

## Enhancing community accountability, empowerment and education outcomes in low and middle-income countries:

### A realist review



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May 2014

This material has been funded by the Department for International Development. The research was commissioned as part of a joint call for systematic reviews with the Department for International Development (DFID) and the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department for International Development. The authors are part of Community Matters; World Vision Australia; and Centre for Applied Social Research at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University); and were supported by the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre).

The EPPI-Centre reference number for this report is 2207.

The report should be cited as:

Westhorp, G., Walker, D.W., Rogers, P., Overbeeke, N., Ball, D., and Brice, G. (2014) Enhancing community accountability, empowerment and education outcomes in low and middle-income countries: A realist review. EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

ISBN: 978-1-907345-72-2

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## List of abbreviations

ASP	Autonomous Schools Programme
ACE	Community Education Association
ATEO	Assistant Thana Education Officer
BESO	Basic Education Strategic Objectives
BOM	Board of Management
CAE	Community Accountability and Empowerment
CGGP	Community Government Partnership Programme
CVA	Citizen Voice and Action
CMOCs	Context-Mechanism-Outcome Configurations
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DfID	Department for International Development, UK
LMIC	Low and Middle-Income Countries
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PCSC	Parent Community School Committee
PI	Principal Investigator
PEC	Quality Schools Programme
PESLE	Programme for Enrichment of School-Level Education
PETS	Public Expenditure Tracking Survey
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
SHG	Self-Help Group
SIF	Schooling Improvement Fund
SBM	School-Based Management
SMC	School Management Committee
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
TEO	Thana Education Officer
VCP	Vidya Chaitanyam Project
VO	Village Organisation
VEC	Village Education Committee
WVA	World Vision Australia

## Abstract

This realist review addresses the question: 'Under what circumstances does enhancing community accountability and empowerment improve education outcomes, particularly for the poor?' Community accountability and empowerment interventions, it has been argued, improve educational outcomes by improving the quality of educational services and the participation of students and families in education. However, there has been no agreed understanding of what is meant by 'community accountability' or 'community empowerment' in relation to education. The range of interventions which, it has been claimed, affect accountability and empowerment, is broad, and evidence of impacts has been mixed.

Search strategies included keyword searches in numerous databases, including IngentaConnect; JSTOR: The Scholarly Journal Archive Icon; ProQuest; UNESCO Information Sources; document searches of relevant websites; keyword and targeted searches using Google Scholar; snowballing of references of included documents and consultation with End User group members. Over 21,000 individual documents were identified. Titles and/or abstracts were considered against inclusion and exclusion criteria. 'Core' documents provided information on accountability and empowerment interventions, and provided data on intermediate or final education outcomes. Other documents were included if they provided data relevant to processes of change, mechanisms, or contextual features affecting whether and how interventions 'worked' (or did not).

At the beginning of the research, an initial programme theory was developed for the overall class of community accountability and empowerment interventions, using a rough hierarchy-of-outcomes format. Evidence relating to outcomes for education, empowerment and accountability was aligned with that initial hierarchy of outcomes, and revisions were made to address outcomes not covered by the initial rough theory. Programme mechanisms were identified abductively. Features of context that appeared to affect the operations and outcomes of interventions were identified through close reading of texts and propositions about context (abstracted to the level of middle-level theory) were drafted. Evidence from a wider selection of texts was aligned against the mechanism and context propositions. A CMOC (Context-Mechanism-Outcome Configurations) table was developed by aligning significant features of context against mechanisms, either on the basis of evidence or on the basis of logic (where evidence was not available). A theoretical model for the relationship between empowerment and accountability was proposed on the basis of the findings. The CMOC table and the empowerment and accountability model constitute the revised theory that is the intended product of a realist review. Ways in which the theory might be used to support practice are described below. That theory remains to be tested and further refined through future research and evaluation.

Implications for policy and practice and for future research and evaluation have been identified. While descriptions of community accountability interventions often focus on a simple programme theory, we have found that effective interventions work through a combination of mechanisms and require a combination of strategies. They take into account factors at national, sub-national and local levels and changing circumstances. Interventions must clarify the types of accountability they intend to address (of whom, to whom, for what, within which power relationships, and so on) and be tailored to local contexts if they are to be effective.

Research and evaluation should similarly identify the different mechanisms that are expected to operate and explicitly gather and make available data to better understand them and the contexts within which they work.

## Executive summary

Since the 1990s, community accountability and empowerment interventions have been advocated to improve educational outcomes by improving the quality of educational services and the participation by students and families in these services. There is a growing body of work examining the impacts of community-accountability initiatives in general and, in particular, on educational outcomes. Several reviews have summarised the state of knowledge in the area of community-accountability initiatives, noting the mixed results that have been achieved, and the need to understand more about how various strategies work differently in different contexts.

DFID contracted this realist review to address the question: ‘Under what circumstances does enhancing community accountability and empowerment improve education outcomes, particularly for the poor?’

Following consultation with the funding body, the agreed foci for the review were: low and middle-income countries (LMIC); primary-school education; a focus on girls and on marginalised populations, because they are frequently disadvantaged in relation to education; public (that is, government-provided) education; interventions that have, as their primary intention, improving accountability of governments and education-service providers to communities and that target, or demonstrate outcomes in relation to, education; and interventions that entail local-level participation or implementation.

Search strategies included keyword searches in nine databases, document searches of websites of accountability organisations, keyword and targeted searches using Google Scholar, snowballing of references of included documents, and consultation with end-user-group members. Over 21,000 individual documents were identified. Titles and/or abstracts were considered against inclusion and exclusion criteria and 140 documents were included in the synthesis.

Sixteen studies were identified that provided evidence of impacts on student-learning outcomes, in India, Indonesia, Uganda, Kenya, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Many of these studies also reported intermediate outcomes. An additional 14 studies were identified that identified enrolment, attendance, retention and/or year-repetition outcomes or intermediate outcomes such as reduced corruption and hence increased access to resources, improved teacher attendance, improved teaching and learning resources, improved facilities and so on. These 30 studies constitute the ‘core’ studies for the review. However, a significant number of additional references were also used, providing evidence in relation to particular mechanisms or features of context.

This review contributes to existing knowledge by: identifying the categories of intervention within which community accountability and empowerment interventions fit; collating the evidence for intermediate outcomes and student-learning outcomes from the included studies; proposing and providing examples of 11 mechanisms through which community accountability and empowerment interventions may work; identifying 11 categories of contextual features (representing a total of 28 elements of context, or ‘circumstances’) that affect whether and where community-accountability and empowerment interventions work; proposing relationships between mechanisms and the elements of context most likely to affect them; and proposing a new conceptual model for the relationship between accountability and empowerment.

The review understands the term ‘community accountability’ to refer to the ability of communities (here, primarily local communities) to hold governments, funders,

bureaucracies and service providers accountable to them for the provision of services and opportunities that meet basic rights. The review has operationalised the term ‘empowerment’ by slightly adapting Friedmann’s model of empowerment (Friedmann, 1992). This has resulted in a model identifying eight bases of social power: *spaces, surplus time over subsistence requirements, appropriate information, knowledge and skills, financial resources, productive assets, social networks and social organisations*. These bases would either be required for communities to be able to hold authorities and service providers to account, or may be developed as a result of community accountability and empowerment interventions.

The report discusses four categories of intervention relevant to community accountability and empowerment in education: specific accountability interventions; decentralisation; school-based management; and community schools. Specific accountability interventions, including community scorecards, citizen report cards, text-book monitoring, and monitoring of teacher attendance, have been designed to address specific problems and operate, at least in part, at the local level. Decentralisation may be relevant to community accountability and empowerment because it empowers local communities directly, or because it establishes a context in which it is easier for local communities to hold (closer) levels of government to account. School-based management is a particular form of decentralisation in which various decision-making powers and forms of budgetary control are devolved to school level. Types of school-based management in which parents hold control, or share control with school staff, may strengthen accountability of staff to communities. Community schools are a relatively common response to shortages of education provision, often involve significant control by community members, and are sometimes integrated into government strategies for expanding education access and improving accountability. Given the focus of the review, decentralisation, school-based management and community schools were only included where they explicitly involved elements of community accountability and empowerment.

The review proposes and provides examples of 11 mechanisms through which community accountability and empowerment interventions work.

1. *Eyes and ears*: in which community members act as local-data collectors for monitoring purposes, forwarding information to another party, which has the authority to act. The outcome of this mechanism is the action taken by the party that receives the information.
2. *Carrots and sticks*: in which actors respond to actual application of rewards or sanctions.
3. *Big brother is watching*: in which actors respond in anticipation of the application of rewards or sanctions.
4. *The power to hire and fire*: in which a direct, employment-based accountability relationship is established between an SMC and school staff.
5. *Increasing community capacity*: in which provision of training and ‘learning by doing’ support communities to develop knowledge, skills, and self and collective efficacy.
6. *Elder/Council authority*: in which strengthened relationships between school committees and other local authorities lend credibility and authority to the school committees to take specific actions to support education.
7. *Increasing the capacity of local politicians*: in which local representatives develop an understanding of local issues and needs and increased confidence and skill to advocate for them.

8. *Mutual accountability*: in which all parties to an agreed action plan monitor the performance of all others, building mutual accountability.
9. *Mind the gap*: in which discrepancies between rights or entitlements and actual provision surprise or concern local citizens, who demand change in response.
10. *Our children's future*: in which increased understanding of and support for education motivates individual or collective action by parents to support children and schools.
11. *It's working!*: in which seeing positive outcomes from any action operates as a positive feedback loop motivating further action.

The review identifies 13 categories of features of context that appear to affect whether, and which, mechanisms operate, and/or whether interventions operate as intended, and provides 30 specific propositions in which community accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to generate improved education outcomes.

1. In terms of **the broader environment**, community accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely:
  - to be effective if they are introduced in a reasonably supportive political context;
  - to be effective where government and other societal actors encourage a strong and inclusive civil society, and are inclusive of relevant civil-society actors;
  - to be effective when powers and responsibilities are clearly allocated to different levels of government and to all relevant stakeholders, including parents, pupils and SMC members;
  - to generate improved education outcomes where those initiatives deliberately include and build constructive partnerships and generate shared goals with teachers and teachers' representative bodies;
  - to generate improved educational outcomes for the poor where education-funding structures are pro-poor.
2. In terms of **the education system**, community accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely:
  - to generate improved accountability of teachers where there is neither an undersupply nor an oversupply of teachers;
  - to improve the frequency and quality of teaching where they build on teachers' intrinsic motivation and avoid creating *perverse incentives*;
  - to generate improved learning outcomes when there is a national, high-quality system for assessment of student learning and when assessment systems are constructed to support collective action.
3. In terms of **information and information systems**, community accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely:
  - to generate engagement and improve the quality of decision-making where the state has effective systems for collecting and distributing accurate information.
  - to operate as expected when the nature of the information provided is tailored to the particular change processes that the information is supposed to trigger, and in relation to the information needs of communities. Different kinds of information are likely to trigger (or enable) different mechanisms at community level.

4. In terms of ***de jure* and *de facto* powers**, community accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely:
  - to be effective when powers are actively exercised at local level.
5. In terms of **school-management committees, SMCs** are more likely:
  - to hold staff to account, and to be accountable in their own roles, where their role is clear, they have formal authority, and they are adequately resourced to do so;
  - to be held accountable to communities where parents directly elect their representatives on school Boards or Councils, when those elections are conducted openly and effectively, and when there are sufficient parent representatives to balance the power of other stakeholders;
  - to be effective when significant power differentials do not exist between committee members and social norms do not inhibit the exercise of community power.
6. In terms of **the roles, capacities and attitudes of school staff**, community accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely:
  - to engender higher levels of community participation where school leaders (principals, headteachers, directors) actively support, promote and resource that participation;
  - to engender higher levels of community participation when teachers have positive attitudes towards genuine community participation.
7. In terms of **school facilities**, community accountability and empowerment initiatives are more likely:
  - to increase student and teacher attendance (which potentially increases teaching time and the number of students receiving education, which may improve student-learning outcomes) where community accountability and empowerment initiatives prioritise and improve school facilities.
8. In terms of **engaging communities and enabling voice**, community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely:
  - to engage community members in pro-education activities when they engage local leadership and develop both bridging and bonding capital in communities;
  - to engage community members there is significant investment in mobilising local communities;
  - to resolve local problems when local communities are actively engaged in defining ‘what matters to them’ about education, and in designing locally appropriate solutions;
  - to be effective when they incorporate specific strategies to engage communities and develop voice;
  - to develop effective voice when communities are actively supported to develop agreed positions before they are required to negotiate with decision-makers;
  - to generate improved outcomes when communities present their views in constructive and culturally appropriate ways.
9. In terms of **engaging service providers and officials**, community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely:
  - to engage fearful, or otherwise reluctant, service providers and officials in collaborative processes if they leverage existing social capital;

10. In terms of the **roles of external organisations and catalysts**, community accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely:
  - to change local power relationships if they are actively facilitated by external organisations or catalysts.
11. In terms of **capacities of local communities**, community accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely:
  - to be effective where adult community members are literate and/or where adult literacy initiatives or other strategies are integrated into the initiative;
  - to involve and empower communities they actively develop the capacity and confidence of community members;
  - to engage parents when they take into account social norms, parental resources and parents' intrinsic motivations.
12. In terms of **gender**, community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely:
  - to empower women and girls and generate improved learning outcomes for girls when specific barriers, including cultural barriers, to their participation are understood and addressed.
13. In terms of **sustainability**, community accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely:
  - to be effective when they are both sustained and sustainable.

While evidence is available to support the influence of each of these propositions, at least in some contexts, there is not clear evidence to support linkages with either the mechanisms described above, or the features of empowerment and accountability defined in the earliest stages of the review. The next stage of the review, therefore, tentatively proposes two further theoretical contributions. The first of these relates to the nature of the relationship between accountability and empowerment, while the second proposes relationships because the key features of context (described above) and the elements of the empowerment model.

Reflections on the nature of the evidence examined here establish some boundaries around the portability of the analysis. Almost all the interventions focused on rural areas and it should not be assumed that mechanisms that fire in small rural communities will work as effectively in large cities. It is likely that many interventions operated in small schools with multi-grade classes, which may have enabled some kinds of interventions, but may concurrently have made learning-outcome improvements harder to achieve. Relatively few deliberately addressed inclusion of the most disadvantaged population groups or disaggregated the results to examine differential impacts for the poor, or for girls. Very few addressed problematic aspects of community or fear of reprisals for community members. Finally, and importantly both for this review and for its policy implications, relatively few collected the kinds of information that allow careful examination of processes of change and the impacts of context on change processes.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations for policy and practice, and for evaluation and research.

1. There is value in considering community-accountability and empowerment interventions in the education domain.
2. Planning for community accountability interventions needs to address the different types of accountability involved.

3. Planning needs to articulate the theory of change, identifying the different elements that need to be in place for the multiple mechanisms needed to achieve outcomes, and taking into account contextually appropriate variations.
4. Accountability and empowerment interventions need to be adapted to local contexts and conditions.
5. Selecting (or designing) interventions for particular contexts should be an iterative process, starting at a broad level and gradually becoming more detailed and refined. Refinement and adaptation should continue throughout implementation.
6. Evaluation and research should take account of and test the theory of change for the intervention, and variations in response and outcome across contexts.
7. Evaluation and research should include attention to identifying and understanding barriers to engagement in accountability interventions and how these might be overcome.
8. Research teams need to be constituted in such a way as to provide the necessary skills, and research designs need to be structured to take account of the variety of data required.
9. Researchers and research commissioners should ensure that detailed information about studies is available to later researchers, including access to detailed reports and datasets, to enable secondary analysis.

# 1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, community-accountability and empowerment interventions have been advocated to improve educational outcomes by improving the quality of educational services and the participation by students and families in these services. In many cases, these initiatives have been part of a broad focus on rights-based development.

The accountability in these interventions refers to the relationship between the State and the community in terms of the transparency of decision making, answerability (the requirement to justify decisions) and enforceability/ability to sanction (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008). Community accountability can also involve questioning the standards to which public organisations are held, and the extent to which these are responsive to the needs of the community (Joshi 2010). Voice—processes by which the community may express preferences and opinions—is, therefore, an important component of these initiatives. Citizens' Voice and Accountability initiatives have become increasingly important since the 1990s (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008).

Three motivating factors for community-accountability initiatives have been identified (Arroyo and Sirker 2005): the increasing focus on improving development effectiveness, improving governance; and empowerment. Formal decentralisation policies and the development of poverty-reduction-strategy programmes in many countries provide a foundation for these initiatives. They seek to reduce misallocation, misuse and waste of public funds (caused by corruption or mismanagement) and inefficiencies in public services, and to contribute to achieving stated aims regarding pro-poor development and rights-based development.

Key elements of accountability include transparency of decision-making, answerability, enforceability and the ability to sanction (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008, pp. 5-6) and other actions by social actors to hold public officials to account or to support attempts to hold them to account (World Bank, Social Accountability Source Book, p. 11).

Many different types of initiative have been implemented for this purpose, some by civil society and some by state bodies. These include budget analysis, participatory budgeting/community expenditure tracking, public-expenditure tracking, sectoral-expenditure tracking, lifestyle checks (which monitor the assets of public officials for excessive expenditure, inconsistent with salary levels), monitoring of public-service delivery, citizens' charters, citizen's juries, citizen report cards, public hearings, community score cards, integrity pacts, procurement monitoring, transparent online transactions and e-procurement.

Citizen-feedback strategies can be part of community-accountability initiatives, including: public hearings, public forums, citizen advisory boards, study circles, government-contract committees, and direct feedback (either in person, by mail, electronically or by phone), investigative journalism, public commissions and citizen advisory boards (Malena et al. 2004; Arroyo and Sirker 2005).

## 1.1 Background

There is a growing body of work examining the impacts of community-accountability initiatives in general and on educational outcomes in particular. Several reviews have summarised the state of knowledge in the area of community-accountability initiatives, noting the mixed results that have been achieved, and the need to understand more about how various strategies work differently in different contexts.

A recent document, which undertook preliminary mapping of the evidence base concerning empowerment and accountability, noted the considerable variation in results: “Even studies using the same method (for example RCTs) [Randomised Controlled Trials] often yield different outcomes in different contexts, suggesting that success or failure is very dependent on context.” (DfID 2011, p. 1). A recent review undertaken by the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre in 2010, concluded:

Several studies conclude there is a need for more evidence of why certain accountability mechanisms work well in certain contexts. There does not appear to be any research available which seeks to compare the results of different mechanisms, or attempts to draw any overall conclusions about which mechanisms are the most effective and why. Rather, the available evidence is mainly in the form of reviews of the outcomes of specific mechanisms, in specific cases (GSDRC 2010, p. 1).

Agarwal et al.’s review of social accountability in World Bank Operations (2009) highlighted a number of successful and unsuccessful initiatives. They identified a number of lessons on designing and implementing effective social accountability. The specific tool used was seen as less important than who was involved and how (in terms of underlying principles and values) they were involved: “Social accountability is as much about changing mentalities, building relationships, and developing capacities as it is about technical tools” (p. 6).

Agarwal et al. (2009) concluded that it is important to pay attention to understanding stakeholders and existing power relations, to identify supporters and build coalitions between stakeholders in order to create a *critical mass* or *tipping point*. Using both sanctions (for example, public shaming) and positive incentives (for example, public recognition) together was seen as effective. The quality and accessibility of information provided was seen as a ‘key determinant of the success of social accountability’. Finally, accountability interventions needed to avoid ‘elite capture’ by focusing on engaging the marginalised and the weak.

A 2008 review undertaken by the Overseas Development Institute for the Evaluation Core Group (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and UK), analysed 90 community-voice and accountability interventions in ten countries, and five case studies undertaken in five different countries (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008). While they found examples of positive impact from the interventions, these were mostly at the level of changes in behaviour and practice ‘especially in terms of raising citizen awareness, empowering certain marginalised groups, and encouraging state officials’ (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008, p. v). They found difficulties in scaling-up and sustaining the initiatives and inappropriately high expectations about the time needed to achieve change. They also found problems with the theory of change underpinning the interventions, which were understood to work as follows:

[I]ncreasing citizens’ voice will make public institutions more responsive to citizens’ needs and demands and thereby more accountable for their actions. This combination of voice and accountability will in turn i) generate outcomes that will directly contribute to broad developmental outcomes, such as the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals]; or ii) will have considerable influence on other (intermediate) factors believed to impact poverty reduction and other broad development objectives. (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008, p. ix).

The ‘misguided assumptions’ they identified as underpinning this theory of change were:

- “An assumed automatic relationship between enhanced citizens’ voice and improved government accountability.

- An assumption that citizens' voice represents the interests, needs and demands of a homogeneous "people"
- An assumption that more effective and efficient institutions will naturally be more transparent, responsive and, ultimately, accountable.
- A related assumption that CVA interventions can be supported via a traditional focus on capacity building of formal institutions.
- An assumption that democracy leads to improved developmental outcomes (including poverty reduction)" (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008, p. xi).

Bruns et al.'s (2011) review of the effectiveness of information for accountability at the school level described three main channels by which this information could be expected to contribute to improved learning outcomes—by increasing choice (where parents had options about where to send children to school), by improving and increasing parents' participation in schools, and by increasing voice and enabling parents to lobby governments for improved services.

A preliminary review of the literature suggested multiple mechanisms (in the realist sense of the term) through which empowerment and community accountability may contribute to improved learning outcomes, and these were included within the 'initial rough theory' for the review, drafted as part of the protocol (See Appendix 2).

The existing literature also identifies elements of context that affect these mechanisms either positively (that is, enabling positive mechanisms to fire) or negatively (that is, preventing positive mechanisms from firing or enabling mechanisms that generate undesirable outcomes to fire). Aspects of context that can operate positively include reciprocal strengths in civil society and state structures (for example, capacity for voice on the part of civil society must be matched by capacity for accountability on the part of state structures) and for adequate channels of communication between these (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008); adequate resourcing and 'absorptive capacity' for civil society organisations (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008) systematic capacity building for local committees alongside support, guidance and materials for teachers (Glassman et al. 2007); citizen belief in the efficacy of interventions (Banerjee et al. 2008) equitable participation in consultation and decision-making processes (see, for example, Rose 2003, Condy 1998); the role of local non-government organisations (NGOs) and co-ordination and timeliness in responding to complaints (World Bank Social Accountability Source Book, 2004). Aspects that can operate negatively include power imbalances between communities and teachers (Banerjee et al. 2008) and the absence of positive features just described. Differences in communities (Bray 2003) and in the roles of local NGOs (see, for example, Miller-Grandvaux et al. 2002) may operate positively or negatively.

This review contributes to existing knowledge in six ways.

- It identifies the broad categories of intervention that might be classified as community-accountability and empowerment interventions.
- It collates the evidence for intermediate outcomes and student-learning outcomes from the included studies.
- It proposes and provides examples of 11 discrete mechanisms through which community-accountability and empowerment interventions may work.
- It identifies 11 categories of contextual features (representing a total of 28 elements of context, or 'circumstances'), which affect whether and where community-accountability and empowerment interventions work.

- It proposes relationships between mechanisms and the elements of context most likely to affect them.
- It proposes a new conceptual model for the relationship between accountability and empowerment.

## 1.2 Authors, funders and other users of the review

The review has been funded by DfID as part of a joint call with 3IE and AusAid for systematic reviews of evidence in relation to a number of matters of policy interest. The three funding bodies compiled a list of potential questions for which research teams could tender.

The review team comprises members who share interests both in the content of the review (international development, governance and accountability, empowerment, and education) and in the review methodology (realist synthesis). Members are drawn from a major NGO involved in community accountability and education interventions in low and middle-income countries (LMIC); academics with backgrounds and interests in international development and education; and a researcher with particular expertise in realist.

Realist synthesis has been selected as the appropriate methodology because it is specifically designed for use in relation to complex and varied interventions applied across multiple contexts, and for investigating questions requiring depth of understanding rather than a *verdict* on a family of programmes. Because it provides depth of understanding of how programmes work and the contexts in which they work, the product of a realist review can be used to select appropriate interventions for particular circumstances or to refine interventions for different contexts.

It is anticipated that the outcomes of the review will be used:

- by funding bodies, in relation to funding-allocation decisions for accountability initiatives and/or strategies to improve education outcomes that may require accountability components; these include both donors and in-country governments, including national and state/provincial education departments and central agencies with responsibility for social-accountability initiatives or processes;
- by policy staff in government and NGOs to refine policies and programmes that seek to improve accountability to communities and/or education outcomes;
- by programme-implementation staff in government and NGOs, to refine interventions to improve their effectiveness in diverse contexts.

## 1.3 Review question

This realist review seeks to address the question: 'Under what circumstances does enhancing community accountability and empowerment improve education outcomes, particularly for the poor?'

Following consultation with the funding body for the review (the DfID), the agreed foci for the review were:

- LMICs, because these countries are where the greatest populations of poor and very poor people in the world reside;
- primary-school education, because the Millennium Development Goals specify ability for all children to complete primary school as the goal for 2015;

- within primary-school education, a focus on girls and on marginalised populations, because current evidence suggests that they are frequently disadvantaged in relation to education;
- public (that is, government-provided) education in the first instance, because this is the domain for which governments are most directly accountable. However, other providers of primary education are not excluded from the review, especially where they provide services for poor children (for example, through scholarships);
- interventions which have, as their primary intention, the improvement of the accountability of governments and education-service providers to communities and that target, or demonstrate outcomes in relation to, education.

Empowerment of communities is both a likely process within, and a likely outcome of, accountability-related interventions. In such cases, empowerment may itself generate impacts on education separately from those generated by accountability, and these processes and outcomes are within the scope of this review. However, there is a wide range of interventions that can empower communities and that may impact on education, which bears no relationship to the accountability of governments and service providers to local communities. These are outside the scope of this review;

- interventions that entail local-level participation or implementation, because education is ultimately delivered at local level and that is the level at which improved education outcomes must be generated.

There are a number of approaches to social accountability that operate at the political level (for example, national governments towards the broad citizenry) and/or which entail horizontal accountability (involving accountabilities, checks and balances between the political, bureaucratic and judicial arms of government). While these may improve education outcomes and remain within the scope of this report insofar as they do, they are less likely to target education specifically, less likely to involve local stakeholders across a wide range of communities, and less likely to tackle some local barriers to improved education outcomes. Priority is, therefore, afforded to interventions which require local participation.

#### 1.4 Definitional and conceptual issues

Each of the key terms in the review question—for example, community accountability, empowerment, education outcomes and the poor—are interpreted in a variety of ways in the literature.

##### 1.4.1 Community accountability

For the purposes of this study, we understand the term ‘community accountability’ to refer to the ability of communities (and, for the purposes of this review, primarily local communities) to hold governments, funders, bureaucracies and service providers accountable to them for the provision of services and opportunities that meet basic rights. Key elements of accountability include transparency of decision making, answerability, enforceability and the ability to sanction (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008, pp. 5-6).

Evidence for community accountability included the establishment of formal powers for communities and/or actions taken by community members to hold service providers and decision-makers accountable for education or schooling. Following King et al. (2001)<sup>1</sup>, the

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<sup>1</sup> King et al. (2001) applied the distinction between *de jure* (in law) and *de facto* (in fact) to school autonomy.

establishment of formal powers might be termed ‘*de jure* accountability’, while enacting those powers might be termed ‘*de facto* accountability’.<sup>2</sup> Decision makers could be teachers, principals or other school staff; SMCs, Councils or Boards; Local or Village Education Committees (VECs); regional, state or national bureaucracies; or local, regional or national politicians.

Individual community members may exercise voice, but formal accountability requires community structures or agreed processes. To be defined as ‘community’ groups, such structures were required to involve parents, children/students, and/or community members who were not otherwise involved in the school. In most cases, these groups were SMCs, VECs, and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). In a few cases, they were local or village processes (for example, meetings or planning workshops) or structures (for example, village councils), which collect and express village views, resolutions or decisions in relation to education.

It should be noted, therefore, that structures at local level—in particular, SMCs, PTAs and VECs—might hold others to account, or themselves be held to account by community members through other processes.

Within the scope of this review, therefore, are:

- Policies, procedures or laws introduced by governments, which are designed to increase accountability of service providers and decision makers to communities, for example:
  - provision of information to communities by government agencies, for example, relating to school-budget allocations and amounts received;
  - policies requiring community participation in planning and reports by schools back to communities;
  - policies establishing SMCs or VECs with the authority to require accountability from school staff.
- Projects or programmes implemented or facilitated by NGOs and international development agencies, which are designed to empower communities to hold decision makers accountable.

For some authors, accountability is a mechanism that builds community participation through which school based management (SBM) may improve education outcomes. Patrinos et al. (2007) suggested that: “The second way in which SBM can theoretically change educational outcomes is by promoting more involvement by the community and parents in the school, and by holding accountable and monitoring those making decisions about school management.” (p. 5)

Patrinos et al. (2007) suggested that the nature of formal structures for parent engagement, the influence parents have in decision making, and changes in accounting, data systems and school climate will need to be investigated, in order to assess whether or not accountability is at play.

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<sup>2</sup> Community members might also exert pressure on service providers and decision makers in the absence of formal answerability, enforceability or the ability to sanction. This constitutes voice, but not accountability per se. Voice does not necessarily increase accountability of governments or institutions (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008, p. xi).

#### 1.4.2 Education outcomes

The right to education is established in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While the precise and locally appropriate application of the right to education will depend on the context, General Comment 13 on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights prescribes that ‘Education in all its forms and at all levels shall exhibit the following interrelated and essential features:’

- availability (including ‘buildings or other protection from the elements, sanitation facilities for both sexes, safe drinking water, trained teachers receiving domestically competitive salaries, teaching materials, and so on’);
- accessibility - meaning non-discrimination, physical accessibility and economic accessibility;
- acceptability - ‘The form and substance of education, including curricula and teaching methods, have to be acceptable (e.g. relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality) to students and, in appropriate cases, parents...’; and
- adaptability - ‘[...]to the needs of changing societies and communities and [the ability to] respond to the needs of students within their diverse social and cultural settings.’

Our tentative theory of change proposed to use these as outcomes. However, in the process of coding, it became apparent that evidence was being duplicated under multiple headings. To avoid such duplication we assigned evidence to more specific headings. Intermediate education-outcome indicators include enrolments, attendance, retention and year-repetition rates. Student-learning outcomes are treated as the final outcome of interest for this review.

#### 1.4.3 The poor

The review question focuses attention particularly on outcomes for the poor. We were guided by World Bank definitions (less than US\$2a day or US\$1.25), but found that few authors gave explicit attention to differential outcomes for the poor, and none defined income levels. The poor also include groups who are marginalised or disenfranchised in social and political, as well as economic, terms.

There is good reason to expect that poor governance, including elite capture and corruption, will have greater impacts on the poor than on the non-poor. Al-Samarrai (2009), referencing earlier work by Goetz and Jenkins (2005), suggested that the poor “are less likely to be in a position to substitute their own resources for misappropriated government resources”; “have fewer exit options from the government-supported education system and will therefore be more affected by declines in access and quality associated with corruption”; “are in a weaker position in society as a whole compared to wealthier households and this makes it less likely that they will resist and expose corruption in the education sector”; “are more likely to face informal payments to access education services”; and do not benefit to the same extent from services that are captured by elites, which widens disparities between the poor and non-poor (p. 169).

Biases in rules and systems can also disadvantage poor people relative to the non-poor, for example where budgetary processes result in the poor receiving less government resources per capita than the non-poor; where allocations are made by schooling sector and the poor are more likely to attend a particular sector; where examinations cause a focus on better-performing students (who are more likely to be non-poor); and where systems to identify and redress disadvantage are inadequate (Ibid. p. 170). Similar issues can affect girls in

countries that have previously prioritised boys' education, students with disabilities, and other low-status groups.

Because so few of the studies included in this review provided disaggregated outcomes data, it was all but impossible to identify whether the poor (or any other sub-group) have been differentially affected. This issue is addressed further in Section 8, which sets out recommendations for future research.

#### 1.4.4 Empowerment

Dozens of definitions of *empowerment* are in use among development practitioners, scholars and organisations. Often, the term is undefined, or is employed with multiple meanings. Underlying this confusion are the complexity, multiple meanings of and theoretical debates about the word *power*.

We began the review assuming that empowerment is both a process and an outcome. It involves both agency and structure and interactions between them, and involves building the capacity of individuals and groups to make meaningful choices and changing power structures and institutions, both formal and informal, which perpetuate inequality. It is multidimensional and can include social, economic, political, material and psychological dimensions (DfID 2011b).

Empowerment may refer either to individual empowerment or to collective empowerment. Individual empowerment refers both to attitudes and beliefs and to the individual's capacity to influence decisions affecting their lives. Collective empowerment refers to increasing the power of collectives (here, communities) to make choices and influence policy-makers and officials, and staff at different levels of service-provision systems. Given the review question ('community accountability and empowerment'), this will be the primary sense of the term used here, although it is acknowledged that individual empowerment can in some circumstances contribute to collective empowerment.

Collective (or community) empowerment often has a particular emphasis on increasing the power of the various disenfranchised groups within a community. We included gender empowerment because of its importance in education outcomes for girls.

The review team slightly adapted Friedmann's model of empowerment (Friedmann 1992), for use as an analytic tool. The model was initially developed to describe the forms of social power that households required to lift themselves out of absolute poverty. The eight bases of social power in the original model were '*defensible life space*', '*surplus time over subsistence requirements*', '*appropriate information, knowledge and skills*', '*financial resources*', '*instruments of work and livelihood*', '*social networks*' and '*social organisation*'.

We believed the model to be an appropriate heuristic because it deals with social power, where social power is defined as 'the power associated with civil society' (p. 67) (which contrasts with various forms of state, economic and political power). It also seemed appropriate because it conceives of the eight bases of power as 'distinct, yet interdependent.' (p. 69): 'Because all refer to means for obtaining other means in a spiralling process of increasing social power, they are interdependent. Yet, because they cannot be collapsed into a single dimension such as money...they are also independent of each other' (p. 69).

To make the model more directly applicable to this task, the household (at the centre of the original model) was replaced with the local community; defensible life space was

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replaced with the more general term 'space'; and the term 'instruments of work and livelihood' was replaced with 'productive assets'<sup>3</sup>. We later adapted the model further, on the basis of evidence arising from the review, in order to incorporate aspects of accountability (see Section 6.1, below).

In the earlier stages of the review, interventions were understood to have empowered communities if they contributed resources for any of these bases of social power, for example, if:

- information about the communities' rights and entitlements in relation to education was made available to community members in general;
- information about the school's entitlements (for example, budget or staffing allocations) was made available to community members in general;
- community members participated in training or other capacity building to enable them to undertake roles or responsibilities in relation to schools, education or advocacy for education, beyond those required to support their own children in learning;
- community members (as distinct from school personnel or district officers) were actively engaged in processes to assess the quality, adequacy or effectiveness of the school;
- community members were actively engaged in processes to develop plans for school improvement;
- community members were actively engaged in decision-making structures within a particular school;
- community members were actively engaged in decision making about schools and education at village or district level.

Interventions were also understood to empower communities if they countered factors already existing in some communities (such as latent or overt conflict, inequality, pre-existing forms of elite capture or dysfunction within communities), which could prove obstacles to communities acting effectively together to contribute to educational outcomes.

There are degrees of empowerment and degrees of power. Consequently, interventions can be assessed as *more empowering* or *less empowering*. For example:

- The greater the level of control afforded to community members, the more an intervention may be considered to be empowering. For example, an intervention in which community members were involved in deciding the criteria for assessing the quality or effectiveness of a school might be considered more empowering than one in which they were trained to use a pre-existing tool. Similarly, authority to make decisions might be interpreted as more empowering than processes of consultation or participation in planning.
- When circumstances permit, power can develop over time, as both resources and capacities accumulate. Consequently, interventions might be assessed as more empowering where information, training or other resources were made available on an on-going, rather than a one-off, basis.

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<sup>3</sup> These more general terms were in keeping with a public presentation of the model by Friedmann in 1995 at a conference hosted by the Youth Affairs Council of Australia.

- Power can be concentrated among a few people, or can be spread more widely. The greater the degree of inclusiveness, the more an intervention might be considered to empower *the community*.

Accountability interventions themselves can also be either more or less empowering. Interventions that only develop voice are less empowering than those that both develop voice and provide the authority to make decisions, or to sanction poor performance.

However, power itself, and degrees of power, were not directly evaluated or reported in the studies included here and these more fine-grained distinctions could not be made by the review team. In scope for this review, therefore, were:

- policies, procedures, or laws introduced by governments that are designed to increase the decision-making authority of communities in relation to education (for example, establishing SMCs, VECs and the like);
- projects or programmes conducted by NGOs and international-development agencies, which are designed to enable communities to exercise their decision-making authorities effectively and appropriately;
- actions by communities to exert influence in relation to decisions, policies or laws affecting local education;
- actions taken by communities to establish and manage their own schools, whether or not empowered by policy or legislation to do so.

It should be noted that many programmes and authors talk in terms of ‘community participation’, rather than ‘empowerment’. For example: ‘Community participation in education may be understood as involvement of the people or local group in undertaking an educational process or running an educational institution which is meant for its benefit’ (Aikara 2011, p. 168).

However, participation does not necessarily imply decision-making power. Participation is within the scope of this review insofar as communities or community structures do gain decision-making power or sustainable influence in decision making in relation to education.

Because reforms in education are often complex and not simply a matter of individuals taking unilateral action, communities also need to take collective civic action based on decisions made in relation to education. After analysing evidence from many community projects, Rao (2013, p. 275) concludes that there are two broad capacities that communities need for collective action:

- Cohesion: ability to co-ordinate and to manage its own affairs on matters that are relatively independent of states and markets.
- Representation: ability to represent its collective interests to the state and its agents and foster responsiveness by the state to its needs.

Community cohesion and the representation of community collective interests related to primary education are, therefore, relevant to community empowerment in our study.

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Finally, it is important to recognise that *community* can have many meanings (Gould 2008, p. 74)<sup>4</sup> and that the role of community may not necessarily be benign. Thus, Roy (2012 citing Majumdar 2003 writes that: “[It] is naïve to presume a strictly benign role of the community in school governance, without paying heed to the nature of the community groups, the degree of cohesion among them, and, more generally, the oppressive class system of the Indian society” (p. 67).

Therefore, the sort of community needed to build participation in local educational governance, rather than being straightforward, may be 'tenuous and hard to build' (Guijt 2007, p. 222). This caveat about community seems especially applicable in contexts where local communities have significant existing inequalities and conflict.

#### 1.4.5 Empowerment, accountability and education outcomes.

The assumption in our initial rough theory was that accountability and empowerment are mutually constitutive (that is, each contributes to generating the other) and that they would operate as mutually reinforcing contributors to improved education outcomes. We refined this understanding considerably over the term of the review (see Section 6.1, below, for discussion and further theory development).

### 1.5 Intervention types

There are at least four broad categories of intervention that may affect community accountability and empowerment in education. These are, *specific-accountability projects*, *decentralisation*, *school-based management* and *community schools*.

#### 1.5.1 Specific-accountability interventions

There are a small number of interventions that have been designed specifically to address *short-route accountability* or to address very specific problems with accountability and which operate at the local level. Most, if not all, use monitoring of some sort at the local level. Interventions include community score cards, text-book monitoring, monitoring of teacher attendance and so on.

To provide just one example: community score cards involve a staged intervention, typically engaging a whole community in reaching agreement about reforms required for a given public service, such as a school. The methodology reflects a fairly well-tested, facility-focused approach to citizen participation. It uses multiple small groups to develop score cards, a social audit process to gather data, and a community gathering to discuss the findings from both and agree on an action plan.

Social accountability interventions, such as public-expenditure tracking systems that do not rely on local monitoring, and accountability interventions that are undertaken by NGOs or CSOs on behalf of local communities, rather than with them, are out of scope of this review and have, therefore, been excluded.

#### 1.5.2 Decentralisation

*Decentralisation* is a major theme in the educational-improvement literature and is significant for this review for two reasons. Firstly, it is, in many cases, a vehicle that is

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<sup>4</sup> We have adopted a relatively narrow definition of *community* as meaning *local communities* for the bulk of this review. We also recognise sub-groups within communities and use the term *civil society* to refer to community at the broader level.

intended to empower local communities (albeit community empowerment may not be the primary goal). Secondly, even where decentralisation does not directly empower local communities (for example, where authority is transferred to local or district government, rather than to communities themselves), it may establish a context in which it is easier for local communities to act, and therefore within which empowerment may become more possible.

There are multiple forms of decentralisation and not all forms are relevant to CAEs. Rondinelli (1980, pp137-138) distinguished three forms: *de-concentration* 'redistributes decision-making authority and financial and management responsibilities among different levels of the central government'; *delegation* transfers 'responsibility for decision-making and administration of public functions to semi-autonomous organizations not wholly controlled by the central government, but ultimately accountable to it'; and *devolution* transfers power to local governments. Parker (1995) adapted Rondinelli's three forms as follows: *de-concentration* or *administrative decentralisation*; *fiscal decentralisation*; and *devolution* or *democratic decentralisation*.

Of these, democratic decentralisation (sometimes also called *political decentralisation*) is most important for this review. However, even here some forms may merely transfer power from one set of elites to another (UNDP 2002 p. 75). Democratic decentralisation, the UNDP suggested, involves 'truly giving voice to the people', which requires widening participation, especially by marginalised people, and increasing accountability of public officials locally<sup>5</sup> (Ibid., p. 76). For decentralisation to succeed, Manor (2004) proposed, it is essential to devolve adequate power and authority, resources (especially financial) and accountability to local citizens.

Because decentralisation means different things in different places, it is important to understand the specifics of the model for each context. In the case of community empowerment and accountability interventions, what constitutes *enough* power, resources and accountability devolved to local communities to contribute to educational outcomes seems likely to depend on various contextual factors. For this review, only those policies or initiatives that enabled direct participation by parents and other school-community members, such as grandparents or guardians, (as distinct from local governments), and/or provided direct authority for them, are in scope for the review.

Democratic decentralisation is the type of decentralisation within which community empowerment and accountability interventions are most likely to be possible. However, even for those forms of which are in-scope, there is considerable variation in the extent and types of powers that have been transferred or which are taken up by communities.

As Gunnarsson et al. (2004) noted in their analysis of the impacts of local autonomy and community participation on student learning in ten Latin American countries, "[A] considerable degree of variation exists between the level of decentralisation and autonomy stipulated and codified in a given norm or law (*de jure* autonomy) and what

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<sup>5</sup> This report, on pp76-77, argues that, across India, the legislative revitalisation of the Panchayati Raj institutions by affirmative legislative action improved political representation by marginalised groups, enabling marginalised peoples to enter political debates (increased political voice). In Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, two of India's states with among the worst schooling and literacy rates, literacy jumped by 20% between 1991 and 2001.

'Community involvement in mapping households and identifying children out of school was a major factor in voicing need. Although 80,000 schools had opened in the 50 years since independence, 30,000 more were created within three years of the scheme's announcement in 1997. In addition, enrolments of girls and tribal children increased enormously.' (p.77)

actually occurs in schools (*de facto* autonomy)' (p. 5) and "[s]chool autonomy and parental participation vary more within countries than between countries" (p. 2).

Many recent efforts to devolve control of schools from central to local authorities have involved the passage of new laws mandating the transference of power from the center to the periphery. If this assignment of responsibility by fiat were truly effective, we would expect that most of the variation in school autonomy in our data set would be across countries and not within countries. To the extent that the legal environment also dictates parental freedom to participate in local schools, we might expect much of the variation in parental participation to occur across countries and not within countries. These expectations are soundly rejected. Only 5% of the variation in school autonomy, 4% of the variation in participation and 18% of the variation in shortages could be explained by differences across countries in the LLECE data (Gunnarson et al. 2004, p. 17).

The nature or extent of centralisation or decentralisation has a number of implications for accountability systems and structures. Berryman (2000), in a review of decentralisation initiatives in Europe and Central Asia, suggested that highly centralised systems undermine accountability at both central and local levels. 'Highly centralized systems, usually overwhelmed by operational decisions, are unable to focus on strategic planning and issues of national policy. They are not easily held accountable by civil society. ... A centralized system means that the school has no control over decisions that affect its ability to deliver on its obligations' (Berryman 2000, pp. 83, 84).

As will be explored in much greater depth later in this report, decentralisation must also assume a range of capacities and particular kinds of relationship at local level if it is to be effective.

Bardhan (2002) argues that autonomous decisions are particularly prone to fail in developing countries. First, populations may not be mobile, so inter-jurisdictional competition in quality of public services is unlikely to be a source of new migrants. Second, local officials may be subjected to undue influence by prominent local families for the allocation of public resources towards their needs. A related problem is that there may be no tradition of monitoring of local officials by local residents, so presumptions of greater accountability with local control may not in fact be true. Finally, local officials may lack necessary experience or skills to effectively manage resources in countries with few well-educated professionals. (Gunnarsson et al. 2004, p. 5)

### 1.5.3 School-based management

While some authors (for example, Barrera-Osorio et al. 2009) have argued that school-based management (SBM) and decentralisation are the same thing, we have separated the two notions in this report, in part because decentralisation implies a *change* of control from central to local level, while SBM can be on-going long after the process of devolving power has stabilised; and in part because, as we have already seen, decentralisation does not necessarily imply that schools or communities themselves are empowered.

As with decentralisation, there are many models of school-based management. Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009) in their review of SBM reported that:

There are two key dimensions to the devolution of decision making—the degree of autonomy being devolved (what) and the people to whom the decision-making authority is devolved (who). With so many possible combinations of these two dimensions, almost every SBM reform is unique. (p. 4)

Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009) suggested a typology of four models of SBM, based on who has the power to make decisions (p. 98):

1. Administrative-control SBM – in which the authority is devolved to the school principal.
2. Professional-control SBM – in which the main decision-making authority lies with the teachers.
3. Community-control SBM – in which parents have the major decision-making authority.
4. Balanced-control SBM – in which decision making is shared between parents and teachers.

Of these, community control and balanced control are potentially in scope for this review, at least in so far as they involve strategies for both empowerment and accountability to local communities.

As Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009) noted, SBM programmes can devolve authority over one or more activities including ‘(1) budget allocations, (2) hiring and firing of teachers and other school staff, (3) curriculum development, (4) procurement of textbooks and other educational materials, (5) infrastructure improvement, and (6) monitoring and evaluation of teacher performance and student-learning outcomes.’ (p4). They suggested that SBM models lie on a continuum from ‘weak to strong’ and suggest that ‘weak’ models may give school councils advisory roles. In ‘strong’ models, ‘Parents have complete choice and control over public education and where all decisions concerning the operational, financial, and educational management of schools are in the hands of school councils or school administrators’ (p. 4). Bruns et al. (2011) used a three-level categorisation of *weak*, *intermediate* and *strong* to describe SBM initiatives in multiple countries (p. 95). Of those listed, only reforms in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua were described as strong.

Despite the multitude of models and countries that have implemented them, multiple reviews have noted that impact evaluations of SBM remain relatively rare (Patrinos et al. 2007, Barrera-Osorio et al. 2009, Bruns et al. 2011).

#### 1.5.4 Community Schools

For the purposes of this review, community schools and non-formal education (NFE) centres are treated as synonymous. Community schools may be established by communities, by individual community members or by NGOs. In some instances, governments and international aid agencies fund disadvantaged communities in establishing these institutions. For example, Janshala schools in India were jointly funded by the Government of India and five UN agencies. The Janshala Programme operated from 1998 to 2004 and was a predecessor of the SSA (see Kapur 2006, p. 4).

In other cases, they may be a response to the inability of the state to provide education, for example as in remote areas of Bangladesh (<http://education.brac.net/formal-a-community-school>) and in Guatemala (see Vasquez 2012, p. 13). They may also be a response to the collapse of the state as a result of prolonged war or conflict, as in Somalia (Abdinor 2008) or the refusal of the state to provide education for particular groups, as in Iran’s refusal to provide education for Afghani children (Hoodfar 2007). (Iran also refuses to provide citizenship or education for mixed Afghani-Iranian children.)<sup>6</sup>

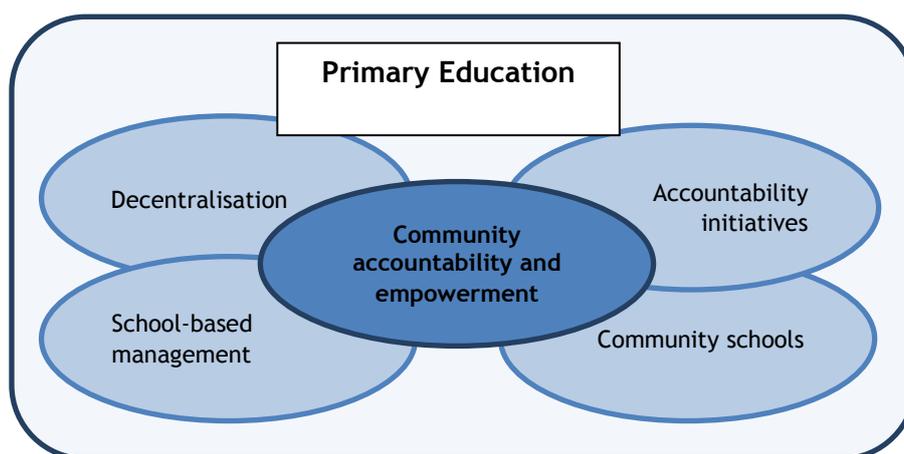
<sup>6</sup> [http://www.sunni-news.net/en/articles.aspx?article\\_no=26929](http://www.sunni-news.net/en/articles.aspx?article_no=26929)

Teachers, often local community members, are usually employed by the school, rather than the state, and may not be formally qualified.

While community schools, as defined here, are not generally the result of accountability or empowerment *initiatives*, some are relevant to this review, for three reasons. Firstly, they are sometimes demonstrations of ‘empowered communities’, in the sense that communities have decided to take action on their own behalves. Secondly, they usually involve significant parent and community participation in management (although some NGO-run schools do not). Understanding the circumstances in which they are effective can, therefore, contribute to understanding community empowerment in relation to education. Thirdly, community schools are sometimes integrated into government strategies for expanding education access and improving accountability. Notable examples include the EDUCO programme in El Salvador and the Janshala programme in Jharkhand, India.

Within each of these four categories, however, only some studies or programmes met the definitions of accountability and empowerment adopted for this review (represented by the dark blue oval in the diagram below). Only the studies that did so were included in the review. Inclusion and exclusion are discussed further in Section 2, Methodology, below.

**Figure 1:** The scope of the review in terms of the four types of intervention



## 1.6 Structure of report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows.

Section 2, Methodology, describes our approach to end-user involvement, search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria and screening processes, and a brief description of our analytic processes. It also provides a brief overview of the included studies and distinguishes between core studies and additional materials.

Section 3 describes the revised programme theory that has been generated through the process of the review. Realist syntheses differ from other systematic reviews in that their primary product is a realist programme theory: that is, how, in which contexts and why particular interventions generate particular kinds of outcomes. Because this was a large and complex review, the theory comprises multiple elements: rough programme theories for each of the intervention types; a hierarchy of outcomes for community accountability and empowerment interventions overall; causal pathways for intermediate outcomes; descriptions and examples of mechanisms; and a Context-Mechanism-Outcome-Configuration (CMOC) table (in section 3.8), which provides a summary answer to the

overall question of the review. Details of the original ‘rough theory’ developed at the beginning of the review are in Appendix 2.

Section 4 provides the evidence of outcomes. This ordering of outcomes roughly follows the *hierarchy of outcomes* table provided in the revised programme theory: that is, *immediate outcomes*, *short-term outcomes*, *intermediate outcomes*, *intermediate education outcomes* and, finally, *student-learning outcomes*.

Section 5 provides an overview of the contextual features that appear to affect whether, when and how outcomes are achieved. This is, in a sense, the section that most directly addresses the question, ‘In what circumstances are outcomes achieved?’, but specific contextual features affect particular aspects of interventions, and interventions themselves are widely varied. A more detailed discussion of contextual features is in Appendix 3.

It should be noted that we were not able to provide comprehensive evidence against each of the mechanisms we have described, for two reasons. Firstly, the mechanisms are a *product* of the review, inferred from the evidence we have reviewed. We have provided examples for each, but resource constraints precluded complete recoding of all studies against the inferred mechanisms.<sup>7</sup> Secondly, the original studies had not hypothesised or tested these mechanisms, and so evidence for them is scant. It would be possible to put each mechanism to the test, either through new primary research or through a specific realist review of each mechanism.<sup>8</sup> An *ideal* realist review usually proceeds in exactly this way, but resource constraints precluded doing so in this instance.

Section 6 provides additional theoretical work, in particular, a new description of the relationship between empowerment and accountability. Again, we were not able to extract data against this model for the same reasons: this is a product of the review; there is as yet no primary evidence to test it, and resources did not permit further investigation of it. It may, however, form a basis for future research. The section also provides diagrammatic representation of relationships between the aspects of context that were identified in Section 5, aspects of empowerment and, therefore, accountability.

Our reflections and observations on the literature and its implications are provided in Section 7, and recommendations for policy and research in Section 8.

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<sup>7</sup> Realist reviews may be, broadly speaking, *theory building* or *theory testing*. Theory testing is possible once relatively precise and delimited theories have been developed. Theory building is required if the theory-testing stage has not yet been achieved. The current review is very broad, and was conducted in an under-theorised area and is consequently more of the ‘theory-building’ type.

<sup>8</sup> Such a realist review would be constructed around the mechanism in question and consequently would not face the same evidentiary restrictions as does this review.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 User involvement

The research team sought to involve people from a range of stakeholder groups, who would have different and complementary perspectives on the topic and how the findings might be used. We identified five different categories of end-user and sought to identify and engage people from each of these categories from a range of countries:

- Education officials in government, policy-makers in education.
- Direct-service deliverers of community-accountability projects.
- People working on research/policy development in education programming, including community advocates.
- People working on research/policy development in community accountability with interests in education.

We searched for individuals and organisations active in community accountability and empowerment programmes, or research on such programmes, and invited them to participate or to nominate someone to participate. We also asked colleagues working in World Vision internationally to suggest people who might be approached to be involved, with particular attention paid to government officials in low and middle-income countries (LMICs), who might be expected to be primary users of the review.

A table showing those who agreed to participate by category, name and organisation is available in Appendix 1.2.

Potential participants were invited to participate once the protocol had been approved, and were invited to provide input at two key stages:

- Suggestions about the studies and projects to be included and appropriate forums and processes for sharing the findings
- Feedback on the draft report

Opportunities for higher levels of engagement were constrained by the circumstances of the review. No funding was available to convene a face-to-face meeting, and the broad focus of the review made it difficult to find a readymade constituency whose members were already attending a meeting. Multiple time zones made synchronous meetings difficult. Delays in approval of the protocol, and uncertainty about the timelines for the project as a result, made it difficult to plan effectively for end-user involvement in specific stages. Therefore participants did not convene as a group, but provided individual feedback by email.

In addition, two other potential end-users were provided access to a draft version to seek their feedback.

### 2.2 Search strategy

The search strategy included three phases:

- 1) Initial, relatively unstructured scan to identify literature for use in developing tentative theories, undertaken as part of the protocol-development process.

- 2) Detailed search to identify literature that could be used to elucidate, test and refine those tentative theories.
- 3) On-going reference tracking to identify the most theory-relevant studies available.

### 2.2.1 Initial scan

This initial scan was undertaken by WVA staff and a WVA volunteer, Sharron Lane, together with other volunteer members of the research team, and was based on:

- a limited list of search terms: Community empowerment, Community accountability, Social accountability, Participatory governance, Participatory budgeting, Participatory budget monitoring, Participatory planning, Community score cards, Civic driven change, Community driven development, Social auditing, Score cards, Community/citizen reports, Citizen watch/Participatory expenditure tracking;
- names of programmes identified during the initial workshop (for example, Citizen Voice and Action, an WVA initiative);
- websites of key organisations involved in or funding community accountability and empowerment work, and of research consortia working in education in developing countries.

### 2.2.2 Detailed search

This structured search aimed to identify all outcome studies of direct relevance to the research question, and was undertaken by a contracted informaticist (Helen Carter). Ms Carter was contracted by RMIT University for the project, and supervised by Bill Walker (a past librarian and the team's social-accountability expert) and Patricia Rogers (the PI for the project).

The detailed search also included reference and author tracking to identify the most theory-relevant studies. It had been predicted that traditional search-term-based searching was unlikely to locate all relevant material—for example Greenhalgh and Peacock (2005) reported that this strategy identified only around 30% of the references used in a complex review. This proved to be correct.

The detailed search included:

Search terms:

accountability, active citizenship, budget analysis, citizen-led accountability, citizen report cards, citizen scorecards, citizen voice, citizen watch, citizens' charter, citizens' jury, civic-driven change, collective empowerment, community accountability, community-driven development, community empowerment, community expenditure tracking, community management, community report cards, community score cards, decentralisation, decentralization, empowerment, engaged citizenship, e-procurement integrity pacts, lifestyle checks, monitoring of public service delivery, participatory budgeting, participatory expenditure tracking, participatory governance, participatory planning, participatory spending, procurement monitoring, public expenditure tracking, rights-based accountability, sectoral expenditure tracking, social accountability, social audit, transparent online transactions, voice, voice and accountability.

AND Schools / government schools / primary schools / community schools / school improvement OR Education / primary education

Enhancing community accountability, empowerment and education outcomes in low and middle-income countries

AND Developing countries / international development / poor countries/ low-income countries/middle-income countries/ LMIC (in addition, searches will be undertaken without the geographic inclusion criteria, and sources will then be filtered to exclude sources that only refer to high-income countries)

In addition to the search as outlined in the protocol, additional searches were undertaken in light of the varying success of different terms:

Search 1: accountability AND (su(schools) OR 'school improvement' OR su(education)) AND ('developing countries' OR 'international development' OR 'poor countries' OR 'low-income countries' OR 'middle-income countries' OR 'LMIC') NOT su(higher education)

Search 2: ('active citizenship' OR 'citizen-led accountability' OR 'citizen report cards' OR 'citizen scorecards' OR 'citizen voice' OR 'citizen watch' OR 'citizens' charter' OR 'citizens' jury' OR 'civic-driven change' OR 'collective empowerment' OR 'engaged citizenship' OR 'voice and accountability') AND (su(schools) OR 'school improvement' OR su(education)) AND ('developing countries' OR 'international development' OR 'poor countries' OR 'low-income countries' OR 'middle-income countries' OR 'LMIC')

Search 3: ('budget analysis' OR 'community accountability' OR 'community-driven development' OR 'community empowerment' OR 'community expenditure tracking' OR 'community management' OR 'community report cards' OR 'community score cards') AND (schools OR 'school improvement' OR education) AND ('developing countries' OR 'international development' OR 'poor countries' OR 'low-income countries' OR 'middle-income countries' OR 'LMIC')

Search 4: (empowerment OR 'rights-based accountability' OR 'social accountability' OR 'social audit') AND (su(schools) OR 'school improvement' OR su(education)) AND ('developing countries' OR 'international development' OR 'poor countries' OR 'low-income countries' OR 'middle-income countries' OR 'LMIC')

Search 5: (decentralisation OR decentralization) AND (su(schools) OR 'school improvement' OR su(education)) AND ('developing countries' OR 'international development' OR 'poor countries' OR 'low-income countries' OR 'middle-income countries' OR 'LMIC')

Search 6: ('integrity pact' OR 'lifestyle check' OR (monitoring AND 'public service delivery')) OR (participatory AND (budgeting OR expenditure OR governance OR planning OR spending)) OR 'procurement monitoring' OR 'expenditure tracking' OR 'transparent online transactions') AND (su(schools) OR 'school improvement' OR su(education)) AND ('developing countries' OR 'international development' OR 'poor countries' OR 'low-income countries' OR 'middle-income countries' OR 'LMIC')

The term 'voice' was omitted as it did not successfully find the concept of voice as expressed in accountability interventions. The terms 'public expenditure tracking' and 'sectoral expenditure tracking' were combined into 'expenditure tracking'

The following bibliographic databases were searched:

APA-FT: Australian Public Affairs - Full Text (Informit); Cambridge Journals Online; Contemporary Women's Issues; Country Studies (Library of Congress); Expanded Academic ASAP (Gale); IngentaConnect; JSTOR: The Scholarly Journal Archive Icon; Political Science: ProQuest; UNESCO Information Sources

The following bibliographic databases, which had been identified in the protocol, were not searched due to the large number of items retrieved that were then screened out and the low hit rate:

Factiva, MAIS (Multicultural Australia and Immigration Studies); netLibrary, OECD iLibrary, SAGE, Project Muse and UN Wire

Reference lists of key authors/papers as identified in the initial search

References on key web sites including:

Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and Pacific (ANSA) [http://www.ansa-eap\\_net/](http://www.ansa-eap_net/), South Asia Social Accountability Network (SasaNet) [www.sasanet.org](http://www.sasanet.org), Affiliated Networks for Social Accountability (ANSA Arab World), Research for Development (R4D) <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d/>, Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty (RECOUP), <http://recoup.educ.cam.ac.uk/>, Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) <http://www.create-rpc.org/>, Assessment, Survey, Evaluation Research Centre, (ASER) <http://www.asercentre.org/>

A list of included papers was circulated to the end-user group who suggested additional material to be screened.

### *2.2.3 On-going reference and author tracking to identify the most theory-relevant studies available*

This proved to be one of the most useful ways of identifying materials. All reviewers identified potential documents by these means throughout the review process.

Searches of all sources were limited to studies conducted after 1995.

Resource constraints prohibited significant iteration in the search process. However, searching of references in included texts fulfilled the same role, at least to a limited extent. The reference lists of all included texts were reviewed to identify further relevant references. In addition, the reference lists of a number of earlier reviews (both systematic and rapid reviews) on related topics were reviewed, including Bruns et al. (2011) *Making Schools Work: New Evidence on Accountability Reforms*; DfID's Helpdesk report on Education and Community Empowerment; GSD's Helpdesk report on RCTs for empowerment and accountability programmes; Rocha Menocal and Sharma's Joint Evaluation of Citizen's Voice and Accountability Synthesis Report; the World Development Report 2004, and so on.

The reference check identified a relatively high number of additional sources that were not captured through the protocol-based search. Of 268 documents initially screened in, only 46 (17.2%) were identified through the original search strategy; of those, only 28 were eventually included in the review. This is consistent with previous studies, which found traditional searches to be a relatively poor basis for theory-based reviews (Greenhalgh and Peacock 2005). The process of reviewing reference lists continued throughout the processes outlined below.

## **2.3 Screening studies: Applying inclusion and exclusion criteria**

Studies were selected for the review on the basis of their relevance to concepts of community accountability and empowerment in primary education in LMICs. Studies that provided evidence of outcomes (that is, learning outcomes, intermediate outcomes for education, and intermediate outcomes on pathways to education outcomes) constitute the core studies for the review. In keeping with realist methodology, some additional studies provided evidence for the theoretical work that follows.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied successively to (a) titles and abstracts and (b) full reports. Full reports were obtained for those studies that appeared to meet the criteria or where there was insufficient information to be sure.

In total, 26,672 documents were found by the initial searches conducted by the informaticist. Of these, 5,558 were excluded as duplicates, which left just over 21,000 to be screened for inclusion or exclusion. Over half of the documents in the Endnote file were screened and around 150 of the 12,000 screened were screened in for further review.

In the interests of preserving rigour, while increasing efficiency, given the very large number of potential resources found and the very low 'hit-rate' for inclusion, a two-step process based on the idea of 'data trawling' was proposed to check that all relevant sources from within the EndNote file had been assessed.<sup>9</sup> The proposed process was reviewed by reviewers at the EPPI-Centre, revised in response to feedback, and then agreed to by the EPPI-Centre and DfID.

The process involved the following steps:

1. **Search by programme name.** Many of the in-scope interventions (that is, policies, programmes, Acts) have proper names, which were identified through the reading of references and previous reviews. In the first round of data searching, each intervention name was used as a search term. This would ensure that all references relevant to those interventions have been identified. These searches (69) returned 38 results in total. None of these met the inclusion criteria.
2. **Search by filter terms.** Many interventions use common strategies, and some potential key terms were identified through coding and analysis. Searching the database of retrieved papers by 'filter terms' (for example, *capacity building*, *social capital*, *community score cards* and appropriate synonyms) ensured that references relevant to those strategies were identified. These searches (64) returned 1,263 results that were assessed and 30 were included.

The success of this process was checked through the undertaking of two random samples from the remaining texts and the manual screening of all of them. Using a random number generator and the record number assigned to sources in the EndNote file, two sets of 100 texts each were selected at random and then screened. No relevant texts were identified through the random-sampling process.

- After this, the authors were relatively confident that theoretical saturation had been reached. The reasons for this were as follows. There are relatively few evaluations that are in-scope and that provide education-outcomes data (this is a common finding in previous/related reviews). The stage had been reached where very few new resources were being identified through reference checking. Some searches have previously been conducted within the Endnote library in order to identify high-priority references to allocate to team members for review. These had identified no, or few, references that pass screening requirements.
- The final safeguard for testing inclusiveness of the sample was the End-User Group. The End-user Group was forwarded: the complete list of references that had been screened in for the review; and the list of names of initiatives used for the search within the EndNote library (step 1, above).

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<sup>9</sup> Realist synthesis relies on theoretical saturation, rather than statistical aggregation.

The End-User Group was asked to provide any references or names of interventions of which they were aware. Additional programmes and/or references provided by members of the End-User Group were then followed up (reference checking, programme-title search and so on.)

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were re-applied to the full documents, and those that did not meet the initial criteria were excluded. Included documents were then imported into NVivo 9 for analysis.

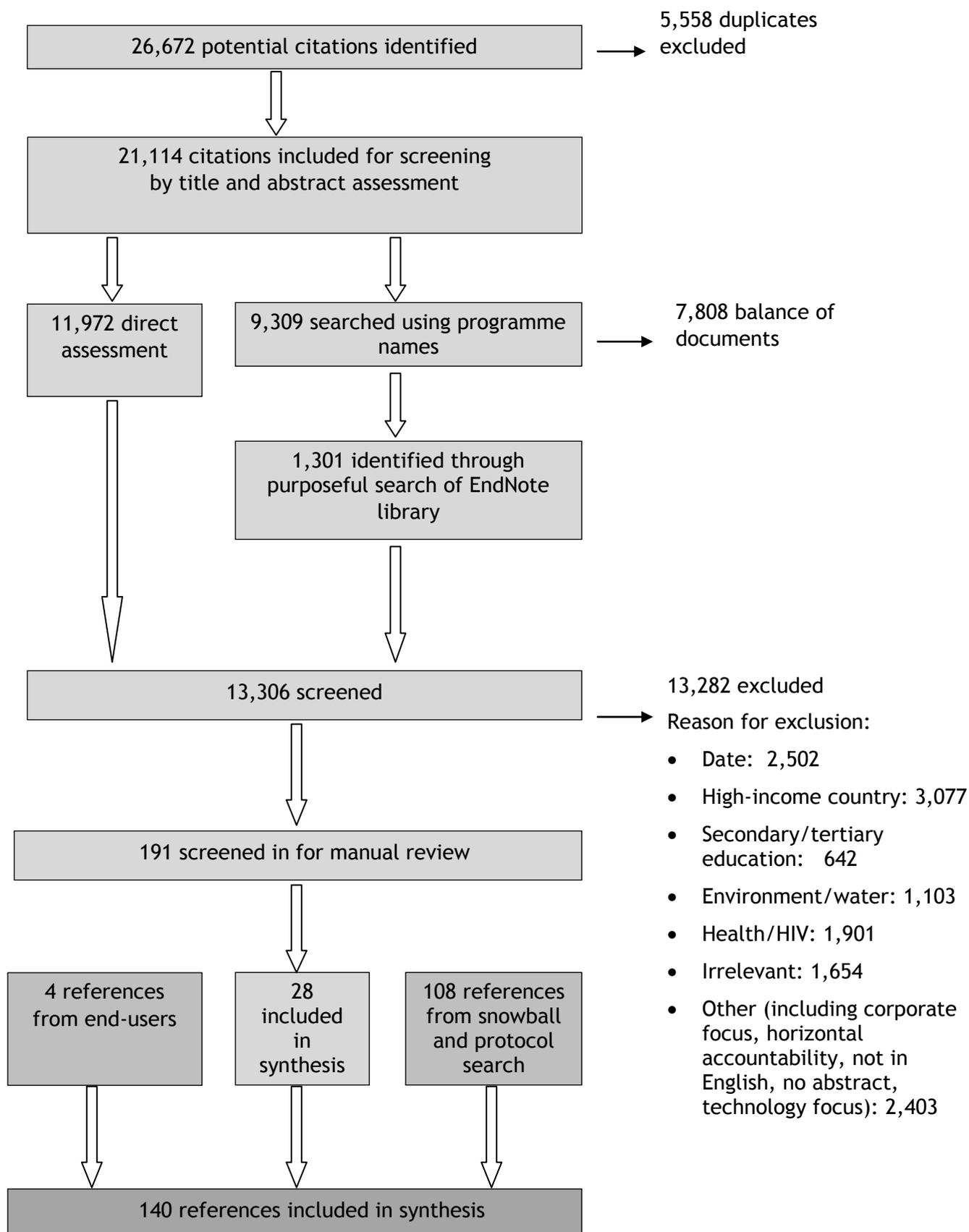
Included documents fell into two groups: 'core' studies, which met inclusion criteria and which provided interim or education outcomes data; and 'additional' documents, which provided information relevant to contexts and mechanisms, but did not necessarily provide reliable education-outcomes data.

### **2.4 Quality appraisal**

Realist synthesis does not require whole studies to be included or excluded: evidence within a study can be included, provided that the methods used to generate the particular datum are sufficiently robust to substantiate the judgement based upon it.

Material was reviewed by two team members, who conferred as required to make judgements about the trustworthiness of data within reports, referring documents to one of the lead investigators for discussion where they had doubts. Claims about outcomes that were not supported by evidence (and there were a surprising number of these, even in papers that were otherwise technically sound) were not included in the synthesis. Weak evidence (for example, claims based on inappropriately small samples) was also excluded. Where we have reservations about the quality of the included data, these are noted in the text that follows.

**Figure 2: Screening of citations**



## 2.5 Analysis processes

An NVIVO coding structure had been developed as part of the protocol for the review. Each team member coded a number of documents using this structure. However, the coding structure proved too unwieldy to use in practice and there were technological difficulties in using the software across agencies.

Two alternative data-extraction forms were developed, a document-summary sheet and a draft-propositions sheet. The former provided a format for extraction of data from individual documents and provided the basis for tables summarising extracted data for core-outcomes studies. The latter provided a format for drafting statements about mechanisms and contextual features across documents.

Content from propositions sheets was then collated and used as the basis for developing a first-draft collation of materials. Review of these materials and repeated team discussions resulted in the theoretical framework for the report.

Evidence was initially aligned against the draft programme theory that had been developed during writing of the protocol. A typology of intervention types relevant to community accountability and empowerment was constructed and relevance to the research question was described for each intervention type. A theoretical construct for empowerment (Friedmann's 1992 empowerment model) was selected and slightly adapted to apply to community accountability and empowerment. It was used to conceptualise the specific ways in which selected interventions empowered (or did not empower) communities to hold authorities and service providers to account.

Features of context that appeared to affect the operations and outcomes of interventions were identified through close reading of texts and propositions about context (abstracted to the level of middle-level theory) were drafted based on reading of specific documents. Additional evidence relating to those propositions was then collated from other texts. Programme mechanisms were hypothesised abductively and through discussion among the lead researchers, describing underlying processes that appeared to be operating in more than one text. Examples of the operation of these mechanisms were selected and briefly described.

Causal pathways for intermediate outcomes were identified in a similar manner and the mechanisms (which may operate in more than one causal pathway) were located within them. A revised overall hierarchy of outcomes that could apply across intervention types was constructed.

Relationships between identified elements of context and the hypothesised mechanisms were proposed, in part on the basis of logic and in part on the basis of implications drawn from the descriptions of the contextual features themselves. A context-mechanism-outcome table was then constructed.

A new conceptual model for the relationship between empowerment and accountability was developed through discussion among the lead researchers, and a diagrammatic representation of the relationship between the previously identified elements of context and that model was developed.

## 2.6 Summary of included studies

### 2.6.1 Types of included studies

Included studies fall into two categories: core studies and other documents. Core studies provide evidence of intermediate outcomes, education outcomes and/or student-learning outcomes. Other documents provide evidence in relation to context, supporting evidence for the operation of mechanisms, supporting evidence in relation to education issues, and other references. It is not necessary for studies in the second group to focus on community accountability and empowerment initiatives: data have, for example, occasionally been drawn from expenditure surveys or from other community engagement in education literature.

While we found relatively few reports that provide direct evidence of improved student-learning outcomes, even fewer explicitly explored the relationship between aspects of context, the nature of interventions, and student-learning outcomes. An examination of the Whole School Development programme in Gambia (Blimpo and Evans 2011) is a notable exception. Similarly, very few explicitly tested the assumptions behind processes of change, but Lieberman et al.'s (2012) study of an information-for-accountability initiative in Kenya and Pradhan et al.'s (2013) study of pathways to student-learning outcomes in four interventions in Indonesia are exceptions.

The relatively low number of studies reporting student-learning outcomes has at least three possible explanations. Firstly, many projects do not attempt to assess student-learning outcomes. Some studies simply seek to understand particular aspects of programmes, and some projects have specific objectives that lie at the intermediate outcome level (for example, Textbook Watch programmes are evaluated in terms of their impact on delivery of textbooks). Secondly, many evaluations are undertaken over relatively short time frames and impacts on student-learning outcomes may take longer than this to eventuate. As Patrinos et al. (2007) have noted, research into SBM in the US<sup>10</sup> found that it took around five years to generate 'fundamental changes' at school level and up to eight years to affect 'more difficult to modify indicators, such as test scores' (p. 13). They described this as 'a reasonable rule of thumb' for SBM. Whether student-learning outcomes might be affected more quickly in low-income countries because of the greater scope for improvement, or more slowly because of the contextual difficulties facing education and students, could not be assessed in this review. It remains possible that some of the interventions reported here that had not impacted test scores at the time of evaluation may, if sustained, have impacted test scores in the longer term. Thirdly, of course, some interventions do assess student-learning outcomes over an appropriate timeframe, but find no impact.

### 2.6.2 Included studies by outcome

This section provides a table that identifies the core studies used in relation to particular outcomes. This is followed by brief paragraphs describing each of these core studies. Other studies and documents used throughout the report are not summarised here. Tables with brief summaries of evidence of immediate, short-term, intermediate, intermediate-education, and student-learning outcomes can be found at the start of each section, followed by a more detailed table summarising studies with evidence of student-learning outcomes.

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<sup>10</sup> The original research was Borman et al. (2003). This (high-income country) text was not reviewed here.

Table 1: Included studies with evidence of outcomes

AUTHOR	COUNTRY	INTERVENTION	OUTCOMES FOR WHICH EVIDENCE PRESENTED
<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES</b>			
<b>REDUCED CORRUPTION</b>			
Bjorkman (2006)	Uganda	Information about funding entitlements	Leakage of funds
Klugman (2013b)	Indonesia	ACCESS	
Majeed (2011)	Philippines	Textbook Count	Prices quoted by companies tendering to supply textbooks
Reinikka and Svensson (2005)	Uganda	Information about funding entitlements	Leakage of funds,
<b>REDUCED ELITE CAPTURE</b>			
Pandey et al. (2009)	India	Information for accountability	Access to scholarships and uniforms
Suzuki (2002)	Uganda	School governance	Participation in school activities
<b>IMPROVED TEACHER ATTENDANCE</b>			
Cant, n.d.	Uganda	Citizen Voice and Action	Teacher attendance and punctuality
Duflo and Hanna (2005)	India	Tamper-proof camera and teachers' pay	Teacher attendance at NFE centres in tribal villages
Galab et al. (2013)	India	Participatory score card	Teacher attendance
King and Ozler (2005)	Nicaragua	Rural Autonomous Schools Program	Teacher attendance
Pandey et al. (2009)	India	State information campaign	Teacher attendance, time spent teaching
World Bank/NRI, 2004	PNG	Comparative study of schools	Teacher absence
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory and standardised score card	Teacher attendance
<b>IMPROVED TEACHING PRACTICES</b>			
Arvind (2009)	India	'Bottom-up' school-management reforms	Content and style of teaching, languages used
Galab et al. (2013)	India	Participatory score card	To be done
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory and standardised score card	
<b>IMPROVED BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES</b>			
Beck et al. (2007)	Mongolia	Local Investment Fund	Availability of student dormitories (nomadic society)
Galab et al. (2013)	India	Participatory score card	Improved maintenance of toilets, improved quality of school meals
Pailwar and Mahajan (2005)	India	Janshala (community-provided schools)	Availability of school education
<b>IMPROVED TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES</b>			
Majeed (2011)	Philippines	Textbook Count	Quality, quantity and timeliness of textbook provision
World Bank, (n.d. / Arroyo and Sirker 2005)	Bangladesh	Report Card on the Textbook Crisis	Availability of textbooks, errors and losses

<b>IMPROVED PARENTAL SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION</b>			
Cant (n.d.)	Uganda	Citizen Voice and Action	Parental payment for school lunch for children
Klugman (2013b)	Indonesia	ACCESS	Support for children's homework
Skoufias and Shapiro (2006)	Mexico	Quality Schools Program	Parental participation in school, parental supervision of homework
Swift-Morgan (2006)	Ethiopia	BESO Schools	Parental encouragement of children
<b>INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION OUTCOMES</b>			
<b>STUDENT ENROLMENT</b>			
Arvind (2009)	India	'Bottom-up' school-management reforms	Enrolment, including girls
Beasley and Huillery (2012)	Niger	School grants to SMCs	Enrolment
Beck et al. (2007)	Mongolia	Local Investment Fund	Kindergarten enrolment
Di Gropello (2006)	Guatemala	PRONADE	Enrolment
Di Gropello (2006)	Honduras	PROHECO	Enrolment
Di Gropello (2006)	El Salvador	EDCUO	Enrolment
Pailwar and Mahajan (2005)	India	Janshala programme	Enrolments of girls and marginalised groups
Swift-Morgan (2006)	Ethiopia	Basic Education Strategic Objective I (BESO) policy	Enrolments for girls
World Learning (2007)	Ethiopia	Community Government Partnership Program (CGPP)	Enrolment in Non-Formal education
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory and standardised score cards	Enrolment
<b>STUDENT ATTENDANCE</b>			
Cant (n.d.)	Uganda	Citizen Voice & Action	Attendance
Di Gropello and Marshall (2005)	Honduras	PROHECO	Attendance
Duflo et al. (2009)	Kenya	Extra-teacher programme	Attendance
Galab et al. (2013)	India	Participatory score card	Attendance
Jimenez and Sawada (1999); Sawada and Ragatz (2005)	El Salvador	EDUCO	Attendance
Swift-Morgan (2006)	Ethiopia	Basic Education Strategic Objective I (BESO) policy	Attendance
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory and standardised score cards	Attendance
<b>STUDENT RETENTION</b>			
Arvind (2009)	India	Facilitated responses to local-education issues	Retention
Beasley and Huillery (2012)	Niger	School grants to SMCs	Retention
Beck et al. 2007	Mongolia	Local investment fund	Retention
Jimenez and Sawada (1999)	El Salvador	EDUCO	Retention
Pailwar and Mahajan (2005)	India	Janshala	Retention
Pradhan et al. (2013)	Indonesia	Four interventions in seven combinations: block grants, SMC training, election of SMC, link to village council	Retention
Skoufias and Shapiro (2006)	Mexico	Quality Schools Program	Retention

Umanzor et al. (1997)	El Salvador	EDUCO	Retention
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory and standardised score cards	Retention
<b>STUDENT YEAR REPETITION</b>			
Pradhan et al. (2013)	Indonesia	Four interventions in seven combinations	Repetition/progression rates
Swift-Morgan (2006)	Ethiopia	Basic Education Strategic Objective I (BESO) policy	Repetition/progression rates
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory and standardised score cards	Repetition/progression rates
<b>STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES</b>			
Banerjee et al. (2010)	India	Three interventions: information re VEC roles; information + student-learning assessment; information + student-learning assessment + volunteer teachers running 'reading camps'	Reading skills Mathematics
Bjorkman (2006)	Uganda	Information about funding entitlements	Test scores
Duflo and Hanna (2005)	India	Monitoring teacher attendance in NFE centres in rural India	Oral or written test, Mathematics and language
Duflo et al. (2009)	Kenya	Extra-teacher programme	Mathematics Language skills
Galab et al. (2013)	India	Participatory score card	'A' grades awarded by teachers
Jimenez and Sawada, 1999	El Salvador	EDCUO programme	Mathematics Language
King and Ozler (2004)	Nicaragua	Autonomous Schools Program	Mathematics and Spanish
Pailwar and Mahajan (2005)	India.	Janshala (Community School); Jharkhand, India	Language Mathematics
Pandey et al. (2009)	India	Community-based information campaign	Mathematics Language
Parker (2005)	Nicaragua	Autonomous Schools Program	Mathematics Spanish
Pradhan et al. (2013)	Indonesia	Four interventions in seven combinations	Mathematics Language
Reinikka and Svensson (2005)	Uganda	Newspaper campaign re: funding entitlements	Primary Leaving Exam
Sawada and Ragatz (2005)	El Salvador	EDCUO programme	Mathematics Language
Umanzor et al, 1997	El Salvador	EDCUO programme	Mathematics Language
Vasquez (2012)	Guatemala	PRONADE	Reading Mathematics
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory and standardised community score cards	Literacy and numeracy

### 2.6.3 Brief descriptions of studies, by region

#### ASIA

**Arroyo and Sirker (2005)** reported on a stock-take of social-accountability initiatives in the Asia and Pacific regions, examining ‘the tools, mechanisms, and activities that were used to improve governments’ accountability in relation to selected initiatives’ (p. vi).

**Arvind (2009)** examined ‘case-studies of bottom-up approaches to school governance’ in India, as part of a larger study of the Programme for the Enrichment of School-level Education (PESLE). PESLE sought to improve pupil enrolment and achievement by ‘reforming government school systems and practices’. The case studies experimented with processes for community engagement with and community management of schools in four villages.

**Banerjee et al. (2010)** evaluated three interventions in India. The first intervention provided information about the roles and resources of Village Education Committees (VECs) to community members and VEC members. The second intervention repeated these strategies and added training for volunteers in each neighbourhood to administer a literacy test to children, record their scores and enrolment status, prepare a neighbourhood report using the data, and report the neighbourhood data to a village meeting. The third intervention added one more component. Volunteers were trained in a particular approach to teaching reading and then set up reading classes for children, independent of the school system.

**Beck et al. (2007)** undertook research into enabling conditions for social accountability in Mongolia, including a case study examining community involvement in Mongolian schools. Two schools were involved in the case study. A World Bank Project Note on the project reported education impacts.

**Duflo and Hanna (2005)** examined an intervention to increase monitoring of teachers in one-teacher, non-formal education (NFE) centres in rural India. Teachers were given a camera “with tamper-proof date and time functions” (p. 2) and a student was required to take a photograph of the teacher and students at the beginning and end of the school day. Specific requirements were set for the length of the school day and the number of students who were required to be in attendance. Teacher pay was directly linked to their (teacher) attendance.

**Galab et al. (2013)** conducted a case study of a community-based accountability and parental-participation intervention in rural India. The intervention involved carefully sequenced processes of building local awareness and knowledge of rights, design of a simple score card for school quality, capacity building and training of self-help groups, mobilisation of parents to attend SMC meetings, and strengthening of SMCs.

**Klugman (2013b)** undertook a case study of the ACCESS (Australian Community Development and Civil Society Strengthening Scheme) Program Phase II in Indonesia. The programme worked through selected civil society organisations (CSO) to mobilise the community to develop plans and monitor the use of school operational funds. In addition, they established structures for privately reporting complaints and, at many sites, developed a citizen charter outlining rights and responsibilities of teachers and parents.

**Majeed (2011)** undertook a retrospective case study on the Philippines Textbook Count project using interviews conducted in 2011.

**Pailwar and Mahajan (2005)** reported on the implementation of the Janshala (Community School) programme in Jharkhand state, India. The programme aimed to build community participation in school management and the protection of child rights, improve teaching methods, and to improve attendance and performance of ‘difficult-to-reach’ groups of children, including girls.

**Pandey et al. (2009)** investigated the impacts of a community-based information campaign in 340 villages in three states of India, conducted from February 2006 to August 2007. The trial aimed to determine the impact of information dissemination on learning and other school outcomes. Information was provided to parents, communities and school committees about their roles, responsibilities and individual student entitlements, such as scholarships, books and uniforms.

**Pradhan et al. (2013)** conducted a randomised control trial to investigate the effects of four interventions, combined in various ways, on student test scores in Indonesian primary schools. The interventions included the provision of small block grants to school committees (as a single intervention for one group of schools), and then various combinations of the block grant with provision of school-management training to committee members, election of school committees, and linkage of committees with village councils.

#### CENTRAL AMERICA and MEXICO

**Autonomous Schools Program, Nicaragua:** The Autonomous Schools Program was Nicaragua’s education-decentralisation programme. Schools had a school council with responsibility for management and administration of the school, sought to increase community participation in educational administration, and to increase the diversity and level of financial resources for the school.

- **King and Ozler (2004)** investigated the relationship between the implementation of ‘autonomy’ in Nicaraguan schools and the impact on student-learning outcomes.
- **Parker (2005)** compared student test scores in autonomous schools in Nicaragua to those achieved by students in traditional schools.

**EDUCO:** The EDUCO program targeted rural communities in El Salvador that met specific eligibility criteria. The program established school-education associations known as AGEs that had legal authority to make school-management decisions.

- **Umanzor et al. (1997)** published the first report on parental participation and student-learning outcomes in EDUCO.
- **Jimenez and Sawada (1999)** compared EDUCO student test scores and student attendance to those of traditional schools and investigated the involvement of parent associations in EDUCO schools.
- **Sawada and Ragatz (2005)** investigated whether teacher behaviours impacted on student test scores. Using teacher-reported data, they compared teacher absence, hours worked per day, and hours spent meeting with parents across EDUCO and traditional schools.

**Di Gropello (2006)** undertook a secondary study providing comparative analysis of school-based management reforms in four Central American countries (EDUCO in El Salvador, PRONADE in Guatemala, PROHECO in Honduras, and Centros Autonomos in Nicaragua).

**Skoufias and Shapiro (2006)** used regression analysis and propensity score matching to estimate the impact of Mexico's Quality Schools Programme (PEC). The programme provided grants of US\$15,000 for public schools to implement school-improvement plans developed by school staff and the community. Differential impacts on drop-out, repetition and failure rates were identified according to the length of time schools participated in the programme and for non-indigenous, as compared to indigenous, schools.

**Vasquez (2012)** reported on student-learning outcomes from PRONADE schools in Guatemala. The programme aimed to increase access to education in rural, poor, and geographically isolated areas and to encourage community participation in school administration. PRONADE schools were managed by parent-run school committees that were responsible for the recruitment and supervision of teachers, monitoring student attendance, and management of school funds, among other roles.

## AFRICA

**Beasley and Huillery (2012)** used data from the Education for All Fast Track Initiative, funded through the Education Program Development Fund in Niger to test a model to explain differences in the outcomes of community participation on the basis of community characteristics.

**Beyene et al. (2007)** studied the Community-Government Partnership Program (CGPP) under the Ethiopian Basic Education Strategic Objective (BESO) II Program to investigate three questions: 1) Why does community participation in Ethiopian schools need to be stimulated by outside sources? 2) How does community participation impact school quality? 3) What are the characteristics of a community that make its members more willing to participate in schools?

**Bjorkman (2006)** analysed the impacts of capitation grants on student-learning outcomes, using the Ugandan newspaper information campaign (also studied by Reinikka and Svensson 2005). Differences in exposure to newspapers (and, by extension, information) across regions were used to identify differences in Primary Leaving Exams (examinations conducted when leaving primary school in Year 7), using difference-in-differences methods.

**Cant (n.d.)** evaluated the Citizen Voice and Action programme operated by World Vision in Uganda, using a combination of data collected by World Vision from 50 of the participating 100 schools, and interviews with stakeholders. The programme provided information about rights and entitlements, supported communities to develop participatory score cards, and supported collaborative planning and advocacy to address local issues.

**Duflo et al. (2009)** examined the Extra Teacher Program in Kenya. The programme combined two elements: provision of funds to employ an additional, contract (that is, non-civil-service) teacher and training of School Management Committees (SMCs) to monitor and assess the performance of teachers.

**Reinikka and Svensson (2005)** examined a Ugandan campaign to provide information about the allocated amounts and due delivery date for capitation grants to cover primary schools' non-wage expenditures through public newspapers. The basic programme theory was that provision of the information would 'boost schools' and parents' ability to monitor the local officials in charge of disbursing funds to the schools' (Bjorkman 2006; pp. 1-2).

**Suzuki (2002)** undertook a qualitative case study of four schools in one region of Uganda to examine how parents' perceptions of the accountability of schools affect their participation in the school.

**Swift-Morgan (2006)** and **Beyene et al. (2007)** reported on the Basic Education Strategic Objective I (BESO) policy in Ethiopia. The BESO I initiative began in 1994 with the aim of improving the quality and equity of primary education. It used strategies including the Community School Action Plans (CSAP). This focused on building the capacity of SMCs to plan and implement school-improvement initiatives and promote girls' education and safety.

**World Learning (2007)** provided an evaluation report for the Ethiopian Community Government Partnership Program (CGPP). The programme provided training to build community capacity to improve the quality and equity of education. It aimed to improve the physical and educational school environment, and to improve community capacity to identify educational issues that could not be solved by the community alone and to advocate to the government that these needs be met.

**Zeitlin et al. (2011)** conducted a randomised controlled trial that compared standardised and participatory reporting mechanisms (community scorecards) designed to foster 'bottom-up accountability' across 100 rural primary schools in four regions of Uganda.

## OCEANIA

**World Bank/NRI (2004)** undertook a Public Expenditure and Service Delivery survey in Papua New Guinea, which, among other things, explored the relationship between school and community characteristics, including parent and community participation, and various outcomes, including student and teacher attendance. The survey covered 214 schools in 19 districts across eight provinces (out of 20 provinces in the country), with two provinces selected in each of the eight main regions of the country.

### 3. Conceptual model

#### 3.1 Overview of initial and revised programme theory

Realist synthesis begins with an initial rough theory and uses evidence from included studies to refine that theory. The initial rough theory for this study was described in the protocol for the study and is reproduced in Appendix 2. It described:

- the ways in which programme theory for a realist synthesis vary from programme theory for a traditional meta-analytical review;
- a series of sub-questions that may fall within the scope of the review, relating to the nature of the problems that community accountability and empowerment interventions may address in education; the mechanisms by which accountability might be engendered, the mechanisms by which empowerment might be engendered, the processes by which accountability and empowerment might contribute to education outcomes; and the circumstances which may affect the operations of those mechanisms or the generation of the outcomes;
- tentative answers to each of those questions, laid out in lists or tables;
- draft ‘hierarchy of outcomes’ diagrams showing potential pathways by which outcomes at one stage of a process might contribute to later outcomes.

Community accountability and empowerment interventions are typically both complicated and complex. The revised theoretical model proposed here, based on the review, reflects this. It comprises multiple elements, each of which is described below:

1. Basic programme theory for each of the four basic types of education initiative included in this review (specific-accountability initiatives; democratic decentralisation; school-based management; and community schools), with brief references to the accountability relationships and the elements of the empowerment model they affect.
2. A hierarchy of outcomes, in which intermediate outcomes contribute to the achievement of later outcomes.
3. Description of the mechanisms named in the pathways. Mechanisms describe processes ‘below the surface’ that generate changed behaviours, which in turn generate different outcomes. They usually describe:
  - a. the actor(s) whose decision-making has been changed;
  - b. the ‘reasoning’ that underlies the changed decision, and;
  - c. the outcome of the different decision.

In each case, we have provided a short statement describing the mechanism and one or more examples, drawn from this review, of initiatives within which we believe the mechanism has operated.

4. Basic programme theories for each of several pathways to achieve those intermediate outcomes. Each pathway describes actions or stages that operate sequentially to generate an intermediate outcome of some sort, but also identifies particular mechanisms that must operate in order for subsequent elements of the pathway to eventuate.
5. Identification of the features of context that affect how programmes work, which mechanisms fire and which do not. This is structured as a CMO (Context Mechanism Outcome) table.

In addition, a new theoretical model has been constructed by integrating our modified version of Friedmann's (1992) empowerment model with elements of the basic-accountability model. This last element is one of the final products of the project and is not included in our revised programme theory per se. It is provided in Section 6.1, below.

### 3.2 Basic program theories for categories of education initiatives

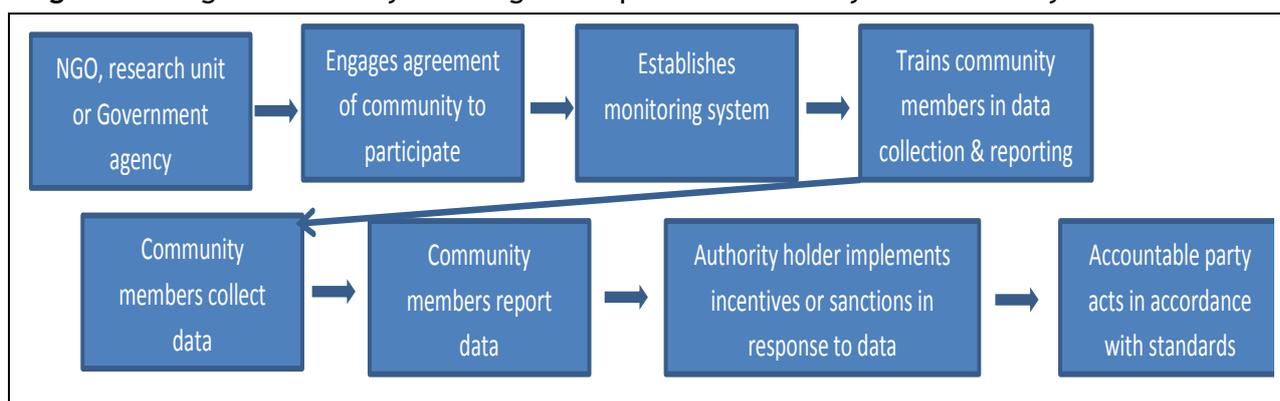
In section 1.5 we described the four basic categories of education initiatives, which (sometimes) work through empowerment and accountability to communities. These were specific-accountability initiatives; democratic decentralisation; school-based management; and community schools.

This section provides very brief descriptions and highly abstracted programme theories for these categories of intervention. Our purposes here are to ensure a common basic understanding of the types of interventions for readers and to clarify the basic relationship between each category of initiative, community accountability and empowerment.

These basic theories differ fundamentally from the other kinds of theoretical work, below. Each one relates to a category of intervention, rather than to the mechanisms by which, and contexts in which, interventions do or do not work. All the other theoretical work below relates to aspects of accountability and empowerment, regardless of the broad category (or categories) to which the specific intervention might best be allocated.

**Specific-accountability initiatives** identify a particular problem or set of problems—such as poor attendance by teachers, problems with text-book supply, or problems with delivery or receipt of funding—and develop a particular solution to address it. In community-accountability (as distinct from social-accountability) interventions, most solutions rely on some form of monitoring at local-community level. Who uses the data that are collected (the 'authority holder') varies in different initiatives—it may be the government, the SMC, or, in rare cases, the monitors themselves. Those held accountable also vary—it may be teachers, text-book suppliers or funding suppliers.

**Figure 3:** Programme theory of changes for specific community-accountability initiatives

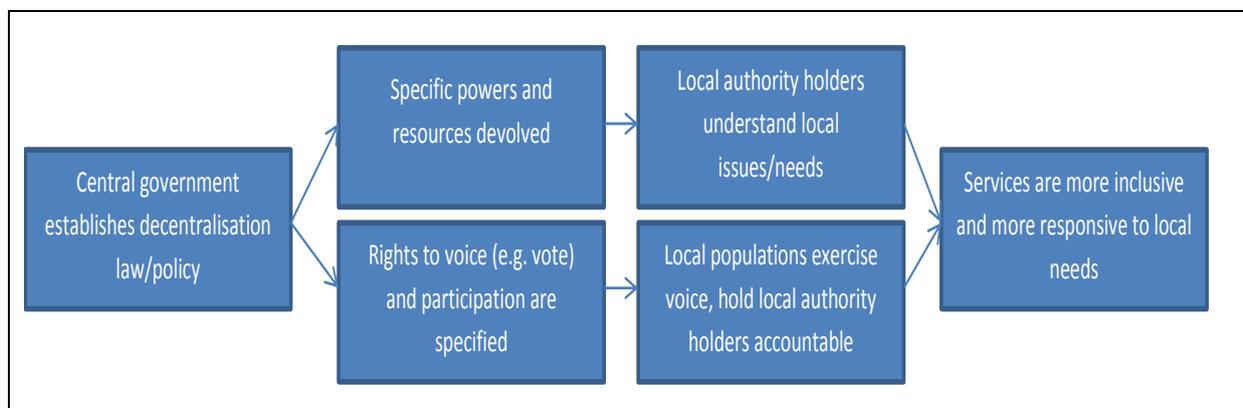


The two elements of empowerment involved here relate to information (both that provided to the community as part of the engagement and planning process, and that collected by the community through the data-collection process) and knowledge and skills (through training community members in data collection and reporting).

**Democratic decentralisation** devolves decision-making power and resources to local levels. It provides *de jure* (in law) authority for the local level—either local government or, in the case of SBM, schools themselves. What is devolved, and to whom, varies across

models, but democratic decentralisation changes ‘who is accountable to whom, for what’. The authority to sanction is moved from the central to the local level.

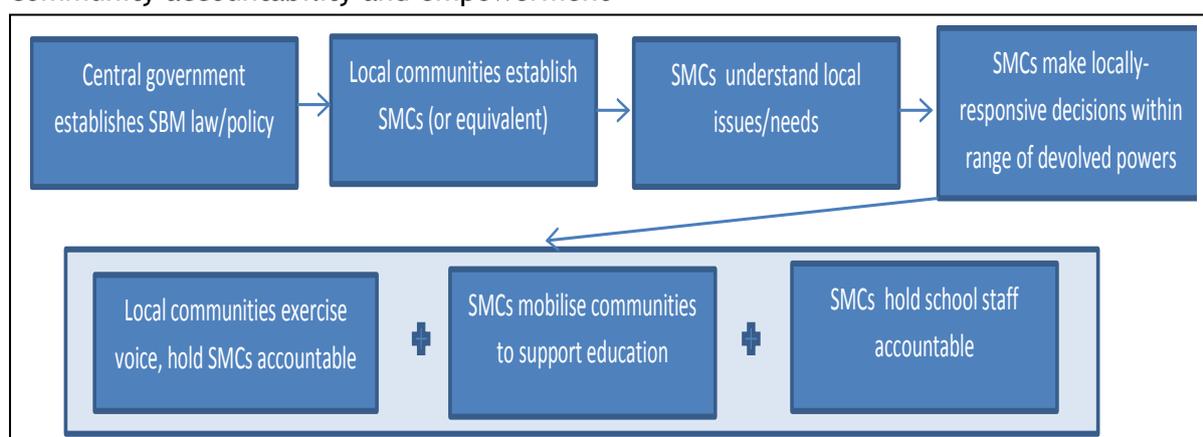
**Figure 4:** Basic programme theory of changes for democratic decentralisation involving community accountability and empowerment



The elements of empowerment involved in democratic decentralisation vary according to the model, but may relate to money or productive assets where funding is devolved, and social organisation where structures are established to enable local voice. Where community empowerment or participation programmes are instituted alongside decentralisation, other elements (such as information, knowledge and skills) may also be enhanced.

**School-based management** is a sub-set of decentralisation where authority and funding for school-related decisions are devolved to school level. In community accountability and empowerment initiatives, authority is devolved to a community structure such as a School Management Committee (SMC)<sup>11</sup>. SBM makes SMCs dually accountable—to the government authority from which they receive funds, and to the local community. It can also change to whom teachers are accountable, depending on whether the power to hire and fire staff was devolved. Again, the authority and funding that are actually devolved vary across models.

**Figure 5:** Basic programme theory of change for school-based management involving community accountability and empowerment

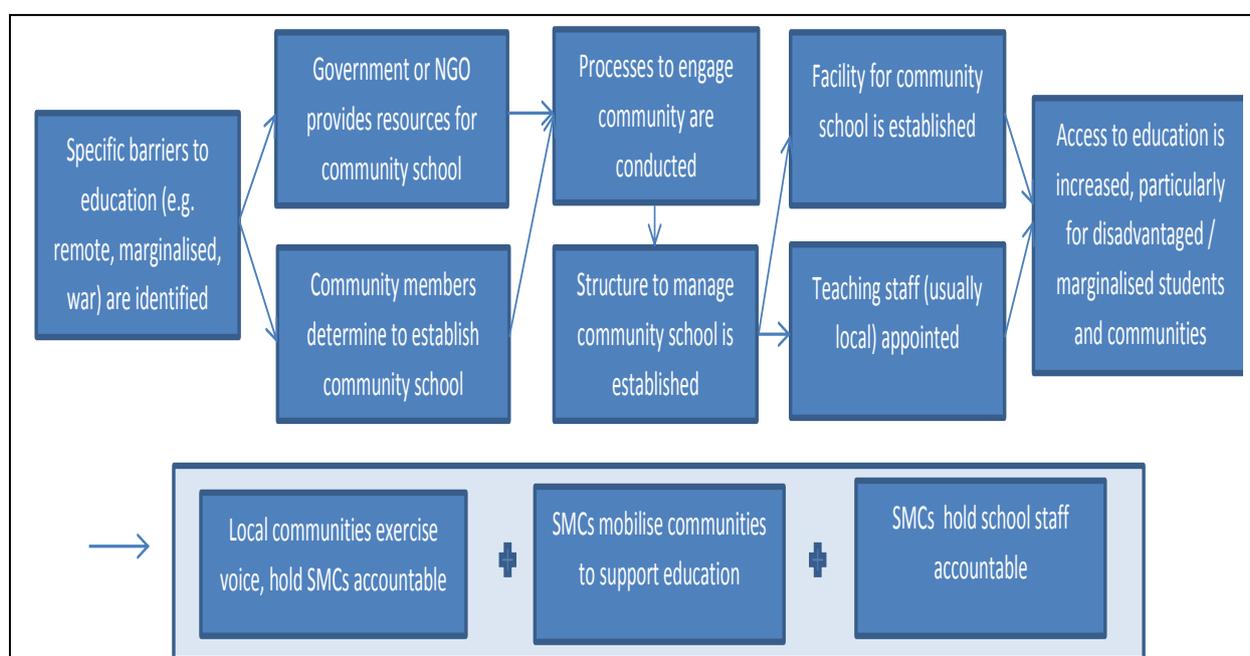


<sup>11</sup> This contrasts with models in which authority is devolved to the principal (or headteacher) and staff, rather than the community.

Most elements of the empowerment model may be activated in school based management. SMCs are themselves local social organisations; they may receive funding, purchase or improve education assets, be able to access information, generate information, develop knowledge and skills, and so on. However, members of SMCs may benefit more than other community members. It is important, therefore, to be clear about ‘who is empowered’ under particular initiatives.

**Community schools** may be initiated by communities themselves, by governments as funding providers or by NGOs. They are usually established as a response to non-availability of education, for remote communities, marginalised-population groups, or in situations of war or post-conflict fragility. Community schools are more closely linked to empowerment than accountability, but once established, share some of the local-accountability relationships of school-based management.

**Figure 6:** Basic programme theory for community schools involving community accountability and empowerment



### 3.3 Hierarchy of outcomes

All the interventions reviewed here are intended to work through a sequence of intermediate outcomes, which should then contribute to improving student-learning outcomes. The diagram below represents a synthesis of the outcomes found in various studies, roughly sequenced in the order in which the outcomes might be expected to be observed.

**Figure 7:** Hierarchy of outcomes for community-accountability and empowerment

ACTIVITIES	IMMEDIATE	SHORT TERM	INTERMEDIATE	INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION	FINAL EDUCATION
Engagement strategy	Involvement of necessary stakeholders	Application of sanctions/ incentives	Reduced corruption	Increased student enrolments	Improved student-learning outcomes
Information provision	Increased awareness relevant to project	Stronger relationships between stakeholders	Improved teacher attendance	Increased student attendance	
Capacity building	Increased knowledge/ skills for project roles	Community structures established or strengthened	Improved pedagogy	Increased student engagement	
			Improved teaching and learning resources		
Deliberation and planning processes	Plans tailored to local contexts	Stronger voice in advocacy or decision making	Improved buildings and facilities	Improved student retention	
Implementation processes	Plans implemented		Participation in planned activities	Stronger parent support for education	

In this diagram, programme activities are shown in the first column and immediate outcomes related directly to implementation activities at the local level in the second column. In the third column are short-term outcomes related primarily to prerequisites for accountability at the local level, although sanctions or incentives may be applied by authority holders outside the community. The column of intermediate outcomes shows the different ‘pathways’ by which these interventions can produce improved education outcomes. The column of intermediate education outcomes deals with intermediate outcomes at the student level.

The final column of education outcomes shows improved student-learning outcomes, the highest level of outcome considered in this review.

### 3.4 Mechanisms

In realist terms, mechanisms are causal forces or processes that generate a particular outcome. The outcome generated by a particular mechanism can lie at any stage along an implementation chain, any point along a pathway, or at any level on a hierarchy of outcomes. The aim in realist evaluation and realist synthesis is to identify the ‘main mechanisms’ that different types of intervention fire. We hypothesise, on the basis of this review, 11 principal mechanisms that operate in community-accountability and empowerment interventions, described in brief below. For ease of reference, each mechanism has been given a title that encapsulates how the mechanism works.

It is worth noting that the majority of these mechanisms (when they work) do not generate education outcomes per se. Rather, they generate outcomes at intermediate levels, which then create contexts in which education outcomes are more likely to be achieved.

#### *3.4.1 Eyes and ears*

Local community members act as local-data collectors for monitoring purposes, which results in a comprehensive and verifiable basis of information. The information is forwarded to another party, which has the authority to act on the information. The outcome of this mechanism is the action taken by the party that receives the information.

Where government is a partner in the process, the information is forwarded to government, which has the formal authority to redress problems. This can include sanctions of corrupt officials, service providers or providers of materials and equipment; it can also include ensuring that lower levels of government enact their responsibilities.

**EXAMPLE:** In the Philippines Textbook Watch programme, local monitors checked the title, number and quality of textbooks delivered to local schools and district office. The Education Department would not pay for the delivery until the monitoring data were received.

Alternatively, information may be forwarded to the central level of an NGO (for example where local schools operate under the auspices of an NGO).

**EXAMPLE:** In rural India, an NGO running NFE centres provided a camera to teachers. A student was required to take a photograph of the teacher and the class at the start and end of each day. Time and date stamps on the photographs acted as proof of the teacher's attendance. Teachers' pay was directly related to their attendance.

Where the party with the authority to act is not a partner in the process, the information can be used by a regional or national organisation to advocate for change.

**EXAMPLE:** HakiElimu is a Tanzanian civil-society organisation that promotes the right to education, emphasising quality of learning, equity, governance and active citizen engagement. It informs communities about their rights and collects citizen feedback on school performance, which it analyses and uses to advocate through mass media for the right to education.

The strategy that underpins this mechanism is only possible where the data to collect are relatively easy to observe. For example, in the Philippines Textbook Count example, focusing on textbook delivery was not a random choice. The problem was real and it was also readily observable. Local people could be trained to check titles, quantity and delivery dates. A later addition was to have experts review the quality of the content of the textbooks. This was also observable, but needed different expertise.

Some aspects of education are readily observable and some are not. Teacher attendance is relatively easy to observe and is often the focus of the 'Big Brother is Watching' mechanism (see 3.4.3, below). However, quality of teaching is much harder to observe. It requires expertise on the part of the observer to make assessments of quality. Furthermore, the process of observation is very likely to affect what happens in the classroom.

Enhancing community accountability, empowerment and education outcomes in low and middle-income countries

The processes of mobilisation involved in interventions that primarily work through the ‘eyes and ears’ mechanism may also trigger other mechanisms at the local level.

### 3.4.2 Carrots and sticks

This mechanism operates in conjunction with the *eyes and ears* mechanism just described. It refers to the incentives that are experienced by the actor whose behaviour is expected to change. When the ‘party with the authority to act’ does act on the data received, that action constitutes an incentive (positive or negative) for the actor whose behaviour is expected to change. The mechanism will only ‘fire’ if the incentive is strong enough—that is, if it is valued sufficiently by the actor—that they will change their behaviour to achieve or avoid that consequence. The outcome of this mechanism is changed behaviour on the part of the observed actor, which in turn generates different outcomes.

**EXAMPLE:** In the Philippines Textbook Program, there was a strong incentive for suppliers to get the delivery correct, as any rejected shipments had to be rectified at the publisher’s expense (Majeed 2011; p. 10). There is evidence that the imposition of consequences for poor performance led to improved performance (see Section 4.3.5, Improved teaching and learning resources).

**EXAMPLE:** In the photographs of teacher attendance example provided above, teachers’ pay was directly related to their attendance.

### 3.4.3 Big Brother is watching me

This is a slight variant of the *carrots and sticks* mechanism. Here, monitoring acts as a deterrent to corrupt behaviour or poor performance, regardless of whether the incentive is or has been applied. It is an *anticipatory* mechanism: it operates because those who are observed fear a sanction if they are caught (or desire the reward for good performance) and change their own behaviour *before* the sanction or incentive is applied (whereas the *carrots and sticks* mechanism operates because a sanction or incentive has in fact been applied). This requires a belief, on the part of the observed actor, that:

- the observation will happen;
- the observation will be capable of detecting the corrupt or desired behaviour;
- the observation will be reported to those with the authority to implement the sanction;
- the sanction or incentive will be applied;
- the sanction constitutes a greater cost than the actor is willing to bear.

**EXAMPLE:** Any monitoring intervention that does not have an explicit sanction or reward tied to specifically defined behaviours intends to fire this mechanism. The evaluation of the ACCESS project in Indonesia found ‘examples of cases where allegations of misuse of funds were being addressed in village X, the service unit [health facility or school] in neighbouring village Y, hearing of the cases and processes, changed their practice of charging illicit fees without intervention’ (Klugman 2013a; p. 14)

We also found examples of this mechanism not operating (for example, Beasley and Huillery 2012).

#### 3.4.4 *The power to hire and fire*

Local community members, working through a formal structure such as an SMC, are the formal employers of school staff. They monitor and supervise education staff and act on the results of their observations at the local level. This operates in a similar way to *eyes and ears*, except that the SMC has the authority to act on its own observations. Relationships are, therefore, much more direct and sanctions and rewards can be much more immediate. This requires at least four elements: the SMC must be composed of community members; the SMC must hold the power to hire and fire and/or to provide other incentives or impose other sanctions; staff must believe that rewards or sanctions will be directly related to their attendance and performance; and the SMC must act consistently in accordance with the observations.

This mechanism holds local-service providers accountable to local communities, but it does not necessarily hold higher levels of government accountable to communities.

**EXAMPLE:** The Extra Teacher Program in Kenya taught SMC members to monitor and assess teacher performance and to hold performance reviews to determine whether to extend the contracts of teachers. Impacts on both contract teachers and civil-service teachers were observed.

**EXAMPLE:** In a slight variation of this mechanism, school councils in autonomous schools in some Latin American programmes (for example, Autonomous Schools Programme, ASP, in Nicaragua) could provide bonus payments to teachers who performed well.

#### 3.4.5 *Increasing community capacity*

Both the provision of training and “learning by doing” (Verger et al. 2012, p. 80) support communities in developing knowledge, skills, and self- and collective efficacy. This enables communities to undertake the roles expected of them.

**EXAMPLE:** In the Extra Teacher Program in Kenya, SMCs were trained to monitor and supervise teachers, and to determine whether to maintain teachers’ contracts. In schools where the SMC training was provided, both SMC and contract teachers improved their performance.

As knowledge and skills are applied in practice, a virtuous cycle of capacity development is generated, enabling new roles and new problems to be tackled.

**EXAMPLE:** Capacity building in Guatemala and Honduras spilled over into other forms of democratic participation.

This mechanism may be required to operate alongside other mechanisms noted here, in many LMIC contexts, because of low initial levels of formal education.

#### 3.4.6 *Elder/Council authority*

Agreements are established between community members in school leadership roles (for example, SMCs) and village leadership (for example, local elders or local councils) about actions to improve education outcomes at local level. This involves building social capital (bridging capital between institutions in the first instance). The involvement of local elders or councils provides both local credibility, which encourages community members to participate in the agreed strategies, and authority for particular actions. Actions taken

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under the joint auspices of the two groups contribute to changed circumstances for learning and/or to changed social norms pertaining to education in the longer term.

**EXAMPLE:** In Indonesia, linkage between local councils and SMCs resulted in a variety of actions undertaken at local level to improve situations for learning (building or extending school facilities, establishing village study hours, contracting teachers) and so on.

**EXAMPLE:** In India, bottom-up approaches to school governance resulted in local elders in a village tracking absentee children and bringing them back to school.

**EXAMPLE:** In CVA in Uganda, politicians were involved in providing information to parents about policies, and, therefore, parents' responsibilities, in relation to the cost of food and books at school. The parents listened to the politicians in a way that they had not listened to teachers.

#### *3.4.7 Increasing the capacity of local politicians*

Local politicians are involved in community accountability and empowerment processes at the local level. As a result, they develop a better understanding of local issues and needs. They also develop a more sophisticated understanding of their role in advocating for their local communities, and the skills to advocate in political or bureaucratic settings for those needs to be met. Politicians may be motivated to undertake the advocacy role on altruistic grounds and/or because they believe that communities will use formal political accountability processes (that is, elections) to keep them accountable for their performance. Advocacy by a politician carries more weight in political and bureaucratic circles than advocacy by community members and intended outcomes are more likely to be achieved.

**EXAMPLE:** In Uganda, local politicians reported that participation in Citizen Voice and Action helped build their understanding of the government system and national service standards and their confidence to lobby district authorities to provide services for their constituents (Cant undated, p. 31).

#### *3.4.8 Mutual accountability*

All relevant stakeholders establish common goals for education, an agreed action plan with clear responsibilities for each stakeholder group, and a monitoring process. All parties monitor the performance of all others, building mutual accountability. Mutual understanding of issues and concerns is strengthened, as are relationships between the parties.

**EXAMPLE:** Citizens Voice and Action brings together education authorities, school leadership, local politicians or leaders, community members, parents and students in a facilitated process to learn about rights and entitlements, establish goals, establish their own indicators for monitoring progress, and agreeing actions. The implementation group meets periodically to review progress and determine subsequent actions.

**EXAMPLE:** In India, bottom up approaches to school governance (Arvind 2009) generated locally specific strategies to address local education needs.

### 3.4.9 *Mind the gap*

Providing information about actual rights, entitlements and provision of education compared to what is provided, and/or about the standards achieved by education providers compared to what is expected, surprises or concerns local citizens, who demand change in response.

This is a fundamental precept underpinning information for accountability interventions. However, there was only extremely limited evidence in the literature reviewed here that this mechanism fires as anticipated. (See, in particular, the discussion of information and information systems (in Section 5.3), increased access to relevant information (Section 4.1.3), and higher levels of monitoring by communities or decision makers (Section 4.1.6).

This study hypothesises, instead, that information is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for other mechanisms to operate.

### 3.4.10 *Our children's future*

As parents become involved in community accountability and empowerment initiatives, their awareness of the importance of parental support for education grows. They also develop increased understanding of the ways in which they can provide support and assistance to their own children. One set of outcomes are private actions to support their children's learning, for example, supervising homework or providing a school lunch. Other parents contribute at community level, for example by contributing to building or maintaining schools, or by supervising and supporting children's attendance at school.

**EXAMPLE:** In the Janshala Programme in India, 98% of parents reported encouraging their students to attend school and 75% reported supervising their homework regularly. (Pailwar and Mahajan 2005, p. 382).

**EXAMPLE:** In the IDEAL programme in Bangladesh, mothers reported that regular meetings with teachers meant that they now understood "the importance of their children's education, regular attendance in school and completing the schooling cycle" (Mozumder and Halim 2006; p. 158). They monitored their own children's attendance and contributed ideas and/or money to implement the annual school plan.

**EXAMPLE:** In the Education for All Fast Track Initiative in Niger (Beasley and Huillery 2012), parent members of school committees supervised attendance of students and visited the parents of non-attending students.

### 3.4.11 *It's working!*

In order for their actions to be sustained over time and produce on-going change, actors need to see that their action is efficacious over time, to reason that their continued engagement is warranted, and take on-going individual or collective action accordingly. This involves positive, reinforcing feedback loops. Some of these feedback loops may interact. Such feedback loops are likely to be complex and dynamic, varying over time in intensity and nature, augmenting or offsetting each other in complex ways, and, over time, possibly atrophying or being actively undermined by actors. As noted above, community-empowerment and accountability interventions may not be sustained (p. 8 in 1.1), while some suggest that school-based management reforms, for example, may take at least five years to become effective (Barrera-Osorio et al. 2009, p. 12)

**EXAMPLE:** In the Vidya Chaitanyam Project (VCP) reported by Galab (2013), parental action in monitoring schools appears to have been sustained by a series of

positive-feedback loops in which parents saw that their collective actions were yielding increasingly effective outcomes as measured by their own score cards. They saw that their increased efforts as parents in encouraging their children to attend school and learn resulted in increased school attendance and learning; their attempts to engage SMCs and teachers garnered increasing responsiveness and, over time, generated the school-quality reforms they sought; and their own observations, recorded in score cards verified that measures of school quality were indeed improving over time. Further, the study claims and provides some evidence that, over the 18 months, this project was studied, a sense of joint ownership of school issues developed, which embraced collective problem solving and action by parents and the school –that is, both parents, SMCs and schools believed that their efforts were effective over the period studied (pp. 28-31, 36).

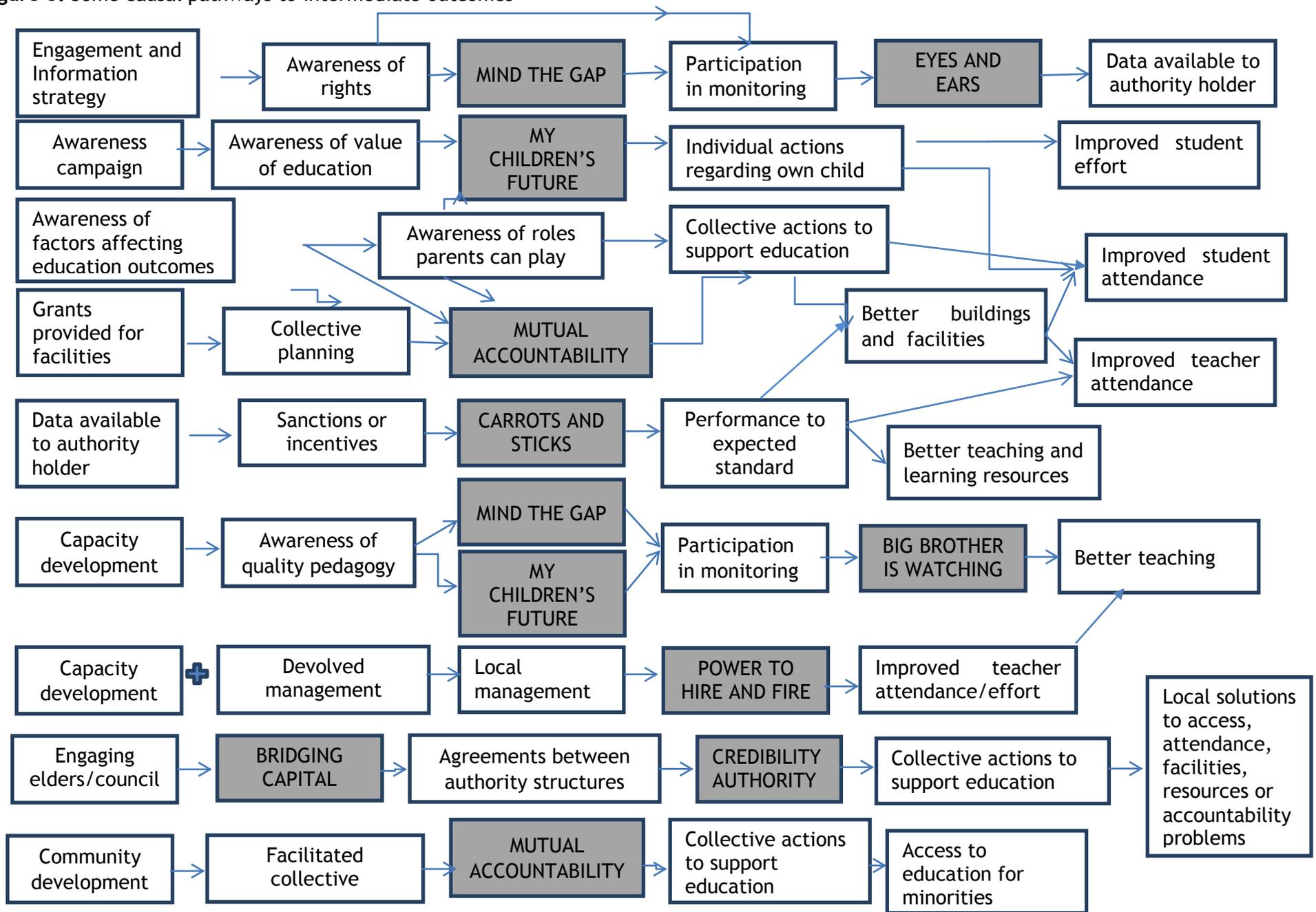
### 3.5 Causal pathways for intermediate outcomes

The intermediate outcomes themselves, represented in Figure 7 above, do not explain how the next (or final) sets of outcomes are achieved. There are particular sequences of activity, necessarily involving participation by different stakeholders, which are essential to achieving particular outcomes. Because this review considers many types of intervention and addresses multiple intermediate outcomes, there are many such pathways. Different mechanisms fire in different contexts, and do not necessarily fire in a particular order.

Figure 8, below, provides an overview of some of the primary pathways identified in the literature reviewed. Note that the mechanisms described in Section 3.4 are shown here in shaded boxes, while all other stages of the pathway are shown in unshaded boxes.

This ‘map’ of pathways is read a little differently to most programme-logic diagrams. Each line demonstrates what is necessary to achieve the intermediate outcome shown at the right-hand end of the line. However, the diagram does not show every outcome that may follow from a particular ‘step along the way’, as might normally be drawn in a programme-logic diagram. To provide just one example: in the top row of the diagram, ‘awareness of rights’ might trigger the ‘mind the gap’ mechanism. That mechanism might motivate community members to participate in monitoring activities, as shown in this pathway. It might also motivate a community member to take some other action, such as making a complaint to an SMC or a politician, which is not shown on the diagram. That is, the purpose of this diagram is simply to demonstrate what some pathways to intermediate outcomes appear to be, rather than to demonstrate all possible interconnections between all steps and all outcomes.

Figure 8: Some causal pathways to intermediate outcomes



### 3.6 Programme mechanisms and categories of intervention

There is a dilemma in trying to relate programme mechanisms to the four categories of education intervention. On the one hand, programmes’ purposes and activities do affect the kinds of mechanism that might be triggered: mechanisms involve an interaction between what the programme provides and how targets respond. On the other hand, some mechanisms fire in multiple kinds of interventions.

We address this dilemma in two ways. Firstly, we list the mechanisms which we believe, on the basis of the review we have undertaken to date, are *most likely* to be triggered by interventions in different categories. It is important to note that not all interventions within these categories will trigger all the mechanisms listed: whether mechanisms fire depends both on the specific features of the intervention and on the features of the context in which the intervention is implemented.

In the next section we will address the features of interventions we believe are most likely to be necessary for specific mechanisms to fire.

**Table 2:** Mechanisms most likely to be triggered by particular categories of education interventions

Categories of education intervention	Mechanisms most likely to be triggered
Specific-accountability initiatives	Eyes and ears Carrots and sticks Big brother is watching me Increasing community capacity Elder/Council authority Increasing local-politician capacity Mutual accountability Mind the gap Our children’s future It’s working!
Democratic decentralisation	Carrots and sticks Big brother is watching me The power to hire and fire It’s working!
School-based management	The power to hire and fire Increasing community capacity Elder/Council authority Mutual accountability Mind the gap Our children’s future It’s working!
Community schools	Increasing community capacity Elder/Council authority Mutual accountability Mind the gap Our children’s future It’s working!

### 3.7 Necessary features of interventions for specific mechanisms

In order for interventions to trigger particular mechanisms, they require particular features. The following table has been developed partly through analysis of successful and unsuccessful examples, and partly through logical analysis of necessary pre-conditions.

These features do not refer to specific categories of intervention. The same mechanisms can be triggered by multiple types of intervention.

**Table 3:** Necessary features of interventions for specific mechanisms

Mechanism	Necessary features of intervention	Example/Rationale
Eyes and ears	<p>Mobilisation of community members across the geographic region for the intervention.</p> <p>Readily observable features to be monitored.</p> <p>Observers have appropriate expertise for the nature of the observation</p>	<p>For Philippines Textbook Watch, volunteers were required across the whole country, including remote areas.</p> <p>Successful programmes have focused on tangible features, such as textbooks, furniture, teacher attendance, or use of particular teaching techniques.</p> <p>For example, volunteers trained for textbook count. Monitoring quality of teaching requires different expertise than monitoring teacher attendance; monitoring quality of textbook content requires different expertise than monitoring delivery.</p>
Carrots and sticks	<p>Incentives/sanctions are consistently linked to evidence of strong performance</p> <p>The scale of the accountability intervention is appropriate relative to the actor to be sanctioned.</p> <p>Incentives/sanctions are of sufficient value to the actor to influence their decision making.</p>	<p>For example, tamper-proof date-stamped photograph of teacher and class at beginning and end of day, linked to teacher pay.</p> <p>For example, in the Philippines Textbook Watch, publishers could not have been effectively sanctioned, and would not have been affected by sanctions, had only one local community or school participated; the national scale was necessary for the programme to be effective.</p> <p>For example, In the Philippines Textbook Watch, publishers were not paid for book deliveries if they were not signed off by monitors.</p>

<p>Big brother is watching me</p>	<p>The actors to be incentivised/sanctioned have accurate information about and understand the intended accountability process. Incentives/sanctions are of sufficient value to the actor to influence their decision making. Observers have appropriate skills/training to make the required observations</p>	<p>In order for actors to change their behaviour prior to a sanction or incentive being applied, the actor(s) believe that observations will be made, are capable of detecting corrupt behaviours, will be reported, and will attract sanctions/incentives.</p>
<p>The power to hire and fire</p>	<p>The SMC comprises community members. The SMC holds the power to hire and fire and/or to provide other incentives or impose other sanctions. The SMC acts consistently in response to desired/undesired staff behaviours. SMCs are skilled and confident in their management roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Accountability is to the local community, rather than a central department. There is a direct accountability relationship of staff to the SMC as employer.</p>
<p>Increasing community capacity</p>	<p>Capacity building is appropriately tailored to the tasks required of community members and to the learning needs of community members. Capacity building reinforces knowledge, skills and confidence (information provision alone is not usually sufficient). Capacity building is sufficiently sustained to account for turnover of personnel over time.</p>	<p>Power imbalances between community members and authority holders consist of, among other things, different levels of knowledge and skill; building capacity is an element of empowerment. Accountability interventions may require new knowledge and skills of community members.</p>
<p>Elder/Council authority</p>	<p>On-going relationships are established between school authorities and local authorities. Common goals and agreed strategies are established by both leadership groups.</p>	<p>Bringing credibility, authority and resources from both leadership sets to bear requires constructive working relationships and an agreed vision.</p>
<p>Increasing local-politician capacity</p>	<p>Local elected members are engaged in intervention activities (not just recipients of information generated by the activities). Capacity building addresses the needs of local elected members, as well as local community members.</p>	<p>Locally elected members may not have either a good understanding of national policies and entitlements or a good understanding of needs and issues for education at community level. Active engagement builds their awareness on both levels.</p>

Mutual accountability	<p>Time is available to engage stakeholder groups prior to commencement of the intervention. All necessary stakeholders are involved in goal setting and planning.</p> <p>An ethos of ‘joint contribution to a common goal’ is established.</p> <p>Clear roles, priorities and actions are decided for each stakeholder group.</p> <p>Regular processes for monitoring are established, with all stakeholder groups involved in monitoring.</p>	<p>Agreement to participate cannot be assumed; it must be established. All stakeholders have other priorities as well.</p> <p>Different stakeholders can make different contributions to education facilities, education and ensuring attendance.</p> <p>Accountability requires clear expectations.</p> <p>Mutual accountability emerges over time. Each group must participate in monitoring to hold other groups to account.</p>
Mind the gap	<p>Accurate information about rights and entitlements is provided to stakeholders.</p> <p>Accurate <i>comparative</i> information is provided to stakeholders about the receipt of entitlements and the performance of the local school. Comparison may be made with standards or entitlements, or with the performance of equivalent schools.</p>	<p>Local communities do not necessarily know their rights or entitlements, or know what is actually received at school level.</p> <p>Without accurate comparative information, parents may tend to accept the status quo and/or to over-estimate the effectiveness of local education.</p>
Our children’s future	<p>Constructive relationships are established and maintained between parents and school staff.</p> <p>Information about the value of education, the importance of attendance and the ways in which parents can support their children are provided to those parents who do not already have it.</p>	<p>Parents are generally positively motivated to want a better future for their children, but may lack information about the role of education, or about what is required for effective learning.</p> <p>Parents may doubt their own capacity to contribute.</p>
It’s working!	<p>Interventions are sustained over time.</p> <p>Feedback loops are built in to interventions so that stakeholders can monitor progress.</p>	<p>Information about successes may increase motivation or sustain commitment. Information about lack of success may inform change of strategies. Time is required for changes to accumulate.</p>

### 3.8 Contextual features influencing programme outcomes

This review has identified 11 mechanisms through which we believe community accountability and empowerment interventions work. The next step in a realist analysis is to identify the features of context that affect whether and which mechanisms actually ‘fire’ (operate) in particular instances. A realist analysis links context and mechanism to generate statements taking the form of ‘In context “x”, “y” mechanism produces “z” outcome.’

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The data available for this review do not, strictly speaking, allow such analysis. Too few of the reports that provided outcomes data also provided information about context and change processes. Too few of the reports that provided information about change processes, 'reasoning' or salient features of context also provided good information about outcomes. Too few of the interventions had multiple reports examining different aspects of the interventions, which would have permitted such linkages to be drawn for particular interventions.

There is evidence of each of the elements of context identified here and this is described in Section 5, below. There is not, however, specific evidence to *link* those aspects of context to specific mechanisms. In this table, we infer connections between context and mechanism, either on the basis of very partial evidence or on the basis of logic.

That is, Table 4 on the next page provides a summary of the features of context that we believe, on the basis of the research reviewed to date, are necessary for particular mechanisms to operate and the kinds of outcomes that are generated when they do. We offer these as a provisional set of context-mechanism-outcome statements (in realist terms, a context-mechanism-outcome configuration, CMOC) which might form the basis for future research and development.

Each row of the table can be read as a statement. For example, the first row reads:

In a supportive political context, and where government is a partner in the accountability intervention, the *eyes and ears* mechanism operates. This means that the community gathers data and passes them to the government, which is then in a position to take action against the corrupt party.

This mechanism would only generate an education outcome if the second CMO also operated, which might be read as:

When the State takes action against a corrupt part and uses incentives or sanctions of sufficient strength, the *carrots and sticks* mechanism operates. The corrupt party seeks to avoid the sanction and alters behaviour accordingly. As a result, there is an improvement in the extent to which, or standards to which, responsible parties implement the actions required of them. The resources available for education are improved.

It is sometimes necessary for multiple conditions to be met before a particular mechanism can operate. For example, in row 7, it is hypothesised that, for teachers to be held accountable by local SMCs, SMCs must hold the formal power as their employer; there must be an adequate teacher supply; the intrinsic (for example, desire to teach) and extrinsic (for example, pay level, teaching conditions) incentives for teachers must be adequate; the principal or headteacher must have a positive attitude to community participation and the skills to engage and support the SMC in its role, and SMC members must have adequate literacy, numeracy and other knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles effectively. If any of these conditions are not met, the accountability relationship is at risk.

Other factors in the context could, of course, still undermine this accountability relationship. It is never possible to describe every feature of context that might affect whether a particular mechanism will operate. The attempt here is to represent the most significant aspects of context from section 5 (below) against each of the 11 mechanisms described in Section 3.4, above. This provides, we hope, a basis for both programme design and future research or evaluation.

**Table 4:** A Provisional Context-Mechanism-Outcome Configuration (CMOC)

CONTEXT	MECHANISM	OUTCOME
A supportive political context Government as partner in accountability intervention Performance can be observed	Eyes and ears	Corruption reduced Resources available for education improved
Widespread community mobilisation Lack of fear of reprisals Performance can be observed	Eyes and ears	Civic campaigns for rights and entitlements to be met
Effective monitoring systems Authority holder acts on data received through monitoring system Incentives of sufficient power Performance can be observed	Carrots and sticks	Improvements in the extent to which, or standards at which, responsible parties implement the actions required of them
Effective monitoring systems Belief that the authority holder will act on data received through monitoring system Incentives of sufficient power Performance can be observed	Big Brother is watching	Improvements in the extent to which, or standards at which, responsible parties implement the actions required of them
SMCs have <i>de jure</i> power as employer SMCs have literacy rates, knowledge and skills that enable them to monitor, assess and supervise education staff Performance can be observed Adequacy of teacher supply Positive attitude and skills of principals/headteachers regarding community participation	The power to hire and fire	Education staff are held accountable to SMCs as employer
Investment in skills development for community members Sustained and real opportunities to put skills into practice Sustained support by external facilitators	Increasing community capacity	Communities and community-based structures (for example, SMCs) have the skills to undertake roles expected of them Quality of community leadership for education improve
Authority structures (elders, elected local Councils) are formally engaged with school leaders	Elder/council authority	Community members actively participate in initiatives to improve education outcomes

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CONTEXT	MECHANISM	OUTCOME
Local politicians are engaged as participants in, rather than as targets of, the process Information, training and support are provided to politicians	Increasing local politician capacity Politicians are altruistic and/or wish to be re-elected	Politicians become advocates for local community needs
	Politicians' voices carry authority with higher levels of government	Resources are provided from higher levels of the system
A wide range of stakeholders are engaged in jointly defining issues, developing solutions and monitoring progress	Mutual accountability	A system for managing and continually improving the availability and quality of education is established
Understanding of the value of education Accurate information about children's learning outcomes (requires assessment systems) School-leadership and staff capacities and attitudes support parental engagement	My children's future	Parents undertake private actions to support children's learning Parents contribute to collective actions to improve the availability and quality of education
Supportive contexts and community capacity/resilience and expectation of change are sustained	It's working	Parents continue or increase forms of collective action that support on-going reforms Other influential actors, such as teachers, SMCs or public officials, act in concert with or reinforce parental reform action Sustained collective action is generated

### 3.9 Illustrative case study: Multiple CMOs in a single study

The previous sections have laid out a detailed programme theory for community accountability and empowerment interventions, examining a range of different mechanisms, and the contexts in which they operate. This section shows, through a brief description and analysis of a single case (Galab et al. 2013), how different mechanisms can work together in a single intervention.

The Vidya Chaitanyam Project (VCP) in Andhra Pradesh (AP), India, aimed to address inadequate access to and poor quality of primary education by improving accountability between parents and schools, with a focus on SMCs (p. 14). SMCs had been established in 2007 by the AP Government as the main vehicle for school accountability. However, the baseline study found that SMCs met irregularly and were ineffective (p. 21f).

VCP was implemented through 60 selected Village Organisations (VOs), located in seven isolated *mandals* (regions) of Anantapur district.). It promoted collective action by a large network of mothers already in self-help groups (SHGs) (pp. 4-5, 16), 70% of whom were illiterate. SHGs used a simple traffic-light score-card process, designed in consultation with district officials for people with low levels of literacy<sup>12</sup>, to measure and track four dimensions of school quality: student progress (attendance and academic); leadership and management (displaying school statistics, utilising government grants, and parental support); teaching and learning (teachers' attendance, utilisation of teaching and learning resources and co-curricular activities); infrastructure (maintenance, provision of midday meal and toilets) and the image of the school (parental involvement in SMCs). Score cards facilitated shared understanding of key elements of school quality between communities, SMCs and the State (pp. 18, 23). The score cards were designed to give *mandal* staff performance information compatible with their own measures (p. 42). SHGs also published these score cards in their own group meetings and at SMCs (pp. 4-5).

The evaluation combined primary research with self-reported 'school-score-card' data, and baseline and endline survey data. The primary research compared the impact on 16 randomly selected schools in two intervention areas, with 16 schools from one control area. It used focus groups of parents, (SMC and non-SMC members), and students (one group per school) and semi-structured interviews with key project staff and district and local education officials. All 48 headteachers completed a survey, as did 237 parents across all schools. Score-card data were collected at baseline, after seven months and after 18 months. These reported only percentage ratings.

The study attributed VCP's success to a carefully sequenced set of sub-interventions, which sensitised and built the capacity of the school, raised community awareness of education rights, designed the score card, built capacity of marginalised women, mobilised parents to attend SMC meetings and engendered voice within these meetings (p. 15), and their engagement with district officials.

The table below proposes a number of the context-mechanism-outcomes (CMOs) we identified from Galab (2013), accompanied by page numbers providing evidence of varying weights for each element. This table is not intended to be an exhaustive review of all the mechanisms involved in this intervention. Rather, it illustrates sequential, parallel and feedback-loop pathways involved in generating improved education outcomes.

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<sup>12</sup> 'Simple traffic-light indicators were developed as a ratings system. The cut-off points for each colour rating were agreed collaboratively with input from district-level officials to align with existing indicators and standards' (p. 18).

**Table 5: Multiple-Context-Mechanism-Outcome Configurations operating in a single intervention**

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Education quality in AP is known to be poor (p. 14) Existing self-help groups (SHGs) have built up social capital over many years, (pp. 16, 17) Existing infrastructure of SMCs, Village Organisations (VOs), <i>mandal</i> officials	<b>Authority</b> (A variant of Council/Elder authority) Clear state-sanctioned authority for role of SHGs, (p. 17); legitimization of state authority by officials regularly attending higher-level meetings, (pp. 16, 18)	SHGs agree to add education to their agenda (implicit in subsequent actions)  State-sanctioned authority structure exists (p. 17)
VC project is designed for low-literacy self-help-groups, using score cards developed in conjunction with district-level officials, (p. 18) Information campaigns re: rights	<b>Capacity building</b> SHGs trained to use score cards, (pp. 15,18) Increased awareness of rights (pp. 15,22,25)	Parents understand school quality and how to use score cards (p18, 24)  Parents develop capacity to question both SMC and teachers
Parents understand school quality Parents use data to ask questions of SMC and teachers (pp. 25, 35) SMCs meet regularly	<b>Eyes and ears</b> Parents monitor and report data to SMC (pp. 23,25,26)	SMCs discuss issues raised by parents using score cards showing gaps in school quality (pp. 22, 23, 24)
Score cards reveal gaps in school quality, (p28-30) Parents aware of their rights, (pp. 15, 25)	<b>Mind the gap</b> Parents/SMCs concerned re gaps shown by score cards (pp. 28-31)	Parents report the gaps to SHGs, SMCs and District/Mandal officials and ask questions after SMC meetings (pp. 18, 25)
SMCs discuss issues monitored and raised by parents, (pp. 23,24)	<b>It's working!</b> Positive feedback loops between parents and both SMCs and teachers	SMCs respond regularly to parents and SHGs (pp. 21-4) Parents gain increased capacity and confidence to monitor, measure and report performance (pp. 24-6, 35)
Parents have increased capacity and confidence to monitor measure and report school performance (pp. 24-6, 35)	<b>Capacity building</b> Parents learning by doing in asking questions of teachers and SMCs (pp. 25, 35)	Parents question school performance –directly to teachers, and via SMC (pp. 25, 26)
Parents question teacher performance Parents report on teacher performance to district and <i>mandal</i> Parents report on school quality regularly to SHGs, SMCs and district/ <i>mandal</i> authorities (pp. 18, 23, 24, 27)	<b>Big Brother is watching</b> Teachers are aware that authority structures of SHGs, SMCs and of districts and <i>mandals</i> are ‘watching’	Improved teacher effort: Teachers attend more regularly/on time. (pp. 25, 26, 28,29,31, 32)
Parent belief in value of schooling, (pp. 22, 24) Increased parent capacity and confidence, (pp. 24-6, 35)	<b>Capacity building</b> Parents trained re: quality of pedagogy and testing of students (p. 18)	Parents and students observe improved teacher pedagogy (pp. 32, 33)
Parents and students observe improved teacher pedagogy, (pp. 32, 33)	<b>Big brother is watching</b> Parents backed by authority system and students backed by parents (pp. 32, 33)	Teachers adopt more inclusive/engaging teaching methods, techniques and materials (pp. 32, 33)

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Teachers adopt more inclusive/engaging teaching methods, techniques and materials, (pp. 32, 33)	<b><i>It's working!</i></b> Teachers, parents and students see this is working (pp. 32, 33)	Teachers sustain and increase use of inclusive/engaging teaching methods, techniques and materials (pp. 32, 33) Improved student-learning outcomes ('A' grades) (pp. 29, 35) Increased learning reported by students and parents (pp. 22, 32, 33)
Educational authorities report SMCs meeting regularly, score cards enhance parental questioning, teacher effort in response (p. 26)	<b><i>It's working!</i></b> Education authorities see positive results	Authorities support and sanction on-going use of approaches (p. 26)

In the sequential pathways, the outcome from one CMO becomes part of the context for the next CMO. Therefore, pathways can be traced from an earlier context, through a set of CMOs that build on one another, to produce empowerment outcomes, accountability outcomes and education outcomes.

Mechanisms in parallel (for example, *capacity building* for parents and *big brother is watching* for teachers), but each contributes to overall outcomes (of course it is possible for parallel mechanisms to undermine each other as well, but no cases of this were identified in this case study).

Similarly, feedback mechanisms may reinforce or undermine outcomes. The table above provides one example of a feedback mechanism, the *It's working!* mechanism. The limited available evidence suggests this operates as a positive-feedback loop, but did so for several stakeholder groups, thereby contributing to a variety of outcomes.

## 4. Evidence of outcomes from included studies

This chapter is structured to reflect the outcomes hierarchy described in section 3.3, above; that is, immediate, short-term, intermediate, intermediate education, and final education outcomes.

### 4.1 Immediate outcomes

The immediate outcomes considered below are:

1. Involvement of necessary stakeholders.
2. Increased awareness relevant to the intervention, including awareness of rights.
3. Increased access to information.
4. Increased knowledge and skills relevant to roles required for the intervention.
5. Plans tailored to local contexts.
6. Plans being implemented, with a focus on monitoring activities.

**Table 6:** Summary of evidence relating to immediate outcomes

Immediate outcome	Summary of evidence
1. Involvement of necessary stakeholders	Few studies provided evidence about whether the necessary stakeholders were involved
2. Increased awareness relevant to the intervention	Few studies provided evidence about whether stakeholders gained increased awareness
3. Increased access to information	Many interventions improved communities' access to information, but the quality and comprehensiveness of information provided was highly variable
4. Increased knowledge and skills pertaining to roles required for the intervention	Many projects provided information on activities undertaken to increase knowledge and skills (such as training), but evidence of improvements was less common. Some successful projects had evidence of this and participants attributed their changed behaviour to their increased knowledge and skills
5. Plans tailored to local contexts	Successful projects were more likely to report having tailored their interventions to meet local needs, but there was little evaluation of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the tailoring
6. Plans being implemented, with a focus on monitoring activities	While some projects were successful in implementing the planned monitoring or support activities, others identified important barriers to being engaged in monitoring—for example, parents not seeing their increased involvement as appropriate or even possible (given their level of authority) or already being engaged in providing this type of support

#### 4.1.1 *Involvement of necessary stakeholders*

It is a truism to suggest that different stakeholders are required for different programmes. Descriptions of their participation are discussed throughout this report.

Only a couple of studies systematically captured information about involvement of or participation by stakeholders. Pradhan et al. (2013) recorded data about school committee and parent meetings with and without the school principal, and committee meetings with *dinas* (government offices), community groups and village councils and, partly on this basis, was able to identify the role of linkage with village councils as a contributor to education outcomes. Banerjee et al. (2010) collected survey data that included action by parents and action by VEC members to hold schools accountable and found that neither was significantly affected by the information strategies tested.

The ACCESS Program in Indonesia did identify that those participating in volunteer positions and being elected to school committees and parents' groups were less likely to be poor, and 'appeared to come from relatively well-off backgrounds, most (though not all) with at least junior-high-school education' (Klugman 2013b; p. 12). This was despite efforts to engage poorer families, including inviting them to meetings, and going door-to-door to talk with them about issues of concern.

#### 4.1.2 *Increased awareness, including of rights*

There is significant discussion in the theory of community-accountability and empowerment interventions about the provision of information about rights and the role that this should play in motivating action by communities to achieve those rights. However, few reports examined here provided detailed descriptions of information about rights. Cant (undated) provided some description of the nature of information provided through Citizen Voice in Action:

Under CVA, civic education is provided about tangible rights to services under local law. Communities learn what their national government sets as education, health and other standards. For example, the national teacher-pupil ratio; the ratio of pupils to textbooks; the maximum distance a child should have to travel to school... (p. 4)

The Janshala Programme in India (Pailwar and Mahajan 2005) used community sensitisation in Jharkhand, one of the most disadvantaged states in the country, to raise awareness about the importance of education for all children (especially those who were disadvantaged, such as girls) and about the right to education, while also mobilising parents to increase community participation. This reportedly led to enthusiastic participation in local community educational institutions (such as VECs, PTAs), and active monitoring of enrolment, performance and attendance of children. This reportedly led to reduced drop-out rates (0% and 10%, respectively, in the two blocks) and increased attendance at school (around 90%) and at extra-curricular activities, and nearly 75% of parents monitoring their children's homework (p. 382). Around 75% of the VEC or mothers' group and 85% of community members surveyed claimed to have approached higher authorities with demands for more schools, teachers and better amenities (p. 383).

The ACCESS Program in Indonesia (Klugman 2013b) undertook surveys at the beginning of the programme that showed most parents were unaware of the systems for school funding or use of operational funds, or the role that the school committee was supposed to play in this. District and national Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) mobilised the community through parental and non-parental volunteers, working either through existing school

committees or by establishing parents' groups. They provided training and engaged in discussions with community members. Interviews with parents, conducted as part of the fieldwork for a case study of the programme, reported significant improvements in the level of understanding of systems and engagement in monitoring.

Parents involved in interviews all reported that their increased awareness and understanding of systems and funding allocations had resulted in increased capacity to monitor use of funds, and in most were able to explain how the community is involved in development of plans for use and monitoring of School Operational Funds. (Klugman 2013b; p. 9)

Only one of the reports examined here captured systematic evidence that information about rights had been understood (Pandey et al. 2009) and none formally attributed actions by communities to that understanding. At least two reports (Cant n.d., and Tadesse et al. 2010) provided quotations from community members that reflect the role that understanding rights can play in generating action. However, Cant (Ibid.) referred explicitly to healthcare services. Tadesse's (Ibid.) example is provided in section 4.2.5, below.

#### *4.1.3 Increased access to information*

Information is widely accepted to be a key to accountability and a wide range of social-accountability initiatives focus on the provision of information to the public. In the studies reviewed here (the majority of which were education initiatives, rather than accountability initiatives per se), the provision of information to communities was sometimes a feature, but at other times appeared to be taken for granted.

In some cases, information was provided as part of a project, without changing systems to ensure on-going access to information. An example of this type included the three interventions in India, which provided information about the role of VECs to local communities (Banerjee et al. 2010, reported in 4.1.1, above). In many others, it is not clear from the reports available for review whether or not information systems were changed. Arvind (2009) reported that access to school records by the community allowed community members to ascertain that enrolment and retention rates were low and take collective action to rectify these problems (pp. 4, 5). This was part of a project to create democratic governance of schools in those communities and it is possible, although it is unclear from the text whether it was the case, that local access to information would be sustained.

However, some initiatives apparently created or changed information systems. At the local level, a participatory-score-cards initiative in Uganda (Zeitlin 2011; Galab et al. 2013) created a system where the local community developed its own indicators and collected its own information about those indicators, thereby generating access to information for as long as the community sustained the activity. (Standardised score cards could also be maintained by the community, but this was considered more difficult, making maintenance less likely). At country-wide level, the Philippines Textbook Count project provided broad access across the country to information about the delivery schedule and the number of textbooks that were due to arrive (Majeed 2011).

The three-state information for accountability experiment in India (Pandey et al. 2009) provided information to parents, communities and school committees about their roles, responsibilities and entitlements. A few months after the intervention, they found that Village Education Committees (VECs) reported meeting more frequently, more parent

members attended those meetings, more members participated in school inspections, and more parent members participated in those meetings (Pandey et al, 2009., p. 36). While trends for actions by parents who were not members of VECs or PTAs were positive, they were not statistically significant (p. 37).

The ACCESS Program in Indonesia found evidence of better reporting to parents of financial information, although not consistently so. Parents reported in interviews that ‘more school principals disclosing information on the management of school funds’ (p. 9), and all schools visited in the eight districts included in the fieldwork had publicly posted budgets. However, the quality of this reporting varied considerably—for example, in one school, ‘The costing details provided were very vague, making it difficult if not impossible to monitor’ (p. 9).

In addition, increased access was only in relation to aspects focused on in the project. In particular, there had not been attention to providing information about funding entitlements at the district level, and most people were unaware that there was a target of 20% of budget to be allocated to education, and that, in most districts, the allocation was well below that level (Klugman 2013b; p. 14).

One recent study (Lieberman et al. 2012) has provided a particularly significant contribution to understanding *information for accountability* initiatives. It is presented below as a boxed example.

#### **Boxed Example 1 Detailed example of information for accountability initiative**

Lieberman et al (2012) reported on the first phase of the Uwezo initiative in Kenya, a two phase project to provide information to communities. The information in the first phase consists of ‘good quality information about how much their children are (or are not) learning in school’ (p. 7) and posters and pamphlets about ways in which parents could support learning, either privately or at the school or social level. The second phase of the project will involve broad dissemination of student-assessment results and ‘stimulation of a multi-faceted national discussion about children’s learning’ (p. 1). The programme theory is that:

[T]hese measures will empower citizens to hold their governments accountable for improving the quality of their children’s education, and also equip them with the knowledge necessary to contribute themselves to improving their children’s learning. (p. 8)

The research used a *matched-pairs* design, applied at village level, and compared ‘treated households’ and ‘untreated households’ in treated villages and untreated villages. The outcomes of interest were described as ‘active citizenship’ in relation to education and included:

[I]nterventions at home to help one’s own children, general involvement in efforts to improve one’s children’s learning; interventions at school; and civic participation and citizen action more broadly. (p. 18)

The research found no evidence of impact on any of the outcomes of interest (p. 28). Of more interest to this review, however, is the fact that it systematically assessed the assumptions implicit in the theory of change for the first phase in order to identify ‘the ways in which the treatment may have influenced outcomes—the mechanisms’ (p. 16: See pp. 32-34 for a full description of the assumptions behind the theory of change.<sup>13</sup> The authors were able to discount implementation failure (p. 29). They found that many

<sup>13</sup> The programme’s theory of change anticipates outcomes after the second phase of the project, rather than the first, so ‘failure’ at this stage is consistent with the theory of change and may not in fact represent true failure.

parents could not remember their children's assessment results or what they thought about them at the time (p. 35), but that the majority could remember at least one suggested individual or community action (p. 37). For those who could remember their child's results, many already knew how their child was performing at school and most were 'relatively well informed' about the performance of their child's school (p. 38). Information that is not new was theorised to be less likely to prompt citizen action. The assessment information was unlikely to have provided a shock (most children passed), but this may have been an artefact of the assessment (p. 40), again meaning that it was less likely to prompt action. While parents did generally care about education, only 16% thought it was their responsibility to improve education (p. 43; this result was from a smaller survey of around half the participating households). The majority had never taken part in actions that would enable them to participate in advocacy (p. 43) and may have lacked the skills or confidence to do so. Most thought that their efforts could make some difference, but reported being unsure of what action to take (p. 44). Expectation of 'punishment' for taking action appeared to be a significant barrier to taking action:

In fact, government trustworthiness and state capacity seem to be a major concern among respondents. Many respondents, for example, feared that complaining about corruption at the village school or clinic would result in punishment or retribution. Forty-two percent thought punishment was very likely and another 24 percent thought punishment was somewhat likely. Expectation of punishment, not surprisingly, was correlated with lack of action. (p. 44)

Expectations of corruption were also high, but concerns about other community members not taking part did not seem to be an issue (p. 45). Importantly, however, the initiative may not have had its intended effects because many of the respondents were already doing the things that it intended to prompt: 'In fact, a large proportion of parents are already active at home, in schools, and in their communities. Many of the treated do not "need" the treatment' (p. 45). It might be theorised that providing communities with feedback on the outcomes of monitoring would act as a positive-feedback loop, sustaining motivation to participate in community accountability and empowerment initiatives.

In the Philippines Textbook Count project, communities saw delivery of the textbooks and some communities organised 'textbook walks' by students or other celebrations of the arrival of the resources (Majeed 2011). Score-card interventions (for example, Cant n.d., Zeitlin et al. 2011, Galab 2013) generated information at local level. However, little direct evidence was found that this feedback-loop operated, other than in the Galab (2013) case study. It is not clear whether this is because it rarely operates this way, or whether the absence of evidence is an artefact of research design and reporting.

Few studies gave attention to the circumstances under which communities are free to use information for accountability purposes. Some referred to fear of repercussions as limiting community action. The ACCESS Program in Indonesia developed new processes for confidential reporting of concerns (Klugman 2013a). Few, if any, gave specific attention to the multiple kinds of information likely to be needed to prompt action by parents or communities.

#### *4.1.4 Increased knowledge and skills pertaining to project roles*

A significant proportion of the studies reviewed here indicated that training was provided for community members as part of programme implementation. These included provision of literacy training for members of school committees in the EDUCO Program in El Salvador (Basaninyenzi 2011); training for SMC members in their roles and responsibilities (see, for example, Condy 1998 regarding the Schooling Improvement Fund in Ghana; Altschuler and Corrales (2012), regarding community-managed schools in Guatemala and Honduras; Pradhan et al. (2013), as one of four interventions in Indonesia); training SMCs to monitor

and supervise teachers (for example, Extra Teacher Program in Kenya—see Duflo et al. 2009); training volunteers to teach children to read (Banerjee et al. 2010 in India); training self-help group members to use score cards, understand school quality, and monitor pedagogy (Galab et al. 2013); training for community members to establish or support community schools (Beyene et al. (2007) regarding the Community-Government Partnership Program, (CGPP) under BESO II in Ethiopia), and so on.

A number of these reports provided qualitative evidence, in the form of comments by participants, that the training increased their knowledge and skills. Almost none, however, directly evaluated the outcomes of that training.

Altschuler and Corrales (2012) surveyed the impacts of participation in CMS on parents in 285 schools across Honduras and 150 schools in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala. The majority of parents surveyed acquired new skills from CMS training, with 77% of Guatemalan respondents and 53% of Honduran respondents reporting that they had learned at least one new skill (Ibid., p. 7). Around one third of Guatemalan respondents and around one quarter of Honduran respondents reported applying learned skills to participation in other organizations (Ibid., p. 7)<sup>14</sup>. The greater government support was, the more likely it was that parents would report such use of skills beyond the school context (Ibid., pp. 13-14) and the greater the number of participants who deemed their school councils to be effective and democratic. Furthermore, even in Honduras, where CMS provided more limited training, parents reported greater ability to resist partisan encroachment on the performance of their duties, indicating increased capacity to perform and clarity about their roles (p. 17).

##### *4.1.5 Plans tailored to local contexts*

A number of interventions reviewed here relied, at least in part, on involving local communities in designing or planning locally appropriate solutions to local issues. Notable examples include ‘bottom-up approaches’ to enhancing school management in India (Arvind 2009), developing local strategies in SMCs and then establishing linkages with local councils in Indonesia (Pradhan et al. 2013), establishing Girls’ Advisory Committees (GAC) that identified and responded to local issues affecting girls’ participation in education (World Learning 2007), and developing community score cards and local action plans based on them (Zeitlin et al. 2011; Cant n.d.).

The ACCESS Program in Indonesia took two different strategies, depending on the local context. In some areas they focused on working directly with existing school committees to strengthen them (see below for details), while, in other areas, it was decided to establish new parents’ groups and to seek to influence the working of the school committee through the parents’ group (Klugman 2013b; p. 6).

We note that all these examples were also successful in at least some ways and posit that tailoring to local needs is part of what makes the projects successful. However, no examples were found where the extent to which local plans did in fact ‘match’ local needs was expressly evaluated, and no examples were found that expressly tested whether the fit to local needs contributed to outcomes being achieved.

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<sup>14</sup> Moreover, parents who considered their CMS school councils to be effective or democratic were more likely to report such spill-overs. Such parental empowerment beyond the schools, therefore, seems attributable to parents’ increased levels of skills and capacity to run schools. However, the higher that parents’ baseline socioeconomic and community participation levels were, the more likely it was that such spill-overs, indicating empowerment, would occur (Altschuler and Corrales 2012; pp.13-14).

#### 4.1.6 Plans implemented, including monitoring

The implementation of intervention plans—be they locally developed, developed by researchers, or developed as part of policy or legislation—is, of course, essential to achieving their intended outcomes. Assessing the extent to which plans are implemented requires good-quality process evaluation. The literature reviewed here did not, by and large, include such process evaluations, although that might be an artefact of the search and data-extraction processes.

This section focuses on implementation of monitoring processes, because the accountability aspect of community-accountability and empowerment interventions usually relies to some extent on monitoring and because a number of reports do provide discussion and evidence regarding it.

In a randomised evaluation of a community participation and school-improvement programme in Niger, Beasley and Huillery (2012) investigated a model that: ‘...suggests that the role of community participation is likely to vary greatly depending on the context, and makes explicit the role of power imbalances between the beneficiaries and the service provider. We consider different types of school participation activities: managerial, supportive, and oppositional, and examine how different community characteristics might either support or hinder these different types of participation. (p. 4).’

Supportive actions were defined as ‘purely supportive of the school actions and policies, for example raising money or paying fees’; management as acting “as agents of the school staff in some capacity, which requires decision-making or management” and oppositional actions as ‘those which put the community in opposition to the teachers ... One important action of this type is measuring and demanding accountability for teacher attendance. These actions require a high real authority’ (pp. 20-21).

School committees in the experiment received a small grant and school-management training. They were responsible for monitoring teacher attendance and performance, as well as the management of school resources. They found ‘no improvement in teacher effort, consistent with the fact that most communities did not supervise or sanction teachers’ (Beasley and Huillery, 2012p. 5). There were no differences between school committees in the treatment and control groups for this outcome (p. 27). However, they note that teacher supervision was 0.13 standard deviations higher in the treatment group compared to the control group when the school committee was educated (Beasley and Huillery, 2012. p. 27).<sup>15</sup>

They further noted that:

...in the Niger context, even the educated parents are not so educated (they just completed primary school) so their real authority remains limited compared to contexts in which a fair proportion of parents are more educated than teachers, like in capitals or in developed countries. The fact that none of the communities in this experiment was able to undertake remedial actions against teachers is therefore consistent with our prediction that real authority matters. (Beasley and Huillery, 2012., p. 27).

They concluded:

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<sup>15</sup> However these results were only significant at the 10% level of significance.

...in situations where (i) the community has little authority relative to the school staff or (ii) the community and the school staff share important social links, the community is rather prompt to undertake managerial and supportive actions, but not oppositional actions, specifically supervising teacher attendance. Only communities with high levels of parent education are in a position to put pressure on teachers for improved quality. (p. 5)

Jimenez and Sawada (1999), using teacher-reported data from EDUCO in El Salvador, found that members of parent associations visited classrooms more than once a week, which was reported to be 'three to four times more often than their traditional counterparts' (Ibid., p. 428). What members did during classroom visits was not reported.

Using data from parent association member surveys, Sawada (2000) reported that more EDUCO parents' associations discussed teacher behaviour compared to their counterparts in traditional schools: '80% 80% and 79% of ACEs at EDUCO schools discussed at the group meeting teacher discipline and attendance of school personnel, respectively. On the other hand, only 62% and 38% of [parents' associations] in traditional schools discussed these issues' (p. 22).

However, no data were provided about whether, or which, actions were taken as a result of the discussions.

In a qualitative study of ASP in Nicaragua, Fuller and Rivarola (1998; p. 69) found little evidence to suggest accountability processes to improve teaching quality were implemented at school level. Although they reported hearing much discussion focused on student achievement, they noted that, "For average teachers who may not be effective in the classroom, we heard of no evaluation or sanctioning process that would encourage them to improve their pedagogical practices' (Ibid., p. 69).

Parent monitoring of classroom teaching and learning has the potential to improve teaching and learning efforts. The Vidya Chaitanyam Project in rural India developed a school score card that included attention to teaching practices, as well as to more easily observed aspects of performance, such as teacher and student attendance, toilet maintenance, and quality of meals (Galab et al. 2012). Parents developed the skills and confidence to undertake monitoring of school performance and to use the information to advocate for improvements. In interviews, nearly all parents in the project regions stated that they had made improvement suggestions to their children's school, compared to only half the parents in non-participating schools (Galab et al. 2012; p. 25). In all interviews with parents and students in participating schools, they pointed to improvements in teacher effort and improved teaching methods as a major benefit from the project, making comments such as:

"Because of this, we got a right of questioning the teachers." [Parent]

"Because of the VC project, our awareness increased and we are able to know what is happening in the schools and what our children are doing in school. Otherwise, we were so scared to enter the schools because we are uneducated and we didn't know what to ask the teachers or how to approach the headmaster. "[Parent](p. 25)

However, not all projects were successful in establishing these monitoring processes. Okitsu (2011) reported that some parents rejected this role, believing the teaching process would be adversely affected, or that it was not their responsibility to do so:

A few parents said that they had gone to the school on their own initiative and had observed lessons to see how their children were learning. However, in general,

little enthusiasm for monitoring lessons was expressed on the part of parents and guardians. Some parents reported that they were reluctant to do so, as they presumed that the teachers would not feel comfortable with their presence in class. In other cases, parents explicitly refused an invitation to go and observe lessons, accusing the teachers of neglecting their duties. The minutes of a PTA meeting in Lukasi give an indication:

Why did you ask us to come to monitor how the children are learning and how the teachers are teaching, when there are professionals such as teachers and the district education standards officer who are trained and paid for this job? (Father, extract from the minutes of a PTA meeting, Lukasi, 22/08/05). (p. 184)

## 4.2 Short-term outcomes

The short-term outcomes considered below are:

1. Application of sanctions or incentives.
2. Stronger relationships between stakeholders.
3. Community structures being established or strengthened.
4. Stronger voice in advocacy or decision-making.
5. Participation in planned activities, particularly by marginalised groups.

**Table 7:** Summary of evidence relating to short term outcomes

Short-term outcome	Summary of evidence
1. Application of sanctions or incentives	There were a few examples where sanctions had actually been applied, and some where there was an implied risk of sanctions
2. Stronger relationships between stakeholders	Many of the studies reported improvements in stakeholder relationships—an important building block for collaborative action for improvement, rather than adversarial
3. Community structures being established or strengthened	Many studies reported this. In addition to establishing and strengthening SMCs and PTAs, other community structures were developed by some projects, such as advisory committees and complaints centres.
4. Stronger voice in advocacy or decision making	The evidence of this was mixed—there were examples where there was more capacity and willingness to participate in decision making and express views, but others where this had not been achieved
5. Participation in planned activities, especially by marginalised groups	A number of projects reported high levels of participation in planned activities; some reported difficulties engaging groups in particular activities

### 4.2.1 Application of sanctions or incentives

A fundamental assumption in many monitoring for accountability interventions is that monitoring will identify miscreants. That information will then be used by local authorities

(for example, SMCs in schools) or be channelled to district or central authorities who can apply sanctions.

Very limited evidence of the application of such sanctions was found. In the Philippines Textbook example, deliveries were rejected if the quality of textbooks was poor, for example if the binding on books was falling apart:

The measure of success was 100% deliveries to the schools or school districts of textbooks of the quality that we had agreed upon—the right number of textbooks, the right titles, the right weight and quality of paper, clean, neat printing and quality, sturdy binding. All of these were met or shipments were rejected. And whatever was not met was rectified at the publisher's cost. (Majeed 2011, p. 10)

Arvind (2009) reported a rare example where a sanction against a non-performing teacher was applied in India as a result of pressure from the community:

The Village Education Committee also drew on its own political and organizational network for fixing school problems. For instance, it convinced the Block Education Officer to transfer an underperforming teacher and hire a more committed teacher. These collective efforts resulted in the government primary school in Gopala becoming the first school in the entire rural Thanagazi block in 2004 to realize a 100% enrollment rate. (Arvind 2009; p. 5)

The ACCESS program reported that “in Lombok, 30 cases of significant corruption were reported and resolved in collaboration with schools involved and the local Department of Education.” (Klugman, 2013b, p. 13). In one case, it was a teacher who reported misuse of funds by the school principal. The parents' group took the issue forward, including discussions with the village head, which stopped this misuse happening. However, in a case in a neighbouring district, where a teacher reported misuse of school operating funds to the department, he was ‘punished for his whistleblowing by being moved to a school in a remote location’ (Klugman, 2013b p. 11).

There were also cases where the use of sanctions was implied—for example, in the tamper-proof camera monitoring of teacher attendance, where salaries were tied to attendance (Duflo and Hanna 2005)—but where data on the use of sanctions were not provided.

We had initially theorised that involving communities in developing accountability interventions could contribute to the development of sanctions that were developed from, or adapted to, local culture and context. We had also theorised that the rate of application of sanctions would increase. No direct evidence was found to support either of these hypotheses in the literature reviewed for the current study. It is unclear whether this reflects actual lack of outcomes in this area, lack of research into the application of sanctions within community accountability and empowerment interventions, or gaps in the documents retrieved.

An example was found where there was an implied risk of sanctions that was seen to influence behaviour. Galab et al. (2013) reported interview data with parents, school officials and students who believed that this was influencing teacher behaviour:

‘They are teaching us better now as the parents are coming into the school and checking. Our teachers know that they will be questioned’ (student; p. 25).

#### 4.2.2 *Stronger relationships between stakeholders*

Stronger relationships between stakeholders in education are an aspect of *social capital*. There is good evidence (not reviewed here) that social capital contributes to a range of social outcomes. Stronger relationships can also be an aspect of empowerment, providing social support or enabling co-operation.

Umanzor et al. (2004) found that teachers in EDUCO schools spent more time meeting with parents than did teachers in traditional schools. They were also more likely to say they would visit a student's home to investigate a prolonged absence (more than two weeks), rather than summon the parents to an interview at the school (pp. 16-17). This suggests that relationships between parents and teachers had strengthened.

Mozumder and Halim (2006) reported, in relation to the IDEAL programme in Bangladesh, that scheduled meetings between mothers and teachers enabled teachers to report on students' attendance and progress and to gather information about school-aged children in a locality, which supported enrolment. It also enabled mothers to talk about their concerns in relation to schooling, and mothers and teachers together to plan ways to make schooling more engaging.

Ma shamabesh enhances both horizontal (among mothers) and vertical (between mothers and teachers) interactions. Such frequent interactions create social capital, which facilitates common pooling of mothers' and teachers' resources to increase school enrollment, and reduce dropouts. (Coleman 1988, p. 154)

One of the strategies used by the ACCESS Program in Indonesia to improve relationships between stakeholders was to provide training for the different stakeholders together. For example, this parent member of a newly established parents' group described how the joint training not only increased their knowledge of how the school committee was intended to work, but made it easier for them to work together with them: 'We knew there was a school committee, but didn't know its role. Now we know who they are, and what they are supposed to do ... We have had training together with the Committee, and so now we can understand their role, and we can talk to them if we have a question or one of the parents has a complaint' (female parent quoted in Klugman 2013b; p. 8).

The comparison of four interventions in Indonesia (Pradhan et al. 2013) found that the two social-capital interventions—one relating to democratic election of SMC members, and one to linkages of SMCs to village councils—were effective. The former was: '...the most promising at reforming the school committee into an institution that engages community members and improves service delivery. Indeed, elections raised the awareness of the school committee, increased parental support for homework and teachers reported more work hours' (p. 40). However, only the latter improved student-learning outcomes (see Section 4.4, below).

Altschuler and Corrales (2012) were concerned that community and intra-community fragmentation would result from CMS in Guatemala and Honduras, since, to establish a community school, parents mostly had to create a separate village, splintering their capacity to act collectively; and in these small, new communities, leaders felt pressure to create multiple new organisations (pp. 22-3). However, they did not provide direct evidence of this fragmentation.

#### 4.2.3 *Community structures established or strengthened*

The existence of community structures is, conceptually, an aspect of empowerment (social organisation), which facilitates collective action.

Community management of schools is a broad strategy to create structures that can be accountable for education at the local level. Similarly, the establishment of SMCs, PTAs and other local-community structures can be an intermediate outcome for accountability. Such structures were widely reported in the literature reviewed for the current study. Their effectiveness, and factors affecting their effectiveness, are discussed throughout this report.

There were a few examples of initiatives that created structures other than SMCs, PTAs and their equivalents. For example, under the CGPP in Ethiopia, a number of communities formed GACs, which identified and responded to local issues affecting girls' participation in education.

**Beyene et al. (2007)** found that, in some cases, the CGPP under BESO II in Ethiopia contributed to the establishment of community organisations. The authors report that, in one case-study school, an NGO contracted to implement the CGPP regionally assisted the community in establishing a PTA. Furthermore, the provision of training by the NGO<sup>16</sup> 'helped community members to create a Girls' Advisory Committee that works to keep orphans enrolled and co-ordinates Saturday tutorials for struggling female students' (p. 49).

The ACCESS Program in Indonesia worked to either strengthen existing school committees or to establish parents' groups to work with the school committee. As in many other studies, before the project, there had been low levels of understanding of the role of the school committee, even among members. The project engaged the community more widely in nominating and electing members of the committees (who had previously often been simply appointed by the principal), provided training to undertake their roles and established more regular meeting schedules and effective meeting processes.

I was a member of the School Committee, but we didn't get involved in the school, we didn't know what we were supposed to do. We met once to sign some paper, that was all. Now, we are much more involved, we have had some training and so better understand our role. We now have some new members and we meet regularly with the head of the school to develop plans, and decide how to use operational funds. We also work closely with the parents' group. We talk to them about school plans, and we are also involved in resolving any issues or complaints raised by any of the parents in the parents' group. (Interview with parent; Klugman, 2013b, p. 16)

The ACCESS Program also created structures for confidential reporting of complaints, including establishing over 200 Community Resource and Complaints Centres, staffed by over 3,000 trained volunteers. These were used in particular to report illegal charging of fees by schools and misuse of funds (leading to increased outcomes in terms of application of sanctions): 'Parents reported that [prior to the programme], although they suspected issues of corruption or misuse of funds, they were not sure who they could discuss their concerns with. Several informants advised that, as people did not know who they could trust with their concerns, "they just kept quiet" (and did nothing)' (Klugman, 2013b, p. 10).

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<sup>16</sup> The authors do not detail what the training involved, but report that community leaders and PTAs in participating communities received training. This included organisation, morale building, taking ownership of the school, and planning.

#### 4.2.4 Stronger voice in advocacy or decision-making

There is some difficulty in identifying evidence in support of increased voice for communities in the sample of literature reviewed here. The concept and term are widely used in social-accountability literature, but not in education. In the education sector, voice can be direct (when parents or children speak on their own behalf) or indirect—for example, through participation in SMCs or PTAs. However, this constitutes a community voice only insofar as those structures are democratic (that is, elected) and act as representatives (that is, forwarding and representing the views of the wider community, rather than themselves as individuals). There are also institutions in some countries that allow collective voice and that affect education, but which are not specific to it. For example, Gram Panchayats [local self-government institution at the village level] in several Indian states have powers to make decisions about local education, allowing citizens in hamlets without schools to bring their case to the Gram Panchayat. A resulting large increase in the number of schools is credited with increasing numbers of tribal children receiving schooling (UNDP 2002; p. 75).

Pandey et al. (2009) found that the three-state information campaign in India increased the frequency of VEC meetings in the first few months after the intervention, and increased parent attendance at those meetings. They also reported the number of parents who had spoken to a teacher or a VEC member about issues such as teacher attendance, but increases were small and not statistically significant (p. 37).

Galab et al. (2013) found that the frequency of SMC meetings increased, that discussions were more purposeful in relation to school quality, and that members of SHGs were more active in raising issues for consideration and questioning both SMCs and teachers (see Section 3.7, above). SMC meetings provided an important venue for parents to challenge and put pressure on the SMC to improve their school. The study indicated that parents, who lacked schooling themselves and had previously been disengaged from the school, had become more engaged, active in monitoring school quality, and were discussing score cards with the SMC (pp. 14, 22, 25, 26). It was reported that 94% of parents in the project *mandals* claimed they had made suggestions to improve their children's school, whereas only 53% in the control group of schools had done so (Galab et al. 2013; p. 25).

It was consistently observed in the meetings at various levels that the Self Help Groups are mature and empowered. The women were articulate and confident, they could identify problems in the schools, cite instances, give reasons for the problems as well as suggest solutions. Uniformly, the women engaged the duty bearers in a dialogue with facts, figures and counter arguments. It was evident that the dialogue was on an equal footing. (Mid-term report, Betts and Menon, May 2010, pp. 20-21; cited in Galab et al. 2013)

Arvind's (2009) study of the Programme for the Enrichment of School Level Education (PESLE) in Rajasthan reported increased opportunities for voice taken up by marginalised groups and villages in various meetings for deliberation, both formal (for example, *gram sabhas*) and informal, and representation of community concerns and decisions to various authorities (Ibid., pp. 5–8). This was reported to help resolve conflict in one village (p. 7) and, in another, created a shared perspective on education, to which community leaders sought to align themselves (p. 8). In a third case, the community became an active partner in planning, monitoring and evaluation of school activities through regular meetings between the community and the school (Ibid, p. 9).

A number of instances were reported where community members chose not to exercise voice, despite a desire to do so. In some cases, this related to elections of committee members. In one community-run school, community members felt compelled to re-elect

existing committee members because the casting of votes was not anonymous (Okitsu 2011; p. 247). In one government-school committee re-election meeting, a district education official ‘openly and unilaterally opted to retain the incumbent PTA chairman’ (Okitsu 2011; p. 153). The author reported that this was unchallenged, despite one mother stating to the author before the meeting, ‘Today, we are going to elect a new executive because they [the incumbents] have been in the position for too long and are not doing their jobs’ (Okitsu 2011, p. 153).

In other cases, community members suspected of corruption were not challenged and or sanctioned by a school committee. A PCSC was unwilling to investigate and or sanction a committee member suspected of misusing donor money stating:

There is tradition to respect if one gives something. People are afraid that, if we remove him, he would claim the land back. The same PCSC chairman went on: We cannot remove him because he thinks differently to other villagers. He is literate and used to work at a bank in town; so, he could write a proposal to the donors... (Okitsu 2011, p. 247).

A final example related to perceptions of risk in acting alone: ‘We paid ZMK10,000 to the PCSC, but nothing has happened since. We want to know what happened to our money, but we are voiceless because we don’t know I am not in a position to inquire; you cannot just ask alone when others keep quiet.’ (Okitsu, 2011, p. 217)

#### 4.2.5 Participation in planned activities

Participation in planned activities is important, not only because it is an aspect of implementation (discussed in Section 5.1.6, above) and because participation in accountability processes in itself can be an indicator of empowerment. This is consistent with the notion of empowerment and accountability being *mutually constitutive*—that is, empowerment contributes to accountability and accountability contributes to empowerment. Participation by marginalised groups is of particular interest to this review, in part because it may reflect their empowerment and in part because they are likely to include significant concentrations of poor and very poor people. A few authors have expressly considered the issue of participation itself.

In Guatemala and rural Honduras, governments initiated CMS, with major administrative duties delegated to school councils controlled by parents. Often, these parents were ordinary citizens, with little education, so governments supported their participation with training and technical help. Communities faced multiple obstacles expected to severely hinder their engagement: geographical remoteness, scarcity of material resources, low levels of education, high transportation costs, insufficient project resources and weak decentralisation (Altschuler and Corrales, 2012, p. 7). Nonetheless, they did participate and did successfully establish and manage schools.

In their qualitative study of the ASP in Nicaragua, Fuller and Rivarola (1998, p. 68) reported that parent participation in the programme aside from *consejos* (school councils) was varied, but limited:

Our interviews and focus groups certainly reveal a great deal of variability in the extent to which a broader circle of parents are becoming involved. These data also suggest that involvement often comes in the form of social events and festivals, certainly a positive first step. A few parents are taking active roles in serving on *consejos*, although they are often met with skepticism and even opposition from teachers. (Ibid., p. 68)

The IDEAL programme in Bangladesh commenced in 1995 and aimed to improve the quality of primary education with regard to teaching methods, the social and physical-learning environment, and student learning. It used two primary strategies to engage communities.

School catchment-area mapping begins with a survey to identify the school-aged children in a particular geographical area. As births are not generally recorded and there is little societal pressure to register school-aged children, education officials do not know the exact number of children in the school area. This activity aims to identify all the school-aged children in a particular area so that enrollment and attendance data can be accurately determined and monitored. School planning, the second major activity, enrolls the community in school management and develops its sense of ownership of the school and the education of children. [...] School planning attempts to restore the school-community link and gives parents and community members an avenue for giving their input into school life (Schaezel, 2000, pp. 1-2).

Mozumder and Halim (2006) conducted focus groups with ‘students, teachers, mothers, school managing committee (SMC) members, *thana* education officer (TEO) and assistant *thana* education officers (ATEOs)’ (p. 152) to examine the effectiveness of the two strategies. Groups were conducted in eight sub-districts (*thanas*), with ten schools in each of five *thanas* participating in the IDEAL programme and five schools from each of three non-participating *thanas* invited to participate. They reported, that for some mothers,<sup>17</sup> participation in school planning and resourcing had increased and that the mothers ‘now have an institutionalized voice to express their views on what benefits their children’s learning’ (ibid., p. 157)<sup>18</sup>.

Taddesse et al. (2010, p. 53) reported that some community members were more likely to participate in service-improvement meetings as part of the Protection of Basic Services Program in Ethiopia, once they had been advised that they had a constitutional right to adequate service provision. Once attending, they received new and detailed information that was described as ‘empowering’:

These discussions were found by majority of focus group discussants and key informants to be empowering because for the first time many of them got clear and detailed information on the sector and their rights and entitlements. The EDC team did meet with several key informants and focus group discussants that said, “At first we were reluctant to participate for fear of annoying the local officials. However, after the NGO explained that this was about our constitutional rights to receive adequate basic services we changed our minds and begun to participate in all meetings and trainings (ibid, p. 53)”.

Galab (2013) provided significant evidence of better school accountability to parents and the SMC as a result of a participatory community-based accountability intervention. This included evidence that: SMC meetings became more regular, along with statistically significant elevation of parents’ awareness about SMC meetings and parents’ engagement with SMC members, compared to a control group. SMC agendas became increasingly purposeful over the life of the project, thereby facilitating SMC discussion of more relevant school issues. Those in VCP schools were significantly more likely to suggest school improvements than those in control groups.

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<sup>17</sup> No explanation of the focus on mothers, as distinct from parents, was provided in the report.

<sup>18</sup> It is unclear from the article whether these mothers were new participants in this aspect of school management. The increased participation of some mothers may have been in part due to targeting by the Project, but it is unclear from the description provided by the authors.

### 4.3 Intermediate outcomes

This tentative theory suggested that community-accountability and empowerment interventions could improve education outcomes through a number of different pathways. These were revised after review of papers to produce the list below and, in keeping with our hierarchy-of-outcomes model, are described as intermediate outcomes. They are:

1. Reduced corruption.
2. Reduced elite capture of interventions.
3. Improved teacher attendance.
4. Improved teaching practice (initially described as improved pedagogy).
5. Improved teaching and learning resources.
6. Improved buildings and facilities.
7. Improved parental support for education.

**Table 8:** Summary of evidence for intermediate outcomes

Intermediate outcome	Summary of evidence
Reduced corruption	There was some evidence of lower funding leakage, cheaper textbook prices and less charging of illegal fees
Reduced elite capture of interventions	There was no evidence of reduced elite capture. There was some evidence of elite capture of interventions or their benefits and some evidence that elite participation can hinder parental participation and voice
Improved teacher attendance	There was evidence of a range of levels of improved teacher attendance, in varied settings, but not in all interventions
Improved teaching practice	Mixed evidence, ranging from significant to no effect, was reported in a small number of studies
Improved teaching and learning resources	Some studies reported significant improvements in more appropriate and better resources, and their provision, and also in provision of school lunches
Improved buildings and facilities	There was limited evidence of positive improvements
Improved parental support for education	Some improvements were reported in parental support and behaviour, but few studies quantified changes or provided evidence

### 4.3.1 Reduced corruption

**Table 9:** Studies with evidence of corruption outcomes

Author	Country	Intervention	Outcomes for which evidence presented	Key Findings	Evidence
Bjorkman (2006)	Uganda	Newspaper campaign about funding allocations	Leakage of funds	Less leakage in districts with greater exposure to information	Difference-in-difference analysis of districts with/without access to newspaper reporting of entitlements
Klugman (2013b)	Indonesia	ACCESS	Reported incidence of charging illegal school fees, leakage of funds	Lower incidence of charging illegal fees, reduced leakage	Existing reports, surveys, interviews
Majeed (2011)	Philippines	Textbook Count	Prices quoted by companies tendering to supply textbooks	Quoted prices for textbooks from new bidders in 2002 less than half the prices quoted in 2001	Detailed case study from interviews, observations, official records
Reinikka and Svensson (2005)	Uganda	Newspaper campaign about funding allocations	Leakage of funds	Reduced leakage of funds	Non-experimental (econometric) analysis

Many studies have found significant levels of corruption and leakage of funds in the education sector.<sup>19</sup> Reinikka and Svensson (2004/05) reported that, in 1995, on average, only 22% of capitation grants in Uganda reached primary schools. Lewis and Petterson (2009) suggested that ‘combination of non-disbursement for bureaucratic reasons, diversion of resources to purposes other than education, and private capture by local officials and politicians’ (p. 16) was likely to account for this outcome. They also reported that, in Tanzania in 1998, only 43% of non-wage funding reached primary schools and, in Ghana in 2001, only 51% of grants reached schools (Ibid., p. 17, citing Reinikka and Smith 2004).

In the Philippines there had been a serious shortage of textbooks due to procurement problems, with one textbook being shared by six pupils in elementary schools and eight pupils in high schools (Chua 1999, cited in Majeed 2011, p. 4). Suppliers estimated that payoffs to Department of Education officials consumed 20-65% of textbook funds, and a sample survey found that 40% of textbooks were unaccounted for.

Textbook Count, which aimed to improve the quality and timely delivery of textbooks to schools, was part of a broader programme to improve procurement, including improving the transparency of procurement processes (widely advertising them and having bids opened publically and considered under observation), and developing partnerships with private enterprise to deliver books to remote schools. Community monitors checked deliveries of textbooks to make sure the titles, quantities and physical quality were

<sup>19</sup> Lewis (2009, pp. 16-17) gives data on ‘budget leakages’ for LMICs. For access to available PETS by country see <http://go.worldbank.org/HSQUS4IS20>. See also Savedoff (2008).

correct and, with school officials, formally signed off the delivery. Payment would only proceed once the delivery was accepted. In a further development, school students conducted a *textbook walk* to carry textbooks from the district office to their schools. After the first phase of the Textbook Count project, 100% of textbooks were distributed to high schools and district offices within 12 months (a cycle that had previously taken two years). Quality also improved: the level of deficiencies in the first round (in one of four zones across the country) was 14% of deliveries; By the end of the fourth zone, this was down to 5.5%.

A similar project was introduced in Bangladesh:

In Bangladesh, the 2001 school year began without textbooks because the sole supplier failed to deliver them on time. Hence, 25 million students did not have textbooks for their high-school classes, and the few books that were on hand were full of errors. After a Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) investigation to generate feedback on the availability of books, the textbook errors, and the quality of the books' printing and binding, the government filed a lawsuit against the corrupt institutions that had caused the shortage. (Arroyo and Sirker 2005, p. 5).

While data are not available about the impacts of those two interventions on student-learning outcomes, there is some evidence that textbooks make a difference to learning outcomes for higher-achieving students.

Indeed, cross-sectional and difference-in-difference analysis of Kenyan data would suggest that textbooks have dramatic effects on test scores. Results from a randomized evaluation paint a more subtle picture, however. Provision of textbooks increased test scores by about 0.2 standard deviations, but only among students who had scored in the top one or two quintiles on pre-tests prior to the program. Textbook provision did not affect scores for the bottom 60% of students (Glewwe, et al. 2002b; Kremer 2003; no page numbers)

The Ugandan campaign to provide information about the allocated amounts and due delivery date for capitation grants to cover primary schools' non-wage expenditure through public newspapers is widely known and has been widely discussed. The basic programme theory was that provision of the information would 'boost schools' and parents' ability to monitor the local officials in charge of disbursing funds to the schools' (Bjorkman 2006, pp. 1-2). There is evidence that overall leakage of funds was reduced by almost 60% between 1995 and 2002 (Reinikka and Svensson 2005a) and that rural schools with greater exposure to the program (as measured by distance from an outlet selling newspapers) 'experienced a significantly larger reduction in local capture of funds than those with low exposure' (ibid., p. 2), suggesting that access to the information played a role in generating this outcome. There is also evidence of impact of the receipt of funds on student-learning outcomes:

...students in districts highly exposed to the information campaign, and hence to the grant program, scored 0.40 standard deviations better on the Primary Leaving Exam (PLE) than students in districts less exposed to information. This corresponds to an improvement of roughly 11% in the test scores of the average student in Uganda. The result is robust to controlling for a broad range of confounding factors, including income.' (ibid., p. 2).

The ACCESS Program in Indonesia increased parents' understanding of their rights (especially to free education) and provided access to trusted complaint processes. In interviews with parents in all eight districts visited for a case study, it was reported that there had been a large decrease in the incidence of schools charging illegal fees and leakage of funds (Klugman 2013b, p. 9).

These studies, however, provided no information about the mechanisms by which any of these outcomes were generated. There was no information about what school staff or parents actually did in response to the information or whether their actions did, or could, logically account for reduced leakage of funds (the *carrots and sticks* mechanism). It is equally consistent with the evidence that those responsible for leakages modified their behaviour simply because they knew that discrepancies between allocations and amounts dispersed *could* be monitored; not because school staff or parents actually did anything to hold them to account (the *big brother is watching* mechanism).

In terms of context, the strategy had an impact in rural areas, but not in ‘urban, high test score and high funding districts’ (Bjorkman 2006 p. 22). The author suggested that, in rural areas, the difference in student-test scores was due to control districts (those with poor newspaper access) falling behind. This occurred during a period of rapid increase in enrolments, including enrolments of ‘marginal’ students across the entire primary-education system. The author concluded that, ‘The increase in the enrollment of marginal students in combination with insufficient funding caused test scores to fall in the control districts during the period’ (Bjorkman 2006, pp. 19-20), although no direct evidence for this claim was provided. Areas that received higher funding, however, were able to cope with the increase in students. This suggests that it was improvements in facilities and resources as a result of increased funding that contributed to the relatively better performance of schools in ‘intervention’ districts (those with better newspaper access).

It is also possible that poorer students, or students in poorer schools, benefited more from the campaign because the initial research into funding leakage found that, ‘poor students suffered disproportionately because schools catering to them received even less funds than others’ (Reinikka and Svensson 2004a, p. 3).

#### 4.3.2 Reduced elite capture

**Table 10:** Studies with evidence of elite-capture outcomes

Author(s)	Country	Intervention	Outcomes for which evidence presented	Key Findings	Evidence
Pandey et al. (2009)	India	Information for accountability	Access to scholarships and uniforms	Greater benefits accrued to high-caste students (who were still poor)-a negative example	Measurement of learning outcomes taken very soon after the intervention
Suzuki (2002)	Uganda	Parents perceptions of accountability	Participation in school activities	Elite domination of school structures deters other parents’ participation	Case study of four schools

We did not find evidence within this literature sample that community-accountability and empowerment interventions *reduced* elite capture of intervention benefits. Data which would allow analysis of elite capture was not usually provided in results, and sophisticated comparative data would be required to demonstrate that community-accountability and empowerment initiatives are less affected by elite capture than other interventions.

Limited evidence was found to suggest that there was, in fact, elite capture of some community accountability and empowerment interventions or of the benefits from them. In one information-for-accountability intervention in India, some greater benefits accrued to students of higher caste (Pandey et al. 2009, p. 16). The higher-caste students were, however, still poor (one benefit, automatically available to lower-caste students, was only

available to higher-caste students if they were from families living below the poverty line.) Evidence was also found that the outcomes of some interventions were greater for more capable students or those who were higher-performing at baseline (for example, Pradhan et al. 2013: positive impacts were found for Indonesian language and were strongest for higher-scoring students, [p. 33]). This may suggest elite capture, based solely on the generalisation that education outcomes tend to be better for students from wealthier backgrounds, but data were not provided to test this.

Some evidence was also found that participation by elites in SMCs can hinder other parents' participation or reduce their willingness to raise issues. In a small-scale, but 'in-depth' (p. 244) study of participation and accountability in Ugandan primary schools, Suzuki (2002) found that both indirect representation and social distance acted as barriers to accountability to parents and that SMCs could 'legitimise and reinforce the existing power structure' (p. 252).

For the majority of parents, the PTA and SMC chairpersons are both 'big people', who have a close relationship with the headteacher. Often these chairpersons hold other posts in the villages, such as LC councillor or church leader. For instance, out of nine members of SMC at Mukasa, six were LC I or II councillors, and at Omutwe four were LC I or V councillors. In such a situation, ordinary parents are reluctant to ask questions that challenge their leaders (Suzuki 2002, p. 252).

In another small-scale study, this time of five schools in the implementation of community-managed schooling in Nepal, Carney et al. (2007) argued that specific provisions of the Education Act and non-election of SMCs contributed to elite capture and that the SMC 'has tended to become an elite institution' (p. 623). However, they provided neither direct evidence to support their claims, nor evidence of the outcomes of that capture.

### 4.3.3 Improved teacher attendance

**Table 11: Studies with evidence of teacher-attendance outcomes**

Author	Country	Intervention	Outcomes for which evidence presented	Key findings	Evidence
Cant (n.d.)	Uganda	Citizen Voice and Action	Teacher attendance and punctuality	Improved teacher attendance and punctuality (after school repairs following CVA)	Interviews with officials, MPs, headmaster, SMC chair and students on varied outcomes
Duflo and Hanna (2005)	India	Tamper-proof camera and teachers' pay	Teacher attendance at non formal education centres in tribal villages	Absenteeism rate in programme schools halved over 18 months of programme (extreme delinquency eliminated); 35% of teachers had better than 90% attendance (compared to 1% of teachers in comparison schools)	RCT of 60 treatment and 60 control schools. Attendance measured through one random, unannounced visit per month
Galab et al. (2013)	India	Participatory score card	Teacher attendance	Significant increase over 18 months in percentage of schools with full attendance	Community score card (validity unclear), corroborated by interviews with parents
King and Ozler (2005)	Nicaragua	Rural ASP schools (community schools?)	Teacher attendance	Between 1995 and 1997 teacher absence reduced from 50% of teachers absent 1-2 days in past month to less than 10%	
Pandey et al. (2009)	India	State information campaign	Teacher attendance, time spent teaching	Increase in one of three states for attendance, in one for time spent teaching. No change for the state with higher baseline scores	Cluster RCT; Outcomes measured only after 2-4 months
World Bank/NRI, (2004)	PNG	Comparative study of schools	Teacher absence	Schools with higher levels of parent and community participation had lower levels of teacher absence (pp. xii, 78)	Survey of stratified random sample of schools. Some gaps in data
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory score card (compared to standardised score card)	Teacher attendance	Teachers in schools using participatory score cards 13% more likely to be in attendance than teachers in schools using standard score card	Attendance measured through unannounced visits

Teacher absence can be a major barrier to student learning. It can be due to teacher non-attendance or to delayed start due to late appointment of teachers, especially to remote

schools. For example, the PNG Public Expenditure and Service Delivery survey (NRI/World Bank 2004, p. xi) found that ‘about 13% of school days were lost due to the combined effect of late start and cumulative absence’ and that teacher absence, combined with ‘ghost teachers’ (teachers on the salary list, but not actually employed) reduced the actual number of available teachers by one-third. Steiner-Khamsi et al. (2009, p. 1) noted that reports published from 2004 to 2007 had found teacher-absenteeism rates of 20% or more in Ghana (20%), Indonesia (21%), India (25%), Uganda (27%) and Kenya (30%).

The PNG Public Expenditure and Service Delivery survey (NRI/World Bank 2004) found that schools with higher levels of parent and community participation had lower levels of teacher absence (pp. xii, 78) and that the effect held after ‘controlling for a range of school-input variables’ (p. 78). The survey covered 214 schools in 19 districts across eight provinces (out of 20 provinces in the country), with two provinces selected in each of the eight main regions, including a range of schools and communities in terms of remoteness, poverty levels, primary-enrolment rates, adult-literacy rates and retention rates (pp. 4-5). Community and parental involvement was measured by an index combining six variables about parent participation and eight variables about the relationship between the school and community members. However, the nature of the data did not enable explanations about how participation might improve teacher attendance.

Teacher non-attendance can be due to individual teacher behaviours, or to systemic problems, such as a lack of local teacher housing and unreliable transport to get to work (see, for example, Guy et al. 2003, pp. 170-1, 174). Severe weather, health issues, violence in schools (including against teachers) and teacher training were all cited as reasons for teacher absence (Steiner-Khamsi et al. 2009, p. 5).

These different reasons for non-attendance suggest different potential causal pathways through which community-accountability and empowerment initiatives may have an influence, depending on who is intended to be influenced (local teachers or regional or central education officials) and how. Some initiatives work by increasing the risk of sanctions for not attending. This may be appropriate when non-attendance is due to incompetence or corruption. Others work by fostering collective action. For example, Citizen Voice and Action initiatives have included communities working collaboratively with a range of local actors, including government, to build teachers’ houses, and thereby seek to increase the attractiveness of schools (while also seeking to improve teacher retention) in a rural district:

Ugandan children have not been afraid to raise their concerns. For example, during a community gathering in 2007 at a school in Mpigi District, 10-year-old girls said the biggest problem in their school was the lack of teacher accommodation. After the issue was raised, the community contributed their labour to build staff quarters and the district was able to fund the salaries of two new teachers. The problem in this case was not that the district was unwilling to fund additional teachers, but that the teachers were not attracted to the area because there was nowhere to live. Remarkably, these young girls prioritised their teachers’ housing over their own hunger (Cant n.d., p. 35).

Zeitlin et al. (2011) noted that teacher representation on SMCs ensured that schools using participatory score cards nominated their accommodation needs as an issue for regular monitoring (p. 13). However, no evidence was found that staff housing had improved as a

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result of this attention/process (p. 27). It remains possible that the short time frame for the research affected this outcome.<sup>20</sup>

Pandey et al. (2009), in their analysis of the three state information campaigns in India, found impacts on teacher attendance in one state and on time spent in teaching in a second. There was no impact on either indicator in the third state, which had higher baseline scores for both indicators (p. 15).

The *tamper-proof camera and teachers' pay* intervention examined by Duflo and Hanna (2005) had 'immediate and sustained' impacts on teacher presence in non-formal education centres:

Over the 18 months of the program, teachers at program schools had an absence rate of 22 percent, roughly half of the 44 percent baseline and the 42 percent at comparison schools. Some 36 percent of program teachers had better than 90 percent presence compared to only 1 percent of comparison teachers. Extreme delinquency, over 50 percent absence, was eradicated in program schools (p. 5).

In Uganda, Zeitlin et al. (2011) considered the question of whether the two score cards impacted on teacher presence. Using unannounced visits, they found that teachers in schools using the participatory score card were 13 percentage points more likely to be present in school on a randomly chosen day and described this as 'a substantial gain' (p. 21). In schools using the standardised school cards, the impact was smaller (nine points) and not statistically significant.

King and Ozler (2005, p. 23) reported that teacher attendance in rural ASP schools improved more than other schools in Nicaragua between 1995 and 1997. The authors reported:<sup>21</sup>

Teacher attendance was significantly lower in small rural autonomous schools (NERA schools) than others at the primary level in 1995. Approximately half of their teachers were absent at least 1-2 days in the last month, compared with about a quarter in other public schools. The numbers have improved for all schools in 1997, with NERA schools making the largest jump in teacher attendance, reducing the aforementioned figure to less than 10% (Ibid., p. 23).

It was reported (although no data were provided to support the statement) that the Janshala (community school) programme resulted in teachers 'being more regular in taking classes' (Pailwar and Mahajan 2005, p. 383) and that almost 70% were actively involved in school management and extracurricular activities. The authors asserted that this contributed to developing a school environment conducive to study, thereby improving enrolment and retention (p. 383), but provided no evidence to support these assertions.

A large documented improvement in teacher attendance was reported by Galab et al. (2013) in the VCP in India. As part of the intervention, parents gathered data about teacher attendance, using a school score card. At the beginning of the project, over half

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<sup>20</sup> There are significant similarities between CVA and the participatory score card tested in Zeitlin et al. (2011). However there are also differences, including the nature of the participants in the process. CVA includes local politicians, community members, parents and teachers. Zeitlin (Ibid.) involved SMCs. It is feasible that this may also affect whether accommodation for teachers is constructed and the timeframe required to do so.

<sup>21</sup> Although the ASP in Nicaragua was initially implemented from 1993 in secondary schools, it was only expanded to rural primary schools in 1995. Consequently, cross-sectional data collected in 1995 are effectively baseline data.

the schools (52%) had *green* ratings in terms of the traffic-light score card—signifying that 90-100% of teachers had been present when attendance was recorded. By the end of reporting, 18 months later, this had improved to nearly 100% of schools.

#### 4.3.4 Improved teaching practices

**Table 12:** Studies with evidence of teaching-practices outcomes

Author	Country	Intervention	Outcomes for which evidence presented	Key findings	Evidence
Arvind (2009)	India		Content and style of teaching	Use of local languages for teaching	Four case studies
Galab et al. (2013)	India	Vidya Chaitanyam	Teachers using varied teaching materials	Increased usage of varied teaching materials by all teachers in the schools	Community score cards—percentage achieving traffic-light ratings, interviews with parents and students
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory and standardised score card	Prepared lesson plans	No outcome for either intervention	RCT

Very few of the studies included in this review directly addressed pedagogy (which includes curriculum and teaching methodology, and, consequently, quality of teaching), as distinct from teacher attendance or time spent teaching in class.

Zeitlin et al. (2011) examined the impacts of both participatory and standard score-card systems on the question of whether or not teachers had prepared lesson plans on random visits. They found no effect on this indicator for either of the interventions.

Galab et al. (2013) reported significant changes in the quality of teaching. Score card data showed the percentage of green ratings (90-100% of teachers using varied teaching materials) improved from 20% to nearly 80% between September 2009 and March 2011. This was confirmed by data collected in interviews during the evaluation.

Improved teacher effort and better teaching methods were highlighted as a benefit of the project in every parental and student focus group. The students described in some detail the changes they had witnessed in teaching methods and were able to articulate the link between these methods and the impact on their learning outcomes (p. 32).

Arvind (2009) identified a range of curriculum changes in the four villages experimenting with participatory governance under the PESLE.

A number of community-schooling initiatives that have successfully increased access to education for disadvantaged populations have also deliberately constructed curricula that are responsive to local cultures and norms. These include BRAC, originally in Bangladesh and now extended to six countries (<http://education.brac.net>), and the RIVER methodology used within Janshala schools (Blum and Diwan 2007, pp. 28-30). They are not reported here because they are not outcomes of community accountability and empowerment initiatives as defined for this report.

#### 4.3.5 Improved teaching and learning resources

**Table 13:** Studies with evidence of teaching and learning resources

Author	Country	Intervention	Outcomes for which evidence presented	Key findings	Evidence
Arvind (2009)	India	Bottom-up management	Content and style of teaching? languages used	Adoption of oral history and traditions into curricula in Garhi Mewat village, use of local languages for learning	Four case studies
Galab et al. (2013)	India	Participatory score card	Quality of school meals	Percentage of schools with a green (high) rating increased from 50% at baseline to 80%	Community score card
Majeed (2011)	Philippines	Textbook Count	Physical quality, quantity and timeliness of delivery of textbooks	Improved quality, quantity and timeliness of delivery of textbooks	Detailed case study from interviews, observations, official records
World Bank (n.d.); Arroyo and Sirker (2005)	Bangladesh	Report Card on the Textbook Crisis	Availability of textbooks, extent of errors, and consequences in terms of losses incurred by students and schools	School year began without textbooks because sole supplier failed to deliver, and high error rate in few available books; following year, 'no problems' reported on textbooks issue	Survey of random sample of 636 students and 53 headmasters from high schools in 21 districts

A number of studies reported significant improvements in teaching and learning resources after implementation of interventions. The Textbook Count project, implemented in the Philippines, had two separate components of monitoring: procurement and delivery. Procurement processes were made more transparent, including public advertising of tenders, and public scrutiny of the opening of tenders, resulting in new vendors entering the market and prices charged being significantly reduced. Delivery processes were monitored by volunteers from civil society who had the authority to approve payments for delivery. In the first year, all deliveries were made to schools in time for the beginning of the school year, and there were improvements in physical quality (printing and binding) (Majeed 2011).

*The Bangladesh Report Card on the Textbook Crisis*, produced by Transparency International Bangladesh, after schools began the year with no textbooks, led to the government's taking legal action against the supplier and there being 'no problems' reported the following year.

## 4.3.6 Improved buildings and facilities

**Table 14:** Studies with evidence of buildings and facilities outcomes

Author	Country	Intervention	Outcomes for which evidence presented	Key findings	Evidence
Beck et al. (2007)	Mongolia	Local Investment Fund	Availability of student dormitories (essential in a nomadic society)	Children staying in dormitories increased by 169%	
Galab et al. (2013)	India	Vidya Chaitanyam	Toilet facilities	Percentage of schools with green rating increased initially from 10% to 30%, but then declined to 20%	Community score card
Pailwar and Mahajan (2005)	India	Janshala (community-provided schools)	Availability of school	School-unserved habitations in two blocks studied fell by 93% and 89%, respectively	

There are several examples of interventions that provide small amounts of funding to SMCs to enable them to improve school facilities, such as India's SSA programme (Dongre 2011, p. 4) and the BESO II program in Ethiopia. Local Investment Fund (LIF) projects were part of the Sustainable Livelihoods Project in Mongolia, funded through an International Development Association (IDA) loan.

As of January 2005...more than 730 projects had been approved to enhance the infrastructure of educational institutions, representing approximately 60 percent of the total number of grants awarded. In addition to enhancing local control over public resources, these education-related LIF projects enhance community involvement in Mongolian schools and empower school councils (Beck et al. 2007, p. 88).

A report on phase 2 of the programme reported on these local projects, renamed *community initiatives*: 'Children staying in school dormitories, essential in a nomadic society, increased by 169 percent; drop-out rate was reduced by 82 percent; kindergarten enrollment rate is up 69 percent' (World Bank 2011, Project Profile).

There are also a number of examples of communities contributing their own resources to improve school facilities. These are subject to differences in interpretation. The requirement for community contributions can be interpreted as an attempt to shift costs and responsibilities to communities and, therefore, as an abrogation of state responsibilities (for a discussion of this topic, see Corrales 2006). Alternatively, in a context of chronic resource shortages, as is the case in most low-income countries, significant contributions by both state and community can be seen as necessary to improving education, necessitating on-going collaborative relationships between them to deliver services adequately. Joshi and Moore (2004) refer to this as the 'institutionalised coproduction of services' (pp. 40, 46).

Some improvement was reported in the maintenance of toilet facilities assessed with a score card (Galab et al. 2013). The percentage of schools with a green (high) rating improved from a baseline of 10% of schools to 30%, but then declined to 20% by the end of reporting. No information was available about the nature of the quality assessment, or how these improvements were made.

#### 4.3.7 Improved parental support for education

**Table 15:** Studies with evidence of parental support for education

Author	Country	Intervention	Outcomes for which evidence presented	Key findings	Evidence
Cant (n.d.)	Uganda	Citizen Voice and Action	Parental payment for school lunches for children	Previously, no children came to school with food, and at least 25% would leave school at lunchtime because they were hungry; now, parents pay for school lunches for children	Interviews with officials, MPs, headmaster, SMC chair and students on varied outcomes
Klugman (2013b)	Indonesia	ACCESS	Parental support for homework	Reported more support for children's homework	Existing reports, surveys, interviews
Skoufias and Shapiro (2006)	Mexico	Quality Schools Programme	Parental participation in the school, parental supervision of homework	Increased parental participation and supervision of homework	Administrative data for 2000, 2001, 2003, for 74,700 schools, analysed using regression analysis, propensity score matching, difference-in-difference with matching
Swift-Morgan (2006)	Ethiopia	BESO Schools	Parents asking children about school, encouraging attendance and punctuality, affirming the value of education,	Improved parental behaviours	Secondary study quoting earlier evaluation report

The great majority of the initiatives reviewed for this report required some change in behaviour by at least some parents. This section considers behaviours of parents *as a whole*, as distinct from those who participate in formal structures, such as SMCs, and individual actions (as distinct from planned group actions described under *participation in activities* above). While there is some evidence that parents change private behaviours in response to community accountability and empowerment initiatives, it should be noted that few of the reports quantified either the proportions of parents and children adopting particular behaviours, or could convincingly support claims that observed improvements were the result of particular programmes.

A number of reports suggested that parents increased support for their children's learning, including supervising homework, asking children about what they had learned, and protecting time for children to go to school. For example, in BESO schools in Ethiopia:

Students also noted that their parents often encouraged them not to skip class or be late to school, and parents and students in all but one community noted that parents also encouraged their children to study, leaving them time at home to do school work and asking if they had completed assignments. As one father

remarked, “I myself am thirsty for knowledge, and so I always ask my students what they learn in the classroom.” In one women’s group, several mothers explained that even though they themselves had not been to school, they make a point of discussing school with their children. As one woman reported, ‘I ask “What did you learn, how was class?”’. . . because I want to tell my children the importance of education (Swift-Morgan 2006, p. 353).

Cant (n.d.) reported that, in Uganda, Citizen Voice and Action<sup>22</sup> resulted in increased parental understanding of the link between nutrition, hunger, school attendance and education outcomes. As one teacher reported: ‘...before CVA none of the children would come to school with food and at least a quarter of the students would leave the school at lunchtime because they were hungry. Now parents are making small cash contributions to the school in payment for a prepared lunch for their children’ (pp. 11-12).

Parents did not understand, prior to the project, that it was not the school’s responsibility to provide this. Through negotiated action, parents agreed to contribute to the cost of a school lunch for students (Cant n.d.). In Indian schools where lunches were already provided, the concern was about the quality of the meals, which improved significantly after it was focused on in a participatory score card and parents began to feel they had permission to enter the kitchen where meals were being prepared (Klugman et al. 2013b). It should be noted that adequate nutrition is important to learning and can have direct impacts on both student attendance and engagement.

The PNG Public Expenditure and Service Delivery survey (NRI/World Bank 2004) found that schools with higher parental and community participation tended to have higher student attendance (p. xii) –however, the pattern was non-linear, and positive for most, but not all, schools (p. 95). Patterns were similar for girls and boys (p. 95).

Umanzor et al. (2004) found that parents involved in ACE (Community Education Association) were more likely to be involved in sending students to school, maintaining furniture and controlling attendance than members of parents’ associations in traditional schools (pp. 15-16). While EDUCO parents were more likely to have little formal education (66% of mothers had grade 3 or below, compared with 47% of mothers of students at traditional schools), their involvement in helping with homework and reviewing notebooks was similar to that of mothers in traditional rural schools.

Beasley and Huillery (2012, p. 26) reported that community members on school committees would supervise pupil attendance or take ‘remedial actions for pupil absenteeism (usually visiting and talking to parents)’, but were less likely to do so as the distance of the student’s house from the school increased (p. 26). This finding was consistent with their prediction that distance from school would affect community members’ decisions regarding participation.

#### 4.4 Intermediate education outcomes

This section reviews studies that provide evidence of intermediate education outcomes—increased student enrolment, attendance, or engagement, or reduced drop-out or grade repetition.

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<sup>22</sup> Zeitlin et al. (2011), in testing participatory and standardised score cards, used the CVA score-card method for their participatory score card.

**Table 16:** Summary of evidence of intermediate education outcomes

Enrolment outcomes	Enrolment outcomes were reported in 10 studies. Nine reported improvements in enrolments (Zeitlin 2011; Uganda, score cards was the exception). Two reported improvements only for girls; two studies related only to early years of education; and one related to NFE.
Student attendance	Seven studies reported student-attendance impacts. Six reported positive impacts on attendance (PROHECO, Honduras, was the exception); one showed impacts only after controlling for some factors (EDUCO, El Salvador); one study provided data for girls only.
Student retention	Eight studies reported retention/drop-out rates. Six reported improvements (Zeitlin, 2011 Uganda, score cards, and Pradhan et al. 2011, Indonesia, multiple interventions, were the exceptions). One study showed impacts only after controlling for some factors (EDUCO, El Salvador).
Year-repetition rates	Three studies reported impacts on students repeating years. Only one reported positive impacts (Swift-Morgan, 2006, Ethiopia, BESO). Data provided for girls only.

#### 4.4.1 Enrolment outcomes

**Table 17:** Studies with evidence of student enrolment

STUDENT ENROLMENT				
Author	Country	Intervention	Key findings	Notes
Di Gropello (2006)	Guatemala	PRONADE	Contributed significantly to improved enrolment	Secondary study
Di Gropello (2006)	Honduras	PROHECO	Enrolment increased	Secondary study
Di Gropello (2006)	El Salvador	EDCUO	Enrolment increased	Secondary study
World Learning (2007)	Ethiopia	Community-Government Partnership Program (CGPP)	Enrolment increased in NFE. (Enrolment data for formal schools provided for one year only—no increases or decreases reported)	Evaluation report. NFE enrolment numbers are provided, but no information about how these were collected
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory and standardised score cards	No impact for either intervention	RCT
Arvind (2009)	India	Facilitated community responses to education issues	Full enrolment, from a low base, including girls.	Case study of four villages. Data not provided
Pailwar and Mahajan (2005)	India	Janshala programme	Improved enrolments of girls and marginalised groups	Percentage increases reported, but raw data not provided

#### 4. Evidence of outcomes from included studies

Swift-Morgan (2006)	Ethiopia	Basic Education Strategic Objective I (BESO) policy	Enrolments for girls 3.3% higher in participating schools than in non-participating schools	Secondary study quoting earlier evaluation report
Beasley and Huillery (2012)	Niger	School grants to SMCs	Increased enrolments for young children (Grade 2)	Randomised evaluation, 1,000 schools. Enrolment data from school self-report survey
Beck et al. (2007)	Mongolia	Local Investment Fund	Kindergarten enrolment increased by 69%	

Di Gropello (2006, p. 9) reported the PRONADE program in Guatemala had contributed to an increase in student enrolment. The program aimed to increase access to education in rural, poor and geographically isolated areas and to encourage community participation in school administration (Ibid., p. 9). PRONADE schools were managed by parent-run school committees that were responsible for the recruitment and supervision of teachers, monitoring student attendance, and management of school funds among other roles. Rojas et al. (2005, p. 4) reported that PRONADE contributed significantly to improved enrolment 'at rates of increase that surpass all other countries in the region. Guatemala's primary net enrolment rate increased from 72 percent in 1996 to 89 percent in 2003' (2005, p. 4). Di Gropello (2006, p. 33) reported that, in December 2002, PRONADE enrolments accounted for: '21 percent of primary school enrolment in rural areas and accounted for 14 percent of the total enrolment in primary education at the national level' (MINEDUC 2004). (Di Gropello 2006, p. 32)

Student enrolment at the primary level also increased in Honduras through a school-based management programme, PROHECO. The programme aimed to increase education access in rural and remote areas with schools managed by school councils (Di Gropello 2006, p. 11). Councils consisted of community members who were responsible for recruitment of teachers, monitoring of teacher and student attendance and performance, and management of school funds. Di Gropello (2006, p. 33) reports that 34,144 primary-school students were enrolled in 2000 and According to the Central Unit of PROHECO, in 2004, 87,310 students were enrolled at the pre-basic and primary level in PROHECO, representing about 11 percent of the total enrolment in rural areas.

In rural El Salvador, the EDCUO program contributed to the growth of primary student enrolments since the programme began in 1992 (Di Gropello 2006, p. 31). EDUCO schools were intended to provide pre-school and basic education (grades 1-9) in rural communities. Among other criteria, communities qualified if they had at least 28 students per grade in the community and no other available education services (Marchelli 2001, p. 9). In 2001, enrolment in grades 1-6 represented 38% of public rural enrolment and grades 7-9 accounted for 25% (Ibid., p. 31).<sup>23</sup>

In Ethiopia, the CGPP impacted on primary-school enrolments. CGPP aimed to build community capacity to improve the quality and equity of education with regard to the physical and educational school environment (World Learning 2007, p. 11). Further, the programme aimed to improve community capacity to identify educational issues that could

<sup>23</sup> It was acknowledged these results should be put in the context of a general increase in the growth of enrolments in rural areas (Di Gropello 2006, p. 31).

not be solved by the community alone and to advocate to the government that these needs be met. Community capacity was developed through training workshops that covered a variety of topics, including financial accounting and school-improvement-proposal design. Proposals were submitted to the programme-implementation body for approval and funding. In 1998, approximately 1,855,000 students were enrolled in 1,800 CGPP schools (p. 17).

Beasley and Huillery (2012) undertook a randomised evaluation of a community participation and school improvement programme in Niger, and found increased enrolment for Grade 2 students and reduced drop-out rates for Grades 1 and 2 (see Section 5.4.3, below). They interpreted this as evidence of ‘more elastic’ demand for education when children are younger, in part due to the greater expense and greater opportunity cost of education for older children (pp. 28-29).

Zeitlin et al.’s (2011) study, comparing participatory score cards with standardised (expert-based score cards), found ‘No impact of either the standard or the participatory treatment on the probability of continued enrollment ... although the participatory score-card approach appears to have been successful in boosting performance, it was not effective in addressing the problem of primary completion rates.’ (p. 18).

Arvind (2009) examined ‘case-studies of bottom-up approaches to school governance’ in India, in a study that drew from data provided by PESLE, commissioned and designed by the Agha-Khan Foundation and implemented in rural and urban communities in four Indian states (p. 3). PESLE sought to improve pupil enrolment and achievement by ‘reforming government school systems and practices’, with particular attention paid to disadvantaged children. It assembled a ‘consortium of civil society initiatives under PESLE’s umbrella for consolidating, scaling up and mainstreaming the best school practices that emerged in their specific socio-geographical contexts’ (p. 4). Arvind provided case studies of contextually adapted initiatives in four highly, but differently, disadvantaged rural community villages in Rajasthan, an Indian state with poor schooling for girls, lower-caste children and religious minorities. Major challenges faced each of these groups. In each village, NGOs facilitated deliberation and collective action to address local issues.

All villages reported that targeted schools achieved full enrolment from a low base, including better enrolment of girls. Arvind also reported that community presence was strengthened in the village schools, along with each community’s engagement with local issues, and highlighted intermediate empowerment and education outcomes in relation to them.

The Janshala programme in Jharkland, India, focused on girls, child labourers, and other especially disadvantaged groups (for example, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes - two groups of historically-disadvantaged people recognised in the Constitution of India), minorities, disabled children and children from remote, sparsely populated areas.

There has been a substantial increase in the enrolment of girls. Percentage growth rate in girls enrolment for the period 1999-2000 to 2003-04 is 113 per cent for Deoghar, whereas, for Giridih, it is 3.6 per cent for the period 1996-97 to 2003-04 (Pailwar and Mahajan 2005, p. 383).

There has also been a significant percentage increase in the enrolment growth rate of marginalised children during the program period. Of the two Janshala districts, the enrolment figures of marginalised children in Deoghar (SC 120%, ST 169% and OBC 91%) are much higher than Giridih (SC 8%, ST 20% and OBC 8%). Declining trends have been observed for out-of-school marginalised children in both Deoghar (97%) and Giridih (9%) districts’ (Ibid, p. 384).

## 4.4.2 Student attendance

**Table 18:** Studies with evidence of student-attendance outcomes

Author	Country	Intervention	Key findings	Notes
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory and standardised score cards	Increased attendance for boys and girls	
Cant (n.d.)	Uganda	Citizen Voice and Action	Substantial increase in consistent attendance	Case-study report
Duflo et al. (2009)	Kenya	Extra Teacher Program	Increased attendance by students in contract-teacher classes only	
Di Gropello and Marshall (2005)	Honduras	PROHECO	No impact on attendance	
Jimenez and Sawada (1999) and Sawada and Ragatz (2005)	El Salvador	EDUCO	Improved attendance after controlling for some characteristics (one study only)	Outcomes differ according to analytic method used
Swift-Morgan (2006)	Ethiopia	Basic Education Strategic Objective I (BESO) policy	Improved attendance for girls (a programme objective). No data re boys' attendance	Secondary study quoting earlier evaluation report
Galab et al. (2013)	India	Participatory score card	Substantial increase	Community score card, interviews with students, parents and headteachers and survey of parents from a sample of 32 participating schools and 16 non-participating schools

Zeitlin et al (2011) found 'statically and economically significant effects of the participatory score card across a range of outcomes' (p. ii) when they compared the use of participatory with 'best-practice' standard score cards in Uganda. The authors acknowledged their sample size was small and the experiment had limited statistical power, but the result was consistent and unequivocal. They reported 'economically substantial and statistically significant' estimated impacts of the 'participatory treatment' on increases in pupil attendance of between 8% and 10% (p. 20, Table 4). Furthermore, although female pupils were significantly more likely to attend school than boys, this impact was not restricted to girls. They concluded that their comparison highlighted the relative advantages of a participatory monitoring mechanism and process.

Duflo et al. (2009) found, in their study of contract teachers and SMC monitoring of teachers that:

[S]tudents of contract teachers were 1.5 percentage points more likely to be in school than students of civil-service teachers in the same schools. This corresponds to an 11-percent decrease in absenteeism among students of contract teachers, significant at the 5-percent level. Since we found in Table 2 that the ETP program reduced the rate of class presence by civil service teachers, while that of contract

teachers was significantly higher than the class presence of teachers in comparison schools, a plausible interpretation of the effect of the program on student's presence is that students come to school more if their teacher teaches more (pp. 10-11).

This finding was not a result of SMCs' monitoring of teachers, but it does suggest that community-accountability and empowerment interventions that increase effective teacher time in the classroom may improve student-learning outcomes, in part by improving student attendance.

In their examination of student data from PROHECO schools, Di Gropello and Marshall (2005, p. 351) concluded that student absence had not reduced relative to traditional schools.<sup>24</sup>

Jimenez and Sawada (1999) and Sawada and Ragatz (2005) both investigated whether student attendance had improved under the EDUCO Program. The two studies used different statistical methods and included slightly different numbers of schools in the analysis. Jimenez and Sawada (1999, p. 437) used a sample of 30 EDUCO schools and 101 traditional schools and controlled for household, school, and community-participation characteristics.<sup>25</sup> They found that an EDUCO student was less likely to be absent. Sawada and Ragatz (2005, p. 296) compared the effects of administrative activities and teacher behaviour on student attendance using a sample of 37 EDUCO schools with 96 traditional schools and found no statistically significant difference.

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<sup>24</sup> However, they noted that it was difficult to obtain clean data on attendance (p. 353). Furthermore, they acknowledged that their statistical approach to control for systematic differences between PROHECO and traditional schools may not have corrected this (p. 315).

<sup>25</sup> A key issue with their statistical analysis was whether they had corrected for bias due to the participation of potentially more effective schools in the EDUCO Program. Gertler et al. (2007, p. 20) note that Jimenez and Sawada's execution of their chosen approach was likely ineffective.

## 4.4.3 Retention and repetition rates

Table 19: Studies with evidence of student retention or repetition outcomes

<b>STUDENT RETENTION</b>				
<b>Author</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Key findings</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Arvind (2009)	India	Facilitated responses to local-education issues	Increased retention, especially for girls	School records used for retention data
Pailwar and Mahajan (2005)	India	Janshala	Reduced drop-out rate	Data not provided
Pradhan et al. (2013)	Indonesia	Four interventions in seven combinations	No significant impact on drop-out rates	High-quality multiple-comparison design
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory and standardised score cards	No impact for either intervention	RCT
Beasley and Huillery (2012)	Niger	School grants to SMCs	Decreased drop-outs for young children (Grades 1 and 2; significant for boys in Grade 1 and girls in Grade 2)	Randomised evaluation, 1,000 schools. Enrolment data from school self-report survey
Beck et al. (2007)	Mongolia	Local Investment Fund	Drop-out rate reduced by 82%	
Umanzor et al (1997); Jimenez and Sawada (1999)	El Salvador	EDUCO	Contradictory findings. Drop-out rate reduced after controlling for some characteristics (one study only)	Outcomes differ according to analytic method used
Skoufias and Shapiro (2006)	Mexico	Quality Schools Programme	Significant decrease in drop-out rates (0.24 percentage points). Lesser decreases achieved with shorter participation in programme. No significant impact on Indigenous schools	Administrative data for 74,700 schools. Regression analysis, propensity score matching, difference-in-difference with matching
<b>YEAR REPETITION</b>				
<b>Author</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Key findings</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Pradhan et al. (2013)	Indonesia	Four interventions in seven combinations:	No significant impact on year-repetition rates	High-quality multiple-comparison design
Swift-Morgan (2006)	Ethiopia	Basic Education Strategic Objective I (BESO) policy	Year-repetition rates for girls improved to below the national average, in just over half of 700 participating schools. No data re: boys' attendance	Secondary study quoting earlier evaluation report
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory or standardised score card	No detectable difference	RCT

Swift-Morgan (2006) reported that the Basic Education Strategic Objective I (BESO) policy in Ethiopia contributed to reducing year-repetition rates for girls. No data were provided in relation to boys. The BESO I initiative began in 1994 with the aim of improving the quality and equity of primary education (Beyene et al. 2007, p. 45). It incorporated several strategies, including the Community School Action Plans (CSAP). This focused on building the capacity of SMCs to plan and implement school improvement initiatives (Swift-Morgan 2006, p. 345)<sup>26</sup> in addition to promoting girls' education and safety. It is unclear in the author's report whether it was the gender focus in the programme that resulted in better outcomes for girls and, if so, how it did so. However, girls' enrolments increased and positive impacts for girls' repetition rates were reported in just over half of the participating schools.

At the end of CSAP, USAID and World Learning reported that in roughly 53 percent of the seven hundred targeted schools, female repetition rates 'fell below the national grade four average of 11 percent' over the five-year life of the project (USAID/Ethiopia 2003, p. 26). Moreover, girls' primary enrollment in 2000 was found to be 3.3 percent greater in schools participating in the grants program than in non-CSAP schools (p. 345).

Beasley and Huillery's (2012) analysis of the Niger school-improvement programme found significant reductions in Year 1 drop-out rates for boys and Year 2 drop-out rates for girls, which they interpreted to be part of increased demand for education, resulting from the programme (pp. 28-29).

Different analyses of data pertaining to EDUCO schools found different results in terms of school retention/drop-out rates. Analysis of data collected in October 1996 from a sample of 311 schools, which compared actual drop-out rates (defined as the number of students who had abandoned school during the course of the academic year as a percentage of the total who matriculated) found they were higher in EDUCO schools (12%) than in traditional rural schools (8%) (Umanzor et al. 1997, p. 21).

Jimenez and Sawada (2003) analysed the same data using regression analysis, where they control for differences in initial test scores, household background and grade availability, and found different results. On the basic specification of the model, the co-efficient on the EDUCO dummy variable was positive and statistically significant: 'Being in an EDUCO school was associated with a greater probability of continuing in school' (p. 20). When a community-participation variable was added to the regression equation (the number of times parents visited classrooms, which was 3-4 times higher than in traditional schools): 'The result was a decline in the magnitude and level of significance of the EDUCO coefficient. At the same time, a positive and reasonably significant community-participation effect on school continuation emerged (Table 3, specifications 4 and 5). These results suggest that a significant portion of positive EDUCO effect can be explained by community participation' (Ibid, p. 22).

Zeitlin et al. (2011) in Uganda found 'no detectable difference in rates of progression across the treatments [either type of score card] considered in the study' (p. 18), despite finding a clear statistical association between the participatory monitoring regime and student results.

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<sup>26</sup> The author quotes a World Learning report that stated SMCs were composed of school staff and influential members of the community, and 'occasionally parents' (Swift-Morgan 2007, p. 345).

Among outcomes reported in the initiatives in four highly, but differently, disadvantaged rural community villages in Rajasthan, as studied in Arvind (2009), were various community efforts and initiatives, adapted to local context, to increase retention rates, which villagers had discovered to be low after gaining access to school records; reportedly, at least some of these efforts were successful. In each village, NGOs facilitated deliberation and collective action to address local issues. As noted in Section 4.3.4, villages adopted measures to make schooling acceptable and appropriate to local culture, including use of local languages for learning. In Garhi Mewat village, other changes included altered school hours to allow children to attend religious education in the local *madrassa*, the adoption of rich oral history and traditions into curricula (p. 6), resulting in an ‘appreciable gain in student enrolment and retention’ (p. 6). In Talvarsha village, as a result of effective pedagogic practices, awareness of rights and building of a common understanding of the school’s role, children of several castes stopped accompanying their parents on their seasonal hunt for livelihood and reportedly stayed in school (p. 8). In Alipur, a remote rural village, the school was reportedly dysfunctional because of the long-term absence of its regular teacher. The local NGO helped the village community to articulate and raise the issue at *panchayat* and block-level forums, resulting in transfer of the absentee teacher. A newly appointed teacher was given a mandate to reform the school, and, with civic support, strengthened the school’s operation and its pedagogic resources and reached out to children—making school structures, pedagogic resources and school timing more flexible—especially for girls who were able to ‘log in to the school’ at varying hours, even if they only came for an hour (pp. 8-9). These measures reportedly contributed to full enrolment and increased retention, especially among girls (p. 8).

Pailwar and Mahajan (2005) reported that, as a result of community mobilisation, sensitisation and participation—the primary strategies for community engagement used in the Janshala programme—community members became proactive in monitoring the enrolment, attendance and performance of children, and reported (without providing data in support) that this led to reductions in the drop-out rates, to 0% and 15%, respectively, in the two blocks sampled (p. 382).

Students in EDUCO schools in El Salvador had similar daily absenteeism and repetition rates to students in traditional rural schools, but had higher drop-out rates during the year (12% compared to 8%) (Umanzo et al. 1997, p. 21).

### 4.5 Student-learning outcomes

#### 4.5.1 Overview of studies with evidence of education outcomes

This section examines those studies with evidence of learning outcomes. As learning outcomes are the focus of this review, greater detail is provided about each of these studies below the summary table.

**Table 20:** Summary of evidence for student-learning outcomes

Locations of studies	India (5 studies, 7 interventions); Indonesia (1 study, 4 interventions); Kenya (1 study, 1 intervention); Uganda (3 studies, 2 interventions); El Salvador (3 studies, 1 intervention); Nicaragua (2 studies, 1 intervention); Guatemala (1 study, 1 intervention)
Learning-outcome measures	Almost all studies considered language and mathematics. Multiple kinds of measures were used—some used schooling-system academic results and some introduced specific assessments for the studies. The validity of some measures is questionable
Impacts on learning	Unequivocal impacts from high-quality studies are relatively rare. Studies using high-quality measures of multiple subjects/indicators for multiple-year levels rarely found significant impacts on learning for all indicators or all students groups. Impacts on language/literacy were somewhat more common than impacts on mathematics. Where multiple studies examined the same intervention, different results were sometimes reported due to differing methodologies
Intervention types	Some interventions in all categories (accountability interventions, decentralisation/school-based management and community schools) reported positive impacts. Several interventions with positive impacts on student learning increased face-to-face teaching, by using volunteer teachers, employing additional teachers, or increasing teacher attendance

Table 21: Studies reporting student-learning outcomes data

Author	Country	Intervention	Outcome Measures	Key Findings	Evidence
Banerjee et al. (2010)	India	Three interventions: information re: VEC roles; information + student assessment; information + student assessment + volunteer-run 'reading camps'	Reading skills Mathematics	No impact on student-learning outcomes for first two interventions. Teaching volunteers had 'very large' effect on literacy, but not numeracy. Around 8% of children participated in reading camps	RCT design.
Duflo and Hanna (2005)	India	Monitoring teacher attendance in one-teacher, NFE centres in rural India; pay linked to attendance	Oral or written test Mathematics Language	Positive impacts by mid-test. Impacts stronger for students with higher initial scores. No positive impact for students scoring below the median at pre-test	RCT design. Results only significant when controlling for student pre-scores
Galab et al. (2013)	India	Vidya Chaitanyam Project		Increase in 'A' grades given by teachers—relationship to actual learning outcomes unknown	Data collected through community score-cards; validity unknown
Pailwar and Mahajan (2005)	India	Janshala (community school) programme in Jharkhand state	Language Mathematics	'Average improvement of nearly 5% in language and mathematics grades for students in both districts'	Student learning data not provided. Small sample; unclear if student learning data relates to sample or whole district
Pandey et al. (2009)	India	Community-based information campaign re: decision-making structures and individual entitlements in three states of India	Mathematics Language	Positive impact for language in one grade each in two states, in writing for one grade and mathematics for other grade in third state	Cluster RCT design. Outcomes data collected 2 to 4 months after campaign.
Pradhan et al. (2013)	Indonesia	Four interventions in seven combinations: block grants; SMC training, election of SMCs, links with village councils	Mathematics Language	Improvements in language scores for linkage, and linkage + elections interventions. No impact on mathematics scores	High quality multiple comparison design
Duflo et al. (2009)	Kenya	Extra Teacher Program. Additional contract teacher, smaller class sizes, with or without training for SMCs in monitoring and assessing teacher performance	Mathematics Language	Positive impacts for students of contract teachers where parents were trained to monitor teachers sustained one year past intervention. Impacts for other groups not sustained	RCT design

Enhancing community accountability, empowerment and education outcomes in low and middle-income countries

Bjorkman (2006)	Uganda	Newspaper campaign to publicise amounts of funding and dates due for Ugandan primary schools	Test scores	Students with larger exposure to newspapers had 11% higher test scores on average	Difference-in-difference approach to analysis of average test scores
Reinikka and Svensson (2005)	Uganda		Primary Leaving Exam	Higher rates of exposure to information correlated with higher levels of funding received and with better student-learning outcomes	Non-experimental (econometric) analysis
Zeitlin et al. (2011)	Uganda	Participatory community score cards compared to standardised community score cards	Literacy and numeracy	Increased scores for participatory score cards, but not for standardised score cards	RCT design. Small sample (100 schools total)
Umanzor et al. (1997)	El Salvador	EDCUO Program: decentralised/community schools in targeted rural communities	Mathematics Language	Equivalent learning outcomes, despite lower socio-economic status (SES)	Systematic sample of 311 schools
Jimenez and Sawada (1999)				Learning outcomes not statistically significant. Higher levels of parental visits improved learning outcomes	Regression analyses to identify community-participation impact
Sawada and Ragatz (2005)				Teachers in EDUCO schools spent more time teaching and met with parents more often, both correlated with student-learning outcomes	Different statistical methods generated different patterns of statistical significance
King and Ozler (2004)	Nicaragua	Autonomous Schools Program	Mathematics Spanish	Higher levels of autonomous decision-making significantly correlated with improved learning outcomes	Matched comparison design
Parker (2005)				No clear relationship between autonomy, teacher behaviours and student-learning outcomes	Multi-level modelling; Propensity score matching
Vasquez (2012)	Guatemala	PRONADE	Reading Mathematics first and third-grade students	'Comparable student learning, after controlling for differences' for first grade; comparable to rural schools for third grade	Comparison across PRONADE schools, bilingual schools and traditional schools

**Pandey et al. (2009)** investigated the impacts of a community-based information campaign in 340 villages in three states of India, conducted from February 2006 to August 2007 (the implementation phase in each state was shorter than this). The trial aimed to determine the impact of information dissemination on learning and other school outcomes.

The information campaign gave information to the community, village education committees and parent teacher associations on their oversight roles in school management, as well as the services they are entitled to. Our hypothesis was that school outcomes may improve if the community has detailed information about the control it has over the schools and the services parents are entitled to from the school (p. 3).

In each village, eight to nine public meetings were held, targeting different caste groups. The information resources were “a short film of six minutes, poster, wall painting, take-home calendar and a learning assessment booklet” (p. 9). The learning-assessment booklet provided information about expected standards for the participating grades and materials that would enable a parent to assess their own child’s learning. In one state (Karnataka), an extra two minutes was added to the short film, providing information about the economic benefits of education and advocating that the community should monitor learning in schools.

Outcomes evaluation was undertaken two-to-four months after the campaign, using face-to-face surveys conducted by trained, research assistants, blinded to allocation. Student-learning outcomes, teacher behaviours, student access to entitlements (uniforms, meals and scholarships) and parental and committee-member monitoring behaviours were analysed.

In two of three states, mathematics and language-learning outcomes were assessed for three grades. There was a positive impact for language for one grade in both states. In Karnataka, two grades were tested and the impact was positive for writing (a subset of language) for one grade and mathematics for the other grade.

These learning outcomes might be explained by other interim outcomes (changes in teacher behaviour for example, see Section 4.3.4 below), but it is also possible that use of the learning-assessment booklet by parents affected learning outcomes (the equivalent of a *teach to the test* effect). This possibility was not discussed in the report. Student-learning outcomes were not analysed by caste, although some of the other student outcomes (see Section 4.2.1, below) showed better outcomes for higher-caste students. The relative weakness of the testing method, the short time frame between intervention and data being collected, and the patchy nature of impacts are all cause for treating these findings with some caution.

**King and Ozler (2004)** investigated the relationship between the implementation of ‘autonomy’ in Nicaraguan schools and the impact on student-learning outcomes. Autonomy in this context implied, among other things, establishment of a school council with responsibility for management and administration of the school.

King and Ozler used a matched comparison design of 80 autonomous government schools and 46 traditional government and private schools. Within the control group, they distinguished between ‘*de jure*’ autonomy (having signed an agreement with the Government to operate as an autonomous school) and ‘*de facto*’ (‘real’) autonomy (the extent to which the school took autonomous decisions). *De jure* autonomy made no difference to student-learning outcomes. *De facto* autonomy significantly improved student-learning outcomes in Mathematics and Spanish. There was a statistically

significant correlation between the proportion of decisions taken and student-learning outcomes, with higher rates of autonomy having stronger impacts. The correlation was 'non-negligible', showing 'an increase in the number of decisions made at the school level that would take a school from the 25th to the 75th percentile (moving from making 36% of key school decisions to 61%) is associated with an increase in math and language scores by 0.2 and 0.1 standard deviations, respectively' (p. 15).

Furthermore, it was administrative decisions such as hiring and firing of personnel, incentives for teachers and leaders, and budget use, which were associated with improved outcomes, rather than pedagogical decisions or teachers self-reported autonomy in pedagogical matters. The authors suggest that autonomous schools may 'extract more effort from their teachers' (pp. 20-21); that attendance of teachers in small, rural autonomous schools improved (pp. 23-24); that more autonomous schools made bonus payments to teachers, 'presumably tied to performance and attendance of their teachers' (p. 26); and that 'In particular, focusing on decisions related to hiring and firing of personnel and their compensation illustrates the pathway through which local decision-making power positively affects student achievement' (p. 25).

While this study clearly distinguished active decision making at local level as being important, it did not identify whether staff or school councils made those decisions or the extent to which local community voice was significant in the decision making.

**Banerjee et al. (2010)** evaluated three interventions in India, each of which operated within the existing framework of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA—the Education for All Movement), which is the Indian Government's primary policy aimed at achieving universal primary education. VECs are 'the primary channel of participatory action under the SSA' (p. 6).

Membership, roles and responsibilities of VECs vary across Indian states. In Uttar Pradesh, where the study was undertaken, VECs comprise: 'the elected head of the village government, the headteacher of the local government school, and three parents of children enrolled in the village public schools. The parent members of the VECs are nominated by block-level public officials (the block is the first administrative level above the village)' (p. 6).

It is perhaps important to note here that VECs do not operate at the level of single schools (villages may have several schools):

VEC's are responsible for monitoring performance of public schools by visiting the schools, scrutinizing records, meeting teachers, parents, and children, and devising solutions to address any problems encountered. They are entitled to claim specified public monies and powers for this purpose—such as public grants for school development, the power to mobilize community contributions toward school improvement, and the power to identify and hire community members if the school needs additional teachers... These community teachers are called Shiksha Mitras; they are usually paid by the state government (in some cases, the community pays for them), but the community has the responsibility for overseeing them (p.8).

The first intervention used local neighbourhood discussions to invite residents to village-wide meetings, where information was provided about the roles and resources of VECs. Written information about VEC roles and responsibilities was also provided, in a personal visit to VEC members (p. 8). The second intervention repeated these strategies and added training for volunteers in each neighbourhood to administer a literacy test to children, record their scores and enrolment status, prepare a neighbourhood report using the data, and report the neighbourhood data to a village meeting (pp. 4-5). Neither of these

interventions generated intended outcomes in terms of the intermediate outcomes of large group indirect or direct control over public schools through participation by any of the players (the parents, the VEC, the teacher) - nor did they improve school performance. (p. 5).

The results from the evaluation show that none of the three intervention methods managed to significantly increase involvement in the public schools by any of the players (the parents, the VEC, the teacher), nor did they improve school performance (attendance of children, attendance of teachers or community participation in schools).

The third intervention added one more component: volunteers were trained in a particular approach to teaching reading and then set up reading classes for children, independent of the school system (p. 9). This component was

...a clear success. It succeeded in mobilizing a large number of volunteers from the villages, who signed up for the Pratham training and then set up reading classes in their village: More than 400 reading camps were held across 55 villages. Almost 7,500 children enrolled (more than 130 children per village) suggesting that there were enough parents and children who were keen to improve their children's education. (p. 5)

This represents 8% of children in villages in which the third intervention was conducted. For that group of children,

The reading camps had very large effects on learning: ... Our instrumental variables estimate suggest that the average child who could not read anything at baseline and who attended the camp was 60 percentage points more likely to decipher letters after a year than a comparable child in a control village. The average child who attended the camp and who could decipher letters, but not words, in the baseline was 26 percentage points more likely to be able to read and understand a story than a comparable child in the control villages. (p.5)<sup>27</sup>

**Duflo et al. (2009)** examined the ETP in Kenya. The programme combined two elements: provision of funds to employ an additional, contract (that is, non-civil-service) teacher and training of SMCs to monitor and assess the performance of teachers. One hundred and forty schools participated in the study, 70 as control schools and 70 employing contract teachers. Of the 70 with contract teachers, 35 received the training for SMCs. These are described as SBM schools, but, in fact, the only training provided and the only additional roles required related to monitoring and assessing teachers.

In those schools, school committees held a formal review meeting at the end of the first school year of the program (in November 2005) to assess the contract teacher's performance and decide whether to renew his or her contract or to replace her. The school committee members were taught techniques for soliciting

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<sup>27</sup> The authors theorised that the difference in the effectiveness of the interventions may be because: 'large-group mechanisms make very different demands on the community than small-group mechanisms. The fact that the interventions got so many people to volunteer for read camps, but almost entirely failed to influence involvement with the VECs, might then reflect the community's expectations about the efficacy of the large-group mechanisms—if you do not believe that these mechanisms work, there is no reason to invest in them.' However, no evidence was offered for this interpretation, and other interpretations are also possible (see the nature of information and membership of school management committees in Section 5 below).

input from parents and checking teacher attendance. A formal sub-committee of first-grade parents was formed to evaluate the contract teacher and deliver a performance report at the end of the first year. (p. 7)

Sixty students from participating grades from each school were randomly selected and tested on Mathematics and language skills. The assessment was repeated 12 months after the end of the intervention to divine longer-term outcomes. Simply reducing class sizes by adding an additional teacher did not significantly affect learning outcomes. Students allocated to a contract teacher did achieve better learning outcomes by the end of the intervention, probably in part due to the different incentives applying to contract teachers.<sup>28</sup>

The SMC initiative had a statistically significant impact on attendance of contract teachers, but not on the time they spent in the class teaching, which was already high. However, in the short term, it increased the time that civil-service teachers spent in the class teaching, and those students' learning outcomes improved. A perverse outcome was also noted, however. In schools where contract teachers were employed, but the committee monitoring intervention was not used, civil-service teachers reduced their time teaching, in effect moving their workload over to contract teachers (p. 15).

At the follow-up assessment, only students of contract teachers in SBM schools maintained better learning outcomes. A little over half of all schools maintained the contract-teacher position using their own funds, but SBM schools were more likely to retain the same teacher, providing continuity of teaching, and were more likely to maintain the teacher with the same class, thereby maintaining smaller class size for that cohort.

**Duflo and Hanna (2005)** examined an intervention to increase monitoring of teachers in one-teacher, NFE centres in rural India. Teachers were given a camera 'with tamperproof date and time functions' (p. 2) and a student was required to take a photograph of the teacher and students at the beginning and end of the school day. Specific requirements were set for the length of the school day and the number of students who were required to be in attendance. Teachers' pay was directly linked to their attendance. The programme resulted in increased attendance by teachers (see Section 4.3.2, below, for more detail):

...because they had better attendance records than their comparison school counterparts, teachers at treatment schools taught for the equivalent of 54 more child days (or a third more) per month. Student attendance was the same in both groups, but more teaching meant more learning for children in treatment schools. A year after the start of the program, their test scores were 0.17 standard deviations higher than those of children in comparison schools. (p. 6)

Impacts on student-learning outcomes were stronger for students with higher initial test scores. Girls gained slightly more than boys, but the difference was not statistically significant (p. 21).

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<sup>28</sup> A number of differences may have contributed to these outcomes. Contract teachers are supposed to teach a single class for all subjects, whereas civil-service teachers often teach particular subjects and rotate through classes. Contract teachers had the same basic formal qualification as civil-service teachers, but were younger and faced different incentives. Being in a contract-teacher class also increased student-attendance rates and reduced attrition, particularly for boys, from the follow-up assessment.

**Pailwar and Mahajan (2005)** reported on the implementation of the Janshala (community school) programme in Jharkhand state, India. This programme, a predecessor of the SSA, was a collaborative effort between Government and multilateral organisations in India from 1992 to 2005, and operated in nine Indian states. The programme aimed ‘to enhance and sustain community participation in effective school management and the protection of child rights; to improve performance of teachers in the use of interactive, child-centred and gender-sensitive methods of teaching in multi-grade classrooms; and to improve attendance and performance of “difficult-to-reach” groups of children, especially girls...’ (p. 378). The Janshala response centred on deliberate processes to mobilise communities, sensitise them about the importance of and right to primary education, and to engender community involvement in and ownership of schools (pp. 378-9). These processes were embedded in a three-pronged strategy. The first prong was the formation and structuring of ‘institutions’<sup>29</sup> for community participation. The second prong involved the design, modelling and implementation of extensive and inclusive local participatory micro-planning processes. The third comprised drives and campaigns to raise community awareness, increase participation in school management, and improve child attendance and performance, especially by disadvantaged children. Janshala provided training, which aimed to institutionalise community participation and empower communities to manage and maintain their schools, together with monitoring and other education-relevant tasks (p. 380). As well as improvements in teaching time, student access and attendance (as reported below), the authors’ study of 32 schools in two blocks reported that an ‘average improvement of nearly five percent has been observed in the grades of students of both the districts in language and mathematics during the program period’ (p. 384). However, there are a number of weaknesses in the study. Firstly, it draws on a very small sample of schools (32 schools from two blocks). Secondly, no student-learning outcomes data are provided. Thirdly, no research or evaluation method to attribute outcomes to the intervention (for example, construction of a counterfactual, or detailed tracking of education outcomes against programme strategies) was apparent in the report.

**Pradhan et al. (2013)** conducted a randomised control trial to investigate the effects of four interventions, combined in various ways, on student test scores in Indonesian primary schools. The study was designed to test the impact of social capital, as compared to human and financial capital, on education outcomes. The interventions included the provision of small block grants to school committees (as a single intervention for one group of schools), and then various combinations of the block grant with provision of school-management training to committee members, election of school committees, and linkage of committees with village councils. The interventions were tested in regions selected because they had ‘few large education projects active’ and because ‘conditions were hypothesized to be ripe for community engagement to flourish—the area is peaceful, has reasonably high levels of existing social capital, and schools are relatively well equipped (high levels of electricity, adequate number of teachers, etc.)’ (Pradhan et al. 2013, p. 19).

Tests in Mathematics and language were administered to fourth-grade students in January 2007 and to sixth-grade students in December 2008, (the Indonesian school year starts and ends in July). They found statistically significant improvements in language scores in schools that received the linkage intervention, and linkage together with elections (Ibid, p. 30): ‘Two years after the start of the project, linkage, and linkage plus elections show a

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<sup>29</sup> Institutions included ‘...the Village Education Committee (VEC), Panchayat Education Committee (PEC), Block Education Committee (BEC), Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Mata Samities (MS: Mothers’ Group), Self Help Groups (SHG), and Prerak Siksha Samities (PSS: motivating groups)’ (p. 380).

positive impact on learning. Indonesian test scores increase by 0.17 standard deviations for linkage and 0.23 standard deviations for linkage plus elections.’

Stronger effects were reported for girls than for boys. In Indonesian, but not Mathematics, effects were stronger for higher-achieving students (p. 33): ‘The effect sizes are 0.16 standard deviations for boys and 0.19 for girls. For girls, we also find a positively significant effect of 0.11 standard deviations of the linkage intervention on math scores’ (Ibid., p. 32).

The authors reported no statistically significant impacts on test scores for training of committee members, nor elections, or any other combinations of the interventions (Ibid., p. 30)<sup>30</sup>. They noted that impacts of the interventions on Mathematics test scores may have been more difficult to detect because ‘the endline Mathematics test was much harder than the baseline test’ (Ibid., p. 31).

In the linkage initiative, facilitated meetings were held initially between the school principal and the school committee to develop their proposals to improve education outcomes. Then:

These measures were discussed in a subsequent meeting with village council representatives and other village officials, and the results of the meeting were documented in a memorandum of understanding signed by *the head of the school committee, the head of the village council, and the school principal*. Examples of measures that parties collaborated on included building school facilities, establishing village study hours (two hours in the evening when households would turn off televisions and computer-game kiosks would be closed), hiring contract teachers, making land available for school infrastructure expansion, resolving conflicts between two schools in a community and encouraging social and religious activities at school. (Ibid., pp. 18-19).

The proportion of schools that implemented these initiatives is unclear. Teachers also reported increased teaching hours (of about one hour per week) under the linkage model (p. 67) and this may have contributed to the outcome. The authors attribute the outcome, however, to the authority of the village council:

Linkage possibly has strong learning effects because the school committee in Indonesia, like VECs in India, has no power. Engaging the more powerful village council leads to concrete actions on the ground and increases the legitimacy of the co-sponsored initiatives developed as a result of the joint meetings. (p. 7)

We think that the success of the linkage intervention results from the fact that a more powerful community institution, the village council, was involved in the planning of the activities. This provided the legitimacy needed to ensure that actions that could improve learning were implemented. (p. 41).

A couple of other issues should be taken into account in interpretation of these results. Firstly, schools in the linkage-plus-elections intervention scored higher at baseline on a school-based management index. The authors controlled for this in the main results (p.

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<sup>30</sup> Dilemmas with implementation were acknowledged in the report. Of 190 schools assigned to the election intervention, for example, only 48% completed it as designed. Another 44% implemented it partially, meaning that previously under-represented groups (primarily parents) were elected, while previous members continued in their roles. The implementation and measurement of the grant intervention was undermined by significant delays in the distribution of grant funds. Results, therefore, reflect receipt of only one funding tranche.

29). However, it remains possible that better-managed schools were those most able to benefit from that intervention. Secondly, the interventions were tested in rural areas because the authors hypothesised that ‘accountability would be easier to engender in smaller, closer-knit areas’ (p. 20).

A number of studies have examined the linkages between various aspects of the EDUCO Program and student-learning outcomes. The EDUCO Program, which commenced in 1990, targeted rural communities in El Salvador in accordance with eligibility criteria (Sawada and Ragatz 2005, p. 262). The Program established school education associations (AGEs) that had legal authority to make school-management decisions. AGEs consisted of five community members elected by parents of enrolled students. AGEs were responsible for the administration of school funds, the recruitment and retrenchment of teachers, and the monitoring of teacher attendance among other roles (Ibid., p. 258).

**Umanzor et al. (1997)** published the first report on parent participation and student-learning outcomes in EDUCO. The study compared EDUCO schools to traditional public schools in rural areas through a systematic sample of 311 schools, drawing on interviews with the school director, the third-grade teacher, five randomly selected third-grade students, these students’ parents, and two members of the parents’ association. Language and Mathematics achievement tests were administered to third-grade students. They found that third-grade students in these schools achieved equivalent learning outcomes in Mathematics and language as students in traditional rural public schools—even though families in EDUCO schools had lower SES, lower levels of maternal education, and worse school and home facilities in terms of electricity and access to piped water (pp. ii, 9, 18, 20).

While the EDUCO school had poorer facilities overall, they had a number of features that might also have contributed to the learning outcomes. Classrooms in EDUCO schools were more likely to have a textbook for each student (this was emphasised in their approach), and to have a classroom library. While teachers in EDUCO schools had less experience (four years on average compared to eight for traditional schools), and tended to be younger (27 compared to 34), and were more likely to be university educated.

**Jimenez and Sawada (1999)** compared EDUCO student test scores and student attendance to those in traditional schools. As part of their analysis, they also investigated the involvement of parent associations in EDUCO schools. Although average third-grade EDUCO students’ Mathematics and language scores were slightly lower than those of students in traditional schools, no statistically significant difference was detected (Ibid., p. 425). A number of different regression analyses were then conducted. Comparison of the outcomes across these analyses suggested that community participation contributed to outcomes for EDUCO students.<sup>31</sup> The community-participation variable was constructed from teacher surveys based on the reported number of classroom visits by education association members. The authors noted: that ‘EDUCO parent associations visit classrooms more than once a week, which is three to four times more often than their traditional counterparts’ (Ibid., p. 427). They reported that (if the pattern held) an additional classroom visit per week could increase Mathematics and language-test scores by 3.8% and 5.7%, respectively (Ibid., p. 431).

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<sup>31</sup> Jimenez and Sawada (1999) used *instrument variable analysis* to correct for bias from the potential participation of better schools in the EDUCO Program. Gertler et al. (2007, p. 20) note that the instruments used by Jimenez and Sawada to correct for this bias had limitations.

**Sawada and Ragatz (2005)** investigated whether teacher behaviours impacted on student test scores. Using teacher-reported data, they compared teacher absence, hours worked per day, and hours spent meeting with parents across EDUCO and traditional schools. The impact of these three teacher behaviours on test scores was then investigated using four different statistical specifications. They reported that teacher-parent meetings improved test scores in Mathematics and Spanish (Ibid., p. 299).<sup>32</sup> Propensity score matching indicated EDUCO teachers might have spent 9.7 hours more teaching per week compared to teachers in traditional schools (Ibid., p. 294). Teacher hours worked per day had a statistically significant impact on third-grade Mathematics test scores (0.214) (Ibid. p. 298).<sup>33</sup> The number of days a teacher was absent in the preceding two weeks did not have a statistically significant impact on test scores for either subject. However, due to different patterns of statistical significance across the specifications, the authors acknowledged that these results were ‘only suggestive and are by no means conclusive’ (p. 299).

**Vasquez (2012)** reported on student-learning outcomes from PRONADE schools in Guatemala. PRONADE schools were similar to EDUCO schools in being implemented in rural areas where there had not previously been a school. Vasquez’s study was based on data from the Guatemalan Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) school performance evaluation programme (PRONERE), which gathered from a representative sample of 767 public schools (out of 11,288), including administering reading and Mathematics tests to first and third-graders. The study found that:

For first grade, community-managed, bilingual and traditional schools produce comparable student learning, after controlling for differences in teacher, school and student characteristics [...] For third grade, community-managed schools produce similar learning to traditional schools in rural areas, but less student learning than traditional schools nationwide. (p. 30)

Average scores for third-grade students at rural schools were lower than for urban schools. In a system where a score of 60 was needed for grade promotion, the average score for rural schools was 53.86 for reading and 41.00 for Mathematics, while the averages for urban school were 65.01 and 48.75, respectively.

**Parker (2005)** compared student test scores in autonomous schools in Nicaragua to those achieved by students in traditional schools. Autonomous schools had decentralised decision-making powers, sought to increase community participation in educational administration, and to increase the diversity and level of financial resourcing for the school. A comparison of third and sixth-grade Mathematics and language-test scores revealed scores in both subjects were higher and statistically different in autonomous schools (Spanish scores: traditional: 241.6, autonomous: 245.8, Mathematics scores: traditional: 245.3, and autonomous 248.5) (Ibid., p. 374). When propensity score matching was used to control for bias from the potential participation of better schools in the ASP, only third-grade maths scores were statistically higher (the mean difference was 3.9) (Ibid., p. 380). With regard to sixth-grade scores, a comparison of mean Mathematics and Spanish scores revealed no statistically significant differences. Propensity scored matching revealed a negative and statistically significance difference in Mathematics scores, but no difference in Spanish (Ibid., p. 382). Using two difference matching processes, mean

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<sup>32</sup> Specifications included using propensity score matching, and treating different teacher variables as endogenous or exogenous while controlling for student and household characteristics.

<sup>33</sup> Where teacher variables were treated as exogenous and child and school variables were controlled for.

Mathematics scores were 4.1 and 3.7 points lower in autonomous schools when compared with scores from traditional schools (Ibid., p. 382).

Parker (2005) compares professional development in ASP and traditional schools. More headteachers in ASP schools reported that they provided technical assistance to both third-grade and sixth-grade teachers than in traditional schools (third grade in traditional schools: 64%, ASP schools 92% (Ibid., p. 374), sixth grade in traditional schools: 70%, ASP schools 94% (Ibid., p. 377). More third-grade teachers in ASP schools reported having a copy of the curriculum standards compared with their counterparts in traditional schools (Ibid., p. 373). A comparison of student and classroom characteristics was also undertaken. Third-grade and sixth-grade ASP students were from wealthier backgrounds than students in traditional schools and mean class size in third and sixth grade was smaller in ASP schools than in traditional schools (Ibid., p. 371).

Zeitlin et al. (2011) conducted a random control trial of standardised versus participatory reporting mechanisms (community score cards<sup>34</sup>) designed to foster bottom-up accountability across 100 rural primary schools in four regions of Uganda. Participatory score cards were developed by SMC members in 40 schools in response to their own identification of needs or aspirations. Standardised score cards developed by experts to reflect 'good practice' in education were used by SMCs in another 40 schools. SMCs in other 40 schools, where there was no SMC intervention, made up a control group (pp. 6-7)

The participatory score card intervention had substantial positive and statistically significant effects on student test results. For combined literacy and numeracy scores, there was an impact 'of approximately 0.19 standard deviations, which was statistically significant; such an impact would increase a pupil from the 50th percentile to the 58th percentile of the distribution' (pp. iii, 15; Table 2). The effect of the standardised score card intervention was smaller and not statistically significant.

#### 4.6 Evidence across the hierarchy of outcomes

Because different studies examine outcomes at different levels, it is difficult to collate studies against the hierarchy of outcomes in ways that show meaningful patterns. However, a single table identifying the studies that reported positive outcomes for each of the intermediate, intermediate education and final education levels of our hierarchy of outcomes is provided in Appendix 3.

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<sup>34</sup> Score cards that are completed by community members, whether standardised or participatory, are commonly referred to as *community score cards*. This report does not do so in the remainder of the text because Zeitlin et al. (2011) do not use the term; because SMC members were involved, rather than the process being open to a wider community grouping; and to avoid cumbersome description.

## 5. Contextual features

More detailed evidence for the propositions below is provided in full in Appendix 4. Here, a brief summary of the evidence in relation to each proposition is provided.

In some cases, it is possible to be specific about the specific outcomes that are more likely to be achieved if particular features of the context exist. In others, it is not. Where there are multiple kinds of impacts, or it is not possible given the current state of the evidence to be specific about the nature of the impacts, we have used the generic phrase ‘more likely to be effective’. Where more specific outcomes are postulated, these are underlined. The relevant features of context conclude the propositional statements.

### 5.1 The broader environment

#### 5.1.1 *A supportive political context*

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to be effective if they are introduced in a reasonably supportive political context.

None of the core studies for this review directly investigated the impacts of the broader political context on community-accountability and empowerment initiatives or their outcomes.

There were hints in other documents that a supportive political context does matter. Gaventa and Barrett (2012) identified that around 25% of outcomes from 100 broader citizen-engagement case studies did not support further democratisation or positive state-civil society relations. Leiberman et al. (2012) noted that fear of reprisals is a barrier to participation in community-accountability and empowerment interventions. Altschuler and Corrales (2012) found that establishing new institutions through community-accountability and empowerment interventions could undermine existing social institutions. Cornwall et al. (2011) concluded that the spaces within which citizen participation is facilitated, the identities citizens bring to these spaces, and the ways in which power relations are exercised within them, are likely to affect significantly the degree of citizen empowerment and accountability outcomes. Altschuler (2013) found that patronage politics may have contributed to the underperformance of community-managed schools in Guatemala’s PRONADE scheme and Honduras’s PROHECO scheme. Hallak and Poisson (2006) noted that corruption tends to place a disproportionate burden on the poor.

On the basis of these studies and the findings elsewhere in this review, this study proposes that ‘a supportive political context’ is likely to require either low levels of corruption or concerted attempts to reduce corruption across the whole of government; lack of, or a relatively low level of fear of reprisals; an education policy that devolves authority to the school level, providing *de jure* responsibility to schools; a balance between the opportunities for demands, citizen/parent empowerment to make demands, and public accountability to those making the demands; and ‘conducive political spaces’.

### 5.1.2 *The strength and inclusion of civil society*

Community-accountability and empowerment initiatives are more likely to be effective where government and other societal actors encourage a strong and inclusive civil society, and are inclusive of relevant civil-society actors.

We found little direct evidence or analysis in the materials reviewed here of the relationship between civil society, government actions, and the effectiveness of community-accountability and empowerment initiatives. There were implicit relationships; for example, the Textbook Count project in the Philippines and the Galab et al. (2013) study of SHGs monitoring schools both built on strong, existing CSOs. However, direct analysis of the impacts of the relationship was rare. The exception was a study by Corrales (2006), which examined the impacts on civil-society empowerment of government actions in relation to CMS in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, which found both that community-accountability and empowerment initiatives could undermine existing social structures and that their performance was strongly affected by the competence of state officials and the adequacy of state resources.

We suggest that, for community-empowerment and accountability interventions to operate, government must provide enough space to include civil-society actors, and independence for them to operate. Fostering a strong and inclusive civil society where citizens have enough freedoms to associate, mobilise and take collective action for educational reforms appears also to be important. Lastly, when governments provide resources to communities, they must do so without making them so beholden to government that they are compromised in their ability to exact accountability outcomes.

### 5.1.3 *Clarity of roles and responsibilities*

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are most likely to be effective when powers and responsibilities are clearly allocated to different levels of government and to all relevant stakeholders, including parents, pupils and SMC members.

Processes of decentralisation, and/or policies to increase community management of schools often introduce new structures or change the powers and responsibilities of structures. This can cause difficulties in accountability systems.

Berryman (2000) noted that, in some countries in Central Europe and Asia, this had resulted in ‘overlapping responsibilities for the same function between two or more levels of government without rules for adjudicating shared authority’ (p. 84). Having clarity about roles, duties and responsibilities may make access to decision makers easier and enable communities to lobby, or work with, the right level for the right issue. Hedger et al. (2010) present a case where lingering centralisation of power in the education system in Uganda had diminished local and district accountability mechanisms, despite legal requirements under the Local Government Act of 1997, and that this ‘had important implications for the capacity of frontline institutions to deliver services’ (p. 73). Resource leakages at all levels, teacher absenteeism, inefficient teacher deployment and resource use and low levels of local monitoring—all failures of accountability—were all identified as contributing to lowering the -quality of education (pp. viii, 73). In Nepal, a formative evaluation of the 2004-2009 National Plan of Action to decentralise school management and build community capacity to manage schools found that guidelines and directives emphasised local involvement, but Acts and regulations empowered education bureaucrats. As a result, SMCs tended to play ‘supportive’, rather than management, roles.

At local level, where there are both SMCs and PTAs, the absence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities can lead to friction between the groups (Suzuki 2002, p. 248: Uganda; Mfum-Mensah 2004, p. 150: Ghana), which, in one case, was reported to spread to the wider community and negatively affect community enthusiasm.

The evidence is consistent with a *virtuous circle* process, in which appropriate implementation of clearly specified roles and responsibilities for each tier of government, and for local-service providers and local communities, provides a conducive context for community accountability and empowerment. Community accountability and empowerment initiatives can then contribute to effective operations at local level. If implemented on a wide enough scale, and with systems established to collate information from local level, they may plausibly also *feed up into* improved accountability at higher levels of systems.

#### 5.1.4 The roles of teacher unions

Community accountability and empowerment initiatives are more likely to generate improved education outcomes where those initiatives deliberately include and build constructive partnerships and generate shared goals with teachers and teachers' representative bodies.

A number of authors have described the roles and impacts of teacher unions in relation to change in schools. Álvarez et al. (2007, summarised in Berryman 2000) found that, in Mexico, students in states with low levels of conflict between unions and the state fared better in test scores. Umansky and Vegas (2007) noted that, in Central America (El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras) SBM is sometimes associated with weaker unions and that weaker unions are sometimes associated with improved teacher quality and teaching. Arcia and Belli (1999) suggested that direct negotiations between schools and the central department of Education could improve conditions for teachers in participating schools, whereas collective bargaining would 'spread the benefits thinly'.

Corrales (2006), in a study of CMS, cited evidence that teachers arguably bore the greatest cost of education reform in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. By empowering schools to hire and fire teachers, CMS threatened teacher security, undermined unions' collective bargaining power, and frayed parent-teacher relationships. As a consequence, teachers were either unlikely to be broadly supportive of reforms such as CMS or openly hostile to them. Khan and Zafar (1999) also found that reforms to provide parents with additional powers also generated conflict with unions. Given the crucial role teachers play in education, this confrontational approach and party-politicisation of educational reforms may have contributed to their underperformance. We therefore propose that consultative and collaborative processes that build support for reforms are more likely to generate improved learning outcomes.

#### 5.1.5 Resource allocation for the poor

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to generate improved education outcomes for the poor where education funding structures are pro-poor.

A number of the interventions studied here attracted government funding and responded explicitly to educational disadvantage or social or rural marginalisation (for example, Janshala, PESLE, SSA in India, PRONADE in Honduras and PROHECO in Guatemala). Altschuler (2013) reported that Central American initiatives had expanded coverage to

poor rural areas, suggesting that the resource reallocation involved may have achieved some degree of catch-up for unserved or poorly served school catchments.

However, Al-Samarrai (2009) found that, in Bangladesh in 2005, government education spending was biased towards the non-poor, despite clearly stated intentions to address inequality. Forty-six percent of the Bangladeshi Primary Education Stipend (PES) programme was captured by the non-poor, that accountability structures to improve selection were weak, and that the structure of the programme itself militated against collective action by poor parents. Claussen and Assad (2010) noted that a differential capacity to implement budgets served to entrench the disadvantage of rural schools in Tanzania. Funding provided by community-accountability and empowerment interventions may not be adequate to meet programme objectives (Beyene et al. 2007), and this, in turn, may further disadvantage the poor. As the World Bank review of the Community School Support Project, Nepal (2010), suggested, communities with different resources were likely to implement different things, and, in the interests of equity: ‘The education of the poorest children should not depend heavily on the means available to the very poor communities’ (p. vii).

## 5.2 Features of the education system

### 5.2.1 Teacher supply

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to generate improved accountability of teachers when there is neither an undersupply nor an oversupply of teachers.

One of the ways in which accountability is hypothesised to work at local level is by increased capacity to sanction underperforming teachers. Underperforming teachers may be sanctioned or replaced and they (or their replacements) may perform better in response. Alternatively, teachers may respond to the *threat* of sanction.

Some studies found that actual sanctions are rarely applied (Okitsu 2011; Kremer et al. 2005). Zeitlin et al. (2011) noted that where vacancies are hard to fill, or slow to fill, ‘SMC members may not want to fire even underperforming teachers, for want of an alternative’ (p. 21).

Aikara (2011) described a situation in Kerala, India, where a surplus of teachers led to ‘unethical practices’, so that teachers were not ‘rendered surplus’ (p. 182). A context of oversupply appeared to contribute to decreased accountability. The state also introduced a scheme for ‘protected teachers’, who were paid a salary and deployed regardless of whether there was adequate work for them (Ibid., p. 183). While oversupply of teachers should, in theory, make it easier for SMCs to sanction underperforming teachers, a system that protects teachers’ employment regardless of the demand for them may serve to undermine local accountability. This hypothesis remains to be tested.

This study, therefore, proposes that a system with neither an under- nor an over-supply of teachers is most conducive to the effective operation of community-accountability and empowerment interventions.

### 5.2.2 Teachers' performance incentives

Community-accountability and empowerment initiatives are more likely to improve the frequency and quality of teaching where they build on teachers' intrinsic motivation and avoid creating perverse incentives.

A number of the initiatives reviewed here incorporate features that were intended to incentivise teachers. These included use of contract teachers in many community-schooling schemes, where the desire to maintain employment should incentivise the teacher to work hard; bonus-payment schemes, where additional payments should fulfil the same function (for example, ASP in Nicaragua: see Parker 2005); monitoring schemes where social sanctions might operate alongside either payment incentives or sanctions; and collective-action approaches, where barriers to teachers' performance might be addressed, thereby improving teacher motivation.

However, short-term contracts could also act as a perverse incentive. Desmond (2009, p. 20) interviewed teachers in the EDUCO Program who indicated that the stability and pay conditions of teaching positions in official schools would motivate them to leave the Program should the opportunity arise.

Zeitlin et al. (2011) suggested that addressing barriers to teachers' undertaking their roles might be more important than incentives per se and that this was consistent with earlier laboratory experiments, which showed that—in an environment of low-powered incentives—teachers' intrinsic motivation is an important factor explaining their performance (Barr and Zeitlin 2010).

### 5.2.3 Assessment systems

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to generate improved learning outcomes when there is a high-quality national system for assessment of student learning and when assessment systems are constructed to support collective action.

Student-assessment systems can support community-accountability and empowerment interventions by providing information about student-learning outcomes to parents and communities. If the assessment system is structured against agreed standards, it can inform parents about how their school is performing relative to those standards. If information about the performance of other similar or local schools is also provided, it may also serve to fire a competitive mechanism ('If they can do better, we should be able to do better, too.'). However, it was not possible to extract data to test this supposition in this review.

No studies were found for this review that directly examined the relationship between the nature of the assessment system and the effectiveness of community-accountability and empowerment interventions.

Lewis and Petterson (2009) reported that, in Mexico, 'Students in states with strong accountability systems (for example, testing, report cards, school rankings and the dissemination of results) performed even better.' (p. 27) Benveniste's (2000) examination of the development and role of the centralised assessment system in Uruguay provides an example of ways in which an assessment system can be designed to support collaborative action to improve learning outcomes. The assessment system collected information about socio-demographic backgrounds of schools, as well as competencies for students (p. 8) and then analysed school results in five clusters (those from 'very favourable' backgrounds,

medium-high, medium-low, and ‘very unfavourable’ and rural backgrounds). In response, schools adapted curricula, developed in-house assessments to further refine their understanding of teaching and learning problems, aligned curricula across grades, developed projects to improve learning outcomes (including, in at least one case, a project to involve parents in supporting student learning) and modelled their own assessment processes on the model (pp. 20-21).

We propose, based on this report, that assessment systems can provide the basis for schools to improve outcomes for the poor, where the evaluation tools are developed in a consultative and participatory manner; blame for poor outcomes is not attributed to schools or teachers, but to broader social structures; responsibility for improving outcomes is attributed to the system as a whole; additional resources and supports are provided at multiple levels of the system, in order to support change; and reflection and planning based on the data are a mandated requirement. Such a system would be consistent with what Freedman (2003) and Seiling (2005) call ‘constructive accountability’ and with what Porter (2013) calls ‘a citizenship approach’ to accountability. This report further posits that these approaches are more likely to contribute to improved education outcomes for the poor than some traditional accountability approaches, but this hypothesis remains to be tested.

### 5.3 Information and information systems

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are most likely to generate engagement and improve the quality of decision making where the state has effective systems for collecting and distributing accurate information.

Community accountability and empowerment initiatives are more likely to operate as expected when the nature of the information provided is tailored to the particular change processes the information is supposed to trigger, and in relation to the information needs of communities. Different kinds of information are likely to trigger (or enable) different mechanisms at community level.

The studies reviewed here reveal a variety of information that was perceived to be relevant for communities and/or for accountability. These include information about budgets and fund delivery; rights and entitlements, including entitlements to equipment and resources; the roles and responsibilities of local and state institutions; student-learning outcomes and performance against standards. Clearly, information is not simply information: it is information about particular things. It seems likely (following Lieberman et al. 2012) that the various interventions that provide these different kinds of information make slightly different assumptions about who will do what and why. However, these assumptions were rarely identified or tested.

Other differences in the nature of information may affect how it may be used to affect decision making, and, therefore, outcomes. Differences may include: the simplicity or complexity of the information; whether the information is generated centrally and distributed locally, or generated locally; whether the format for locally collected information is determined by communities (for example, Zeitlin et al.’s 2011 comparison of standardised and community-developed score cards); the nature of the information (whether it is qualitative, such as complaints or suggestions, or quantitative; whether it comes from one school or many); whether or not the information is about a single entity (child or school) or comparative; whether the information is provided once or over a short time period, as in an experimental intervention or a campaign, or whether it is available either periodically or consistently; whether information is disseminated or exchanged; and

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the nature of the systems used to disseminate it and support communities in understanding it.

These differences in the nature of information are highly likely to affect the kinds of responses that it will provoke, the purposes for which the information is suitable, the timescale over which it can be used, and therefore the outcomes that will result from it. Bruns et al. (2011) also provide evidence of the potentially perverse effects of information campaigns. These include triggering opposition, gaming behaviours affecting student-assessment outcomes, *elite capture*, where educated parents can read the information, but others cannot, and exacerbating inequalities (pp. 72-73).

This study, therefore, proposes that adequate information systems, and careful tailoring of information to particular purposes and change processes, will be necessary for effective community-accountability and empowerment interventions.

#### 5.4 De jure and de facto powers

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to generate improved education outcomes when powers are actively exercised at local level.

A number of studies have identified that it is not enough simply for formal powers to be created by legislation (*de jure*). Rather, powers must in fact be *exercised (de facto)*.

There are multiple examples in the literature of powers not being exercised, or only sometimes being exercised at local level. These include VECs in Uttar Pradesh, India (Banerjee et al. 2010), Nicaragua's school-autonomy reforms (King and Ozler 2005), Mongolia's social accountability initiative for CMS (Beck et al. 2007) and Nepal's CMS initiative (Upadhayaya et al. 2007) and the World Bank's Community School Support Project in Nepal (World Bank 2010).

This comparatively high level of partial implementation failure may in part be explained by the fact that many aspects of context need to come together in the right ways for success to be achieved. These include the roles, membership, and power relationships within local structures; the expertise, resource levels and attitudes of staff in schools; the processes used to engage local leaders, engage service providers and officials, and community members; the capacities and attitudes of community members and so on. These are described below.

#### 5.5 School management committees

We use the term school management committees (SMCs) as a generic one—the names vary in different countries.

##### 5.5.1 Powers of SMCs

SMCs are more likely to hold staff to account, and to be accountable in their own roles, where their role is clear, they have formal authority and they are adequately resourced to do so.

The studies reviewed here revealed considerable variation in the powers of SMCs in different initiatives and countries, and significant differences in the resources provided to them by governments or through experimental initiatives.

The first part of our proposition refers to the notion of *de jure* and *de facto* powers. While *de jure* powers alone are not enough, we suggest that they are a necessary condition for

SMCs to be effective in holding staff accountable. Bandur (2012) examined how the legislative mandate in Indonesian SBM had operated and concluded that ‘legislative enactment and clear-cut government regulations’ can achieve a significant devolution of power and authority, and create partnerships in participatory school-level decision making (p. 869).

‘Resourcing’ SMCs does not just refer to funding, but also to capacity development. Some initiatives provide training for SMCs for their staff supervision role (see, for example, Altschuler and Corrales 2012; Duflo et al. 2009). This may contribute to their effectiveness, given the disadvantages community members can face relative to teachers (see 7.9 below). However, training SMCs may not be sufficient to improve student-learning outcomes. Pradhan et al, (2011, 2013) explicitly tested this pathway, providing two-day training courses for SMC members, covering a range of topics. This intervention did not impact on student-learning outcomes.

### 5.5.2 Membership of SMCs

Community accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to hold SMCs accountable to communities when parents directly elect their representatives on school Boards or Councils, where those elections are conducted openly and effectively, and where there are sufficient parent representatives to balance the power of other stakeholders.

SMCs can play two *structural* roles in community-accountability and empowerment interventions. On the one hand, they can be the structure that holds staff accountable and that attempts to hold governments and their officials to account. On the other hand, they can be the structure that parents and the wider community hold to account.

Where committee members are appointed by governments or government departments, the ability of parents to hold members of SMC to account is inhibited (see, for example, Suzuki 2002, writing about Ghana). Where principals select committee members, this undermines the capacity of SMCs to hold principals to account (Beck et al. 2007, writing about Mongolia). Where elections or other appointment processes are not conducted effectively, members may not know that they are members, be aware of or understand their roles, or be able to implement them effectively (Beck et al. 2007, and for VECs, which may have authority for more than one school: Banerjee et al. 2006; 2010; Rao 2009). Where principals or headteachers are themselves the chair of the SMC, the possibility of ‘real conflict of interest’ exists (Khan and Zafar 1999). Appropriate representation of women on SMCs is also a problem in some countries (for example, Pakistan: Khan and Zafar, 1999)—this is discussed under Section 5.10 (Gender) below.

### 5.5.3 Power relationships within SMCs

SMCs are unlikely to be effective when significant power differentials exist between committee members and social norms inhibit the exercise of community power.

Power possessed by different actors within the school setting may impact on the use of power held by SMCs. In rural Zambia, a school committee chairman reported that the financial contributions and administrative experience of a committee member suspected of corruption, and a social norm about respecting those who make a contribution, prevented the committee from holding him to account (Okitsu, 2011, p. 247). Okitsu (2011) also identified cases where decision making appeared to be concentrated among powerbrokers in the PTA and staff, excluding other parents, and noted that, while women

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outnumbered men in general parent meetings, they rarely spoke and consequently decisions were ‘often made solely by male participants’ (p. 215).

## 5.6 Roles, capacities and attitudes of school staff

### 5.6.1 *The roles of school leaders*

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are likely to engender higher levels of community participation where school leaders (principals, headteachers, directors) actively support, promote and resource that participation.

The impact of the school principal’s leadership style on community participation was noted in Nepal (Upadhyaya et al. 2007) and Nicaragua (Fuller and Rivarola 1998). A constructive and proactive approach to engaging parents was seen to have helped to mobilise the community and make parents feel welcomed and respected. Working in partnership with parents, staff and other community members ‘can affect in-school processes, including staff, norms and the overall school climate’; principals can, therefore, exert a strong indirect influence on student achievement and outcomes (Rodriguez and Hovde 2002; Borden 2002, quoted in Gunnarsson et al. 2004, p. 8). Arcia and Belli (1999) suggested that the ‘managerial quality’ of the SMC depends in large part on the skills of school leaders (p. 5), in part because they are a key conduit for information. By way of contrast, Fitriah (2010) found that a belief about appropriate management roles that concentrate financial-management power in the hand of the principal could be shared between community members and principals (p. 108).

### 5.6.2 *Staff attitudes and community participation*

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to engender higher levels of community participation when teachers have positive attitudes towards genuine community participation.

Little or no evidence was found of community members affirming that positive relationships between parents and teachers supported community participation. However, some evidence was found that negative attitudes on the part of teachers deterred parental participation (Fuller and Rivarola 1998; Swift-Morgan 2006). ‘Negative’ attitudes to participation can be shared by teachers and parents, and relate to perceived roles. In Ethiopia, the idea of parent contributions to classroom teaching was not warmly received by either parents or teachers (Swift-Morgan 2006; pp. 354-355)

## 5.7 School facilities

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to increase student and teacher attendance (which, at least potentially, increases teaching time and the number of students receiving education, which may improve student-learning outcomes) where community accountability and empowerment initiatives prioritise and improve school facilities.

The quality of school facilities and the availability of teaching materials affect teacher attendance at schools. A World Bank study of teacher absenteeism in six countries showed that well-equipped schools with better infrastructure had absentee rates roughly half those of schools with poor infrastructure (Chaudhury et al. 2006). Kremer (2004, p. 6) reported from a large survey of teachers in India that teacher absenteeism was lower in schools with better educational infrastructure, noting that this was a potentially important aspect of teachers’ working conditions. Facilities are often of a lower standard in rural

areas (Berryman 2000, discussing schools in Europe and Central Asia), which may mean that prioritising school facilities makes a greater difference in rural areas

Student attendance, particularly for girls, can also be affected by the quality of facilities (Lewis and Petterson 2009, p. 34). Having ‘a fully functioning school—one with better-quality roofs, walls or floors, with desks, tables and chairs, and with a school library’ was positively associated with learning and school attendance (Glewwe 2011, p. 41). However, the relationship is not straightforward. The PNG Public Expenditure and Service Delivery survey (NTI/World Bank 2004) found that teaching resources, infrastructure and classroom facilities did not predict teacher absence, but schools with lower numbers of textbooks per student had higher rates of teacher absence (Ibid., p. 77)

Dongre (2011) reported, state-by-state in India, the extent to which public primary schools and SMCs receive their major discretionary funding, and the timing of its disbursement, what they do with it and the educational outcomes in the state. SMCs at Haryana’s SSA schools performed well in terms of both receipt and utilisation of SSA funds (pp. 63-5) for facilities and increased teaching and learning resources. Panighrahi (2012) undertook a small-scale study that compared student-learning outcomes in SSA and non-SSA schools in two districts in Haryana and found better outcomes in all academic subject areas tested for both boys and girls in SSA schools. It is plausible to suggest that the use of SMC grants improved infrastructure, which contributed to improved learning outcomes.

## 5.8 Engaging stakeholders

### 5.8.1 Local leadership and social capital

Community-accountability and empowerment initiatives are more likely to engage community members in pro-education activities when they engage local leadership and develop both bridging and bonding capital in communities.

*Social capital* refers to the productive properties (or productive capacity) of social relationships, resulting from the interaction of structures and the social norms that bind those relationships (Putnam 2000)

Pradhan et al. (2013) found that linking village councils with school leaders (bridging capital) contributed to positive education outcomes and attributed improved education outcomes to the authority of the village council. Beyene et al. (2007), reporting on the CGPP under BESOI in Ethiopia, also described a linkage between school-management structures and local councils that increased non-parent community members’ involvement with schools. Arvind (2009) reported that village elders tracked children and encouraged their enrolment and attendance at school (p. 5). This might be interpreted as using the authority of elders to reinforce (or establish a new) social norm in relation to education.

Suzuki (2002) suggested that, in Uganda, in areas where direct confrontation was required to hold schools accountable to local communities, ‘existing social norms and structures may hinder parents from taking such action’ (p. 255). Local councils were, therefore, expected to play the role of external monitors. In PNG, in one of Guy et al.’s (2003) case studies of primary schools, the strength of informal linkages (bonding capital) was seen to compensate for a relatively poorly performing school Board (p. 82).

### 5.8.2 Community mobilisation and capacity building

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are most likely to engage community members when there is significant investment in mobilising local communities.

Some programmes expect local communities to make significant contributions to schools and education by building or maintaining school facilities, by managing schools, or by both. Such programmes are likely to require a significant investment in community mobilisation and capacity building.

UNICEF's Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education (COPE) programme in Uganda experienced some successes, but also important difficulties. The two classrooms intended to be built by community members were not completed in 'significant numbers of the centers'; utilisation was 'significantly lower than anticipated', attrition rates over the three-year cycle of the programme were high (estimated at 65% on average); and it was 'conservatively estimated that 20 percent [of centers] have failed and no longer receive children' (no page numbers). The author argues, on the basis on an earlier interim evaluation, that shifting costs to those least prepared to bear them' and failure to invest in and develop the 'energy and capacity' of local members of the community account for these difficulties.

In Nepal, 'one-way communication (communicating central intentions to local level), failure to engage local-community leaders and inadequate 'policy orientation' limited the impact of community-mobilisation attempts (Upadhayaya et al. 2007, p. 84).

### 5.8.3 Participatory approaches to defining the problem

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to resolve local problems when local communities are actively engaged in defining what matters to them about education, and in designing locally appropriate solutions.

Arvind (2009) reported on a series of NGO-led interventions in marginalised villages in India, which were highly tailored to local context. They relied on careful diagnosis of the root causes of marginalisation and school failure, involving villagers, and using the creative solutions they developed to counter varied, multi-layered forms of local exclusion within villages and of whole villages.

Zeitlin et al. (2011) provided no qualitative detail to elaborate on the bare bones of their comparison between participatory and standardised community score cards. However, they reasoned the participatory milieu had elicited 'higher effort levels' of both pupils and staff and inferred that a 'stronger sense of ownership among school stakeholders' had driven this outcome.

### 5.8.4 Engaging communities and enabling voice

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to be effective when they incorporate specific strategies to engage communities and develop voice.

While many documents commented on the significance of voice, no research was found in the core studies for this report, and little research elsewhere, into the requirements of, or conditions for, effective engagement and voice. Descriptions of how interventions tried to create engagement and voice were not supported by reliable evidence of how successful these efforts had been.

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to develop effective voice when communities are actively supported to develop agreed positions *before* they are required to negotiate with decision-makers.

The processes by which community score cards empower communities were described by Akasoba and Robinson (2007). Writing about work in Northern Ghana, they suggested that preparation and participation by community members at the community level increased knowledge of the issues and built confidence (p. 24). Participation in wider forums with decision makers and other communities then built wider understanding of the issues and constraints. These processes also generated options for action at local level and a sense of community efficacy (p. 26), both of which may contribute to empowerment. Galab et al. (2013) also comment that discussion of score card results in SHG meetings, meaning that women ‘became familiar with discussing school-quality concerns’ before discussing them in SMC meetings (p. 15).

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to resolve local problems when communities present their views in constructive and culturally appropriate ways.

Respecting cultural norms is understood to be an important element in giving voice. No specific example of this was found in the education-specific literature reviewed here, but it was in the wider citizen-voice literature (Tembo 2012). Both behaviours and language are important to enacting protocols that allow the voices of the less powerful to be heard by the more powerful.

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to generate improved outcomes for vulnerable groups when communities are sufficiently free and where citizens are protected from retribution from the powerful.

It can be difficult for less powerful groups, including women and children, to raise complaints or concerns with the authorities. Fear of retribution (Lieberman 2012) and retribution against children (Klugman 2013b) both serve to silence those who might otherwise speak up.

Suggestion boxes and radio-listening clubs that use recorded messages and call in radio programmes have all been used to protect anonymity and to enable participation in ways that bypass cultural impediments and power imbalances (Tembo 2012, pp. 15-16). World Learning (2007) reports on the use of religious leaders in strategies to address sensitive issues for girls, such as child marriage (see section 5.10 on Gender, below). Community-score-card processes can create collective opportunities for disadvantaged or marginalised groups to set their own reform agendas, deliberate, and agree on action, which is then fed into a wider community meeting (Winterford 2009). In Indonesia, direct election of community representatives to ‘user groups’ provided poorer community members with a trusted person to talk to about their concerns (Klugman 2013b).

#### 5.8.5 Engaging service providers and officials

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions may need to leverage existing social capital in order to engage fearful, or otherwise reluctant, service providers and officials in collaborative processes.

Collaborative processes to service-delivery improvement require the engagement of both providers and users of services. However, providers may be reluctant to participate.

Tadesse et al. (2010, p. 53) reported that, in Ethiopia, either CSOs, using their existing relationships and goodwill, or officials had to ‘persuade’ service providers to participate (p. 53), not least because they feared losing their jobs. A focus on ‘service enhancement’, rather than ‘accountability’ (with its overtones of power and punishment), reduced this barrier. Condy (1998) reported that the Schooling Improvement Fund (SIF) project in Ghana was undermined when teachers were challenged by community members in a manner that caused them to become defensive. Teacher-community relations were ‘negatively affected’ (p. 18), which reduced the level of co-operation to improve the quality of schooling.

#### 5.8.6 *The roles of external organisations and catalysts*

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to change local power relationships where they are actively facilitated by external organisations or catalysts.

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are by definition an attempt to change power relationships: within local communities, between local communities and service providers, and/or between local communities, service providers and the state. Changing power relationships requires disruption of existing norms, behaviours, social institutions and structures. External catalysts and facilitators can play a very significant role in enabling these processes.

Specific research into the requirements of, or conditions for effectiveness of, such external facilitators or catalysts were not found in this study. External facilitation and capacity development, however, played a significant role in a number of the more effective interventions, including facilitation of multiple meetings in each village, structured to consult different caste groups, in the information from three states for the Indian accountability project (Pandey et al. 2009); facilitation of community development processes to identify and address barriers to participation (Arvind, 2009); facilitation of processes to develop participatory score cards and training for SMCs to use the score cards (Zeitlin et al. 2011); NGO training of volunteers to teach children to read (Banerjee et al. 2010); training of SMCs to monitor, assess, and review contracts for staff (Duflo et al. 2009); and training of SHGs to use score cards and their resulting data (Galab et al. 2013).

Commentary about the significance of external agents was found in Banerjee et al. (2010), Swift-Morgan (2006, p. 363) and Akasoba and Robinson (2007, p. 26).

It is proposed, on the basis of this review, that the specific roles played by external organisations or catalysts include engaging stakeholders, including elites; identifying and ‘speaking to’ the specific incentives and barriers that they face in the anticipated change; challenging norms that undermine education access and outcomes, and/or identifying local champions for new norms; facilitating the establishment of bridging capital (relationships, trust, shared norms and goals) between stakeholder groups; enabling discussion about different and sometimes conflicting perspectives; and facilitating development of human capital by providing, or enabling access to, information and training.

## 5.9 Capacities of local communities

### 5.9.1 Adult Literacy

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to be effective where adult community members are literate and/or where adult-literacy initiatives or other strategies are integrated into the initiative.

Low literacy levels among community members appear to have multiple impacts on community-accountability and empowerment interventions.

Where members of SMCs are not literate, it is more difficult for them to administer schools effectively or exert influence on schools (Fuller and Rivarola 1998, p. 39). Low parent-literacy levels also appear to impede the ability of parents to assess their children's progress at school and, therefore, to judge whether or not the school is operating effectively (Banerjee et al- 2010, re: India; Blimpo and Evans 2011, re: Gambia). Parents who can make those assessments may be more likely to make complaints (Blimpo and Evans p. 27, or to intervene in school management (Gunnarsson et al. 2004, re: ten Latin American countries).

Some successful projects use deliberate strategies to counter illiteracy. Nicaragua's ASP programme required SMC parent members to be literate (Arcia and Belli, 1999, p. 5); El Salvador's EDUCO Program instituted a literacy programme for parents (Basaninyenz, 2011, p. 1), and the traffic-light community-score-card system was designed for use with low-literacy groups (Galab et al. 2013).

### 5.9.2 Parent knowledge, skills and confidence

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to involve and empower communities where they actively develop the capacity and confidence of community members.

Where parents have low levels of knowledge and skills or low confidence in their knowledge and skills relative to teachers, this can inhibit the exercise of voice, because these constitute major imbalances in power.

Lack of skills, or lack of confidence in skills, undermined participation in school management (Govinda 2003, p. 216; India; Okitsu, 2011: Zambia) and, in asking questions of headteachers or teachers (Suzuki 2002, p. 252: Uganda). Lack of skills in project planning, budgeting and management increased reliance on external support or on teachers (Condy 1998, pp. 10, 16, 17: Ghana). Conversely, higher levels of community education were associated with opting in to the ASP in Nicaragua (King and Ozler 2004, p. 19) and similar programmes in other South American countries (Gunnarsson et al. 2004, p. 24). However, lack of information about teachers, teacher performance and evaluation of teacher performance made it difficult for parents to hire and fire teachers or to monitor curriculum and pedagogy (Di Gropello 2006, p. 52, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala).

Parents and community members need confidence not just in themselves, but also in the responses of others. An African Education Watch (2009) report noted that complaints tended to be made when problems could be resolved at school level and the complaint procedure was fast and verbal. Parents had less confidence that complaints made to education officials or local authorities would be responded to, and many claimed that no observed action was taken.

### 5.9.3 Social norms and parent resources

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are most likely to engage parents where they take into account social norms, parent resources and parents' intrinsic motivations.

Parent participation in community-accountability and empowerment interventions takes many forms, often structured by the initiative itself and ranging from a small number of people participating in a committee to a large number of people participating in community-wide planning processes; from parents' supervising their children's attendance and homework to contributions in cash or kind; from monitoring teachers to supervising them; and from conversations with teachers to managing schools. Using Beasley and Huillery's (2012) categorisation, expected contributions may be *supportive*, *management*, or *oppositional*. This review has identified a range of features that affect whether and when parents contribute in the expected ways.

Parents' intrinsic motivation for participation often related to an interest for their own children to do well, and sometimes to a broader collective interest for children to succeed (see, for example, Swift-Morgan 2006, p. 358). Lack of belief in the ability of the school staff and government to provide quality schooling underpinned agreement to make financial contributions (Swift-Morgan, 2006, p. 358). Absolute poverty was a barrier to participation, even where the school allowed contributions in the form of labour. The time required conflicted with the demands of survival (Okitsu 2011, p. 165). In Indonesia, when schools became free, parents were less likely to participate or to make complaints. No longer making a financial contribution, they perceived that they had lost the right and authority to do so (Fitriah 2010, pp. 87-88).

### 5.10 Gender

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to empower women and girls and generate improved learning outcomes for girls where the specific barriers, including cultural barriers, to their participation are understood and addressed.

Gender discrimination affects both girls' participation in education and women's participation in school management.

Arvind (2009) and Pailwar and Mahajan (2005) reported on interventions that addressed girls' exclusion from education on the basis of gender in Rajasthan and Jharkhand—very poor states. Interventions involved sensitisation, mobilisation, deliberation, agreement on joint action and collective action. This involved both recognising existing gender norms and working to reconstruct them. In Ethiopia, GAC were established to support girls' enrolment, protection and success in BESO schools (World Learning 2007). GACs developed their own locally appropriate strategies that variously addressed enrolment, financial and material support, tuition, counselling, addressing 'harmful traditional customs such as, inheritance of widows to brothers or uncles, polygamy, female genital mutilation, early marriage, abduction, and rape' (p. 15), rescue of abducted girls, advocacy for legal action, health advice and strategies to avoid stigma and discrimination. However, women were not usually represented in PTAs and did not participate in decision making. Even within the GACs, male involvement and the involvement of religious leaders was seen to be essential (p. 74).

In rural Honduras and Guatemala, women were less likely to acquire skills through CMS (Altschuler and Corrales 2012, p. 16). In Guatemala, women remained almost completely excluded from school councils, while there was tokenism in El Salvador (Garcia 2006, pp. 17-18). Upadhyaya et al. (2007) note that, in Nepal, mobilisation was seen as a vehicle for

information dissemination, rather than engagement and that this was a barrier to addressing gender issues.

In Pakistan, community participation was seen as critical in increasing enrolment of girls and identifying local female teachers and a policy of gender-specific committees for gender-specific schools was adopted. Despite this, there were very few female members of SMCs/PTAs, engaging women was slower, women were often not aware of SMCs and women's roles were often not addressed in training or awareness raising (Khan and Zafar 1999). However, the authors reported: 'Since research shows that the presence of mothers on committees enhances activity levels and reduces drop-outs, an increased representation of women on such committees or separate mothers' committees is called for' (p. 45).

### 5.11 Sustainability

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to be effective where they are both sustained and sustainable.

It can take a number of years for programmes to generate changes of the kind that improve student-learning outcomes (Patrinos et al. 2007). Successful interventions are often those that have been sustained over a significant period, such as the oft-cited Philippines Textbook watch programme and the EDUCO Program in El Salvador.

There is also evidence that programmes that are not sustained are not effective. Turnover of personnel means that the impacts of training are lost; unless new personnel are also trained, momentum and enthusiasm are lost (Evans et al. 2012, p. xii).

For some initiatives, being sustained means that policies and funding systems are sustained (political and economic context). For others, sustainability means that capacities are developed at the local level (local-community context). This may require support and training by external organisations over a period of time, until sufficient members of the community are trained (implementation context).

## 6. Discussion and further theory development

Realist synthesis begins with an *initial rough theory* and concludes with a more refined theory.

The main body of the theory was presented in Section 3.2, above. Here, two final, somewhat more tentative elements of the theory developed through this review are provided. Neither has been tested in the review; both are offered as contributions that might spark debate or further research.

### 6.1 Empowerment, accountability and context

#### 6.1.1 *The relationship between empowerment and accountability*

In the protocol for this review, it was noted that, ‘The relationship between empowerment and accountability is unclear... The assumption in our initial rough theory is that accountability and empowerment are mutually constitutive (i.e. each contributes to generating the other).’ In Section 1.4.4, above, it was noted that this review had slightly adapted Friedmann’s model of empowerment to assist in screening in studies for detailed examination and that this foreshadowed a more extensive adaptation in order to incorporate aspects of accountability.

The diagram on page 122 provides an outline of that more extensive adaptation. Here, the model is described and the links between the aspects of the model and the propositions included in Section 5, above, are demonstrated (contextual features).

Five of the elements of Friedmann’s empowerment model are grouped on the left-hand side of the model.

*Information* refers to all the varieties of information, and all the topics of information, described in Section 5.3: that which comes from the state and that which is generated locally; in relation to rights, entitlements, budgets, expenditure, student-learning outcomes and so on.

*Spaces* refers to the social spaces in which people come together to identify their concerns, deliberate, develop strategies and so on. The availability of ‘conducive political spaces’ is identified as necessary in Section 5.1.1 (*A supportive political context*), above.

*Norms and beliefs* refers to the cultural perspectives, norms in relation to education, attitudes and aspirations of communities, and understandings of roles and responsibilities for communities and the state that shape the specific demands communities seek to make, community cohesion in relation to those demands, and the propensity of communities to make demands. A number of items in Section 5 (*contextual features*) are relevant to this, but, in particular Section, 5.9.3 (Social Norms and Parent Resources) and 5.10 (Gender).

*Knowledge and skills* refers to the capacities of local communities, identified primarily in terms of *adult literacy* (Section 5.9.1), *knowledge of the local community, understandings of information*, and *skills to plan, manage, and advocate on their own behalves* (Section 5.9.2).

*Time* refers both to available time after survival needs and other social roles are fulfilled to participate in accountability initiatives, and to the passage of time—change does not happen quickly, and years may be required for significant change to be achieved.

These are linked within a rectangle, which is intended to indicate that all elements are required, and all operate concurrently, to provide voice. Voice is a central element of accountability. Voice includes the expression of complaints, compliments and demands, but here it also represents the provision of feedback to the state (including district governments, where they are responsible for education) discussed in Section 5.3.

In order for voice to generate accountability, it needs to operate through some form of social organisation, represented here in the centre, at the top of the diagram. This can refer to education specific structures such as SMCs or PTAs; other authority structures at local level, such as local councils; or to structures that are not community driven, but which exercise influence or control over education, such as district offices. The greater the degree of community control of the organisation, network or association, the more empowered the community.

Important forms of informal association typically exist at local community level, such as networks and associations of citizens, local movements and community-based organisations. These are also included under the heading of *social organisations*, but may not have direct control of funds and may have few or no collective productive assets. Nonetheless, they may be important for stages of empowerment, especially for marginalised groups or communities.

Some social organisations, then, exercise control over money and productive assets (both aspects of the empowerment model). Where the organisation is school-specific and resourced, money will refer primarily to school budgets and productive assets will include school facilities and teaching and learning resources. Where the organisation is not education-specific, it will refer to the organisation's own funds and whatever assets they use to undertake their roles. (Advocacy organisations, for example, may use computers, smart phones, campaign materials and so on.)

Social organisations operate in the context of the powers and resources they derive from external sources. For schools, this refers particularly to their delegated authorities, the funds they receive through education-funding sources and education policies. This is represented in the top-left-hand corner of the diagram and refers to several of the items in Sections 5.1 (*the broader environment*) and 5.2 (*features of the education system*), above. They also operate within the framework of the states' own accountability systems (top-right-hand corner of the diagram). This refers both to horizontal accountability structures (such as Auditor-General's Office) and to accountability systems within education (such as district offices, which often employ Inspectors with a role in monitoring and supervising staff). These institutions are both sources of resources or authority for local social organisations and targets for advocacy by local organisations. Consequently, they are linked by double-headed arrows.

It is social organisations that then hold stakeholders to account. The key elements of accountability are therefore represented below the social organisations, even though some of the stakeholders they call to account may lie *higher* in a formal structural model than does the organisation demanding accountability. The elements of accountability—transparent decision-making, answerability, authority to sanction and enforceability, are represented within a rectangle, again because all elements are required to operate together for accountability to be sustained.

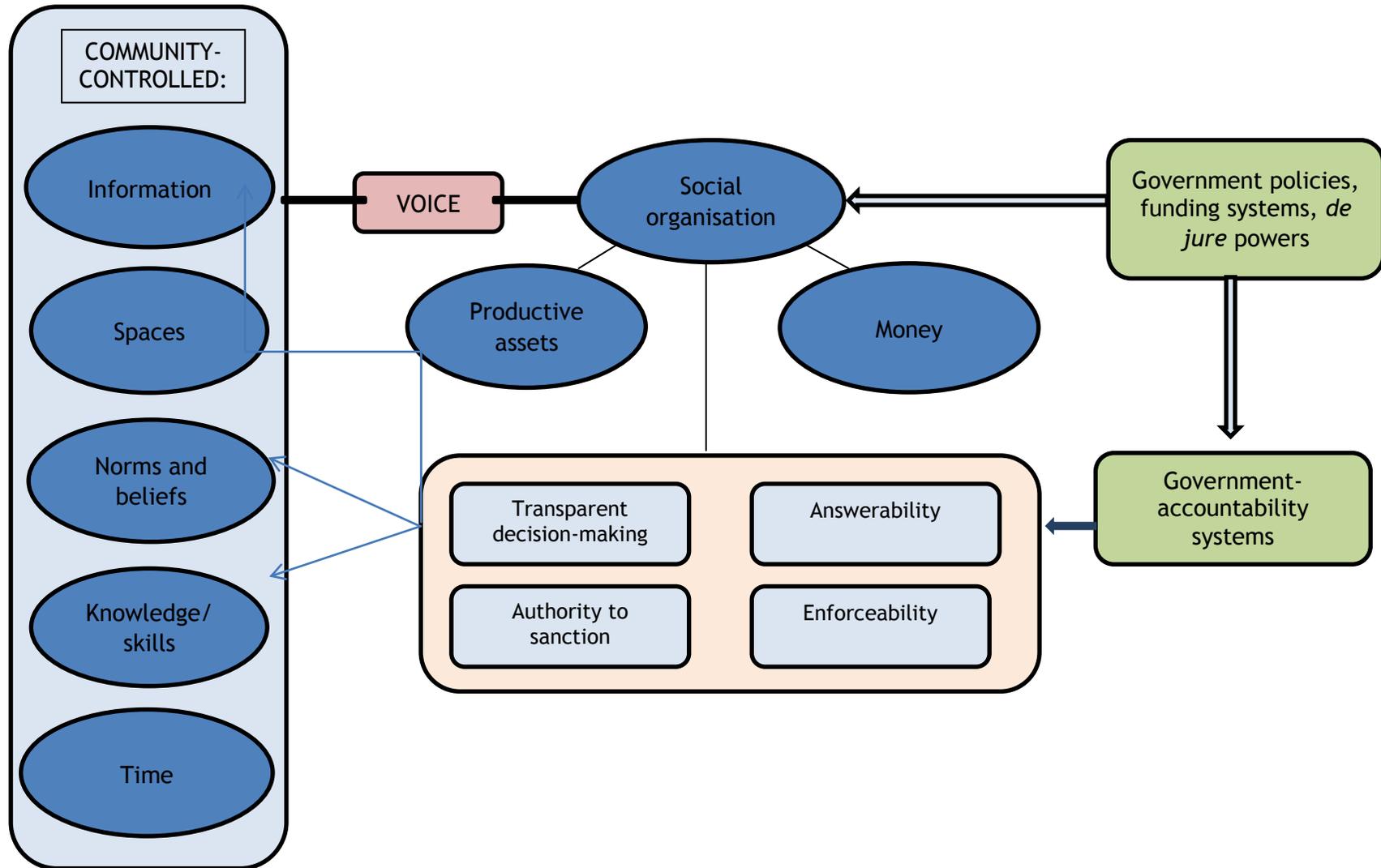
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Armed with the various resources displayed throughout the diagram, the social organisation is in a position either to create (where it has the formal authority to do so) or demand (where it does not) transparent decision-making systems and information from those systems. It is in a position to provide answers and justify decisions when it is held to account and to demand answers and justifications from others—both those formally within its power (for example, SMCs holding teachers to account) and those outside its formal authority (for example, SMCs calling district offices to account). It has the authority to sanction those within its power or to provide citizen feedback to enable others to sanction, and the power to demand that others be sanctioned. It has the power to determine means to sanction those within its power (for example, sacking a teacher for poor performance) and the power to apply informal sanctions (for example, naming and shaming actors for their poor performance).

The exercise of that authority then generates information, changed experience (which may in turn affect norms and beliefs) and new knowledge and skills, which can feed back in to the empowerment cycle. Whether it will do so depends on *to whom* the accountability is owed (government, social organisation or the community at large). This is shown as light arrows flowing back from the elements of accountability to those aspects of empowerment.

The state also retains the power to hold the social organisation itself accountable, and/or to hold other actors to account. In the diagram, this is represented by the arrow between *government accountability systems* and the *elements of accountability*.

Figure 8: Conceptual model: The relationship between empowerment and accountability

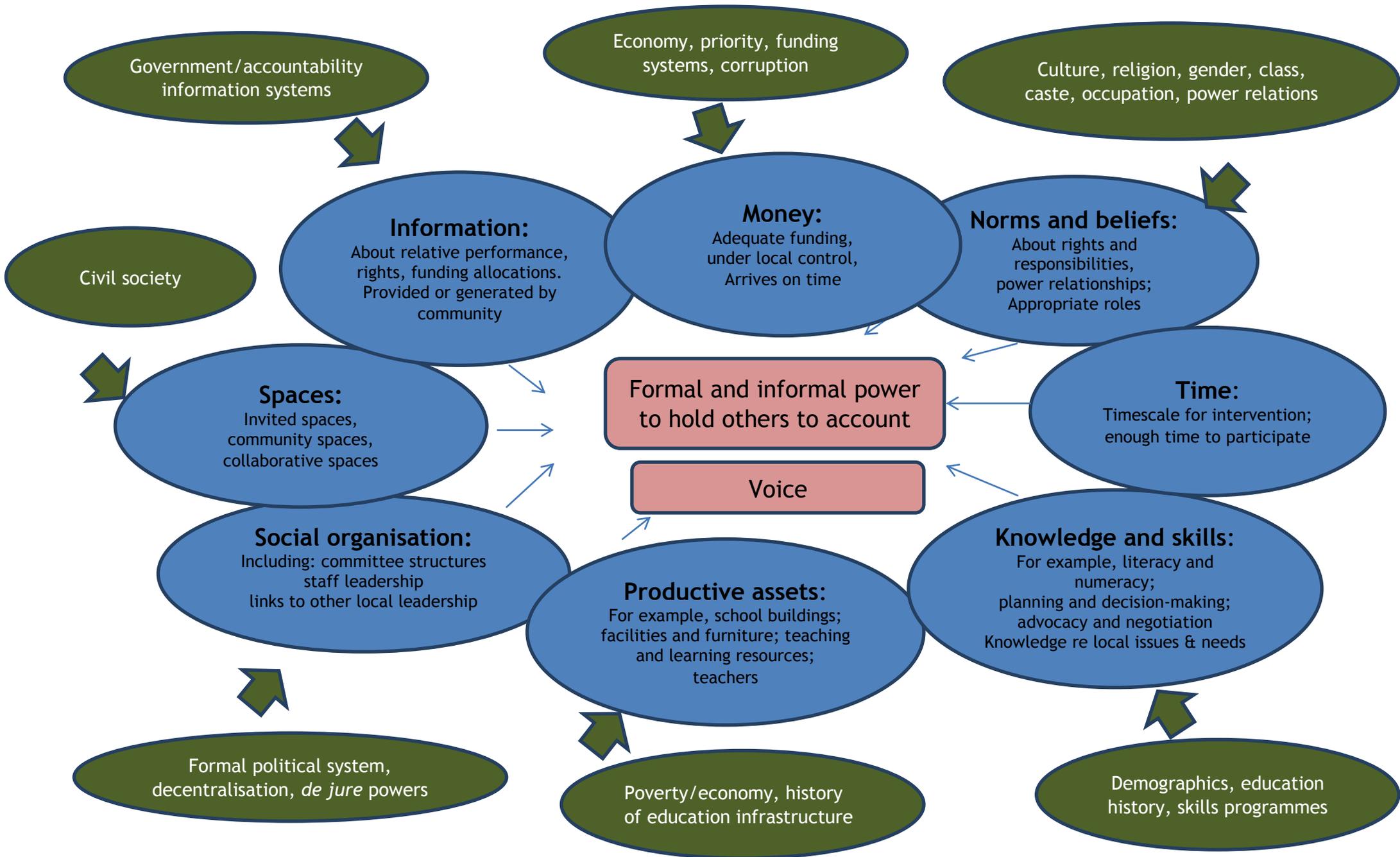


### *6.1.2 The relationship between context, empowerment and accountability*

The focus question for this review asked for ‘the circumstances’ under which enhancing community accountability and empowerment generated improved education outcomes. This study interpreted ‘circumstances’ as ‘context’: in realist terms, the elements of context that influence whether, for whom and how interventions work. As should by now be clear, none of these terms—circumstances, empowerment and accountability—is simple. Different aspects of context affect different mechanisms. However, different aspects of context also affect different aspects of empowerment and accountability.

Our final diagram is an attempt to summarise some of the key contextual features identified in Section 5 and their relationships to aspects of our modified model of empowerment-for-accountability. This is, of course, a simplification; in reality, the elements of context all interact in ways that cannot be fully described or measured. Nonetheless, it seems from this that there are some elements of context that are particularly important to some elements of empowerment, and, therefore (through our earlier model), to accountability.

Figure 9: Features of context affecting aspects of community empowerment and accountability



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This model requires some explanation. Firstly, the model does not only deal with features of context required for accountability; It also addresses features of context for communities to be empowered to establish and run schools, as happens with some community schools. Doing so, of course, also requires at least internal accountability systems.

Secondly, the model works *from the outside in*: that is, towards the centre, where both voice and accountability powers are represented (pink rectangles). The blue ovals represent the elements of our revised empowerment-for-accountability model.

The light-green ovals represent specification of each of the blue ovals in the context of community accountability and empowerment interventions. These light-green ovals relate to the contextual features discussed in Section 5, above.

Take, for example, the *productive assets* element. In order to generate education outcomes, communities need certain productive assets. They need infrastructure including school buildings, facilities and furniture, teachers, and teaching and learning resources. They also need to be accountable for their use and management of these resources. They may, however, also need to hold others accountable for the provision of these resources—for example, holding government to account for allocating teachers, holding teachers to account for their attendance and performance, holding building contractors to account for the quality of work done to build or repair schools, holding book publishers and district offices accountable for the quality and delivery of textbooks, and so on.

The large, dark-green ovals on the outside of the diagram represent particular aspects of the broader social, political, economic and civic environment that affect the aspects represented by the light-green circles. To continue our example of productive assets: the history of the particular education system and the particular community will affect the nature of assets that exist and the nature of accountability systems and processes in relation to those assets. Similarly, the broader economy will affect the adequacy of provision of those assets and levels of poverty in the community will affect the community's capacity to supplement them.

## 6.2 Using the theoretical model

There is no simple answer possible to the contexts in which community-accountability and empowerment interventions improve education outcomes. The theoretical model proposed in this study—which comprises the hierarchy of outcomes, causal pathways, mechanisms, and CMOC, as well as the materials just presented—reflects both the difficulty and the complexity of attempting to do so. While far from simple, it is proposed that the theoretical materials provided here may be used in a number of ways.

Firstly, almost any element of the theory—and certainly, any of the mechanisms, and any of the causal *pathways*—could be the subject of a more refined and more detailed review. Secondly, mechanisms could be tested through programme evaluation or primary research, investigating whether and how they work in particular contexts, and what combinations of mechanisms need to fire together to generate desired outcomes. Thirdly, most elements of the theory could be used in programme planning or in tailoring interventions to particular contexts. This study expands this idea in some detail below. Thirdly, elements of the theory could be used to develop more specific hypotheses about specific interventions in specific contexts—which could then be tested through action research by practitioners and participants, or other evaluations of the intervention. Finally, the more speculative aspects of the theory could provide a basis for discussion and for further theoretical development.

Below we provide a number of examples of ways in which elements of the theory might be used in practice. Implications for policy and future research are included in Chapter 8.

### *6.2.1 Using the hierarchy of outcomes for practice*

The hierarchy of outcomes (Figure 7, Section 3.3) represents a simplified diagram of early, intermediate and final outcomes that community accountability and empowerment interventions may affect. It can be used as a template for modelling the outcomes that a particular programme could expect to see. Once outcomes are identified, they can be used to identify indicators that could be collected for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

### *6.2.2 Using mechanisms in practice*

No intervention will trigger all the potential mechanisms identified in Section 3.4. Understanding which mechanisms an intervention expects to trigger—that is, *how* it is expected to generate its outcomes—can be used to refine programme planning and evaluation.

For planning, the sequence of questions might be: How (through which mechanisms) do we expect this intervention to work? If we expect it to work that way, how should we design it to give it its best chance of success?

For formative evaluation, the sequence of questions might be: How is the intervention expected to work (through which mechanisms)? Given this, what are the potential barriers, and what might be early signs of progress or problems? Once data are available, what does this imply for our understanding of how the intervention is working? Which changes might be made to improve its likely effectiveness?

For summative evaluation, the sequence of questions might be: How was the intervention expected to work (not just a hierarchy of outcomes, but identifying likely mechanisms)? Given this, how should we design the evaluation to assess whether or not that was the case?

Causal pathways, which link some programme activities (for example, information provision), some intermediate outcomes (for example, awareness of entitlements) and some mechanisms (for example, Mind the gap), can be used in much the same way.

### *6.2.3 Using context propositions in practice*

The context propositions are intended to inform thinking about the circumstances in which particular interventions are more—or less—likely to work. Each proposition can, therefore, be considered in relation to a particular situation—simply to ask, ‘Is this an issue in this situation?’ If so, additional questions might be asked: In which ways is it an issue here? How does it manifest itself and who does it affect? How does it affect which mechanisms could, or do, operate? What implications does that have for whether the intended intervention is feasible, desirable, or appropriate? What implications does it have for how the intervention should be designed or implemented?

### *6.2.4 Using the CMO table in practice*

In realist analysis, context, mechanism and outcome are inextricably linked. The components are not intended to be used separately, as the text above may imply. CMO statements are intended to be read as a sentence: ‘In this context, that mechanism generates these outcomes for those groups and these other outcomes for these groups.’

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While processes of analysis can require taking the pieces apart and examining them separately, CMO statements are used to put the pieces back together. They provide meaningful interpretation of otherwise inexplicable patterns of data.

The table of CMOs might be used:

- to provide a starting point for thinking about particular interventions, the ways in which they work (or fail to work), the factors that affect whether and how they work, and the outcomes that they generate;
- as a basis for development of more detailed or specific CMOs for particular interventions in particular contexts;
- as a basis for evaluation design.

### 6.2.5 Using the empowerment and accountability model in practice

Similarly, the conceptual model of the relationship between empowerment and accountability presented (Figure 9, section 6.1.1) can be used for multiple purposes: as a planning and programme-refinement tool; as a guide for analysis and problem-solving if a programme is not generating the expected outcomes; and as a guide to designing programme evaluation.

Firstly, the model can be used as a tool for overall analysis of the current situation and for design of an overall intervention. It might be used, for example, to consider which aspects of the model an intervention intends to affect most: information, knowledge and skills, norms and beliefs, voice, answerability.

Secondly, each element of the model can be used to undertake an analysis of the situation that the programme or intervention intends to affect and/or to guide planning (or refinement) of specific aspects of an intervention. Table 22, below, is not comprehensive, but provides examples of the sorts of question that might be asked for these purposes.

**Table 22:** Using the empowerment and accountability model for planning

Model Element	Understanding the context	Designing/refining the intervention
<b>Information</b> What sorts of information, from what sources, are required to address the issue?	What information is currently available, especially about rights (for example, entitled inputs to schools)? Who has access to what information? What are the information gaps?	Which information will programme participants need? What information could the intervention be designed to generate? To whom should which sorts of information be provided? Which information feedback loops should be 'designed in' to support on-going accountability? Which information will provide evidence of progress or improvement?

<p><b>Knowledge and skills</b> Which capacities are required to implement, manage and participate in the intervention?</p>	<p>Which capacities and strengths are held by which community members and service providers now? What are the effects of current imbalances in knowledge and skills? What cultural and political value does specific knowledge have and what are the cultural and political implications of trying to change different stakeholders' knowledge and skills?</p>	<p>How might the intervention be designed to build current strengths and capacities? To enable local sharing of knowledge and skills, rather than dependence on outside training? Which forms of support for <i>learning by doing</i> can be provided? What does a capacity-building approach imply for the roles, skills and expertise of intervention workers?</p>
<p><b>Norms and beliefs</b> How do existing norms and beliefs support or impede the intended intervention?</p>	<p>What are the existing norms, beliefs, role expectations, and attitudes relevant to the intervention (both topic—for example, education—and purpose—for example, changing accountability structures)? How do the existing norms and beliefs affect outcomes for different groups now?</p>	<p>How might the intervention be designed and implemented to support and enact positive local norms, beliefs, attitudes and roles? Which problematic norms will need to be tackled, and which are the most culturally appropriate and powerful ways of doing so? What favourable norms could be leveraged to enhance participation and commitment?</p>
<p><b>Productive Assets</b> Which material assets are required for the intervention?</p>	<p>Which material assets are available in the community? Who/which groups control those assets? Are assets available that could be allocated to the intervention?</p>	<p>How might the intervention be designed to maximise use of existing assets and require minimal additional assets? How might the intervention be designed to generate additional assets under the control of the community and/or alienated groups in the community?</p>
<p><b>Money</b> What money is required for the intervention itself, and for the issue being addressed?</p>	<p>What money is currently available (for example, from funding) for the issue under consideration? Who controls that money? What funds are available for the intervention? In which ways will money be used in the intervention (including payment for travel and attendance or <i>per diem</i> for participants)?</p>	<p>How will the project manage its own funds transparently and accountably? How might the intervention be designed to increase community control of funds required for on-going accountability work? How can payments to participants support their attendance without creating risks of capture?</p>

<p><b>Socio-political organisation</b> Which formal and informal social and political organisations can contribute to on-going accountability?</p>	<p>Which organisations and networks currently exist? How are they engaged in accountability work to date? Who participates and who does not? What relationships do these organisations have with government structures, for the issue (for example, education) and for accountability?</p>	<p>How might the intervention support or build formal or informal networks or organisations to undertake and sustain accountability work? How might it support strengthening of relationships between organisations?</p>
<p><b>Spaces</b> Which physical, social and political spaces are required to enable voice and answerability?</p>	<p>Which physical, social and political spaces are currently used? Which groups do and do not have access to those spaces? Which groups do and do not have voice in those spaces? Which forms of exclusion exist?</p>	<p>How might the intervention be designed to ensure that more inclusive spaces are developed? Which aspects need to be managed to provide safety and to enable voice for alienated groups? In which ways can spaces be made more inclusive?</p>
<p><b>Time</b> How much time is required from whom for implementation of the intervention? Over what timescale?</p>	<p>Whose time (in terms of social roles) is currently allocated to the issue? Who in the community is particularly ‘time-poor’? How much time do people have?</p>	<p>How might the intervention be designed to accommodate the particular time pressures affecting relevant stakeholder groups?</p>
<p><b>Voice</b> How, and for whom, will voice be strengthened by the intervention?</p>	<p>In which circumstances are whose voices expressed and heard? In which circumstances are there positive or negative responses to expressions of voice?</p>	<p>Whose voice(s) does the intervention seek to strengthen? How might it be designed to strengthen voice without compromising safety?</p>
<p><b>Transparency</b></p>	<p>How transparent are decision-making processes at local, regional and state levels?</p>	<p>How might decision-making processes be made more transparent? How might the intervention contribute to developing a culture of transparency? To maintaining transparency over time?</p>
<p><b>Answerability</b> Whose answerability, to whom, does the intervention seek to strengthen?</p>	<p>To whom are authority holders currently accountable? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current accountability arrangements? How and in which ways are authorities answerable and how timely is this answerability?</p>	<p>How might those to whom authority holders are accountable be supported by the intervention? How might they be engaged in the intervention? How can rights holders be enabled to make authorities answerable?</p>

<p><b>Authority to sanction</b> Which changes to authority to sanction does the intervention seek to create?</p>	<p>Who currently holds the authority to sanction? To what extent is the authority exercised? In which circumstances is it, or is it not, exercised? How are positive and negative sanctions working?</p>	<p>Will changes anticipated under the policy or intervention change control of the authority to sanction? From whom to whom? What implications will this have for future accountability work? How might those with the authority to sanction be appropriately supported by the intervention?</p>
<p><b>Enforceability</b></p>	<p>Are current policies, roles and expectations enforceable? For whom and for whom not? In which ways, and in which ways not? In which ways does enforcement work?</p>	<p>Should the intervention be designed to examine enforceability, or to strengthen it? If so, in which ways?</p>

Similar questions (tailored to the immediate situation) might be used for problem-solving, should a programme not be working as anticipated.

## 7. Summary and Observations

In Sections 3 (Conceptual model) and Section 6 (Discussion and further theory development) a new synthesis and theoretical framework were provided, which begin to integrate two theoretical constructs: that of empowerment and that of accountability. This is a tentative beginning only and should, we believe, be the subject of additional work in future. Previous sections also provide a realist account of the contexts in which, and mechanisms through which, community accountability and empowerment interventions may contribute to improving education outcomes in LMICs.

That analysis is drawn from the evidence collated in this review; some reflections on the nature of that evidence follow.

Almost all the interventions this report has examined have focused on rural areas, sometimes because community schools were established to address the absence of schools in rural areas, sometimes because authors have hypothesised that interventions were more likely to be effective there. It should not be assumed that mechanisms that fire in small rural communities will work as effectively in large cities.

While specific data on school size were not often provided, it is likely that many—possibly the great majority—of schools included in the interventions reviewed here would be small schools using multi-grade teaching methods. (For example, in India, approximately 78% of primary schools have three teachers or fewer, Blum and Diwan 2007, p. vi). There is mixed evidence for educational outcomes from multi-grade teaching methods (Glewwe 2011, p. 32). Small rural schools are also likely to suffer from a range of other problems: being under-resourced and understaffed, often lacking qualified teachers, having high teacher absenteeism and absence from the classroom, and major gender discrimination. Because they often specifically address large-scale exclusion from schooling and use multi-grade teaching methods, they are likely to struggle to achieve a quality of education comparable to that of schools not similarly constrained (Blum and Diwan 2007, p. 16). While community accountability and empowerment interventions are expected to address some of these problems, the fact that the problems exist in the first place may in fact make it harder for community-accountability and empowerment interventions to be implemented. Alternatively, even where some of the problems are addressed (for example, by improving teacher attendance), this may not be sufficient to overcome the range of other disadvantages that affect education outcomes; that is, community accountability and empowerment interventions alone may not be sufficient to improve learning outcomes.

Only a few of the interventions provided disaggregated data on student-learning outcomes. Of those that did, it was relatively common for the effects to be strongest for students who were achieving at higher levels prior to the intervention (for example, the tamper-proof camera monitoring project in India, the textbooks programme in Kenya, and the ASP programme in Nicaragua<sup>35</sup>). Given that it is statistically unlikely that the poorest students were also the highest-achieving students, it is also unlikely that those interventions would have served to close the achievement gap between the poorest and the less poor in their own communities. However, this observation only applies to students who were already in school. Where community schools were established for students who previously had no access to education, new access may well have served to close the gap.

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<sup>35</sup> The EDUCO Program in El Salvador achieved equivalent outcomes for its students, despite their being somewhat more disadvantaged than students in traditional schools.

In many reports, the theoretical descriptions of accountability were thin and used a single model, often nothing more than the *short route to accountability* model. Consideration of different perspectives about what accountability might be (for example, ‘constructive accountability’ [Freedman 2003, Seiling 2005] or ‘a citizenship approach’ to accountability (Porter 2013) were missing. So, too, were analyses of what such different models might imply, or offer, for the design and evaluation of community-accountability and empowerment initiatives. Insofar as empowerment is necessary for improved learning outcomes for the poorest and most marginalised, and insofar as *constructive* and rights-based approaches to accountability are (at least likely to be) more empowering than traditional hierarchical approaches, these alternative approaches warrant active consideration in the education sector.

This study found few school-based management models that even set out to involve disadvantaged groups, and most of those that did appeared tokenistic, given the power dynamics and inequalities in these groups (see list in Barrera-Osorio et al. 2009pp. 27-29; King 1999, p. 19). This suggests fundamental design failure when viewed from a community-accountability and empowerment perspective, as the presence and exercise of community voice is *de facto* absent or, at best, in doubt from the start. Even where community members are present, this is a long way from community empowerment and even further from accountability. However, some other models were more likely to involve and cater appropriately for marginalised groups, including many community-school models.

Similarly, despite awareness of the heterogeneous and sometimes divided nature of communities, this study found little evidence of the problematic side of community in the literature about community-empowerment and accountability interventions. We are concerned that this may reflect either design and implementation flaws in interventions or shortcomings in the nature of research that has been conducted to date.

While there was some evidence of fear of reprisals on the part of community members acting as a barrier to participation or change, this study did not find the level of evidence expected. Practitioner comments suggest that this may be a bigger barrier in some countries than does the evidence reviewed here. Explicitly incorporating this in research and evaluation projects in future is recommended.

It was noted, too, that the Textbook Count programme in the Philippines and some of the Central American studies were relatively unusual in having multiple accounts available. Different accounts tend to represent interventions somewhat differently, often provide complementary perspectives, and sometimes provide contradictory data. Most other accounts could not be compared to an alternative perspective and their validity could not be critically reviewed. Even where there were multiple accounts, it was not possible to adjudicate differences between them without significant primary-data collection, which was beyond the scope of the review.

Reports and articles necessarily present limited accounts of the complicated process of implementation and its interaction with various aspects of context. This is sometimes a feature for evaluation design (which does not collect the data) and sometimes a feature of time constraints of evaluation projects. Sometimes it is a result of selection of details to fit within the space constraints of publications. Without an appropriate conceptual framework, decisions about which details to include and which to exclude can be arbitrary and lead to important information being left out of reported materials. Wider use of conceptual models, and archiving of detailed qualitative data, along the lines of the archiving of quantitative datasets to permit subsequent re-analysis, would allow more detailed sifting of data in terms of emerging CMOCs.

## 8. Recommendations

The sections provide recommendations for policy and practice and for evaluation and research.

### 8.1 Policy and practice

1. *There is value in considering community-accountability and empowerment interventions in the education domain.*

There is evidence that some kinds of community-accountability and empowerment interventions can improve education outcomes, and/or intermediate outcomes that may later contribute to improved education outcomes, in some circumstances.

2. *Planning for community-accountability interventions needs to address the different types of accountability involved.*

Notions of accountability should be unpacked in design. Many kinds of stakeholders at multiple levels of systems need to be accountable for a variety of functions if education outcomes are to improve. Accountability arrangements necessarily involve power, and careful attention must therefore be paid to the nature of existing power relationships, the perceived problems in the power relationship and how those problems contribute to poor education outcomes before design is attempted.

3. *Planning needs to articulate the theory of change, identifying the different elements that need to be in place for the multiple mechanisms needed to achieve outcomes, and taking into account contextually appropriate variation.*

This review has, we submit, provided ample evidence that community accountability and empowerment interventions are both complicated and complex in nature; that they are inserted into diverse contexts across LMICs; that they attempt to achieve different goals; that they work in different ways; and that they are affected by a wide variety of factors at national, sub-national and local levels.

It will come as no surprise, then, that the review includes a recommendation about the nature of the planning that is required to design effective community accountability and empowerment interventions.

Simplistic assumptions should be avoided. For example, the idea that *simply* providing information about entitlements and delivery against those entitlements will be sufficient to prompt community action should by now be discounted. Even where information is included as a component of a more sophisticated intervention, design will need to take into account the topics of *information, the nature of the information* and its *delivery*, and the programme's assumptions about *who will do what and why* in response to it.

Detailed guidance on how to use the new theoretical framework developed in this review for practice was provided in Section 6.2.

4. *Accountability and empowerment interventions need to be adapted to local contexts and conditions.*

It should not be assumed that *what worked there* will necessarily *work here*. Active consideration should be given to the implications of culture and to the other aspects of

context that affect whether, where and how community-accountability and empowerment interventions work. Policies for accountability and empowerment interventions need to provide support for local adaptation, rather than require identical implementation at all sites.

As well as tailoring interventions to their contexts, this will support better-quality research and evaluation (see Section 8.2, below).

5. *Selecting (or designing) interventions for particular contexts should be an iterative process, starting at a broad level and gradually becoming more detailed and refined. Refinement and adaptation should continue throughout implementation.*

At each stage of planning, the aim should be to assess (or create) the best possible fit between the intervention, the mechanisms through which it is expected to work, and the context.

**Stage 1: Feasibility assessment.** Assessments of the context could be structured to address features of context identified as important in this report. For example, an initial broad assessment of the context may ask:

- To what extent is there a supportive political environment?
- Can citizens safely congregate and criticise authority holders without fear of reprisals?
- What is the nature of decentralisation in education and what does that imply for power relationships, particularly at local level?
- Are education budgets structured to support participation of poor children and poor communities?
- Is there already a strong and inclusive civil society?
- Are CSOs already engaged in accountability work?

With answers to questions such as these in place, it should be possible to answer whether community-level accountability and empowerment interventions are feasible or whether some prior policy (for example, decentralisation) or stabilisation (for example, peace-keeping) is required.

**Stage 2: Strategic assessment.** If community accountability and empowerment approaches are deemed feasible in principle, a next step may be to consider the broad features of the education system—for example, teacher supply, assessment systems and performance incentives for teachers.

- To what extent are these features likely to support, or to undermine, community-accountability and empowerment initiatives?
- What is the nature of state-level information systems and how might they enable or constrain community-accountability and empowerment initiatives?

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- Who holds which powers and authorities in the system, and how might those be supported by, or constrain the operations of, community-accountability and empowerment initiatives?
- What are the particular issues or problems facing the education system?

With an understanding of the education system, it should be possible to assess whether community-accountability and empowerment interventions are the most appropriate response to the needs of the system, and/or whether complementary strategies are required to enable them to work (for example, training additional teachers). Answers to these questions might also suggest particular design features for an intervention (for example, strengthening state information systems or designing in feedback to authority holders to enable them to hold other parties to account).

**Stage 3: Local capacity and model assessment.** If community-accountability and empowerment approaches are deemed appropriate, a next step may be to consider the capacities of the local communities within which the intervention is designed to operate.

- What are the local power structures—both formal and informal—and how might they support or impede community-accountability and empowerment interventions?
- What is the state of literacy and numeracy? (And so on).

With answers to these questions, it should be possible to decide which types of community-accountability and empowerment initiatives are likely to be most effective. If neither formal nor informal power relationships support accountability of schools or higher authority-holders to communities, simply establishing community monitoring is unlikely to be effective. Alternatively, the answers may inform particular aspects of programme design (for example, by informing the design of accountability monitoring instruments, or the nature of capacity-building activities required).

**Stage 4: Programme design and programme theory.** With an understanding of the type of community-accountability and empowerment initiative and an understanding of the nature of local communities, detailed programme design can be undertaken. At this stage, detailed consideration can also be given to the specific mechanisms through which, and contexts in which, the particular intervention might be expected to work. At that stage, reference might be made to Table 3 (*Necessary features of interventions for particular mechanisms*, p. 52), and/or the CMO chart (Table 4, p. 56). The ‘logic’ of a design task at this stage might be summarised in the following questions:

- How do we expect this intervention to work?
- If we expect the intervention to work like that, how should we design it to give it its best chance of success?
- How do we expect various aspects of the context to affect whether, for whom and how it works?
- Given what we know about the context, how should we refine the design to give it its best chance of success?

**Stage 5: On-going reflection between practice and theory.** Programme design and programme theory are not simply upfront activities for such interventions. Instead, there needs to be an on-going process of learning what is working and what is not, and adapting both practice and programme theory accordingly.

However, although iteration and adaptive programmes are needed, there is also a requirement for reasonable stability over time. Community-accountability and empowerment programmes require time to bear fruit. Many projects reviewed here had not been implemented for long enough for results to be evident at the time they were evaluated. Policy frameworks need to support adaptation to local contexts and learning, but over sufficient timeframes and with sufficient stability to generate outcomes.

## 8.2 Evaluation and research

1. *Evaluation and research should take account of and test the theory of change for the intervention, and variations in responses and outcomes across contexts.*

Effective *cookie-cutter* approaches have not emerged after several decades of CEAs. It seems that more layered, complicated or complex interventions are likely to be needed to tackle disempowerment and lack of accountability in disadvantaged settings. If this is the case, then viable ways to understand their complexity will have to be embraced. Sophisticated approaches, that yield better insight into how current more promising approaches work, appear to be required.

This leads to another research-related recommendation. Given the importance of context in the effectiveness of interventions, good-quality policy advice needs to address the circumstances in which community accountability and empowerment approaches are most likely to be effective. It would be much easier to provide that advice if a greater proportion of studies paid close attention to the processes by which, and circumstances in which, interventions achieve their goals. This should include specifying the assumptions built into programme theories at a level of specificity that enables examination of where and how they ‘break down’ (as Lieberman et al. 2012 demonstrated). It also includes careful consideration of the range of intermediate outcomes that might be found along the way, and data collection about many—rather than single, or a few—outcome indicators.

We propose that the sets of outcomes described in this report may provide a starting point for some research designs. This report (in line with others, for example, Joshi 2013, McGee and Gaventa 2010, Tembo 2012) recommend that future research and evaluation projects should be structured—and by implication resourced—to undertake these more detailed and, therefore, more policy-useful designs.

It is only with this kind of information that programme-design improvements can be made. While no single research or evaluation project will be able to investigate all aspects of a programme, a clear focus on *how and why* for even a particular aspect of a programme will contribute to knowledge. Aggregation of that knowledge over time will greatly increase the utility of evidence for policy and programme staff. This will be more useful if there is explicit attention to the sorts of intermediate outcomes identified in this review.

Since good-quality policy advice will also take account of the fact that programmes achieve different outcomes for different sub-groups, studies will need to be structured to examine those outcomes. Gender remains an important consideration, but so, too, does poverty, belonging to minority groups, disability and so on. This report recommends that studies should hypothesise in advance how impacts may vary across sub-populations and why, and then collect data in such a way as to test those hypotheses.

Few, if any, of the research studies available examined the *relationships between government-accountability systems and community-based accountability systems*. On the basis of the evidence above, community-based accountability systems can hold local service providers to account in two circumstances. The first is where governments provide them with the formal authority to do so (for example, establishing SMCs with the power to hire and fire staff). The second is where the community system feeds information into the government system and the government system then acts to hold the service provider to account. For example, VECs in India are supposed to report problems to formal authorities (Banerjee et al. 2010, p. 3). This study found, however, no studies that examined (for example) whether school inspectors were called in to respond to community concerns about non-accountability. Some stories were found within studies, but no overall systematic studies of whether, when and how governments at any level responded to information provided by communities. If community accountability is supposed to supplement government-accountability systems, this is an important gap in the research. We recommend that studies of the relationships between community accountability and government accountability be initiated.

2. *Evaluation and research should include attention to identifying and understanding barriers to engagement in accountability interventions and how these might be overcome.*

This review found relatively few studies that explicitly identified barriers to participation in local monitoring or other accountability-related activities. Where they were identified, however, important effects were noted. We therefore recommend that more explicit attention should be paid to this issue in future research.

3. *Research teams need to be constituted in such a way as to provide the necessary skills and research designs need to be structured to take account of the variety of data required.*

The need to collect and analyse a range of outcomes and contextual variables suggests that multi-disciplinary research teams will be required in many (if not most) cases. As Inamdar (in Dongre et al. 2011) notes:

The big difference in building capacity for PAISA<sup>36</sup> is the complexity of the content as well as context of the research. Accountability research spans domains relating to policy, finance, education, planning, management and service delivery. In unearthing education-fund flows, the researcher is often called upon to know policies, systems, and processes as much as local rural realities, needs and priorities. It requires an innovative mind of considerable breadth to look for data in the right places in rural ecologies—for processes that are known and valid, but also informal and not easily accessible. (Inamdar cited in Dongre et al. 2011, p. 15)

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<sup>36</sup> PAISA: Planning, Allocations and Expenditures, Institutions: Studies in Accountability. “PAISA is Accountability Initiative’s flagship project that works to develop innovative models to track social-sector programs.” <http://www.accountabilityindia.in/paisa-planning-allocations-and-expenditures-institutions-studies-accountability>

4. *Researchers and research commissioners should ensure that detailed information about studies is available to later researchers, including access to detailed reports and datasets, to enable secondary analysis.*

Far too many published accounts of intervention evaluations left out important information, such as how data were collected and when, and sufficient analysis, including appropriate bivariate and multivariate analysis or sub-group analysis. In the absence of more realist evaluations to synthesise, reviews that take account of contextual factors, as realist syntheses do, need access to datasets to explore whether patterns of outcomes are consistent with CMOCs.

A significant contribution to knowledge could be made if a condition of funding of evaluations were that detailed information and access to de-identified datasets were made available, and that funding and infrastructure to support this were provided.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1.1: Authorship of this review

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The report should be cited as:

Westhorp, G., Walker, D.W., Rogers, P., Overbeeke, N., Ball, D., and Brice, G. (2014) Enhancing community accountability, empowerment and education outcomes in low and middle-income countries: A realist review. EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

#### Acknowledgements

This research was funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The research was commissioned as part of a joint call for systematic reviews with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (then the Australian Agency for International Development, AusAID) and the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3IE).

We would like to thank the many research assistants, volunteers, end users and reviewers who contributed to this review. The product is significantly improved as a result of their contributions.

## Appendix 1.2: End-User Group

A group of potential end-users was contacted during the review and invited to provide input at two key stages: reviewing the list of included references and suggesting additions, and reviewing the draft report and suggesting revisions, as described in section 2.1 of the main report. They will also be involved in reviewing the policy brief that will be developed from this report.

The table below shows the names and affiliations of the people who agreed to provide input into the project.

**Table A1.1:** End-user group member and affiliations

Name	Description
Education officials in government, policy-makers in education	
Dewi Susanti	National Team for Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (TNP2K), Indonesia, and manager for a point-of-payment experiment on community oversight of teachers' pay. <a href="http://tnp2k.go.id/">http://tnp2k.go.id/</a>
Direct service deliverers of community-accountability projects	
No end-user engaged (but World Vision Australia a research partner and co-investigator)	
People working on research/policy development in education programming, including community advocates	
Jean-Marc Bernard and Sarah Beardmore	Global Partnership for Education comprises nearly 60 developing countries, as well as donor governments, international organisations, the private sector, teachers, local and global civil-society organisations (CSOs)/non-governmental organisations (NGOs), all devoted to helping children receive a good-quality education. <a href="http://www.globalpartnership.org/">http://www.globalpartnership.org/</a>
Armando Estrada	ViaEducation is an international network of specialists who undertake design, implementation and evaluation of programmes aimed at improving the quality of life and of sustainable development through education in Latin America. <a href="http://viaeducacion.org">http://viaeducacion.org</a>
Yoliswa Dwane	Equal Education, South Africa is a movement of learners, parents, teachers and community members working for quality and equality in South African education, through analysis and activism. <a href="http://www.equaleducation.org.za/">http://www.equaleducation.org.za/</a>
People working on research/policy development in community accountability with interest in education sector	
Fletcher Tembo	The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the UK's leading independent think tank on international-development and humanitarian issues. <a href="http://www.odi.org.uk">www.odi.org.uk</a>
Funders; for example, bilaterals, multilateral-development banks	
Nicole Goldstein	Education Adviser, DfID Ghana
Jennifer Donohoe	Unit Manager for Basic Education (Quality and Governance), AusAID

## Appendix 2: Initial rough theory (as outlined in study protocol)

The initial *rough theory* described below differs from other sorts of programme theory in four ways. Firstly, the theory is not a programme theory for a particular programme (for example, Citizen Voice and Action) or intervention (for example, Participatory Expenditure Tracking Surveys). Rather, it is a theory for a *family* or class of interventions, all of which are intended to generate change by building community accountability and empowerment. It is, in realist terms, a *middle-range theory*—one that is specific enough to use in relation to a specific study, but abstract enough to apply across programmes or contexts. The specific theories of change for specific interventions will be coded during analysis and may be compared back to this more general theory during the theory-refinement process.

Secondly, the theory is structured in realist terms and it therefore defines ‘mechanisms’ in a particular way. Mechanisms are not programme strategies or types of intervention (for example, community score cards), but underlying processes that generate changed outcomes (this study uses Pawson and Tilley’s (1997) construct of programme mechanisms, described further below). The theory also identifies potential contextual features that may affect the operations of those mechanisms. It should be noted here that mechanisms and contextual features are sometimes described in other sorts of theory as ‘assumptions underpinning the theory of change’. That is, by listing potential mechanisms and potential contextual features, this study will have identified many potential assumptions, but will have used different language to describe them. (This language reflects realist philosophical constructs about the nature of reality and the nature of causality, which are beyond the scope of this protocol to describe, but see, for example, Pawson and Tilley (1997), Pawson (2006) and Sayer (1992) for descriptions. Other types of assumptions will be coded as they are identified throughout the review process; this is included in the coding guide.

Thirdly, the theory described below is not a singular theory, positing a specific causal pathway to a limited set of outcomes. Rather, a number of potential mechanisms for different levels of an overarching hierarchy of outcomes have been identified. This is for three reasons: 1. Any intervention (for example, community scorecards) may trigger a range of different mechanisms (for example, building agreement among community members about valued outcomes, which facilitates local goal setting and planning, or increasing the perception on the part of the agent that rewards for effective or high-quality performance will follow from monitoring). 2. This review considers a range of different interventions, which may operate through the same or different mechanisms. 3. Realist philosophy assumes multiple causation (many causal processes contributing to any outcome), some of which operate concurrently (and are therefore reflected on the same level of the hierarchy of outcomes) and some of which operate sequentially (and therefore appear on different levels of the hierarchy of outcomes). The purpose of this initial rough theory is not to delimit the mechanisms to which attention will be paid, but to sensitise the review team to a range of potential mechanisms for which evidence may be sought.

Fourthly, the theory does not—and is not required to—specify exact definitions of intermediate outcomes or longer-term impacts. Because its analytic techniques are different from those of other forms of review, a realist approach can incorporate the full range of definitions, process indicators, outcome indicators and impact measures used in primary studies.

The realist position in relation to attribution (implying that an intervention *caused* an outcome) and contribution (implying that an intervention was one of a number of factors *contributing to* an outcome) is also relevant to the nature of the rough theory, detailed

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below. A realist approach assumes multiple and contingent causation and, therefore, assumes that contribution is more appropriate.

### **The questions**

The rough theory for the question to be addressed in this review can be conceptualised as responding to a linked set of questions:

The problem:

- What are the barriers to improved education outcomes, particularly for the poor, in developing countries?
- What are the sorts of problems that community-accountability and empowerment interventions can address and the opportunities such interventions can exploit?
- What is the overlap between the two: that is, which of the barriers to improved education outcomes are caused (contributed to) by the sorts of problems that community accountability and empowerment can address? Or, framed the other way around: How do the sorts of problems that community accountability and empowerment can address manifest in the education domain, and how do they contribute to lesser or worse education outcomes, particularly for the poor? Or, which of the opportunities that community accountability and empowerment interventions can exploit will address barriers to education outcomes?

### **The mechanisms**

Assuming that accountability and empowerment interventions primarily improve education outcomes by two main pathways—improving education systems or services and generating community engagement with education—which in turn generate better education outcomes:

- What are the main mechanisms by which accountability and empowerment interventions generate increased accountability, of whom, to whom and for what? What are the main mechanisms by which community accountability generates improvements in education systems or services?
- What are the main mechanisms by which accountability and empowerment interventions contribute to empowerment, and who is empowered relative to whom? What are the critical mechanisms by which empowerment of local communities generates improvements in education systems or services?
- What are the main mechanisms by which community-empowerment and accountability interventions contribute to gender equity and/or improved education outcomes for girls?
- What is or are the relationship(s) between accountability and empowerment?
- Which of the improvements to education systems or services best create improved education outcomes for the poor?

### **The circumstances**

Assuming that all interventions require certain pre-conditions to be effective, and that all programme mechanisms only operate in some circumstances:

- What are the key contextual conditions, at which levels of which systems, which affect the operations of each of the identified mechanisms?
- In which ways do those conditions affect the operation of the mechanisms?
- How do the interactions between conditions and mechanisms affect the outcomes that are generated, particularly for the poor?

### **The problem**

For ease of reading, we begin by summarising the types of problem that community-accountability and empowerment interventions may feasibly address.

These include:

- corruption, and, in particular, diversion of funds or materials away from their intended purposes for private gain; clientelism, nepotism; and failure to provide services for which payment has been provided at organisational or individual level (the latter including, in this case, low attendance of teachers at schools);
- elite capture of interventions (where intervention strategies are broad-based and specifically include marginalised groups);
- lack of understanding of community needs on the part of decision-makers, or differences in priorities between decision-makers and communities, meaning that services do not meet community needs;
- failure of policies or service-delivery systems to meet conditions described in UN rights documents (and in particular, availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability of education services as described in the UN Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), meaning that services are differentially available to different communities or different populations within communities;
- lack of understanding of rights and entitlements on the part of communities, failure of trust in governments or service providers on the part of communities, or fatalism on the part of communities, meaning that they do not act to redress problems arising from a), b) and c), above;
- poor-quality services, meaning that services that do exist do not achieve outcomes as well as they otherwise might;
- community norms or expectations that affect the priority afforded to the service provided (in this case, education) or to the sub-populations for whom the service is seen to be a priority (for example, girls as compared to boys, children with disabilities as compared to those without, children of different castes, cultural backgrounds or religious groups, and so on).

It should be noted in relation to the last point that there is a range of other problems that contribute to low participation at school—most obviously, extreme poverty requiring children to work, either for money or at home—which would not be expected to be

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addressed by community-accountability and empowerment interventions, at least in the short-to-medium term.<sup>37</sup> The point here, however, is that community norms and expectations are one of the influences on participation and that those norms and expectations may reasonably be expected to be influenced by community accountability and empowerment interventions.

Barriers to improved education outcomes that may be addressed by community-accountability and empowerment interventions may be conceived as falling at local level and systems level. The systems level comprises central (that is, national and/or state), political and administrative decision-making structures and processes, policies and procedures, as well as the systems (structures and processes) that link and manage central-local relationships. Barriers may pertain to physical facilities, curriculum, teachers and teaching, budget, parent and student behaviours, and governance. The two levels for these sets of issues are represented in the table below.

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<sup>37</sup> It is feasible that community accountability and empowerment interventions may, in the long term, develop local economic capacity, which may then impact on participation in education.

**Table A2:** Aspects of issues at local and systems levels

Issue	Local Level	Systems Level
Physical facilities	Adequacy of school buildings (including toilets, kitchens) Access to and adequacy of furniture (for example, desks and chairs) Availability of teacher accommodation	Infrastructure (including roads, bridges and transport to enable access to schools)
Curriculum	Quality and perceived relevance of curriculum Availability of teaching and learning resources (books, pens, chalk, IT)	Curriculum policies, standards and systems
Teachers and teaching	Availability of teachers Teacher attendance Teacher skills and pedagogy Teacher behaviours (for example, bullying, harassment, assault, sexual assault)	Teacher supply Teacher training
Budget	Adequacy of local budget for core functions Corruption (misallocation or misuse of funds at local level)	Adequacy of national budget Funding policies and systems Corruption at central or regional level
Parent and student behaviours	Student attendance Parent participation in education Priority afforded to education Student social norms and behaviours (bullying, harassment, assault, sexual assault)	Community norms and institutions (including law) in relation to education, teacher and student behaviours Enforcement systems for norms and laws
Governance	School governance Local accountability systems within the school, and between school and community Financial-administration systems	Systems governance Political governance Financial monitoring and accountability systems

As noted above, there are other barriers to improved education outcomes for the poor, which community-accountability interventions should not, in their own right, be expected to address, most notably poverty. There is also a range of sequelae of long-term poverty that community-accountability interventions cannot address in the short-to-medium term, including (for example) lower educational status of parents, irreversible health impacts of malnutrition, and so on.

### The mechanisms

Our rough theory sees community accountability and empowerment as related, not least in the sense that any increase in accountability of decision-makers to communities reflects a lesser asymmetry in power between the two. However, different types of interventions (or ‘the same’ intervention in different contexts) may influence accountability and empowerment in different ways. The two remain, therefore, conceptually distinct.

A realist explanation of the mechanisms involved requires two levels of explanation: How is it that the intervention generates accountability, empowerment or both; and how is it that accountability or empowerment generates improved education outcomes, particularly for the poor? This dual level of analysis is necessary, firstly, because it is possible to hypothesise changes in accountability or empowerment that do not result in improved education outcomes, or which result in improved education outcomes, but not for the poor; and, secondly, because mechanisms may *fire* or *fail* at different stages in different contexts.

Accountability theory suggests that accountability requires answerability; that is, both community voice in relation to the issue and transparency of information in relation to the issue; systems for monitoring and effective rewards and sanctions. Accountability always occurs in social contexts, and involves some form of evaluation by self (or, more commonly in this context, others). Structures and processes for evaluation do not themselves necessarily directly influence behaviours: 'Rather, it is the expectations surrounding potential evaluations which are at the root of our responses.' (Frink and Klimoski 2004, p. 3).

Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggested that programme mechanisms involve an interaction between a resource or opportunity provided by a programme and the reasoning of those affected by it. Describing programme mechanisms, therefore, involves identifying the resource, the reasoning, and the changed decisions that generate different behaviours that generate different outcomes. (The changed behaviours may be seen as early-level outcomes or as part of the overall process of change.)

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions may contribute to increased accountability by:

- directly providing information to communities, thereby increasing transparency of information and motivating communities to work for change (for example, by highlighting discrepancies between budgets allocated and those actually received at local level);
- facilitating processes that enable communities to analyse information about both their own needs and the services under consideration, to set local priorities in response, and to plan actions to achieve their priorities. These agreements at community level are a pre-requisite for community voice;
- changing community perceptions in relation to their rights and entitlements, thereby building their motivation to advocate and otherwise act to ensure those rights;
- establishing or strengthening communication systems between communities and decision-makers, at least at the local or regional level, which enable community voice to be heard;
- increasing the perception on the part of the agent (the person or body responsible for a particular action) that breaches will be detected and/or that sanctions will follow from detection;
- increasing the perception on the part of the agent that rewards for effective or high-quality performance will follow from monitoring;

- establishing or strengthening structures to undertake monitoring at community level;
- establishing or strengthening structures across multiple communities, thereby strengthening capacity for shared advocacy on systems-level issues;
- establishing appropriate local-level rewards and sanctions and systems for their implementation;
- advocating for improvements to systems-level rewards and sanctions and their implementation;
- directly sanctioning systems failures through established political or legal systems (for example, voting incumbents out of power, or taking legal action against breaches).

Increased accountability may improve education outcomes by:

- increasing the proportion of allocated funds that reach their intended destination and that are utilised for their intended purposes, thereby ensuring that appropriate school facilities, staff and teaching and learning materials are available for students, and potentially reducing fees (increasing availability);
- improving behaviours by teachers—increasing attendance, decreasing negative behaviours such as discrimination, bullying, harassment or assault, and/or improving pedagogy and teaching skills—thereby improving the amount of teaching time, improving the quality of relationships between teachers and students, and increasing the quality of teaching (increasing acceptability and quality);
- improving the quality and relevance of curriculum to local needs, including the needs of poor and very poor students and families (increasing adaptability);
- improving the quality of school governance, potentially contributing to any or all of the mechanisms already described;
- advocating for equivalent or supporting changes at systems level;
- building reciprocity between communities (particularly parents and students) and education authorities, such that parents and students fulfil their roles and expectations (for example, ensuring that students attend school);
- improving students' experiences of schooling, sustaining or building their motivation to learn;
- over time, building new social norms and institutions that support and facilitate quality education for all.

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions may contribute to empowerment by:

- establishing a sense of shared vision, positive possibilities and opportunities, which generates motivation to work collaboratively;
- increasing the skills of individuals and communities to undertake actions required for accountability: seeking information, working collectively, analysing

information, problem solving and planning, managing their own organisations and so on;

- increasing the participation of otherwise marginalised groups—including the poor, students themselves, girls as students, and students with disabilities—in community structures and processes, including decision-making processes;
- building or strengthening relationships within communities, building both bonding and bridging capital that communities can draw on in implementing their plans (*social capital* refers to the properties of social relationships that have productive capacity; that is, properties that enable people or groups to do things, as a result of the relationship, which they could not do alone. *Bonding capital* describes the product of relationships within groups, providing group members with both material and social support. *Bridging capital* is the product of relationships across social groups, providing access to new relationships and new resources at local or regional levels. Bridging capital is the product of relationships across social groups);
- building more positive beliefs, norms or expectations about the roles that community members can play directly in education services (for example, joining school Boards, volunteer teaching) and in accountability initiatives relating to education;
- building individual and collective self-efficacy (that is, positive expectations and beliefs about performance in and outcomes of particular tasks in particular contexts);
- increasing community-owned assets (for example, school facilities or equipment for use in accountability processes).

Increased empowerment may improve education outcomes, and in particular, education outcomes for the poor, by:

- changing dynamics in local decision-making, so that increased priority is afforded to the needs and interests of poor students;
- increasing community and parent participation in school governance, teaching and support for students;
- increasing student voice within school governance;
- increasing student self-efficacy in relation to learning.

These mechanisms will not operate singly and may not always operate positively. Our initial assumption is that accountability and empowerment are mutually constitutive (that is, each contributes to generating the other) and that they are joint contributors to improved education outcomes for the poor. This review seeks to identify the strength (or otherwise) of evidence to support each of these hypothesised mechanisms and the relationships between them; and to identify any additional mechanisms triggered by the interventions that contribute to outcome patterns. In so doing, it will provide the basis to ‘support, refute or refine’ the theory.

## The circumstances

Realist analysis sees reality as comprising multiple levels and layers of open systems, each interacting with the others, and with causation operating both up and down the levels of systems (Mark et al. 2000, p. 156). Programmes operate in and through these existing systems. Many kinds of programmes have long implementation chains, involving funders, central policy bodies, regional offices and authorities, implementation agencies, local staff and local communities (Pawson 2006). The circumstances in which accountability and empowerment interventions generate improved education outcomes will, therefore, comprise interacting influences at international, national, regional and local levels; from political, policy and education domains; from cultural and beliefs systems; from economic and geographic conditions; and from the circumstances of local communities. Characteristics of interventions will also affect whether and how outcomes are generated. These will include the strategies or activities used (different strategies fire different mechanisms), the *fit* between interventions and local circumstances, and the fit between the scale of the intervention (local, regional, national) and the level at which the particular problem(s) to be solved exist (local responses will not necessarily resolve problems at regional or national level).

On the basis of the preliminary scan of the literature undertaken to date, and from the experience of the research team, the following sets of circumstances are posited as being particularly conducive to generating improved education outcomes. However, it should be noted that these circumstances will, in some instances, also be the intermediate outcomes of accountability and empowerment interventions; that is, where sufficient of these circumstances exist for accountability and empowerment interventions to proceed, other circumstances, which do not exist in the first instance, may be created over time, thereby creating contexts in which improved education outcomes for the poor are more likely. This is consistent with the realist tenet that programmes change the contexts in which they operate (Pawson and Tilley 1997).

The table below incorporates a significant element of the report's initial rough theory, to be refined through the synthesis. It should be noted that, as yet, features of context have not been aligned with particular mechanisms from the lists above, nor have the outcomes that they generate been specified. This is a necessary stage for constructing context-mechanism-outcome configurations (CMOCs, which provide integrated statements: in X context, Y mechanism generates Z outcome) and will be undertaken as part of the process of the review. However, the *Implications* column of the chart begins the process of describing *what it is that matters* about the particular feature for supporting the operation of particular mechanisms and/or provides brief description of some elements of potential mechanisms related to those features.

It should also be noted that this table is framed by the positive: that is, it identifies features of context that are likely to be conducive to community accountability and empowerment and to the generation of improved education outcomes. The implicit logic includes the obverse: that the absence of these conditions is likely to militate against community accountability and empowerment and, therefore, the improved education outcomes to which they may have contributed. We will, in the course of the review, also code for other specific circumstances that undermine community accountability and empowerment and/or generate negative outcomes.

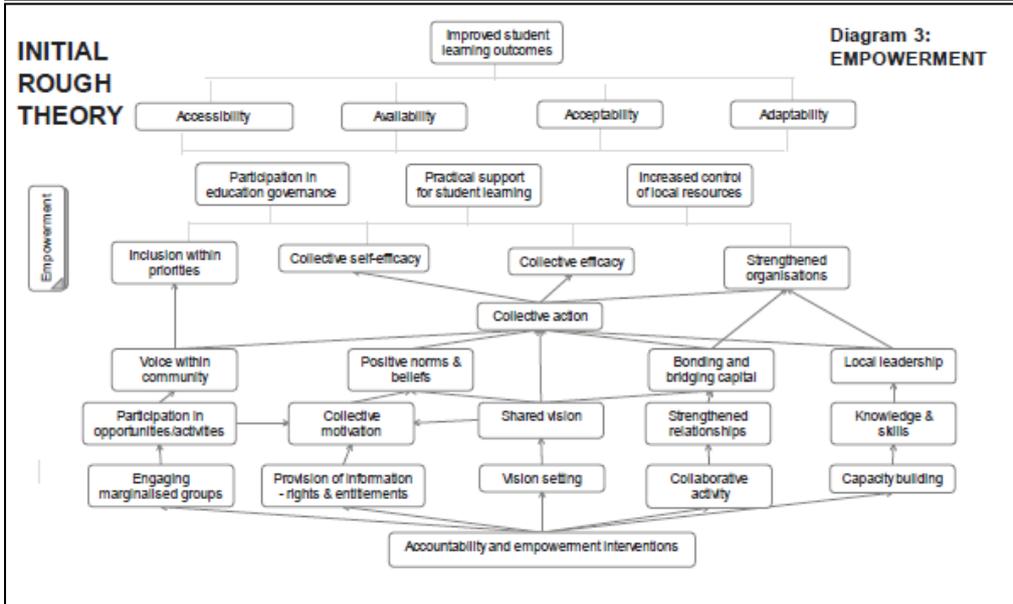
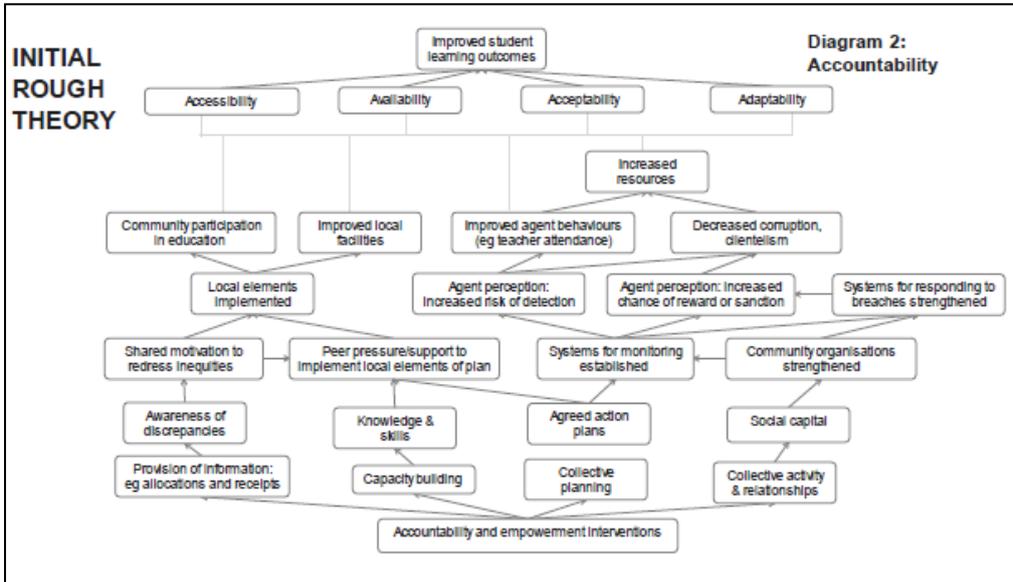
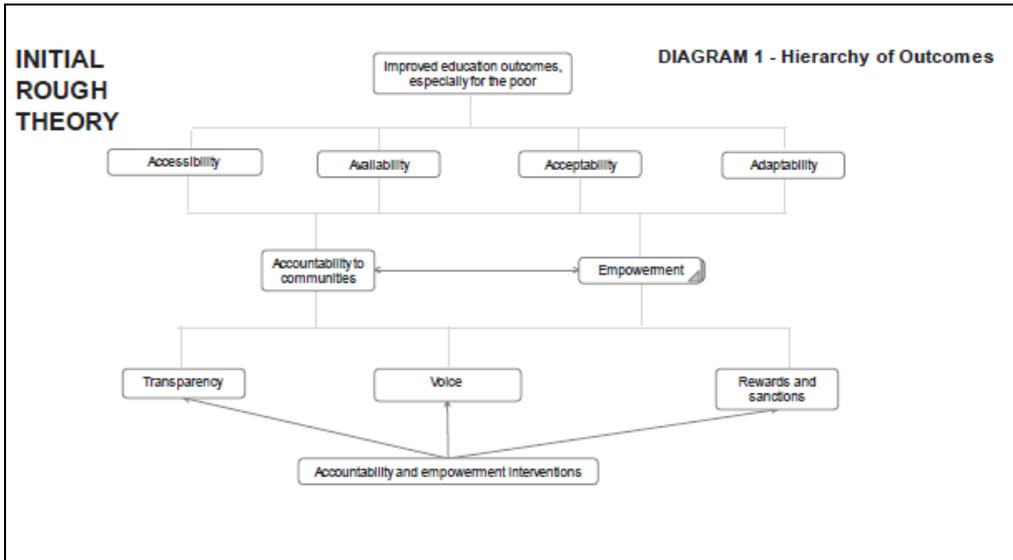
**Table A3.1:** Implications of context

Elements	Initial theory statement re circumstances	Implications
Funding donor requirements	Donor requirements support, both in principle and in practice, decentralisation, democratisation and accountability. Donor requirements support rights-based access to education.	Consistency between programme objectives and requirements and funding objectives increases access to funding, reduces administrative complexity and provides a tool for advocacy to national governments, where necessary.
National political system and broad policy directions	Political system is broadly democratic or democratising, and/or has established structures for participation in policy development. Cross-government policy directions support decentralisation of decision-making.	Systems exist through which citizen voice can be heard. Policy directions support local priority setting and tailoring of implementation to local needs. Education-policy directions are consistent with broader policy directions, increasing political support. <i>Reciprocal strengths</i> between state structures and civil society.
National education policy	Education policy supports equitable access, availability, acceptability and adaptability of education systems; decentralisation of education decision-making within broad policy frameworks; participation in local-education decision-making; and accountability of education providers, both to central government and to local communities.	Broad consistency between policy directions and programme objectives. Policy directions support local priority setting and tailoring of implementation to local needs. Policy sets a framework for monitoring, answerability and sanctions.
National education-funding system	The funding pool for education is adequate to provide at least core funding for education infrastructure and operating costs at local level. Administration systems for education funding enable equitable allocation of funds to regions/localities, timely distribution of funds and accurate monitoring of distribution against allocations.	Funding is available to local communities to provide basic school infrastructure, pay staff and purchase teaching and learning resources. Funding is distributed to regions and administrative systems enable monitoring, which is critical for accountability.
Political and bureaucratic culture (national, regional and local levels)	Political and bureaucratic culture values ethical behaviour. Systems exist to identify and respond to corruption.	Social pressure from peers and higher levels of systems for politicians and bureaucrats to operate in accordance with policy. Reduced likelihood and rate of misappropriation of funding. Sanctions can be applied when corruption is identified.

Established civil-society institutions	Established channels of communication between state and civil society. Cultural expectations of contributing to policy decisions.	Cultural support and role models for participation in decision-making.
Local power relations	Teachers and other school staff are respected by communities, and communities are respected by teachers and other school staff. There is adequate participation (both in terms of representation and involvement) of diverse groups, including marginalised groups, within community structures.	School teachers and other staff do not see themselves, and are not seen by communities, as being of such high status that they can safely ignore community wishes. Breadth of participation safeguards against <i>elite capture</i> of programme resources and opportunities.
Local community relationships	Communities are relatively homogeneous OR relationships between cultural and religious sub-groups are relatively peaceful. Cultural norms include concerns for rights of marginalised or disadvantaged groups.	Diverse community members are able to collaborate on issues of common concern.
Nature of barriers to education outcomes	At least a proportion of the barriers to improved education outcomes can be addressed at local level.	Communities are able to achieve improvements in circumstances that have positive impacts on education. A sense of success builds motivation and resilience to address longer-term issues or issues requiring central-government attention.
Nature of accountability intervention	There is a match of intervention strategies to culture, power relations and the nature of barriers to education. Specific features of interventions which affect outcomes may include the underlying theory of change (for example, strengths-based/appreciative; cf. problem focused); extent of capacity building; responsiveness to local priorities; facilitation and conflict-resolution skills of local workers; facilitation of horizontal and vertical relationships to build dialogue.	A variety of specific features of interventions may affect whether and how they work in different contexts. Interventions that are tailored to local circumstances are more likely to be effective.
Nature of participation in accountability intervention	Local leaders participate in interventions. Marginalised groups participate in interventions. Parents' participate in interventions. Students participate in interventions.	Participation of local leaders provides mandate and legitimacy for the intervention at local level. Participation strengthens local leadership capacity. The voice and perspectives of marginalised groups are included within local plans. Participation strengthens capacities of marginalised groups. Parents' intrinsic motivation to

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		<p>support education builds sustainability. Parents develop capacity to support both the provision of education and their own children's learning. The voice and perspectives of students are included in local plans. Students are empowered within school settings and motivation to learn/self-efficacy are increased.</p>
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### Appendix 3: Detailed discussion of contextual features

The initial rough theory for this review proposed a range of contexts in which community-accountability and empowerment interventions would be likely to improve education outcomes and/or intermediate outcomes. Below is presented a revised set of propositions about contextual features that are likely to influence whether, when and how community-accountability and empowerment interventions work. The basic logic of our approach is that the intervention must *work* (that is, be implemented effectively and generate a range of lower-level outcomes) before higher-level education outcomes can be achieved.

Because both contexts and the causal processes that generate outcomes are complex, there can be no final or definitive statements that *x* will always generate *y*. We therefore frame our propositions in the form of '*x* being *more likely* to generate *y*, when ...'—with the final clause describing circumstances (or, in realist terms, aspects of context). In formal, realist terms, *context* refers to features of context that affect whether, or which, mechanisms *fire*. Because of gaps in the evidence to date, also include here are propositions about contexts in which particular strategies might be more effective or might generate particular outcomes, even where the mechanisms through which they work cannot be identified.<sup>38</sup>

The notion of *context* can refer to quite different things. At the macro level (for the purposes of this report, *societal* level), for example, political systems, the economic situation, funding systems and the balance between political and civil societies all influence the way in which community-accountability and empowerment initiatives can work (Tembo 2012). Then, there are features of community context—amongst them, the skills, resources, power structures, and levels of cohesion (or otherwise) of the communities in which schools are located. Thirdly, there are features of the interventions themselves that affect whether, when and how they work. All of these fit within the realist notion of *context*: *context* is conceptualised as 'whatever affects whether mechanisms fire, which mechanisms fire, how and why programmes do or do not work' in different situations.

The propositions are organised into a number of categories. The first category, labelled *the broader environment* deals with *big-picture* issues: the political context, funding systems and so on. The second category deals with features of the education system: teacher supply, assessment systems, information systems, and teachers' performance incentives. There is also a category dealing with School Management Committees (SMCs)—roles and powers, membership, internal power relationships and so on. Another category deals with the roles, capacities and attitudes of school staff; another with engaging stakeholders; and another with the capacities of local communities. In addition, some contextual features that do not neatly fit into these categories are included: *de jure* and *de facto* powers, school facilities, gender and sustainability.

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<sup>38</sup> This is a fine distinction in realist methodologies. Strategies are not the same as mechanisms; the same strategy can fire different mechanisms in different situations. However, we do not always (or, in fact, usually) have information about mechanisms, but we can still distinguish aspects of context in which strategies seem to be more effective.

### A3.1 The broader environment

#### A3.1.1 A supportive political context

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to be effective if they are introduced in a reasonably supportive political context.

Short-route accountability initiatives are intended to strengthen accountability within political and service-delivery systems and, almost by definition, will be introduced into systems that are, in some ways and to some extent, unsupportive. However, there are degrees of supportiveness and unsupportiveness. For example, in their study of a set of 100 case studies of citizen engagement in 20 countries, Gaventa and Barrett (2012) identified a total of 830 outcomes, of which around 75% were coded as ‘positive outcomes’ and 25% as ‘negative outcomes’ (that is, not contributing to democratisation and positive state-civil society relations). They conducted multiple analyses of the patterns of outcomes, including by *category of outcome* and by the *existing level of democratisation of the country*. On a three-tier scale of democratic strength, the highest proportion of negative outcomes was found in tier-2 democracies.

In the education sector, a supportive political and public-policy context is likely to include:

- either low levels of corruption or concerted attempts to reduce corruption across the whole of government; ‘Corruption tends to contribute to the reinforcement of inequities by placing a disproportionate burden on the poor, and limiting their access to public services’ (Hallak and Poisson 2006).
- lack of, or a relatively low level of fear of reprisals (see, for example, Lieberman et al. 2012, as discussed in Section 5.8.4)
- education policy that devolves authority to school level, providing *de jure* responsibility to schools;
- a balance between three factors: the opportunities for demands, citizen/parent empowerment to make demands, and public accountability to those making the demands.

Altschuler and Corrales (2012) found that Honduras and Guatemala, in introducing community-managed schools (CMS), created new institutions: parent councils, which contained a conundrum. On the one hand, they were created by the state to empower citizens, yet they lacked the autonomy needed to make demands of it. Their origin as a state creation and their dependence on the state suggests a limitation in councils’ capacity to make demands and exact accountability from the state. Altschuler and Corrales (2012) also cited other research, indicating that similar problems occurred with participatory forms of local-government decentralisation in Mexico:

Our study mirrors Grindle’s (2007) finding in Mexico: Decentralization increased demand making without strengthening groups’ ability to hold local officials accountable, at least not yet. Parents in both countries repeatedly expressed feeling powerless to influence municipal decision making, oversight of resource distribution, and other spheres of local politicians’ power. Second, also in parallel with Grindle (2007) (Ibid.), increased demands on government without public accountability reinforce clientelism. State actors continue to distribute material support along partisan lines, especially in Honduras, undermining parental authority.

- Conducive political spaces.

Cornwall et al. (2011, pp. 26-27) concluded from cases drawn from a ten-year international research programme on citizenship that the spaces within which citizen participation is facilitated, the identities citizens bring to these spaces, and the ways in which power relations are exercised within them are likely to significantly affect the degree of citizen empowerment and accountability outcomes.

For example: Parents who are marginalised by not knowing the policy entitlements of their school, their rights to exercise voice about improving the school or the skills to exercise it influentially seem unlikely to be able to exercise democratic power regarding the absence or failing of education for their children. Where whole communities or significant groups (such as low-caste groups) are excluded or marginalised by others from having influence, then their children are likely to be educationally disadvantaged. In India, where local participatory democracy has been introduced and communities participated in a scheme to identify children out of school and voice the need for a local school to be established, UNDP (2002, p. 75) reported that 30,000 new schools were created in the first three years after the scheme was announced in 1997, greatly increasing the enrolment rate of tribal children and girls.

There have been a number of studies that have analysed political factors motivating, influencing or undermining educational reform (for example, Grindle 2004). Those political factors influence the design, implementation and sustainability of educational decentralisation and associated initiatives, such as school-based management (SBM).

A comprehensive study of the ways in which the politics of educational reform affects community-accountability and empowerment initiatives is beyond the scope of this review. It should be noted, however, that many authors provided a brief review of policy, history and sometimes politics in the introductions to their reports. Very few, however, investigated or provided evidence of the effects of politics on the operations or impacts of the interventions they studied.

On the basis of a series of studies that examined the educational politics of CMS in four Central American countries, Altschuler (2013) found that patronage politics may have contributed to the underperformance of CMS in Guatemala's PRONADE scheme and Honduras's PROHECO scheme (pp. 130-132). In his study of PROHECO, Altschuler (2013) found, through discussions with teachers, activists and parent leaders, that party activists were rewarded with work in departmental and local PROHECO posts, and that party activists—and the ruling party, through their relationships with ruling-party politicians—rather than parents, ended up hiring teachers in many PROHECO schools (pp. 126-129). Patronage through the ruling party also took the form of geographic favouritism, affecting where PROHECO placed new CMS schools (p. 129). Altschuler also reported (2013., p. 132) that governments had overturned CMS in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, but not how politics had influenced these decisions. (For more details regarding the politics of government-union relations in Central America, see *The roles of teachers and teacher unions*, below.)

### A 3.2 The strength and inclusion of civil society

Community-accountability and empowerment initiatives are more likely to be effective where government and other societal actors encourage a strong and inclusive civil society, and are inclusive of relevant civil-society actors.
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For the purposes of this review, civil society was considered to include CSOs, NGOs, informal community-level associations of citizens, and citizens themselves. Because our review is about *community* empowerment and accountability in relation to primary education, it is primarily concerned with the local level, but recognises that what happens in government and civil society at other levels often influences what happens locally.

At national, sub-national and local levels, space for and strength of civil society to facilitate change varies considerably (see Civicus's Civil Society Indexes for LMICs <http://www.civicus.org/csi>). Where citizens cannot associate freely, or do not have enough freedoms or capacities to organise effectively, or government deliberately or inadvertently excludes civil society, then community-level collective action or empowerment is less likely to occur. Perhaps unsurprisingly, no examples of community-accountability and empowerment initiatives were found in places such as North Korea, Eritrea or Myanmar.

There is a wider civil-society and accountability literature that speaks to this issue, but little direct evidence or analysis was found in the materials reviewed here of the relationship between civil society, government actions, and the effectiveness of community-accountability and empowerment initiatives. The exception was a study by Corrales (2006, p. 455ff), which examines the impacts on civil-society empowerment of government actions in relation to CMS in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Corrales (Ibid.) applies 4 'tests' (*disruption; inclusion; accountability and leverage; empowerment spillover*).

On disruption, Corrales (2006) found that:

By empowering schools to hire and fire teachers, the reforms threaten teacher job protection, undermine the collective bargaining capacity of unions, and change the relationship of teachers with their community (the cordial parent-teacher relationship becomes a possibly adversarial employer-employee relationship. As a consequence they also made unions unlikely to support reforms, regardless of how well teachers were paid and in that regard become socially disruptive of local civil society. (p. 456)

Despite these disruptions, and 'low levels of pre-existing human capital and institutional facilities', Corrales (2006) found that, in all four countries, participating citizens had been able to carry out often-complex CMS roles.

*Corrales (2006.) also argued that, because CMS are 'enormously dependent on state resources', their performance is strongly affected by the competence of state officials and the adequacy of state resources (p. 459). He concluded that: 'CMS arrangements, like all social policies, work best if both the participating citizens and the state are engaged and committed, rather than if only one of the parties is. (p. 459)'*

These studies suggest that, for community-empowerment and accountability interventions to operate, government must provide enough space to include civil-society actors, and independence for them to operate. Fostering a strong and inclusive civil society, where citizens have enough freedoms to associate, mobilise and take collective action for educational reforms, appears also to be important. Lastly, governments must also provide sufficient and consistent resources to communities, especially to those which are most marginalised, but must do so without making them so beholden to government that they are compromised in their ability to exact accountability for education outcomes from it.

### A3.3 Clarity of roles and responsibilities

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are most likely to be effective when powers and responsibilities are clearly allocated to different levels of government and to all relevant stakeholders, including parents, pupils and SMC members. This provides clarity on roles, duties and responsibilities. It may make access to decision-makers easier and enable communities to lobby, or work with, the right level for the right issue.

Processes of decentralisation, and/or policies to increase community management of schools often introduce new structures or change the powers and responsibilities of structures. This can result in ‘overlapping responsibilities for the same function between two or more levels of government without rules for adjudicating shared authority’ (Berryman 2000, p. 84; Central Europe and Asia).

Decentralization and voice are often equated. However, they are not the same. Decentralized governance is more conducive to the exercise of voice because clients have more access to those making decisions about the sector. However, clients need channels, such as local elections, to make themselves heard. These channels need to be protected from capture by local subgroups, usually the elite of a community. (Berryman 2000, p. 92)

It is also necessary for all levels of the decentralised system to operate effectively. Hedger et al. (2010), in their case study of Sector Budget Support in Uganda, presented a case that lingering centralisation of power in the education system in Uganda had diminished local and district-accountability mechanisms, despite legal requirements under the Local Government Act of 1997. They used existing documentation, stakeholder interviews and field visits to service providers to develop their evidence base.

They concluded that centralisation had taken place to such an extent that it had brought about weak local government generally, and poor management of education at the district level leading to poor education outcomes:

Education inputs have been deployed very inefficiently, and this has manifested itself in problems such as teacher absenteeism, mismanagement of funds for schools operations and infrastructure. (p. 25)

The focus on policy and planning capacity, rather than service delivery at the centre, and the failure to address district management in education, have both had important implications for the capacity of frontline institutions to deliver services. (p. 73).

In particular, this had resulted in on-going problem with teacher absence:

Teacher absenteeism, a major area of leakage, was highlighted as early as 2004, when the World Bank PER found an average rate of teacher absenteeism of 27%. The types of MoES responses recommended by the PER—improved school inspection, monitoring by communities and parent-teacher associations, penalties for absenteeism and bonuses for attendance—did not appear to feature strongly in historical documentation... (p. 73)

They identified the contributors to on-going weakness in resource allocation as:

[L]eakages of resources between central government and school (e.g. *ghost teachers*, misuse of UPE grants to districts); leakages of resources within schools (e.g. high rates of absenteeism by pupils, teachers and head teacher); deployment of teachers across districts in a way which is unrelated to measures of need; and

inefficient allocation of resources within government schools (e.g. large class sizes in early grades and lower sizes at higher grades). (p. viii)

It is at least theoretically possible that various kinds of accountability interventions could affect each of these problems. Community-accountability and empowerment interventions (as distinct from other forms of social or public accountability) may be most effective in relation to *leakages within schools*. They could also potentially feed information into wider social-accountability initiatives.

This study proposes, therefore, a *virtuous circle*, in which appropriate implementation of clearly specified roles and responsibilities for each tier of government, and for local-service providers and local communities, provides a conducive context for community accountability and empowerment. Community-accountability and empowerment initiatives can then contribute to effective operations at local level. If implemented on a wide enough scale, and with systems established to collate information from local level, they may plausibly also contribute to improved accountability at higher levels of systems. However, examples of initiatives that had been structured in that way, other than the Philippines' textbook count, were not found.

In Nepal, a formative evaluation of the 2004-2009 National Plan of Action to decentralise school management and build community capacity to manage schools found that, 'Guidelines and directives intend to involve community members in the local educational affairs, whereas Educational Act and Regulations empower educational bureaucrats to control school affairs' (Upadhyaya et al. 2007, p. 88).

As a result, SMCs have tended to play *supportive*, rather than *management* roles. However, particular kinds of leaders were able to generate strong community participation and to build effective schools (see Section 8.2.6.1).

At local level, where there are both SMCs and parent-teacher associations (PTAs), the absence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities can lead to friction (Suzuki 2002, p. 248; Uganda; Mfum-Mensah 2004, p. 150; Ghana).

Before the introduction of the UPE policy, school financing depended heavily on the PTA, which consolidated fees from the parents and even supplemented teachers' salaries (Passi 1995). This gave the PTA substantial power in school governance... (Mwanga 2000). Under the UPE policy ...[i]t is now the SMC that manages the UPE grant and all school affairs ... Yet there is still a lack of clarity over the demarcation of roles between the PTA and the SMC (i.e. confusion, which, in some extreme cases brings about overt antagonism between them." (Suzuki 2002, p. 248).

'This situation [misunderstandings between the PTA and SMC] has come about because these two local bodies lack defined roles and have overlapping job descriptions.' (Mfum-Mensah 2004, p. 150).

One SMC member stated that the disagreements had spread to the wider community and negatively affected community enthusiasm:

'... the most unfortunate aspect of the problem is that more community members have become involved in the conflicts and are thus losing the enthusiasm they previously had for working and otherwise supporting the program' (Mfum-Mensah 2004,., p. 150).

### A3.4 The roles of teacher unions

Community-accountability and empowerment initiatives are more likely to generate improved education outcomes where those initiatives deliberately include and build constructive partnerships and generate shared goals with teachers and teachers' representative bodies.

A number of authors have described the roles and impacts of teacher unions in relation to change in schools.

Berryman (2000) noted that teachers are potentially 'a powerful source of innovation and change—and of overt and covert resistance to change' (p. 25). Lewis and Pettersson (2009) summarised research conducted in Mexico (Álvarez et al. 2007), that found that:

[S]tudents in states with lower levels of conflict between state authorities and teachers' unions and higher teacher wages performed better in terms of average PISA mathematics scores (Figure 5). For instance, test scores were highest in states with low levels of conflict between state authorities and teachers' unions and with high teacher wages, and lowest in states with high levels of state-teacher's union conflict and high teacher wages, implying that simply paying teachers more may not affect student performance as measured by test scores (p27-28)

Writing about Central America (El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras) Umansky and Vegas (2007) noted that:

School-based management is also generally associated with weaker teachers unions, as teachers in these schools are often subject to local decisions rather than national guidelines established through collective bargaining. Previous research has indicated that weaker teachers' unions are sometimes associated with improved teacher quality and teaching because in countries with strong teachers unions teachers' positions are typically based on rigid pay and advancement structures, such as seniority and education level, rather than on quality of work. (p.201)

Corrales (2006, p. 455), in a study of community-managed schools in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, analysed the divergent ideological, political and development factors motivating or affecting responses of these governments towards teachers and their unions. He cited evidence that teachers arguably bore the greatest cost of education reform in these countries. By empowering schools to hire and fire teachers, CMS threatened teacher security, undermined unions' collective bargaining power, and frayed parent-teacher relationships. In Nicaragua (especially) and El Salvador, he adduces evidence suggesting that, as early as the 1990s, a core objective of education reformers was to weaken the powerful influence of teacher unions, which were affiliated with opposition parties. Consequently, teachers were either unlikely to be broadly supportive of reforms such as CMS, or else openly hostile to them. Given the crucial role teachers play in education, this confrontational approach and party-politicisation of educational reforms may have contributed to their underperformance.

In Nicaragua, unions initially opposed school autonomy, but were 'unable to prevent its spread', in part because the decision for schools to participate was taken locally, rather than centrally, because the Education Department negotiated directly with local schools, and because there were strong incentives for teachers to participate. The programme allowed school Boards to determine additional parental fees and to use funds to reward high-performing teachers; 'Moreover, from the point of view of teachers, dealing directly with the MED was seen as a better way to increase their salaries and working conditions than through a

collective bargaining process whose benefits would be spread thin among all teachers, regardless of their individual performances. (Arcia and Belli 1999, p. 8).

In Pakistan, reforms to provide parents with additional powers also generated conflict with unions:

The repeated reconstitution of SMCs, giving increasing authority to parents, has drawn an angry response from teachers' associations in the Punjab who have resorted to strikes, protests and even legal action against the education department. The fault also lies with the aggressive media strategy adopted by the government promoting the role of the community without taking the teachers' unions into confidence. (Khan and Zafar 1999, p. 12)

This study therefore proposes that community-accountability and empowerment initiatives are more likely to generate improved education outcomes where those initiatives deliberately include and build constructive partnerships and generate shared goals with teachers and teachers' representative bodies.

### A3.5 Resource allocations for the poor

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to generate improved education outcomes for the poor where education-funding structures are pro-poor.

Like any other intervention, community-accountability and empowerment interventions are most likely to be effective when broader policy and funding structures are supportive. A number of the interventions studied here attracted government funding and responded explicitly to educational disadvantage or social or rural marginalisation (for example, Janshala, PESLE, SSA in India and PRONADE, PROHECO in Honduras and Guatemala). However, evidence was also found that initiatives were commonly embedded in overall funding structures that were not pro-poor and no evidence that community-accountability and empowerment interventions addressed that larger problem.

For example, Al-Samarrai (2009) found that in Bangladesh in 2005:

Despite clearly stated objectives to address inequality, government recurrent spending on education is biased towards the non-poor; 68% of total government spending is devoted to the non-poor despite this group only representing 60% of the relevant age group (i.e. primary to tertiary (6-25) age group). (p.5)

Claussen and Assad (2010) in their study of the Tanzanian government's Public Expenditure Tracking Survey For Primary and Secondary Education in Mainland Tanzania noted that a differential capacity to implement budgets served to entrench the disadvantage of rural schools. A critical factor in this regard was found to be the 'capacity to implement budgets'—that is, the 'ability to employ and retain teachers in the positions allocated' (p. 16). These were schools that found it hard to attract teachers, such as rural schools, and they tended already to have high pupil-teacher (P/T) ratios. Therefore, 'councils with high P/T ratio are not able to employ the new teachers in the positions allocated'. Rural schools, in particular, become further disadvantaged: '... many of these positions are shifted to urban councils and schools with lower P/T ratio' (p. 16). This effectively results in the perpetuation of a system wherein the least resourced receive the least resources.

Altschuler (2013) reported, in summarising research on CMS in Central America, that they had expanded coverage to poor rural areas and 'produced schools of similar—though mostly dismal—quality to traditional public schools in comparable areas' and may have

increased teacher accountability (p. 123). This suggests that the resource reallocation involved may have achieved some degree of catch-up for unserved or poorly served school catchments.

The nature of financial support provided to poor students may also be important. A number of countries provide conditional cash transfers to allow individual students from poor families to participate in education Al Samarrai (2009) found evidence that 46% of the Bangladeshi Primary Education Stipend (PES) programme had been captured by the non-poor, that accountability structures to improve selection were weak, and that the structure of the programme itself mitigated against collective action by poor parents:

While there are no formal accountability institutions that parents can use if they feel that selection has been unfairly carried out, complaints to the school and the local education administration can be made. However, these efforts cannot be described as an effective means for ensuring that selection is carried out fairly. Parents have an incentive to ensure that their children are selected for the stipend programme and by consequence others are excluded, preventing any collective action on the part of parents. (p. 175)

SMCs are responsible for administering the PES programme—a situation that might, on face value, be considered empowering for local communities and in keeping with accountability to local communities. However, there are potential conflicts between the SMC's role in supporting the school as a whole and a strict implementation of the rules of the stipend programme. Strict administration would result in a higher proportion of resources being allocated to poor students and may, therefore, improve education outcomes for the poor. However, it might also result in lower allocations across the school as a whole. Here, both perverse incentives and limited sanctioning power tend to reduce accountability in a way that makes improved outcomes for the poor less likely:

In addition to its role in selecting beneficiaries, the SMC is responsible for verifying the attendance and examination performance data used to make payments to beneficiaries. There are potentially greater incentives for the SMC to maximise the total stipend payments for the school rather than limiting payments according to the criteria. Often SMC chairs are drawn from the local elite and in many cases their families were central to the establishment of the school. Their desire to improve services for the local community is unlikely to provide a strong incentive to limit payments on the stipend programme. SMCs also do not have any formal powers to discipline school officials if discrepancies in stipend records are found. Their only recourse is to make complaints to the *upazila* [sub-district] education office which is also limited in its sanctioning power. (p. 177)

In order to be pro-poor, funding systems will need to take into account existing starting points in different communities. The World Bank, in its review of the Community School Support Project, Nepal, noted that:

Community management of schools offers many potential benefits, but it is important to understand what communities of different educational and income levels are likely to implement. The education of the poorest children should not depend heavily on the means available to the very poor communities. (p. vii)

At local level, community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to be effective when allocated resources are adequate. In some cases, NGOs contributed additional resources that may have assisted in generating student-learning outcomes. Beyene et al. (2007 p. 45) reported that, in respect of BESO II in Ethiopia, external funds provided by USAID were relatively small in proportion to the total amount needed to meet programme objectives, and served as 'seed money'.

The resources that communities themselves mustered, be they money, raw materials, labour or time, were crucial to CGPP's implementation and long-term sustainability. World Learning's final report on the programme (2007) provided multiple examples of contributions made by local communities. They also reported that PTAs and Kebele Education Training Boards were 'playing a lead role in seeking support from other NGOs': 'For example, a first cohort school, Almetema, received 70 combined desks, one typewriter, 37 reference books, 1,400 exercise books, 280 school bags and pens for girl students from IRC' (Ibid., p. 27).

### A3.6 Features of the education system

#### A3.6.1 Teacher supply

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to generate improved accountability of teachers when there is neither an undersupply nor an oversupply of teachers.

One of the ways in which accountability is hypothesised to work at the local level is by increased capacity to sanction underperforming teachers. This could work through either or both of two mechanisms. Either underperforming teachers may in fact be sanctioned (and, in extreme cases, be sacked and replaced) and they (or their replacements) may perform better in response. Alternatively, teachers may respond to the *threat* of sanction, or simply to the sense of being observed.

Some studies have found that actual sanctions are rarely applied (Okitsu 2011, Kremer et al. 2005). From analysis of nationally representative data on teacher absence from unannounced visits to Indian primary schools, Kremer et al. (2005, p. 661) found that few teachers are ever sanctioned for absence. They reported that 'only one head teacher in nearly 3,000 public schools reported ever dismissing a teacher for repeated absence' (Ibid, p. 661). A number of reasons for this have been proposed in the literature, but with varying levels of evidence to support them. Zeitlin et al. (2011) noted that, where vacancies are hard, or slow, to fill, 'SMC members may not want to fire even underperforming teachers, for want of an alternative' (p. 21, no direct evidence provided).

This review found only one example of oversupply of teachers, in Kerala, India, where existing high levels of student enrolments and a declining student population created the surplus (Aikara 2011):

As a result there is now a mad scramble for getting students among teachers and school managements so that schools are not closed and teachers are not rendered surplus. Some unethical practices have crept into the system to snatch away students from one school to another. Manipulation of the number of students on the day of the headcount in the beginning of the school year is reported. (p. 182)

It would seem that the context of oversupply generated (or contributed to) decreased accountability. However, the state also introduced a scheme for 'protected teachers', who were paid a salary and either deployed to another school or retained in their original school, regardless of whether there was adequate work for them (Ibid., p. 183). While oversupply should, in theory, make it easier for SMCs to sanction underperforming teachers, a system that protects teachers' employment regardless of the need for them may serve to undermine local accountability. This hypothesis remains to be tested.

### A3.6.2 Teachers' performance incentives

Community-accountability and empowerment initiatives are more likely to improve the frequency and quality of teaching where they build on teachers' intrinsic motivation and avoid creating perverse incentives.

A review of teacher-performance incentives is beyond the scope of this review. However, a number of the initiatives reviewed here incorporated features that were intended to incentivise teachers in various ways. These included use of contract teachers in many community-schooling schemes, where the desire to maintain employment should *incentivise* the teacher to work hard; bonus-payment schemes, where additional payments should fulfil the same function; monitoring schemes, where social sanctions might operate alongside either payment incentives or sanctions; and collective-action approaches, where barriers to teachers' performance might be addressed, thereby improving teacher motivation.

In the South American community-schooling schemes, hiring teachers on short-term contracts was intended to motivate teachers to improve their teaching practices (Di Gropello 2006, p. 19). In El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, teacher contracts were renewed every 12 months, subject to a favourable review from parent-run school councils (Ibid., p. 17).

However, short-term contracts could also act as a perverse incentive. In a qualitative study of selected EDUCO schools, Desmond (2009, p. 20) interviewed teachers who indicated that the stability and pay conditions of teaching positions in official schools would motivate them to leave the EDUCO Program, should the opportunity arise: 'All teachers agreed that working in an official school provided job stability and increased salary increments and thus, EDUCO teachers left EDUCO for official positions if and when the opportunity arose.' (p. 20).

A number of programmes used bonus pay as a mechanism to incentivise teachers to improve their teaching. One example was ASP in Nicaragua, whereby teachers received a biannual bonus based on student registration and class enrolment, and were eligible to receive additional bonus pay at the discretion of the *consejo* (school council). The biannual bonus was equivalent to a month's salary while the bonus issued by the *consejo* was funded from *voluntary* fees (Parker 2005, p. 364).

Using director and teacher-survey data collected from 1996, Parker (2005, p. 376) reported that 'teachers and directors report higher levels of incentives in autonomous schools, and those levels reach significance' (p. 373). In autonomous schools, SMCs could be paid incentives from the monthly fees collected from students, although this did not always eventuate (Fuller and Rivarola 1998, p. 37)

In EDUCO schools in El Salvador, however, EDUCO teachers received a rural bonus of US\$40 a month and a social-security benefit, but the total value of their salary was the same as that for teachers in non-EDUCO schools (Di Gropello 2006, p. 19).

Zeitlin et al. (2011) suggested that addressing barriers to teachers' undertaking their roles might be more important than incentives per se:

While there is evidence that teacher absences are considered a serious part of the problem, the [participatory] scorecard content seems to reflect a view that teachers face substantial barriers to performing their duties. The most effective means to improving the quality of education may lie in mitigating these barriers,

rather than in providing teachers with high-powered incentives and expecting them to resolve these issues themselves. (p.14)

Zeitlin et al. noted that this was consistent with earlier laboratory experiments, which showed that—in an environment of low-powered incentives—teachers’ intrinsic motivation is an important factor explaining their performance (Barr and Zeitlin, 2010).

### A3.6.3 Assessment systems

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to generate improved learning outcomes when there is a national, high-quality system for assessment of student learning and when assessment systems are constructed to support collective action.

Student-assessment systems can play at least two roles in supporting community-accountability and empowerment interventions. The first is by providing information about student-learning outcomes to parents and communities. If the assessment system is structured against agreed standards, it can inform parents about how their school is performing relative to those standards. If information about the performance of other, similar schools, or other local schools, is also provided, it may also serve to fire a competitive mechanism (*If they can do better, we should be able to do better too*).

In Mexico, Lewis and Petterson (2009) reported that ‘Students in states with strong accountability systems (e.g. testing, report cards, and school rankings, and the dissemination of results) performed even better’ (p. 27).

Benveniste’s (2000) examination of the development and role of the centralised assessment system in Uruguay provides an example of ways in which an assessment system can be designed to support collaborative action to improve learning outcomes. Uruguay had, at the time of writing, a highly centralised education system, but nonetheless used democratic and participatory processes to develop a new assessment system. The underpinning assumptions and processes built into the assessment system were:

First, the central State circumscribed teacher liability over poor performance, largely assuming itself the responsibility for the character of schooling. Second, the national government built a wide level of consensus with respect to the assessment instruments by encouraging educators to participate and buy into the assessment initiative. *Third, the national government shifted the focus of the national evaluation from measuring schooling outcomes to addressing the social wants that condition student learning.* Hence, the national evaluation has come to symbolize an agreed-upon mechanism of social accountability by which the central government upholds its responsibility for educational provision as it intervenes on behalf of impoverished communities. (p. 2).

The assessment system that was developed collected information about socio-demographic backgrounds of schools, as well as competencies for students (p. 8) and then analysed school results in five clusters (those from ‘very favourable’ backgrounds, medium-high, medium-low, and ‘very unfavourable’ and rural backgrounds). The analysis demonstrated both the differences in outcomes for these groups and also demonstrated that ‘academic achievement levels were not directly tied to the public or private nature of schooling, but rather to the sociocultural composition of the student body’ (p. 10). Strategies to build teacher support for the assessment programme included: ‘1. strict confidentiality of test results, 2. prompt devolution of student outcomes to school authorities, 3. contextualization of test scores by sociocultural background, and 4. abstention from holding teachers directly accountable for academic attainment’ (p. 19).

It was a requirement that student scores would then be discussed by schools: 'Teachers report that test scores were subject to repeated discussion and reflection sessions among school inspectors, principals, and the teacher cadre. The organization and participation in these initiatives was mandated by the central government' (p. 20).

In response, schools adapted curricula, developed in-house assessments to further refine their understanding of teaching and learning problems, aligned curricula across grades, developed projects to improve learning outcomes (including, in at least one case, a project to involve parents in supporting student learning) and modelled their own assessment processes on the model (pp. 20-21).

The material in this report may be summarised as follows. A centralised assessment system can provide the basis for schools to improve outcomes for the poor, where:

- the evaluation tools are developed in a consultative and participatory manner;
- blame for poor outcomes is not attributed to schools or teachers, but to broader social structures;
- responsibility for improving outcomes is attributed to the system as a whole;
- additional resources and supports (in this case, training for inspectors, training for teachers and leaders, and small grants for poorer schools) are provided at multiple levels of the system to support change; and
- reflection and planning based on the data are a mandated requirement.

No studies were found for this review that directly examined the relationship between the nature of the assessment system and the effectiveness of community-accountability and empowerment interventions. However, it is posited that the system just described is consistent with what Freedman (2003), writing in the health sector, and Seiling (2005), writing in the organisational accountability domain, call 'constructive accountability':

I use the phrase 'constructive accountability' to make clear that a rights-based approach to maternal mortality reduction is not primarily about enacting a system to find fault and pronounce punishment; rather, it is about developing a dynamic of entitlement and obligation between people and their government and within the complex system of relationships that form the wider health system, public and private. It is about building health systems that function for the benefit of people. (Freedman 2003, p. 111)

[C]onstructive accountability (CA), which I define as an ongoing process of relationship that contributes to a mutuality of sensemaking and its outcomes, bringing a heightened willingness to be collaboratively contributive and responsible ... Constructive accountability is an ongoing mutually beneficial process of sensemaking that leads to an increased willingness of participants to be collaborative and responsible. As I see it, constructive accountability exists in a context of shared and co-constructed thought, knowledge and action; mutually constructed synergies; open communication; and multiple connections and partnerships. It includes recognition of the importance of working well together over time. (p .12).

It is also consistent with what Porter (2013) calls 'a citizenship approach' to accountability. This is by way of contrast with assessment systems that simply provide citizens with information about the outcomes of student assessment across schools. The latter may enable non-poor families in areas where there is a choice of school to exercise choice and move to better schools, and therefore be consistent with 'a client approach' to accountability (Porter, 2013 However, while discussion of the notion of school choice was

found in the literature reviewed here, there was very little evidence of it operating through community-accountability and empowerment initiatives.

This report further posits that a citizenship approach, or a constructive-accountability approach, is more likely to contribute to improved education outcomes for the poor. However, in formal terms, this hypothesis remains to be tested.

### *A3.7 Information and information systems*

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are most likely to generate engagement and improve the quality of decision making where the state has effective systems for collecting and distributing accurate information.

Community-accountability and empowerment initiatives are more likely to operate as expected when the nature of the information provided is tailored to the particular change processes the information is supposed to trigger, and in relation to the information needs of communities. Different kinds of information are likely to trigger (or enable) different mechanisms at community level.

The World Bank report ‘Making Schools Work’ s Bruns et al. (2011) devoted an entire chapter to information for accountability interventions. Itsuggested that simplicity of information (p. 66) and matching of the type of information to the purpose of the information (for example, ‘mobilising parents’ as compared to ‘using data in planning or management’; pp. 66, 71) are important considerations. It noted that little is known as yet about the need for intensity of efforts to support communities in understanding information (p. 72). It also highlights—with evidence for each—the potential perverse effects of information campaigns. These include triggering opposition, gaming behaviours affecting student-assessment outcomes, elite capture, where educated parents can read the information, but others cannot, and exacerbating inequalities (pp. 72-73). The report concluded, however:

The evidence to date in developing countries—which is admittedly thin—suggests that information can lead to improvements in outcomes. This happened because information promoted effective choice and competition, because it enabled more effective participation in school oversight and management, and because it enabled citizens to hold local governments accountable. (p. 74)

The studies reviewed here reveal a variety of information that was perceived to be relevant for communities and/or for accountability. This includes information about:

- budgets and fund delivery (as are provided by PETS or as provided in the Ugandan campaign to provide budgetary information through newspapers);
- entitlements to equipment and resources (for example, allocations and delivery dates for textbooks in Philippines Text Book Watch);
- the roles and responsibilities of local and state institutions (for example, the three initiatives studied by Banerjee et al.(2006) in India, which provided information about the roles of VECs);
- rights and entitlements (for example, the information provided as part of the Citizen Voice in Citizen Voice and Action programme in Uganda);
- student-learning outcomes (for example, the Uwezo initiative in Kenya; the second initiative of the three studied by Banerjee et al. (2006) in India, which taught villagers to assess learning locally; the democratic-governance interventions studied by Arvind (2009), the Uruguay centralised assessment system);

- performance against standards (for example, score card interventions, whether participatory or standardised, as studied by Zeitlin (2011) in Uganda).

Clearly, information is not simply information: it is information about particular things. It seems likely (following Lieberman et al. 2012) that the various interventions that provide these different kinds of information make slightly different assumptions about who will do what and why. However, these assumptions were rarely identified or tested.

Some other differences in the nature of information that may affect how it operates to change decision-making, and therefore outcomes, were noted. One difference relates to where the information is generated. In some interventions, information is generated centrally and then provided to the local level. Inevitably, the content of the information is decided centrally and may or may not be responsive to local needs. Indeed, in one experimental intervention, the research assistants providing information at local level were not allowed to answer questions that fell outside the centrally determined information: 'To ensure that the information campaigns were uniform, research assistants read a scripted introduction and were only allowed to answer questions to which the answers were already written on the calendars. Any other questions or issues were not answered. (Pandey et al. 2009, p. 9).

Other information, however, is generated locally. This may be using centrally developed instruments (as when an intervention provides a student-assessment instrument or a standardised score card to local communities) or the format may be developed locally. It is entirely possible that centrally determined and locally determined information work through different mechanisms.

Where information is generated locally by citizens on performance of a school or schools, such as the performance information generated by community score cards, then a feedback loop may be created where information is fed back to government for action (Bisht and Sharma 2011, p. 253). These systems, understood in the context of community and social accountability, 'can be inherently empowering' (Jacobs 2010, p. 56). The nature of the information (for example, whether it is qualitative, such as complaints or suggestions, or quantitative, such as whether it comes from one school or from many schools) then affects its utility for different purposes. It may be relevant for immediate government response or action, governmental planning, policy or regulative amendment or formulation, activation of horizontal-accountability mechanisms or other official measures. It may be useful at one or more levels of government. Such citizen feedback is not well understood, defined or measured. However, one newly created measure is the *fix rate*. Galtung (2013, pp. 3-4) describes this as focused on 'measuring outputs, like the resolution of citizen complaints, or improvements in public service delivery based on problems identified by the stakeholders of this service'. The fix rate helps measure the percentage of resolved problems.

Governments may create centrally developed instruments (as when an intervention provides a student-assessment instrument) or the format may be developed locally. Civil society, through its organisations or informal associations of citizens, may also create instruments for information flow at local and/or national level. It is entirely possible that centrally determined and locally determined information work through different mechanisms.

Another difference relates to whether or not information is comparative. Some interventions give information only about a single entity (the parent's own child's academic performance; the learning outcomes for a single school; receipt of resources for

a single school). Others provide information about the single entity against a standard (academic performance compared to expected academic outcomes for a year level; receipt of resources against entitlements). Others again provide comparative information (outcomes for own and other students, own and other schools or districts). Again, these are likely to fire different mechanisms, generate different kinds of responses and therefore generate different outcomes.

A third difference relates to whether information is provided once or over a short time period, as in an experimental intervention or a campaign, or whether it is available either periodically or consistently. The former may achieve higher exposure for a period, but wane in effectiveness over time. The latter may be accessible when a community needs or wants it, but, unless there is comprehensive marketing about the availability of the information, communities may not know that it exists or how to access it. Yet again, this will affect whether and how information *works* to generate outcomes.

The comprehensibility of information (including its cultural and linguistic acceptability) and the nature of support provided to understand information, as noted in Bruns et al. (2011) are, of course, other factors that will affect whether and how information can be used.

Finally, it should be noted that both information dissemination and information *exchange* at the local level are necessary elements of community accountability and empowerment interventions. These rely on local communication systems, which, in turn, often rely on relationships. Where communication is poor, this can undermine the operations of local groups. Discussing Pastoral Basic Schools (PBS) in Ghana, Mfum-Mensah (2004) noted:

Another theme that emerged as having contributed to rising tensions due to local management of the PBS is dysfunctional communication among stakeholders. Such communication has resulted in lack of information. Most members pointed out that only a portion of the stakeholders have specific information on the PBS. Dysfunctional communication has eroded confidence and spawned mutual suspicion among all the stakeholders. (p. 151)

In order for systematic information to be available on a variety of topics (budgets, entitlements, learning outcomes and so on), states need effective information systems. As Berryman has noted: ‘The information responsibility of the central level is particularly important for accountability—a society cannot hold its education sector accountable without credible information on its performance’ (Berryman 2000, p. 83).

However, as might be expected (given that accountability interventions often tackle problems with information systems), this study found multiple examples of information systems that did not function adequately. For example, in Mongolia, there was no legal requirement for information to be provided:

Preliminary results from the World Bank-sponsored Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) project indicate that parents characteristically have no information on the school budget processes. Although the representative of MEA noted that it is easiest to gain access to information ‘at the bottom’ (*soum* [district] level), she indicateds that officials typically refuse at the *aimag* [province] level. Currently, the law on education does not require that school finance or fiscal information be available to the public, a legal lacuna that clearly undermines the capacity for social accountability in the education sector. (Becket al. 2007, p. 87)

Legislation requiring provision of information may contribute to providing an enabling environment for community-accountability and empowerment initiatives.

### A3.8 *De jure and de facto powers*

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to generate improved education outcomes when powers are actively exercised at the local level.

A number of studies have identified that it is not enough simply for formal powers to be created by legislation or in policy (termed *de jure*, or *in law*). Rather, powers must in fact be exercised at the local level (termed *de facto*, or *in fact*).

It is tempting to describe policies that are enacted centrally, but not implemented locally, with the term *implementation failure*—or, more commonly, in cases where only some localities implement the policy, partial implementation failure. There are multiple examples in the literature, including Village Education Committees (VECs) in Uttar Pradesh, India (Banerjee et al. 2010), Nicaragua’s school autonomy reforms (King and Ozler 2005), Mongolia’s social-accountability initiative for CMS (Beck et al. 2007) and Nepal’s CMS initiative (Upadhyaya et al. 2007).

Both government policies and internationally funded projects that should support them can suffer implementation failure. The World Bank’s Community School Support Project, which differed from the overall Nepalese policy only in that it provided a letter of agreement about the transfer of powers to community level and provision of a small incentive grant to the SMC (World Bank 2010, p. 4), was assessed by the Bank itself as ‘unsatisfactory’, as was the Bank’s own performance within the project (Ibid., p vii).

It seems likely that one of the reasons for the comparatively high level of partial implementation failure is that very many aspects of context need to come together in the right ways for success to be achieved. These include the roles, membership and power relationships within local structures; the expertise, resource levels and attitudes of staff in schools; the processes used to engage local leaders, engage service providers and officials, and community members; the capacities and attitudes of community members and so on. These are described below.

#### A4 School Management Committees

We use the term School Management Committees (SMCs) as a generic one—the names vary in different countries.

##### A4.1 Powers of SMCs

SMCs are more likely to hold staff to account, and to be accountable in their own roles, where their role is clear, they have formal authority, and they are adequately resourced to do so.

The studies reviewed here revealed considerable variation in the powers of SMCs in different initiatives and countries, and significant differences in the resources provided to them by governments or through experimental initiatives.

The first part of our proposition refers to the notion of *de jure* and *de facto* powers. Section 4, above, details that *de jure* powers alone are not enough. Here, however, it should be noted that *de jure* powers are a necessary (albeit insufficient) condition for SMCs to be effective in holding staff accountable. A legislative mandate provides the formal framework within which powers exist and can be exercised.

In Indonesian SBM, school councils were mandated to create collaboration with school principals under a specific set of laws, regulations and guidelines. Each school has to elect

its own school council, with a balance between community and school representatives. Standing committees can be set up for school-quality control, buildings and school facilities and partnership networks and information systems. The council must approve school policies, develop its mission and vision and strategic plans, approve annual school programmes and budgets, determine learning standards, decide on incentives to school staff, raise funds and mobilise school resources. (Bandur 2012, pp. 846-847).

Bandur used quantitative (surveys) and qualitative methods (interviews and focus groups of varied stakeholders, especially council members) to ascertain how SBM policy had shifted power in school in a district of Flores (p. 852). While claims about improved learning outcomes appear doubtful, 85%-95% of respondents claimed they had been empowered in relation to school mission, vision, mission and goals, building renovation, school budget and learning programmes. This appears to suggest increased clarity both about their role and increased agency in collectively setting the school agenda (pp. 857-858). Bandur (2012) concluded that 'legislative enactment and clear-cut government regulations' can achieve such a significant devolution of power and authority, and create partnerships in participatory school-level decision-making (p. 869).

Under some initiatives, governments provide training for SMCs in relation to their staff supervision role (see, for example, Altschuler and Corrales, 2012; Duflo et al. 2009). This may contribute to their effectiveness in the role, particularly given the disadvantages community members face relative to teachers in some contexts (see Section 5.2.9, below).

There are, however, examples that demonstrate that training SMCs or their equivalents is not enough, on its own, to improve student-learning outcomes. Pradhan et al. (2011, 2013) explicitly tested this pathway, providing two-day training courses for SMC members covering community participation and school quality, the role of the school committee, budget and exploring local potentials, maintaining community participation, and active learning. This intervention did not impact on student-learning outcomes.

#### A4.2 Membership of SMCs

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to hold SMCs accountable to communities when parents directly elect their representatives on school Boards or Councils, when those elections are conducted openly and effectively, and when there are sufficient parental representatives to balance the power of other stakeholders.

SMCs can play two *structural* roles in community-accountability and empowerment interventions. On the one hand, they can be the structure that holds staff accountable and that attempts to hold governments and their officials to account. On the other hand, they can be the structure that parents and the wider community hold accountable to them.

The ways in which school Boards or Councils are structured and the processes by which members are appointed influence both the formal (*de jure*) and *in practice* (*de facto*) powers of the committees, and, therefore, the capacity of those committees to hold service providers to account.

Where committee members are appointed by governments or government departments, the ability of parents to hold members of SMC to account is inhibited (see, for example, Suzuki 2002).

Moreover, while the PTA chairperson is directly elected from among the parents, and therefore can be held accountable to them, the SMC chairperson is not. This is

because the SMC chairperson is appointed by the District Education Officer, over whom ordinary parents have no power. Yet there is no mechanism for parents to impose sanctions on the SMC chairperson, which, according to Kogan's (1986) definition 'makes the SMC chairperson only responsible to the parents, but not accountable.' (Suzuki 2002, p. 249: Ghana)

Where elections or other appointment processes are not conducted appropriately or effectively, members may not even know that they are members, may not be aware of or understand their roles, and, as a result, are unable to implement them effectively. This can be the case both for SMCs (Beck et al. 2007) and for VECs, which may have authority for more than one school (Banerjee et al. 2006, 2010; Rao 2009).

[B]y 2005, more than four years after SSA was launched, it was clear that, at least in the Jaunpur district of the state of UP, the VEC was not playing its assigned role. A survey of children, parents, and teachers in 280 villages in that district found that, while most villages did have a VEC, very few parents knew of its existence, sometimes even when they were supposed to be members of it. VEC members were also unaware of even the most important responsibilities that they have been assigned under the SSA: hiring of additional teachers, allocation of school resources, and monitoring of performance. (Banerjee et al. 2010, p. 4)

Another model of SBM was developed in Mongolia, where the composition of school Boards, which originally consisted of teachers, students, parents and representatives of local organisations, were changed to add 'founders' (not elected members, but the district governor or their designees) and give them a majority of seats on the Board (Beck et al. 2007, p. 85). This study also found cases where parent representatives were not aware that they were members:

[The] governor of Uyanga Soum related that a parent had visited him to discuss a matter unrelated to the school. During their conversation, the governor had mentioned that the parent had been "elected" to the local school council. The parent had neither solicited nor accepted his nomination before he became a parent representative on the council. According to the Uyanga governor, it is not uncommon for parent representatives to school councils to be elected in absentia. Indeed, another parent representative at the school in Uyanga mentioned that she had not known of her election to the council until she was contacted by the school social-worker, who serves as the chair of the council. According to the social-worker, the election took place at the first parents' meeting at the beginning of the school year, which this parent, like many others, did not attend. (Becket al. 2007, p. 85)

The internal functioning of those committees also affects the extent to which parents and community members can exercise their powers. A number of reports suggest that school principals tend to dominate committees (see, for example, Di Gropello 2006; see also Section 4.1, below). This can result from the leadership style of the principal, the beliefs of the parent and community members about appropriate roles, and the skills of parents.

[D]irectors dominate school councils in many schools and there are concerns about the low participation level of community members and parents (Castillo 1998; King and Özler 1998; Fuller and Rivarola 1998). In the case of Nicaragua, stakeholder participation appears to depend integrally on the leadership style of the school director (Florez and others, 2003)." (Di Gropello 2006, p. 26)

In Mongolia, it was reported that the principal selected parent representatives to the school Council:

Moreover, the director of MAPSSD [Mongolian Association for Primary and Secondary School Development] noted that council members are often chosen by principals. Not only is this contrary to the rules and the purpose of the elections, which is to ensure that council members are accountable to the community, but it seriously undermines the capacity of councils to objectively evaluate the performance of principals or to recommend their dismissal. (Beck et al. 2007, p. 87)

Khan and Zafar (1999) studied capacity building and training of SMCs in Pakistan, in order 'to investigate which of the key aspects of participation and collective action work for community schooling' (p. 1). Data were collected through document review and extensive fieldwork, including interviews with teaching staff, NGOs, line departments and donor organisations in the Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, the North-West Frontier Province and the Northern Areas between September and December 1998. The focus was on primary schools (providing five years of schooling) run by NGOs, which were randomly picked from a sampling frame; then, the closest government and private schools were included in the sample. Twenty-nine of the NGOs, 4 of the private schools and 22 of the state schools included in the sample had an SMC or PTA. Women were seriously under-represented in SMCs:

Since the process of involving women in SMCs/PTAs takes longer, DEOs [District Education Officers] and, in some cases NGOs, tend to bypass women in the initial stages. The role of female SMCs/PTAs, or female members of such committees has not been adequately identified and remains a gap in most awareness sessions, orientations, training modules and materials. Also, since research shows that the presence of mothers on committees enhances activity levels and reduces drop-outs, an increased representation of women on such committees or separate mothers' committees is called for. (p. 45).

Bureaucratic/political stipulation of the composition of SMCs/PTAs was found to be counterproductive and fraught, as non-parents could 'subvert committee function to suit their own agendas'. The implication they stipulate is threefold: firstly, the local committees (consisting only of parents or teachers) should elect other members, not 'outside authorities', who lack local knowledge or understanding of the participatory process. Secondly, to avoid 'real conflict of interest', the chair of such committees should never be a teacher or headteacher, as was found in Sindh and the Punjab [p. 39]. Thirdly, expectations must be realistic, for example fund-raising (in at least some contexts) is expecting too much of members. (pp. 14-15).

Of all the research that Khan and Zafar (1999) scrutinised, the one carried out by the Government of Punjab / Multi-Donor Support Unit (1998) was the most extensive (325 schools in two districts). This study noted that SMC membership often under-represented mothers (p. 35) and, in contrast, membership over-represented so-called 'influentials' (p. 31). In the Punjab, it was found that only one in five SMC had mothers' representation and, across the study, not one government-school SMC included parental representation.

#### *A4.3 Power relationships within SMCs*

SMCs are unlikely to be effective when significant power differentials exist between committee members, and social norms inhibit the exercise of community power.

Power possessed by different actors within the school setting may impact on the use of power held by SMCs. In one community school committee in rural Zambia, a chairman reported that the financial contributions and administrative experience of a committee member suspected of corruption prevented the committee from holding him to account

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(Okitsu 2011, p. 247). The social norm about respecting those who make a contribution further insulated him from accountability.

For example, in Pulofa, one man had been on the PCSC executive since the school had been founded, in spite of the fact that he was suspected of misusing donor money. The PCSC chairman explained: There is tradition to respect if one gives something. People are afraid that, if we remove him, he would claim the land back. The same PCSC chairman went on: We cannot remove him because he thinks differently to other villagers. He is literate and used to work at a bank in town; so, he could write a proposal to the donors. (Okitsu, 2011 p. 247).

Okitsu (2011) also identified cases where decision-making appeared to be concentrated among powerbrokers. In one case, the chair of the PTA, the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS), confirmed with the headteacher what decision they should support prior to conducting a community meeting:

[T]he PTA chairman, and the head teacher gathered in the latter's office to discuss the agenda while the parents had already gathered outside. DEBS: What do you want me to say at the meeting today?

Head teacher: We have decided to increase the amount of PTA fund and the fees for grades 8 and 9. We would also like to introduce a new uniform.

DEBS: OK, I'll make sure that what we say to the parents does not contradict one another. (Okitsu, 2011, p. 149)

At a different school, a parent perceived that members of the PTA and school staff made decisions prior to community meetings:

A father in Mutande also spoke of his frustration at such school management practice: When we have the meeting, the PTA executive and teachers sit and discuss among themselves to decide instead of coming to us, while we are kept waiting for hours. They secretly make decisions without our consent. (Okitsu, 2011 p. 149).

Although not directly investigating gender, from attendance at selected community-run school committee meetings, Okitsu (2011,) observeds that:

Although women usually outnumbered men in a general PCSC meeting and were the dominant labour force when it came to school construction, they seldom spoke during the meetings; thus, decisions about the mode and scope of the contribution were often made solely by male participants. (p. 215)

## **A5 Roles, capacities and attitudes of school staff**

### **A5.1 The roles of school leaders**

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are likely to <u>engender higher levels of community participation</u> where school leaders (principals, headteachers, directors) actively support, promote and resource that participation.
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The leadership style of the school principal can have a significant impact on community participation. A qualitative study of nine schools in Nepal reinforced earlier research by the same authors into the qualities of effective headteachers (HT) in community schools, and other research in Nicaragua found similar impacts:

The successful HT is able to create a congenial school climate that promotes teamwork in the school. They are self-determined, self-motivated, disciplined,

creative and impartial, and take initiatives to implement innovative programs and activities to increase enrollment, retain the children in schools, and improve the quality of instruction. They are very active in mobilizing the local community. Management of these successful schools actively engages in various self-initiated activities without much regard to the government-supported programs and activities.” (Upadhyaya et al. 2007, p. 80)

The director seems pivotal in this arena. If the director is inviting and skilled in working with parents—beginning with those serving on the *consejo*—then parents will likely feel welcomed and respected. But, if the director is trying to work around, or independently of, the *consejo* or vocal parents...this attitude is read clearly by other parents and participation will remain limited. (Fuller and Rivarola 1998, p. 68)

Gunnarsson et al. (2004) quoted earlier evidence to suggest some of the pathways through which the influence of the principal on education outcomes might be achieved:

Rather than simply enforcing policies made elsewhere, a principal can become a champion and advocate of the school. Working in partnership with the staff, parents or local community, the principal can affect in-school processes, including staff, norms and the overall school climate; principals thus can exert a strong indirect influence on student achievement and outcomes (Rodriguez and Hovde, 2002; Borden, 2002). (Cited in Gunnarsson et al., 2004., p. 8)

Gunnarsson et al. (2004) then investigated the relationship between some aspects of principals’ education, training and experience and the extent to which they exercised autonomy and ‘induced’ parental participation. University education, teaching experience and current teaching responsibilities were all associated with increased parental participation.

[P]rincipals with degrees from teacher’s colleges exercised less autonomy and experienced more shortages, but they also induced more parental participation. Principals’ prior teaching experience increased autonomy and participation, but having more experience as a principal had the opposite effect. Principals who also had teaching responsibilities acted more autonomously, induced more parental participation and had fewer shortages. Principals who attended training related to their administrative responsibilities exercised more autonomy and experienced fewer materials shortages, with no apparent effect on parental participation. (p. 23)

According to Arcia and Belli (1999), school leaders also play a role in relation to the effectiveness of school Councils. However they provided no direct evidence in support of this claim.

[T]he school director also has a significant role to play in school governance, since much of the information presented to the council, and many of the decisions taken by the council, depend a great deal on the technical capacity, leadership qualities, initiative, and communication skills of the school director. Hence, the managerial quality of the Local School Council depends heavily on the quality of the director. (p. 5)

Fitriah (2010) investigated community participation in the management of school resources in a case study of two decentralised primary schools in Indonesia. In one school, the headmaster stated that she made the key decisions about the school budget because it was viewed as her prerogative to do so as head of the school. The chair of the school committee shared that attitude toward parent participation in budget decisions:

I am the one who sets up the budget plan, and the SC only acts to legitimize it. So far the chairman has always agreed with my plan. Because, according to him [the SC chairman], it is the right of school to administer the budget. (Interview, Headmaster, School 1)...

It is not because the SC is not allowed to propose the budget; but rather, I think the budget proposal is the prerogative of the headmaster because she is the stakeholder who knows what is needed by the school. But for sure, we are involved in its implementation and control. (Fitriah, 2010, p,108)

## A 5.2 Staff attitudes and community participation

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to engender higher levels of community participation when teachers have positive attitudes towards genuine community participation.

Little or no evidence was found of community members affirming that positive relationships between parents (or other community members) and teachers supported community participation. However we found some evidence that negative attitudes deterred participation.

Teachers sometimes see parent members as requiring training and "not understanding their roles" a limiting attitude on the part of school staff that may undercut parents' status and influence over time.

[S]ome parents see school staff members as off-putting and disinterested[uninterested] in their opinions and involvement. Parents interpreted remarks by teachers as critical and disrespectful. During our parent focus group, one mother said: "we feel mistreated and humiliated by teachers." (Fuller and Rivarola 1998, p. 68)

[B]oth parents and students claimed that teacher attitudes can have a significant influence on a parent's perceptions of whether participation is possible or worthwhile. Many parents contended that more appreciative attitudes would make community members more likely to become involved.' (Swift-Morgan 2006, p. 359)

Negative attitudes to participation can be shared by teachers and parents, and relate to perceived roles. In Ethiopia, the idea of parent contributions to classroom teaching was not warmly received:

[M]any teachers and parents flatly objected to the idea. 'There is no viable role for parents in the classroom,' said one teacher. 'Because parents are not educated', voiced another group of teachers, 'they have nothing to contribute to the teaching and learning process. Parental involvement in the classroom would provide no advantage' ... Parents who discussed this topic agreed with the majority of school staff, characterizing the realm within the classroom as the exclusive territory of the teacher and beyond the purview of their knowledge and responsibilities. 'We should not be involved in the technical part of teaching,' one father explained. 'That is not our job.' (Swift-Morgan 2006, pp. 354-355)

## A6 School facilities

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to increase student and teacher attendance (which, at least potentially, increases teaching time and the number of students receiving education, which may improve student-learning outcomes) where community-accountability and empowerment initiatives prioritise and improve school facilities.

An important factor affecting teacher attendance is the quality of school facilities and the availability of teaching materials. A World Bank study of teacher absenteeism in six countries shows that well-equipped schools with better infrastructure had absentee rates roughly half that of schools with poor infrastructure (Chaudhury et al. 2006).

Kremer (2004; ) reported from a large survey of teachers in India that 'Teacher absence is considerably lower in schools with better infrastructure, a potentially important element of working conditions.' (p. 6)

Facilities are often of a lower standard in rural areas, which may mean that prioritising school facilities makes more difference in rural areas. Discussing schools in Europe and Central Asia, Berryman (2000) wrote:

Rural schools are in worse physical condition than urban schools, and most rural schools lack basic teaching materials. A national assessment of the educational achievements of grade-4 students in June 1998 showed that the strongest influence on students' performance was the location of the school (rural versus urban). (p. 38)

Student attendance, as well as teacher attendance, can be affected by the quality of facilities: 'Interestingly, household evidence suggests that parents are also more likely to send their children, especially girls, to schools with better infrastructure (King and van de Walle 2007)' (cited in Lewis and Petterson 2009, p. 34).

This finding is further corroborated by Glewwe et al. (2011), who examined what they assessed as the best of 9,000 studies, which they retrieved, published between 1990 and 2010, to ascertain specific school and teacher characteristics most strongly impacting positively on learning and time in school. Their clearest finding was that, 'Having a fully functioning school—one with better-quality roofs, walls or floors, with desks, tables and chairs, and with a school library—appears conducive to student learning' (p. 41).

Additional evidence was gathered in Dongre (2011), showing, state-by-state in India, the extent to which public primary schools and SMCs received their major discretionary education funding, and its timing, what they do with it and the educational outcomes in the state in question.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is the Government of India's primary vehicle for implementing the Right to Education Act. Under SSA policy, the Government makes school grants to the SMCs at each SSA school. Although these grants make up only 5% of total SSA funding nationally, they are the only school-expenditure funds over which SMCs can exercise control. Two national NGOs (ASER and Accountability Initiative, AI) monitor, analyse and report annually on each Indian state's receipt and utilisation of SSA funds (see, for example, Dongre et al. *Ibid.*).

Dongre et al. (*Ibid.*) provided considerable data suggesting SMCs at Haryana's SSA schools performed well in terms of both receipt and utilisation of SSA funds (pp. 63-5). In this state, SSA funded major or significant improvements in most SSA schools. In 2010-11, 89% of Haryana schools received SSA grants and, as one result, 59% of schools whitewashed their walls, 61% repaired buildings and 36% repaired boundary walls. Overall results included better school infrastructure (including installing girls' toilets in 94% of schools by 2011), and increased teaching and learning resources.

Panighrahi (2012) undertook a small-scale study that compared student-learning outcomes in SSA and non-SSA schools in two districts in the Haryana state of India. He compares 100 Year-5 students (50 each from two districts) with 100 Year-5 students from non-SSA

schools. He found better outcomes in all academic subject areas tested (language, Mathematics and Environmental Studies) for both boys and girls in SSA schools compared to non-SSA schools. While Panighrahi (2012) did not investigate factors contributing to that better performance and the study sample is very small, it is plausible to suggest that the use of SMC grants improved infrastructure in Haryana schools, which contributed to improved learning outcomes.

However, the relationship is not straightforward. The PNG Public Expenditure and Service Delivery survey (NTI/World Bank 2004) found that teaching resources, infrastructure and classroom facilities were not predictors of teacher absence, but schools with lower numbers of textbooks per student had higher rates of teacher absence (p. 77). It also found that the student/teacher ratio affected teacher attendance:

The student/teacher ratio, conditional on the total number of students in the school, is associated with less teacher absence. That is, the fewer teachers there are relative to students, the less likely they are to be absent, which suggests that having relatively fewer teachers to go around exerts some pressure on them to report to work (p.77).

## A7 Engaging stakeholders

### A7.1 Local leadership and social capital

Community-accountability and empowerment initiatives are more likely to engage community members in pro-education activities when they engage local leadership and develop both bridging and bonding capital in communities.

*Social capital* refers to the productive properties (or productive capacity) of social relationships, resulting from the interaction of structures and the social norms that bind those relationships. Social capital may be built within existing groups (*bonding capital*), across groups (*bridging capital*) or between groups and external power structures and decision-makers (*linking capital*). Norms that are thought to be important in social capital include *trust*, *reciprocity* and *accountability* (Putnam 2000).

Involving community leaders (as distinct from school leaders) and building their relationships with school leaders can contribute to positive education outcomes. As noted earlier, Pradhan et al. (2013) investigated the impact on test scores of school committees linking with village councils in Indonesia. In social-capital terms, this represents bridging capital between the two institutions. The authors attribute improved education outcomes to the authority of the village council:

We think that the success of the linkage intervention results from the fact that a more powerful community institution, the village Council, was involved in the planning of the activities. This provided the legitimacy needed to ensure that actions that could improve learning were implemented. (Pradhan et al, 2013 p. 41)

Beyene et al. (2007), reporting on the Community-Government Partnership Program (CGPP) under BES0II in Ethiopia also described a linkage—albeit at a much less formal level—between school-management structures and local councils: ‘The KETB leader, who is also a member of the PTA committee, raises the issues addressed by the PTA with additional community members at *kebele* [local council] meetings ... This increases involvement in the schools from community members that are not parents’ (p. 57).

Arvind (2009) reported that village elders tracked children and encouraged their enrolment and attendance at school (p. 5). This might be interpreted as using the authority of elders to reinforce (or establish a new) social norm in relation to education.

Suzuki (2002) suggested that in Uganda, where direct confrontation was required to hold schools accountable to local communities, ‘existing social norms and structures may hinder parents from taking such action’ (p. 255). Consequently, local Councils: ‘...are expected to play the role of external monitors. The LC councillors are directly elected from the constituency, and are thus accountable to the local people’ (Suzuki 2002, p. 255).

One of Guy et al.’s (2003) case studies of primary schools in PNG provided another example where social capital seems to have been important. Navuranam Primary School, located in a poor district in the East New Britain province, with poor-quality school buildings and teacher housing, had high levels of community engagement and high levels of student performance, but low levels of engagement in the formal-accountability processes. Parents and the wider village communities were reported to encourage students to attend school (p. 80) and contributed to school maintenance at the start of each year. However, the current Board of Management (BOM) was seen (by parents interviewed) to be less effective than the previous one, with a lack of financial reporting (p. 82), and parents had little participation in educational planning through parents and citizens meetings (p. 82). However, the strength of informal linkages was seen to compensate for this: ‘The links between the church, the school and the villages are strengthened by the people’s interaction during community, church and school activities. As a result, the school has benefitted from such commitment, even though its present BOM is ineffective’ (p. 82).

In this example, it would appear that bonding capital—strong networks between community members across a range of institutions—is at play, and is substituting for weak accountability by the BOM.

## A7.2 Community mobilisation and capacity building

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are most likely to engage community members when there is significant investment in mobilising local communities.

Some programmes expect local communities to make significant contributions to schools and education—by building or maintaining school facilities, by managing schools at local level, or both. Such programmes are likely to require a significant investment in community mobilisation and capacity building.

UNICEF’s Complementary Alternatives in Primary Education (COPE) programme in Uganda was developed to ‘reach and retain children whose life circumstances exclude them from entering and completing a basic education via the formal primary school’ (Deweese 2000, no page numbers), including those affected by ‘poverty, gender and handicapping conditions’ (Deweese, 2000 UNICEF expected that local communities would build two-room structures for schools, provide para-professional instructors and provide local management of the centres. This ‘reliance on local human resources (instructors and management committees)’ was ‘intended to reduce costs, ensure quality, and encourage sustainability’ (Deweese, 2000)

Continued demand for new centres and reports by students that ‘in most cases...would not attend the formal school if COPE were not available’ were taken as evidence of improving access to schooling for disadvantaged and excluded students. A shorter school day (of

particular relevance to those who needed to contribute labour for household survival), more relevant curriculum and more engaging teaching methods were cited as reasons contributing to attendance at COPE centres. 'Informal testing' of students 'strongly suggested' that those who completed the three-year programme had achieved the equivalent of Year-5 level in formal schooling, as intended.

However, the intended two-classroom arrangement was not completed in 'significant numbers of the centers'; utilisation was 'significantly lower than anticipated', attrition rates over the three-year cycle of the programme were high (estimated at 65% on average); and it was 'conservatively estimated that 20 percent [of centers] have failed and no longer receive children'.

The author argues on the basis of an earlier interim evaluation that:

This shifting of costs to those least prepared to bear them has been accompanied by an underinvestment at the community level. The logic of COPE is to substitute local involvement for financial resources, resulting in a higher-quality program than would have been possible given the available resources. Given this strategy, the relatively small investment in building community-level capacity is perhaps the major shortcoming of the program as it is currently implemented. Supporting and monitoring the instructors, facilitating and encouraging students to enroll and persevere, advocating for the program at the district level, building relationships with local schools and district officials, and mobilizing parents and the wider community to support the program are among some of the most critical elements in the success of the program that depend on the energy and capacity of members of the local community. The failure to adequately develop this resource has resulted in the high percentage of center failures and high levels of desertion from the program. (no page numbers)

In Nepal, 'one way communication' (communicating central intentions to the local level), failure to engage local-community leaders and inadequate 'policy orientation' has limited the impact of community-mobilisation attempts.

The community mobilization intends to promote participation of local stakeholders such as parents, NGOs, CBOs, VDCs and civil society, etc., create sense of ownership and sustain the reform attempts.

[C]ommunity mobilization was limited to engaging with parents, mothers or disadvantaged groups, attempt was lacking at bringing together local political leaders, community leaders, intellectuals, government officials and other middle-class members who hold various kinds of social-power positions and their voice and participation can make a big difference in local-school governance. Community mobilization confined in donation or free-labour contributions to construct school buildings, playgrounds and drinking-water facilities, they are never involved in monitoring and evaluation of school plans and strategy. There is a lack of both policy orientation and necessary professional skills to do so. Even if the community mobilization has immense significance to create critical awareness and mobilize local stakeholders in the process of reform implementation, the previous study shows that the effort could not bring desired result. Phuyal and Singh (2000) contend that community mobilization is perceived more as a technical tool, rather than a process of civil-society participation in the good governance of primary education. The way the mobilization activities are handled promotes one-way communication—authorities' messages to communities, which does not help to promote authentic dialogue among community members for their own collective actions towards good governance of schools. (Upadhyaya et al. 2007, p. 84)

It might also be noted that ethnic diversity can affect the outcomes of mobilisation attempts: ‘In related work, Gugerty and Miguel [2000] show that higher ethnic diversity is associated with lower community participation in school meetings’ (footnote in Reinikka and Svensson, 2004a, p. 12).

### A7.3 Participatory approaches to defining the problem

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to resolve local problems when local communities are actively engaged in defining *what matters to them* about education, and in designing locally appropriate solutions.

Arvind (2009) reported on a series of NGO-led interventions in marginalised villages in India, which were highly tailored to local context. They relied on careful diagnosis of the root causes of marginalisation and school failure, involving villagers, and using the creative solutions they developed to counter varied, multi-layered forms of local exclusion within villages and of whole villages.

Zeitlin et al. (2011) provided no qualitative detail to elaborate on the bare bones of their comparison between participatory and standardised community score cards. However, they reasoned that the participatory milieu had elicited ‘higher effort levels’ from both pupils and staff: ‘The picture that emerges from these results is one in which the participatory approach leads to higher effort levels from both the providers and clients of the schools, and improved learning outcomes result’ (p. 21). Elsewhere, (p. iii) the authors inferred that a ‘stronger sense of ownership among school stakeholders’ had driven this outcome.

### A7.4 Engaging communities and enabling voice

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to be effective when they incorporate specific strategies to engage communities and develop voice.

*Voice* has been defined as: ‘the capacity of all people—including the poor and most marginalised—to express views and interests and demand action of those in power’. This requires a ‘capacity to access information, scrutinise and demand answers’ and is undertaken ‘with a view to influencing governance processes’ (Foresti et al. 2007, p. 1).

*Direct voice* is where the voice of communities is presented directly to decision-makers; *indirect voice* is where the community speaks directly to an intermediary or interlocutor (Tembo 2012), who then engages with the decision-maker.

While many documents comment on the significance of voice, limited research was found into the requirements of, or conditions for, effective engagement and voice. Descriptions of how interventions were operating to try to create engagement and voice were found, but without reliable evidence of how successful these had been. Given that little evidence was found about effectiveness, illustrations are provided here of issues people identified as important in particular contexts. These issues included culturally appropriate processes, such as those dealing with unequal relationships, the norms expressed through actions within the processes, and anonymity.

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to develop effective voice when communities are actively supported to develop agreed positions before they are required to negotiate with decision-makers.

The processes by which community score cards empower communities were described by Akasoba and Robinson (2007). Writing about work in northern Ghana, they suggested that preparation and participation at community level increased knowledge of the issues and built confidence (p. 24). In accountability-theory terms, this contributed to voice. Participation in wider forums with decision-makers and other communities built wider understanding of the issues and constraints. However, these processes also generated options for action at the local level and a sense of *community efficacy* (p. 26), both of which may contribute to empowerment.

The community-level activities helped prepare community members for these forums by encouraging them to learn more about, think about, and discuss the issues and concerns they had. This gave them the confidence to stand up in the district forum and tell the education authorities and district assembly personnel their thoughts. (p. 24)

One positive outcome was the forum's effect on community members' level of understanding of the issues. They realised that it is possible for any community to have a dialogue with any perceived authority in order to seek solutions for their problems. They also realised that some problems are not beyond their own means of solving. (p. 26)

However, no formal research evidence to support these statements was provided.

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to <u>resolve local problems</u> when communities present their views in constructive and culturally appropriate ways.
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Respecting cultural norms is understood to be an important element in giving voice. No specific example of this was found in the education-specific literature reviewed here, but it was in the wider citizen-voice literature:

Citizen voice is rooted in social norms such as 'respect for elders', which is enacted through symbols (such as kneeling while talking, etc.) as well as words that are well recognised in society. This means there is a particular way for words and their associated symbols to be enacted in order for the intended communication between youths and elders or between women and men to happen. It is this particular form of engagement that gains access to public-office holders, which hence can be regarded as one of the citizen voices that work.

For example, Choice Ghana (a Mwananchi-supported organisation in Ghana) enabled youths in East Gonja district to hold their traditional authority accountable on the use of community land and forest. It did this in the midst of a strong chieftaincy culture through creation of a dialogue platform whereby youths used their identity as youths of the community and fulfilled all traditional protocols, including kneeling down when speaking to the chief. (Tembo 2012, p. 12)

This example also illustrates the importance of face-to-face engagement in some cultures, such as many traditional sub-Saharan African cultures, where engagement between people and rulers has historically been carried out in this way, and continues to be so in many rural settings.

Community accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to generate improved outcomes when communities are sufficiently free and where citizens are protected from retribution from the powerful.
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The example above further illustrates how voice is enacted in the context of unequal relationships (in the instance above, between a tribal chief and village youths), and are suggestive of possible limits to voice in these relationships. It may be difficult for individuals, especially less powerful groups, such as women and children, to raise sensitive issues about service failure with authorities.

One strategy to address this difficulty is to protect anonymity. Tembo (2012) reported that the Masindi District Education Network (MADEN) in Uganda used suggestion boxes to obtain children's input for discussions and lobbying with local education institutions and the Ministry of Education. Radio-listening clubs (that use recorded messages prepared before face-to-face meetings with government authorities) and call-in radio programmes have also been used to enable those who otherwise may have remained silent to participate, in ways that bypass cultural impediments and power imbalances (Tembo, pp. 15–16).

There are many such sensitive issues that less powerful groups may find difficult to raise, and which even authorities acting alone may be unable to solve. One example is child marriage, which has considerable impacts on girls' ability to complete school. One strategy that has been used here is to involve local leaders. World Learning (2007) reports on the use of religious leaders in strategies to address sensitive issues for girls (see Section 5.2.10, below).

Another strategy is to create collective opportunities for disadvantaged or marginalised groups to set their own reform agendas, deliberate, and agree on action, which is then fed into a wider community meeting. Community-score-card processes often provide specific meetings for less powerful groups in advance of a wider community meeting. They then manage processes in the wider meeting in such a way that reforms proposed by those less powerful groups (who may make up a majority of the population, for example, women and children) tend to receive greater attention.

It is important to remember, however, that voice does not automatically lead to accountability. As ODI noted, 'voice without concrete mechanisms to effectively hold the state accountable is not likely to achieve change' (Foresti et al. 2007, p. 1).

### A7.5 Engaging service providers and officials

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions may need to leverage existing social capital in order to engage fearful, or otherwise reluctant, service providers and officials in collaborative processes.

Collaborative processes to service delivery improvement require the engagement of both providers and users of services. However, in some cases, providers may be reluctant to participate. In a study of the Basic Protection of Services Program in Ethiopia, Tadesse et al. (2010, p. 53) reported:

According to key informants, CSOs/IPOs [Implementing Partner Organisations] in many pilot sites used their established working relationships and good will to organize interface meetings between service providers, local government officials and service users. In other cases, regional and *woreda* [district] administrators had to intervene and persuade service providers to participate in the interface meetings. And in some cases interface meeting deadlocks were broken by interventions of regional or zonal officials. (Tadesse et al. 2010, p. 53).

In other cases, some service providers were unwilling to be engaged by decision-making structures that did not have legal authority: 'In Sofi, Harari, however, ... the SAIC [Social Accountability Implementing Committee] could not fulfill its duties because the service

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provider refused to work with the SAIC saying that it was not a registered entity with the government and thus had no legal mandate. (Taddesse et al, 2010, p. 54).

A focus on *service enhancement* (which carries a tenor of collaboration) rather than *accountability* (with its overtones of power and punishment) may reduce barriers to engagement:

From service providers' perspectives, the EDC team also found incidents where service providers were resistant to interface meeting with service users fearing dismissal from their jobs. However, the resistance was overcome after the civil service organisations or implementing partner organisations clarified the purpose of the interface meeting as being strictly service enhancement interaction with service users and not a personal attack on service provider department staff. (2010, p. 53).

In contrast, Condy (1998) investigated the Schooling Improvement Fund (SIF) project in Ghana and reported opportunities for community members and teachers to work collectively towards school improvement were limited. The SIF programme was designed to engage parents and other members of the community to design improvement plans that, if approved by district and central education officials, were funded. The plans were, in theory, designed by community members during planning meetings held by SMCs. Condy (1998) reported that the opportunities for community members to work co-operatively with teachers on improving education were undermined when teachers were challenged in a manner that caused them to become defensive:

The project's focus on communities rather than teachers resulted quite frequently in a conflictual situation between the teachers and the communities. Even while lacking the means to become fully empowered, the project achieved its goal of encouraging communities to question teachers, which in many cases put their backs up, negatively affected teacher-community relations, and reduced the chance of mutual cooperation to improve the quality of schooling. (p. 18).

#### A7.6 The roles of external organisations and catalysts

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to change local power relationships where they are actively facilitated by external organisations or catalysts.

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are, by definition, attempting to change power relationships, within local communities, between local communities and service providers, and/or between local communities, service providers and the state. Changing power relationships requires—sometimes significant—disruption of existing norms, behaviours, social institutions and structures. External catalysts and facilitators can play a very significant role in enabling these processes.

We did not find specific research into the requirements of, or conditions for effectiveness of, such external facilitators or catalysts. However, it was noted that a significant role for facilitation in a number of the more effective interventions. For example:

- the only one of the three interventions studied by Banerjee et al. (2008) that generated improved learning outcomes was training volunteers in villages to teach children to read. This relied on Pratham, the NGO conducting the intervention, to train the villagers;

- the three-state Indian information for accountability project (Pandey et al. 2009) involved eight or nine facilitated meetings in each village, structured to ensure that different caste groups were consulted;
- the participatory score-card intervention in Uganda (Zeitlin et al. 2011) depended on facilitation of the process by which local score cards were developed and training for SMCs to use the score cards;
- the Extra Teacher Program in Kenya (Duflo et al. 2009) depended on training SMCs to monitor, assess and review contracts for staff.

This study also noted commentary in a range of documents about the significance of the role. Analysing differences between an effective Ugandan health community-accountability and empowerment intervention and the unsuccessful Indian VEC intervention, Banerjee et al. (2010) commented:

Second, the Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) that facilitated the intervention in Uganda seem to have played a much more active role in pressuring public providers to improve performance than Pratham chose to play. For example, facilitators from these organizations in Uganda directly negotiated with the dispensary staff before involving the villagers, and the villagers who got involved were hand-picked hand picked by the CBO ... In any event, the involvement of the CBO meant that the local (or non-local) elites were much more involved in the collective action in Uganda than they were in UP. (2008, p. 23,).

In a case study of selected BESO schools in Ethiopia, Swift-Morgan (2006, p. 363) suggested that leadership provided by School Development Agents (SDAs, experienced teachers or headmasters seconded by local-education offices) encouraged parents and community members to participate in new ways:

The third implication is that greater participation depends on leadership, potentially provided through an external catalyst ... In BESO schools, it was the project's SDAs who helped to spark action, as most noticeably demonstrated in the successful promotion of girls' education. These experiences suggest that some amount of leadership is necessary for parents and other community members to begin participating in non-traditional domains of school-community collaboration, such as teaching, and that this catalyst can be provided by outside facilitators when it does not already exist locally. (Swift-Morgan, 2006 p. 363).

It is possible that engagement of non-local authority figures during community processes is also important in some contexts. In Akasoba and Robinson's (2007) study of the community-score-card process, it was suggested that the inclusion of a representative from the national teacher association would have 'increased the likelihood of useful information coming out' (p. 26).

This study proposes, on the basis of this review, that the specific roles played by external organisations or catalysts include:

- engaging stakeholders, including elites;
- identifying and *speaking to* the specific incentives and barriers that stakeholders face in the anticipated change;
- challenging norms that undermine education access and outcomes, and/or identifying local champions for new norms to support;
- facilitating the establishment of bridging capital (relationships, trust, shared norms and goals) between stakeholder groups;

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- enabling discussion about different and sometimes conflicting perspectives;
- facilitating development of human capital by providing, or enabling access to, information and training.

## A8 Capacities of local communities

### A8.1 Adult Literacy

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to be effective where adult community members are literate and/or where adult-literacy initiatives are integrated into the initiative.

Low literacy levels among community members appear to have multiple impacts on community-accountability and empowerment interventions.

Where members of SMCs are not literate, it is more difficult for them to administer schools effectively. El Salvador's EDUCO Program recognised that 'low literacy rates were common' among members of the ACEs (school committees) and instituted a literacy programme for parents (Basaninyenzi 2011, p. 1):

In PA3, for example, teachers report that who holds influence has not changed, since most parents are illiterate and not very involved in the school. (Fuller and Rivarola 1998, p. 39)

The Secretary General of ANDES also reported that, in a majority of cases, the ACEs are composed of parents and community members who cannot read or write. (Desmond 2009, p. 20)

Nicaragua's ASP required parents to be literate, to be of good standing in the community, to have a clean police record and not to have business or family relations with the school (Arcia and Belli 1999, p. 5). This was the programme that found positive impacts on student-learning outcomes where local control was in fact exercised, suggesting that this combination of 'protective factors' may have been of value.

Low parental-literacy levels also appear to impede the ability of parents to assess their children's progress at school and, therefore, to judge whether or not the school is operating effectively. Banerjee et al. (2010) find in a sample of 2,800 households in the Jaunpur district of the state of Uttar Pradesh, India, that 42% of parents overestimated their own children's ability to read, 25% overestimated their ability to write, and 82% overestimated their mathematical skills. Parents also tended to overestimate the abilities of other children in the village to read a paragraph (p. 8).

Similarly, Blimpo and Evans (2011), writing about Gambia, report on the basis of a survey of 567 parents (p. 34) that:

Even though standards are low, pupils are performing poorly, and teacher content knowledge is problematic, over 90% of parents are satisfied with the school and think that the school is doing fine in training their children. When asked to give the reason why they make such assessments, 83% of the parents say that the child is performing well and that the school has good teachers ... Over 90% of the parents have high aspirations for their children. They reported wanting them to study to the highest level and hold high profile positions such as doctors, ministers, etc. Therefore, it appears that the parents care about the educational outcomes of their children, but there is a contrast between this aspiration with their ability to

assess the effectiveness of the school and hold the teachers accountable. (pp. 26-27)

Blimpo and Evans (2011) also noted that it was parents who could make these assessments who were most likely to complain about poor standards:

Among the parents who are dissatisfied by children and the schools' performance, most have pointed out specifics about the incapacity of the child to read and write properly and the mismanagement of the school. These assessments indicate that those parents may be more educated and better able to assess objectively the progress of the children and the performance of the school. (Blimpo and Evans, 2011, p. 27)

Being able to assess the performance of the school and children's learning may, in turn, affect parents' motivation to act. Gunnarsson et al. (2004), drawing on a multi-country survey carried out in 1997 over ten Latin American countries, suggested that 'parents are more prone to exercise autonomy when the school is doing poorly, or alternatively, that parents do not have an incentive to intervene in school management when they perceive their children are performing well' (p. 21)

## A8.2 Parent knowledge, skills and confidence

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to involve and empower communities when they actively develop the capacity and confidence of community members.

Evidence for this proposition was drawn from studies in India, Uganda, Pakistan, Ghana, Zambia and South America. In some instances, the lack of knowledge or skills related to teaching itself or to the content of material being taught to their children; in other instances, it related to knowledge or skills to manage a school. These appear to work in distinguishable, but overlapping ways.

There is, of course, a SMC/VEC set up for each school. However, the involvement of the community seems only marginal. Many of the people expressed that they felt inadequate to play any significant role in the management of the school, except with regard to construction of the school building or finding temporary space for the school. (Govinda 2003, p. 216: India).

Some teachers and local leaders commented that the parents are not interested in school governance. Many parents are, however, concerned about the school, but feel intimidated when asking questions to the head teacher or even to the ordinary teachers... The same feeling of intimidation applies even to a member of the SMC... 'It isn't easy because it is to supervise the people who know better than we are (do). The teachers, because for we find it that they know better than I [am do]" (Suzuki 2002, p. 252: Uganda).

Further, where project planning and implementation skills are low, community members may be heavily reliant on external advice and support to make decisions. In the SIF in Ghana, Condy (1998 p. 10) reported that, due to tight implementation timelines, the provision of training to SMCs in Ghana took place after the design of school-improvement plans. She reported that the NGO had to spend more time than anticipated assisting SMCs with the development of their plans:

Community members also lacked a set of skills central to the actual execution of their SIF plans, namely conceptualising and planning a project, and the ability to handle finance, budgeting and implementation (Condy 1998, p. 16) ... [the

implementing NGO] had to spend more time than had been anticipated in the design of the pilot on giving practical assistance to the SMCs, for instance, in opening bank accounts and finding and purchasing the materials for their plans. (Condy, 1998 p. 17).

[T]he limited capacity of all but a few in the community to deal with this set of issues meant that the SIF plans and projects were heavily dependent on either a few local teachers or local elites or on external advice and support. (Condy, 1998, p. 17)

Likewise, Okitsu (2011), researching the Zambian rural-primary-school context concluded (p. 315) that, despite government policy assuming parental participation and official and teacher support for it, there was little evidence of any consideration of the micro-politics involved. Rather:

[T]he empirical investigations reveal that community participation in managerial and pedagogical aspects of education remained largely rhetorical, whether in government schools, community schools or at the district level. Lukewarm community participation was partly due to the high cost of participation and lack of confidence in ability and skills with respect to participation in the academic, managerial and pedagogical aspects of education. These findings reinforce the view expressed by Parry et al. (1992), Watt (2001), Chapman et al. (2002), and Dunne et al. (2007) that one cannot take it for granted that parents and local community members were endowed with the necessary materials and cultural resources to play the roles expected of them in education governance—particularly in a rural setting. (p. 316)

Di Gropello (2006), writing about Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, suggested that some SMCs have poor information on which to accurately assess the merit of teachers. This may limit the ability of SMCs to hire appropriate teachers or to supervise or support teaching practices, which arguably directly impacts on student learning:

However, parents also need information on teacher performance to exercise effectively their task of hiring and firing teachers. In most cases, it appears that the council members do not have enough information to select the best candidates and technically evaluate them. A related point is that parents usually find it difficult to monitor curriculum and pedagogy. (Di Gropello 2006, p. 52)

Where there is choice about whether or not schools opt in to initiatives, community education levels may also influence whether or not schools seek to participate. In Nicaragua, King and Ozler (2004) found that communities with higher rates of high-school completion (but not university completion) had a higher probability of joining the reform (p. 19). A similar finding across a wider set of Latin American countries came from Gunnarsson et al. (2004

There is evidence that local autonomous managerial effort requires a community with a more developed human capital base ... School autonomy is practiced more commonly in communities with more educated parents or parents with more books in the home, with more educated teachers, in bigger schools, and in more populated communities. In most cases, these factors were also associated with more parental participation and fewer shortages of school materials. (p. 24)

Parents and community members need confidence not just in themselves, but in the responses of others. An Africa Education Watch (2009) report provided statistics on the proportion of parents that made complaints to the school in different countries and the proportion who followed up their initial grievance with an official complaint (p. 19). The

majority of complaints were addressed to teachers, headteachers, PTAs and SMCs. The authors noted complaints tended to be made when problems could be resolved at the school level and the complaint procedure was fast, such as ‘a verbal exchange with the head teacher or class teachers’ (Africa Education Watch, 2009). The authors report that parents had less confidence that complaints made to education officials or local authorities would be met with a response, and many claimed that no observed action was taken (Africa Education Watch, 2009).

### A8.3 Social norms and parent resources

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are most likely to engage parents when they take into account social norms, parental resources and parents’ intrinsic motivations.

Parental participation in community-accountability and empowerment interventions takes many forms. The nature of participation is often structured into the initiative itself; some expect a small number of people to participate in a committee; some expect a large number of people to participate in community-wide planning processes; some expect parents to supervise their children’s attendance and homework. Some expect contributions in cash and/or kind. Some expect parents to supervise teachers, others to expect them to monitor teachers. Using Beasley and Huillery’s (2012) categorisation, expected contributions may be *supportive*, *management* or *oppositional*. This review has identified a range of features that affect whether and when parents contribute in the expected ways.

Parents’ motivation for participation often related to an interest in their own children doing well, and sometimes to a broader collective interest for children to succeed. As an example, in one study, parents in all group discussions declared that they had become involved in schooling because of their belief in formal education and their desire to see their children succeed and prosper. ‘We are very much interested in educating our children,’ said one mother; ‘we don’t want them to remain just like us.’ As another father explained, parents are motivated to contribute their time and resources to the school because, ‘Education itself is sunshine. It is light. After [students] have improved themselves, they will be able to help their local community’ (Swift-Morgan 2006, p. 358).

However, other factors can impede participation. In at least one study, absolute poverty was a barrier, despite the fact that the school allowed contributions in the form of labour. The time required conflicted with the demands of survival. For example, one parent remarked: ‘I have no time to go to work for the school. It is the rainy season and there is no meal [maize flour] at home. We need to go to the forest to catch whatever we can eat’ (Okitsu 2011, p. 165).

In another, resource constraints for government prompted contributions from community members. Parents and non-parent community members said that they felt compelled to become involved because they believe that the school staff and government were incapable of ensuring that their children received quality schooling. Such was the case in one CSAP school, where the government had stopped supplying books and other materials and parents ultimately agreed to a per-student levy to cover the costs. While many parents were reportedly upset at having to pay, one PTA member explained that, ‘In the end people said, “What else can we do? Do you take your children out of school and bring them home?”’ (Swift-Morgan 2006, p. 358).

In another study, parents who made voluntary contributions to the school were more likely to participate in school Council meetings and or visit the classrooms/talk to the teachers

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because they perceived that their financial contribution gave them the right and or authority to do so.

Since the school is free, there is no more parents' contribution. As a result, the process in the school seems only one-way, and parental participation is stagnant. Parents cannot participate anymore. We also feel reluctant to complain when we do not agree with something. (Interview, Parent 3, School 2; Fitriah 2010, p. 87)

The headmasters' views on parent's participation reflected the same picture:

Now, since the school is free, parents are not aware about what happens at school anymore. They think that the government has already paid for them, so there is nothing else to do. They have become distant from the school and their attention to school issues is diminished. When they were still contributing financially to the school, they were more aware, because they felt that they had given something that could become lost if they did not pay attention to what was happening at the school. Therefore, they were more concerned about school and encouraged their children more. (Fitriah 2010, p. 88)

## A9 Gender

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to empower women and girls and generate improved learning outcomes for girls when the specific barriers, including cultural barriers, to their participation are understood and addressed.

Arvind (2009), and Pailwar and Mahajan (2005) reported interventions that addressed girls' exclusion from education on the basis of gender in Rajasthan and Jharkhand—very poor states. Interventions relied on the sort of pathway sketched in describing these interventions earlier—sensitisation, mobilisation deliberation/discussion, agreement on joint action, and collective action. This involved both recognising existing gender norms and working to reconstruct them.

World Learning (2007) reported that Girls' Advisory Committees (GAC) were established to support girls' enrolment, protection and success in BESO schools.

Examples of activities carried out by GACs were: •House-to house visits to encourage parents to enroll girls in school, • Tutorial classes for female students, • Provision of school supplies, clothing and hens for girls from poor families, • Solicitation of support for poor students from the *woreda* HIV/AIDS secretariat, • Provision of counseling to prevent dropout, gender education, prevention of early marriages, and awards for high achieving female students, • Organization of meetings with parents and community leaders about harmful traditional customs, such as inheritance of widows to brothers or uncles, polygamy, female genital mutilation, early marriage, abduction, and rape, • Rescue of female students from abduction attempts and support to continue their education, • Advocacy to bring teachers and others who abused female students to trial, • Organization of *woreda*-level meetings to discuss problems/challenges of girls' education and to develop remedial actions for better school participation by girls, and • Guidance on HIV/AIDS prevention and control, avoiding stigma and discrimination against people who are HIV positive. (p. 15)

However, women were not usually represented in PTAs and did not participate in decision-making. Even within the GACs, male leadership was seen to be essential.

Since Ethiopia is a highly pious country and male-dominated society, the involvement of religious leaders and men in the GAC is an essential element

leading to greater success in reaching the goals of their mission. In many schools, religious leaders serve as members of GAC; at other schools, GAC leaders present their concerns directly to churches and mosques to lobby religious bodies to speak out against the destructive treatment of girls. Male involvement is seen as a very positive characteristic of the GAC structure, because if any broad based ideological changes are to be made, men must remain involved. (p. 74)

In their study of CMS in rural Honduras and Guatemala, Altschuler and Corrales (2012) found that women were less likely to acquire skills through CMS (p. 651). In Guatemala, women remained almost completely excluded from school councils, while there was tokenism in Honduras:

Women, if nominated at all, were recommended by male leaders to serve as at-large members when there were no more willing males. And although male at-large members sometimes attended training for other leaders unable to miss work, women seldom did. This reflects pervasive conservative gender norms—in these Q’eqchi’ communities, men typically expect their wives to stay in the communities. (García 2006)” (Altschuler and Corrales, 2012, p. 653).

Although many more women participated in the Honduran councils, similarly conservative gender norms prevented women from taking active roles in council decision-making. Instead, women remained mostly relegated to participating in the school lunch rotation: ‘In all the case studies, male leaders retained the positions of responsibility and received training. They were thus more likely to learn from their participation and apply this learning to other organizations than their female counterparts.’ (Altschuler and Corrales, 2012, p. 653)

In Pakistan, community participation was seen as critical in increasing enrolment of girls and identifying local female teachers. ‘The policy on SMCs/PTAs therefore stated that there would be male committees for boys’ schools and female committees for girls’ schools’ (Khan and Zafar 1999).

Despite this, there were very few female members of SMCs/PTAs. In girls’ schools, about 40% of SMCs reported representation of mothers in the parents’ category. In the Punjab, mothers were included as members in around 20% of the committees.

Field surveys reveal that, in most cases, female members of the community were not aware of the SMCs. Where women have been involved in the process, the presence of females (mothers of students) in the non-teaching category of committees seems to have a positive relationship with activities especially in relation to a reduction of dropouts. (Khan and Zafar 1999, p. 27).

In Nepal, - et al. (2007) note that mobilisation was seen as a vehicle for information dissemination, rather than engagement and that this was a barrier to addressing gender issues.

The way the mobilization activities are handled promotes one-way-communication - authority’s messages to communities, which does not help to promote authentic dialogue among community members for their own collective actions towards good governance of schools. In the process, gender becomes more a ritual term than a meaningful concept. Mothers’ meetings are though appreciative; the meeting is more used to convey important messages to the mothers’ groups, rather than encouraging them to analyze the socio-political contexts of gender discrimination in education field. (p. 84)

## A10 Sustainability

Community-accountability and empowerment interventions are more likely to be effective when they are both sustained and sustainable.

As noted earlier in this chapter, it can take a number of years for programmes to generate change of the kind that demonstrates impact on student-learning outcomes (Patrinos et al. 2007). Successful interventions are often those that have been sustained over a significant period, such as the oft-cited Philippines Textbook Count programme (which ran from 2002 to 2010<sup>39</sup>) and the EDUCO Program in El Salvador.

There is also evidence that programmes that are not sustained are not effective. Turnover of personnel means that the impacts of training are lost: unless new personnel are also trained, momentum is lost.

Unfortunately, for reasons largely beyond the control of DBE1, some of the early gains in the program were lost. Principals and school committee members, the main focus of many of DBE1 training activities, were replaced due to political considerations or normal retirements. Their replacements were not trained, resulting in a great loss of momentum in school governance reform as school principals were transferred and school committee members moved on. Less than a year after the end of the project, many schools have lost their enthusiasm for school planning and many communities are only barely involved in the management of the schools. (p. xii, Evans et al. 2012)

For some initiatives, sustainability means that policies and funding systems are sustained (an element of the wider political and economic context). For others, sustainability means that capacities are developed at the local level (an element of local-community context). This may require support and training by external organisations over a period of time, until sufficient members of the community (an element of implementation context).

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<sup>39</sup> Even Textbook Count, however, which had weathered the loss of its senior champion in the Department of Education (Parafina 2006), could not continue in its established form, which had relied on continued support from the Ateneo School of Government and moved to a new approach: Check My School (Shkabatur 2012, p. 6).

The authors of this report were supported by the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre).

The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre) is part of the Social Science Research Unit (SSRU), Institute of Education, University of London.

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This material has been funded by the Department for International Development. However the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the Department's official policies.

The report was first published in 2014 by:

Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre)  
Social Science Research Unit  
Institute of Education, University of London  
18 Woburn Square  
London WC1H 0NR  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7612 6397 <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk> <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/ssru>

ISBN: 978-1-907345-72-2

Cover image: Pupils' school reform proposals being presented in a community scorecard process © Betty Wamala, World Vision

The views expressed in this work are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the EPPI-Centre or the funder. All errors and omissions remain those of the authors.

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