

Getting Schools to Work Better

Educational Accountability and Teacher Support in India and China

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Reimagining the quest of getting schools to work better

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1 Introduction

Reimagining the quest of getting schools to work better

1.1 Strong commitment, turbulent quest

How can we get schools to work better? In the second decade of the twenty-first century, hardly anyone would dispute the importance of addressing this question of high policy pertinence. Parents have great expectations for a quality school education to prepare their children for a brighter future, whatever this entails. On the supply side, schools can benefit from providing high-quality education through earning high reputation amongst students and parents and receiving sustained financial resources and recognitions from the governments and the society at large. More broadly speaking, a country with a good record of school education is also likely to enjoy higher economic competitiveness (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2008) and more mature democratic participation (e.g., Glaeser et al., 2007). Aggregated to the global scale, these interests and aspirations are incorporated and well reflected in the commitment to achieving the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) on inclusive and equitable quality education for all.¹

Though strong and sincere, such global commitment to getting schools to work better is relatively new. For a long time, the priority for policymakers was to get children into schools in the first place, as notably exemplified by the World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. Such prioritisation was understandable at a time when around half of the adult population in regions like South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Middle East and North Africa could not read or write. The average adult literacy rate of the world, at slightly above 70%, only tended to obscure the huge gulf between these regions and the more advanced education systems in Europe. Although regional differences still existed over two decades later, more countries in East Asia and Latin America had moved closer towards achieving universal adult literacy. Even the education systems whose literacy rates were previously below the world average had their rates improved significantly by at least ten percentage points (Figure 1.1). Since the turn of the century, the number of out-of-school children was estimated to be further reduced by more than 100 million (Figure 1.2).

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Adult literacy rate

The share of adults aged 15 and older who can both read and write.

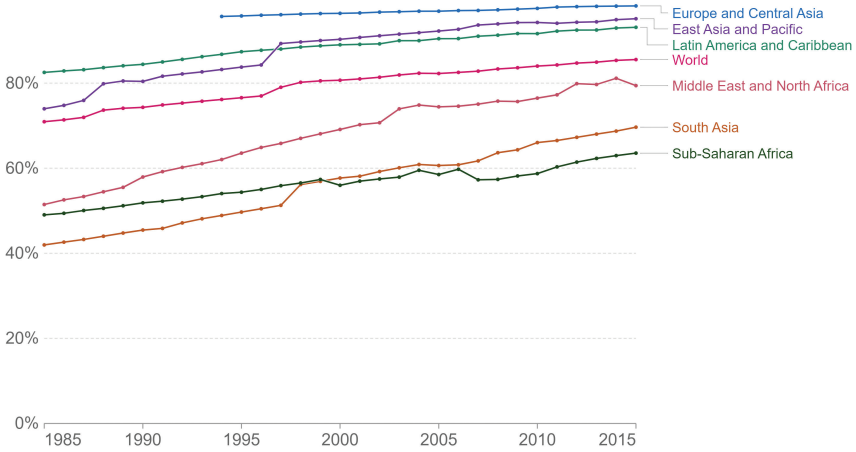


Figure 1.1 Adult literacy rate, world and selected regions, 1985–2015.

Source: Roser and Ortiz-Ospina (2016a).

Number of out-of-school children, World, 2000 to 2014

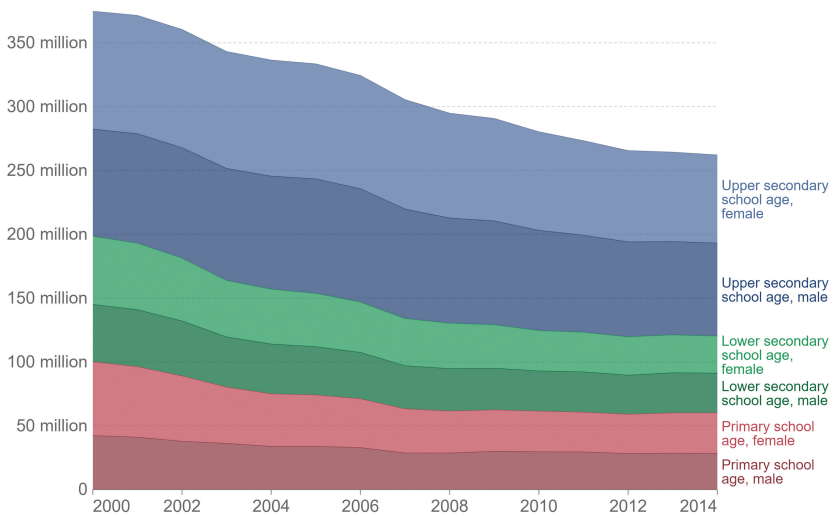


Figure 1.2 Number of out-of-school children, world, 2000–2014.

Source: Roser and Ortiz-Ospina (2016b).

With remarkable progress made on education access and literacy, the subsequent turn of policy attention to student learning outcomes seemed perfectly justified. However, policy efforts in this direction were often shadowed by an inconvenient truth that “schooling ain’t learning” (Crouch et al., 2021; Pritchett, 2013), although the debates on how student learning can or should be appropriately measured remain unsettled. When the two do not closely correspond with one another, schooling may instead become an empty promise and wasted opportunity. The few examples where schooling did lead to improved student learning were predominantly from socioeconomically advanced systems such as Singapore, Finland and Canada. With rare exceptions such as Shanghai, China (OECD, 2011: Chapter 4; Tucker, 2011: Chapter 2) Vietnam (Asadullah et al., 2020) or Ceará, Brazil (Yan et al., 2023), education systems in the Global South were more likely to undergo reforms that did not yield improvements as expected (see Muralidharan & Singh, 2020 for a latest example from India), not to mention their stark internal variations even when progress was reported at the national level.²

1.2 Identifying and correcting the fault line: main argument of the book

How can we make sense of this contrasting picture presented in the previous section? Compared with expanding enrolment towards universalised schooling in an earlier period, why has it been more difficult to raise the learning outcomes of those who are now enrolled in schools?

One way to answer these questions is to think about the complexity of the tasks involved. Getting schools to work better in raising student learning outcomes is arguably more challenging or “wicked” a problem than getting children into schools at the outset. For the latter, higher student enrolment is likely to follow once an education system has adequate financial resources to build school infrastructure, hire teachers, acquire textbooks and get ready other inputs. Historically, this has been the case partly thanks to the increased lending and grant commitments of global education donors (Bruns et al., 2019, p.27). In contrast, the improvement of learning outcomes further necessitates appropriate curriculum design, progress tracking and follow-up, learner support and so forth. None of these higher-order tasks are easy to deal with (Yan & Saguin, 2021), particularly in a sector that has seen a proliferation of governmental, private and societal stakeholders (Bruns et al., 2019) from the very local to the supranational levels. When the number of policy actors grows expansively and each comes to shape the interaction dynamics with varying power and interests, coordination of them can understandably become more challenging (Peters, 2018; Rhodes, 2017: Chapter 11).

Without disregarding these task- and actor-oriented explanations, this book³ seeks to zoom into concrete policy interventions, especially those intending to improve education outcomes through strengthening educational

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accountability (Bruns et al., 2011; Verger & Parcerisa, 2017b). If anything, these alternative perspectives as summarised above highlight even more the importance of investigating the concrete policy measures adopted, as it will help shed light on how the complexity of the policy tasks is accommodated and how the different stakeholders are treated, and their roles exercised. In that sense, the book joins the existing literature that has extensively scrutinised and criticised the strong or even exclusive focus on performance as exhibited in current mainstream accountability policies. However, it also notes that while many studies have discussed the negative consequences of performance-based accountability on teachers and school leaders at the frontline, few proposals have been put forward as for how such pitfalls can be systematically rectified. Likewise, while much has been commented on the policy implementation challenges in various education systems, few have taken a closer look at the design facets of these challenges and how they can be remedied. Filling these gaps with the novel conception of “Accountability 3.0” is therefore where the book makes a significant departure.

An elaborated conceptualisation of “Accountability 3.0” is delivered in the next chapter and summarised in Table 1.1. In short, “Accountability 3.0” differs from “Accountability 1.0” in which emphasis was placed heavily on bureaucratic accountability between different levels of government hierarchy over input control and regulation compliance. It is also distinctive from “Accountability 2.0” that advocated for market and network as alternative, or even substitute to the top-down exercise of power. Instead, “Accountability 3.0” recognises that the purposes of accountability are essentially multiple and diverse, which include not only control and assurance but also continuous improvement (Aucoin & Heintzman, 2000).

Fulfilling these multiple purposes, I argue, requires a combination of disciplinary and supportive instruments, each of which is suitable under a specific set of conditions. As such, beyond discipline and control, getting schools to work better critically hinges on supporting teachers and other frontline workers to become more professionally motivated and competent. Within the range of support available, continuing and institutionalised teacher in-service training and career advancement arrangements are more likely to facilitate and sustain continuous improvement compared with time-bound monetary stimulus such as performance bonus. Support in the format of in-service training is essential for updating teachers’ subject knowledge, upgrading their teaching skills and enhancing their ability to collaborate and learn from peers (Jensen et al., 2016). Meanwhile, the career advancement system can send an encouraging signal that teachers thus trained and excelled subsequently are treated as valuable assets of the education system.

The importance of having an empowered and effective teacher workforce is broadly recognised both before and since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Giannini et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2014). Despite so, how such support to teachers is designed and delivered in developing countries remains less adequately explored so far. The empirical knowledge thus generated would

Table 1.1 Three different ways of thinking about accountability.

<i>Conceptions and corresponding modes of governance</i>	<i>Main accountability relationships, types (and examples)</i>	<i>Illustrative references in education policy</i>	<i>Perceived role of the government</i>	<i>Prone to what kind of failures/imperfections</i>
Accountability 1.0 Hierarchical	Bureaucratic accountability between different levels of government (audits and inspections) Market, social and bureaucratic accountability with diverse accountees and government schools and teachers as “ultimate accountors” (audits and inspections; decentralisation/SBM; school choice and privatisation)	Garn (2001)	Command and control (on input and compliance)	Government failure
Accountability 2.0 Hybrid of hierarchical, market and network		Garn (2001), Ranson (2003), West et al. (2011)	Marginally relevant to market and social accountability; compelling performance in bureaucratic accountability	Government failure, market failure, network failure; “accountability overload”
Accountability 3.0 Hybrid of hierarchical, market and network, with an emphasis on government stewardship	Multiple accountability instruments (both command-and-control based and supportive) that are differently suitable for multiple purposes of accountability (to be elaborated in Section 2.4)	N/A (as the idea is proposed and elaborated for the first time in this book)	Providing stewardship with (both negative and positive) feedback	Incentive mismatch, capacity constraints, inadequate coordination and coherence across instruments (to be unpacked in Chapter 6)

nevertheless shed valuable lights on the design features that can facilitate the sound functioning of the support arrangements. To close this empirical gap and offer such fresh insights, I conducted an in-depth investigation in the diverse case settings of government middle schools in Beijing and Delhi. An original teacher survey and follow-up interviews were used as the main research instruments. They helped capture in depth and detail the perspectives of the targeted recipients of such support on the ground, a group whose perceptions and opinions often tended to be ignored in educational policymaking and related research (Anand & Lall, 2022).

My findings offer both promising and cautionary tales on supporting teachers to work better. Support clearly matters, as those who have received in-service training and career advancement reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction as compared with those who were excluded. Having said so, support can go awry when its design and delivery fail to adequately address the needs and expectations of the recipients and enhance their professional capacity. To the extent that these shortfalls are also observed in cases where conventional accountability mechanisms failed to deliver their theorised promise, getting incentive-compatibility and capacity-enhancement right can thus be considered as the key to make accountability mechanisms work in general. Beyond that, making “Accountability 3.0” work as a whole further requires that its constitutive components be orchestrated in an orderly and complementary manner to take care of different substantive and procedural aspects of fulfilling primary and secondary policy goals.

To help readers appreciate more closely how these main arguments are situated in, depart from but also complement and enrich existing debates and discussions on accountability, the next section briefly reviews the problematics of the mainstream approaches to accountability. Special attentions are paid to their heavy emphasis on performance and how the pressure to perform is disproportionally exerted on frontline stakeholders as “the ultimate accountors.”

1.3 Mainstream approaches to educational accountability

The turbulent move from “getting children to schools” to “getting schools to work better” as summarised earlier has generated many hard lessons for education systems especially in the developing world. One of them is that compared with mere mobilisation of inputs, more attention needs to be placed on how efficiently and effectively fiscal, physical and human resources are managed and utilised to solve collective problems within the sector. In other words, *governance* of basic education matters.⁴ And just as accountability is underlined as an integral component of governance in general (Aucoin & Heintzman, 2000; Erkkilä, 2007; World Bank, 2003), so strengthening accountability is perceived as vital to educational governance and the ultimate improvement of student learning in fulfilling SDG4 (UNESCO, 2017; World Bank, 2017).

Despite being commented as an “ever-expanding” yet simultaneously “ambiguous” concept (Mulgan, 2000; Bovens et al., 2008), accountability can be understood in the most basic sense as the relationships between two parties. One party can be described as “accountors” or “account-givers”, while the other known as “accountees” (whether the emphasis is on “forum” along the lines of Bovens (2007) or the actors therein). Within these relationships, accountors are required to give certain types of information or responses (as “accounts”) to accountees, to which feedback is given in return (Yan 2019b). Beyond this basic definition, there exist a wide range of answers to the question of who is accountable to whom, for what, and how.

Corresponding to the hierarchical mode of governance that was common for most part of the twentieth century, the term “accountability” had a relatively restricted meaning at that time (Mulgan, 2000) which mainly referred to bureaucratic accountability. I term this as “Accountability 1.0” (see Table 1.1, second row), with an additional note that bureaucratic accountability was at times expected to be joined and corroborated by political or democratic accountability through the mechanism of elections. Its “Accountability 2.0” sequel, by contrast, is both a result and a reflection of the aforementioned trend of stakeholder multiplication. The types of educational accountability emphasised more frequently under this period include but are not limited to market accountability, network accountability (West et al., 2011), social accountability (World Bank, 2003), and consumer accountability (Ranson, 2003, see Table 1.1, third row). Underlying the rich varieties that served as the basis for the many typologies formulated over the past few decades (see Verger & Parcerisa, 2017b, for a synthesis), two commonalities can nonetheless be spotted.

1.3.1 *“Performative” turn in educational accountability*

As observed by Bruns et al. (2011), there is often a direct link between broader public sector reform efforts and their specific applications in education. Reforms that aim to get schools to work better by strengthening accountability are no exception. Notably, the strong and pervasive emphasis on performance closely mirrors the thinking behind New Public Management (NPM) reforms since late 1980s. Whereas the accountability imperative in the decades prior to that was primarily concerned with procedures or compliance with (financial) inputs, NPM reforms paid much more attention to outputs and results (Laegreid, 2014). While some have made the case of NPM’s demise as the ruling public administration paradigm over the past decade (Drechsler & Kattel, 2009; Dunleavy et al., 2005), the influence of NPM is still clearly noticeable in the basic education sector. Such influence is not just confined to industrialised democracies where NPM was originated (Gunter et al., 2016), but it was also widely observed across the globe (Aoki, 2019).

More specifically, this “performative” turn of accountability is reflected in at least two interrelated trends that are happening in the basic education sector.

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First, for individual policy interventions that aim to strengthen accountability, the evaluations of “what works” are increasingly dominated by quantitative methods, notably the randomised control trials (RCTs), over qualitative ones (Zhao, 2017). For these quantitative and RCT evaluations, student test scores appear naturally as the most convenient candidate when it comes to the operationalisation of the “dependent variable.”

Second, at a more macro level, aggregated data on test scores as the indicator of system-level performance are increasingly available too, thanks to the growing popularity of international large-scale assessments such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). A new and more “visible” form of knowledge on performance has thus been created that is simplified, comparative, normative and transportable (Ozga, 2013, see also Steiner-Khamsi, 2013). Such knowledge generation nonetheless comes at the risk of undermining a more comprehensive interpretation of effective policy outcomes as existing at different levels, on different dimensions and along multiple attributes (Bali et al., 2019). What this knowledge production and dissemination process promotes is instead a highly performative form of accountability at the national level. At least in the case of PISA, “policymakers are acutely conscious of the need to succeed and to be seen to succeed both within the setting of the transnational construction of PISA and by their national media in relation to PISA outcomes” (Ozga, 2013, p. 297). Given the centrality of student test scores, performance-based accountability in the basic education sector is now accordingly known as “test-based accountability,” or simply “datafication.”

1.3.2 *Accountability overload on “the ultimate accountors”*

With this overwhelming focus on performance, upon whom does this responsibility of delivering it fall, then? Undoubtedly, upper-level governments still have a high stake in improving the performance of education systems, especially in an age of intensified international comparison. For instance, publication of the PISA ranking not only drove a series of accountability reforms in countries that experienced the so-called “PISA shock,” such as Germany, Denmark and Japan. It also legitimised existing reforms in relatively well-performing systems such as Switzerland and Israel (Niemann et al., 2017, see also Volante, 2015).

Despite so, another distinctive feature of NPM reforms is that they tend to “concentrate more on individual accountability and less on collective accountability” (Læg Reid, 2014, p. 335). Notwithstanding the expansive varieties of accountability relationships in the basic education sector, schools and teachers remain the ones that tend to be treated as “the ultimate accountors.” To illustrate, in bureaucratic accountability relationships, schools are held accountable to governments through inspections. Rewards are

sometimes anticipated for excellent inspection results, but more common are disciplinary and punitive actions or the threat of them if the measured aspects fall below a certain performance threshold. Through the logic of market accountability, the need to compete for attracting students when they are empowered to “vote by feet” (for example, through voucher programmes) would subject schools to a constant pressure to improve the service they provide. Through decentralised governance or school-based management (SBM), societal actors are expected to join the force in holding schools and teachers accountable with such instalments as the School Management Committees (SMCs).

This scenario of multiple or hybrid accountability (Aleksavska & Schillemans, 2021; Benish & Mattei, 2020), albeit overwhelming for the “ultimate accountants” (more on this in the next paragraph), may nevertheless be expected when schools are viewed as street-level bureaucracies and teachers as street-level bureaucrats. This strand of literature already noted that “accountability of street-level bureaucrats is essentially multiple” (Hupe & Hill, 2007). Yet, its prediction about street-level bureaucrats’ being treated as professionals in their accountability relationships “in as much as they claim that they should be trusted by their managers to use discretion to tackle their work tasks in an adaptive way” is at best partially valid. From a principal-agent theory perspective, the ever-present possibility of discretion is precisely what necessitates that accountability be exerted in the format of bureaucratic control (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003: Chapter 2). Reflected in the basic education sector, what seems a global trend is that the expertise, autonomy and professional discretion of teachers as the “ultimate accountants” is increasingly undermined by such control exerted in the format of datafication (Holloway, 2020). Recent research further points out that “action possibilities” for street-level bureaucrats in the Global South are different from, and more limited than their counterparts in the Global North (Peeters & Campos, 2022). In such environments, frontline workers were reported to have received insufficient training for the tasks they were expected to perform, or even hired based on non-meritocratic criteria in the first place (Peeters & Campos, 2022: Table 1).

Existing public administration literature on multiple accountability has generally viewed its presence in a negative light (Aleksavska & Schillemans, 2021, p. 71), to which the case of accountability in education is hardly an exception. Not least, as the “performative” turn in educational accountability has become omnipresent and autonomy enjoyed by the “ultimate accountants” on the ground much less than expected, stress and demoralisation felt by this group were repeatedly reported from across the globe (a latest piece of evidence on this is Jerrim & Sims, 2022). At the time of writing this chapter, news that a head teacher in Reading took her own life after her school received an “inadequate” rating from the latest round of inspection conducted by Ofsted has shocked the entire country of England (see Box 1.1). Extreme tragedies like this may be

Box 1.1 A tragedy of educational accountability*

For readers outside England, Ms Ruth Perry may not sound like a familiar name. In March 2023, this Reading-based headteacher took her own life after the inspection agency Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) gave her school an “inadequate” rating. Before this shocking tragedy, however, numerous studies and reports already revealed an alarming picture of accountability-related stress felt by teachers. For example, a study led by researchers from the University College London and funded by the Nuffield Foundation reported that 68% of teachers in England felt accountability-related stress. The National Education Union survey in 2022 further reported that 44% of teachers in England plan to quit within five years.

The phenomenon is not unique to England. With research report and news coverage from both the Global North and the Global South repeatedly pointing to the same issue, the overburden of educational accountability on the shoulders of teachers and school leaders has become a universal concern.

This chapter and Section 1.3 in particular provides an explanation to this phenomenon based on the changing landscape and emphasis on educational accountability. How this problem can be solved, and how to make the solutions work to ultimately realise the promise of school education, is what the rest of the book seeks to explore.

* For the news cited, see <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/mar/21/ruth-perry-ofsted-regime-fatally-flawed-says-family-of-headteacher-who-killed-herself>; for the study and survey cited, see <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2021/mar/teachers-point-towards-school-accountability-main-driver-stress>; <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/apr/11/teachers-england-plan-to-quit-workloads-stress-trust>; for the blog piece cited, see <https://www.ukfiet.org/2023/its-high-time-to-rethink-existing-approaches-to-educational-accountability/>.

rare. But it is far more common to see such reactions as quitting the profession (Ryan et al., 2017) or resistance and evasion from those who choose to stay (Verger & Parcerisa, 2017a).

1.4 Proposal for departure

So far, this introductory chapter has explained the puzzle that motivates this research and problematised the mainstream approaches to educational accountability to date. I highlighted how the progress of delivering quality education for all has been hampered by an imbalanced approach to educational accountability. Above all, the mainstream approach disproportionately

emphasises performance and presses for a particular group of accountors to bear the brunt of this emphasis.

These realities urgently call for a substantial departure from the conventional wisdom and a fresh rethinking on how policymakers and other key stakeholders can truly make schools work better. Clearly, demanding for more accountability (Mbiti, 2016) along a “more of the same” logic is hardly likely to help. The rest of this closing section presents the departure this book attempts to make, and how it adds value to the existing discussions on educational governance and accountability, policy design, comparative public policy and administration, and China-India scholarship. While doing so, I also offer a brief introduction to the contents of the subsequent chapters.

1.4.1 Reconceptualising accountability in education

In the next chapter, I propose such a departure first by bringing in a timely reminder that for public services like basic education, constant improvement remains a core purpose as crucial as that of controlling and ensuring that a threat to accountability does not aggravate (Aucoin & Heintzman, 2000). To accomplish this improvement purpose, it is thus imperative to broaden the understanding of accountability to also encompass positive and constructive feedback and support beyond disciplinary and punitive ones. This more comprehensive understanding is what I introduced earlier in this chapter as “Accountability 3.0.” Fundamentally, “Accountability 3.0” is distinctive from both “Accountability 1.0” that emphasises exclusively hierarchical accountability and the subsequent 2.0 version that disproportionately burdens teachers and schools through a hybrid regime that ubiquitously pushes for discipline, surveillance and control.

To move towards “Accountability 3.0,” a parallel reconfiguration of the role of government is needed (see Table 1.1, penultimate row). Extant approaches to educational accountability tend to either relegate it to the margin (as in decentralisation and marketisation reforms) or, when its role is still asserted, expect it to be exerting top-down discipline and control (as in threat-based inspections). Countering these lines of thinking, I concur with the recent literature in comparative public policy over the long-underrated imperative of “bringing governments back in” (Capano et al., 2015). More specifically, I argue that governments remain the key actor with far greater potential than other stakeholders in steering the education system and the stakeholders within it, so that they are incentivised and capable of working collectively towards better school education outcomes. To strive for improvement alongside control and assurance, governments can utilise a combination of informational, regulatory, financial and organisational measures. This point is formalised through the development of a generalised framework of policy instruments used in educational governance. Among others, the framework helps make the case for institutionalised

support such as teacher in-service training and career advancement to be treated as an integral part of educational accountability more holistically interpreted.

Recognising the importance of such support does not necessarily mean that the support will effectively lead to the realisation of educational improvement in any given context. Making an initial inquiry in the contexts of the world's two largest basic education systems is thus the task of the later chapters, as will be introduced next in Section 1.4.2. Building on the empirical findings from the government middle schools in Beijing and Delhi, Chapter 6 ends with reflections that catering to the incentives and consolidating the capacity of key stakeholders are the common conditions for individual accountability measures to be effective. Beyond these commonalities, coordination among various policy tools are further needed to make them work collectively under "Accountability 3.0" as a whole.

This "Accountability 3.0" approach joins the recent research on systemic educational improvement (Rivas, 2023), education system reform (Ehren & Baxter, 2021; Yan et al., 2023) and educational bureaucracy (Mangla, 2022), all of which has likewise endeavoured to explore and articulate a system-level solution to getting schools to work better. Commonality aside, there are at least two points to be highlighted which distinguish this book from the above-mentioned research that focused on the system level.

First, the focus of this book is more explicitly on teachers, a key group of "the ultimate accountors" whose experiences and voices are likely to be bypassed both in the research literature and in policymaking of education system reforms (Anand & Lall, 2022). While the existing accountability literature has documented and commented at length the tension between teachers and the conventional accountability policies imposed on them (see e.g., Verger & Parcerisa, 2017a), few lights have been cast on how this tension can be resolved, and the implications of such a solution on accountability in education more broadly. Making that step forward is nevertheless of vital importance. Indeed, no reformulation of accountability will be viable without taking its "difficult relationship" seriously, especially when this group of "ultimate accountors" serves as a crucial link for transmitting knowledge to students for their learning in any education system. As supportive measures are now viewed as part and parcel of a more holistically conceived notion of accountability, empirical investigations on how they are practiced on the ground and with what features also require an in-depth grasp of how such practice is perceived by the targeted recipients meant to be supported (Choi & Walker, 2018). Therefore, by focusing more explicitly on teachers, not only is the book counteracting a pervasive tendency to neglect an important local context. It also links and integrates this contextual focus with a larger systemic picture of educational accountability through the novel conception of "Accountability 3.0."

Second, in developing this linkage, I draw substantially on the literature of public policy and administration, especially the recently revived and

burgeoning policy design literature. As will be elaborated in Chapter 2 and later in Chapter 6, this literature offers useful and pertinent analytical perspectives with which I can scrutinise the design features of conventional and supportive accountability measures. Not least, the message that “policy design matters” distances this study from the tempt to blame everything on implementation, which gained currency not only in the policy debates of the developing world but also in the Global North (Brodkin, 2008). For studies underpinned by this line of thinking, policy plans and prescriptions are instead either left unscrutinised or assumed as if impeccable. Furthermore, through this in-depth scrutiny, this research expects to yield more “actionable” lessons and inspirations for policy practice than the studies focusing on norms, culture or other abstract aspects of accountability in education that are, by default, more difficult to change.

In sum, “Accountability 3.0” as conceptualised in this book transcends the exclusive emphasis on performance and the narrow understanding of the role of governments as exhibited by previous conceptions. This conception also advances the literature that has discussed extensively the shortcomings of accountability policies to date by showing how engaging the perspective of policy design helps address the key shortcomings regarding stakeholders’ needs, incentives and capacity. Although much of the discussions and, as will be introduced shortly, the empirical cases are rooted in the education sector, the theoretical insights this book generates shall potentially be applicable to help other sectors come up with better designs of accountability systems to fulfil their multiple mandates as well.

1.4.2 Understanding educational governance in India and China

To gain a more concrete idea of how the constitutive components of “Accountability 3.0” can work in synergy to realise its theorised promise in practice, it is noted that the literature has a fair stock of empirical knowledge on whether and to what extent existing measures under “Accountability 1.0” and “Accountability 2.0” worked or failed to work. In contrast, knowledge about the design and delivery of such institutionalised support as teacher in-service training is mainly confined to individual training programmes rather than the entirety of training infrastructure and arrangements. Accumulated knowledge on career advancement to date is even thinner. Providing a rich, comprehensive and more nuanced picture of how such support is practiced and received on the ground is thus the main empirical gap this book aims to close.

It should be acknowledged at the outset that this empirical exploration does not aim to generalise the findings to a statistically broader population. Why, then, is it important to gain comparative insights on school accountability and teacher support in the education systems of China and India? A fuller answer to this methodological question is provided in Chapter 3. More details of the research process are also available in the Appendix. In brief,

contextualised knowledge of teacher support in two of the largest basic education systems in the world constitutes a timely addition to the case repertoire of non-Western public administration (Drechsler, 2013). It can also offer valuable lessons for other developing countries that are similarly struggling to make accountability work for their own basic education sector. As mentioned earlier in Section 1.4.1 and will be elaborated later in Chapter 6, this comparative study further advances our understanding and informs theorisation of the design principles for effective educational governance and accountability to get schools to work better.

Besides contributing to the disciplinary literature, this study joins a rare yet much-needed effort in expanding and enriching the general understanding of two largest developing countries in today's world. Indeed, beyond their usual portraits as geopolitical rivals (e.g., Bajpai, 2020) or emerging economic giants (e.g., Winters & Yusuf, 2007), much fewer lights have been shed on the contemporary policy challenges these two countries face and the solutions they come up with. Joining the few recent efforts in this regard, such as Ho (2019), Kerlin et al. (2021), Ren (2020) and Wu (2018), this book provides a fresh example from the education sector. For readers from the two countries, insights from this book (as well as the aforementioned studies) offer a valuable opportunity for learning *about* each other, which could serve as a solid foundation for exploring what and how to learn *from* each other.⁵ As for readers who have gained familiarity with their education policies and outcomes depicted at higher levels thanks to the existing literature, the book also extends this generic picture with a closer scrutiny of ground-level policy design and practice.

In making these empirical contributions summarised above, the book first presents an overview of the educational governance in the capital regions of India and China in Chapter 3. This will hopefully help readers put the empirical findings into perspective. Chapters 4 and 5 report the findings from each site in terms of the varying manners in which teacher in-service training and career advancement are designed and delivered, as well as the differing perceptions expressed by the survey respondents towards these supportive arrangements. Chapter 4 also contains a brief explanation and justification of the teacher survey and follow-up interviews as the main research tool. A complete account of the research design and implementation is presented in the Appendix as mentioned.

Taking stock of the two preceding chapters, Chapter 6 begins with both cross-case and within-case comparisons. These comparisons show how the observed variations in teacher satisfaction can be explained by the variations in the design and delivery of these two supportive measures in terms of their incentive-(in)compatibility and the extent to which the measures enhanced the professional capacity of their recipients. I then situate these findings about supportive measures back to the larger picture of of "Accountability 3.0." To the extent that design deficits and imperfections are not entirely new, I continue to review how policy interventions commonly

adopted in “Accountability 1.0” and “Accountability 2.0” have similarly fallen short in restoring the incentives and motivations of accountors and strengthening their capacity. Integrating these insights together then allows me to close the chapter by reflecting upon how “Accountability 3.0” can be designed to work in part and as a whole, as mentioned already in Section 1.4.1. Chapter 7 concludes by recapping this book’s contents, scholarly contributions, practical significance and future research directions for both the case sites and beyond. Ongoing reform initiatives in Beijing and Delhi since the completion of the fieldwork are briefly reviewed. Rather than undermining the arguments and findings from previous chapters of the book, this brief review shows how the key reform developments actually corroborate many of them.

Notes

- 1 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>, accessed 2023-09-17.
- 2 Das and Zajonc (2010), for example, presented glaring evidence from India that while the top 5% performers in Orissa and Rajasthan had stellar performances that can make them on par with high-income countries like Norway, the ranking of their peers at the bottom 5% was at 48 out of a total of 51 countries. When such interventions as providing intensive short-term teacher training to teachers in Beijing’s migrant schools or empowering community members with information on existing institutions or tools to monitor student learning in rural India did not lead to learning improvement (Banerjee et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2013), they may risk further perpetuating existing educational inequalities.
- 3 This book draws on my doctoral dissertation (Yan, 2019a) which is the recipient of the Best PhD Dissertation Award of the Indian Public Policy Network in 2019.
- 4 Earlier literature of public policy and administration tends to perceive “(new) governance” as an opposite extreme to government or state-centric “old governance” (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003; Pierre, 2000). For this line of interpretation, governance means a change in the nature of the meaning of government, in a way that “hollows out” the state with market- or network-based alternatives of policy-making (e.g., Rhodes, 1994, 1996). The more recent literature, recognising that governments continue to play a pivotal role in policymaking, defines governance more broadly as the “possible ways in which policy actors, including governments, combine to solve collective problems” (Capano et al., 2015, p. 316). Fukuyama’s (2013, p. 350) definition of governance is relevant here, too, with its emphasis on “a government’s ability to... deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not”. I would like to thank Rod Rhodes for inspiring and enriching the discussion here.
- 5 I would like to thank Anjana Mangalagiri for raising this important point.

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