas. They have to provide evidence of those records that they keep about teachers' and pupils' performance and, after analysis of results, in a termly appraisal review. Teachers have to answer for their own personal and class targets, which might be short or long term. Teachers felt that this reporting is effective, even if it is time consuming, because it motivates them to improve.

At class level, teacher representatives on the School Improvement Team (SIT) are bound by the obligation to report back from other teachers or from the team. Information pertaining to improvement efforts is passed to and from the committee and teachers, with the representatives as the link between the two groups.. Another dimension of reporting occurs in the shared reading process, where an aspect or issue affecting teaching/learning is chosen by a teacher who researches and shares the subject with others. Then the teachers get together to discuss and align their understanding, in a professional development session. During the interviews, it was felt that teachers approved of the practice because they got to facilitate learning for others and that they were dependent on one another. This is indicative of more lateral learning and exchange as well as a greater openness to challenges and a possible evolutionary process of a learning culture, based on a reciprocal accountability relationship.

Collaboration received wide assent as an accountability mechanism. That was mainly through team planning where teachers of a level discuss and plan together what they would be teaching, the materials to use, and learning strategies, as well as any other pedagogical issues. This dependency on one another facilitated individual planning, even though the two generalist teachers from cycles one and two maintained that it was time consuming. In this collaboration, there were also peer observations which the headteacher explained did not go well at times, but teachers were dependent on one another for making it happen. As a result it also contributes to the learning culture.

The structures for ensuring accountability were not limited to those at school level. The Maths Coordinator stressed that the Quality Assurance Service had done much to get them to be more accountable. It had carried out external evaluation at their school and had reported on their strengths and weaknesses, followed by giving them two years in which to improve on those weaknesses. That same coordinator claimed that, if she followed her job description, she was bound to be accountable.

The effectiveness of accountability mechanisms

Tentativeness or caution could be felt when all the subject coordinators referred to existing mechanisms as ‘more or less’ or ‘no, not always’ working. They admitted that though such mechanisms were ‘keeping us on track’, some things were lacking. For example, one clarified that ‘really’ monitoring to ensure progress was not always happening as the other claimed. There can be improvement in the way people report about things; that they need to be guided to give focused reports.

In comparison, teachers felt the mechanisms were adequate, because one would have new ideas, and shared experiences to base her practices on. The fact that observations

of lessons take place, feedback and advice is given and praise is awarded shows that her teaching and the progress of pupils are measured adequately. Similarly, this adequacy is experienced when analyses of results are done and pupils' performance is commented upon. The teacher stated that help is also provided by the subject coordinator.

Consequences of accountability

Generally, breaches of procedures, such as providing reports or giving feedback, do not get to the level of senior management; the headteacher maintained that, in the case of representatives, that is sorted out amongst teachers themselves through discussions and counseling. In the event of the discussions not working, this results in the teacher being put on mentoring programmes. In other cases, the school focuses mostly on positive reinforcement, that is, those who do well are congratulated, and those who do not are supported.

Those times for reflections are well appreciated by teachers, as they all expressed that it was conducted in an amicable way, both by the subject coordinators and the headteacher. Sometimes one can be reprimanded, but the teachers maintain that such incidents happen rarely as they always try to satisfy those expectations. They are ingrained in the school life, and teachers balked at the idea of not making them work. For subject coordinators though, the consequences of not meeting expectations appeared to be more serious than those for teachers. The language coordinator maintained that, apart from being reminded by other members of the management, support providers from the Ministry discuss reasons for not meeting the expectations. The coordinator for Maths, however, claims that sometimes her appraisal reflects the non-compliance, but felt that this was not really reliable. She claims that other than

discussion at the end of the year, not much is done in terms of consequences, even if new targets may be discussed.

The PTA chairperson was not aware whether there were consequences or not for teachers, but instead felt that one needs to find out why the expectation has not been met; she clarified; *“If expectations are not met, if teachers are not giving their best for learning, then there must be a problem.”* She claimed that, in the case of teachers, one should not think of consequences, but rather about advising and providing support by the management. The parent claimed that, since teachers are mostly responsible for pupils’ learning, they were actually in a vulnerable position; and if they are sacked, then the Ministry loses.

The majority of students in the focus group believe that teachers who do not do what they are supposed to do should be seen by the headteacher. One other response also mentioned the value of training: *“Teachers who do not do what they are expected to do should get more training at the N.I.E., sort of advanced studies”*. Students also seemed to echo their teachers’ wishes in saying that a teacher needs to be given a second chance. Further prompting resulted in the student explaining that everyone who does something wrong is given a chance to do better; therefore why not the teacher?

Are others accountable at the school?

‘Everyone at the school has a job to do, and this makes them accountable’. This remark was made by a P5/P6 teacher who felt that they all complement one another; the idea of reciprocal accountability. “We are a team; either the school does well or

it fails”, she continued. Fellow teachers can question others about their class or what they are doing. They claim that this is normal practice and, since attitudes are changing, there are no conflicts. The teacher attached a lot of significance to the management team’s accountability because they are the main supervisors; they classify pupils according to competency levels and they write accounts about what is happening with the pupils. Also, another teacher explained that she needs both the headteacher’s and subject coordinator’s help for feedback and information in order to function. This whole scenario again highlights the level of cooperation that exists among the different staff members. From these self-reports, it appears that everyone may be working within an accountability framework that is working vertically through line management and horizontally across levels and groups.

Internal accountability demands

Demands for accountability on the school are both internal and external. From the inside, the school is mostly challenged by four main requirements. First, subject coordinators felt that they are overwhelmed by requests for monitoring of teaching and learning. The coordinator for Maths and Science admitted that she was not doing well in that area.

A second request, mentioned by the same group of respondents, is giving feedback on teaching and learning in order to establish how pupil learning is progressing. Evidently, in their case, if the monitoring is not working, it impacts on their reporting and any judgments that have to be made.

The third request challenged both the teachers and subject coordinators, who have to report and discuss development planning, that is, the implementation of improvement plans. The teachers claimed that, with their own workloads, it was difficult to ensure that tasks are being implemented by others whom they represent and then report on them. The middle managers maintained that the commitment to implement tasks by teachers was not always satisfactory, therefore the quality of their reports sometimes lacked substance or evidence.

The fourth demand was mentioned only by the subject coordinators, that is, having good subject knowledge or, as one claimed, 'knowing my subject well', because the provision of both pedagogical support and mentoring depends heavily on having sound knowledge of subjects one has to lead.

For the headteacher, internal accountability demands revolved around getting teachers to be able to manage their classes, particularly new ones, and overseeing the overall smooth running of the school.

These internal demands raise a number of important issues at St. John's, especially about the effectiveness of existing structures for monitoring teaching and learning, reporting on pupils' progress and the professional development of both teachers and middle managers.

External accountability demands

After considerable probing, it was found that the case school faces many external accountability demands and the two main parties to which the school is answerable are the parents and the Ministry of Education. Different sections of the Ministry have their own interests, for example, the Accounts section for budget and expenditures and the Schools' Division for results and reports of progress. Some pressure is applied for better results by officials of the Schools' Division, mainly the directors

and Quality Assurance Officers. However, parents want their children to be secure and protected. The language coordinator explained: *“For parents the main thing that they want is to ensure the protection and security of their child and his property”* and that same coordinator also felt that those demands were not so great. In contrast, the Early Childhood Coordinator claimed that too much is expected of teachers by parents; ‘they expect them to do everything for the child’, one expressed. There are also expectations from the community; the Church wants the school to prepare the pupils well for the religious sacraments, while the District Community Council wants to know about everything. The headteacher acknowledged that some of those requests cannot be accommodated, because to do so would result in breaches of confidentiality. On the other hand, the school felt that demands from the Ministry are justified and the school is bound to meet those expectations. The large investment of Government money, in terms of resources and salaries being paid, gives it the right to know what is happening.

In order to meet those external demands, personnel at St. John’s school delegate a lot of responsibilities. The headteacher explained that she negotiates deadlines with the Ministry personnel and she is prompt with provision of explanations. On one occasion, she was asked to modify dates on the action plans and was given a new deadline in which to hand over the plans, together with corresponding monitoring plans for their implementation.

Although people at the school understand that they are accountable to the Ministry, it does not always work in practice and this puts the school in challenging situations. For example, it requested maintenance work to be done on infrastructure and that was not met. It was identified as the one of the school’s biggest weaknesses when

external evaluation was carried out by Quality Assurance. Sanitary facilities were not up to standard. However, the report from QA pushed the Ministry to act on the matter promptly, in turn pointing to the Ministry's accountability to the school.

Observations

Foster's (1996) claim about observational data combining with other information sources to provide an in-depth picture of perspectives and cultures was the basis for setting up, organizing and carrying out observations in the case study. The purposes of the observations were to 'probe deeply and analyse intensively' (Cohen, and Manion, 1994: 106) on the phenomena of school and teacher accountability. The intention was that responses regarding the practices given in the interviews would either be confirmed or refuted by observations of practice in the school, hence the researcher would be both 'open-ended and inductive'. Particular attention was paid to the different settings; physical, human, interactional and program (Morrison, 1993); all those components that bore significantly on the operations of accountability. The observation technique chosen was 'shadowing' of the headteacher, where the researcher looked at daily functions and generated categories to explain the interactions.

The arrangements were discussed in advance with the headteacher. The staff had in turn been informed. The researcher had feared the possibility of participants changing their behaviours. To minimize this risk, some non-shadowing trial time had been spent at the case school, in order to establish ease and comfort. During the exercise itself close proximity was kept with the headteacher and she was seen to be at ease even 'with the researcher in constant attendance' (Moyles, 2002: 184). There

was still the need to be unobtrusive though, and as non-threatening as possible, hence adding to the validity of such data.

During the observation period, the researcher was drawn into the complexity of the processes, operations and relationships. The operations and functions were recorded on the basis of fifteen minutes intervals. Alongside were details, taken in the form of a running record. Those were field notes of everything that took place, including the change of contexts and who was involved. The events were then left to 'portray what it is like' (Cohen et al, 2003:13), as participants did or did not live out their experiences of accountability. Through it all, the observations required sustained attention, open-mindedness and being non-judgmental, even though it was a sole researcher's perspective.

As the observations progressed, a tentative formulation of themes began to emerge, arising from the analysis and interpretation undertaken. These themes were similar to those that had emerged through the pilot study. The themes were recorded onto a 'matrix of categories placing evidence within such categories' (Yin, 2003:111), through the process of selective reduction. The grounded themes or categories were discussions, involvement, obligations, reporting, decision-making and relationships.

Discussions

The headteacher involves her subject coordinators and teachers in a lot of discussions, which seem to focus on the sharing of ideas. This was evident in discussing a student teacher's plight in relation to her poor performance on teaching practice. That element was also evident in the discussion pertaining to the mismatching of teaching objectives and evaluation activities by some teachers and, more so, in discussing strategies to improve the evacuation process. This indicates that St.

John's gives a high value to discussing, sharing opinions and ideas, hence what is decided is characteristic of a clear collective decision.

Involvement

This theme was prevalent in at least five different activities. For example, members of staff came together to prepare refreshments for the less fortunate children or when each member of staff without exception was involved in the evacuation process; each with a specific task. Those examples also highlight the responsibility of delivering on assigned tasks and the school was cleared in exactly eight minutes. The idea of involvement was also manifested through the headteacher's discussion with a guardian of her ward's poor performance, poor attendance and very frequent change of address.

Obligations

Attention is drawn to the obligation of different people in the school; that of the Maths coordinator to ensure that a particular teacher does carry out her observation as required; the obligation of each member of staff to ensure that the school is evacuated in the shortest possible time; teachers' obligation to raise the level of difficulty in items to challenge the more able pupils in homework; and also that both the headteacher and subject coordinators show teachers how to work out competency levels. Those obligations seem to be much, but at the case school, it is apparent that obligations are the driver for people to act, that is, getting on with what they have to do, hence internal demands direct the functioning of the school.

Reporting

Another theme of significance was that of reporting. Various aspects of school life were reported on. During the management meeting, for example, Subject Coordinators reported on lesson observations they carried out. Also the same group

of people had prepared written reports of how their subject areas had fared for the term. Since those reports were to be sent to the Ministry, it is evident that it was an external demand made on the school, and that also can be viewed as the school being obligated to provide such reports. One point of importance is that, where reporting was done, it was found to be done within well established structures like management team meetings or professional development sessions. This indicates that accounts are given either to senior management, to parents, to the Ministry or other teachers, as is the case for reporting about strategies. One may conclude that reporting is highly valuable and, at St. John's, care is taken to report on valid issues.

Decision-making

Decision-making was not too prominent during the observations. Against this backdrop of so much reporting, one might anticipate that decision-making would parallel those, if only to be pro-active. Only two instances were recorded in which decisions were made, and neither followed any reports.

Relationships

Another theme which was not too evident was that of relationships. The good rapport among management team members was evidence of a positive working relationship, and coupled with each reporting on different aspects, shows their dependency on one another, which is indicative of mutual support, and reciprocal accountability. Another facet of such relationships was the ease and frankness with which each member discussed or reported. No inhibitions could be detected.

Case Two: St. Michael's primary school

Context

St. Michael Primary School is a large comprehensive educational establishment on the eastern, coastal area of the main island of Mahe. Since its location is central, it facilitates movements and contact with parents and other important bodies in the district. Those are the Health Centre, the Police Station, the District Administration Office and the main church which is Catholic, all within the vicinity of the school. Two years ago, the school was re-constructed and fenced in; providing more security and a more conducive environment for both pupils and staff.

The school hosts a population of seven hundred pupils from pre-primary through to primary six. These are divided equally between girls and boys. The staff comprises sixty teachers and ten non-teaching members. The school operates with a management team comprising five members; a female headteacher and subject coordinators for Maths and Science, Languages, Early Childhood and Special Education Needs.

The performance of St. Michael's has been considered 'good' (Ministry of Education, 2008:25) and among the top five primary schools over the last four years in all six examinable subjects. However, in contrast to St. John's, performance seems to be on a downward trend in the last two years with the school going from an aggregate score of +5 down to +3 above the National Mean, even with the girls scoring impressive results. The boys are not faring well in any of the subjects. The 2008 report suggested that results could be improved if the school paid more attention to their boys' performance.

The school's vision is geared towards a commitment to promoting excellence in teaching and learning through encouraging all staff and pupils to take responsibility

for developing a learning culture and partnerships. This goal is intended to be realised through teachers taking into account pupils' individual needs and improving the effectiveness of their teaching through more differentiated instructional practices. Another goal is for the school management to be fully committed to development planning in order to manage and monitor its implementation effectively. In the realisation of these goals the school aims to work in partnership with the different stakeholders in the community (St. Michael's, 2009). It is important to note that those goals were reflected in the teacher respondents' expectations. They visualised pupils working hard academically to maintain the school's position, while those teachers also expect to give their best and share a good team spirit with all concerned in a disciplined environment.

This case study design followed the same pattern as for St. John's primary school.

Documentary Analysis

As with St. John's primary school, documentary evidence was used to investigate the school's intentions concerning how accountability is operationalised; whether there were any particular processes or mechanisms that make it function or the types of relationships which exist within the school's context of accountability. The same three types of documents were used: job descriptions, the school's development plan and minutes of both management and school improvement teams' meetings.

Job descriptions

St. Michael's, like St. John's, is a state school and they share the same job descriptions (see table 6.1 and appendix J).

Development plan

The most pervasive theme that emerged from the development plan was ‘intentions’; which covered the school wanting to improve the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in literacy and numeracy, particularly at P3/P4 levels. The school also intended to augment the opportunities for pupils to participate in decision-making, and ensure that the school environment is safe and free from hazards.

Other themes that were highlighted in the development plan were processes, relationships and obligations. The processes reflected the school’s preoccupation with differentiation as a teaching approach, which will help it to cater for all pupils. This was clear in how teaching should be delivered and what assessments should reflect. The processes also included mechanisms to be put in place to ensure pupils’ involvement in decision-making.

Apart from a passing mention of teamwork to enhance capacity building, and of the school working in partnership with stakeholders, the theme of relationships was not very prominent.

Two points brought out ‘obligations’ clearly. The plan stipulated that teachers are required to consider pupils’ individual needs and that the management ought to be committed towards development planning.

Minutes of meetings

Management team meetings

In comparison to the development plan, the management team minutes of meetings strongly featured ‘reporting’. That theme, was evident in the many instances where the headteacher, for example, had to give feedback or report on discussions held with Quality Assurance officers and the clarifications that were given, or when subject

coordinators reported about observations they had carried out. Other significant reports included teachers setting targets for different ability groups. They reported that meeting the targets was difficult for some of them. It was also reported by subject coordinators that some teachers were practicing differentiated instruction, resulting in others being invited to do peer observations. The Early Childhood coordinator was also required to improve her conferencing with teachers after observations.

‘Discussions’ also came out as a valued theme and it was evident that discussions preceded implementation of scheduled tasks, even if it was also evident that some of the tasks were not undertaken. Issues affecting the school were often discussed too, for example, teachers’ absences.

‘Self-evaluation’ too emerged from the documentary data. It was recorded that the management had evaluated itself, to see what it had accomplished. However, its significance was reduced by the fact that such evaluation covered what it had accomplished only, and not the weaknesses. Self-evaluation was also evident in teachers’ performance reviews that were carried out. In those cases, the weaknesses were compiled to help coordinators prepare support programmes.

Another theme was ‘processes’, which referred only to the headteacher checking all management records and planners. A final theme was ‘involvement’; a plan for parental involvement had been drawn up but not been implemented.

School Improvement Team meetings

Various themes similar to those from the management meetings emerged from the school’s improvement team meetings. One of the most prominent showed that the school depends heavily on ‘processes’, even if at times those did not operate as the

school would have liked. The example of the regular updating of school improvement documents is a good illustration of this scenario. There was a backlog of information not recorded in professional development journals, minutes not completed or assessment results which had not been recorded in termly reports. On the other hand, some processes did work, for example perusing lesson notes to ensure the differentiation of tasks. Spot-checking for the use of differentiated instruction in class was another process that seemed to be working at the school. That was focused on the school's main target and at the same time helped them to collect data to evaluate the target.

The second prominent theme was that of 'self-evaluation'. At St. Michael's, a lot of effort and time were dedicated to self-evaluation, from teachers' evaluation of their own teaching to the evaluation of the school through development planning. Evidence shows that, in each of those cases, staff was engaged in reflections after they had been given critical questions to answer. Another noteworthy aspect of self-evaluation is discussion of the school's mission statement. However, the school's management team acknowledged that they might not have what it takes to accomplish such a mission.

Analysis of the minutes also brought out 'involvement', which seemed to revolve strongly around the participation of students in school life. That was evident first in the nomination of student heads of classes and the subsequent election of head boy/girl of the school. It was clear too in the management's desire to have students' involved in school activities. One example of this involvement was recorded as 'helping during break supervision' which was being done by the head girl.

In the school improvement meetings, 'reporting' also featured. That happened in giving feedback from professional development sessions, or reports on other issues, from the grades the members represented. It was not evident, however, whether there were any consequences, as the minutes did not record any decisions made following the reports.

The theme of 'relationships' was not strongly evident, but was implied in 'team work', which was apparent in the grouping of teachers of the same subject areas for the discussion of specific issues and concerns about differentiated instruction. It was also present in the management working together with the professional development facilitator as they collaborated to update all school improvement records and in sensitising teachers on peer-observations.

There was little that the researcher could term 'obligations' through analysing the minutes and only two instances could be identified. First, a specific date had been set for the submission of the development plan and, secondly, the requirement to update the school improvement corner with information about the new plan.

It is obvious that a lot of 'discussions' take place at St. Michael's. Two distinct examples are the discussion of professional development objectives for each week and the discussion to align the whole school's understanding of the concept of differentiation.

Interviews

For the interviews, data collection followed the same arrangements as at St. John's primary school. The same sample of participants; the headteacher, three subject

coordinators, three teachers, the PTA chairperson and a focus group of ten pupils were used. Again, A tape recorder was not used, instead the researcher made notes during the interviews. The same themes, as at St. John's, were used to structure the presentation of interview findings.

Perceptions of accountability

'Responsibility' was the term mostly used to explain school accountability by the various internal participants. This implies a focus on the relationship each respondent has with his/her work inside the school. This was evident in statements like: 'being responsible for what happens in a school', responsible for putting into practice what one feels 'should be happening' or 'I am responsible to ensure the proper running of the school', from the subject coordinators and headteacher respectively. For one subject coordinator, the term 'responsibility' was taken further in terms of the school as a unit being responsible for making decisions about its operation being ready to be criticised and ready to justify its actions. This sheds light on the possibility of judgments being made, or the evaluation of actions carried out, as well as the requirement to provide justifications. It may also be indicative of the term 'responsibility' being used interchangeably or synonymously with accountability.

The emphasis on responsibility was compounded when teachers were asked whether they perceived themselves as accountable. They made the following comments:

'I know my responsibilities and I deliver on them, not always a hundred percent, but I try my best' (cycle one teacher).

'Whatever records we have we update and hand them over when those documents are needed. At primary four level, there are a lot of responsibilities. Sometimes we do not meet expectations in marking exercise books' (cycle two teacher)

'I discharge my responsibilities vis a vis my work; that is, what has been set out to do. I do it with potential. Children will gain through what I have taught them. I am responsible to develop them to their full potential too; physically, socially, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually' (cycle three teacher).

A similar focus on 'responsibility' was expressed by the PTA chairperson who defined the concept as: *'when people, for example a teacher is responsible for their actions'*. This response is indicative of some form of relationship with what someone has to do.

The accountability of teachers

As *opposed* to school accountability, teachers at St. Michael had pupils and parents as their main common stakeholders. Being answerable for them also bore a spiritual imperative in terms of religious accountability maybe, as one teacher explained: *'God has placed those children in my hands; I have a moral responsibility towards them. I have to help them learn'*. This reflection connects with what they have to answer for: pupils' learning, their development, their future and their behavior. Though parents were listed by all teachers who were interviewed, explanations given showed that parents' interests were largely on social issues rather than visible in pupil learning. Few parents demand any account of their children's learning from the teacher. The PTA parent could be one of those few, because he claimed that the school is required to share at least two aspects of his children's education ; progress

in class and behaviour. However, he also claimed that such information is only given at the end of the term, when there is open day and parents collect reports. This leads to the issue of how much involvement parents really are allowed in their children's education, whether boundaries for each of the parties exist. This is because the parent also distinguished what he felt was his role as a parent, which was to ensure his children attend school and do homework assignments, from what he claimed was the teacher's role, that is to teach, ensure pupils learn and report to parents. Nevertheless, consultation with parents was highly valued because teachers maintained that they are the children's parents and they know those children better. The parent acknowledged that some of the teachers on occasions seem accountable as they can really explain to a parent how a child can improve and they solicit the parent's help. However, he added that some are not and his discontent was made clear in the statement: *'they are always blaming the children, but they do not question what they do to help those children'*.

Apart from parents, teacher responses also highlighted other possible stakeholders; the school's management team, the Ministry of Education, the society, colleagues, and one teacher explained: *'Myself too, because I need to be always ready to teach what I am supposed to be doing and I am also self evaluating myself'*.

Teachers saw being accountable to all those different parties stressful; evident in both cycle two and cycle three teachers' comments. Subsequent explanations varied and teachers expressed concern about demands being made even in areas where the teachers themselves felt they were not receiving adequate support and attention. One of them also stated that a teacher is also required to push him/herself to become better or to be more professional. One teacher maintained that the process is challenging. However, the cycle one teacher felt she was doing enough in her work.

Compared to the other two cycles, this may be indicative of low performance pressure in that first cycle or an individual lack of impetus from this teacher.

All three subject coordinators perceive that teachers of St. Michael's are commonly accountable for pupils' learning. They are also answerable for their own performance, keeping records, planning, their classroom and resources. The headteacher claimed that teachers are accountable mainly for teaching and learning; to raise pupils' standards. This confirmed the comments made by subject coordinators, but the headteacher added a new dimension, that of teacher initiative or proactivity. She claimed that this was not evident, because even if teachers knew their pupils' ability, they still could not differentiate tasks; they offered a 'one size fits all' approach. Also, rather than discuss weaknesses with pupils, they wrote comments like: 'could do better'.

The interviewees' opinions varied as to whether teachers really understand what they are being held accountable for. For example, the Early Childhood coordinator claimed that all of them do understand but they do not consider the whole child:

'They focus mainly on teaching and learning. Some seem unaware that other aspects make up the whole child. Some are not setting good examples for pupils to follow'.

Similarly, the Language coordinator admitted they do understand, but that some teachers are not serious enough because they easily go back to old ways even if they have been shown how to do some things more effectively. She further added: *'I suggest that these teachers are referred to the Ministry where officials can follow-up on them and such visits need not be announced'.* Such comments clearly show that

a strong accountability structure does not exist, and that middle leaders are challenged by ensuring that teachers do their duties effectively. This was also evident in the Maths and Science coordinator's claim that teachers do understand, but at times tend to 'forget' or blame others. The coordinator complained of teachers not handing in lesson plans, and not reflecting much when doing post-lesson evaluation. Though there is the need to differentiate instructions, the coordinator maintained that there was very limited evidence of it in the few lesson plans that are given to her when she does lesson observations.

The headteacher was also affirmative about teacher understanding but she had doubts about their practice. She argued that they had too many 'un-graded' results. She vehemently stressed that teachers are not doing enough.

However, at the case school, it seems that there might be conditions under which teachers felt they should not be held accountable. For example, the cycle two teacher mentioned when one has not been followed, monitored or given the help needed. Also, when she is not involved in something, she maintains she cannot be held accountable. Such responses seem to question the type or the amount of support provided to poor performing, ill prepared or stagnant teachers. At the same time it also questions again the teachers' understanding of what they are really held accountable for. Is there a formal structure which is stipulated or has it ever been discussed with them? Nevertheless, being accountable under those conditions cannot be expected to bring about changes in instructional practices. In contrast, the other two teachers articulated that, if a teacher is at school, he/she has to be accountable. They also questioned the accountability of the management; they claimed they were not clear whether the management was accountable to them too, or not.

The scope of accountability

The headteacher presented a narrow scope for her accountability; that is the proper running of the school because she maintains that she would be the one to be called in if things were not working well. The headteacher was not able to rank which aspect of school life she was more accountable for, insisting it was for everything.

In comparison, subject coordinators had no difficulty in discussing what they were accountable for. There were no discrepancies, other than one claiming that she is responsible to give information to parents about their children, a point not mentioned by other subject coordinators. A focus on their role as subject leaders could be identified. This was evident in their common responses featuring the procurement of quality teaching and learning in the classrooms, the welfare of both staff and pupils, resources procurement for teachers to use, monitoring and mentoring teachers. Overall, it appears that the scope for accountability covers a wide range of aspects, but some form of individual prioritisation was shown, as each coordinator had a different list of priorities. Surprisingly, only the early childhood coordinator gave top priority to ensuring that teaching and learning is taking place. It seems reasonable to conclude that this does not really reflect a shared, collective vision for their school.

The teachers commonly claimed accountability for their pupils, their own development, their future and performance. Other responses varied, but still covered many aspects such as keeping records, for pupils' behaviour, pupils' development, planning good lessons and teaching what one is supposed to be doing. In combination, these aspects suggest there are many things for which the school as a

unit is accountable; but at different levels from senior management down to teachers. It may also suggest strong management processes to ensure they are all working if teachers are to answer for those aspects.

Who is the school accountable to?

The school's accountability constitutes that of all its personnel as a unit. This accountability for the people at St. Michael's primary school has both an internal and an external dimension.

Inside the school

Inside, the school was generally answerable to all members of staff, to pupils, tuck-shop operators as well as security firms. Pupils ranked top as the group to whom the school was most accountable. Students had varied expectations of the school; particularly to provide them with a good education, helping them to be good, respectable students or someone who can achieve something in life.

Outside the school

External to the school, the unit is generally answerable to parents, the Ministry of Education, the parish priest, the district administrator and the public at large, but again, as the headteacher explained, the level differs in each case. Accountability seems more to the Ministry of Education, though, because of the reports they claimed they have to send to the Ministry. The headteacher explained that the parish priest and district administrator form part of the district community council, hence accountability is due to them.

How does accountability at St. Michael's function?

At the case school, accountability is said to be maintained through several processes or structures that are currently in practice. Those range from simple routine administrative structures, such as attendance and time-keeping, to more powerful ones like the customary termly appraisal reviews, commented upon by all the teachers. During those, teachers claimed they had to answer for the performance of their pupils and meeting both personal and class targets. The enterprise apparently engages teachers in self evaluation before they need to give an account of how well they or their class have been doing. Other processes by which teachers are held accountable are: reporting on pupils' progress through analysis of assessment or examination results; record-keeping and team planning. It was clear that a lot of emphasis was placed on results. That was also acknowledged by half of the pupils who also felt that the remarks that go with the results are more important and should motivate them to do better. What they felt was lacking though, was using remarks to explain what the weaknesses are, rather than simply writing: 'your attitude has affected your work' or 'could do better'.

Management members at St. Michael perceived many structures that ensured accountability and they ranged from the more mundane ones such as team planning, both at teachers' and management levels, to giving reports of assessment and exams results or giving feedback in management meetings. Other meetings, too, are considered as accountability mechanisms and those are apparently for the same purpose of reporting. As for teachers, record-keeping stood out as one of the most powerful processes because of the dependency of reports on records that are kept. The headteacher believed her weekly planner to be another process. It was not clear how except that she may be accountable for planning. However, this may not make

much sense if what is planned is not undertaken. Records kept of what has been done make more sense as an accountability measure. Many of the other mechanisms appeared similar to the planner; for example, holding assemblies and professional development sessions. It is evident that there is a lack of clarity as to the management's perceptions of what constitutes a mechanism or structure that ensures accountability.

However, post-lesson observation is one clear accountability function as it engages teachers in self-evaluation of the effectiveness of their practices, suggesting how those can be improved, although the interview responses implied that this process is not very effective.

The effectiveness of accountability mechanisms

The validity of at least two of the mechanisms mentioned above; reporting on pupils' progress, and the teachers' appraisal reviews, were doubted by the teachers themselves who claimed that one is not always questioned about reports of performance and limited consequences really exist. This short-coming in the effectiveness of the structures was more clearly articulated by both cycle two and cycle three teachers in their comments about Their superiors who should be asking questions about pupils' progress more regularly or assisting in preparing assessments which truly reflect pupils' abilities. In cycle one, though the effectiveness of the mechanisms is more positively acknowledged, the request for training and school-based research by superiors highlighted more limitations in the leadership of the subject leaders.

There was unanimous agreement that each of the mechanisms worked only to a certain extent; there is much room for improvement. For example, subject

coordinators explained that team planning does not sufficiently exploit content and methodology; hence teachers do not teach effective lessons. As a consequence, instructional methods do not help meet accountability demands and, when giving feedback on tasks, weaknesses are not always addressed. The subject leaders for languages, and maths and science, claimed that the mechanisms need to be more effective in order to measure both teaching and learning achievements, and progress, adequately.

Consequences of accountability

At St. Michael's primary school, providing an account may trigger various types of consequences. There were mixed sentiments on this issue. For example, a teacher may be called in and reprimanded by a subject coordinator and then given advice on how to improve. Sometimes teachers may be put on mentoring programmes. Even though consequences, in terms of both rewards and punishment, are not specified, they are applied as they happen. Teachers were sceptical about this whole idea of sanctions. Some teachers would rather a teacher who breaches expectations is mentioned publicly or transferred. Others contended that the management might have already decided on sanctions therefore, whatever explanations or justifications a teacher gives have no importance. This attitude suggests subjectivity on the part of the management. Furthermore, teachers complained that the support given may not be what is required. These opinions point to the lack of formal processes where obligations are specified or consequences agreed on. At a higher level, subject coordinators have only to discuss with the management as to why the processes were not satisfactory but the maths and science coordinator claimed she felt like a failure if others did not benefit from the support she provided.

The headteacher highlighted two main sanctions, mentoring and conferencing, but she maintained that they lacked consistency and continuity respectively. Teachers who are engaged in professional development do not really apply skills learnt and post-lesson evaluation lacks reflection in terms of lessons' weaknesses and recommendations, all pointing again to the inefficiency of the accountability processes.

Subject coordinators also advocated that, when reports are given, nothing may be done and, because of the diverse opinions of the members of the management about the issue, no recommendations are discussed as to what could be done. Within the context of lack of formal structures, or inefficient appropriate consequences, the early childhood and language coordinators strongly articulated their support for more serious actions to be taken with teachers who are not meeting expectations or that the Ministry should compile reports against a teacher for much harder sanctions.

The parent interviewed was not aware of any consequences resulting from given accounts, but stressed that teachers who are not performing well should be sanctioned; in the form of disciplinary measures which may involve forfeiture of salary or given an amount of time in which to improve before cutting off salary.

Two teachers were not sure whether those they provided an account to, had the expertise to make valid, independent judgements. The uncertainty was noted in comments like 'I do not really know' or in not commenting at all. However, the teacher from cycle three seemed more certain because she explained that the coordinators had been experienced teachers themselves; they know what they are talking about when giving advice. Therefore their judgements should be valid.

Are others accountable?

All three teachers expected to be accountable but there were differences in their responses. For example, the P3/P4 teacher claimed that everyone has a responsibility to make the school work, while the P5/P6 teacher was more explicit in how pupils can play their part. *'Depending on what they do, pupils too need to be accountable for what they do; their performance and their learning should be their priority'*, a view which was also shared by pupils in the focus group. Almost all of them responded *'for my education'* or *'for studying'*, hence underlining a possible understanding of mutual accountability. They also felt they were accountable for others in class. In comparison, the early childhood teacher chose to refer to the lack of responsibility of some members of staff; first towards themselves and to the pupils. She felt those staff members were not doing enough to help pupils. That idea gained a lot of support from pupils, particularly when they listed qualities of who they perceived to be 'good teachers'. Their most common answers (more than half of them) homed in on 'one who has patience to explain when a pupil does not understand', but not one who scolds or beats a pupil who has difficulties.

Other members of staff; teachers, subject coordinators and support staff are accountable to the teachers who were interviewed. Subject coordinators are accountable for providing support to teachers and ensuring that they have necessary materials for teaching. The idea of collaboration was emphasised as the teachers talked about shared planning, sharing of ideas, materials, assessment and exam preparations. In the light of comments about teachers' understanding of what they are accountable for, some form of responsibility towards one another could be glimpsed, even if the level seemed difficult to define. At the same time, the idea of lateral accountability seems an important step for the three teachers.

Internal accountability demands

Internal demands for accountability varied considerably within each cycle or subject area. In cycle one, for example, the challenges were in being accountable for smaller children's performance. The coordinator maintains that not much progress is made because many teachers are absent on a daily basis and, while their ancillaries should be helping, instead they are covering for other classes. Being accountable for the class seems a big challenge too, as the cleanliness and food service are at times problematic.

Other internal demands are about the resource materials that teachers use for teaching and learning. While the subject coordinator for languages claims that they are accountable for those resources, she also claimed that they are lacking or inadequate, as in the case of photocopying and printing equipment. For the maths coordinator, the most challenging demand is being delegated to run the school in the absence of the headteacher.

As to whether the demands are justified or not, being required to run the school was considered a legitimate request and the coordinator concerned explained that it was part of her job description, therefore she was obligated to do it. The early childhood and language coordinators claimed that some of those demands are not really justified; particularly in ensuring that teachers receive the required and adequate materials for teaching because they argued they have no control over resources or over some of the things that happen, like ensuring that all pupils learn, because of other factors that may impede learning.

The headteacher's most challenging internal accountability demands have been three-fold:

'My personal target is to motivate staff. As I am responsible for overall teaching and learning, I find that pupils are not managing to learn independently and distributed leadership at my school is a problem'

This suggests that the headteacher is accountable for her personal targets. The demand for staff motivation, though seen as justified, is very challenging. The headteacher explains that, though there is a positive working climate, motivating teachers to improve the teaching is difficult. She adds that requests for pupils' independent learning, or distributed leadership, are justified, because improved teaching is bound to improve learning. The size of the school also demands the distribution of leadership at different levels.

External accountability demands

For the headteacher at St. Michael's, external accountability demands consist of two main components; that of attending meetings and of meeting deadlines set by the Ministry. Delegation of responsibilities was found to be the main way in which the headteacher ensures that the demands of meeting deadlines or attending meetings are met. However, delegation here does not diminish the headteacher's responsibility as she stressed: *'I try my best, but in the end I have overall responsibility to see that everything is done'*. The headteacher also explained that the Ministry's requests are justified. She provided an illustration in terms of enrolment lists, which are essential for the Ministry to plan. Schools should be accountable for those lists and for sending them on or before stipulated dates.

For the subject coordinators though, external requests were mainly from parents and such requests tended to focus more on social issues rather than demands for pupil learning. The maths and science coordinator reported: *'From parents; asking to take*

care of their children, ensuring that they work well in class or control them like in detention class. Also do counseling if a pupil's behaviour cannot be handled'.

'Ensuring that they work well in classes' was almost hidden among all the social requests. That focus on social issues was amplified through other demands like parents wanting the school to provide basics like school bags, food or uniforms for the less fortunate pupils. The languages coordinator did not feel that such demands are justified, but she adds that some parents are really difficult, and this calls on their sense of social responsibility.

The parent felt that, rather than seeing it as a demand, that relationship should be a combined effort of teacher and parent, suggesting a partnership and mutual accountability. For the early childhood coordinator, external requests had to do with social issues too, but not only from parents; from the social worker as well. Those demands highlighted the challenges that the school faces; parents who are drug abusers, parents who are incarcerated, and pupils with abnormal behaviours. The coordinator felt to a large extent that the demands were not justified, since most of the teachers' time is taken up dealing with the social issues; an agency role, rather than concentrate on teaching and learning. This strong focus on social aspects of school life also highlights the type of parental involvement the school has. The parent attends regular meetings of the PTA but he was not happy with that level of involvement; he felt that other activities to get more parents together were lacking.

Observations

As for the first case study, observations were carried out to secure more in-depth data, in combination with interviews and documentary analysis, to elaborate on ideas

and issues gathered from the main survey. The design and data collection were replicated for the larger school.

The arrangements were made with the headteacher and informed consent was sought from the staff during a morning briefing. It was made clear by the researcher to the headteacher that everything that happened during the observations would be recorded. The same procedure of spending a few days of non-shadowing trial time in the school, to ensure the subjects were comfortable with the researcher, was followed. During the actual observations, they did not ignore the researcher and they seemed more open. However, there was no evidence to suggest that there were any alterations of behaviour.

During the observation itself, that is, the shadowing of the headteacher, the researcher was again drawn into the complexity of the daily functioning of accountability. Operations and relationships were also recorded. The fifteen minutes intervals allowed for writing of some details like changes in the context, people involved, or location. As at St. John's, the events developed with participants living or not living out their accountability. Some of the observations were obvious in portraying the concept but, for others, links became clear only when the researcher was re-reading and organising the field notes after the observations had been completed. As the connections were made, patterns and trends related to the research questions were noted. Similarly for those observations, the researcher was called upon to be attentive, open-minded and non-judgmental.

With the progression of organising the notes and linking them to accountability, themes began to emerge and they were recorded onto a matrix through the same process of selective reduction.

Discussions

The daily functions were characterised by a series of discussions which seemed pertinent to the internal processes of the school. For example, the morning briefings brought teachers together to discuss events and activities the school would be undertaking. This theme was also evident in the arrangements made for the school nurse to see students, or during conferencing with teachers that took place. This indicates a focus on everyone being informed of what happens in the school and that negotiations are a daily occurrence. It might also suggest that the more awareness they have, the more likely teachers will be responsible for participating.

Involvement

Most cases of involvement revolved around parents and the school nurse coming to the school. However, most of the parents attended for social aspects like ensuring their children get their snacks, to inform the school of their absences or to collect them. This clearly indicates that the visits, though frequent, are influenced by the social needs of students rather than demands for discussions about pupils' progress in learning. This involvement also highlights both parents and nurse as people with different interests and who play important roles in the daily functions of the school.

Obligations

The school management was responsible for organising and forwarding a transferring student's record. Since a student cannot be admitted to another school without those, attention is drawn to the obligation of the management. This obligation has a legal dimension as a procedure in the system's bureaucracy, hence binding the school through an external demand. Furthermore, the system in this case is represented by the Ministry of Education, another partner.

Reporting

The other theme which emerged from the observations was the significance of reporting. The personnel at the case school were bound by the duty to report on various aspects of school life, as in the case of the warden who had not opened the gates on time, hence others could not get back to class on time. The expectation is that the gates would be opened on time, yet there was no alignment between the school's expectation and the warden's responsibility.

Consequences

The management was also bound by the duty to give feedback on lesson observations. Both of these scenarios highlight the idea of consequences, since both the warden and the teacher were 'sanctioned'; one by being reprimanded, while the other by being followed up; some form of support structure, in some aspect of instruction or 'points for development' (Leung 2005:8). It is important to note that both sanctions are soft ones, implying a soft internal principle which takes care of addressing weaknesses at the school itself. Another example of reporting occurred when, through discussions of tasks implemented for development planning, the expectation of describing and justifying oneself is brought to light. The tasks that had been implemented were reported to Quality Assurance Officers, who in turn wanted explanations and justification for non-implementation of some tasks.

Relationships

Though this theme was not too prominent, it had some significance because it brought out the possible lack of collaboration or support for peers. This was shown when one teacher found excuses rather than accept a fellow teacher in her class when the focus and scheduling for the observation had been designed and negotiated with

the teacher herself. This leads to questions about the type of professional relationship that exists among colleague teachers.

Cross-Case Comparison

Perceptions

The interviews did not lead to an agreed definition for ‘school accountability’, and notable differences were seen between the two schools. At St. Michael’s, perceptions of the concept were common and consistently seen as ‘responsibility’ by most of the respondents; exemplified in statements such as ‘being responsible for making decisions’, with even parents sharing the same understanding. In contrast, St. John’s interviewees viewed the concept mostly as giving an account about one’s job, ‘delivering on expectations’. Their parent representative viewed it as working well as a team, emphasizing partnership.

Accountability of teachers

Both cases were highly affirmative about teacher accountability, but for different reasons. At St. John’s, it was mostly because the headteachers and subject coordinators ask questions, while, at St. Michael’s, accountability is mostly driven by the moral imperative because God has placed children in their hands. Commonality was also evident in parents’ responses where they felt that teachers are required to share information about pupils’ progress and behaviour, even though evidence showed that this is done only when reports are collected by parents at the end of term. At St. Michael’s, there was evidence of low pressure in Cycle One, with a

teacher maintaining that she is doing enough, whereas teachers at St. John's were emphatic about Studies Coordinators monitoring them more through lesson observations.

Who is the school accountable to?

Inside the schools, there were similarities in perceptions about the school's accountability. Most interviewees ranked pupils top in both schools. Most of the management team members accepted their own accountability, and felt accountable to other staff and colleagues. In respect of external accountability, most participants prioritised parents, whose expectations they felt obliged to fulfill. They also accepted accountability to the Ministry of Education, and members of the community. The headteacher of St. John's added the parish priest, and the district administrator.

Scope of accountability

Both headteachers used broad terms to explain what they were accountable for. At St. Michael's, this was for the overall running of the school while at St. John's, it covered ensuring that teaching and learning happens in the whole school as well as managing resources; both physical and financial, effectively. The coordinators also offered similar notions, for teaching and learning and providing pedagogical support, but one at St. Michael's added concern for the welfare of both staff and pupils.

Though the teachers of both schools made it clear that they were accountable for pupils' performance, development as well as keeping records, one teacher at St. Michael's also mentioned presenting a good self-image, helping others and developing a learning culture. The PTA representative At St. John's explained that

schools should share information with parents about the behaviour, attitude and progress of their children.

How accountability functions

Common to both cases was evidence that reporting was the main function of accountability at all levels; teachers report about pupils' performance and meeting both personal and school's targets. Teacher representatives on both SI Teams report to and from teachers. Subject Coordinators too are required to report on the status of teaching and learning in cycles and subject areas. At St. John's; they are asked to provide records (evidence) of pupils' and teachers' performances, and termly appraisal reviews are also undertaken. At St. John's, reporting was also about what is read for sharing. They also reported to External Quality Assurance (EQA) officers, on improvement progress, after having been given recommendations. There was no shared reading; instances where teachers read about pedagogical issues and shared with others, at St. Michael's. Students believe that reporting to them should provide full comments, as well as results, to help them to improve. Both schools also understand both time-keeping and attendance to be another mechanism through which accountability functions. St. Michael's also included weekly planning and post lesson evaluations as accountability structures.

Effectiveness of mechanisms

Both schools admitted that the accountability mechanisms only worked to a certain extent, though teachers at St. John's believed that they were adequate. Checking of lesson notes and spot checking of engagement in teaching and learning were seen as satisfactory by their school managers. In contrast, teachers at St. Michael referred to

the lack of challenge by superiors when reporting about performances. They added that reporting was problematic when documentation pertaining to school improvement was not up to date.

Accountability of others

All interviewees at both schools believe that everyone should be accountable, including pupils. This was reflected in the comment by a teacher at St. John's. "We are a team, either the school does well or it fails." To support their responses, some interviewees at St. Michael's commented on the lack of responsibility of others, and that is supported through the students' lists of 'good' teachers characteristics. Members of both management teams stress that their accountability should be greater than those of others.

Consequences

There were several differences, and some similarities, on the subject of consequences between the two schools. In both schools, teachers with weaknesses were put on mentoring programmes and support is provided as well as advice on how to improve. However, teachers at St. Michael's claim that the support given is not always appropriate. Teachers can also be called in for reprimands, but this is something that rarely happens at St. John's as most breaches of expectations (particularly in reporting or giving feedback), do not get to the level of senior management because subject coordinators or teacher representatives deal with those. In both schools, there is a tendency for soft sanctions, but some teachers, especially at St. Michael's, are calling for harder ones such as public mention or a transfer. St. John's also uses positive reinforcement such as congratulating someone.

Consequences for subject coordinators differed too. For those at St. Michael's, it suffices for them to explain to the headteacher why expectations have not been met, or processes adhered to, while their counterparts at St. John's are reminded by fellow management team members, and issues may be taken up during appraisals.

Parents at both schools were not aware of any consequences, but St. Michael's parent stressed that teachers should be sanctioned through disciplinary measures, including forfeiture of salary, after having been given ample time in which to change. Those echo the wish of St. Michael's Early Childhood Coordinator for more serious actions to be taken. The parent of St. John's maintained that teachers should be allowed to give explanations and then the focus should be on support.

Accountability demands

While both groups of respondents acknowledge the necessity to monitor and give feedback about teaching and learning, Studies Coordinators at St. Michael's felt that certain demands are not justified, as they have no control over the type, adequacy or suitability of resources provided. However, they accepted responsibility for how these are used in class. Subject Coordinators at St. John's felt that there are also requests for reporting about development planning which sometimes cannot be met because of their work-loads and lack of satisfactory teacher commitment. They claimed that demands for having good subject knowledge in order to provide pedagogical support, and mentor weaker teachers, are fully justified.

The St John's headteacher felt that the greatest demands are in ensuring teachers manage their class, and in seeing to the overall running of the school. In contrast, St. Michael's head's main demands were for delivering on her personal targets..

With regards to external demands, there were a lot of similarities between the schools; each tried to meet those through a lot of delegation of duties by the headteacher, and the head at St. John's negotiated new deadlines or is prompt with providing explanations. Her counterpart though claims that still she has overall responsibility. For both schools, parents and the Ministry of Education were the main stakeholders. While St. Michael's head saw requests from the Ministry of Education as attending meetings and meeting deadlines, that of St. John's felt each section of the Ministry wanted something from the school; exemplified in the Accounts Section wanting Budget expenditures. One really contrasting aspect is that the PTA representative of St. Michael felt parents were not really demanding much, rather to really have mutual partnership as he attends meetings but was not happy with the level of involvement. Contrarily the representative for St. John explained that demands were for pupils' security and protection. Coordinators from both schools said too much is expected of teachers. Furthermore, St. John's staff felt that accountability is not reciprocated by the Ministry of Education.

In summary, there seem to be more similarities between the two cases than differences. It is evident that most variations are to do with the processes in the day to day running of the schools, hence giving each some distinctive aspects of context.

Overview

Several common themes characterised the functioning of the concept of accountability in the two schools: reporting, self-evaluation, obligations and processes. Perceptions of accountability strongly featured the term 'responsibility', 'giving an account' and 'being answerable'. The job descriptions clearly set out what

may be the legal dimension of each school-based respondent's obligations, dissimilar from one another in the fact that the hierarchical nature of the school system was outlined. The school accountability bears various imperatives with both internal and external dimensions; each with demands at different levels and varying for each respondent group. It was common that pupils ranked as the top stakeholders with an entitlement, that is, the ones to whom most people are accountable inside the school. Outside the school, parents and the Ministry of Education were those to whom accounts were mostly owed.

The type of accountability within the schools varied at different levels and cycles as the scope of accountability was found to be substantial when focusing on the school as a unit, although levels vary because of each one's specific role. Several processes or mechanisms are currently in place to ensure accountability, but the participants doubted the effectiveness of some of them. The provision of an account triggers different responses, but all of them are soft consequences and not hard ones. A significant number of respondents desire stronger sanctions.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

Data Analysis was an on-going process as the researcher reflected on the data from the main survey, the interviews and observations transcriptions, and the documentary evidence, when recurring themes became evident. Establishing the significance of the themes was crucial; particularly in linking them to larger theoretical and practical issues. Each theme which is also derived from the research questions is presented in the discussion below. The discussion of the themes integrates data from the pilot study, the main survey and the two case studies, linked to the empirical literature.

Perceptions of accountability

A key element of the investigative work on school accountability has been an exploration of how headteachers, subject coordinators, teachers, parents and pupils perceive the concept. Heim's (1995) view about the concept being 'multi-faceted' is highlighted at different points; Farrell and Law (1997) describe it as a 'muddled concept' as it may mean different things to different people, who give it different interpretations.

Perceptions of accountability among the participants of the study were as numerous, and as 'multi-faceted', and have many interpretations as the authors have claimed, but most elements mentioned relating to the concept suggest satisfactory understanding, irrespective of how the concept is operationalised. This understanding

is not restricted to heads of primary schools only, but also applies to other members of the management teams, teachers and parents.

The interchangeable use of ‘accountability’ with ‘responsibility’ appears to stem from the fact that the participants are confused by both terms, or they cannot distinguish between the two like Kogan (1986), or their perceptions are influenced by the fact that ‘responsibility’ is clearly stipulated on job descriptions, seen through documentary analysis as: ‘Responsible to...’, and also denotes a relationship between two parties as in ‘being responsible for teaching and learning’. For example, the subject coordinators in the survey pointed out their relationships with the teachers, whose responsibility is towards the student. The use of the term ‘responsibility’ by teachers, however, sometimes implies a sense of duty from within; a different relationship than being accountable, but not answerable. This indicates limited understanding or again showing the multi-facetedness of the concept. An illustration of this is the heads being responsible for the effectiveness and quality of the school, but at the same time being responsible to provide different partners with information, that is, having a responsibility towards a larger system, or being accountable to others, as claimed by parents and students. The heads’ responsibilities can be easily translated into middle managers’ and teachers’ responsibilities too. The responsibility comes from within; the moral sense of duty, while the accountability suggests an outside dimension (Kogan, 1986). Scott (1989) adds that responsiveness is freely arrived at, while accountability is imposed from outside; a relationship in which one has to be answerable for one’s responsibilities, either for processes or outcomes.

One set of perceptions expressed by participants links to ‘giving an account’ (Bush, 1994). As interpreted by some teachers and subject coordinators, this entails

furnishing an explanation of events and behaviour, as stated by teachers, or giving an account of students' results, as stated by subject coordinators. Bush (1994) explains that this might indicate difficulty in explaining the concept. It also means 'giving a report on' or 'being answerable to', where both examples are extended further by Kogan (1986), and Farrell and Law (1997), implying the notion of evaluation as a vital component. The respondents' views lacked this component. In understanding accountability, Kogan (1986) explains that evaluation is a prerequisite for accountability and Forster (1999) says it is self-evaluation for each individual, as well as for the school as a unit.

There were also other cases where limited understanding of the concept was noted (for example by 29% of subject coordinators); these respondents named some elements like rules, regulations and policies set by the Ministry, but they explained the concept simply as following those rules and regulations.

Various interpretations of the concept of accountability were also evident at the two case study schools - St. John's and St. Michael's. However, at St. John's, there was no interchangeable use of the concept with responsibility. A lot of attention is placed on delivering on their roles; which evidently is the moral sense of duty. In the school's daily operations, comments like 'everything is done for the progression of the child', and 'working on difficulties', denote a clear understanding that an accountable school provides 'internal correctives' (Darling-Hammond and Snyder, 1992:14) to identify, detect and change practices that are ineffective. The elaboration provided by Darling-Hammond and Snyder (1992) illustrates a potentially strong characteristic of an accountable school; that it should be able to manage its improvement efforts through remediation of harmful or ineffective practices after evaluating its performance.

However, the PTA chairperson of St. John's views the concept as expectations of a partnership between the school, parents and teachers, where each partner delivers well on their roles; a proposition for the sharing of accountability by the school professionals, parents and community representatives, also noted by Leithwood and Earl (2000). Glatter (2002) claims that the notion of 'responsiveness' in processes ensures the involvement of parents and students in decisions based on needs and preferences. Leithwood and Earl (2000), note that schools are not as responsive as they should be. This is because decision-making power is in the hands of the Ministry of Education and personnel at school level. They add that they should recognise the advantage of accountability being shared between professionals at school level and representatives of parents and the community. This idea reflects both the primary schools', and the Ministry's, aspirations for more school-based governance.

At St. Michael's primary school, perceptions of the concept imply the type of relationship each individual has with his/her work or personal responsibility (Abelmann and Elmore 1999). The survey evidence suggests that is also typical of other primary schools. Through documentary evidence, it was seen that teachers and subject coordinators had used their job descriptions to clarify the 'responsibilities of the post'. Within the school, understanding strongly involves the consideration of responsibility where Biesta (2004) stresses that in such a culture [of responsibility], one cannot argue against accountability. That personal responsibility translated itself into obligations. One such occasion was observed in the headteacher's transferring of a student's record. The school is responsible for keeping up to date records of pupils and, if one transfers, those records have to be sent to their new schools. Another

example of where the concept is related to individual's roles is the case of the warden who had to give an account of why the security gates were opened late.

Why Accountability?

One outstanding commonality from the study is that everyone strongly believes that schools and teachers ought to be accountable. Within the various respondent groups, most people say that this 'should be for improvement', showing that they have a very good understanding of their role in schools. This links to Barber's (2004) claim that accountability creates improvement through causing a school to work on its weaknesses, and this keeps the public believing in it. That understanding becomes stronger for teachers. Those from the survey speak of civic duties in which they explained that parents send their children to school to be educated. Barber (2004), stresses that only an accountable school provides the required motivation for students, teachers and administrators.

The second reason offered by participants relates to the perceived status of schools; the participants explained that everyone is bound to be aware of what is happening; of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This argument is limited, in the sense that being aware is not enough. A truly accountable school uses information about its strengths and weaknesses to review projects and goals (Forster, 1999). Therefore, it is also essential to know what the school is undertaking in order to improve. Participants are also clear about having been delegated the responsibility for a school, including its staff and pupils - therefore they have to be accountable and ensure that the school serves its purpose. This is illustrated at St. John's where staff maintained that the school protects public investment through being accountable for

resources; which comes down to teachers protecting that same investment through regular inventories.

The survey evidence suggests that teachers focus on their own roles as most feel they play a big part in *'enhancing pupils' knowledge and learning abilities in order to develop'*, a factor which was also evident in the pilot survey. Their comments reflect the reality of teachers providing support and guidance to pupils in mixed-ability classes. However, respondents acknowledge that this accountability does not apply only to schools and teachers, but also to parents, which is consistent with the school's mission statement stipulating that *'everyone is concerned with teaching and learning'*. There is recognition of the part parents play in school life; explicit in the comment made about *'parents sending their children into the care of teachers'*. The relationship also implies some form of responsiveness: *'They have to give reliable information to parents'*, one teacher commented; evidence of a partnership that is not always forthcoming as one parent who completed the questionnaire wrote: *'though parents are concerned, they are not keen to participate'*.

Recognition of the partnership mentioned above is a little more visible at St. John's. The PTA chairperson, teachers and pupils see teachers providing learning experiences, parents following progress from home, and ensuring pupils attend school; all indicative of an aspiration to a more collaborative endeavour. The attempt made by the headteacher, through the researcher's observations, to engage a parent in discussions about a child's poor performance shows that efforts are being made to develop a partnership approach. All this evidence gives credence to Forster's (1999) claim that a school or teacher giving an account provides an opening for a partnership and collaborative endeavour.

At St. Michael's, the emphasis tends to be far more on why teachers should be accountable, but there seems to be some controversy as well. While teachers feel that giving an account increases their personal motivation, which is supported by Barber (2004), saying that a teacher becomes more professional, the headteacher is doubtful of their practices, particularly proved by low results and what she describes as 'lack of teacher initiative'. This suggests non-alignment between the headteacher and teachers' expectations.

Another interesting aspect of why there should be accountability concerns the process being more systematic and formal as it goes through self-evaluation, communication and renewal, for example as found in New South Wales, Australia (Forster, 1999). This strategy was visible through the survey and case studies; the collection of data about strengths, weaknesses and taking steps to improve as well as reporting about those. These are features of the Development Planning process in all Seychelles primary schools. However, the process does not always work well. Records of meetings suggest that teachers are not delivering well on their obligations such as in recording pupils' reading progress, or maintaining good behaviour in their class, at St. John's. Similarly, improvement plans have not been implemented at St. Michael's and there is a backlog of improvement documentation not updated, all rendering the account-giving process problematic.

To whom is an Account owed?

Among the four groups of respondents who completed the questionnaire; the three school-based groups, headteachers, subject coordinators and teachers, were asked who they perceive they should be accountable to and to whom they are accountable

in reality. Some differences are noted between headteachers' and subject coordinators' responses. In comparison, students were not included in the top three parties headteachers perceived they should be answerable to, but were among those whom they are actually accountable to. This pattern is reversed in the case of subject coordinators. This difference is indicative of headteachers not being directly linked to teaching and learning; they think they are more visibly administrative than instructional; hence they think they should not be accountable to students. The responsibility of teaching and learning is mostly assigned to the middle managers and teachers.

In line with this evidence, it was expected that headteachers would be more accountable to the Ministry of Education. This would be consistent with the hierarchical organisational structure and bureaucratic system where general rules are set by the Ministry, as in the case of Germany (Fussel, 2000), and the head representing the school is supposed to be in an accountability relationship which complies with regulations (Anderson, 2005). However, the survey shows that headteachers feel more accountable to parents, even more so than to students. The subject coordinators also feel compelled to give accounts to parents. They are in charge of subjects or cycles; hence they are more directly linked to teaching and learning and more in contact with parents. However, they say that their actual accountability is more to the Ministry of Education, in contrast to the coordinators from the pilot who feel most accountable to the school's management team.

These differences in perceptions and reality show that one's role plays an important part in delineating 'to whom is an account owed'. This leads to the issue of 'entitlement', a question which has been debated by numerous authors (e.g. Sockett 1980, Bush 1994, Heim 1995, Forster 1999, Leithwood and Earl 2000, and Jones

2004). Bush (1994), and Leithwood and Earl (2000), argue that the entitlement on the part of those receiving an account has both legal and moral dimensions.

Each respondent group from all data sets confirmed a substantial list of parties or stakeholders; both inside and outside the school. School management, parents, Ministry of Education through officials, students, the public, community, government agencies, and other members of staff, can be classified into providers and recipients (Heim, 1995) of the education service. This raises the contentious issue of whether a school or a teacher can be accountable to all these various parties at the same time. Dunford (2003), cautions against being answerable to a wide range of bodies, without specifying which level of accountability is required. It makes sense that all the stakeholders will not have the same level of interest in the service; therefore the level of accountability varies. Differences in ranking are highly indicative of who is accountable to whom being not clear.

The ranking of the different stakeholders by the respondents shows the level of accountability accorded to each one of them. The distinction made by subject coordinators between Ministry officials as support providers, and the Ministry as the head of the system, is also evidence of different levels of interest. The head teacher is accorded more accountability than the Ministry. Similarly, Leithwood and Earl's (2000) discussion of teacher review illustrates the different levels of entitlement of each stakeholder involved. Dealing with this tension then seems easy enough; a school accountability system can define levels of accountability to corresponding parties: whether this should be description, explanation, or justification (Leithwood and Earl, 2000), and who is entitled to accountability, as well as stipulating what is to be accounted for.

In the case of teachers, there is no difference between the perceived reality of accountability and those they perceive they should be answerable to. In each case, these are parents, students and the Ministry of Education. This evidence supports Forster's (1999) argument that accountability is due only where someone is directly affected by what teachers do, not merely affiliated to the schools, as Sockett (1980) apparently thinks. Teacher responses here hand the right to know to students and their parents, that is, teachers should be and are most accountable to students and their parents. Their entitlement takes precedence over all others. In contrast, PTA chairpersons perceive that parents, and the Ministry of Education, share equal rights to an account and they too claim that the distinction is in what is to be accounted for. Data from both case study schools largely confirm the survey findings. At St. John's, there is A strong emphasis on professional responsibility from subject coordinators. Accountability is generated from within and is intrinsic. This strongly relates to professional accountability (Kogan, 1986): 'I have a job to do and I deliver on it', one of them commented. This also links well with Leithwood and Earl's (2000) claim that professional teachers have the most relevant knowledge about teaching. Inside the school, that professional accountability was evidenced further as the subject coordinators prioritised accountability to themselves, then to their colleagues and pupils. The interdependency among teachers raises the idea of the level of collaboration which exists among them as they aim for a common goal. Mutual and lateral accountability also stands out when teachers claimed that they do shared reading by looking up a topic and then discussing it with others. That trend towards self-accountability or being accountable to colleagues is not apparent at St. Michael's, whose staff sees students as their main focus. This pedagogical

accountability is appropriate if the school is to fulfill the students' expectations, expressed during the focus group interview, to provide them with a good education. But it can be better if teachers could reconcile their knowledge and skills through networking within the school.

Inside the school, the limited mention of accountability to parents also signifies limited involvement, or limited parental engagement with schools in connection with their children's school work. Parents are kept at a distance and this was seen through the request by the PTA chairperson of St. John's for more active participation inside the school.

External stakeholders are numerous too; a reflection of vested interests of various parties in the school community itself. This may allow voluntary engagement of the community with the school or necessary liaison, as in the case of the agencies. As part of the community, parents from the survey were seen to be the main stakeholder, as it is their expectations that both teachers and management members have to fulfill: providing their children with a good education, even if data suggest that the parents do not demand much in terms of accounts from schools. Similarly to internal stakeholders, the rankings from each group delineated the perceived levels of interest of each stakeholder, again based on which roles or functions a school-based respondent has. As a consequence, entitlement is established (Bush, 1994, Leithwood and Earl, 2000).

Who provides an Account?

In perceiving accountability the respondents were drawn into answering the question 'Who is expected to provide an account' or 'who is held accountable?' Farrell and Law's (1997) link of the concept to responsibility clearly stipulates that one with

responsibility is asked to account for it. Essentially, at school level, the debate is about whether it is the teacher or the school that is accountable. In analysing the various claims from the data sets, it is evident that the onus is on both even if some may prefer for it to be on the school as a unit or the teacher. However, it is clear that distinctions need to be made in the nature of individual or group obligations. The school is accountable for the sum of all accountabilities of its staff members while each individual is accountable for the cumulative process of schooling, as Forster (1999) points out.

The survey respondents believe that both the school as a unit, and individuals in the school, ought to be accountable. The headteacher is the one providing the leadership, as the heads from the study emphasised, and they have to give an account about several issues. In addition to the head teachers, subject coordinators also have to give an account of matters related to their roles. Therefore, the organisation itself is a unit of account, where it functions within a managerial approach. As Leithwood and Earl (2000) point out, more responsibility is assigned to the school leadership to ensure that teaching and learning happens. Those leading are required to be able to use data for school improvement and to give an account to the next in the 'down-up' hierarchy. The survey evidence shows that, in the Seychelles primary schools, teachers are accountable to the coordinators, in turn they to the headteacher, who is then accountable to the Ministry of Education, but the level of accountability to each is not clear.

Darling-Hammond and Snyder (1992) focus on the school and Forster (1999) also claims that rendering an account involves the whole school in reflections about its progress. Attention is also focused on all staff as a 'school' to understand what its intentions are and they are all expected to combine to make it work. Here,

accountability is found to be a management strategy as the school gives an account of all its activities, financial or otherwise. Most of the PTA chairpersons in the Seychelles' schools perceive the onus ought to be placed on the school too. They define its whole existence as being 'for education, learning and development of students' which is significant to the Ministry of Education delegating authority to the school to carry out the duty of educating. However, accountability of the school can also be limited or compromised in some ways. Therefore it is vital to find other ways of giving an account, other than simply looking at results. On the other hand, Leithwood and Earl (2000) clarify that anyone who undertakes an act or plays a role in an organisation is obligated to give an account, but what seems problematic is whether one person or an organisation can be held solely accountable in situations where there is a shared responsibility, as in the case of a school.

In the Seychelles primary schools, teachers see themselves liable as individual teachers and also as a collective group. Individual teachers feel accountable because they are the ones who interact with pupils and enhance their knowledge and learning abilities. Documentary evidence showed they have proof of that through records they keep of their pupils' progress. Teachers also see themselves as being required to give an account because they are part of a larger system of civil servants who are being paid by the state. However, the majority of teachers also feel that the school should give an account for everyone to know what is happening in the school. Some teachers state that parents send their children to be educated. To highlight the cumulative process of schooling discussed by Forster (1999), each teacher should be doing his/her best to accomplish the goal of schooling, in his/her class. Therefore, one of the interviewed teachers at St. Michael's is justified in commenting: 'I feel that at school, teachers and other persons involved should be accountable'. That

parallels Forster's (1999) individual contributions to the cumulative process of schooling or Leithwood and Earl's (2000) claim that everyone holding a role within an organisation should be accountable. Each individual teacher is responsible for teaching his/her own class and getting good results. The important thing to note is that teachers are collectively accountable for effective teaching, but if the school as a unit does not have effective assessment and remediation programmes, then Forster (1999) stresses that the school is culpable.

The survey teachers are reluctant to talk about the actual accountability of their colleagues. This may be because they are not really in the habit of discussing the concept, but even then a positive practice came through the pilot study; that of teachers regularly answering questions and giving feedback about their teaching and student learning. Evidence also suggests a lack of accountability from some teachers who are seen not to care much, not delivering on what they are expected to do, or are regularly absent without reasonable excuses. Those teachers are the ones who probably see the 'Ministry putting a lot of pressure on teachers' and whose colleagues from the survey are calling upon in their comments: "Teachers need to adopt a positive attitude in our school".

Additional perceptions about who is accountable were evident from the case study schools. Documentary evidence from the job descriptions indicated who is to provide an account, through 'responsibilities of the post' or 'responsible to'. The obligations are highlighted for each individual role holder and give accountability a legal dimension because the Ministry of Education delegates authority to the school to educate children. Delegation thus becomes an obligation (Bush, 1994).

A teacher of St. John's says that they are accountable for teaching and learning. The welfare and behaviour of both students and staff needs to be accounted for by the management team and other staff" and stressed that that was the reason for the prompt management of undesirable behaviour. Through its development planning process, St. John is obligated to give an account through formalising its structures for self-evaluation and putting in place remediation programmes, as Forster (1999) suggests. The collective accountability was observed through the mock disaster evacuation process when everyone truly made sure that the process went well. "Everyone has a job to do, and this makes them accountable- all complementing one another". This highlights mutual accountability, summarised by a teacher's comment: "We are a team, either the school does well or it fails". The good rapport between management team members and staff showed evidence of a good working relationship conducive to collective accountability. Furthermore that collaboration places teachers in a relationship where they are also expected to give an account to parents.

The subject coordinators and the headteacher at St. Michael's are also accountable, as recorded in the minutes of meetings, and in school management giving an account of lesson observations they have carried out or whether students were meeting their targets. However, there is also some support for Forster's (1999) view of the limitations of school accountability: not understanding how it functions. For example, the school's management has a backlog of information for school improvement, which someone was responsible for documenting and it was not done. Therefore, there is no record of an account to be given, as opposed to answering critical questions in self-evaluation, which works well for St. Michael's. Similarly, teacher accountability was found to be problematic. Data from St. Michael's show

that teachers find being accountable stressful, particularly in being answerable to different parties, including parents. However, most teachers accept that they are accountable since they are the ones who can really explain how a child is progressing. That is well illustrated through the St. Michael's Development Plan, which delegates the responsibility to the teacher to implement differentiated instructions; therefore the responsibility to give an account about how it is progressing. However, the PTA chairperson feels that teachers are not really accountable, since they keep blaming pupils but they do also reflect on their own practices. There is obviously some confusion there; as in the views of the subject coordinators, who maintain that, though teachers understand that they are individually accountable, some are not serious enough: "they go back to old ways or blame others". Those middle managers also see the lack of accountability of some teachers through their many 'ungraded' results. This scenario may well reflect teachers' understanding of their own accountability as a shared responsibility and that they should not be held solely accountable, as pointed out by Leithwood and Earl (2000), in cases where there have not been appropriate support or teachers themselves were ill- prepared or performing poorly. However, there is not enough evidence to support this, but what is clear is that teachers cannot bring about changes in their instructional practices if they are not accountable; hence they are left with the types of results subject coordinators described above.

Accountable for What?

The survey findings show that headteachers' perceptions of what schools should be accountable for were quite similar to what they are actually accountable for. The only difference between the perceptions and the reality was that three headteachers claimed they are actually accountable "for providing leadership for measuring and

evaluating school effectiveness and progress for school development”. The provision of leadership by school personnel is essential, as Leithwood and Earl (2000) point out.

Most headteachers say that they are accountable for pupils’ performance and learning development, which signifies that the school heads understand the purpose of schooling and, as heads, they have to ensure that this happens. The substantial list of issues for which they are accountable include: staff performance and professional growth, giving meaningful information to parents, management of budget and resources, developing a positive school ethos, and implementing both the Ministry’s and the school’s policies and guidelines, which is indicative of a large scope of accountability.

The survey of subject coordinators suggests that they are accountable for what they as middle managers are responsible for, or for the role they play. One respondent says that, “schools should be accountable for students’ learning progress, achievement and development”, which is translated into being “accountable for ensuring that teaching and learning takes place effectively”. That example serves to show that, while the school as a unit is accountable for the end results, coordinators are mostly accountable for the processes leading to obtaining those results. Subject Coordinators are also accountable for ‘monitoring and mentoring teachers’, and ‘teachers’ planning and delivery’, while the school is accountable for ‘staff performance, welfare and growth’.

Teachers also translate what the school is accountable for into what their job entails in their classrooms, as one survey respondent pointed out: “finding ways and means

to overcome pupils' weaknesses or developing each child according to his/her ability". Another explained that s/he is accountable for: "for the quality of education I give, values and attitudes they develop, communicating reliable information to parents". Forster (1999), too, claims that teachers may be accountable for their teaching, but in a climate where outputs are important and schooling is a cumulative process, the author also questions the legitimacy of teacher accountability for student learning. This caution is due to the complexity of the relationship between teaching and learning.

PTA chairpersons feel schools should be accountable for 'education, learning and development of its students'. Parents are also preoccupied with the 'financial activities of the school; class and school funds'- probably because parents are indirectly funding the activities. They also cite the welfare and security of the students, or '*doing things according to policies and codes of conduct*', which may show some level of unawareness of how things are done at school level or how uninvolved the parents are in the process.

Operationalisation and Functioning of Accountability

The survey offered some of the characteristics of an accountable school for the participants to say to which extent they existed at their own school. The findings provide evidence on the functioning of accountability of primary schools in the Seychelles. A number of processes or mechanisms are identified; in confirmation of Abelman and Elmore's (1999) working theory: the premise that conceptions of accountability are embedded in schools' daily operations. For all three groups of school-based respondents, professional development (PD) is an important aspect of

school life and that could be due to the formal organisation of PD as part of Development Planning programmes in Seychelles schools. Being provided with equal opportunities to learn is a feature which all respondents agreed to; indicating a preoccupation with providing both equity and access, as stated in the system's education principles. There is less agreement on the part of parents, though, leading to questions about whether the basic compact between schools and parents making a difference in the life of each child exists. Headteachers, subject coordinators and some teachers believe that reports to parents consist of everything that constitutes learning experiences. In contrast, parents say that reports from teachers comprise only academic performance, showing a clear lack of alignment. However, there is some confusion or controversy, as the parents also claim that teachers report on what pupils learn, evidently meaning not only academically. The same pattern prevailed in the pilot study. However, it is not clear whether parents participate in this account-giving process as Forster (1999) suggests. Both areas require further investigation.

Self-evaluation happens in the schools too, a vital component in accountability functions because of the reflection on progress made towards goals (Forster 1999). This gives credence to accountability being directed to processes as well as outcomes (Heim 1995). There is an understanding that, when someone undertakes something, it should be done properly; giving as much importance to the way it is done as to its outcomes. Within the context of development planning, however, there is a potential conflict between the demands of accountability and the need for self-evaluation. Leung (2005) suggests that there can be self-evaluation for both accountability and development purposes; first for accountability, where Forster (1999) claims explanations are given in order to understand and influence factors shaping the work

of the school. Secondly, for development; projects are revised through reflections about progress towards goals and what to implement to ensure attainment. That may be the reason for the high levels of agreement from all four respondent groups, particularly head teachers and subject coordinators, on adjustments and changes being brought about promptly to improve the school. In this function, ‘responsive’ accountability (Glatter, 2002:233/34) is glimpsed and is likely to inform on the types of relationships and how they are to operate.

Anderson’s (2005) formal constructs present accountability in a more systematic way; where relationships are clearly explained. Anderson (2005) warns that using all three modes: complying with regulations, adhering to professional norms and driven by results, simultaneously is problematic. It seems more appropriate for a school to decide which construct it wants to prioritise and to what extent it wants others to combine with it.

Parental involvement in decision-making is shown to happen to a very limited extent as the respondents did not agree that parents are significantly involved in decision-making. Parents leading the PTA are the ones who may be closest to the school, yet they claim they are not as ‘involved’ as they ought to be; a reality which contradicts Kogan’s (1986) belief that relationships are the key to accountability. Data-driven decision-making and continuous school improvement are both characteristics of an accountability minded school, but if data to guide the improvement is lacking, school improvement efforts tend to become superfluous. Evidence of this is available in the comment by the headteacher of St. Michael’s that pupils’ results are still poor and teachers fall short of keeping proper records of their pupils’ progress.

The survey and pilot data show the involvement of students sitting on committees is greater than their contribution to decision-making. There are no records of any decisions to which students have contributed except for an instance recorded in the minutes of a management meeting at St. Michael's, where students expressed a desire to help out with break supervision, but there is no record of whether this actually happened. Both sets of evidence, survey and pilot, emphasise the lack of student voice in the running of the school, contrary to Glatter's (2002) notion of responsive accountability. Little consideration is given to the interests and wishes of students as stakeholders; hence there is limited accountability to students. As a consequence, there is no devolution of decision-making power (Leithwood, 1999) at school level and no responsiveness on the part of school professionals (Leithwood and Earl, 2000).

Constructs

The research aimed to ascertain participants' accountability constructs. Those are found to be threefold in Seychelles primary schools: agreeing on procedures, discussing expectations, and imposition of accountability from outside the school. Some respondents believe they agree on procedures or expectations and around twelve percent believe that accountability is imposed from outside the school. That was the pattern across all four data sets. What is deduced is that, in the form of collective expectations or procedures, there exists some form of accountability system operating and guiding ways in which people account for their actions, as well as there being certain demands external to the school. Though most headteachers, and a significant number of subject coordinators, claim that the accountability relationship is lateral, which contradicts evidence gathered about whom they are

accountable to. For example, headteachers claimed they did not feel accountable to other management members and that subject coordinators are not accountable to other colleagues. Therefore, the evidence indicates a hierarchical structure of accountability where it operates down-up, that is, from teachers up to coordinators and then up to the headteacher. The controversy also lies in the fact that some respondents called for mutual or reciprocal accountability. In practice, however, accountability is hierarchical, from teachers to the management, evidenced by peer observation at St. Michael's or teachers ensuring that they read for others at St. John's. This emphasises the presence of different forms of the accountability concept. All headteachers rated their teachers' accountability as 'good' or 'satisfactory', a level also agreed to by parents, providing confirmation of the existence of some accountability mechanisms.

Levels of accountability

As to the level of accountability which exists, views varied, but a very significant number of respondents claim a lack of accountability. This is shown through the headteachers' comments about low performance of pupils, lack of evidence of progress, and lack of remediation programmes. This evidence strongly suggests that the level of accountability is too low if it is to ensure academic progress. The low standard of accountability is compounded through what subject coordinators describe as inefficiency and ineffectiveness in monitoring of teaching and learning, improper records, and the lack of appropriate fora to discuss teachers' performance. Some teachers too probably the hard working ones, feel that accountability is insufficient. As with the management members, there is a lack of agreement on what level, for example, of monitoring, is considered rigorous enough or whether the presentation of

results (from teachers) suffices as records of pupils' progress. Evaluating and judging the performance is lacking. Although some mechanisms do exist, the evidence suggests that professionalism is lacking and that the level of accountability is not clearly defined.

At both case study schools, accountability is operationalised at different levels, including for both processes and results. The rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning at St. John's, for example, focuses on the school being accountable for outcomes in terms of results as well as how to get the results, the processes. The school undertakes a lot of lesson observations and the management members are called on to report on those. Accountability also operates through the checking of plans, and drawing teachers' attention to their short-comings. Reporting as a process is highlighted. This is done through giving feedback and having subsequent discussions which lead to collective decision-making, although the minutes of management meetings showed those to be limited in number. Nevertheless, positive decisions, such as returning pupils to mainstream classes, after following a special needs programme, help to validate the reported accounts.

Similarly, at St. Michael's, reporting is used a lot as an accountability function, as the minutes recorded management giving feed back on Development Planning to Quality Assurance Officers, but, in some cases, it sometimes leads to diminished accountability, because of limited discussions about how to address weaknesses. Further evidence is the non-implementation of tasks set, and the non-compliance of teachers in differentiating instructions, seen in School Improvement minutes. In the light of such data, the claim of lack of accountability mentioned in the survey is

confirmed at St. Michael's. This was also evident in the non-alignment of expectations and the warden's responsibility (to open the gates). They were not opened on time, hence pupils got back to class late. In this respect, the warden fell short of Kogan's (1986) claim that accountability is an individual's responsibility to fulfill the expectations of his/her role; accountability to oneself.

On the other hand, St John's staff perceives that mechanisms external to the school also help them to enhance accountability. They value the external evaluations carried out by the Quality Assurance Service (QA), which forces the school to go through an action planning process in order to address its weaknesses. In this respect, Quality Assurance serves as an instrument for accountability (Biesta, 2004). The concept also operates through the headteacher's obligation to communicate Ministry's policies to staff, students and parents, and that obligation is clearly spelt out in headteachers' job descriptions. It is also an obligation to comply with the regulations and policies (Anderson, 2005).

Termly teacher appraisal is seen as another accountability mechanism; it purports to give answers about meeting goals through self-evaluation. Through this process, teachers can answer for their pupils' performance; seeing self-evaluation as the basis for reporting and for improvement, although during data collection, the termly appraisal was not working too well at the school. Self-evaluation at management level of St. Michael's, also works through a review of its own work to see what it has accomplished.

As a pre-requisite to reporting, record-keeping is also used as a mechanism. The pupils of St Michael's feel that processes, as well as results, are important. They

want the school to improve processes like reporting on their performance, and claim results would be better if they are told where to improve, hence a call for more accountability to pupils.

At the schools, some of the mechanisms in place, such as the weekly planner, are not necessarily for the functioning of accountability, but are part of the day-to-day operations of the school. Nevertheless, they have been listed as mechanisms helping with the functioning of accountability. When relationships do not work well, for example when the teacher failed to welcome a colleague for peer observation, this results in a lack of accountability on the teacher's part, but it does not mean that there are no positive relationships. There is teamwork among some teachers working on differentiated instructions. Teamwork is another way to ensure accountability. This working of lateral accountability is again seen through the interdependence of teachers at St. John's. For example, it is seen in passing on information about improvement efforts between representatives and the committee leading the improvement plans. It is visible too in the shared reading that teachers engage in and then discuss with others. This is evidence of a developing learning culture and of teachers' willingness to keep abreast of new developments and consequently a high level of collaboration and the development of positive working relationships.

In Abelmann and Elmore's (1999) research, all schools had some way of operationalising accountability, similarly to the primary schools in Seychelles. However, the existing constructs do not clearly inform who is accountable for what to whom.

Accountable by what Means?

Just as Abelman and Elmore (1999) claim that schools must go through a channel to give an account of behaviour, accountability was found to be enacted through multiple forms, some of which are common to all the primary schools. This somehow strengthens the notion that accountability is necessary. The most prevalent is through 'reporting' on various aspects of school life to different parties, 'furnishing a justifying analysis or explanation'(Leithwood and Earl 2000:2-3) to a wider audience, which shows that schools locally recognise the different stakeholders, particularly the Ministry of Education, parents, students and the school's management team. Reporting is done verbally or in written forms; subject reports, students' report cards, and in other ways, to the Ministry or to parents, as stated by subject coordinators in their questionnaires. This is also seen in reports of teachers' and students' performance from the staff of St. John's, or reports of pupils' progress in the form scores and remarks or of analysis and examination results, as explained by St. Michael's staff. Reporting is sometimes used interchangeably with giving feedback. Amid all those reporting in different circumstances, it would be reasonable to assume that a highly visible element of accountability is 'responsiveness'. That can be sometimes daunting when the validity of the reports is doubtful. The teacher at St. Michael's is right in asking superiors to challenge them more on reports of pupils' progress, so that validity can be established. Only then, as Robinson and Timperley (2000:68) claim, will the 'party accept responsibility for improvement' and consequently make the necessary moves for that to happen. That is one source of tension. At the same time there is understanding by the party; be it the school or the teacher, that moves contrary to establishing the validity of reports, would not secure improvement. Another tension arising from the lack of challenge

from the audience, when reports are given, is seen as the ‘lack of expertise needed to make an independent judgment’ (Robinson and Timperley, 2000:69), combined with evidence of lack of subject knowledge hindering the provision of pedagogical support. Responsiveness is further evidenced through the existence of other means of ensuring accountability. There is the use of frameworks that support outcomes. All the primary schools use development planning, a framework involving self-evaluation. Some aspects of this framework are similar to Forster’s (1999) Policy which is in place in New South Wales. These are the school review at St. John’s, following the Quality Assurance Unit’s external evaluation, and the annual report all schools have to prepare and submit to the Ministry.

Internal versus External Accountability Demands

Evidence across all data sources revealed that demands for accountability were both internal and external to the schools. Having established who has a right to an account, it is clear that demands are placed both on the school as a unit and on individual role holders. The Ministry of Education and parents are the two main external parties to make demands. This is understandable because all the schools are state funded and parents are recipients of the service. Respondents, notably subject coordinators and teachers, from the pilot study and the survey, were forthcoming about parents’ demands on them; in terms of the provision of meaningful information on pupils’ learning progress or performance. This opposes what some PTA chair persons, themselves parents, demand. Their interests mostly lie in the financial matters and funds of schools, as well as in the proper implementation of policies and codes of conduct. These parents’ attention focuses partly on schools’ compliance with regulations, evidently concerned with the type of environment in which their

children's learning takes place, and the financial activities which they support. Compared to other parents, PTA chairpersons seem to have a role more closely related to fund-raising. At the same time, observations of parents' interactions at St. Michael's indicate that their attention is focused on social issues rather than stressing that their children 'work well in classes', which was requested by only a few parents. Amplification of this is seen through the agency roles that the school is required to play. Staff at St. Michael's, particularly subject coordinators, feels that such demands from the agencies, particularly about student information are not justified, hence they impede accountability. Therefore agencies should not be calling only on parents' social responsibility but also on their accountability vis a vis their children's learning.

Similarly, the agency role of teachers also exists at St. John's where parents, particularly those with younger children, are said to demand a lot from teachers: "They expect them to do everything for their child", as one coordinator claimed, while also ensuring their protection and security. Contrarily, it can also be that parents are calling on the caring aspect of schools, which Jones (2004) considers critical for their children's development.

Demands from the Ministry of Education are seen to be more numerous than those from parents but this is not consistent with respondent data about ranking who schools are most accountable to. Commonalities from the different sources point to the Ministry wanting returns or reports on policies being implemented, on the use of facilities and resources, on the provision of leadership, on the evaluation of school effectiveness, on teacher behaviour, on results and for meeting deadlines. Some characteristics of an accountable school are evident from the research data. For

example, reports about the evaluation of school effectiveness provides evidence of the school looking at its 'organisational efficiency' (Leithwood and Earl, 2000) and simultaneously informing the Ministry whether it has established 'internal correctives' to change the course of actions that are harmful or not working effectively (Darling-Hammond and Snyder, 1992). The Development Planning process requires that schools evaluate their progress. Compared to the parents' case, there is the general feeling that the Ministry is justified in making such demands, particularly as they are also seen to be answerable to those higher up the ladder, again pointing to the existence of a hierarchical structure and down-up accountability.

External demands are addressed through delegation of responsibilities at both case study schools. This is seen to enhance the accountability of various role holders but at the same time it does not diminish the responsibility of those in charge, as the headteacher of St. Michael's explained: "I try my best, but in the end I have overall responsibility to see that everything is done". However, negotiating deadlines which purport to meet demands is said not to always work in practice as there is no reciprocated accountability from the Ministry of Education. Given this hierarchical background, it seems difficult to negotiate deadlines if those demanding an account have, in turn, to answer to those higher up.

Internal demands also exist in all the primary schools, but they vary across respondent groups. More demands, though are apparently faced by teachers and subject coordinators than the headteacher or any other staff. Demands for both groups revolve around aspects of teaching and learning, which is obviously

consistent with their roles. Such demands usually emanate from the headteacher or the collective management of the school. Subject coordinators from the pilot are asked to ‘provide pedagogical support’ to teachers, which is a justifiable request as they work alongside teachers – ‘to deliver effective lessons’, a feat not achievable if they do not also provide learning opportunities for teachers. Jones (2004) sees that providing such learning opportunities is essential if teachers are to meet ‘standards of professional knowledge and skills’. Evidence from the pilot and main surveys also show that teachers feel accountable to themselves, through what Forster (1999) describes as self-regulation; to feel a sense of duty to those who are affected by their actions.

In contrast, there are hardly any demands from students, other than a simple request from those at St. John’s for teachers to help them to improve by providing feedback after assessments. Such a request proves that students feel they are not being well guided, and they do not know how or where to improve, hence accountability for students’ learning progress is not working well. This is exacerbated by parents’ limited involvement in their children’s learning matters. Having the appropriate type of involvement, that is, in a child’s learning, is seen as a partnership by the PTA chairperson at St. Michael’s, even if it has limitations.

Self-imposed demands are also in existence, particularly at St. Michael’s, and this serves as self-motivation for the headteacher, which she claimed is achieved through setting her personal targets, although she is not achieving the target focused on enhanced staff motivation. Even though the head teacher claims that ‘there is a positive climate’, it does not seem to have much effect on teacher motivation.

Survey evidence is not always explicit about demands internal to the school, but the existence of the hierarchy obviously establishes legitimacy of demands from those the next step up. Another demand for subject coordinators is reporting on Development Planning; one that is proving to be a challenge. At St. John's, especially, they find it difficult to implement the tasks because of flagging teacher commitment, so they end up with lack of vital evidence in reports. The coordinators then question the validity of the report and whether the reporting itself is serving its purpose. In each of those two cases; giving an account about development planning and the validity of the account, it is difficult for the management at St. John's to judge whether they are progressing well or if the course needs changing through the provision of more 'internal correctives' (Darling-Hammond and Snyder 1992).

At St. Michael's though, internal demands are higher on teachers than on subject coordinators and some of those are said to be illegitimate by the teachers. They feel strongly about resources; their accessibility and inadequacy. Teachers may be seeing only the deficiencies but, in the context of accountability, they are apparently not being guided to see themselves being accountable for the effective and equitable use of the resources they do have. The same may apply for their classroom environment where demands from the Ministry focus on what facilities they have.

What are the Consequences of providing an Account?

Generally the subject of consequences is treated with much scepticism, particularly by teachers, but its existence is noted in all the primary schools with varying degrees. It is evident that the scepticism lies in the application of sanctions; which (Heim,

1995:19) describes as 'complex and controversial', even if the general feeling in the primary schools is that it is an important component of accountability.

The responses of the school-based respondents, from pilot and the main survey showed that actual penalties aligned well with the common aspired consequences listed. The most common consequence is that any culpable party is given a set time limit in which to work on improvement targets which, together with 'verbal warning', were seen as 'soft' sanctions. The findings reveal that personal target-setting, and being pro-active in achieving those, are important and current issues in these schools.

In analysing Heim's (1995) third category of consequences; where performance data is collected, the impetus to work towards achieving targets is also evident. However, a focus on such achievements may also exclude or diminish effort in other areas of school life. The sanction of implementing improvement targets though, may also be a catalyst to improve weaker areas which may have been overlooked in self-evaluation, individually or as a school unit. The idea of setting short-term targets for the school or the teacher still prevails in the way that management members perceive that both schools and teachers should be sanctioned for not meeting expectations.

The main and pilot surveys revealed the existence of a number of consequences, but these were all negative and there was no mention of rewards. A distinction between the actual consequences, and what subject coordinators wish to see, reveals a tendency towards harder sanctions, such as a reprimand, added to target-setting, suspension if no progress is noted, or forfeiture of salary or the annual increment.

The request for those types of sanctions reflects the subject coordinators' view that teachers should be more accountable than they are now. This links to Kogan's (1986) argument that, where there is failure, there should be someone responsible and sanctions should be considered. Subject coordinators also refer to close monitoring of teachers; a trend visible in most schools, though a few admitted that it is not working very well. This also links to the provision of support, through what 12% of subject coordinators perceive as mentoring in different areas of weakness. Similarly, teachers' consideration of actual consequences reflects the managements' preoccupation with the provision of time in which to work on targets set, and the opportunity for teachers to provide explanations rather than justifications. Some teachers also expected to face harder sanctions but there is also the wish to be provided with support while working on their weaknesses.

Other teachers are against sanctions. These mixed views reflect their indecision about whether it is the school or the teacher who should be sanctioned. It also shows that there is disagreement about imposing sanctions, and also teachers' scepticism. This may be partly because it depends on who validates a performance, or there may be a deficiency in the means by which one is being held accountable. Heim (1995) suggests that there may also be a body which imposes sanctions that may impact on students' learning or an adult's career. An example of both was illustrated by a management member of St. John's, who commented that, even if an appraisal is done, there is no follow-up to its outcomes. Similarly at St. Michael's, the management may have had preconceived ideas about the breach or the culpable party, rendering them subjective in their judgment. In light of this evidence, Heim (1995) warns about being disciplined in the implementation of an accountability

system. One has to be clear about the instances where a consequence may be triggered, and consider the impact of any of the consequences. Most importantly, whether the accountable school or teacher was obligated or whether they are aware and were clear of the consequences at the onset also needs to be addressed (Leithwood and Earl, 2000). This scepticism may also suggest that teachers are afraid of being judged by ‘hard and fast’ criteria, or that they are aware that student learning does not only depend on the teacher but on other factors too. They believe that they are not the only ones with the responsibility, an aspect that may have been their catalyst in agreeing more to the school as a unit being sanctioned. The wish by some teachers for harder sanctions prevails at St. Michael’s too, in the form of public mention of a teacher or a transfer to another school, both of which are likely to be very controversial. Heim (1995) warns that consequences that may impact on students’ learning or work opportunities are a serious matter. A teacher, for example, who is deemed underperforming and transferred to another school, may result in there being no replacement for his/her class or one may be passing on a weak teacher to another school. In addition, the ‘poor’ performance can be documented and used for future reference. But such dilemmas can be circumvented through clarification of ‘who is responsible for what to whom?’, together with a clear description of the level of performance and its limiting conditions.

Though it advocates the existence of sanctions, a distinctive scenario is evident at St. John’s. The prevailing culture is such that there is hardly the space or the desire to breach accountability expectations. Teachers are dependent on one another. Processes observed like discussions and counseling provoke reflections at cycle level that are effective in settling accountability disputes and organising support for

‘unaccountable’ teachers through mentoring programmes. Encouragement is also given through praise. Teachers are also made aware of what can happen if expectations are not fulfilled. Accountability is not an inhibiting fear factor but a part of the school’s culture, which portrays most of the teachers as those who can undertake realistic appraisal of their current situation and develop themselves, particularly through their programme for professional growth.

At management level, too, the element of support is strong, but seen through the interventions of other members of management, and visits from support providers from the Ministry headquarters. As for St. Michael, subject coordinators admit to the inconsistency and lack of follow-up to sanctions such as conferencing and mentoring, and this reflects limited discussions on processes of internal accountability. As a consequence, subject coordinators may have felt justified in saying that teachers engaged in professional development through mentoring do not necessarily apply what skills they have learnt in class, or they may write post-lesson evaluations which lack reflection.

Almost three quarters of the PTA chairpersons were in favour of sanctions for schools not meeting expectations. In a way they showed up as representatives of the Government or society because they referred to wastage of money, or if schools do not do their part, the society ends up with ‘frustrated learners who become bad citizens’. At the same time they rely on teachers to play the major part in student learning.

The PTA chairperson’s unawareness of any administration of sanctions at St. John’s, may suggest that the parent is ignorant in certain matters pertaining to the school, or because of the culture, there are rarely any reason for administering consequences.

At the same time, that does not stop the parent from arguing that, if a teacher does not fulfill expectations, others should be prepared to listen to explanations or justifications as to why. Providing support and training, as an alternative to harder sanctions, is more agreeable to both the parent and pupils involved in the interview. It is interesting to note that, at this school, the PTA chairperson and the pupils identify weaknesses in teachers' practice, leading to their under-performance.

The idea of rewards is given very little attention, except in the form of a congratulatory remark or praise given at St. John's. Such rewards work as incentives to motivate teachers to do better, and to adhere to accountability procedures both internally and externally.

An Accountability Model for Seychelles

Based on the analysis carried out, the existing models of accountability appear inadequate to explain the construct and operation of accountability in Seychelles. Consideration needs to be given to the specific characteristics of Seychelles, being a small island state, with high levels of personal knowledge, and a centralised system undergoing reforms towards more school-based governance.

A context-specific model has to explain school and teacher practices to ensure improvements because of the centralised characteristics of the system. A model is also required to address the impact of the bureaucratic nature of the system, and its compliance with rules and regulations. It also needs to address the impact on accountability of the high levels of personal knowledge within such a small system, with only 33 schools and 1500 teachers. The proposed model is derived from Kogan's tripartite model with elements from those of Anderson (2005) and Heim

(1995). The model has been developed to address the interests of the most relevant stakeholders (Glatter, 2002). The model has three dimensions: political, professional and customer (see Figure 9.1):

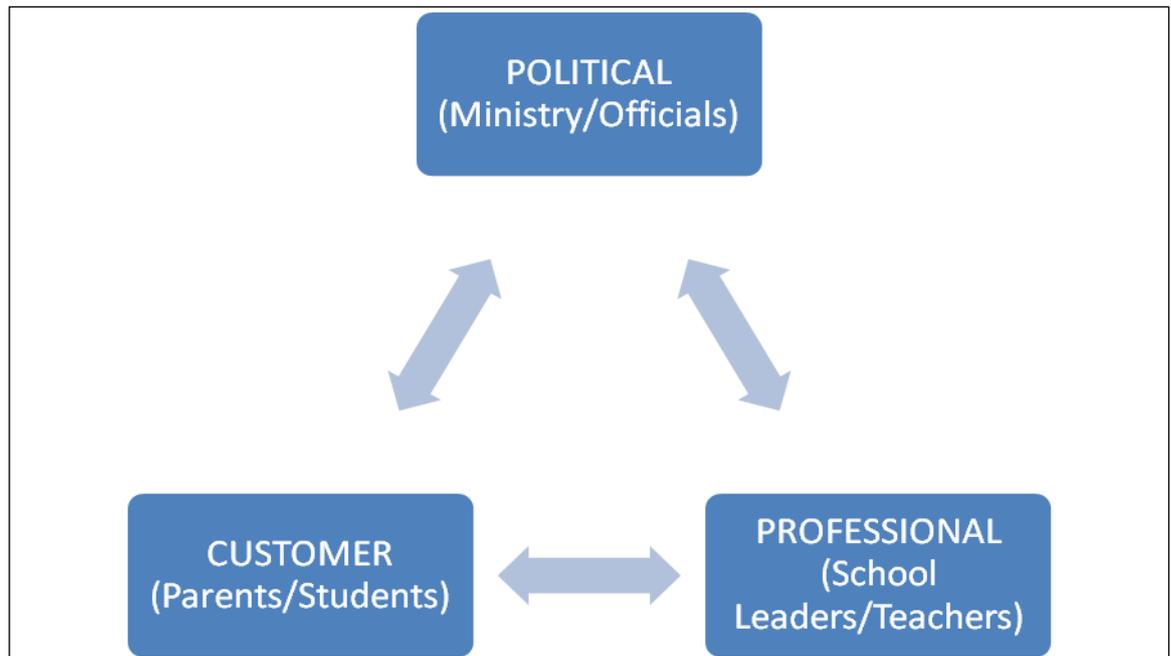


Figure 9.1: An accountability model for Seychelles

Political

This dimension represents the Ministry of Education as head of a centralised system and, simultaneously, the Government, with responsibility for the provision of financial, material and human resources. It also shows compliance with rules, regulations and policies, set by politicians and officials. The Ministry of Education receives accounts from school leaders and teachers about how schools are implementing rules, regulations and policies. It also receives accounts about student learning achievements and teacher performance.

Professional

This is the dimension engaging school leaders and teachers in being accountable for adherence to professional norms, their colleagues (Anderson, 2005) and to *vfigaro*

themselves. This mode of accountability has proved to be problematic in this study. While school leaders and teachers are essentially responsible for the ‘delivery of effective lessons’, and for developing values and developing teachers professionally, this does not operate as intended in many Seychelles primary schools. Some teachers lack initiative or do not put into practice what they gain in professional development sessions. Some subject coordinators also lack the subject knowledge to guide them. As the Ministry introduces more school-level autonomy in decision-making, the professional dimension of accountability is set to become stronger.

Customer (parents/students)

The third dimension of the model relates to customers, who are the parents and students. The model symbolises parental and student involvement in the partnership. The school leaders and teachers are accountable to parents and students for ‘educating their children’, for ‘their learning progress and development’ and for ‘reporting’ relevant information to both parties. With parents’ augmented interests in their children’s learning, and more active participation in decision-making in the future, they will become more accountable. If students’ engagement in their own learning is increased and their ‘voice’ is heard, they may also take an active part in decision-making.

All three dimensions interact with one another. In explaining the relationships, the fundamental question of who is accountable for what to whom is answered. The controlling party, the Ministry of Education (political), is external to the school and judges the performance of the schools, and their leaders and teachers, on the basis of external evaluations and school reports, then imposes consequences. The professional dimension acts through compliance with the political aspect and with

professional norms. The political dimension is answerable to parents and students for the overall provision of education. The model emphasises the simultaneous interaction of all three dimensions, balancing the requirements of each (Anderson, 2005).

Overview

The chapter analysed data from the different sources; pilot, main survey and the two case studies, and linked them to insights from the literature. The key elements analysed include the conceptualisation of school and teachers' accountability from the perspectives of some stakeholders; head teachers, subject coordinators, teachers and pupils. The concept is viewed in many ways, but is mainly used interchangeably or synonymously with responsibility; a responsibility that is influenced by the job description of each school-based respondent group. Data pertaining to respondents' views about why schools and teachers need to be accountable were also examined and all stakeholders accept that they have to be accountable. The school unit, and individuals within it, is accountable to someone else for something, partly because of the hierarchical structure, otherwise because of dependency on one another or the lack of clear lines of accountability.

The analysis established that roles dictate what one is accountable for. This involves many aspects for primary schools in Seychelles and this is sometimes a source of tension. With regards to evidence about the construction of accountability, the analysis identified expectations or procedures for complying with Ministry's regulations, adhering to policies and focusing on results. The concept functions down-up from teachers, up the hierarchy to the Ministry, but there is also evidence of lateral accountability as well as a matrix structure. Operationalisation happens

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through various mechanisms, among which reporting emerges as the central approach. Some of those mechanisms work well for some stakeholders but are problematic for others. Development Planning provides a framework for most of the reporting and professional development, and collaboration emerged as an essential feature in the social context of teacher accountability. The Ministry of Education and parents are the main external stakeholders, but responding to demands from them seems fraught with tension and controversy. This is compounded by evidence of limited parental involvement, and some PTA chairpersons' apparent interest in financial activities. Students' demands are low except for wanting 'good' teachers and giving proper feedback to assist improvement. Further examination confirms the existence of mostly punitive consequences, focused on target setting and time allocation in order to make required improvements. This aspect is another source of controversy for some subject coordinators and teachers, who wish for stronger sanctions for both teachers and schools. More accountability to students, teacher accountability, and reciprocal accountability from the Ministry of Education, as well as more involvement from parents in their children's education, are called for.

In the final chapter, the conclusions of the study are explored and the significance of the study is discussed. The findings will also guide the design of an accountability model for Seychelles.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The central issue in the research is how the concept of accountability is understood in the primary schools in the Seychelles; from the perspectives of headteachers, subject coordinators, teachers, parents and pupils. A second component of this study involves how this accountability is enacted in a school's day to day operations and functions.

Overview of the Findings

The empirical analysis of the perceptions of the respondents highlighted that understanding of accountability in the Seychelles primary schools is still at an early stage. It revealed a tendency to equate the concept with 'responsibility'. There is unanimous belief that both schools as units, and individuals, should be accountable and it is agreed it should be for improvement purposes. Teachers perceive their roles as a civic duty. They are clear about wanting parents to share that accountability. Teacher accountability raises some tension between the management and teachers.

The study confirms that various stakeholders are owed an account, both inside and outside the school; members of school management, parents, Ministry of Education, students, the public, community, government, agencies and colleagues. Evidence shows that headteachers' have less engagement with teaching and learning as compared to middle managers and teachers. Teachers are clearer about their accountability, focusing on students and their parents. Professional accountability is

emerging through what teachers say is their personal sense of duty. Obligations are clearly spelt out in job descriptions. Most headteachers are mainly accountable for pupils' performance and learning development. Subject coordinators see as their main unit of account the monitoring and mentoring of teachers and ensuring that their planning and delivery are effective. Teachers are answerable for translating their job descriptions into practice, and not only for academic aspects. Parents assert that, as well as student learning, the school should be accountable for its financial activities and complying with regulations and policies.

Collective expectations, mechanisms or procedures direct how people at school account for what they do. There is evidence of a hierarchical structure where accountability operates from teachers to management. The main process through which accountability is enacted is reporting. Some accountability mechanisms exist external to the school, notably through external evaluations. Despite the presence of those mechanisms, the level of accountability is proven to be low and seems less focused on teaching and learning. The main external parties to demand accountability are the Ministry of Education and parents. Parents particularly want meaningful information given to them. The Ministry of Education's demands revolve around giving accounts about expenditures, management of resources, leadership provision and evaluation of school effectiveness. Internal demands are mostly about the provision of pedagogical support, and considered to be justifiable. This consequently responds to the demand on teachers to 'deliver effective lessons'. The application of consequences and sanctions in the Seychelles primary schools is regarded as sensitive. Sanctions vary but the most prevalent is to be given a set time limit in which a culpable party is to work on improvement targets. Despite the

setting of targets, improvement is sometimes elusive because of ‘lack of follow-up’ and ‘monitoring’.

Answering the research questions

1. How do stakeholders in education understand the concept of accountability?

In the Seychelles primary schools, the concept is interpreted in many ways. The most striking commonality is that the concept is used interchangeably with ‘responsibility’ or is taken to mean ‘being responsible’. This is influenced mainly by the job descriptions in which the terms ‘responsibilities of the post’ or ‘responsible to’ are used. Obligations are derived from these roles. This leads to a view that role holders should be delivering on their roles, as opposed to accountability, which has an outward facing emphasis. Some other interpretations of the concept include ‘giving an account’, involving teachers and subject coordinators furnishing an explanations of events or ‘giving accounts of students’ results’. However, some perceptions lack the notion of ‘being answerable to’ and do not cover the aspect of evaluation.

2. Who provides accountability in the Seychelles Schools?

Everyone is found to exercise accountability in one form or another, although its extent and nature varies. Liability for account-giving is established primarily through compliance to job descriptions in which responsibilities are clearly spelt out. In most cases, accountability is tied to a certain level or aspect of teaching and learning. Headteachers, subject coordinators, and teachers, are all seen as being accountable for their zones of responsibility. Emphasis is placed on the school, as a

unit being accountable. Teachers, being the ultimate deliverer of what schools stand for, bear a high level of accountability.

The other two stakeholder groups, parents and students, are seen as much less accountable, because of the low level of parental involvement in children's education compared to their involvement socially. As a consequence, accountability becomes one-sided; reciprocation from parents is minimal and is mainly done through ensuring that their children attend school or have what they need for school. Similarly, there is minimal accountability from students, but they do acknowledge responsibility for their studies.

Exercising accountability by the school as a unit is principally a management responsibility. The school is delegated the authority to provide teaching and learning experiences by the Ministry of Education, so the school is obligated to provide an account. Accountability in the primary schools has limitations too, for example when the headteacher fails to document essential information related to development planning. Here is evidence to show that all parties concerned would like a more mutual accountability; the school, parents and students. This cannot be restricted to social issues only, but more to do with student learning and decision-making.

3. What is the scope of accountability in Seychelles primary schools?

School leaders and teachers in Seychelles are accountable for a wide range of outcomes and processes. Headteachers are accountable for student performance and learning development, an aspect which in most cases they are not directly involved in, but are responsible for ensuring that it happens. Heads are also answerable for staff performance, professional growth, giving meaningful information to parents,

management of budgets and resources, development of a positive school ethos. Through compliance to Ministry policies and guidelines, heads are also answerable for the implementation of those.

The middle leaders, subject coordinators, are primarily answerable for processes leading to learning outcomes. They do this by ensuring that teaching and learning take place effectively. This is done by providing pedagogical support and mentoring of teachers. They are also answerable for those. The monitoring aspect is problematic; with a debate about how much monitoring is enough or whether what is being done is rigorous enough.

The scope of accountability for teachers revolves around their 'raison d'être' for being in the classroom. They believe they are accountable for working on students' weaknesses, particularly essential with mixed-ability classes. Teachers' accountability also covers developing students' values and attitudes, providing learning experiences as well as passing on reliable information to parents.

According to a significant number of respondents, there is a lack of accountability at different levels and the reasons given for this are complex. Headteachers refer to the low performance of students, teachers' lack of initiative or evidence of student progress and remediation. Subject coordinators refer to their own inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the monitoring of teaching and learning, and improper records of teachers. Many teachers believe that presenting results is not enough as records of student progress; evaluation of the results and challenging them is lacking. Teacher absenteeism is also an indicator of a lack of accountability. However, some respondents feel that existing levels of accountability are sufficient citing, in particular, the number of records they are required to keep.

4. To whom are school leaders and teachers accountable?

School leaders

In Seychelles primary schools, there is the widely shared belief that schools and individual teachers should be accountable. The study confirmed that there are many stakeholders both internal and external to the schools: management members, middle leaders, teachers, the public, parents, the Ministry of Education, the community, Government, agencies, the church and colleagues. Headteachers feel they should be more accountable to the parents than to the Ministry of Education, even if the hierarchical structure dictates that they should give precedence to the Ministry. Similarly, subject coordinators feel they are more answerable to the Ministry of Education, when instead they should be accountable mainly to parents and consequently to students. Reporting to the Ministry surpasses reporting of student progress to parents or students themselves. It is not clear whose interests take precedence in all this reporting. The accountability then is not clear.

Teachers

The majority of teachers are clear that they should be mainly accountable to students, then to their parents, because they are the ones directly affected by what teachers do. They also have the moral sense of duty, intrinsic accountability. Professionally accountability also means feeling responsible to their colleagues. Though teachers are accountable to parents, they feel accountability is not reciprocated; they require parents to be more involved in the account-giving process of learning experiences and progress, a request which is also made by PTA chairpersons.

Students are not seen to demand much from teachers even if their interests are of primary importance. Students only want their teachers to be ‘good’, to explain well and be able to tell them where and how they can improve. Reports of bad behaviour, not dealt with promptly by class teachers, show that both partners’ entitlement is doubtful at times; again proving that accountability is not reciprocal.

4. What is the nature of accountability in the Seychelles?

The nature of accountability in the primary schools relates to the construction of the concept, how it operates, by what means, and the consequences of accountability:

How accountability is constructed

Constructs of accountability vary but there is agreement on procedures. The most common procedure is the process of reporting, which is done to various parties, including parents, students and the Ministry of Education. Those reports are about different things too. The second is that there are expectations which are set out in schools’ plans for improvement targets, for example at St. Michael’s. A third construct is that accountability is imposed from outside the school, especially in the form of regulations and policies imposed on schools. There is also accountability for budget expenditures and resources, imposed by the Ministry of Education, which the schools find to be legitimate because schools are funded by the Ministry. Another such imposition is the recognition that school leaders and teachers are civil servants and adherence to codes of ethics or conduct comes from the civil administration, but again represented by the Ministry. Because of the hierarchical structure, the accountability mechanisms are from teachers via school leaders to the

Ministry. At the same time, lateral accountability is also evident among some teachers and subject coordinators.

Mechanisms through which schools are held accountable

Reporting is both a construct and a mechanism. It is the main aspect of accountability in all primary schools. Various aspects of school life are reported on to different parties. This sometimes comprises of explanations or justifications, but rarely evaluations. The reporting is done verbally or in written form: subject reports by subject coordinators, students' report cards by teachers, annual, progress and evaluation reports by the management. Subject coordinators and teachers also talk about directly reporting to parents on open-days. There is a highly visible element of responsiveness, which is sometimes daunting, because school leaders argue that validity is not always established. There is also the lack of challenging teachers about students' progress and that results in the former not taking responsibility for improvement. Another argument is the 'lack of expertise' required to make valid judgments, and lack of subject knowledge which facilitates the provision of pedagogical support. Record-keeping of student progress is found to be another limitation. There is no evidence of having worked on weaknesses.

Accountability operates through external mechanisms too. Participants refer to the Development Planning process where they report to the Ministry Officials, as support providers of how implementation of improvement plans are progressing. However, shortcomings are also evident. The headteacher of St. Michael's, for example, talks about diminished accountability because of inadequate discussions about how to improve on weaknesses.

Self -evaluation is also a mechanism seen as vital in accountability functions. St. Michael's management, who run the school, asks questions about how it is doing; members judge their own performance. They do not always develop or prepare well for improvement because they do not discuss extensively about how to address weaknesses. Where other schools are concerned, self-evaluation is one aspect which was barely mentioned.

Consequences of account giving

A general scepticism exists about the subject of consequences but school leaders, teachers, parents and students see it as an essential component of accountability. A number of them did not commit themselves on the subject. The majority of schools concentrate on negative consequences, rather than positive ones, and the main attention is on sanctions. Those currently in practice are 'soft' sanctions such as being given a set time limit to work on weaknesses, a reprimand or a verbal warning. Harder sanctions are written warnings or the transfer of staff to another school. All the sanctions are implemented through target-setting, either personal or as a school, short term or long term, and the impetus is to work towards achieving the targets. However, there is also the wish for much harder sanctions to be imposed. Subject coordinators, in particular, demand that there should be stronger reprimands in the form of written warnings, and suspension if no progress is made, followed by forfeiture of salary or annual increment. The middle leaders also request more rigorous monitoring of teachers, adding the element of support through mentoring in weaker areas. Teachers also aspire to harder sanctions, but they add 'public mention' and 'teacher transfer' to their list of sanctions. This is apparently controversial; there are concerns about teacher transfer because of its

impact on a teacher's career or student learning. They also think one school may be passing around a 'poor performing teacher'.

In contrast, there are about 50% of teachers who are against sanctions. This is because they are divided in the debate about whether it is the school or the teacher who should be sanctioned or the adverse effects of sanctions on a school or a teacher. This emphasises that student learning does not solely depend on them. They also question the validity of sanctions. Two strong examples are illustrated; one where there is no follow-up after review of teacher or leader performance or when a subjective judgment is made because of preconceptions or personal knowledge of the culpable party. This leads to the creation of a lot of tension between teachers and members of the management team. The nature of accountability is such that some school leaders and teachers do not risk breaching accountability expectations or procedures. They believe in a culture where if they fail, their school fails. One such example is St. John's. Parents are not too sure about the subject of sanctions, but they believe in explanations and justifications being given. Support and training are more agreeable to them, and to pupils, than 'hard' sanctions.

The nature of accountability is such that the notion of networking is demonstrated at school level. The study showed how school leaders and teachers are involved in networking activities. The job descriptions of the headteacher, subject coordinators and teachers guide the networks of accountability among these three school-based groups. The patterns of accountability emphasise the vertical hierarchy of subordinate to super ordinate.

Professional accountability also emerges, with teachers coming together to plan or to 'grow', through shared reading, peer observation and the formal organisation of professional development. There are indications that some individual aspects affect relationships, such as a teacher failing to accept a peer in her class for observation. Therefore accountability to colleagues is compromised.

Since the account giving process is sometimes challenging for some schools, particularly in development planning, a network of people is used to plan, implement and monitor the process. Accountability is affected if one link fails. A teacher not recording students' reading progress, or having a backlog of documentation, are all evidence of a lack of accountability, as a result of not maintaining processes essential to the relationship.

6. What are the implications for school leaders in exercising accountability?

The study revealed that school leaders and teachers respond to many, and sometimes conflicting, demands for accountability from inside and outside the school. First, there is the contentious issue of being accountable to all the different stakeholders at the same time. Through ranking of their stakeholders, the respondents in some form have established precedence but the level of accountability accorded to each stakeholder is not clear.

Externally, accountability to the Ministry of Education is the main expectation. Schools and leaders are required to give accounts about policies being implemented, the use of facilities, resources, budget expenditures, evaluation of school effectiveness, and the provision of leadership, teacher behaviour and results. Most

of those demands by the Ministry of Education are made of the school management and are found to be legitimate by subject coordinators and headteachers. Subject coordinators and teachers say parents' demands for accountability revolve around providing meaningful information about student performance. This contradicts what most PTA chairpersons believe; their interests lie mainly in the school's financial activities. However, a few of them do demand accounts about 'how well their children are doing in classes'. In particular, parents of younger children are seen to demand much more from teachers; particularly on the caring aspect of teaching, seen as critical for development.

Internally, demands exist but evidence is not always explicit about them; they are mostly taken as day to day operations. The dominance of the vertical structure emphasises that demands from higher up are more legitimate. Subject coordinators and teachers face most requests for accountability, which are from the headteacher or the collective management. These demands are parallel to the description of roles they play. Subject coordinators have to account for the provision of pedagogical support to teachers for them to deliver effective lessons. This support is essential in order for teachers to meet an acceptable 'standard of professional knowledge and skills'. The middle leaders are asked to give accounts about development planning too and, as noted above, that may be challenging. Subject coordinators refer to teachers' flagging commitment and lack of evidence to report.

In comparison, there are hardly any demands from students; they only want teachers to give them appropriate feedback which will help them to improve. They feel they

are not well guided. They also demand that they have caring teachers; those who are 'good' and who can explain well.

Generally, the research questions were well answered; the data generated contributed immensely to the analysis. The question of how accountability is perceived was not originally included in the research questions, but it was found essential because conceptualizations also shed light on other questions.

Significance of the Study

The author's research is significant in terms of its empirical base and in respect of its contribution to theory development.

Empirical

The significance of this study is seen in four major dimensions:

1. It is the first treatment of the concept in primary schools in the Seychelles, providing original knowledge with the potential to contribute immensely to the Seychelles Education system. Accountability is increasing in importance because of the context of increased competitiveness between the state and private schools, rising expectations from parents and the wider community, and increased pressure from the Ministry of Education for more accountability. The Ministry of Education's Policy statement (Ministry of Education, 2003) provides an extensive discussion of accountability purposes and operational goals, but also acknowledges the rights of parents and learners. This study provides evidence about how accountability is conceptualised at different levels in the education system, and how it functions in practice, including notions of mutual accountability, transparency and the provision of information to parents. It also provides evidence that school size

does not affect the types of accountability relationships or how it functions, but some interpretations can be different. It also informs that having a collaborative school culture facilitates accountability. Consequences though controversial is essential, but rewards, incentives or sanctions are to be driven by context too and valid judgments.

2. The Seychelles is a ‘Small Island Developing State’ (SIDS), with many of the characteristics of such intimate societies, including a network of personal relationships (Farrugia, 2002) which form close knit, integrated communities (Baldachinno, 2002). The research findings, especially from the case studies, serve to highlight the impact of personal knowledge on accountability processes in the primary schools. This can have a positive impact, when the school functions as a collective unit, as at St. John’s. However, it may have negative consequences where subjective personal knowledge affects accountability relationships, as at St. Michael’s, where imposing sanctions is problematic. The study then serves to emphasise that, in small close knit communities, personal relationships are relevant and essential in the construction of sound lateral accountability, but more so, in developing a highly collaborative culture because of it. On the other hand, those personal relationships may be detrimental to accountability in terms of subjectivity in the account giving process.

3. The education system of Seychelles is engaged in reforms aiming to put in place more decentralised school governance, giving the schools more autonomy. Much of the literature relates to decentralised systems. The research is significant because of the timely empirical evidence that can inform the functioning of accountability in the current highly centralised environment. Data informs about the impact of some

bureaucratic features; including hierarchical organisational structures and central control of resources, as well as a prescriptive National Curriculum. For example, schools or individuals are less accountable for resources that they have not generated themselves. Also, if what is provided is not adequate or suitable then they assert they cannot be held accountable. There is also the fact that vertical accountability is more evident than lateral accountability in this centralised system.

4. The study also contributes to the understanding of primary school accountability in Small Island Developing States, through the analysis of the perceptions of both school and teacher accountability, and of five stakeholder groups; school heads, middle leaders, teachers, students and parents. There is evidence about internal and external stakeholders; their interests, the schools' obligations to them, and the level of accountability accorded to them. The research also collected data about challenges faced by school leaders and teachers in response to accountability demands internal and external to the school. These findings provide a wider understanding of accountability frameworks and processes in SIDS.

Theoretical

The theoretical significance of the research arises from the study's focus on the conceptual frameworks of accountability. First, the findings confirm Farrell and Law's (1997) view that the concept means being responsible. Leaders and teachers with responsibilities are asked to account for them and this expectation is explicit in job descriptions.

Anderson (2005) presented three types of accountability systems: compliance with regulations, adherence to professional norms, and results driven. The author's

research supports the compliance framework through mostly vertical accountability relationships, from teachers, leaders and schools to the Ministry of Education. This strong vertical accountability seems to undermine the scope for professional accountability; or accountability to colleagues, but there is evidence of emerging professional accountability in some schools. This is evident through mechanisms put in place by schools; peer observations, shared reading and professional growth, aiming to upgrade teachers' capacity for more effective teaching. Despite the prevalence of hierarchical structures, professional or lateral accountability is not impeded.

In Kogan's (1986) normative models, there are three dimensions: political, professional and customer oriented. In Seychelles, accountability to the Ministry of Education is a very strong form of political accountability. Aspects of this political dimension were highly visible in self-evaluation imposed on the school as they go through the development planning process and in evaluating the school management's performance. It was also visible through the many reports schools have to send to the Ministry and through the Ministry of Education having control of major decision areas: curriculum, staffing, budget, and student welfare. The evidence shows that having a highly centralised system renders accountability to be highly political.

Kogan's (1986) model considers answerability to clients too. The author's evidence confirms that most teachers feel accountable to parents and students, but in practice, this has proved to be inadequate and problematic. There are differences of view about what is reported and there is lack of both parental and student involvement.

The evidence undermines the theory that, if schools are to acknowledge accountability to their communities, of which parents and students form part, they should have rich and accurate ways in which to do so (Forster, 1999).

Another aspect that has theoretical importance is that one of the conditions for justifying a request for accountability is 'entitlement' (Leithwood and Earl, 2000). The author's data confirm the difficulty of understanding entitlement, though school leaders and teachers confirm that there is a substantial list of stakeholders. In other respects, the data support the view that there is a group or party receiving the account that is entitled to an account, irrespective of teachers' recognition or acceptance of this (Sockett, 1980).

Looking at the concept of reporting as a means to hold schools accountable, Robinson and Timperley (2000) claim that accountability guides improvement when the person accepts the validity of the judgement. That is supported through evidence about problems related to reporting; validity is challenged due to lack of expertise to judge, subjectivity and inaccurate reporting. If validity cannot be established, there is no acceptance and responsibility for improvement is lacking.

The study explored and explained the concept of accountability through numerous ideas, hence managing to really understand school and teacher accountability. Overall, the study is theoretically significant in explaining accountability processes in centralised systems. It also serves to confirm that accountability is taken to be responsibility but, if it lacks vital components such as the outwards focus of being answerable and evaluated, the accountability does not work. The evidence that

having vertical hierarchical structures in a centralised system does not lessen professional accountability but it does affect the nature of reporting within accountability processes.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The research began by understanding how some specific stakeholders perceive school and teacher accountability. The research has highlighted the complexity of having accountable schools, particularly state funded ones. There is evidence of the existence of the concept in Seychelles primary schools, in various forms and to different extents. The research also identified numerous challenges: Limited school and teacher accountability, certain mechanisms to ensure accountability not working well (Development Planning, self-evaluation, reporting, record-keeping, etc), being answerable to numerous stakeholders, lack of parental and student involvement, people not being clear about who they are accountable to, for what, and with what consequences.

In the context of a highly centralised small island education system, but with current plans to introduce more school-based governance, the accountability of schools, teachers and school leaders is of great contemporary significance. The findings raise some implications for both policy and practice:

Policy

1. The maintenance of the Development Planning framework is crucial. It has been found to be a sound mechanism in guiding schools to take responsibility and become accountable for systematic improvement, through setting of improvement targets and regular reporting of progress. Data from the research support the

framework; respondents found the discussion of weaknesses through self-evaluation, together with the subsequent planning implementation and reporting, to be helpful in informing and guiding improvements. Development Planning also enhanced the accountability process, as leaders and teachers are answerable to the Ministry of Education about their progress.

2. The proposed accountability model is used to refine and clarify the Ministry of Education's policy through transparency and providing meaningful information to parents. The statements which the Ministry of Education uses to explain accountability need to incorporate the element of answerability. Leaders' and teachers' job descriptions also need to emphasise 'answerability' and not only 'responsibility'.

3. In the context of new reforms, the proposed model not only considers a partnership with stakeholders, but also guides relationships and clarifies the roles of partners. Parents and students need to be 'heard' in a balanced executive of school governance. The added benefit of the partnership indirectly emphasises accountability for resources. Therefore it is recommended that the mandate of the new School Governance's School Councils include a partial focus on the generation and management of resources. Student bodies and PTAs need to be given a boost in participating actively and contributing decision-making about various aspects of school life.

4. External Evaluation, provided by the External Quality Assessment (EQA), inspectorate Unit, is an appropriate mechanism through which primary schools can

be held accountable. It is recommended that indicators present in the framework: 'Looking at our School', which guides schools in the development planning process, need to be transformed into standards of student achievement, and school leaders' and teacher standards and quality. This will facilitate the accountability operations in terms of being more explicit about the judging and establishing validity of performance. This will also provide the impetus for school leaders and teachers to work towards achieving such standards with more measurable indicators.

5. It is recommended that the question of consequences and sanctions is addressed, particularly the consideration of harder sanctions, as requested by subject coordinators and teachers. Similarly, consideration should be given to rewards and incentives show-casing good practice, encouragement and praise at school level. This can be done through: the provision of bonuses or salary enhancement, based on evidence of performance, regional or national professional development incentives through attendance at regional or international seminars, scholarships or publications.

Practice

The research findings also lead to a number of implications for practice:

1. Pre-requisite to reporting as an accountability function is record-keeping and documentation. School leaders, teachers and other relevant partners have to examine the relevance and status of records, aligning them to units of account, under the proposed accountability model, taking into consideration relevant indicators.
2. Reporting to students and parents needs to be addressed, with a proper record of any relevant information. The implication is for schools to encourage parents'

discussions about student learning progress, and not only about academic experiences, with teachers or school leaders. Open days should be organised with ample time allocated for exchanges, questions and discussions. The reporting also needs to review written reports so that they are relevant and helpful in advising parents about children's progress. This applies to report cards advising students on how to improve. Giving student a 'voice' with all it implies about their learning is an important step forward for securing student accountability.

3. In the quest for more accountability, positive relationships among stakeholders are to be valued through the development of a more collaborative culture, as seen at St. John's primary school. Headteachers are required to become more clearly and visibly accountable to teachers for the decisions they make. There should be regular meetings to involve stakeholders in discussions about relevant aspects of school life. This will help them to share the responsibility for the education of all children. It will also solicit stakeholders' support for teachers and school leaders.

4. Ministry of Education officials have to provide timely support for school leaders and teachers, addressing their needs, in order to enhance the capacity of leaders to lead teachers into planning and delivering of 'effective lessons', as well as developing positive values and attitudes for the holistic development of students. The support is considered vital for leaders or teachers working on personal improvement targets, through mentoring, and for the development and generation of their own resources.

Implications for the researcher

The study has been a systematic critical enquiry (Bassey, 1999) into the accountability of primary schools, which aimed at informing educational policy and practice. The enquiry was set in an exploratory design; involving the collection of quantitative data through survey, and qualitative data was collected to provide greater depth and understanding. From a positivist standpoint, the aim of the research was to be able to generalize the findings to all primary schools in the Seychelles. But the researcher felt that with percentages or numbers (the structure of the questionnaire), language was required to be able to interpret them. The numbers would not have been the best way of reflecting precision and accuracy, hence the added interpretivist approach even within the questionnaire, through the open-ended questions. Had the questionnaire been more structured and standardised, it might have generated cause and effects relationships in the operationalisation of accountability, but at the expense of depth and understanding. The survey findings provided facts and opinions, but some of them required substantiating through in-depth case studies. From the interpretivist standpoint, human behaviour is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs, thus, the researcher studied accountability in situations, i.e. at school level. That contextualised the operationalisation of school accountability through the case studies. By using both approaches, a mixed methods stance, reflexivity on what was happening made clearer that, though the research was concept-based, inherent was always the hypothesis that internal accountability systems are likely to influence individual actions if they are closely aligned with individual responsibility and collective expectations.

In conclusion, the researcher's interpretivist approach, in combination with the positivist approach, has contributed immensely to the knowledge gained in this enquiry. Therefore the combination of approaches worked. Within the paradigm debate, what is 'fit for purpose' works.

Overview

The chapter has drawn conclusions from the analysis of the evidence gathered. Overall, the study highlighted the importance of accountability in the primary schools. It has also discussed stakeholders' claims to accountability. Perceptions of accountability have many interpretations but, most commonly; it is seen as synonymous with responsibility. There are features common to all schools, such as the vertical down-up accountability line, but elements of lateral accountability are also present. As Barber (2004) points out, accountability brings areas of weakness or failure into the open. The author's research has also managed to bring out weaknesses in the Seychelles' accountability framework; including lack of parental involvement, lack of accountability in particular aspects of school life, and barriers to the development of professional accountability. The study has also allowed the researcher to clarify the Ministry of Education's policy concerning its partnership with parents and community, focusing on teaching and learning, resources and professional attitudes to accountability.

Overall, the mutual accountability of school leaders, teachers, parents, students, the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders is essential if primary schools are to improve.

The study has given the researcher the opportunity to understand the intricate but essential concepts of school and teacher accountability. Analysing data from the various sources has enabled the researcher to make sound evidence-based recommendations. Furthermore, the role that accountability plays in educational leadership has been clarified in two dimensions; policy and practice. The findings are likely to influence policy decisions and also have implications for educators. They are likely to contribute to the development of more accountable primary schools, and teachers, in the centralised education system of Seychelles.

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APPENDICES

- A. Subject Coordinator Questionnaire
- B. PTA Chairperson Questionnaire
- C. Headteacher Questionnaire
- D. Teacher Questionnaire
- E. Headteacher Interview
- F. Teacher Interview
- G. Parent Interview
- H. Subject Coordinator Interview
- I. Focus Group of Students Interview
- J. Job Descriptions
- K. Development Plan-St. John's Primary School
- L. Minutes of Management Meetings-St. John's
- M. Minutes of School Improvement Meetings-St. John's
- N. Observation Schedule-St. John's
- O. Development Plan-ST. Michael's Primary School
- P. Minutes of Management Meetings-St. Michael's
- Q. Minutes of School improvement Meetings-St. Michael's
- R. Observation Schedule-St. Michael's

APPENDIX A

SUBJECT COORDINATOR'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Participant,

As part of a Doctoral Degree, I am undertaking some research in the primary schools in the country. I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the following questionnaire. It is likely to take you about 30 minutes.

I am investigating the subject of school and teacher accountability. Your honest opinions will be very much appreciated and would be of great value to the research.

Your participation and contribution will remain anonymous and you are asked not to write your names on the questionnaire. Furthermore, the information you contribute will be treated confidentially; in terms of only my supervisor and the examiners based at the University will be the ones to see the data. As a participant, you will not be identified in the thesis. However, the findings from the research are likely to contribute to the body of research both in Seychelles and in Small Island Developing States and may be published after examination.

Thank you for your time, consideration and contributions and hope that together we will contribute much to the body of research in our education system and subsequently in our country.

Yours sincerely,

Veronique Figaro (Mrs.)

Section A

Put a **tick** in the appropriate () box.

1. Gender:

Male

Female

2. Age:

- Below 20 years
- 20 to 30 years
- 31 to 45 years
- 46 to 60 years
- Above 60 years

3. School Size

- Extra Large- Over 1000
- Large – 700 to 999
- Medium- 400 to 699
- Small- Below 400

4. How long have you been in your present post?

- Less than 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 11 to 15 years
- 16 to 20 years
- 21 to 25 years
- More than 25 years

Section B

5. As a Subject Coordinator, do you consider yourself accountable?

Yes

No

6. If you answered yes, what are you accountable for?

7.	Parents are regularly involved in decision-making	4	3	2	1
8.	Students are involved in decision-making	4	3	2	1
9.	Students are actively involved in committees	4	3	2	1
10.	Adjustments /Changes are promptly brought about to improve the school	4	3	2	1

Section C

9. How would you describe accountability at your school? **Circle** the most appropriate answer:

- A. Everyone agrees on expectations
- B. Accountability procedures are agreed on
- C. Accountability is imposed from outside the school

10. How would you describe accountability relationships at your school? Which is the most common type of relationship? **Circle** the most appropriate answer:

- A. Top-down- Management to teachers
- B. Down-up Teachers to management
- C. Lateral – Everyone accountable to one another

11. How would you describe the level of accountability at your school? Circle the most appropriate letter:

- A. There is over-accountability
 - B. There is adequate accountability
 - C. There is a lack of accountability
-

Section D

12. Do you consider **reporting** as an accountability process? Tick () the appropriate box.

Yes

No

13. If you answered 'yes' explain how:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

14. Are there any penalties or consequences following reported accounts?

Yes

No

15. If you answered 'yes', what are those penalties or consequences?

.....
.....
.....

16. To what extent do you agree that a) **a school** should be sanctioned /penalized when it does not meet with expectations?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	3	2	1

How can a school be sanctioned or penalized?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

b) **a teacher?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	3	2	1

How can a teacher be sanctioned or penalized?

.....

.....

.....

.....

17. How would you rank the involvement of the following groups in the decision-making process at your school?

Put in numbers **1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6**, etc beside each group starting with the **most involved** as **1**.

a) Budget Resources											
Parents		Students		Teachers		Management		Ministry		Other Agencies	
b) Curriculum											
Parents		Students		Teachers		Management		Ministry		Other Agencies	
c) Staffing											
Parents		Students		Teachers		Management		Ministry		Other Agencies	
d) Students' Welfare											
Parents		Students		Teachers		Management		Ministry		Other Agencies	

18. Do you think schools should be accountable?

Yes

No

19. If you answered ‘yes’ schools should be accountable **a) to whom?**

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b) for what?

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c) by what means?

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20. Any other comments?

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Thank you so much for your time and contributions!

APPENDIX B

PTA CHAIR PERSON'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Participant,

As part of a Doctoral Degree, I am undertaking some research in the primary schools in the country. I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the following questionnaire. It is likely to take you about 30 minutes.

I am investigating the subject of school and teacher accountability. Your honest opinions will be very much appreciated and would be of great value to the research.

Your participation and contribution will remain anonymous and you are asked not to write your names on the questionnaire. Furthermore, the information you contribute will be treated confidentially; in terms of only my supervisor and the examiners based at the University will be the ones to see the data. As a participant, you will not be identified in the thesis. However, the findings from the research are likely to contribute to the body of research both in Seychelles and in Small Island Developing States and may be published after examination.

Thank you for your time, consideration and contributions and hope that together we will contribute much to the body of research in our education system and subsequently in our country.

Yours sincerely,

Veronique Figaro (Mrs.)

Section A

Put a **tick** in the appropriate () box.

1. Gender:

Male

Female

2. Age:

- Below 20 years
- 20 to 30 years
- 31 to 45 years
- 46 to 60 years
- Above 60 years

3. How long have you been PTA Chairperson of this school?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 year
- Two years
- More than two years

Section B

4. Should schools be accountable?

Yes No

5. If you answered 'Yes' what should they be accountable for?

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6. Who should they be accountable to?

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7. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the school your child(ren) attend? **Circle** the most appropriate number:

	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Teachers report only on pupils' academic performance.	4	3	2	1
2.	Teachers report on pupils' actual learning experiences to parents	4	3	2	1
3.	Children are given equal opportunities to learn	4	3	2	1
4.	Self-Evaluation is done regularly	4	3	2	1
5.	Parents are involved in the school's self-evaluation	4	3	2	1
6.	Parents are involved in the school's self-evaluation	4	3	2	1
7.	Decision-making is guided by procedures to use the information	4	3	2	1
8.	Students are regularly involved in decision-making	4	3	2	1
9.	Students are actively involved in different committees	4	3	2	1
10.	Adjustments /Changes are promptly brought about to improve the school	4	3	2	1

Section C

8. How would you describe the accountability at your children's school? **Circle** the most appropriate letter:

- A. Both parents and the school agree on expectations
- B. Accountability procedures are agreed on
- C. Accountability is imposed from outside the school

9. How would you, as a parent rate the accountability of teachers in your child (ren)'s school? Circle most appropriate number:

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Less than satisfactory
5	4	3	2	1

10. Give reasons for your answer:

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11. How would you describe the level of accountability at your child (ren)'s school? **Circle** the most appropriate letter:

- A. There is over accountability
- B. There is an adequate level of accountability
- C. There is a lack of accountability

Section D

12. As a parent, do you consider **reporting** as an accountability process? **Tick** () the most appropriate box:

Yes No

13. Give reasons for your answer:

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14. Should there be any penalties or consequences when schools do not meet expectations? **Tick ()** the most appropriate box:

Yes No

15. Give reasons for your answer:

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16. If you answered ‘Yes’, what should those penalties or consequences be?

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17. Any other comments?

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Thank you for your time and contributions!

APPENDIX C

HEAD TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Participant,

As part of a Doctoral Degree, I am undertaking some research in the primary schools in the country. I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the following questionnaire. It is likely to take you about 30 minutes.

I am investigating the subject of school and teacher accountability. Your honest opinions will be very much appreciated and would be of great value to the research.

Your participation and contribution will remain anonymous and you are asked not to write your names on the questionnaire. Furthermore, the information you contribute will be treated confidentially; in terms of only my supervisor and the examiners based at the University will be the ones to see the data. As a participant, you will not be identified in the thesis. However, the findings from the research are likely to contribute to the body of research both in Seychelles and in Small Island Developing States and may be published after examination.

Thank you for your time, consideration and contributions and hope that together we will contribute much to the body of research in our education system and subsequently in our country.

Yours sincerely,

Veronique Figaro (Mrs.)

Section A

Put a **tick** in the appropriate () box.

1. Gender:

Male

Female

2. Age:

- Below 20 years
- 20 to 30 years
- 31 to 45 years
- 46 to 60 years
- Above 60 years

3. School Size

- Extra Large- Over 1000
- Large – 700 to 999
- Medium- 400 to 699
- Small- Below 400

4. How long have you been in your present post?

- Less than 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 11 to 15 years
- 16 to 20 years
- 21 to 25 years
- More than 25 years

Section B

5. How do you understand school accountability?

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6. As a headteacher, do you consider yourself accountable?

Yes No

7. If you answered yes, what are you accountable for?

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8. To whom are you accountable?

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9. How are you held accountable?

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10. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your school?

Circle the most appropriate number:

- Key: 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Agree
- 4. Strongly agree

	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Professional Development is a regular part of a teacher's work	4	3	2	1
2.	Teachers report on pupils' actual learning experiences to parents	4	3	2	1
3.	Teachers report only on pupils' academic performance	4	3	2	1
4.	Children are provided with equal opportunities to learn	4	3	2	1
5.	Self- Evaluation is done regularly	4	3	2	1
6.	Decision-making is guided by procedures to use the information	4	3	2	1
7.	Parents are regularly involved in decision-making	4	3	2	1
8.	Students are involved in decision-making	4	3	2	1
9.	Students are actively involved in committees				
10.	Adjustments/changes are promptly brought about to improve the school.				

Section C

11. How would you describe accountability at your school? **Circle** the most appropriate answer:

- A.** Everyone agrees on expectations
- B.** Accountability procedures are agreed on
- C.** Accountability is imposed from outside the school

12. How would you describe accountability relationships at your school? Which is the most common type of relationship? **Circle** the most appropriate answer:

- A. Top-down- Management to teachers
- B. Down-up Teachers to management
- C. Lateral – Everyone accountable to one another

13. How would you rate the accountability of teachers in your school? Circle the most appropriate number:

Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Less than satisfactory
5	4	3	2	1

14. How would you describe the level of accountability at your school? Circle the most appropriate letter:

- A. There is over-accountability
- B. There is adequate accountability
- C. There is a lack of accountability

Section D

15. Do you consider **reporting** as an accountability process? **Tick** () the most appropriate box:

Yes No

16. If you answered ‘yes’ explain how:

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17. Are there any penalties or consequences following reported accounts?

Yes No

18. If you answered 'yes', what are those penalties or consequences?

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19. To what extent do you agree that a) **a school** should be sanctioned /penalized when it does not meet with expectations?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	3	2	1

How can a school be sanctioned or penalized?

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b) **a teacher?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	3	2	1

How can a teacher be sanctioned or penalized?

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20. How would you rank the involvement of the following groups in the decision-making process, in each of these areas at your school? Put numbers **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6**, etc starting with the **most involved** as **1**.

a) Budget Resources											
Parents		Students		Teacher s		Management		Ministry		Other Agencie s	
b) Curriculum											
Parents		Students		Teachers		Management		Ministry		Other Agencies	
c) Staffing											
Parents		Students		Teachers		Management		Ministry		Other Agencies	
d) Students' Welfare											
Parents		Students		Teachers		Management		Ministry		Other Agencie s	

21. Do you think schools should be accountable? **Tick ()** the most appropriate box:

Yes No

22. If you answered 'yes', schools should be accountable **a) to whom?**

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b) for what?

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c) by what means?

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23. Any other comments?

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Thank you so much for your time and contributions!

APPENDIX D

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Participant,

As part of a Doctoral Degree, I am undertaking some research in the primary schools in the country. I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the following questionnaire. It is likely to take you about 30 minutes.

I am investigating the subject of school and teacher accountability. Your honest opinions will be very much appreciated and would be of great value to the research.

Your participation and contribution will remain anonymous and you are asked not to write your names on the questionnaire. Furthermore, the information you contribute will be treated confidentially; in terms of only my supervisor and the examiners based at the University will be the ones to see the data. As a participant, you will not be identified in the thesis. However, the findings from the research are likely to contribute to the body of research both in Seychelles and in Small Island Developing States and may be published after examination.

Thank you for your time, consideration and contributions and hope that together we will contribute much to the body of research in our education system and subsequently in our country.

Yours sincerely,

Veronique Figaro (Mrs.)

Section A

Put a **tick** in the appropriate () box.

1. Gender:

Male

Female

2. Age:

Below 20 years
20 to 30 years
31 to 45 years
46 to 60 years
Above 60 years

3. School Size

Extra Large- Over 1000
Large – 700 to 999
Medium- 400 to 699
Small- Below 400

4. How long have you been in your present post?

Less than 5 years
6 to 10 years
11 to 15 years
16 to 20 years
21 to 25 years
More than 25 years

Section B

5. As a teacher, do you consider yourself accountable? Tick () the appropriate box:

Yes

No

6. If you answered **yes**, what are you accountable for?

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.....

 7. To whom are you accountable?

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your school?

Circle the most appropriate number:

- Key: 1. Strongly Disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Agree
 4. Strongly Agree

	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
1	Professional Development is a regular part of a teacher's work	4	3	2	1
2.	Teachers report on pupils' actual learning experiences to parents	4	3	2	1
3.	Teachers report only on pupils' academic performance	4	3	2	1
4.	Children are provided with equal opportunities to learn	4	3	2	1
5.	Self- Evaluation is done regularly	4	3	2	1
6.	Decision-making is guided by procedures to us the information	4	3	2	1
7.	Students are involved in decision-making	4	3	2	1
8.	Students are actively involved in committees	4	3	2	1
9.	Adjustments /Changes are promptly brought about to improve the school	4	3	2	1
10.	Parents are regularly involved in decision-making				

		4	3	2	1
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Section C

9. How would you describe the level of accountability at your school? **Circle** the most appropriate letter:

- A. There is over-accountability
- B. There is adequate accountability
- C. There is a lack of accountability

10. How would you describe accountability processes at your school? **Circle** the most appropriate letter:

- A. Everyone agrees on expectations
 - B. Accountability procedures are agreed on
 - C. Accountability is imposed from outside the school
-

Section D

11. As a teacher, do you consider **reporting** as an accountability process? **Tick** () the most appropriate box:

Yes No

12. If you answered 'yes' explain how:

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.....

13. To what extent is the reported account valid? **Circle** the appropriate number:

To a great extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
4	3	2	1

14. Are there any penalties or consequences for teachers following reported accounts?

Yes

No

15. If you answered 'yes', what are those penalties or consequences?

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16. Do other teachers in your school see themselves as accountable?

Yes

No

17. Give reasons for your answer:

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18. Why do you think a) **schools** should be accountable?

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b) Why do you think **teachers** should be accountable?

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19. To what extent do you agree that a) **a school** should be sanctioned/ penalized when it does not meet with expectations?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	3	2	1

How can a school be sanctioned / penalized?

.....

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b) a teacher?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	3	2	1

How can a teacher be sanctioned / penalized?

.....

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.....

 20. How would you rank the involvement of the following groups in the decision-making process, in each of these areas at your school? Put numbers **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6**, etc starting with the **most involved** as **1**.

a) Budget Resources											
Parents		Students		Teachers		Management		Ministry		Other Agencies	
b) Curriculum											
Parents		Students		Teachers		Management		Ministry		Other Agencies	
c) Staffing											
Parents		Students		Teachers		Management		Ministry		Other Agencies	
d) Students' Welfare											
Parents		Students		Teachers		Management		Ministry		Other Agencies	

21. Do you think schools should be accountable? **Tick ()** the most appropriate box:

Yes No

22. If you answered 'yes', schools should be accountable **a) to whom?**

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b) for what?

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c) by what means?

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23. Any other comments?

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Thank you so much for your time and contributions!

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: HEADTEACHER

1. What do you understand by the term 'school accountability'?

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2 .(a) What are you accountable for?

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(b) Can you rank these accountabilities in order of importance?

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3. To whom are you accountable (a) inside the school?

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(b) Outside the school?

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4. Please rank these accountabilities starting with the one you feel is more important?

a) inside the school?

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b) outside the school?

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5 a) what are subject coordinators responsible for?

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(b) Do you think they understand these roles clearly?

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Explain

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6. What are teachers accountable for in your school?

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7. Do you believe teachers understand clearly what they are held accountable for?

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8. What evidence do you have that explains this?

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9. What happens if a teacher does not do what is expected of him/her?

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10. What are the structures that exist to ensure accountability?

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Explain

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11. What happens if those measures are not met?

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12. (a) As a Headteacher, what external accountability demands are you faced with?

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(b) Do you think those demands are justified?

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Explain

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(c) What do you do inside the school so that you can meet these demands?

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(d) What happens if you do not meet those demands?
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13. What has been your most challenging internal issue this year?
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14. What has been your most challenging external issue this year?
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APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: TEACHER

1. What do you understand by the term 'school accountability'?

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2. Do you consider yourself accountable?

(b) Outside the school?

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Why?

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6. (a) What are the processes or structures that exist to ensure accountability?

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(b) Do you think that those mechanisms measure your teaching and student achievement accurately?

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Why?

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(c) What happens if a teacher does not satisfy accountability processes or structures?

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7. Who else is expected to provide an account at your school?

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How?

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8. Are other teachers or members of staff accountable to you? Explain:

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9. Are there any circumstances in which you feel you should not be held accountable?

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Explain

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10. Do you have any other comments about accountability in primary schools?

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11. Do you have any other comments about teacher accountability?

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APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: PARENT

1. What do you understand by being accountable?

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Why?

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5(a) What type of involvement do you have with the school?

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(b) Does this level of involvement meet with your expectation?

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How?

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6. What do you know happens to teachers who do not meet expectations?

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7. Do you think teachers see themselves as accountable when they meet parents?

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Explain

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APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: SUBJECT COORDINATOR

1. What do you understand by the term school accountability?

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2. To whom are you accountable? a) inside the school?

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b) outside the school?

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Can you rank those starting with the one you feel you are most accountable to?

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3. What are you accountable for?

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Can you rank those in order of importance?

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4 (a) What are the processes or structures that exist to ensure accountability?

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(b) Do you think that those mechanisms measure teaching and student achievement accurately?

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How?

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5. What happens if you do not satisfy those processes or structures?

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6.. What are teachers accountable for in your school?

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7. Do you believe teachers understand clearly what they are held accountable for?

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8. What evidence do you have that explains this?

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9. What happens if a teacher does not do what is expected of her/him?

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10 (a) What accountability demands are you faced with (a) inside the school?

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(b) Outside the school?

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(c) Do you think those demands are justified?

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How?

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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: FOCUS GROUP OF STUDENTS

1. As students what are you responsible for?

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2. Who holds you responsible for doing what you are supposed to be doing as a student?

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3. How is achievement measured at your school?

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4. Who is responsible for your learning?

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How?

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5. What makes a good teacher?

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6. What are you expected to know and be able to do when you complete primary six?

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7. Are you responsible for anyone?

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Who? Explain:

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APPENDIX J

JOD DESCRIPTIONS

Post Title: Headteacher		
Themes		
Leadership	Administration	Monitoring/Evaluating.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Promoting a school climate conducive to improvement. ◆ Providing leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Proposing and managing a budget as well as controlling all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Approval of staff and using process to identify staff needs. ◆ Establishing and

<p>for strategic planning and school development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Organising Co. and Extra Curricular activities. ◆ Evaluating activities and reporting on the performance of the school ◆ Motivating, counseling, supporting and disciplining staff. ◆ Creating structures for communication and decision making. ◆ Communicating Ministry's policies to staff, students and parents and ensuring implementation. ◆ Induction of new staff ◆ Ensuring effective management of Pastoral Care System ◆ Overseeing the programme of professional development. ◆ Promoting school based action research to bring about positive changes and school improvement. ◆ Developing and implementing whole school policies. 	<p>financial resources and expenditure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ensuring school facilities are conducive to health and safety of both staff and students. ◆ Maintaining necessary records, reports, returns and other documents as required by Ministry of Education and other statutory bodies ◆ Organising student/staff transfer, and admission 	<p>monitoring interval procedures for assessment, evaluation and reporting of students' progress.</p>
<p>School Ethos/Community Links</p>	<p>Teaching/ Learning</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Promoting a positive image of the school and establishing good relation with parents and the community. ◆ Ensuring that an orderly and disciplined atmosphere prevails throughout the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Promoting quality teaching and learning throughout the school. ◆ Ensuring proper implementation of national curriculum. 	

Post Title: Subject Coordinator (Qualification- Advanced Diploma/ Higher National Diploma

Themes		
A. Leadership	B. Monitoring/Evaluating	C. Supporting/Guidance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Providing leadership in the subject(s), area(s) through: -promoting the subject. -developing guidelines, and practices in the subject. -ensuring coverage, continuity and progression for all students. -managing resources. -developing teamwork. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Monitoring standards to ensure high quality teaching and improved standards of learning. ◆ Organising forums to discuss student progress and teacher performance. ◆ Monitoring and evaluating teachers' and students' performance. ◆ Keeping appropriate records of teachers' and students' performance and progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Providing guidance on choice of methods/materials appropriate to the needs of students. ◆ Ensuring preparations are done and are appropriate to the needs of students. ◆ Organising induction and supporting newly appointed teachers. ◆ Assisting teachers in identifying learning needs of students and advising them on strategies for improvements.
D. Professional Development	E. Planning	F. Network and Community Link
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Organising professional development for teachers. ◆ Participating in curriculum development and evaluation. ◆ Conducting action research in specific subject areas of concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Organising, planning with teams of teachers and assisting them through the process. ◆ Planning for and assisting students, particularly those with special learning needs. ◆ Translating national priorities into targets within the school's Development Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Maintaining Links across the curriculum to ensure continuity and coherence of learning. ◆ Developing links with other schools/NIE. ◆ Sharing subject initiatives and pedagogies within the school. ◆ Establishing partnership with parents.
G. Others.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Submitting termly reports on subjects. ◆ Undertaking professional duties of headteacher in absence 		

Post title: Teacher (Qualification- Local Diploma II in Education)		
Themes		
Planning teaching, learning process	Assessment, Evaluation, recording and reporting	Professional development and other responsibilities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Planning Schemes of work appropriate to the needs of students to ensure coverage of the National Curriculum. ◆ Ensuring effective teaching in a purposeful working atmosphere in the classroom. ◆ Ensuring effective use and efficient management of teaching and learning resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Assessing and monitoring students' progress and using records to report to parents and inform future practice. ◆ Maintaining up to date records of students' progress and assessing how well objectives have been achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Contributing to school ethos through active involvement in co. and extra curricular activities and projects. ◆ Taking responsibility for own professional development and keeping abreast with developments in subject being taught. ◆ Ensuring an orderly and disciplined atmosphere prevails throughout the school, and cases of misbehaviour are dealt with promptly as well as appropriately.