

CHAPTER 8

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING ACCOUNTABILITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLING

8.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Gaynor (1998), an effective process for solving organisational problems must, among others, include the following:

- Describing and documenting the problem.
- Identifying and describing important stakeholders.
- Using theory as a guide in analysing the causes of the problem.
- Formulating general strategies to addressing the causes you have identified.
- Making recommendations tailored to the interest of individual stakeholders and stakeholder groups.

The previous six chapters of this study focused on the identification and documentation of the problem (chapters 1 and 2), the examination of the problem against identified standards and models (chapter 3), the contextualization of the problem (chapter 4), the identification of important stakeholders including the theoretical analysis of the causes of the problem (chapters 5 and 6). This was achieved through the use of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and reported in terms of frequency and percentage analysis (quantitative) and a thematic analysis (qualitative).

The previous chapter (7) identified some limitations relating to school level accountability. Among others the limitations include, but are not confined to the following:

- Poor implementation of accountability processes and practices.
- Complex contexts within which education policies are implemented.
- Poor role clarification and institutional arrangements.
- Poor performance management culture.
- Questionable ethics and values.

Beyond the definition and documentation of the problem as indicated above, this chapter proposes changes that are necessary to reduce or eliminate the problem by presenting a conceptual framework that could enhance public school accountability.

8.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: Towards a definition.

As discussed in paragraph 1.7.1 (p.6) of this study, a conceptual framework (or theoretical framework) can be defined as a set of ideas /concepts that are used to describe a phenomenon or how something should be done. According to Gaynor (1998), the term **conceptual framework** includes a broad diversity of structured ideas about organizations. Conceptual frameworks include sets of related elements and suggest the nature of relationships among them. Gaynor (1998) further states that other terms commonly used to refer to conceptual frameworks include theory, model and theoretical frameworks.

This study uses these terms interchangeably. According to Barlow (2005), a model (or theoretical framework), is a simplified representation of a real situation, except that the complexity of the real situation is done away with to leave only the critical essentials. Bhola (1990) agrees with the above description and sees a model as a design, description or analogy used to help visualise or make understandable something that is more complex.

Mouton (2001) points out that theory building or model building studies are aimed at developing new models and theories to explain particular phenomena. Models come in a variety of forms and that they are not only quantitative. According to him, any model, no matter its form or purpose, has one distinctive feature: attempting to represent a situation in a simplified form. There are different kinds of models as described in the following paragraphs.

8.2.1 Kinds of Models

Gaynor (1998) makes the point that conceptual frameworks vary from verbal descriptions to schematic representations and mathematical models. Jonker and Pennink (2009) has identified the following types of models:

- *Physical models* are three- dimensional presentations of reality; they are often concrete and highly specific
- *Verbal models* are written or verbal abstract information regarding reality and leave room for interpretations
- *Graphic models* are concrete presentations consisting of three lines, symbols and shapes and are supported by verbal explanations
- *Conceptual models* represent reality and show how something in general should look and how it should work. These models have few details because they are generalisable.

The use of models holds the following advantages:

8.2.2 Advantages of Models

According to Fourie (2000), models generally have the following advantages:

- A model represents research results in text form, within a specific framework.
- A model represents a reduced overall image of the borderline problem on which the research has been done.
- The sense of the research results can be established within a specific frame, and can be evaluated.
- A model bridges the existing gap between the investigation and theory.
- It is easy for the decision maker to understand.
- It can be modified quickly and cheaply.
- There is less risk when experimenting with a model than with the real system.

According to Merriam (2008), the theoretical framework of a study is anchored in a particular disciplinary base and its literature. This study has, as its theoretical base for analysis, the bureaucratic theory or perspective. The following paragraphs highlight the key characteristics of this theory as they relate to the focus of this study.

8.2.3 Bureaucratic Theory as a Framework for Analysis

Gaynor (1998) makes the point that every conceptual framework is useful because it focuses your thinking on particular elements in the situation that might be contributing to the problem. He further states that to use any conceptual framework for analysing a problem situation, one needs to understand the elements of the framework and then organise the analysis around them. In the context of this study, the conceptual framework is anchored in the bureaucratic theory as a framework for analysis because accountability processes and procedures lend themselves to Webber's bureaucratic theory. The following paragraphs will highlight and discuss those elements of this theory (Gaynor 1998) that have a direct bearing on this study.

- **Division of labour and functional specialization**

One of the key characteristics of bureaucratic organizations is the extent to which roles and functions are specialised. Technical competence is a crucial characteristic of job performance. Bureaucratic organizations place a very high premium on hiring people with specialised skills and defining their job functions in relation to those skills. A clear job description for every employee is critical in bureaucratic organisations.

- **Functional authority**

This means that bureaucratic functionaries charged with certain responsibilities must be given sufficient authority to discharge their responsibilities. In identifying the problems of an organisation, one has to establish whether employees have been given sufficient authority to perform the functions assigned to them.

- **Technical competence to conform to technical rules and norms**

Effective bureaucratic organizations place a great deal of emphasis on technical competence of employees to carry out their specialised functions. To that effect, a lot of emphasis is often placed on elaborate systems of recruitment and selection, training, and performance management. According to Guthrie and Schuermann (2010), recruiting the right people for the job will enable the manager to delegate authority and assignments confidently, knowing that the delegated responsibility will be executed effectively.

- **Written rules, orders, policies, decisions and universal application of them**

Bureaucratic organizations are rule bound with clear performance expectations and the fair application of policies and regulations. The lack of clear policies and job expectations could result in serious organisational problems.

- **Contractual relationships**

Bureaucratic organizations are rooted in laws and contracts. The drive towards the signing of performance contracts is largely informed by the fact that employees must know what is expected of them and how they will report against the key performance areas. A lack of clarity of expectation on the part of both the employer and the employee could lead to unnecessary tension in the workplace.

The conceptual framework that is proposed in the next paragraphs is largely anchored on the bureaucratic theory as discussed above.

8.3 JUSTIFICATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The mounting demand for more and better public services has placed many governments under tremendous pressure to review and revamp their service delivery approaches. Almost all governments are committed to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their administrations to achieve value for money, better quality service, increased productivity and faster delivery.

Democratic dispensations across the world generally embrace a new culture and attitude to service delivery and, according to Thorpe (1985), accountability is a legitimate demand in a democratic society. The huge expectations imposed on educational establishments have led to a significant change in the nature and scale of education accountability. Since South Africa is a democratic state, the demand for the delivery of quality services has reached escalating proportions because the general public have become more aware of their rights to receive quality service.

Education accountability frameworks and criteria must enhance learning conditions, improve professional development and generally lead to school improvement. Macpherson (1999) points out that education accountability must 'prove' and 'improve' public education as well as advance accountability policymaking in schools. It must also

be about finding the best strategies to enhance learning outcomes. The lack of confidence in public schools to meet the needs of society is a justification for the demand for accountability in education. In South Africa in particular the justification for an accountability framework is sufficiently covered in paragraph 1,3 (p.2) and 4.5 (p.111) which emphasise the following concerns in relation to the delivery of public education:

- That the quantitative expansion of the education system does not translate into qualitative learning outcomes as reflected in the country's performance in international studies.
- Widespread school level dysfunctionality and the poor accountability culture displayed by many schools.
- The recent drive for outcomes approach to service delivery in the country.
- The growing lack of public confidence in public schooling as reflected in the media.

8.4 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the proposed framework is not to reinvent the wheel but rather to enhance some aspects of accountability processes and practices. The framework will specifically address itself to the following:

- To present accountability as a positive incentive to secure better learning outcomes.
- To streamline and provide for better integration and management of accountability relationships, processes and practices.
- To provide for better mechanisms to secure school level accountability.

8.5 PRESENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK

In order to ensure proper implementation of the framework and thereby derive maximum benefits there from, the following principles or assumptions must be taken as pre-conditions for its successful implementation:

8.5.1 Underlying Principles and Assumptions about the Framework

Given the varied contexts within which schools are to be held accountable, the following minimum conditions are assumed if the proposed framework for accountability is to be effective:

It must enhance learning conditions

The accountability framework and criteria must enhance learning conditions, promote professional development and school improvement. It must be about finding the best strategies to enhance learning outcomes. Good school models promote and support professional development by providing a wide range of opportunities for learning. Many of these are internal to the school and may include peer observation, skills workshops and subject development sessions.

The framework must be context sensitive and development orientated

Context determines the extent to which organizations are able to respond to their mandates or not. Contexts entail people, the organizational size, time, and place. It is therefore important that factors relating to the development of all stakeholders (people) involved in the accountability relationship must be considered. Equally, the size of the organization will call for different strategies in managing it. The same would apply in relation to where that institution is located. The notion of accountability must always be underpinned by the need to enhance capacity and to promote development with due consideration given to contextual variables.

Institutionalisation of the Framework

The qualities of school leaders, particularly head teachers, have been singled out as indispensable in initiating and sustaining success in school. The qualities and competencies of school leaders are key ingredients to the success of the school because it is the leadership of the school that must ensure that new changes are organizationally catered for and subsequently maintained.

School leaders must show sustained interest in and support for the framework if the general stakeholder community is to embrace accountability procedures and practices as being fundamental to the day to day operations of the school. One of the ways of sustaining support for new changes is for the school leadership to engage less in transactional leadership practices and to embrace the principles of transformational leadership.

Greater decentralization of power to schools or local administrative bodies

The philosophy underpinning decentralised approach to service delivery (as discerned from the literature studied) is that the closer the government is to the people, the more likely it is to respond to their demands and interests. Related to this are notions of democratic principles that promote constituent influence and control over organisational decisions to achieve increased organisational accountability.

Proponents of decentralisation believe that decentralised units increase knowledge about access to and participation in governance, make organisations easier to change and prevent undue consolidation of power at geographically distant locations and hierarchically remote organisational levels. It is argued that increased responsiveness and accountability will result in more effective and efficient internal operations, and in the development of a better product or the delivery of a service.

8.5.2 A Schematic Representation of the Framework

According to Caldwell (1993; 2002), governments in many countries responded to accountability pressures by taking the lead in setting goals, establishing priorities and building frameworks for accountability while at the same time shifting authority and responsibility for key functions to school level.

Diagram 8.1 presented below shows three distinct levels (macro, meso and micro) of education accountability. Linked to these levels are their core responsibilities. Effective accountability is anchored on ensuring that the roles and responsibilities at different levels of the education system are clearly delineated and understood. The diagram also draws a clear distinction between *policy making* and *policy implementation* responsibilities.

Straddling all three levels of diagram 8.1 are education stakeholders or interest groups. Harnessing and marshalling stakeholder inputs and support could potentially enhance school improvement efforts. As highlighted in the empirical study and the literature review, the involvement of stakeholders in holding the education system accountable is critical and can add a lot of value, provided this involvement is properly managed.

School level accountability is impacted upon by the relationship the school has with all the stakeholders indicated in the diagram below. Schools generally work with multiple stakeholders. The management of the different stakeholders entails building strong and productive relationship with them. One way of ensuring beneficial partnerships with stakeholders is by entering into memoranda of understanding to clarify expectation and to minimise potential conflict.

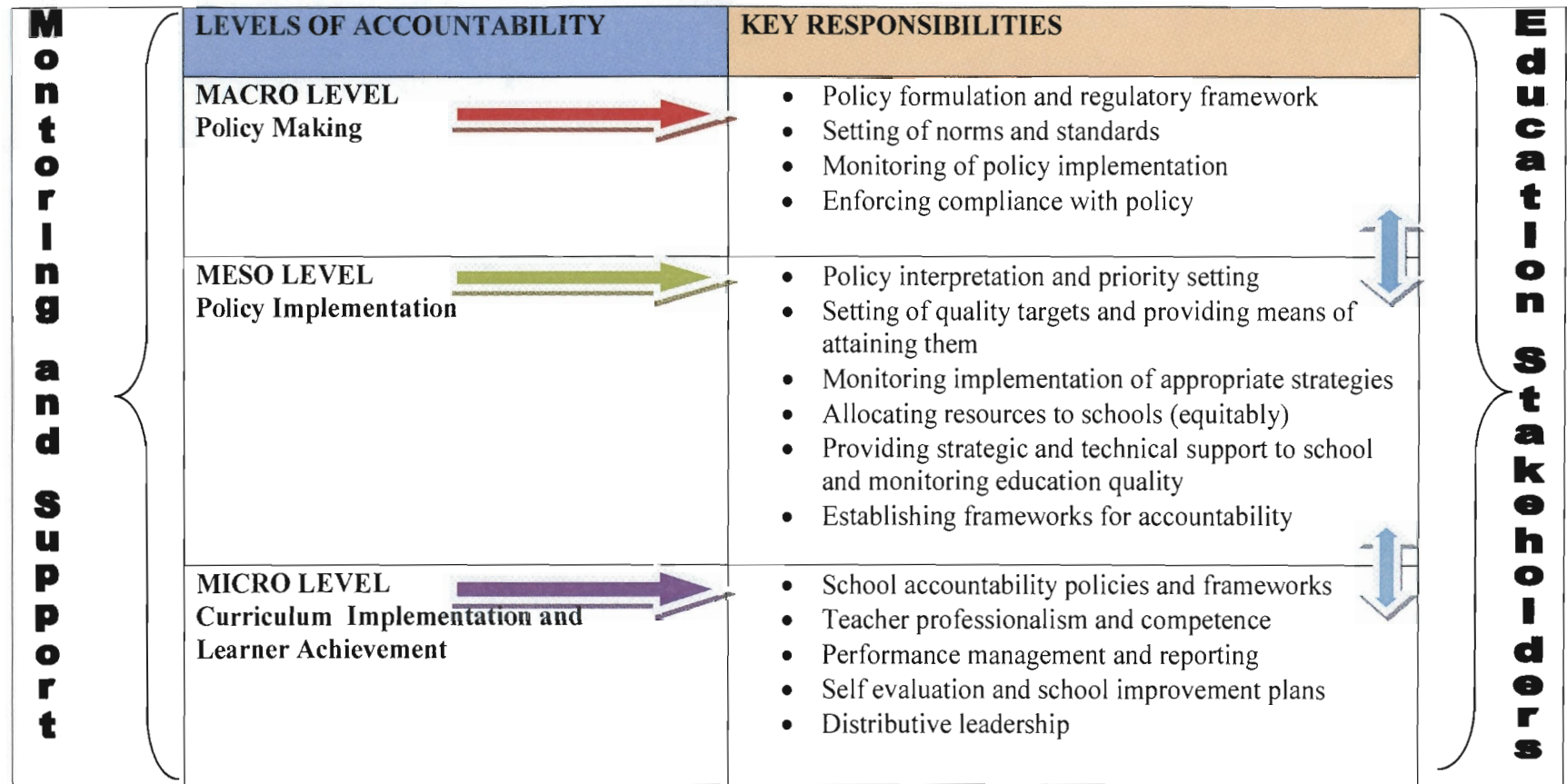
Micro level accountability (i.e. school level) can be secured by adopting different approaches and strategies as figure 8.1 indicates.

The following section gives a detailed description of the different features of the framework.

8.5.3. Key Features of the Framework

NB: This framework must be read in conjunction with section 2.8 entitled: towards a Framework of Accountability Relationships

Figure 8.1 A Framework for Enhancing Accountability in Public Schooling



8.5.3.1 Macro Level Accountability (cf.2.3.1)

Macro level accountability refers to the role of the national state to create the necessary legislative and policy framework. The following are some of the responsibilities of the central office:

Policy formulation and regulatory framework

Accountability works best if clear policy guidelines and directives are determined at the centre (National level) and effectively cascaded to the lower levels of the system. To ensure effective implementation of policies issues of capacity and capability must be taken into consideration. To that effect, all new policies must be costed before they are implemented. Equally, training and support for the implementers must be prioritised if effective implementation is to be guaranteed.

Setting norms and standards

Setting of minimum norms and standards (eg. curriculum and funding) will ensure that policies are implemented uniformly in different contexts. In many systems, standards, norms and targets for achieving equity and other priority goals are set nationally to guide local implementation.

Monitoring policy implementation

Beyond the development of policies, central administrations have a responsibility to monitor and support the implementation of such policies to ensure compliance and review those policies that might not be working on the ground. The balance between policy formulation, implementation, support and review must be maintained if schools as organizations are to be held accountable for policy implementation.

8.5.3.2 Meso Level Accountability (cf.2.3.2)

Active district support to schools will enable schools to respond adequately to their responsibilities of enhancing learner performance and achieving the expected educational outcomes. It has been established that districts are crucial in helping schools sustain improvement reforms. For districts to provide strategic support to schools they must themselves be fully capacitated to do so. Districts are expected to perform the following functions:

Policy interpretation and priority setting.

Once policy is determined centrally, the meso level of the system is responsible for its interpretation to facilitate implementation. Basic in this interpretation is the need to prepare the ground for implementation. Capacity building as well as support for policy implementation at the level of the school remains the responsibility of the province/district. The strategic and technical support for schools in translating policies into actionable activities is critical if schools are to be held accountable for the implementation of a particular policy.

Setting priority targets and providing means of achieving them.

It is expected of the province and the districts to develop and implement detailed inputs, outputs, activities, metrics and roles and responsibilities towards the attainment of the national outcomes. It is from the district and provincial plans that schools will develop their own delivery and operational plans and targets to address priority targets and outcomes. The necessary resources and other support must be provided to schools to enable them to achieve their targets.

Monitoring implementation of appropriate strategies.

Schools are expected to develop their own strategies in terms of how they intend meeting the provincial and district targets. In this case, the role of the district in guiding the operational plans of schools becomes critical because schools have to be held accountable against the targets they are expected to achieve. Regular monitoring and feedback on how each school is performing against its targets has to be provided by the district so that appropriate interventions can be made where agreed upon targets are not met.

Allocating resources to schools (equitably).

As alluded to earlier, all policies must be costed and resources provided to ensure their full implementation. The link between what is expected and available resources and capacities has to be borne in mind at all times if schools are to be held accountable for the implementation of any policy (cf.2.10.4). Where prioritised policies involve equity issues, the necessary resources must be made available to schools. Without the resources to back up policy imperatives, schools cannot be expected to implement such a policy.

Providing technical and strategic support to schools and monitoring education quality.

Districts are strategically positioned to support a number of schools. It is for this reason that districts can facilitate networking between schools to share best practice. District support to schools has been seen as critical in helping schools to sustain reform and to extend the benefits of innovation from one school to the other. It is also expected of districts to recruit the best quality of staff if it is to adequately perform the functions assigned to it.

Establishing frameworks for accountability

In the era of heightened expectations for schooling, growing societal complexity and increasing instructional sophistication, schools, through their district, must be assisted to identify, define and solve problems that confront the education enterprise. The first critical step in solving problems is to identify and fully understand them. One powerful approach to identifying and comprehending problems is to collect and analyse data to inform decision making. Districts are therefore expected to have credible data at their disposal to develop frameworks that would enable schools to confront them.

Effective districts infuse accountability procedures and practices in their planning and practices. The accountability framework at district level must include system wide indicators that must reflect a fair balance between quantitative indicators, i.e. numbers and percentages, and qualitative indicators, i.e. narrative descriptions. District accountability policies and practices must find expression in school level policies and practices. Effective accountability systems focus on a few key indicators, e.g. 5 or 6 in total.

District and school accountability reports could respond to the following key questions (Reeves, 2004):

- What were our goals?
- What is our performance compared to the goals?
- What is our performance compared to the previous year?
- What strategies worked to improve learner performance?
- What does the information in the accountability reports tell us about how to improve learner performance?

8.5.3.3 Micro Level Accountability (cf.2.3.3)

Proponents of decentralisation believe that decentralised units increase knowledge about access to and participation in governance, make organisations easier to change and prevent undue consolidation of power at geographically distant locations and hierarchically remote organisational levels. It is argued that increased responsiveness and accountability will result in more effective and efficient internal operations, and the development of a better product or the better delivery of a service.

The need for support and capacitation of school governing bodies was acknowledged in the empirical study. The South African Schools' Act makes provision for the establishment of a single SGB for more than one school. If implemented this approach could go a long way towards eliminating the growing number of dysfunctional SGBs particularly in poorer communities.

Well functioning SGBs can make a huge contribution in enhancing school level accountability. The SGB could be expected to hold the school principal accountable for the implementation of the school improvement plan. It could also use the same plan to approach potential funders to support their schools.

School accountability policies and frameworks (cf.8.5.1).

The accountability framework, policies and criteria at the level of the school must enhance learning conditions; promote professional development and school improvement. It must be about finding the best strategies to enhance learning outcomes. Good school models promote and support professional development by providing a wide range of opportunities for learning. Many of these are internal to the school and may include peer observation, skills workshops and subject development sessions.

Leaders must empower subordinates. School level accountability frameworks must be underpinned by sufficient delegation of authority to teachers so that they can freely and

fully undertake their assigned roles and responsibilities. Subordinates must therefore be carefully selected and appropriately empowered.

Every school, regardless of the focus of its curriculum and other unique characteristics, must have performance indicators against which it will be evaluated. School based indicators are specific and measurable actions at the classroom level. They must reflect specific strategies and be linked to the achievement of system wide goals.

The best school based indicators reflect the unique needs and challenges of their context. They are selected based on careful analysis of the school environment. If properly used, these indicators would provide continuous feedback to the school leadership and could be tracked every month or more frequently, depending on the needs. The five basic questions posed by Reeves (2004) above would assist schools greatly in determining whether their accountability framework is working for them.

Teacher professionalism and competence.

Schools are as good as the teachers that teach in them. If this statement is true, then it goes without saying that both teacher professionalism and competence are central to enhancing school level accountability. One of the key responsibilities of a principal is to ensure that teachers are carefully selected, appropriately inducted, continuously trained, fairly appraised and creatively motivated.

To keep teachers motivated and committed, opportunities for their growth and development must be embedded in school development plans. Teacher development can take several forms: participation in professional forums to benefit from experts and their peers, regular in-service training and other staff development initiatives. Meaningful involvement of teachers in the decision making processes of their schools would go a long way towards enhancing their professional growth and sustaining commitment to their work.

Performance management and reporting (cf.2.10)

Since accountability relationships revolves around multiple stakeholders, enhanced communication, regular reporting and feedback to stakeholders have been identified as key ingredients for sustaining effective accountability. Timely, regular and credible reporting on progress in relation to the agreed expectations to relevant bodies and parties in the accountability relationship are important to sustain accountability.

It is equally important that organisations commit themselves to instituting credible and fair performance management systems to keep their employees motivated and incentive.

Self evaluation and school improvement plans

One of the approaches recommended for enhancing school level accountability is the development of a school improvement plan that is largely informed by the outcomes of evaluation processes (internal or external).

Some of the following approaches, or a combination of them, could enhance school self evaluations processes: A *stakeholder approach* which involves the surveying of views and attitudes of stakeholders towards the school; *the checklist or audit approach* where a school develops a list of questions generated by the school or other parties to identify strengths and weaknesses with a view to establishing priorities for improvement; the *external review* approach where a school enlists the services of external consultants to review particular aspects (or whole school evaluation) and make recommendations for improvement, and the *benchmarking approach* where the performance of the school is compared to that of other similar schools with a view to effecting own improvements.

Distributive leadership (cf.8.5.1).

Distributive leadership has been identified as a key component of sustaining change in schools. It recognises expertise and encourages meaningful input in decision making among educators who may or may not hold formal leadership roles in their schools. Schools promoting distributed leadership are more likely to be accountable than those that are not doing so.

The qualities of school leaders, particularly head teachers, have been singled out as indispensable in initiating and sustaining success in school. The qualities and competencies of school leaders are key ingredients to the success of the school because it is the leadership of the school that must ensure that new changes are organisationally catered for and subsequently maintained.

School leaders must show sustained interest in and support for the framework if the general stakeholder community is to embrace accountability procedures and practices as being fundamental to the day to day operations of the school. One of the ways of sustaining support for new changes is for the school leadership to engage less in transactional leadership practices and to embrace the principles of transformational leadership.

8.5.3.4 Stakeholders and Partnerships

Schools are the target of numerous expectations, influences and interventions. Some of these influences are formal and stem from substantial structural authority whilst others have no formal authority but may nevertheless exert substantial influence by virtue of the resources they distribute or withhold (e.g. donors and funders) or the political influence they can exercise. Public schools serve a multi-tiered clientele and therefore schools and their leaders have multiple masters.

A good school is generally characterised by its ability to develop leadership at all levels, by focusing on its core business of learning, teaching and assessment, and of sustaining these. The extent to which schools can manage the variety of partners and stakeholders improve through professional development and innovation. Linked to the internal success of the school is its relationship with its external stakeholders who could have a major influence on the life of the school.

Figure 8.1 highlights the critical role of stakeholders across all levels of the education system and how they will determine its success or failure. It became apparent during the empirical study that stakeholders and partners in education are essential to the success of the school.

The ability of the school to maintain a healthy relationship with the varied partners and stakeholders would go a long way towards promoting accountability and enhancing learning outcomes. One of the key findings in the literature and the empirical study is the need to capacitate stakeholders so that their involvement in the school can advance the objectives of the school. Concomitant with the need for capacity building is also the critical importance of clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the involvement of stakeholders in the affairs of the school.

8.5.3.5 Monitoring, Evaluation and Support.

Monitoring and evaluation systems must underpin accountability policies and frameworks. Effective accountability is dependent on regular reporting and feedback to inform intervention and support. The ultimate value of any accountability system is the use of the data from the system to improve teaching, learning and leadership.

8.6 IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Effective implementation of accountability processes and practices is dependent on a number of features including the following:

Integration

Accountability systems, processes and practices must be integrated into the overall procedures and values that are fundamental to the organization. This in essence means that parties involved in the accountability relationship in the organization must clearly understand the purposes of accountability, and ways in which accountability is determined. Similarly, accountability procedures must be integrated within planning activities.

Understanding

It is important for people who are expected to account for their performance to understand and embrace accountability processes and practices within their organisation. This understanding will help to clear away any negativity when their work is examined. Ideally, people should participate in the planning of accountability systems that are used in their organization.

Accuracy and reliability

Effective accountability systems are based on credible information. Critical decisions on accountability are taken on the basis of information that is reliable and accurately interpreted to arrive at informed decisions.

Fairness

Fairness and justice are the cornerstones of any accountability relationship. People subjected to accountability systems should know the limits of their responsibility, the nature of information requested from them and the purpose for which the information about their performance will be used. Fairness implies that individuals or groups should not be disadvantaged or treated unfairly.

Flexibility

Flexibility involves the capacity to accommodate adjustments and change. Strict adherence to timelines and systems could be counter-productive if circumstances change. Effective accountability practices must be able to cope with changed circumstances.

Capacity and Capability (cf. 2.2.2.6)

For accountability to be effective, serious consideration must be given to issues of capacity and capability. Capacity entails the ability of an individual involved in an accountability relationship to perform the tasks assigned to him/her. Capability relates to the availability of resources to enable the individual to execute the tasks for which he will be held accountable. If consideration is not given to these factors, effective accountability cannot be guaranteed.

Johnson (1999) makes the point that one of the key features of a developmental state is that it must insulate its bureaucracy from direct political influences so that it can function technocratically. According to him, bureaucratic autonomy, administrative capacities, meritocratic standards in promotion and recruitment and the creation of career opportunities and training for bureaucrats, will improve their expertise and enhance their commitment.

Shared Values (cf.2.2.2.8)

In both formal and informal accountability relationships, accountability becomes more effective if all parties involved in the relationship share common values of professionalism, honesty and integrity. In such cases all parties feel collectively responsible and also take ownership of the results.

Enhanced Performance Management Practices

One of the fundamental features of an accountable school is the extent to which performance management is approached. Performance management should be integral to the school's key management systems and it should not only be restricted to an annual appraisal of staff but there must be an ongoing focus of evaluation on the quality of learning and teaching in a school.

The existing performance management frameworks in the North-West Province are limited in their potential to turn schools around. Beyond the development of school improvement plans, school principals must sign performance contracts to oversee, manage and report on the key deliverables encapsulated in the school improvement plan.

The uneasiness expressed by participants around performance contracts is ill informed. A good performance contract will always take into account the nuanced contexts of implementation, and target setting will be determined by issues of capacity and capability. The performance contract of the principal will further inform the job descriptions of each and every staff member attached to the school.

Resources to Schools

The signing of the performance contracts as envisioned above calls for availability of resources at schools so as to enable principals to implement their school improvement plans. The South African Schools' Act makes provision for two categories of schools based on their capacity to manage their affairs. Section 21 schools are given more responsibilities in the running of the schools as opposed to section 20 school which have limited responsibilities. Whether a school is a section 20 or 21, expectations are that all schools must improve learning outcomes that are commensurate with the level of resourcing enjoyed by the school.

In order to enable schools to meet their accountability demands, an aggressive capacitation program must be implemented to empower all schools to attain section 21 status so that they can receive direct monetary transfers from the department. The funds transferred to schools would enable them to plan better and manage their resources optimally.

8.7 IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

8.7.1 Introduction

Phasal implementation provides structure and sequence to implementation, particularly if implementation is to be effected under varying conditions and contexts. The following implementation phases take these issues into account. It must also be borne in mind that the implementation framework presented below is but a broad guideline that is subject to change depending on the context of implementation.

8.7.2 Phase 1: Locate the framework within current policy frameworks aimed at enhancing education quality.

The successful implementation of this framework is dependent on the extent to which it responds to the current policy landscape aimed at improving school effectiveness and accountability. It must help advance and add value to the strategic objectives of the department. For that reason, locating the implementation of the framework within current policy imperatives would almost guarantee its successful implementation. The following policies that will be briefly discussed are consistent with the objectives of this framework and will therefore facilitate the implementation of the framework:

A National Guideline on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (2010)

Districts have been identified as critical in supporting and sustaining school improvement efforts. The initiative taken by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to redefine the role of districts is recognition of the importance of districts in turning schools around. The Guideline document provides a national guiding framework for the organisation of education districts, and outlines the delegated powers, roles and responsibilities of district officials for the institutions within their care. This initiative is part of initiatives undertaken by the ministry to raise the quality of teaching and learning and to provide the resources required to achieve this objective.

Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC)

The QLTC takes its cue from the understanding that education is a societal responsibility. This campaign aims to mobilise the support and delineate the roles and responsibilities of all those who have a stake in the delivery of quality education (South African Department of Education, 2009). The structures established to promote the campaign must be utilised to support the implementation of the framework because education accountability is essentially about improving quality education.

National Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU)

In order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools, a Ministerial Committee on the National Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) was established in 2008 to investigate and advise the Minister on how independent evaluation of schools and teachers could be undertaken. Among its terms of reference (South African Department of Basic Education, 2010a; 2010b; 2010c) the Ministerial Committee was to review all existing policies, mechanisms, processes and tools that evaluate and develop schools and teachers.

The Report of the Ministerial Committee has since been accepted by the ministry and the head of the unit has been appointed. The Unit is currently putting systems in place to start its work.

Outcomes Based Approach (OBA) to Service delivery and Schooling 2025

The endorsement of outcomes based approach by the government in January 2010 is a demonstration of its commitment to improve service delivery. The OBA's focus on improving service delivery is consistent with the objectives of the accountability framework which in essence is intended to enhance the academic aspirations and achievement of learners.

The education Ministry's response to OBA is the Schooling 2025 initiative that is intended to put measures and systems in place to continuously improve the quality of basic education (South African Department of Basic Education, 2010a; 2010b; 2010c). Among the key outputs envisaged is ensuring a credible outcomes-focused planning and accountability system.

Stakeholder involvement in the delivery of quality education has been identified as very important in this study. The next paragraphs provide guidelines on how education stakeholders can be mobilised.

8.7.3 Phase 2: Stakeholder Mobilisation to obtain support for the framework

Conduct a stakeholder analysis

Given the critical importance of stakeholders in enhancing education accountability, a stakeholder analysis process must be undertaken to determine those that would advance the objectives of the framework.

Organise a Stakeholder and develop an action plan

Beyond the identification of key stakeholders, a seminar should be organised to bring them all under one roof. Invitations must be extended to respected leaders in education to address the gathering. Organised stakeholder groupings must also be given an

opportunity to make presentations. The use of breakaway sessions to allow for more intensive engagement on the framework is recommended. One way of ensuring support for the framework is to provide an opportunity for the participants in the seminar to pledge their support for the framework.

In order to sustain the momentum, a programme of action must be developed to sustain the interest and involvement of stakeholders in education. A decision can be taken to hold a stakeholder summit biennially to review progress made on the program of action as well as charting a way forward regarding future plans for stakeholder activities.

Establish Education Stakeholder Forums

The establishment of education forums at provincial, district and area office level will go a long way in dealing with school level concerns. These forums would among others ensure that all education related matters are tabled, discussed and addressed during forum meetings. Regular reports on the performance of schools, area offices, districts and the province could be made at these forums on the state of education at each level of delivery. In order to streamline the operations of these forums, clear terms of reference must be developed and gazetted.

Training of stakeholders

Capacity building for stakeholders has been identified as critical in the literature and the empirical studies. Credible training programmes for stakeholders must be instituted if their involvement is to benefit the education system. One way of ensuring that stakeholders are kept abreast of developments in the education sector is to hold regular briefing sessions on new policy developments in the education sector.

Institute training programmes for stakeholders as a follow-up on the seminar. Agree on charters for external stakeholders and performance agreement for internal stakeholders.

Promote the establishment and participation in professional forums for teachers to enhance their professionalism.

8.7.4 Phase 3: Determine System wide Indicators

The accountability system framework must include system wide indicators, school based indicators and a school narrative. A fair balance between quantitative indicators (numbers and percentages) and qualitative indicators (narrative descriptions) must be maintained. As alluded to earlier, good accountability frameworks focus on 5-6 key indicators against which to report. System wide indicators put common values and objectives into measurable terms that the district can use to assess its progress towards meeting its goals

8.7.5 Phase 4: Enhance performance management systems

Leaders must empower their subordinates. One way of empowering subordinates is by managing their performance. Subordinates must be carefully selected, appropriately inducted, fairly appraised and systematically evaluated. Performance agreements, if well implemented, can be a powerful tool in the hands of the manager to enhance the performance of his staff.

8.7.6 Phase 5: Scale of implementation

Implementation can be prioritised based on the needs of the system. For instance, the framework could be piloted on schools at risk. Underperforming schools could be prioritised based on their grade 12 results. Table 8.2 below serve as an example of criteria that could be used to select underperforming schools over a three year period.

Table 8.1 Criteria for Piloting Schools at Risk

Years	% Performance in grade 12
Year 1	0 – 30
Year 2	30 -60
Year 3	30-70

The implementation guidelines provided above are intended to assist in the implementation of the accountability framework. The researcher does not in any way suggest that they are finite and definitive, let alone comprehensive. Implementation will vary depending on needs and contexts.

8.8 UNIQUENESS OF THE FRAMEWORK

This framework adopts the view that accountability is a positive incentive to get the schools right. To that effect, it eliminates the negative connotations often associated with the notion of accountability. For accountability processes and practices to work, a relationship of trust must prevail among parties involved in the accountability relationship. In the final analysis, this framework drives home the view that school level accountability is the responsibility of all involved in the affairs of the school, internal and external stakeholders.

A clear message that is communicated is that all efforts aimed at the school are intended to enable learners to achieve to their full potential so that they can actively participate in developing this country. This framework therefore makes a unique contribution in as far as it presents a new perspective on how schools should understand their role in shaping the futures of the learners they come into contact with almost on a daily basis.

8.9 EXPECTED BENEFITS OF THE FRAMEWORK

It is expected that if fully implemented, this framework will go a long way towards turning underperforming schools around, particularly those catering for the needs of learners coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. The emphasis on developmental accountability as highlighted in this framework takes into consideration the varied contexts within which accountability policies and practices have to be implemented. The flexibility that is built into the framework suggests that it can be implemented in all types of schools resources and time permitting.

The ultimate value of any accountability framework is the use of the data from the framework to improve teaching, learning and leadership.

9 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the framework and its rationale. The principles underpinning the framework are informed by the complexities inherent in education accountability. An attempt has therefore been made to ensure that the varied schooling contexts within which accountability is often demanded are taken into account. The latter part of the chapter focused on issues that have to be taken into account when implementing the framework. A phased implementation plan is also provided as a guideline to successful implementation. It is the conviction of the researcher that if well implemented, this framework would go a long way towards repositioning schools to respond to the educational needs of their communities in general and their learners in particular.