

INFORMATION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY IN DECENTRALIZED EDUCATION: IMPLEMENTATION OF REPORT CARDS - *Draft*

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EQUIP2 Policy Brief

RESOURCES:

Education Decentralization in Latin America: The Effects on the Quality of Schooling by Don Winkler, RTI

Education Decentralization in Africa: A Review of Recent Policy and Practice by Don Winkler, RTI



Description.

Under decentralized primary-secondary education, the providers of instructional services *may* become more directly accountable to the school's clients. One of the essential building blocks of accountability in decentralized education is transparent and public information easily accessed and understood by parents and other citizens and stakeholders. In practice, the content of that information varies widely from simply reporting test scores to more comprehensive reporting of student socioeconomic characteristics, financing, and a number of measures of academic performance. While this information may be provided in a variety of ways, for convenience we label such information "report cards".

Report cards may be issued for the individual school, for the collection

of schools in the municipality or district, or for the region, state, or province as a whole. In the United States report cards can be found at each of these levels. Since in most decentralized education systems decision making responsibilities are distributed across several levels—national, regional, community, and school—it makes sense to have report cards at each of these levels.

Unfortunately, there are few examples of the use of report cards in developing countries. A few countries have census-based student assessment systems, and testing results are publicly reported for each school. For example, Chile has had such a testing and reporting system for over a decade. One of the more interesting examples of more comprehensive reporting is found in Parana State in southern Brazil where the Parana Education Secretary annually issues report cards to each school,

Paraná Report Cards

The main objectives of Parana's report cards are to provide a management tool for better decision-making, especially at the level of the school, and to strengthen accountability for results. Other stated objectives are to monitor the quality of education, to promote transparency, and to motivate community and parental involvement. The cards include the results of student assessment tests [4th and 8th grade test scores in Portuguese, mathematics, and science] as well as broader measures of outcomes, student flow and school characteristics [e.g., percent of teachers with university degrees], measures of school efficiency, and indicators of parental/community involvement. A unique feature of Parana's report cards is the inclusion of parental, student, teacher and school principal opinions about the school. Another feature of the cards is that each school's report card gives the performance of that school and stakeholder perceptions about that school compared to the average for schools in the municipality and the average for schools in the state.

An example of a Parana school report card is given in the attachment to this brief. In addition, more complete information can be found [in Portuguese] at <http://www.pr.gov.br/cie/index.html>

most of which are managed and financed by municipal governments.

Purposes.

Report cards have three main purposes: [1] provide a useful and easily understood management tool [especially at the school level]; [2] stimulate parental involvement and citizen demand for school performance, thereby strengthening accountability; and [3] motivate education reform at all levels—school, community, region, and nation. Report cards can be used not only to improve accountability of schools and education decision makers to their citizen-clients but, also, to create greater accountability upwards, to the managers of educational systems and to the sources of finance. Thus, educational reforms in some large U.S. cities have combined increased autonomy to school managers with clear, quantitative statements of goals, annual monitoring of those goals, and positive or negative consequences for exceeding or failing to meet those goals.

Advantages and Disadvantages.

If implemented well, report cards have the potential to accomplish the goals stated above. In a developing country context where parents and citizens are often used to receiving no information about

the performance of their childrens' schools, and where they have traditionally had no voice in educational decisions and little participation in their childrens' schools, the combination of decentralization and well-executed report cards is truly revolutionary. The introduction of report cards might even stimulate a demand for the type of information often created by costly and under-utilized education information management systems.

However, the attainment of the goals of report cards often depends on factors well beyond the control of education policy makers. Parental and citizen involvement, and accompanying pressure for reform, may be limited if newly created democratic institutions like school boards and advisory councils are co-opted by the traditional elites including, in some cases, teacher's unions interested in maintaining the status quo. Also, if the other building blocks of accountability are not present, report cards may make little contribution to strengthening accountability. If there is confusion as to who is responsible for what in financing and delivering education; if education financing is woefully inadequate; and if there are no sanctions or rewards associated with poor or outstanding performance, the introduction of report cards may have limited short-term impact.

PREAL Experience

PREAL education report cards describe the progress and performance of countries in Latin America. Their main goal is to monitor and publicize educational performance through concise, reliable, and current information and in doing so contribute to transparency and accountability in the educational systems.

PREAL Report Cards include three sections - results, reforms, and recommendations. They are written in a format to provide clear and direct messages that are understandable by different constituencies. The length of the report card, including many visuals representations, is a maximum of 30 pages. The data is presented in ranked order, with a visual one page summary report card and supplementary information in a statistical annex. PREAL established common parameters for all its report cards, and these parameters are cited on each draft to ensure comparability and a user-friendly style accessible to leaders who are not education specialists.

The advantages of this approach are that it enables a diverse audience of non-technical users to be informed and engaged; increases accountability; promotes the improvement of school performance by permitting the use of results as a basis to plan change; and provides information to monitor and improve understanding of new initiatives. For more information, see <http://www.preal.cl/>

Even when these basic building blocks of accountability are present, simply providing information may have limited impact if decision makers don't know what they should do to improve schooling. Thus, a model like New Zealand's has great appeal. In New Zealand, an Education Review Office was established outside the Education Ministry with the specific charge to assess individual schools, to make their findings public [usually, the resulting report is posted on the school's walls], and to provide specific recommendations for actions by the school to improve learning. [For information on the Education Review Office and school reviews in New Zealand, see: <http://www.ero.govt.nz>]

Another potential difficulty with report cards concerns the difficulty of actually measuring the value-added of schools in student learning and the risk that by publishing absolute test scores, as opposed to measures of value-added, increased sorting by ability and socioeconomic status may result, and equity between socioeconomic groups might actual decrease. However, this potential problem is more the result of introducing standardized student assessment systems than it is the result of introducing report cards. Indeed, by emphasizing a broad array of performance measures

report cards may actually reduce the risk of increased sorting. Finally, for most developing countries this risk is small until they develop census-based sophisticated student assessment systems, something that is far off for most poor countries.

Outstanding Questions.

The use of report cards in developing countries is still in its infancy. Thus, our knowledge base is limited concerning how to collect and disseminate information to best attain the objectives of stimulating parental participation and motivating education reform. Does it necessarily have to be government that prepares and distributes report cards, or can NGOs or even the free press carry out this function?

How should information be presented so it can satisfy the dual objectives of providing support for school based management and increasing parent and citizen participation? After all, information for school based management should in general be detailed and technical, while citizens may have difficulty understanding such technical detail and instead require a smaller amount of information presented in an easily understandable format.

The lack of answers to these outstanding questions means the creation of report cards for new

countries will be risky and, most likely, will need to be done flexibly, with an eye towards iterating over time to the most appropriate report card for any given country. Also, the design of the content and dissemination strategies for report cards will need to draw on other experiences. One such experience is the model of the national level report card created and disseminated by the Education Reform Project for Latin America [PREAL] with the objectives of strengthening accountability at the national level and of stimulating education reform efforts.

Suggested reading:

Education Week (1998), *Accountability for Public Schools: Developing School Report Cards*.

T. Kane and D. Staiger (2001), *Improving School Accountability Measures*, National Bureau for Economic Research, Cambridge, MA.

S. Paul (2002), *Holding the State to Account: Citizen Monitoring in Action*, Bangalore, India. Books for Change, publishers.

Secretaria de Estado da Educacao (2001). *Dez anos de educacao no Parana*. Diretoria Geral, Coordenacao de Informacoes Educationais, Curitiba, Parana.

D. Winkler (1999), "Empowering Municipalities or Schools? *Decentralizing the State*, The World Bank.

World Bank (2003), *Making Services Work for Poor People*, World Development Report, 2004.

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SCHOOL REPORT 2002

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[Introduction](#)

[Attachment \(Interpretation of Results for AVA 2000\)](#)

[Responsible Team](#)

School Performance Assessment 2000

	This School							Other Schools in your municipality		Paraná	
	Mean	Number of Pupils Assessed	Pupils at Level I	Pupils at Level II	Pupils at Level III	Pupils at Level IV	Mean	Number of Pupils Assessed	Mean	Number of Pupils Assessed	
Portuguese	4 th *						257	7,232	250	39,239	
	8 th 258 AP	61	16%	25%	25%	34%	263	4,852	250	31,125	
Math	4 th *						255	7,101	250	38,441	
	8 th 262 AC	56	23%	11%	27%	39%	261	4,712	250	31,007	
Science	4 th *						254	7,055	250	38,033	
	8 th 251 AB	63	19%	30%	25%	25%	260	4,743	250	31,125	

Source: SEED/NIE - AVA 2000

- Note: 1. See the attachment for a description of the four performance levels.
 2. -- The number of pupils is insufficient for presenting a result.
 * The school (or municipality) did not offer (or had not assessed) this grade.
 ** The school (or municipality) did not participate in AVA 2000.
 *** No school in this municipality participated in AVA 2000.

School Effects:

- IN Insufficient data to estimate the adjusted mean.
 AC Average above the expected mean given the profile of the pupils assessed.
 AB Average below the expected mean given the profile of the pupils assessed.
 AP Average roughly equal to the expected mean given the profile of the pupils assessed.

Promotion, Repetition and Drop-out ¹

	This school			Municipality			Paraná		
	Grades 1 st to 4 th	Grades 5 th to 8 th	Secondary Education	Grades 1 st to 4 th	Grades 5 th to 8 th	Secondary Education	Grades 1 st to 4 th	Grades 5 th to 8 th	Secondary Education
Promotion	*	67%	78%	95%	79%	71%	89%	81%	75%
Repetition	*	33%	20%	4%	16%	13%	9%	13%	10%
Drop-out	*	0%	2%	2%	5%	15%	2%	6%	15%

Source: MEC/INEP/SEEC - Censo Escolar 2002 (Resultados Preliminares)

- Note: 1. Data refers to the 2001 School Year for public schools in formal education.
 2. * The school (or municipality) did not offer this level of education.

Teachers and Students ¹

	This School				Municipality			Paraná		
	Total ²	Grades 1 st to 4 th	Grades 5 th to 8 th	Secondary Education	Grades 1 st to 4 th	Grades 5 th to 8 th	Secondary Education	Grades 1 st to 4 th	Grades 5 th to 8 th	Secondary Education
Pupils	2,192	*	1,381	811	113,573	100,754	65,965	825,850	737,602	408,020
Average class size		*	37	39	30	35	38	27	34	37
Teachers		*	47	34	6,048	4,193	2,765	39,255	37,464	22,938
Teachers w/ higher education			100%	100%	67%	98%	98%	46%	97%	97%

Source: MEC/INEP/SEEC - Censo Escolar 2002 (Resultados Preliminares)

- Note: 1. Data from public schools.
 2. Total pupils in primary and secondary education.
 3. * The school (or municipality) did not offer this level of education.
 4. The state government standard for pupil-to-class ratio varies from a minimum of 25 to a maximum of 30 pupils per class for 1st to 4th grade, 30 to 40 pupils per class for 5th to 8th grade, and 30 to 45 pupils per class for secondary education.

Parents' opinions about this school regarding...

Education quality

59 out of 70 parents (84%) are satisfied with the quality of education their children receive.

43 out of 68 parents (63%) believe the school buildings are well maintained.

63 out of 69 parents (91%) believe the school infrastructure is appropriate to educational activities.

50 out of 69 parents (72%) believe that school teachers are dedicated to teaching.

57 out of 71 parents (80%) are satisfied with teachers' punctuality.

Parental involvement

65 out of 69 parents (94%) would like to have greater involvement in school activities.

64 out of 68 parents (94%) believe the head teacher favors participation of the school community in school activities,

50 out of 71 parents (70%) indicate that the school promoted parental involvement in education issues.

31 of them participated in such activities.

47 out of 68 parents (69%) indicate that the school promoted parental involvement in school administration issues.

23 of them participated in such activities.

Information dissemination

48 out of 72 parents (67%) report that the school promoted regular meetings between parents and teachers.

55 out of 68 parents (81%) say a regular communication system with parents has been established.

58 out of 65 parents (89%) say that teachers assign homework tasks that promote parents' interest in their children's education

50 out of 69 parents (72%) report receiving information about their children's homework so they could follow up on it.

Security

51 out of 72 parents (71%) feel safe sending their children to school.

47 out of 67 parents (70%) believe the school has discipline problems.

47 out of 68 parents (69%) believe the school has internal security problems.

60 out of 69 parents (87%) believe the school is subject to security problems in the neighborhood.

School Grade

7.8 (mean attributed by 68 parents).

Parents Profile

5 out of 70 parents (7%) reported participating in the School Board.

7 out of 69 parents (10%) reported being members of the Parents and Teacher Association Secretariat.

14 out of 68 parents (21%) reported being a volunteer at this school.

22 out of 69 parents (32%) have more than one child at this school.

Source: Survey submitted to parents during School Family Week, April 20-28, 2002.

Note: 1. Only schools with more than 160 pupils responded to the survey.

2. The results reported represent only the opinions of those parents who answered the questionnaires and not those of all parents whose children attend this school.

3. The results are based on the total number of valid responses and not the total number of questionnaires received.

4. The results based on less than five respondents are indicated by the symbol —.

5. The symbol * indicates that the school did not return questionnaires.

The pupil in this school says that ...

	4 th Grade	8 th Grade
His/Her parents <i>always</i> read his/her school reports	*	74%
His/Her parents <i>always</i> go to the school when requested		66%
His/Her parents <i>always or almost always</i> attend school events		15%
He/She has never failed		59%
At least one of his/her parents has completed secondary education		35%
He/She has a home computer		21%
He/She has a car		63%

	Portuguese	Math	Science	Portuguese	Math	Science
He/She always or almost always requires guidance with his/her homework				27%	29%	38%
He/She enjoys very much the way his/her teacher teaches				68%	37%	42%
He/She likes the textbook used				27%	44%	43%
He/She did not have trouble learning				42%	25%	19%

Source: SEED/NIE - AVA 2000: Questionário do Aluno

Note: 1. — The number of pupils is insufficient to present a result.

* The school did not offer (or had not assessed) this level of education.

** The school did not participate in AVA 2000.

The school head teacher says that ...

- During his/her administration, the head teacher dedicated most of his/her time to the organization of the school management structure.
- During the general school meetings to which all parents were invited, the educational projects for the different periods of the school year were discussed. On average, parental attendance at these meetings was 75%.
- The School Board met every two months.

Source: SEED/NIE - AVA 2000: Questionário da Escola

Note: 1. ** The school did not participate in AVA 2000.