

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Kirst (1990), school level accountability can be achieved through six broad approaches: performance reporting, monitoring, compliance with standards or regulations, incentive schemes, reliance on the market, changing the locus of authority or control of schools and changing professional roles. The empirical investigation that was conducted in this study takes into account some of the approaches proposed by Kirst above as well as other approaches derived from the literature study, that impact directly and indirectly on school level accountability.

This chapter reports on the results of the empirical investigation conducted to answer the fourth research question: *What are the Views and Perspectives of Key Role-players on the Notion of Accountability in Public Schooling?* by addressing the following sub-aims:

- To determine the views and perspectives of principals on school level accountability.
- To determine the views and perspectives of educator unions and departmental officials on school accountability.

The methodological approach used in the study was designed to produce data that could undergo (a) frequency and percentage analysis, and (b) a thematic analysis. The results from the principals' questionnaire were converted into frequency scales and percentages and those from the interviews into themes and concepts.

Since the questionnaires were given directly to principals for completion during a workshop, a 100% return rate was secured. The **questionnaire** that was administered on principals comprised parts A to E and the results are presented as follows:

Part A: *Demographic Information* results will be reported in tables 6.1-6.4. Demographic information includes the classification of schools, their location, their quintile ranking and financial status.

Part B: *Staffing Matters* will be reported in tables 6.5-6.8. The information required under staffing matters includes the principals' academic and managerial experience as well as opportunities for in-service training.

Part C: *Characterisation/description of an accountable public school*. The characteristics of an accountable public school are reported on a four scale ranking and related variables are clustered under different categories and discussed separately. A factor analysis was then administered on the identified categories for the purposes of comparison. The outcomes of the factor analysis processes resulted into seven categories that constitute the key characteristics of an accountable public school.

In part D the *roles and responsibilities of principals* in enhancing school level accountability were also categorised and subjected to the factor analysis processes and the same procedures as outlined under part C were followed. Part E was also statistically reported on.

The relationship between an accountable public school and the role of the principal is highlighted before a summary of the results of the principals' questionnaire is given to conclude the quantitative data analysis.

The **focus group interviews** that were done with **district officials** and **teacher unions** were tape recorded and the interview transcripts were analysed for themes and concepts. Presentation of evidence from the interview is supported by the use of sufficient quotations from the participants' actual discourse. The interview results were then summarised to conclude the qualitative data analysis.

Since this study used the mixed method approach, the results of the quantitative and qualitative methods are reported separately and summarised at the conclusion of the chapter. Consequently, this chapter is structured as follows:

- Results of the Principals' questionnaire (Parts A-E).
- Results of the focus group interviews with teacher unions.
- Results of the focus group interviews with departmental officials.
- Summary of Results.

6.2 RESULTS OF THE PRINCIPALS' QUESTIONNAIRE

6.2.1. Part A: Demographic Information

Tables 6.1 to 6.4 report on the demographic information given under Part A of the questionnaire. This information is important for the researcher to understand the context within which principals work.

Table 6.1: Classification of Schools

Schools	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	136	62.39
Middle	27	12.39
High	49	22.46
Other	06	2.75
No response	04	

The purpose of table 6.1 above was to determine the profile of the principals based on the types of schools they managed. The highest number of respondents were primary school principals 62,39% (f=136) followed by high school principals 22.46% (f=49). Middle school principals accounted for 12.39% (f=27). The category of other schools make up only 2.75% (f=6) of the respondents. These figures are a fair reflection of the distribution of schools in the North-West Province. The middle school category is unique to the

North-West Province where indications show that these will be phased out in the near future.

Table 6.2: Location of Schools

Location	Frequency	Percentage
Village	111	50.68
Township	56	25.57
Farm	33	15.07
Town/City	19	8.68
No Response	03	

Table 6.2 above indicates that 50.68% (f=111) of schools used in this study are situated in rural villages. If village (50.68%; f=111) and farm (15.07%; f=33) schools are added together, then the total percentage of schools in the province that could be classified as rural is 65.75% (f=144). This situation has implications for the way schools are resourced and staffed, given that rural schools are often small and far apart resulting in higher transport costs for both learners and teachers. The demographic information on sampled schools suggests that accountability processes and practices must be context specific if they are to be developmental and effective.

Table 6.3: Quintile ranking of schools

Quintile	Frequency	Percentage
1	98	45.6
2	46	21.20
3	63	29.03
4	08	3.69
5	02	0.92
No response	05	

The ranking of schools reflect their relative poverty. Schools in the province are ranked into five quintiles with those in quintile 1 representing the poorest as opposed to those in quintile 5 that are considered reasonably well off. Municipal wards have been used in determining the quintiles. Table 6.3 indicates that approximately 67% (f=144) i.e quintiles 1 and 2 of sampled schools are generally poor. Only 0.92% (f=02) of the respondents manage schools that are reasonably well off. Tables 6.2 and 6.3 suggest that rurality and poverty go hand in hand. If quintiles 1 and 2 figures are added together, this table will reflect almost the same scenario as in table 2 above, indicating that about 67% of the respondents are managing poor schools that generally serve poor communities.

Table 6.4: Financial Status of Schools

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Fee Paying	51	22.97
No Fee School	171	77.03

Table 4 shows that the majority of schools in the province (77.3%; f=171) are not charging fees. Only 22.97% (f=51) of the respondents manage schools that charge fees. There seems to be a strong relationship between the location of schools, their ranking and their fee paying status (tables 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4). It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the majority of principals who participated in this study manage poor schools. It could also be inferred that since these schools tend to serve poor communities, parental choice of schools for their children is restricted. The implications for school accountability are that these schools must be supported to discharge their responsibilities because they serve communities that rely almost entirely on public schools for the education of their children.

6.2.2 Part B: Staffing Matters

Tables 6.5 to 6.8 below show the academic qualifications and experience of the respondents (school principals). The purpose of these questions was to establish the extent to which the respondents were qualified to discharge their responsibilities as principals.

Table 6.5: Qualifications of Principals

Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma and below	54	24.88
3 year degree	54	24.88
Honours degree	92	42.40
Masters degree	17	7.83
Doctorate	0	0

Table 6.5 above shows that 75.11% (f=163) of the sampled principals have at least a 3 year degree or higher in academic qualifications with a promising number of 7.83% (f=17) holding masters degrees. If qualifications alone were equated to competence, then one could reasonably conclude that many schools were competently managed.

Table 6.6: Managerial Experience of Principals

Experience in years	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 years	15	6.82
6-10 years	51	23.18
11-15 years	63	28.64
16-19 years	44	20.00
20 and above	47	21.36
No response	2	

Table 6.6 shows that 48.64% (f=107) of respondents have between 11 and 29 years of managerial experience with 21.36% (f=47) of them having 20 years or more of experience in management. Only 6.82% (f=15) of the principals have less than 5 years managerial experience, and 23.18% (f=51) have between 6 and 10 years experience. The data in tables 6.5 and 6.6 suggest that the majority of principals have both the academic and managerial experience to run their schools. On the basis of this finding alone, it could be reasonably concluded that one of the requirements for accountability, i.e. capability of principals, has been met.

Table 6.7: Formal qualifications in management

Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	142	64.84
No	77	35.16

As illustrated in table 6.7, about two thirds of all respondents (64.84%; f=142) hold formal qualifications in management. The other respondents (35.16%; f=77) could be targeted for in-service training. In order to secure effective accountability, principals who do not have formal training in management could be prioritised for in-service training.

Table 6.8: Attendance of Management Courses

Management Training	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	168	75.81
No	52	24.19

It would appear from the table 6.8 that reasonable provision is made for in-service training in management 75.81% (f=168). This means that even those principals who do

not have formal training in management, i.e 24.19% (f=52), could enhance their management skills through in-service training.

Tables 6.5-6.8 above show that the majority of respondents have both academic and managerial experience. In addition, these respondents have had an opportunity to attend courses in management. It could therefore be reasonably concluded that the majority of principals in the North-West Province are qualified to hold these positions.

6.2.3 Part C: Characteristics of an Accountable Public School

This part of the questionnaire describes an accountable public school. A four point scale (1=least important and 4= most important) was used to rate the variables that best described an accountable public school. For the purposes of analysis all related variables were initially clustered and the following three broad factors which were largely informed by the literature study, emerged:

- *Management and Governance* (Items C 9, 10, 11, 12, 21, 30, 33, 37 and 44).
- *Commitment to Quality Promotion* (Items C 13, 14, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 45, 46 and 47).
- *Responsiveness to Internal and External Role Players* (Items C 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 32, 34, 35 and 41).

The three categories mentioned above were in turn subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis process out of which emerged eight sub categories. The following paragraphs and tables describe the process followed to arrive at the three factors of an accountable public school.

6.2.3.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Governance and Management

Two components were extracted from the governance and management category as indicated in the following table:

Table 6.9: Pattern Matrix: Governance and Management

Variables	Sub-factors	
	1	2
C30 Commitment to participatory management	.827	
C37 Strategies to combat fraud and corruption	.779	
C44 Complies with laws and regulations	.745	
C33 Transparent and efficient budgeting	.714	
C21 Effective implementation of education policies	.486	
C11 An effective school based management team (SBMT)		.820
C10 A functional learner representative council		.809
C12 Greater authority in decision making		.702
C9 A functioning SGB		.594

The two sub-factors that emerged from this factor: '*Governance and management*' are described as *Governance* and *Devolved Authority*, based on the literature. These two sub-factors explained 55,8% of the variance and can therefore be considered acceptable.

The communalities for all the items in the factor were all above 0.3 and therefore acceptable.

It can therefore be concluded from the above that constant validity for the factor: *Governance and Management* was established. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient (internal

consistency) for the factor: *Management and Governance* was established as 0.801, and therefore this factor can be described as reliable within the context of the questionnaire. The sub-factors identified in Table 6.9 are in turn elaborated on in the following paragraphs.

Sub-factor 1 (C30, 37, 44, 33 and 21): Governance (cf.3.10.9 and 4.4.3)

Squelsh (2000:129) points out that decentralised school governance or site-based management is considered to be a more appropriate form of governance in recent times because it promotes the democratic principles of representation, participation and shared decision making.

The existence of effective governance structures is considered crucial in determining the extent to which an organisation can be held accountable. The variables clustered together under component 1 are closely linked to the notion of governance as discussed in paragraph 2.11.3 of this study. Commitment to participation by all citizens in decision making has been identified as a hallmark of all representative democracies. In the context of a school, participatory management (0.827) is seen as one of the key features of a successful school. Effective organizations comply with laws and regulations (0.745), have strategies in place to combat fraud and corruption (0.779) as well as to ensure that their budgeting and financial processes are transparent. (0.714). Good governance has been identified as an important characteristic of accountability (cf.2.14).

Sub- factor 2 (C11, C10, C12 and C9): Devolved Authority (cf. 3.8.3 and 2.2.2.5)

The general trend in many countries is to devolve authority to schools to secure educational quality (cf.3.15.10). Decentralisation of decision making to the lowest level of the system is seen as a way of enhancing school level accountability (cf.3.8.3). For the decentralised authority to work, an effective school based management team (0.82) must be in place to assume responsibility for the day to day operations of the school. Other structures such as an effective learner representative council (0.809) and a functioning

SGB (0.594) are critical in ensuring that the school is managed effectively and discharges its responsibilities optimally.

School level accountability is essentially about making sure that the educational needs of learners and their immediate communities are met, i.e. that schools are responsive to the needs of their clients (cf. 2.11.3.3). Bush and Bell (2008) make the point that devolution of authority must be accompanied by effective support systems and development opportunities.

6.2.3.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Commitment to Quality Promotion

Four sub-factors were extracted from the Commitment to quality promotion category as reflected below:

Table 6.10: Pattern Matrix: Commitment to Quality Promotion

Variables	Sub factors			
	1	2	3	4
C28 Increased levels of professionalism among staff	.812			
C23 Resource allocation linked to improvement of results	.777			
C24 Regular monitoring of learner performance	.766			
C27 A shared commitment to quality promotion	.583			
C29 Well defined teacher empowerment strategy	.509			
C31 Clear plans and performance targets	.434	.377		
C36 Programmes are delivered cost effectively	.411			
C14 Annual auditing of financial statements		.911		

Variables	Sub factors			
	1	2	3	4
C38 Seeks external expertise to continually improve the school			.823	
C43 A credible incentive scheme to reward committed staff			.655	
C39 Utilises technology to enhance operations			.637	
C46 Share best practice with other schools				.923
C47 Embraces the principle of a learning organisation				.620
C40 A school improvement plan that is reviewed annually				.574
C42 A vibrant extra mural curriculum			.415	.475
C13 Regular external assessments/evaluations				.444
C45 Strategic and operational plan to guide school activities			.337	.356

The four sub-factors that emerged from this factor: *Commitment to quality promotion* are described as : *Programme quality, Financial transparency, Commitment to quality and Continuous improvement*. These four sub-factors explained 61% of the variance and can therefore be considered acceptable. The four sub-factors have been clustered in a manner that provides coherence and meaning to issues relating to quality promotion.

The communalities for all the items in the factor were above 0.3 and can therefore be considered acceptable.

From the above it can be reasonably concluded that construct validity for the factor: *Commitment to quality promotion* was established. The Cronbach Alpha co-efficient for the factor *Commitment to quality promotion* was established as 0.905. Therefore the

factor *Commitment to quality promotion*, can be described as reliable within the context of the questionnaire.

Sub-factor 1 (C28, 23, 24, 27, 29, 31 and 36): Programme Quality

The core business of the school is to meet the educational needs of their primary clients, the learners. Schools are said to be accountable when they offer quality educational programmes that respond to the needs of their clients/learners. One of the factors that gave impetus to the school reform movement included the need to professionalise teaching (0.812) and to change the working conditions of teachers so as to retain them in schools (cf.3.8.3). A well defined teacher empowerment strategy (0.509) is crucial in equipping teachers with the necessary skills and competencies to secure quality learning outcomes.

The provision of adequate resources to schools could enhance the quality of learning outcomes (0.777). Other factors that have a bearing on quality enhancement include regular monitoring of learner performance (0.766) and clear plans with specified performance targets (0.434). It could therefore be said that schools that offer quality educational programmes are more accountable than those that don't because accountability is directly linked to quality considerations.

Sub-factor 2 (C31 and C14): Financial Transparency (cf. 3.10.5 and 3.10.7)

Public accountability has to do with ensuring efficient use and stewardship of allocated resources. This means that the manager must put in place procedures and systems that would ensure that government resources are used optimally and for the purposes for which they have been allocated.

Credible financial management systems and the financial viability of an organisation are seen as important in enhancing school level accountability. Sobe (2006) points out that programmes associated with new public management emphasise among others, cost

control, and financial transparency. The loading of the variable: 'Annual auditing of financial statements' (0.911) attests to this view. The link between planning, target setting (0.377) and funding is undeniable. The implementation of any plan is dependent on the availability of resources to ensure successful implementation.

Sub-factor 3 (C38, C43 and C39): Commitment to Quality (cf. 3.15.12)

Educational change in many countries is primarily focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. Programme or product quality and relevance are crucial in ensuring that organisations remain in business. Educational change in many countries is primarily focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom (cf. 3.15.12) In order to keep abreast of new developments in the delivery of quality educational programmes, many schools seek external expertise (0.823), incentivise their staff (0.655) and utilise technology to enhance their operations. (0.637). Schools are therefore expected to commit themselves to offering quality learning to secure quality learning outcomes.

Sub-factor 4 (C46, 47, 40, 42, 13 and 45): Continuous Improvement (cf.3.10.10)

Internal effectiveness and efficiencies will determine the extent to which an organisation can meet its accountability obligations. Schools, like all organizations that want to remain competitive, must commit themselves to processes of self renewal. Schools must therefore embrace the principles of a learning organisation (0.620), share best practice with other schools (0.923), review their school improvement plans annually and have vibrant extra mural curricula (0.475). Successful schools engage in strategic planning (0.356) processes annually to ensure that they remain relevant in the pursuit of their educational goals.

Table 6.11 Component Correlation Matrix

Component	1	2	3	4
1	1.000	.246	.415	.474
2	.246	1.000	.151	.260
3	.415	.151	1.000	.359
4	.474	.260	.359	1.000

All of the four components listed in the table above tend to focus on quality as a key defining feature of an accountable public school. There is a strong correlation between the variables in the four components with the following standing out: Increased levels of professionalism (C28, component 1); Annual auditing of financial statements (C19, component 2); Seeks external expertise to continually improve the school (C38, component 3) and Shares best practice with other schools (0.923)

An organisation that pursues quality as its objective will tend to embrace professionalism as a defining feature of its operations. Since quality has an external dimension to it, the views of external parties in validating internal quality are important. Hence, external audits and expertise as well as comparison to other similar organizations remain important hallmarks for organisations that aim to continuously enhance their operations.

6.2.3.3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Responsiveness to Internal and External Stakeholders

Two factors were extracted from the Responsiveness to Internal and External Stakeholders category as shown in table 6.12:

Table 6.12 Pattern Matrix

Variables	Sub-factors	
	1	2
C15 Annual auditing of financial statements	.899	
C16 Community involvement in school activities/projects	.801	
C19 Regular reporting and feedback to all role-players	.703	
C22 Effective implementation of education policies	.701	
C20 Well defined roles and responsibilities of role-players	.687	
C17 Private/business sector involvement	.677	
C32 Clear performance targets		.828
C25 Regular monitoring of learner performance		.737
C41 Provision of learning and teaching material		.542
C26 Regular submission of reports to the district office		.517
C34 Transparent and efficient budgeting	.406	.456
C35 An effective school/community interface	.318	.432
C18 An effective learner support system	.380	.397

The two sub-factors that emerged from the factor: *Responsiveness to internal and external stakeholders* are described as: *Relationship building* and *Curriculum delivery and learner needs*. These two sub-factors explained 54.5% of the variance and can therefore be considered acceptable. The two sub-factors clustered together in a meaningful way.

The communalities for all the items in the factor were above 0.3 and therefore acceptable.

It can be concluded from the above that construct validity for the factor: *Responsiveness to internal and external stakeholders* was established. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the factor: *Responsiveness to internal and external stakeholders* was established as

0.899 and therefore this factor can be described as reliable within the context of the questionnaire.

Sub-factor 1 (C15, 16, 19, 22, 20, and 17): Relationship Building (cf. 3.10.3-3.10.5)

Effective accountability is largely dependent on the viability of the relationship between the affected parties. It is about ensuring that parties to the accountability relationship understand their respective roles and responsibilities. Accountability has an external orientation to it, i.e organisations are largely held accountable by the external stakeholders and therefore effective relationships with external stakeholders are important if an organisation is to fully execute its mandate.

Table 6.12 indicates that annual auditing of financial statements (0.899) is one way of subjecting the financial situation of a school to an external party and thereby enhancing public confidence in the school. Equally, the involvement of communities in the activities of the school (0.801) and regular reporting and feedback (0.703) strengthen the relationship between the school and the external stakeholders.

One way of ensuring that the relationships with stakeholders remain productive is to ensure that the role of each stakeholder is clearly defined (0.687). The involvement of the private sector (0.677) in the affairs of the school has the potential to enable the school to leverage additional resources to improve learning outcomes.

Sub- factor 2 (C32, 25, 41, 26, 34, 35 and 18): Curriculum delivery and learner needs (cf.3.10.11)

The variables under sub-factor 2 relate largely to internal operations of the school and talk directly to the core business of the school, viz. curriculum delivery. Setting performance targets (0.828); monitoring learner performance (0.737) and providing learner support materials (0.542) are some of the crucial things that the school must do to enhance learning outcomes. Variables C34, C35 and C18 are, understandably categorised

under both sub-factors 1 and 2 because they display internal and external orientations. Schools exist to provide for the educational needs of their communities in general and their learners in particular.

6.2.4 Part D: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

The variables listed in this part, on a scale of 1-5, relate to the accountability of a school Principal and also gauge the extent to which the respondents, in their capacities as principals, have been able to deal with them. Table 6.13 below will be used to report on the descriptive statistics in two main columns: **Importance (DA)** and **Implementation (DB)**. The *importance column* rates the value attached to the variables deemed important by the respondents while the *implementation column* rates the extent to which the respondents, in their respective capacities as principals, have been successful in implementing them.

The difference (effect size) between the *Importance* and the *Implementation* columns assisted the researcher to determine the extent to which the respondents as principals measured up to implementing what they considered to be important roles and responsibilities of principals in enhancing school level accountability.

Table 6.13 indicates the effect size between the important roles and responsibilities of principals (Importance) and their ability to discharge those responsibilities (Implementation). All statistically significant effect sizes (i.e. 0.4 and above) were isolated and explained individually with a view to determine the extent of the difference between *Importance* and *Implementation*. Spearman effect size $R \geq 0.5$ is considered a large practically significant correlation.

Table 6.13: Roles and Responsibilities of Principals: Importance vs Implementation: Mean scores and effect size

Importance								Area	Implementation							
DA	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD		1 DB	2	3	4	5	M	SD	Effect Size: R
48.	-	0.54	16.67	27.96	54.84	4.37	0.77	Staff recruitment	1.90	10.95	39.05	32.86	15.24	3.49	.945	0.94
49.	-	0.53	17.02	39.89	42.55	4.24	0.74	Attending to staff Professional and personal needs	-	6.07	35.05	44.39	14.49	3.67	.796	0.72
50.	-	-	7.45	25.53	67.02	4.60	0.62	Provision of learning and teaching materials	0.93	4.21	21.50	44.86	28.50	3.96	.833	0.73
51.	-	-	8.06	32.80	59.14	4.51	0.64	Attending to learner needs	0.93	1.87	27.10	43.46	26.64	3.93	.833	0.70
52	-	0.53	3.19	23.40	72.87	4.68	0.58	Managing school finances	1.39	0.93	14.35	41.67	41.67	4.21	.825	0.57
53	-	.-	5.88	27.27	66.84	4,61	0.59	Monitoring learner performance		1.39	25.00	40.28	33.33	4.06	.799	0.69

Importance								Area	Implementation							
DA	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD		1 DB	2	3	4	5	M	SD	Effect Size: R
54	-	-	5.38	19.89	74.73	4.69	0.56	Reporting on learner performance	-	1.40	12.56	36.74	49.30	4.34	.749	0.47
55	-	3.72	19.68	31.91	44.68	4.18	0.87	Marketing the school and raising funds	3.27	14.49	40.19	27.10	14.95	3.36	1.01	0.81
56	0.53	0.53	9.57	26.06	63.83	4.51	0.68	Evaluating teachers' work/ performance	0.47	5.58	30.23	42.79	20.93	3.78	.856	0.88
57		-	9.04	31.38	59.57	4.50	0.65	Building effective relationship with APO/District	0.93	5.09	26.86	38.43	28.70	3.89	.913	0.67
58	-	0.53	10.64	40.96	47.34	4.34	0.73	Building effective relationship with external stakeholders	3.24	6.94	31.02	38.89	19.91	3.65	.981	0.70

Importance						Implementation										
DA	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	Area	1 DB	2	3	4	5	M	SD	Effect Size: R
59	-	0.53	1.60	26.74	71.12	4.68	0.56	Working closely with the SGB	1.85	1.85	8.80	38.43	49.07	4.31	.852	0.43
60	-	0.52	6.81	31.94	60.73	4.53	0.64	Planning and monitoring curriculum implementation	-	3.23	27.65	47.47	21.66	4.53	.647	0.84
61	-	-	3.66	40.31	56.02	4.52	0.56	Involving staff in decision making	-	0.92	20.28	50.69	28.11	4.52	.570	0.64
62	-	-	7.94	28.57	63.49	4.56	0.63	Motivating teachers and promoting teamwork	-	1.40	19.53	46.41	32.56	4.56	.639	0.60
63	-	-	9.57	32.45	57.98	4.48	0.66	Staff development	0.95	7.58	27.49	41.71	22.27	4.48	.666	0.78
64	-	-	11.64	32.28	56.08	4.44	0.69	Facilitating the development of school policies	0.47	2.79	30.70	44.65	21.40	4.44	.694	0.75

Importance								Area	Implementation							
DA	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD		1 DB	2	3	4	5	M	SD	Effect Size: R
65	-	2.63	13.68	40.00	43.68	4.25	0.78	Delegating more responsibility to staff	0.46	5.09	28.70	46.76	18.98	4.25	.788	0.56
66	-	-	6.84	25.26	67.89	4.61	0.61	Keeping accurate records and statistics on my school	-	1.87	18.69	43.93	35.51	4.61	.614	0.62
67	-	-	10.22	38.71	51.08	4.41	0.66	Assuming a more facilitating role in the running of the school	0.93	1.40	28.84	46.98	21.86	4.41	.670	0.67
68	-	-	10.47	34.03	55.50	4.45	0.67	Networking with other principals	1.38	4.15	25.35	41.91	27.19	4.45	.678	0.62
69	-	-	6.81	30.89	62.30	4.55	0.62	Submitting reports to the APO/District	-	0.46	24.42	39.17	35.94	4.55	.621	0.57

Importance								Area	Implementation							
DA	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD		1 DB	2	3	4	5	M	SD	Effect Size: R
70	-	-	7.37	32.63	60.00	4.53	0.63	Undergo regular training to keep abreast of new developments in management	1.38	3.23	27.19	48.85	19.35	4.53	.631	0.86
71	-	-	5.82	33.86	60.32	4.54	0.60	Ensuring that all staff have clearly documented roles and responsibilities	-	3.74	22.90	47.20	26.17	4.54	.605	0.73
72	-	0.53	9.63	34.76	55.08	4.44	0.68	Evaluating staff performance regularly	-	3.26	39.53	39.07	18.14	4.44	.688	0.91
73	0.53	-	9.52	30.16	59.79	4.49	0.71	Ensuring that the asset register is updated regularly	1.40	4.65	26.05	42.33	25.58	4.49	.712	0.69

Importance								Area	Implementation							
DA	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD		1 DB	2	3	4	5	M	SD	Effect Size: R
74	-	0.53	6.35	32.80	60.32	4.53	0.64	Ensuring that management meeting are held regularly as scheduled	-	3.26	28.84	41.40	26.51	4.53	.640	0.75
75	-	-	2.62	26.18	71.20	4.69	0.51	Ensuring the safekeeping of all school records	-	1.86	15.81	44.65	37.67	4.69	.519	0.66
76	0.52	0.52	9.42	30.89	59.16	4.49	0.68	Ensuring that all staff are inducted	1.40	6.51	24.65	41.40	26.05	4.49	.687	0.69
77	-	1.57	10.99	36.65	50.79	4.37	0.74	Engages in self review processes on a regular basis	0.93	6.98	24.65	41.40	26.05	4.37	.741	0.81

Key: M : Average out of 5 (1= least important and 5= most important)

SD : Standard deviation

Spearman effect size $R \geq 0.5$ is considered a large practically significant correlation

The findings shown in Table 6.14 above reveal that the respondents' mean ratings in the 'Importance' column are generally higher than those in the 'Implementation' column. In addition, variables such as *the safekeeping of school records* and *reporting on learner performance* are rated highly with a mean of 4.69. These are closely followed by the *management of school finances* and *working closely with the school governing bodies* with a mean of 4.68 on each.

Table 6.14 further quantifies the degree of difference between 'Importance' and 'Implementation' (the effect size). For the purposes of reporting, only statistically significant differences with large effect sizes (i.e. 0.75 and above) are reported as follows:

- **Staff recruitment**

A possible explanation for this large effect size (0.94) could be because school principals feel that they are not directly involved in the recruitment and appointment of staff in their schools. This responsibility is given to the SGBs by the South African Schools' Act (SASA). Despite their lack of involvement in the recruitment and appointment of staff, they still consider this responsibility as very important for principals.

- **Evaluating teachers work/performance**

Many principals do not see the evaluation of teacher performance as their responsibility; hence the large 0.88 effect size. It could also mean that they have abdicated this responsibility to heads of department. The growing resistance of unions to lesson observations could be one of the reasons why principals seem not keen to implement this responsibility. The implementation of IQMS policy in schools has also led to confusion with regard to the role of principals in evaluating teacher performance.

- **Planning and managing curriculum implementation**

There is a general view held by many principals that curriculum delivery issues are best left to heads of departments and teachers. Principals always claim that they are often not

trained in curriculum matters, hence the reluctance to take responsibility for curriculum planning and management (0.84).

- **Undergo regular training to keep abreast of developments 0.86**

This large effect size (0.86) is not consistent with the finding reported in Table 6.8 where the majority of respondents (75.81%) indicated that they attended management training courses regularly. It could however be interpreted to mean that the courses they attend are either imposed on them or do not correspond adequately to their developmental needs.

- **Evaluating staff performance 0.91**

The large effect size of 0.91 in this variable is consistent with the explanation given under “*evaluating teachers’ work/performance*” and the same explanation also applies to this variable.

- **Engages in self review processes on a regular basis**

Many schools might not be in a position to engage in self review processes (0.81) due to lack of internal human resource capacity, financial constraints or time constraints because of the many policies that schools are expected to implement on a regular basis. Self review processes for schools remain important if a school embraces the notion of a learning organisation.

- **Staff development**

Many principals do not see staff development as their main responsibility (0.78) partly because teacher development is centralised at both the district and provincial levels. The general thinking that all training must lead to accreditation also serves to frustrate staff development at school level. It remains the responsibility of the school however, to initiate school based processes that should focus on developing their staff to enhance their skills and competencies as well as lifting their morale.

- **Ensuring that management meetings are held regularly as scheduled 0.75**

It is surprising that despite knowing the importance of meetings in running a school, the majority of principals surveyed still do not hold regular meetings with their staff (0.78). Some principals however argue that because their teachers are often expected to attend training, they never have a full complement of staff and can therefore not hold meetings as regularly as they would like to. Another explanation given is that some principals are not confident enough to run meetings, they are afraid of their staff. Staff meetings are important to ensure that critical operational issues are dealt with as and when they occur.

- **Facilitating the development of school policies**

The development of policies at school level is, according to the SASA, the responsibility of the SGBs. Many schools argue that the majority of their SGBs generally lack the capacity to perform this function (0.75). The training of SGBs remains an important factor if they are to discharge their responsibilities fully.

Table 6.13 highlighted the effect size between the *important* and *implementation* variables. Table 6.14 below shows the results obtained from the factor analysis process administered on the roles and responsibilities of a principal as perceived by the respondents.

6.2.5 CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS: IMPORTANCE

For the purposes of analysis, all related variables were initially clustered and the following three factors emerged:

- Managerial Responsibilities: DA 48,49,52,55,56,61,62,63,64,65,66,67,70,71,72,73,74,75,76,
- Programme quality and learner needs: DA 50, 51,53,54,60, 77

- Stakeholder Relations: DA 57, 58, 59, 68, 69

Beyond the clustering into the three factors listed above, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted and the outcomes of this process are discussed in tables 6.14 – 6.15

6.2.5.1 Managerial Responsibilities: Importance

Two sub-factors were extracted from this factor: Managerial responsibilities. These two sub-factors will be described and discussed as *Managerial responsibilities* and *Staff development*. These Two sub-factors explained 51.2% of the variance and can therefore be considered acceptable. The two sub-factors clustered together in a meaningful way.

The communalities for all the items in the factor were above 0.3 and therefore acceptable. It can therefore be reasonably concluded that construct validity for the factor: *Managerial responsibility was established*. Table 6.14 below gives a detailed description of the sub-factors: *Managerial responsibility* and *Staff development*.

Table 6.14 Pattern Matrix: Managerial Responsibilities- Importance

Variables	Sub-factors	
	1	2
DA52 Managing school finances	0.867	
DA56 Evaluating teachers' work/performance	0.805	
DA73 Ensuring the asset register is updated regularly	0.797	
DA74 Ensuring that management meetings are held regularly	0.797	
DA75 Ensuring the safekeeping of all school records	0.750	
DA72 Evaluating staff performance regularly	0.714	
DA66 Keeping accurate records and statistics on my school	0.694	
DA62 Motivating teachers and promoting team work	0.678	
DA76 Ensuring that all staff are inducted	0.658	

Variables	Sub-factors	
	1	2
DA71 Ensuring that all staff have clearly documented roles	0.633	
DA64 Facilitating the development of school policies	0.536	0.308
DA55 Marketing school and raising funds	0.527	
DA70 Regular training to keep abreast of developments	0.373	
DA65 Delegating more responsibility to staff		0.768
DA49 Attending to staff professional and personal needs		0.752
DA48 Staff recruitment		0.718
DA51 Attending to learner needs		0.590
DA67 A more facilitating role in the running of the school	0.326	0.579
DA63 Staff development	0.334	0.558
DA61 Involving staff in decision making	0.325	0.470

Sub-factor 1: Managerial Responsibility

DA52, 56, 73, 74, 75, 72, 66, 62, 76, 71, 64, 55 and 70

Sub-factor 1 variables in Table 6.14 above point to a myriad of responsibilities that a principal is accountable for. Perhaps the most important responsibility relates to the management of resources, both physical and human resources.

As discussed earlier, devolved authority calls for an effective SBMT. The efficacy of the SBMT is largely dependent on the extent to which the principal discharges his/her managerial responsibilities. The variables that were highlighted by respondents as important managerial responsibilities of the principal include the following: regular management meetings (0.797), record keeping and statistics (0.749), motivating teachers and promoting teamwork (0.743), development of school policies (0.660) and staff evaluation. Staff induction (0.585), self review (0.583), management meeting (0.486) and documented responsibilities of staff (0.421) all point to the key responsibilities of the

principal. In discharging these managerial responsibilities, it is hoped that the school will meet its accountability obligations.

Sub-factor 2: Staff Development

DA65, 49, 48, 51, 67, 63 and 61

Sub-factor 2 points to the fact that one of the key responsibilities of a school principal is to use different managerial tools to ensure that the staff members reporting to him/her are continuously developed. One way of achieving this includes delegating some responsibilities to staff (0.768), involving staff in decision making (-.470), recruiting the right staff (0.718), and attending to learner needs.

6.2.5.2 Programme Quality and Learner Needs: Importance

Table 6.15: Pattern Matrix: Programme Quality and Learner Needs

Variables	Factors
DA53 Monitoring learner performance	0.829
DA60 Planning and monitoring curriculum implementation	0.786
DA50 Provision of learning and teaching materials	0.780
DA54 Reporting on learner performance	0.766
DA77 Engages in self review processes on a regular basis	0.741

Only one component: Programme quality and learner needs, was extracted after the confirmatory factor analysis. The five items under the component explained 61% of the variance and can therefore be considered acceptable.

The communalities for all the items in the factor were larger than 0.3 and can therefore be considered acceptable. It can therefore be reasonably concluded that construct validity for the factor: Programme quality and learner needs was established.

6.2.5.3 Stakeholder Relations: Importance

Only one component: Stakeholder relations, was extracted after the confirmatory factor analysis. The five items under this component explain 59% of the variance and can therefore be considered acceptable. The communalities for all the items in the factor were all above 0.3 and therefore acceptable. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that construct validity for the factor: Stakeholder relations, was established. Table 6.17 below provides a detailed description of the component.

Table 6.16: Pattern Matrix: Stakeholder Relations

Variables	Factors
DA58 Building effective relationships with external stakeholders	0.826
DA69 Submitting reports to the APO	0.808
DA57 Building effective relationship with the APO	0.788
DA68 Networking with other principals	0.748
DA59 Working closely with the SGB	0.682

Effective relationships enhance (0.826) organisational accountability. These relationships can only be beneficial to the organisation if information is shared with key stakeholders through reports (0.808). In the context of the school, networking among principals (0.748), working closely with the SGB (0.682) and other stakeholders have often proved to be beneficial to advancing the objectives of the school.

6.2.6 Roles and Responsibilities: Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Implementation

For the purposes of analysis, all related factors were initially clustered under the following factors:

- Programme quality and learner needs (DA50, 53, 54, 60 and 77).
- Stakeholder relations (DA57, 58, 59, 68, and 69).

- Managerial responsibilities (DA48, 49, 52, 55, 56, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75 and 76).

These three factors were in turn subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis process. The outcomes of confirmatory factor analysis process are reported in the following paragraphs:

6.2.6.1 Factor: Programme Quality and Learner Needs: Implementation

Only one component: Programme quality and learner needs, was extracted after the confirmatory factor analysis. The five items under this component explain 52% of the variance and can therefore be considered acceptable. The communalities for all the items in the factor were all above 0.3 and therefore acceptable. It is also reasonable to conclude that construct validity for the factor Programme quality and learner needs was established in the context of the questionnaire. Table 6.18 below provides a detailed description of the component.

Table 6.17: Pattern Matrix: Programme quality and Learner Needs

Variable	Component
DB53 Monitoring learner performance	0.826
DB60 Planning and monitoring curriculum implementation	0.794
DB50 Provision of learning and teaching material	0.662
DB77 Engages in self review processes on a regular basis	0.661
DB54 Reporting on learner performance	0.642

Programme quality and learner needs are crucial in ensuring that an organization remains in business. An accountable school will therefore strive to give the best possible programmes that respond directly to the needs of their clients, in this case the learners. For this to happen, *Monitoring of learner performance* (0.826), *planning and monitoring*

of curriculum implementation (0.794), *provision of learning and teaching materials* (0.662) and *engagement in self- review processes* (0.661) are critical if the school has to deliver quality programmes that respond to the needs of the learners.

6.2.6.2 Factor: Stakeholder Relations: Implementation (cf.3.15.5)

Table 6.18: Pattern Matrix

Variable	Component
DB58 Building effective relationships with external stakeholders	0.837
DB57 Building effective relationship with the APO/District	0.781
DB59 Working closely with the SGB	0.752
DB68 Networking with other principals	0.714
DB69 Submitting reports to the APO/District	0.699

Only one component: Stakeholder relations, was extracted after the confirmatory factor analysis. These five items of this component explained 57% of the variance and can therefore be considered acceptable. The communalities for all the items in the component: Stakeholder relations are larger than 0.3 and therefore acceptable. It is also reasonable to conclude that construct validity for the factor: Stakeholder relations, has been established in the context of the questionnaire.

Successful schools rely largely on the quality and effectiveness of the relationship it has with stakeholders. Effective and productive relationships and partnerships are important in supporting the school to achieve its educational goals. Effective relationships with stakeholders (0.837), the district (0.781), the SGB (.0.752) as well as networking with other principals (0.714) are key variables in enhancing school level accountability.

6.2.6.3 Factor: Managerial Responsibilities: implementation

Table: 6.19 Pattern Matrix: Managerial Responsibilities -Implementation

Variables	FACTORS			
	1	2	3	4
DB56 Evaluating teachers' work	0.764			
DB48 Staff recruitment	0.728		0.400	
DB72 Evaluating staff performance regularly	0.703			
DB76 Ensuring that all staff are inducted	0.640			
DB55 Marketing the school and raising funds	0.588			0.303
DB70 Undergo regular training	0.517			
DB74 Management meetings are held regularly	0.466			0.330
DB61 Involving staff in decision making		0.842		
DB62 Motivating teachers and promoting teamwork		0.762		
DB65 Delegating more responsibility to staff		0.556	0.419	
DB67 A facilitating role in the running of the school		0.489		
DB63 Staff development	0.405	0.407		
DB64 Facilitating the development of school policies		0.404		
DB49 Staff professional and personal needs			0.719	
DB51 Attending to learner needs			0.554	
DB52 Managing school finances				0.892
DB66 Keeping accurate records and statistics				0.675
DB73 Asset register is updated regularly	0.331			0.628
DB75 Ensuring the safekeeping of all school records				0.573
DB71 Staff have clearly documented responsibilities	0.319			0.360

Four components were extracted from the factor: Managerial responsibilities, were extracted from this factor. These components are described as Managerial responsibilities (component 1); Staff development (Component 2); Pastoral responsibilities (Component 3) and Administrative responsibilities (Component 4). The four components explained 45% of the variance. All communalities of this factor are larger than 0.3 and therefore acceptable. It can be reasonably concluded that construct validity of the factor: Managerial responsibilities has been established in the context of the Principals' questionnaire. The four components are explained in the following paragraphs.

Sub-factor 1

Managerial responsibilities: (DB56, 48, 72, 55, 70 and 74)

Sub-factor 1 shows the different responsibilities of a principal. Among others, the principal is expected to perform some of the following functions: Evaluate teachers' work (0.764), recruit staff (0.728), staff induction (0.640), market the school and raise funds (0.588) and to hold management meetings regularly (0.466).

Sub-factor 2

Staff development: (DB61, 62, 65, 67, 63 and 64)

Since all accountable schools aim to improve and sustain learning outcomes, teacher capability and effectiveness are crucial. Sub-factor 2 shows that teacher motivation and teamwork (0.737) as well as the involvement of staff in decision making (0.717) are all indispensable ingredients in sustaining good performance and enhancing accountability in schools.

Sub-factor 3

Pastoral Responsibilities: (DB49 and 51)

The principal is expected to assume pastoral responsibilities for both teachers and learners to keep them focused and motivated. To that effect, attending to professional and personal needs of staff (0.719) as well as the needs of the learners (0.554) is essential to secure the welfare of these critical stakeholders who will always look to him for support and guidance.

Sub-factor 4

Administrative Responsibilities: (DB52, 66, 73, 75 and 71)

An accountable public school is also dependent on a sound administrative machinery. For that reason, the principal is expected to develop good administrative systems. Among others, these would include financial systems (0.892), record keeping (0.675), asset register (0.628) and staff files (0.360)

6.2.7 Summary of the Characteristics of the Roles and Responsibilities of Principals

Table 6.20 (on the next page) provides a summary of the mean scores for the total study population. As can be seen from the descriptive data, the mean scores for all factors are ≥ 3.5 . Considering that respondents answered on four and five point Likert-type scales, where four and five are considered Very Important and Extremely Important respectively, it can be concluded that, on average, the principals who participated in this study consider all three factors important.

Table 6.20 : Roles and Responsibilities of Principals

Factors	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Management and Governance	221	2.00	4.00	3.5936	0.39086
Commitment to Quality	221	2.44	4.00	3.5944	0.36591
Responsiveness to Stakeholders	221	2.08	4.00	3.5033	0.42708
Importance of Managerial Responsibilities	193	3.00	5.00	4.5478	0.50164
Importance of Programme Quality and Learner Needs	193	2.90	5.00	4.4674	0.48185
Importance of Stakeholder Relations	193	3.00	5.00	4.4979	0.50539
Implementation of Managerial Responsibilities	218	2.40	5.00	3.9798	0.57818
Implementation of Programme Quality and Learner Needs	218	2.45	5.00	3.8654	0.56171
Implementation of Stakeholder Relations	218	1.80	5.00	3.9714	0.67100

The highest mean scores show that managerial responsibilities (4.55), programme quality and learner needs (4.47), and stakeholder relations (4.5) were considered important by most respondents.

6.2.8 Perceptions of Importance versus Implementation

Table 6.21 shows medium effect sizes, which tends towards practically significant correlations, between importance and implementation of the three factors.

Table 6.21: Perceptions of Importance versus Implementation

	Importance		Implementation		Effect Size
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Management and Governance	4.5514	0.50258	3.9314	0.5725	0.373
Commitment to Quality	4.4694	0.48343	3.8173	0.55867	0.330
Responsiveness to Stakeholders	4.4979	0.50794	3.9276	0.6765	0.384

Key: M : Average out of 5 (1= least important and 5=most important)

Table 6.21 is consistent with table 6.13 that showed that mean ratings in the *importance* column were generally higher than those in the *implementation* column. As discussed in table 6.13, a visible difference exists between what the participants consider to be important roles of principals and what they actually do in their capacity as principals.

Table 6.22 shows the correlations between the characteristics of an accountable school and the roles and responsibilities of principals.

Table 6.22: Correlations Between an Accountable School and the Roles and Responsibilities of Principals

	Management and Governance	Commitment to Quality	Responsiveness to Stakeholders	Importance of Managerial Responsibilities	Importance of Programme Quality and Learner Needs	Importance of Stakeholder Relations	Implementation of Managerial Responsibilities	Implementation of Programme Quality and Learner Needs	Implementation of Stakeholder Relations
Management and Governance		0.728	0.721						
Commitment to Quality	0.728		0.878	0.520	0.532	0.539			
Responsiveness to Stakeholders	0.721	0.878			0.448	0.490			
Importance of Managerial Responsibilities		0.520			0.887	0.792			
Importance of Programme Quality and Learner Needs		0.532		0.887		0.818			
Importance of Stakeholder Relations		0.539		0.792	0.818				
Implementation of Managerial Responsibilities								0.839	0.736
Implementation of Programme Quality and Learner Needs			0.448				0.839		0.794
Implementation of Stakeholder Relations			0.490				0.736	0.794	

6.2.9 The Relationship between the Characteristics of an Accountable School and the Roles and Responsibilities of Principals

In order to determine the relationship between an accountable school and the roles and responsibilities of the principal, Spearman's effect size (R) was used. Table 6.22 provides significant nonparametric correlations that were calculated between the characteristics of an accountable school and the roles and responsibilities of principals. A Spearman effect size $R \geq 0.5$ is considered a large practically significant correlation. Only large effect sizes are reported in table 6.22.

Practically significant correlations were found between Management and Governance and (i) Commitment to Quality ($R = 0.728$) and (ii) Responsiveness to Stakeholders ($R = 0.721$). Practically significant correlations exist between Commitment to Quality and (a) Responsiveness to Stakeholders ($R = 0.878$), (b) the Importance of Managerial Responsibilities ($R = 0.52$), (c) Importance of Programme Quality and Learner Needs ($R = 0.532$), and (d) Importance of Stakeholder Relations ($R = 0.539$). Practically significant correlations were also measured between Responsiveness to Stakeholders and the Importance of Programme Quality and Learner Needs ($R = 0.448$) and the Importance of Stakeholder Relations ($R = 0.49$). The Importance of Managerial Responsibilities also have practically significant correlations with the Importance of Programme Quality and Learner Needs ($R = 0.887$) and the Importance of Stakeholder Relations ($R = 0.792$). The Importance to Programme Quality and Learner Needs also shows a practically significant correlation with the Importance of Stakeholder Relations ($R = 0.818$).

Further practically significant correlations were also found between the Implementation of Managerial Responsibilities and (i) the Implementation of Programme Quality and Learner Needs ($R = 0.839$) and (ii) the Implementation of Stakeholder Relations ($R = 0.736$). A practically significant correlation was also found between the Implementation of Stakeholder Relations and the Implementation of Programme Quality and Learner Needs ($R = 0.794$).

It is apparent from Table 6.22 that the high correlations between the characteristics of an accountable school and the roles and responsibilities of a principal suggest that (a) the principal is key in enhancing school level accountability and (b) all accountable schools must provide quality educational programmes, have productive relationships with stakeholders and embrace the principles of good governance.

Table 6.23 shows the characteristics of an accountable school and the roles and responsibilities of principals at different types of school.

Table 6.23: The Characteristics of an Accountable School and the Roles and Responsibilities of Principals at Different Types of Schools

	Primary Schools		Middle Schools		High/Secondary Schools		Combined Schools	
	Mean	Std Dev.	Mean	Std Dev.	Mean	Std Dev.	Mean	Std Dev.
Management and Governance	3.571	0.414	3.596	0.373	3.621	0.361	3.833	0.208
Commitment to Quality	3.602	0.362	3.599	0.373	3.553	0.389	3.799	0.229
Responsiveness to Stakeholders	3.518	0.417	3.559	0.394	3.411	0.486	3.705	0.335
Importance of Managerial Responsibilities	4.549	0.544	4.427	0.489	4.616	0.398	4.700	0.258
Importance of Programme Quality and Learner Needs	4.483	0.496	4.261	0.512	4.536	0.421	4.563	0.394
Importance of Stakeholder Relations	4.535	0.511	4.285	0.561	4.509	0.469	4.500	0.416
Implementation of Managerial Responsibilities	4.036	0.591	3.856	0.546	3.855	0.539	4.300	0.724
Implementation of Programme Quality and Learner Needs	3.943	0.535	3.619	0.594	3.752	0.553	4.150	0.820
Implementation of Stakeholder Relations	4.082	0.650	3.695	0.650	3.788	0.625	4.200	1.131

6.2.10 The Characteristics of an Accountable School and the Roles and Responsibilities of Principals at Different Types of Schools

Table 6.23 shows the means and standard deviations for the characteristics of an accountable school and the roles and responsibilities of principals at different types of schools. Significant correlations (Cohen's effect size) were calculated in the responses in order to find significant differences in different types of schools (Tables 6.24 to 6.32). An effect size $d = 0.5$ is considered a medium effect which tends towards a practically significant difference; while an effect size $d = 0.8$ is considered a large practically significant difference. Only medium effects were found between the different types of schools, which indicate a tendency towards practically significant difference. Small effect sizes are not reported.

Table 6.24: Practically Significant Differences in Management and Governance in Different Types of Schools

	Primary Schools	Middle Schools	High/ Secondary Schools	Combined Schools
Primary Schools				0.633
Middle Schools				0.635
High/ Secondary Schools				0.587
Combined Schools				

As can be seen from Table 6.24, medium effects, which tend toward practically significant differences, were calculated in the responses of principals at Combined Schools and (i) Primary Schools ($d = 0.633$), (ii) Middle Schools ($d = 0.635$) and (iii) Secondary Schools ($d = 0.587$) concerning Management and Governance. Considering the mean scores (Table 6.23), it seems that principals at Combined Schools put more emphasis on management and governance than Primary, Middle and Secondary schools. This finding suggests that there are greater challenges in the management and governance of combined schools than is the case in the other categories of school. It therefore suggests that Combined schools would need more support in management and governance issues.

Table 6.25: Practically Significant Differences in Commitment to Quality in Different Types of Schools

	Primary Schools	Middle Schools	High/ Secondary Schools	Combined Schools
Primary Schools				0.543
Middle Schools				0.535
High/ Secondary Schools				0.630
Combined Schools				

As indicated in Table 6.25, medium effects, principals at Combined Schools and (i) which tend toward practically significant differences, were found in the responses of Primary Schools ($d = 0.543$), (ii) Middle Schools ($d = 0.535$) and (iii) Secondary Schools ($d = 0.630$) concerning Commitment to Quality. If one looks at the mean scores (Table 6.23), it seems that principals at Combined Schools put more emphasis on Commitment to Quality than Primary, Middle and Secondary Schools. This finding suggests that Combined Schools call for more commitment to quality responsibilities. This is so because often in combined schools all the grades tend to enjoy equal attention in teaching and learning to secure better results in grade 12 examinations. The general tendency in many Middle and Primary Schools is to promote learners to higher grades with little consideration given to quality learning.

Table 6.26: Practically Significant Differences in Responsiveness to Stakeholders in Different Types of Schools

	Primary Schools	Middle Schools	High/ Secondary Schools	Combined Schools
Primary Schools				
Middle Schools				
High/ Secondary Schools				0.605
Combined Schools				

As reported in Table 6.26, a medium effect ($d = 0.605$), which tends towards a practically significant difference, was calculated in the responses of principals at Combined Schools and Secondary Schools concerning Responsiveness to Stakeholders. Considering the

mean scores (Table 6.23), it seems that principals at Combined Schools put more emphasis on Responsiveness to Stakeholders than Secondary School principals.

Table 6.27: Practically Significant Differences in the Importance of Managerial Responsibilities in Different Types of Schools

	Primary Schools	Middle Schools	High/ Secondary Schools	Combined Schools
Primary Schools				
Middle Schools				0.557
High/ Secondary Schools				
Combined Schools				

As can be seen from Table 6.27, a medium effect ($d = 0.557$), which tends towards a practically significant difference, was calculated in the responses of principals at Combined Schools and Middle Schools concerning the Importance of Managerial Responsibilities. As reflected by the mean scores (Table 6.23) it seems those principals at Combined Schools feel that Managerial Responsibilities are more important.

Table 6.28: Practically Significant Differences in the Importance of Programme Quality and Learner Needs in Different Types of Schools

	Primary Schools	Middle Schools	High/ Secondary Schools	Combined Schools
Primary Schools				
Middle Schools			0.537	0.589
High/ Secondary Schools				
Combined Schools				

As reported in Table 6.28, medium effects, which tend toward practically significant differences, were calculated in the responses of principals at Middle Schools and (i) Secondary Schools ($d = 0.537$) and (ii) Combined Schools ($d = 0.589$) concerning the Importance of Programme Quality and Learner Needs. If one considers the mean scores (Table 6.23), it seems those principals at Middle Schools feel that Programme Quality

and Learner Needs are less important than the principals at Secondary and Combined Schools.

Table 6.29: Practically Significant Differences in the Importance of Stakeholder Relations in Different Types of Schools

	Primary Schools	Middle Schools	High/ Secondary Schools	Combined Schools
Primary Schools		0.546		
Middle Schools				
High/ Secondary Schools				
Combined Schools				

As indicated in table 6.29, a medium effect ($d = 0.546$), which tends towards a practically significant difference, was calculated in the responses of principals at Primary Schools and Middle Schools concerning the Importance of Stakeholder Relations. Considering the mean scores, it seems that principals at Middle Schools view Stakeholder Relations significantly less important than principals at Primary Schools.

Table 6.30: Practically Significant Differences in the Implementation of Managerial Responsibilities in Different Types of Schools

	Primary Schools	Middle Schools	High/ Secondary Schools	Combined Schools
Primary Schools				
Middle Schools				0.614
High/ Secondary Schools				0.615
Combined Schools				

As reported in Table 6.30, medium effects, which tend toward practically significant differences, were calculated in the responses of principals at Combined Schools and (i) Middle Schools ($d = 0.614$) and (ii) Secondary Schools ($d = 0.615$) concerning the Implementation of Managerial Responsibilities. If one considers the mean scores (Table 6.23), principals at Combined Schools reported that Managerial Responsibilities are more

implemented at their schools, than the implementation reported by principals at Middle and Secondary schools.

Table 6.31: Practically Significant Differences in the Implementation of Programme Quality and Learner Needs in Different Types of Schools

	Primary Schools	Middle Schools	High/ Secondary Schools	Combined Schools
Primary Schools		0.546		
Middle Schools				0.648
High/ Secondary Schools				0.486
Combined Schools				

As shown in Table 6.31, medium effects, which tend toward practically significant differences, were calculated in the responses of principals at Combined Schools and (i) Middle Schools ($d = 0.648$) and (ii) Secondary Schools ($d = 0.486$) concerning the Implementation of Programme Quality and Learner Needs. A medium effect was also found between Primary Schools and Middle Schools ($d = 0.546$). If one considers the mean scores (Table 6.23), principals at Combined Schools reported that Programme Quality and the recognition of Learner Needs are more implemented at their schools, than the implementation reported by principals at Middle and Secondary schools. It also seems that Middle Schools implemented Programme Quality and the recognition of Learner Needs to a lesser degree than Primary Schools.

Table 6.32: Practically Significant Differences in the Implementation of Stakeholder Relations in Different Types of Schools

	Primary Schools	Middle Schools	High/ Secondary Schools	Combined Schools
Primary Schools		0.595	0.452	
Middle Schools				0.446
High/ Secondary Schools				
Combined Schools				

As reported in Table 6.32, medium effects, which tend toward practically significant differences, were calculated in the responses of principals at Combined Schools and Middle Schools ($d = 0.446$), between principals at Primary Schools and Middle Schools (0.595), and between principals at Primary Schools and Secondary Schools ($d = 0.452$) concerning the Implementation of Stakeholder Relations. Considering the mean scores (Table 6.23), it seems that Stakeholder Relations are further implemented at Primary Schools than in Middle and Secondary Schools. Also, stakeholder relations are more implemented in Combined Schools than in Middle Schools.

The overall conclusion that can be drawn from tables 6.24-6.32 is that Combined schools seem to be more accountable, followed by primary schools, then high schools. Middle schools can arguably be considered the weakest link in the system if the respondents' views are taken into account.

The following part reports on the views of principals on the notion of accountability in the context of the North-West Education Department.

6.2.11 Data Presentation: Part E Principals' Views on Accountability in the NWED

The purpose of this part was to obtain the views of respondents on how they experienced accountability processes and practices as serving principals in the North-West Province.

Table 6.33: Principals' Views on Accountability in the NWED

Statements	No.	Cr 1 in %	Cr 2 in %	Cr 3 in %	Cr 4 in %	Cr 5 in %	Cr 6 in %	Cr 7 in %	Cr 8 in %	Cr 9 in %
E78 Accountability of Public Schools in the North-West	211	0,47	4,74	8,53	18,01	17,06	12,32		13,27	25,59
E79	205	0,98	1,95	2,44	1,95	10,73	10,73	17,56	27,80	25,85

Accountability of Principals in the North-West Province										
E80 Departmental Support for Schools to be more accountable	211	1,90	3,32	11,85	9,48	15,17	9,00	14,22	11,85	23,22

E78: Even though the majority (25.59%) of respondents strongly agree that schools in the North-West Province are accountable, a reasonable number (18.01%) seem uncertain.

E79: There seems to be a general consensus among respondents that principals in the province are accountable.

E80: The respondents' view on the support of the department to schools is generally mixed. This could be explained by the fact that some schools, particularly high schools and especially grade 12, tend to enjoy more support and attention than other schools and grades.

6.2.12 Summary of the Results of the Principals' Questionnaire

The questionnaire that was administered on principals was intended to obtain their views and perspectives on school level accountability. The following paragraphs summarise the results emanating from the questionnaire.

The demographic information obtained from the Principals' questionnaire shows that 62.39% of the sampled principals are in primary schools. Another feature of the schooling landscape in the North-West Province is the existence of middle schools (12.39%) that largely cater for grades 7-9. The majority of the sampled principals manage

schools that are located in rural areas. There are also clear indications that schools that are situated in rural areas are mostly non-fee paying because of their relative poverty.

From the demographic information presented it could be concluded that the principals surveyed manage schools that are relatively poor. The demographic challenges impose serious limitations on the capacity of the principal to manage effectively since rural schools are geographically dispersed and poorly resourced. Consequently, accountability processes and practices must be sensitive to the context within which these schools operate.

Most of the principals sampled have the requisite qualifications and managerial experience, suggesting that they are reasonably equipped to do their work. There is also evidence that provision is made for in-service training in management. It could therefore be concluded that the respondents are capable of managing their schools if qualifications and experience alone were taken as key determinants in securing effective management.

Teacher quality and teacher professionalism were identified as key levers of educational quality and school level accountability. Networking and collaboration with other professionals were also regarded as important in promoting professional growth for enhanced learning outcomes.

There is a clear and direct link between an accountable school and the role of the principal. The characteristic features of an accountable school tended to overlap with the roles and responsibilities of the principal. This is understandable because principals, as accounting officers, are crucial in directing the operations of the school. School level accountability is inextricably linked to the capability of the principal. It must however be noted that there are many other contextual variables that have a bearing on the capacity of principals to manage effectively.

The role of stakeholders in enhancing education accountability is supported by most respondents. This suggests that schools must strive to develop a healthy relationship with

all stakeholders, both internal and external. However, a view prevailed among the respondents that the involvement of stakeholders must be properly managed if their involvement is to benefit schools.

There is enough evidence to support the need for collaboration and networking among principals. It is anticipated that this networking will provide the principals with an opportunity to share ideas and thereby enhance their own capabilities. Equally, teacher professionalism was seen by many respondents as critical in enhancing school level accountability.

It is apparent from the analysis that Combined schools need focused support in governance and management. Middle schools on the other hand have to be closely monitored and held accountable for quality learning outcomes

A general view among respondents is that public schools and principals in particular, in the North-West Province, are held accountable. The respondents generally acknowledged that the provincial department supported schools to meet their accountability obligations.

The following paragraphs report on the results of the focus group interviews that were conducted with departmental officials and teacher unions.

6.3. FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW RESULTS

The qualitative research process produced a number of emergent themes regarding the views and perceptions of the different participants with regard to school level accountability. The following Interview Schedule was administered on the different groups that were interviewed. The reason for this was to expose the participants to the same set of questions so that their views and perceptions could be measured against the same instrument. For the purposes of reporting, direct quotations from participants are presented in *italics*.

Interview Schedule for Teacher Unions and District Officials

(See annexures B and C)

- 1. What, in your opinion, does it mean to be accountable?*
- 2. Conventional media and the general public often interpret accountability as a process of assigning blame and punishing wrong doing. Do you agree with this statement? Please motivate your answer.*
- 3. Schools are called upon to be accountable. Can you explain what this statement means for you?*
- 4. Education accountability is focused on improving learner performance and holding schools responsible for learning outcomes. Can you explain the responsibilities of each of the following role-players in enhancing accountability at schools: The Principal, Educators, School Governing Body and the District/ Area Office*
- 5. The effectiveness, quality and extent of accountability will vary in relation to the level of responsibility i.e. an individual can only be held accountable if given authority/delegation to act in a given situation. Do you agree with this statement? Please explain.*
- 6. It is often stated that performance contracts enhance accountability. Do you think that staff, especially principals, must sign performance contracts with their line managers?*

6.3.1 Results of Focus Group Interviews with District Officials (See Annexure C)

During the data analysis of the focus group interview with teacher unions, five themes and their related sub-themes were identified. These themes are directly linked to issues relating to school level accountability. The themes relate to a) Developmental

accountability, b) Role Clarification, c) Effectiveness of Accountability, d) Performance Management and e) Learner Performance. The following table presents the themes and related sub-themes that emanated from the focus group interview with district officials.

Table 6.33 Themes and related sub-themes: District Officials

Themes	Related sub-themes
Developmental Accountability	Positive Connotation Explanation Authority Responsibility
Role Clarification and compliance	Delegation Relationship with stakeholders
Effectiveness of Accountability	Capacity and capability Data credibility Compliance Clarity of expectation
Performance Management	Performance contract Performance expectation Training and support
Learner Performance	Quality teaching Resources Classroom supervision

6.3.2a Developmental Accountability

The participants provided the following definitions of accountability:

- *'Accountability implies giving reasons for the action taken'*

- *'Accountability means explaining how things are, what systems you have put in place to reach the objective'*
- *'Providing evidence on what you did and why'*

The general understanding of the participants is that the notion of accountability should not be seen in a negative light. They all seemed to suggest that accountability must be about getting the best out of people. The following sub-themes illustrate this point further.

- **Positive Connotations**

The participants generally felt that there is a need to move away from the negative connotations associated with accountability: *"The attitude of how we approach accountability must change."* Another respondent went on to state that schools have to account regularly so that remedial interventions can be made in time. The participants felt that the tendency to expect schools to account for grade 12 results only was unacceptable. Overall, the notion of accountability was welcomed by participants but also cautioned: *'It must not always be negative.'*

- **Explanation**

Linked to the notion of accountability is the requirement to provide an explanation. According to the King III Report, published by the Institute of Directors in South Africa (2009), corporate governance is promoted through the principle of 'apply or explain' which expects the board of directors to explain how the principles and recommendations were applied, or if not applied, to provide reasons.

One of the key features of developmental accountability is providing an explanation for what one has done or failed to do. The literature reviewed (cf.2.2.1) points to the fact that failure on the part of those responsible to deliver services as expected warrant an explanation and possibly a reprimand. As some of the participants put it:

- *"Accountability is to be able to respond to any question related to your responsibility and you must be strengthened with development."*

- *'... be able to tell why you did this. If I am not able to account, I must keep notes to explain why I could not perform'*

There was a general acceptance by the participants that an explanation must always be provided where deviations from the expected level of performance occurred.

- **Authority**

All transformational efforts aimed at improving education, take enhanced devolution of authority to the level of the school as a point of departure. This brings about major alterations in the basic authority and accountability relationships. In effect, schools are deregulated from the district office. They are given greater responsibility and accountability for their performance and learner achievement (cf.1.7.2). Accountability involves at least two parties and a mutually acknowledged relationship between them. This relationship involves delegation of authority to take some action from one party to the other. In the absence of delegation there should be no expectation for accountability (cf.2.4).

- **Responsibility**

Accountability is related to responsibility because as Morrow (1989) puts it: one is responsible to someone for something. Related to the concept of responsibility is the notion of autonomy. For an individual to account means that that individual is given some form of autonomy/authority/delegation to act in a given situation. The participants seemed to also acknowledge the similarity between accountability and responsibility: *'Being accountable means taking responsibility'*

6.3.2b Role Clarification (cf.3.10.4)

The increased use of partnerships and other agencies in the delivery of public services, calls for more open and transparent accountability arrangements (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2002). The need for clear definition of roles and responsibilities of all parties involved is imperative if the relationship is to be beneficial to the intended target group. One way of achieving this is through delegations and performance

contracts. Other ways of enhancing the accountability relationship is to provide related performance information. This might involve access to information and regular reporting by partners.

In the context of education delivery, the relationships between SGBs and their schools, schools and the area/district offices as well as district, province and the national department of education, have to be clearly defined if schools are to effectively address the varied needs of their learners. The distinction between the different levels of accountability would assist greatly in promoting effective accountability by delineating clear roles and responsibilities at different levels and between the different role-players. Equally, the different role-players at the level of the school must understand their respective roles. Table 6.34 below presents the roles and responsibilities at school and district levels as seen by participants.

Table 6.34: Responsibilities of Different Role-players as seen by Participants

Principal	SGB	Teachers	District/AO
Accounting Officer	LTSM Provisioning	Learner performance	Policy implementation
Policy Implementation	Language policy		Training of school based staff
Learner Performance	Learner discipline		Monitoring and support
Control and Administration	Communication with external parties		
As spelt out in the SASA of 2007	Code of Conduct for learners and educators		

It became apparent during the interviews that the respective roles of these different role-players are not properly understood (cf.2.2.2.8). As one participant indicated:

‘Some confusion in terms of roles however, exists. (There) is no clarity of roles and responsibilities’

- **Relationship with stakeholders**

School improvement research has shown that many schools are capable of improving themselves if the conditions are right and the relationships within the external environment are optimum. Evans (2006) states that since governance involves non-state actors in the delivery of public services, decentralization is a way of reinventing government by opening it up to other stakeholders. (cf.2.5.2). The World Bank (2004a) makes the point that education systems must create relationships of accountability between citizens, politicians, policy-makers and providers with clearly stated objectives and adequate resourcing (cf.2.8).

Effective accountability therefore, has more to do with greater clarity in managing relationships and partnerships to achieve set goals and outcomes. (cf.2.2.1). There was general acceptance among participants that the responsibility for education goes far beyond the education department alone. The following comments were made: *‘Education is a societal issue’* and *‘Schools account to many stakeholders’*. The new governance arrangements present challenges for public sector accountability in the sense that managing multiple partners could dilute accountability if relationships are poorly managed.

6.3.2c Effectiveness Accountability

According to TBCS (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2002) effective accountability presupposes the definition of expected performance criteria relating to the compliance with certain rules (values) or achievement of a particular performance level (cf.2.4)

- **Capacity and capability**

To be able to achieve results in an accountability relationship, the manager must have the resources and the necessary authority, greater management flexibility and skill to influence programme outcomes. At a practical level, clear delegation instruments and accountability contracts must be in place.

The critical role of SGBs was acknowledged even though they were generally perceived as being ineffective. The need for their capacitation was emphasised: *'Section 19 of SASA says they must be capacitated. If they are not, then we must take the blame for not capacitating them'*

According to Murphy (1991:166), even if schools enjoy greater autonomy, they are still accountable to administrative authorities at local, regional and national levels. The redesigned roles and responsibilities of districts are listed under 3.8.2 of this study.

- **Data credibility**

According to Dorn (1998), statistical accountability (cf.2.2.2.4) has gained dominance in recent times as a result of the deteriorating credibility of public institutions, because what public leaders say is often in contrast with what the public know and experience. Statistical information, he argues, provides a national framework for discussions because numbers have visible power in public debates. Concern was raised during the interview that *'One weakness with districts and APOs is their inability to keep data on their schools...'*

- **Compliance**

One of the defining features of accountability is the ability to comply with the laws that governs an organization. In regard to schools, the principal is expected to ensure that the school implement policies relating to schooling:

- *'In the department there are prescripts to which you must comply. If you don't you must be held accountable'*.

- *'If you go to schools here accountability is more about policy implementation'.*

6.3.2d Clarity of Expectations

Accountability relationships must be governed by enforceable agreement or contracts to ensure that agreed upon objectives are met (cf.2.2.1).

- **Performance Contract**

'The contract must be context specific. It must talk to the situation in my school'. Included in the agreement/contracts, are goals, target indicators and measures relating to the results to be achieved. In many instances governments encourage their public servants to be more performance or results oriented. Young (1990:1) states that pressures for improved performance and for making public services more accountable, have led the search for measurable educational outcomes in most countries.

Many participants felt that the conditions were not conducive for officials and principals to enter into performance contracts. They made remarks such as: *'I don't agree so much with it. Officials, including school principals, must be capacitated before signing performance contracts'.*

It was apparent from the discussions that the purpose of performance contracts was misunderstood. It is however worth making the point that the participants did not trust the system and were sceptical about the support that should go with the signing of the contract: *'Without any support, you have no case to prove against me'.*

- **Training and Support**

Johnson (1999) points out that a strong developmental state invests in its bureaucracy. This entails the recruitment of capable and competent staff and the creation of career opportunities and training to improve their expertise and enhance their commitment. The

participants reiterated the need for support before they could be held accountable: *‘Blaming and punishing is an indication of lack of support’*.

Capacitation of SGBs was also viewed as critical. Relevant training to SGBs is required both in terms of content and approach. The participants commented as follows:

- *‘We are teaching adults as if we are teaching children’.*

This concern stems from the fact that the approach adopted to teach SGB members, who are themselves adults, tends to be the same as that used for learners in mainstream schools. In a sense, this concern relates to the fact that approaches to SGB training have to be improved if this training is to be effective.

- *‘You cannot give me a certain position without training me.’*

Training was seen as an integral part of delegation. The view expressed here is that if people are to be held accountable, then they must be given the necessary training to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

- *‘Officials, including, principals, must be capacitated before signing performance contracts.’*

There was a very strong feeling among participants that staff could not be expected to commit themselves to performance agreements unless they were trained to do the work. The signing of performance agreements, according to them, had to be preceded by proper training.

- *‘Without any support, you have no case to prove against me.’*

Appropriate support has been identified as important to secure effective accountability. A view was expressed that for anybody to be held accountable, effective support systems must be in place.

6.3.2e Learner Performance

Education accountability is in essence about finding the best strategies to enhance learning outcomes. It is also about relevance and quality of provisioning. In the final analysis it has to do with ensuring that schools prepare learners for the global market. Todaro and Smith (2003) make the point that the extent to which education can contribute to sustained economic growth and development of a country will be determined by its ability to deepen the quality of its graduates (cf.1.3). A concern was raised during the interview that accountability without support is hollow: *'We need to have the necessary resources before we can be held accountable'*.

• Classroom supervision

Monitoring what goes on in the classroom is imperative for quality promotion. The role of teachers in enhancing learner performance was emphasised, participants saw the role of the teacher as follows:

'I would say to ensure quality learning'

'Improving learner performance'

There was a general feeling among the participants that classroom supervision was necessary to ensure that learners were taught correctly: *'We must check whether this person (teacher) is teaching the right stuff. This will help develop them- content wise and language wise'*.

It could be concluded from the statement made above that there is a general lack of confidence in some of the teachers

6.3.3. Summary of the Results of the Focus Group Interviews with District Officials (Annexure C)

The focus group interviews with officials from the North-West Education Department revealed that, in the main, the participants acknowledged the need for school level accountability but cautioned that it is generally poorly understood and implemented.

There was a general consensus that the roles of different stakeholders have to be clarified if the accountability relationship is to be effective. The participants further acknowledged

that delegation of authority was central to holding people accountable. Training and development were also regarded as essential in enhancing accountability.

The view that performance agreements were necessary to enhance accountability was not well received for fear that these agreements might be used '*to get to people*'. Overall the participants were negatively disposed to the idea of performance agreements as key instruments of accountability. This could be largely attributed to two things: the lack of understanding the importance of performance management in organizations and the general lack of trust in the system.

6.4 RESULTS OF THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHER UNIONS (Annexure C)

The analysis of the focus group interviews with teacher unions followed the same procedure as that for departmental officials. Table 6.35 provides a list of identified themes and sub-themes. Whilst most themes and sub-themes were similar to those generated from education officials, additional themes emerged from interviews with teacher unions. These are in turn discussed briefly.

Table 6.35 Themes and sub-themes related to interviews with Teacher Unions

Themes	Related sub-themes
Developmental Accountability	Positive connotations Feedback and responsiveness
Role Clarification and compliance	Authority and Delegation Responsibility
Effectiveness of Accountability	Capacity and capability Data credibility Clarity of expectation
Clarity of Expectations	Performance contract Ethics and Values
Learner Performance	
Training and support	
Relationship with stakeholders	

6.4.1a Developmental Accountability (cf.6.3.2a)

The participants defined accountability as follows:

- *'In simple terms it is to explain what you have done and why you have done it'.*
- *'Being accountable means taking responsibility'.*
- *'Accountability is to be able to respond to any question related to your responsibility'.*

From the quotations above it is apparent that the notion of accountability is reasonably understood by the participants. They seemed to be positively disposed towards it.

- **Positive Connotations**

According to Macpherson (1999), education accountability policy must 'prove' and 'improve' public education and advance accountability policy making capacity in

schools. He further states that accountability processes must enhance learning conditions, and promote professional development and school improvement. (cf.2.2.1).

As was the case with education officials, teacher union participants attached positive connotations to the notion of accountability: Accountability...*'must be strengthened with development'*. However, they lamented the fact that accountability when applied in practice, tended to be negative: *"They (officials) do not do it as an ongoing process; and immediately they do that they pick and choose people they want to get at"*.

- **Feedback and Responsiveness**

Modern governance and public administration literature sees accountability more as a positive incentive, as an integral part of establishing effective relationships for getting things done and taking responsibility.(cf.2.2.1). Regular and effective feedback is important to enhance accountability on the part of the parties involved in an accountability relationship. As one participant puts it: *'It entails providing feedback on what you have done'*. Feedback helps to clarify possible misunderstandings and hindrances impacting on the realization of agreed upon deliverables.

There was however a general feeling that officials viewed or interpreted accountability in a negative sense: *'They (officials) do not do it as an ongoing process; and immediately they do that they pick and choose people they want to get at'*.

Regular review and feedback on the performance achieved should be carried out by the accountable parties. Where expectations have not been met, or underachievement has been detected, corrective measures could be taken and, if necessary, adjustments could be made to the accountability arrangements and lessons learned noted. Accountability without follow-up is unlikely to be effective. Participants highlighted the importance of regular feedback: *'Providing feedback on what you have done. You receive accolades for good'*.

Information must be transmitted to stakeholders within reasonable time frames. The parties involved in an accountability relationship need to understand that feedback and communication are key ingredients in enhancing accountability in public service delivery. One respondent lamented the fact that *'Schools have to account regularly so that remedial interventions can be made. As it is now schools are only expected to account at grade 12'*.

6.4.1b Role Clarification and Compliance

Managing relationships between the parties in an accountability relationship has been identified as crucial in strengthening accountability. To that effect, participants were requested to state the roles and responsibilities of the different role players in enhancing learner performance. Table 6.36 below presents the roles of the different role players.

Table 6.36: Roles and Responsibilities of Key Role Players as seen by Participants

Principal	SGB	Teachers	District/AO
Accounting Officer	Making funds available for LTSM Provisioning	Learner performance	Policy implementation
Policy Implementation	Language policy	Conducive learning environment	Training of school based staff
Learner Performance	Learner discipline	Peer accountability	Monitoring and support
Control and Administration	Communication with external parties	Operational accountability	Professional support
As spelt out in the SASA of 2007	Code of Conduct for learners and educators		Resourcing of schools
Stakeholder accountability			

A concern was raised by the participants that the roles of the different parties as listed above were not clearly understood, at least at a practical level: *'No clarity of roles and responsibilities'*.

- **Authority and Delegation**

An analysis of school restructuring initiatives in many countries pointed to the need for decentralization in the control and management of schools. Among others, this decentralization entailed the altering of governance patterns to allow for school based management (SBM). This meant that schools were freed from centrally imposed regulations that stood in the way of school improvement initiatives.

Wohlstetter and Sebring (2000) make the point that increased autonomy calls for increased accountability on the part of the school. Bush and Bell (2008) further argue that devolution of authority must be accompanied by effective support systems and development opportunities.

Kinsler and Gamble (2000) state that policy makers are increasingly shifting authority for the governance of schools to schools themselves in order to encourage greater ownership of the schooling process and its outcomes. Related to the notion of accountability is the notion of autonomy. For an individual to account means that that individual is given some form of autonomy/authority/delegation to act in a given situation (cf.2.2.2.9). The participants seemed to share this understanding and made the following comments:

- *'Delegation goes hand in glove with support'*.
- *'Delegation (goes) with responsibility and support'*.
- *'Can I be given authority without being given power?'*
- *'When you have delegated... you must support that person because you remain accountable'*.
- *'Authority must be delegated to secure accountability'*.

- *'A person cannot be held responsible for something over which he has no authority'.*

Morrow (1989) and Heim (1995) make the point that without proper delegation there can be no expectation for accountability.

- **Responsibility**

As with departmental officials, the participants inferred a link between accountability and responsibility: *'Being accountable means taking responsibility'*. An example of an organogram as a way of enhancing accountability was given by one participant: ... *'this is also informed by the lines of responsibility as in the organogram'*.

6.4.1c Effective Accountability

For accountability to be effective, the following factors must be considered:

- **Data credibility**

A number of authors (Dorn, 1988; Weiss, 1988; Coleman, 2003 and Sobe 2006) acknowledge the fact that statistical information has assumed great powers and that many decisions are taken based purely on statistics. The value and credibility of statistical data as a source of information for accountability purposes remain undisputed. It was against this background that a participant lamented the failure of districts to keep credible information on their schools:

'One weakness with districts and APOs is their inability to keep reliable information (data) on their schools'.

- **Compliance with policies**

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2002) maintains that effective accountability presupposes the definition of expected performance criteria relating to the compliance with certain rules (values) or achievement of particular performance level. According to participants *'School accountability is about policy implementation'* and principals are

tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that policies are implemented in their schools. Reporting on school activities, including learner performance, is also seen as one of the key responsibilities of principals:

'When schools are called to account, basically they must come and give a report on their daily activities in achieving their goals of responsibility which is basically teaching'.

A view was expressed during the interview that when school is doing well, it is never called upon to account: *"The current situation is that we account for deviations from the norms"*. This view is consistent with the *'comply or explain'* principle (Institute of Directors in Southern Africa, 2009). In essence, accountability is about ensuring compliance with laws and policies.

- **Clarity of expectations and performance contracts**

Clarity of performance expectation relates to the need to agree on what each party is expected to contribute to the end result and the achievement of the desired outcomes. If the expectations are unclear, the outcomes are unlikely to be realised. Performance contracts and regular reporting could help clarify performance expectation (cf 2.4). As one participant puts it: *'There must be clarity of expectation for accountability to be effective'*.

As was the case with officials, the attitude towards performance contracts was generally negative. The feeling among participants was that the system was not ready for officials and principals to sign performance contracts because:

- *'Contracts might be abused'/'Can be open to abuse'.*
- *'The playing field is not level for this to happen'.*
- *'The ills of the system militate against performance contracts'.*

Certain conditions, which are consistent with the literature review, were put forward by the participants with regard to performance contracts:

- *'We need to have the necessary resources to be held accountable'.*

- *'The contract must be context specific. It must talk to the situation in my school'.*

- **Ethics and Values**

Ethics and values refer to the need for openness and transparency. It is about sharing common values that are underpinned by professionalism, collegiality, honesty, integrity and trust. In the absence of these values, the accountability relationship would be difficult to manage. It was apparent during the interviews that a lack of trust prevails among education stakeholders. The following remarks attest to this assertion:

- *'...officials pick and choose the people they want to get at'.*
- *'There could be serious problems with performance contracts- they could be open to abuse'.*
- *'The ills of the system militates against performance contracts'.*

A general feeling existed among participants that there was no fairness in the workplace. They expressed concern that in some cases managers use their authority inappropriately to target certain people for persecution. They argued that rules are not dispensed equally to every staff member. The lack of trust in the system as expressed in the three quotations above led most participants to being uneasy about signing performance contracts. Participants further argued that unless trust is restored in the system, performance contracts may not be introduced because the conditions are not yet conducive for such a step.

6.4.1d Learner Performance (cf. 6.3.2e)

According to participants, the principal, as the accounting officer in the school, *'is responsible for the performance of learners'*. Monitoring responsibilities of the principal, according to participants, *'include checking whether teachers are teaching the right content i.e. the quality of teaching'*.

Educators on the other hand, are to ensure that quality learning takes place. They are also expected to *'push learners to the maximum of their potential'*. Beyond their teaching responsibilities, educators are also expected to set a good example and promote positive values. Classroom supervision *'is important to secure quality learning'*. The participants however cautioned that *'Classroom monitoring to be developmental and not inspection as was in the past. It must be done in terms of offering support'*. Teacher responsibility includes improving learner performance.

6.4.1e Training and Support

According to Johnson (1999) one of the most distinguishing features of a strong developmental state is the emphasis it places on bureaucratic autonomy, administrative capacities and capabilities and the creation of career and training opportunities to improve their expertise and enhance their commitment.

On the issue of capacity and capability, concern was expressed by the participants about capacity in district/AOs. They alleged that:

- *'Districts are poorly staffed'*.
- *'The positions in districts are occupied by people who don't know their work'*.
- *'They are not equal to their responsibilities'*.

The statement made above point to two things about the staffing of district offices. The first relate to the fact that there are high vacancies in most district offices. The second and third bullet are more damning because they allege that district staff are not competent to the work for which they have been employed. In order to address this concern, credible recruitment processes and procedures must be put in place to ensure that the right people are recruited to positions of responsibility.

6.4.1f Relationship with Stakeholders

One of the key ingredients of effective accountability is a healthy relationship between and among parties to the accountability relationship. Building effective relationship

remains core in securing developmental accountability. At the level of the school, the principal is largely responsible for ensuring that good relationships with stakeholders are nourished and sustained to enjoy their continued support in achieving qualitative learning outcomes. In acknowledging the critical role of stakeholders in education, participants made the following remarks:

- *'Education is a societal issue'.*
- *Schools account 'to all the sectors of society'.*

The views expressed in the two bullets above point to the fact that education provisioning is the responsibility of sectors in society. A point is made that the schools alone cannot be expected to provide quality education without the involvement and support of all the other role-players. For that reason, schools have to account to all critical stakeholders in society because schools do not exist for themselves but they are there to address the educational needs of the society.

6.5 Summary of the Results of the Focus Group Interview with Teacher Unions

In the main, the participants' definition of accountability carried with it some positive connotations. They welcomed the notion of accountability as both necessary and desirable. However, like the education officials, they maintained that accountability was generally poorly understood and implemented.

There was a general feeling that the roles and responsibilities of the different role-players were often not clear at a practical level. This lack of clarity could be ascribed to the fact that parties to the accountability relationship in schools often do not discharge their assigned responsibilities due to incapacity or lack of resources.

The participants agreed that delegation of responsibility was essential in securing effective accountability. As was the case with departmental officials, training and support were identified as being critical in enhancing accountability.

The views of the participants on the importance of performance contracts in enhancing accountability were generally negative. The participants contended that performance contracts were generally intended to catch people out. They maintained that the contracts could be abused. It became clear to the researcher that the lack of understanding was at the heart of the rejection of performance contracts. It also became evident that an accountability relationship cannot succeed in an atmosphere of mistrust.

6.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Among others, the mixed method approach employed in this study confirmed the following:

- That the majority of schools in the province are located in rural areas and therefore accountability processes and practices must take the demographical dynamics of the province into account, i.e. accountability processes and practices must be developmental and context sensitive. This view also found expression during the interviews.
- That the majority of the schools in the North-West Province are generally poor and by extension, also cater for the poorer sectors of the community. Consequently, school level accountability becomes critical if education is to make a difference in the life chances of learners coming from poor socio-economic backgrounds.
- The majority of principals surveyed had the requisite qualifications and experience, suggesting that they are reasonably equipped to manage their schools. Other variables impacting on their performance have to be isolated and confronted to give principals the necessary space and opportunity to manage their schools effectively. Efforts must be made to close the yawning gap between what the principals know should be done and what he/she actually does.
- Both focus group interviews confirmed the need and necessity for school level accountability subject to delegation of responsibility and training and support for all role-players.

- There is a general understanding that accountability processes and practices can, if properly managed and implemented improve learning outcomes and thereby increase the life chances of the majority of learners. particularly those from poor socio-economic backgrounds.