

**SYSTEM ASSESSMENT AND BENCHMARKING FOR EDUCATION RESULTS****SABER****School Autonomy and Accountability  
(Background Paper)**

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## School Autonomy and Accountability

### 1. Introduction

The objective of this paper is to present an assessment scale for benchmarking school autonomy and accountability. This scale is one of the tools being developed under [SABER](#), the System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results initiative created by the World Bank as part of its education strategy (World Bank 2011). The purpose of this scale is to reinforce the monitoring and evaluation of education system performance to foster a better environment for teaching and learning. The goal of this effort is to align the personal and managerial incentives at the school level to produce increased student learning.

The application of the assessment scale can be an important tool for education system reform if it is used as an instrument for planning and monitoring the enabling conditions for improving system performance. As such, it starts with the assumption that increased school autonomy and improved accountability are necessary conditions for improved learning because they align teacher and parent incentives (Bruns, Filmer and Patrinos 2011). Viewed in this context, the assessment scale presented here should be considered as an essential component of an overall strategy for improving learning outcomes (see Box 1).

#### **Box1: A quick definition of School Autonomy and Accountability**

**School autonomy** is a form of school management in which schools are given decision-making authority over their operations, including the hiring and firing of personnel, and the assessment of teachers and pedagogical practices. School management under autonomy may give an important role to the School Council—representing the interests of parents—in budget planning and approval, as well as a voice/vote in personnel decisions. By including the School Council in school management, school autonomy fosters accountability (Di Gropello 2004, 2006; Barrera, Fasih and Patrinos 2009).

In its basic form **accountability** is defined as the acceptance or responsibility and being answerable of one's actions. In school management accountability may take other additional meanings: (i) the act of compliance with the rules and regulations of school governance; (ii) reporting to those with oversight authority over the school and (iii) linking rewards and sanctions to expected results (Heim 1996; Rechebei 2010).

This assertion is consistent with the SABER framework for fostering better school performance that includes three important factors: (a) the periodic measurement of learning outcomes and of teacher performance as the basis for school accountability, (b) the use of school and student performance indicators that can be compared across localities and across time, and (c) the use of rewards/sanctions and policy interventions for aligning personal and school incentives with improved student performance (Elmore, Ablemann and Furchman 1996).

### 2. School Autonomy and Accountability: From Freedom of Teaching to School-Based Management

Historically, school autonomy developed in Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a way to ensure academic freedom, a goal justified by religious and philosophical considerations that continued to hold well past the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Eurydice 2007). In the 1980s, school autonomy reforms in Europe were linked to democratic participation, emphasizing the need for schools to strengthen their link with their respective communities. In some developing countries—especially in Latin America in the 1990s—school autonomy was associated with the restoration of the social contract between schools and parents in an attempt to reduce the role of ideology in the content of public education (Arcia and Belli 1999; Arnove 1994), and on the provision of basic education in areas where there was no access to formal education institutions because of political conflict (Meza, Guzmán and De Varela 2004; Di Gropello 2006). In

contrast, during the 1990s school autonomy in Europe changed course as more countries began to justify it as a vehicle for a more efficient management of public funds. Such a managerial approach to school autonomy was the result of national strategies in which a top-down model of decision-making gave schools operational autonomy without any identifiable driving force coming from parents or the schools themselves (Eurydice 2007).

Both the grassroots-based approach from Latin America and the operational efficiency approach from Europe coincide in applying managerial principles to promote better education quality, but driven by two different modes of accountability to parents and the community: one in which schools render accounts through a participatory school-based management—the Latin American case—and another in which accountability is based on trust in schools and their teachers, as in the case of Europe (see Di Gropello 2004 for the first case; Arcia, Patrinos, Porta and Macdonald 2011 for the second). In either case school autonomy has begun to transform traditional education from a system based on processes and inputs into one driven by results (Hood 2001).

The progression in school autonomy in the last two decades has led to the conceptualization of School-Based Management (SBM) as a form of decentralization in which the school is in charge of most managerial decisions but with the participation of parents and the community through school councils (Barrera, Fasih and Patrinos 2009). SBM is not a set of predetermined policies and procedures, but a continuum of activities and policies put into place to improve the functioning of schools, allowing parents and teachers to focus on improvements in learning. As such, SBM should foster a new social contract between teachers and their community in which local cooperation and local accountability drive improvements in professional and personal performance by teachers (Patrinos 2010).

*Is this conceptualization justified?* The empirical evidence from SBM shows that it can take many forms or combine many activities (Barrera et al. 2009) with differing degrees of success (Table 1). In many countries the implementation of SBM has increased student enrollment, student and teacher attendance, and parent involvement. However, the empirical evidence from Latin America shows very few cases in which SBM has made a significant difference in learning outcomes (Patrinos 2010), while in Europe there is substantial evidence showing a positive impact of school autonomy on learning (Eurydice 2007). What factors explain this difference?

<b>Table 1. Selected experiences with SBM activities and their impacts</b>			
<b>Country</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Kenya	Duflo, Dupas & Kremer (2007)	Extra teachers, smaller class sizes, and peer pairing	Significant gains in test scores after SBM interventions vs control group
Mexico	Murnane, Willett and Cardenas, 2006	Schools given resources for implementing a school plan in consultation with parents <i>Programa Escuelas de Calidad</i> )	Positive impact on dropout rates; No effect on repetition
Mexico	Skoufias & Shapiro 2006	<i>Programa Escuelas de Calidad</i> )	Positive impact on dropout, failure, and repetition rates
Mexico	Lopez-Calva & Espinosa 2006	Parent associations given small amounts for small civil works; <i>Apoyo a la Gestión Escolar</i> )	Positive impact on test scores
Mexico	Gertler, Patrinos, Rubio-Codina 2006 & forthcoming	<i>Apoyo a la Gestión Escolar</i>	Reduction (by 4-5%) in grade repetition and failure rates
Nicaragua	Parker 2005	Programa de Autonomía Escolar	Positive impact on test scores
Nicaragua	Arcia, Porta & Laguna, 2004	Programa de Autonomía Escolar	Small positive effect on student test scores; improvements in teacher and student attendance, school discipline and infrastructure.
El Salvador	Jimenez & Sawada 1999 & 2003	Community associations responsible for administering funds, hiring/firing teachers, monitoring & maintaining infrastructure (EDUCO)	Increases reading scores & decreases absenteeism (1999); Increases retention (2003)
Honduras	Di Gropello & Marshall 2005	School councils have autonomy over hiring & firing teachers, monitoring attendance, managing funds, & maintaining infrastructure (PROHECO)	No effect on test scores; Small changes in dropout rates
Madagascar	Nguyen & Lassibille 2008 forthcoming	Training of all key actors in education sector on their respective roles & responsibilities; equip key actors w/ management manual; increase info. flow through report cards (at school & other levels)	Increased student attendance by 4 percentage points; increase of 0.1 SD in test score (but only in schools where school-level actors trained); improved provider behavior (when intervention at school)

Source: Adapted from Patrinos 2010

An explanation for the difference in outcomes between Latin America and Europe may be in that SBM is analogous to a road map in which there are many routes to get from A to B, but some of them may be closed by obstacles blocking the way. The road map analogy is useful because it presupposes that in order to achieve success SBM activities would have to be interconnected. One could use different routes to get from A to B; some routes may be quicker and some may be faster, and as experience is shared by fellow travelers, a critical route starts to develop. Under current conditions, SBM is at the stage where some

preliminary routes or interconnections have been identified as components of a good route from A to B. Taken further, the road map analogy is useful because the road system can achieve closure—that is—one can get from A to B. In that sense, SBM activities can be a precursor of improved education performance if SBM activities can contribute to a closure in the education system.

## 2.1 SBM as a closed System

Because SBM has taken many forms and supported many different managerial activities, of which only some of them may be interconnected. Unless SBM activities contribute to system closure, they are just a collection of isolated managerial decisions. Therefore, the indicators of SBM that relate to school quality must conform to the concept of a system, in which the presence or absence of some critical components within the system allow or preclude system closure.

As components of a managerial system, SBM activities may behave as mediating variables: they produce an enabling environment for teachers and students, allowing for pedagogical variables, school inputs, and personal effort to work as intended.

*Finding the tipping point: When do SBM components become critical for learning?* Intuitively, the managerial component of a school system is a necessary but not sufficient condition for learning, but the improper functioning of a school or a school system can be a substantial barrier to success. One can fix some managerial components and obtain no results or alter some other components and obtain good results. What combination of components is crucial for success are still under study, but the emerging body of practice point to a set of variables that foster managerial *autonomy*, the *assessment* of results, and the use of the assessment to promote *accountability* among all stakeholders (Bruns, Filmer and Patrinos 2011).

In that vein it is clear that for managerial factors to become critical the system has to achieve *closure* before their components reach a critical status. If a system closes, the sudden rupture in one of its components only leads to an imperfect solution. Therefore, defining a managerial system that can achieve closure is conceptually important. If an SBM system is unable to close, are partial solutions effective? Yes, in a broad sense, in which schools can still function but their degree of effectiveness and efficiency would be lower than if the system closes. In this regard, *SBM can achieve closure when it enforces enough autonomy to evaluate its results and use those results to hold someone accountable.*

The concept of system closure is extremely important for SBM, since it transform its components from a list of managerial activities to a set of interconnected variables that when working together can improve system performance. The remaining question is: *when does a Government know that its SBM system can close?*

SBM activities can pertain to any of the following themes:

- budget allocations
- the hiring and firing of teachers and staff
- curriculum development; the choice and procurement of textbooks and materials
- school infrastructure
- the monitoring and evaluation of teacher performance and student learning outcomes

Based on the available evidence presented in more than 30 technical reports (Patrinos 2009), SBM has been implemented as a series of managerial decisions affecting parent participation and financial accountability, and less as a managerial system in which assessment is a key component that can help reach system closure (Clarke 2010). Still, the theoretical framework that has been developed from the

body of evidence leads to the conclusion that *SBM variables can have a significant impact on results in the long run if they affect teacher motivation and if results are measured and disseminated with regularity. Taking this finding further, it can be argued that in those countries where learning assessment is a key component of SBM, then School-Based Management can be a critical component of sustainable learning.*

This last conclusion is very important because it means that *SBM can achieve system closure when autonomy, student assessment, and accountability, are operationally interrelated through the functions of the school councils, the policies for improving teacher quality, and Education Management Information Systems (Figure 1).*

School Councils are crucial for implementing school autonomy because they become the representatives of the school clients: parents and students. As such, the School Council can be a resource to school management in the process of tailoring school services (curricula, teaching materials, school calendar, and teacher selection) to the needs of students. A more active role of School Councils in school governance can make school autonomy more effective.

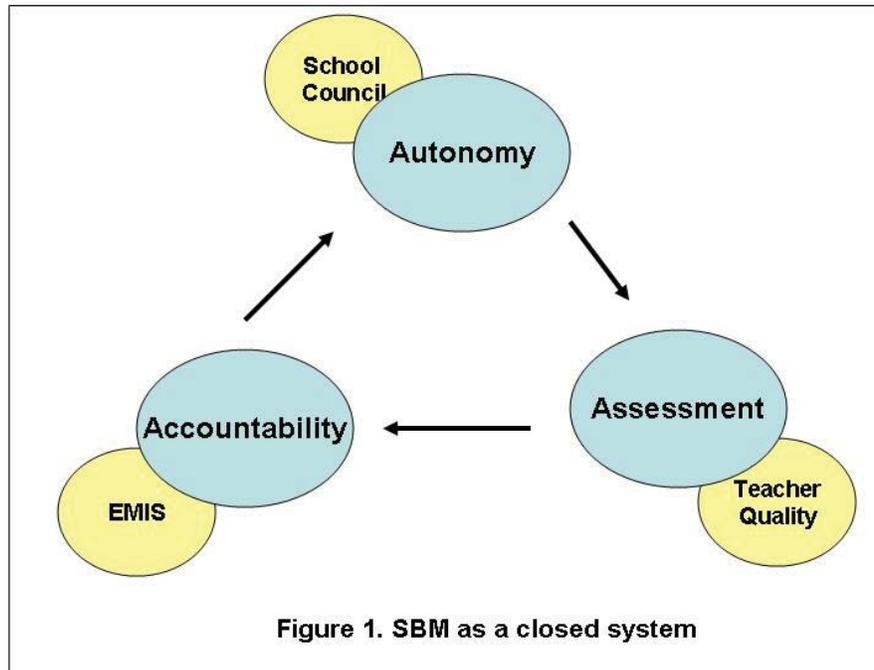
Teacher quality is interrelated with the assessment of teachers and students. The main objective of any assessment system is to monitor learning, which in turn is strongly linked to teacher quality. Hence, for the education system to achieve closure, one needs to link school and student assessment to teacher performance and teacher quality.

Finally, the EMIS is linked to accountability because it is the mechanism in place to report on performance indicators at the school and system levels. EMIS enforce accountability to the extent that it is fed data of good quality and it is used to produce reports that are informative to parents and society about the performance of the education sector.

In summary, the interrelation between Autonomy, Assessment, and Accountability (AAA) must be made operational by reinforcing the roles of school councils, policies aimed at improving teacher quality, and the operation of an Education Management Information System. Otherwise, there is a risk that the AAA system may not reach closure.

It must be pointed out that the above links are conceptual in nature, since the empirical evidence tends to confound these factors. However, in managerial terms it is clear that the point of contact between autonomous schools and their clients is primarily through the school council (Corrales, 2006). Similarly, school assessments are the vehicles used by schools to determine their needs for changes in pedagogical practices and to determine the training needs of their teachers. Both, pedagogical changes and teacher training are determinant factors of teacher quality (Vegas 2001). Finally, the role of EMIS on accountability has been well established and it is bound to increase as technology makes it easier to report on indicators of internal efficiency and on standardized test scores (Bruns, Filmer, and Patrinos 2011).

All of these links will be fleshed out in subsequent sections of this document.



Source: Authors

## 2.2 Implementing Autonomy, Assessment and Accountability

If there is a low level of understanding about the systemic nature of the relationship between autonomy, school assessment, and accountability, then it may help explain their piecemeal implementation, especially in Latin America. Specifically, not understanding the link between teacher quality and student performance has led to too much trust on the power of organizational incentives, which has resulted in the implementation of most of the conditions for success but no system closure.

The conceptual framework developed by Clarke (2010) to analyze educational assessment can be adapted to describe the requirements for the implementation of educational autonomy, educational assessment, and accountability. As a conceptual framework it helps explain why the same activities of an SBM system can produce different results from country to country, the main reason being that in each country there may have been large variations in the enabling environment, in the alignment of SBM activities with other components of the educational system, and in the levels of technical quality inherent to some key factors of the learning process.

### 2.3.1 Effective autonomy

The enabling environment necessary for the proper functioning of the Autonomy-Assessment-Accountability framework can make the difference between real or fake autonomy (Table 2). To work properly, school autonomy must have political support at the central and local levels, it should have a

legal framework that allows autonomy to function unimpeded, and should have the assent of teachers. If teachers are not in agreement what happens in the classroom will be very different from what autonomy intended (Arcia, Porta, and Laguna, 2004).

	<b>Autonomy</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Accountability</b>
Enabling Environment	Political support Legal framework Cooperation by teachers	Assessment Policy Funding Institutional structure	Clear rules Long term vision Individual vs. systemic
System alignment	Education law Decentralization law Fiscal transfers	Tests aligned with goals Strategy for use of information on assessments	School management Teacher management Legal framework Decentralization
Technical quality	Teacher training Parent training	Technical and professional standards Technical analyses	Clear rules Clear results Clear messages

Source: Prepared by the authors

Aside from the enabling environment, school autonomy needs to be aligned with other components of the education system, such as the education law, the decentralization law, and the regulations governing fiscal transfers from the central government. In Nicaragua, for example, the lack of an education law and the misalignment with the laws governing fiscal transfers to municipal governments created a lot of confusion among municipal governments, which saw school autonomy as a problem of the Ministry of Education and not as devolution of power to the local level. As a result, for several years there was confusion among stakeholders as to the meaning and intent of school autonomy. Some stakeholders thought that school autonomy was a precursor to the privatization of education, and some others thought that it was a partial abdication of responsibilities from the central government (Arcia, Porta, and Laguna, 2004). In Honduras, where teachers unions are extremely powerful, the positive experience of the PROHECO schools has not been scaled up; unions refuse to implement student testing or mechanisms of accountability, even though both policies have already been agreed upon between the union and the Government (Arcia and Gargiulo 2010). In this case, the political economy of accountability precludes the implementation of an existing law. The lack of political support in the case of Honduras results in a weak enabling environment for SBM reform.

As for technical quality in relation to autonomy, a key enabling factor is the link between parents and teachers in rendering accounts and in asking for accounts. Teachers should go beyond having perfunctory meetings with parents and embrace a new mental model in which parents are a teacher's client and, as such, have substantive authority over their jobs and, as such, are entitled to information about school performance. On the positive side, this model allows parents to be closer to teachers and understand their concerns, leading to better teacher incentives and better working conditions. On the other hand, parents need to be trained in accountability, since asking for accounts requires knowing what they should ask for.

### **2.3.2 Effective assessment**

Most of the SBM examples from Latin America show that the assessment component was largely absent from school management. With some exceptions, local schools did not measure learning, nor did they measure the capabilities of teachers in order to set baselines with which to measure progress. As a result, assessment cannot be used to reinforce accountability, and the SBM system does not close (Di Gropello 2004).

To be effective, school assessment should be part of a subsystem in which the types of assessment activities and the quality of those activities make a big difference in the reinforcement of accountability.

In particular, the use of proper classroom assessment by teachers, as well as the use of standardized tests for evaluating language and math skills, can be extremely important for achieving system closure.

Assessment cannot operate in a vacuum. It needs an enabling environment which includes having in place a policy for educational assessment that goes beyond measuring and analyzing test scores (Clarke 2010). Teachers fear the misuse of test scores because they can be vehicles for punishment without a context—disadvantaged children may have a hard time improving learning even if they have the best teachers; education ministers may fear that a lack of progress in test scores reflects poorly on their tenure, and elected governments may fear that poor test scores may be used as a campaign issue against them. As a result, test scores carry with them large conflicts of interest among key stakeholders. Managing those conflicts of interest may mean outlining a clear policy for the use of test scores in accountability, or the slow build up of a set of criteria by which to use test scores to measure learning. Classroom assessments by teachers are perhaps a better vehicle to connect with parents and to gain their increased participation and support, but the lack of standards for comparability over time or across schools render classroom assessments less useful for overall accountability.

Aside from the need to have an assessment policy in place, educational assessment needs to have continuous funding and the organizational structure to undertake the assessment exercises. This is an area where the fears associated with assessment results support the lack of efforts at putting into place an assessment system, which requires an institutional structure and stable funding.

In terms of system alignment, the measurement of educational results must align what children need to know with what the tests ask from them. Moreover, the policies for the use of the test results information must be aligned with the long term goals of education. Measuring is good, but misusing the results can produce bad consequences.

Finally, an effective assessment requires well defined technical and professional standards, which take time to develop, and the capability for analyzing the results in ways that can reinforce education policies, teachers training, and schools, without having to fear retribution at the local level.

### **2.3.3 Effective Accountability**

With autonomy and assessment in place, one can reach system closure if both are linked to accountability. However, the concept of accountability can be complicated (Heim 1996). Taken literally, it may mean the payment of a yearly bonus to a school for a positive evaluation by parents, or the use of sanctions for a negative evaluation by parents. In the medium term it may mean the application of a reward system based on test scores or on comparisons the performance of other schools with very similar socioeconomic characteristics. It may also mean the redistribution of local revenues by the community to increase teacher salaries above the level allowed by the fiscal transfer. In any of those cases one must trust that the decisions taken by parents and local schools respond to a correct input. Again, the fear associated with test scores is not about the results, but about the use of the results to ask for accounts.

To be effective, accountability must have an enabling environment which includes clear rules for asking and rendering accounts, a vision of accountability that is based on what is good for the school instead of what is good for a particular classroom, and a clear differentiation between individual accountability—usually tied to rules of conduct and personnel evaluations—and systemic accountability, which refers to institutional incentives and their repercussion over individual incentives.

Accountability at the school level must also be aligned with other components of the educational system, such as SBM activities that are already in place. If SBM is not in place the system does not close and one is bound to ask for accounts in a vacuum. As in the case of autonomy, system alignment in accountability

also implies the existence of a legal framework—especially in financial and human resource management—and alignment with the policies related to decentralization. Education cannot face unfunded mandates due to poorly conceived or poorly implemented decentralization policies.

At the technical level, local accountability requires the development of clear rules, clear results and clear messages for all involved. Clear rules refer to procedures for dealing with the ways in which parents and the school administration interacts with teachers and with the regional and central levels of the Ministry of Education. Clear results refer to the technical aspects of assessment, in which one must rely on adequate technical analysis before reaching a conclusion regarding educational measurements and the interpretation of outcomes, lest major misinterpretations happen, as it did in several Latin American countries (Ravela 2002).

### 2.3.4 Teachers and teacher management as part of the Autonomy, Assessment and Accountability system

As mentioned at the outset, the enforcement of School-Based *managerial* activities is a necessary but insufficient condition for improving learning (Vegas and Umansky 2005). In the end, what happens in the classroom at the point of interaction between teachers and students determines a great deal of the learning that goes on among students. Regarding the role of teacher quality on learning, the World Bank (2004) cites many studies conducted between 1997 and 2003 in which the importance of teachers in student learning is confirmed. The overall evidence of these studies confirms the assertion that SBM can foster teacher effectiveness if it addresses personal incentives. Therefore, when looking for system closure in the Autonomy, Assessment, and Accountability continuum, one needs to include teacher management and teacher incentives to arrive at some important implications for the success of SBM:

- a. School-based management can make teachers more accountable if hiring and firing decisions are made locally, if wages are defined locally, and if teacher’s incentives are understood better at the local level. However, if the teacher’s technical and pedagogical capabilities are low, increased accountability may not yield improved learning.
- b. Improving communications between teachers and parents may increase a teacher’s understanding of the needs of the students, leading to improved teaching.
- c. If teachers perceive SBM as a threat and feel vulnerable to the whims of local stakeholders, SBM activities could be interpreted negatively. In other situations the opposite could be true and teachers could feel more empowered by SBM.

More formally, some possible links between SBM and teacher quality may be established, leading to a better understanding of the role of teacher quality on SBM system closure (Table 3).

<b>Table 3. Possible Links between teaching quality and Autonomy, Assessment and Accountability</b>	
<b>Factors affecting teaching</b>	<b>Link to Autonomy, Assessment and Accountability</b>
Adequate infrastructure and teaching materials	School climate; non-salary incentives for teacher, budget allocation by parents
Definition of clear roles for teachers by Directors and Parents	Director’s pedagogical leadership; parent’s participation; benchmarks for academic performance by students
Clear, transparent rules for teacher selection and assignment to schools	Autonomy in hiring and firing
Monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning	Director’s pedagogical leadership, teacher assessment, parent’s participation, test scores
Instructional leadership and professional development for supporting teacher professional communities	Director’s pedagogical leadership, teacher assessment, non-salary incentives for teachers
Professional autonomy and classroom authority	Pedagogical autonomy, teacher assessment,

<b>Table 3. Possible Links between teaching quality and Autonomy, Assessment and Accountability</b>	
<b>Factors affecting teaching</b>	<b>Link to Autonomy, Assessment and Accountability</b>
	Director's pedagogical leadership
Effective salary and non-salary incentives	Managerial autonomy, salary incentives, teacher assessment, parent participation

Source: Adapted by authors from Vegas and Umansky 2005 and Barrera et al. 2009.

A quick overview of Table 3 suggests that SBM activities placed within the framework of Autonomy, Assessment, and Accountability can have a significant impact on teacher quality and, by inference, on student learning. So far, the impacts of SBM have been significant in many areas except student learning, suggesting that the estimation models of SBM impacts may need to include the above factors in the evaluation process. Still, Table 3 can lead to two important conclusions:

- *SBM can be linked to improved learning if teaching quality improves, and*
- *SBM can be an important factor in improving teaching quality.*

These two conclusions suggest that indicators related to teacher management and teacher quality should be part of the SBM system, and that including SBM activities along the lines of these new indicators would improve the probabilities of system closure and the arrival of a better solution.

#### **4. School Autonomy and Accountability Assessment Scale (SAAS)**

Understanding that SBM activities are part of a system significantly alters the conceptualization of SBM indicators of Autonomy and Accountability, since now they should be linked in some ways that result in system closure. The result is SAAS, the assessment scale used for determining the depth of autonomy and accountability in an education system. SAAS helps diagnose the status of SBM in a given country, where some subcomponents of the system may be in nascent form while other subcomponents may already be functioning well. The fact that some subcomponents may be at the nascent stage may be simply a reflection of the political economy of SBM in a given country, where some legal or institutional barriers may take more time to be surmounted.

##### **4.1 SAAS Indicators of School Autonomy and Accountability**

These indicators are all about authority, especially the authority of parents over school resources. By giving authority to School Councils, where parents must participate, SBM incorporates parent incentives into the planning and resource allocation process. Moreover, one of the indicators of autonomy relates to the hiring and firing of teachers, which transforms parents into clients of the school system, thus alleviating one of the most difficult issues associated with the agency problems of education. The system's approach to Autonomy, Assessment, and Accountability strongly suggests that their indicators move along a continuum of strength, with some areas becoming stronger before others. By examining indicators in terms of strength one could anticipate the pace and depth of the SBM reforms.

There are two sets of indicators for school autonomy; one for school authority over the use of the school budget—as well as authority to seek additional funds from non-government sources—and another set of indicators dealing with authority over school personnel—the authority to hire and fire teachers and staff.. Each set of indicators has three potential levels of strength, each of which is described in an assessment matrix. Table 4 presents the assessment matrix for autonomy in budget management, while Table 5 presents the assessment matrix for autonomy over school personnel. It must be pointed out that the content of each of the cells in the assessment matrix is just an approximation. As the protocol is tested in the field and more case studies are accumulated it is bound to be redefined accordingly.

<b>Table 4. SAAS Indicators of school autonomy in budget management</b>			
<b>SAAS Indicator 1A</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Does the school director have legal authority to manage its operational budget?	No. The operational budget is centrally allocated by the Ministry of Education	No. The operational budget is allocated at the municipal level.	Yes. School directors have the legal authority to manage the funds allocated at the central and municipal levels.
<b>SAAS Indicator 1B</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Does the school director have legal authority to set and manage staff and teacher salaries?	No. All salaries are set and managed centrally by the Ministry of Education	Some. Teacher salaries are set and managed at the central or municipal levels, but the school director has legal authority to set and manage the salaries of administrative and support staff.	Yes. School directors have the legal authority to set and manage the salaries of teachers and staff.
<b>SAAS Indicator 1C</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Does the school director have the legal authority to raise other funds in addition to the transfers received from national or sub-national sources?	No. Budget is fixed by the Ministry of Education	Yes. School directors can request more funds from sub-national governments.	Yes. School directors can raise additional funds from national and sub-national governments, from the private sector, and from non-governmental institutions.

Source: Authors

The set of indicators in Table 4 deal with central-local finance issues. The fiscal transfers given to schools are under local control, and that fact allows parents and teachers to monitor central budgetary allocations. These indicators help schools fight for central resources since they can use the indicators of assessment to render accounts of student performance and in the process use moral suasion to get increased funding from the central level.

<b>Table 5. SAAS Indicator 2: School autonomy in personnel management</b>			
<b>SAAS Indicator 2A</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Are hiring and firing decisions of teachers managed by the school director?	No. Personnel decisions are managed by collective agreements at the national level	Yes. Personnel decisions are managed by collective agreement but the school director can select teachers. However, firing decisions are regulated by the	Yes. School directors have the legal authority to hire and fire teachers.

<b>Table 5. SAAS Indicator 2: School autonomy in personnel management</b>			
<b>SAAS Indicator 2A</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
		collective agreement.	
<b>SAAS Indicator 2B</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Do School Councils (which may include the school director) have legal authority to hire and fire teachers?	No. Personnel decisions area managed by collective agreements at the national level	No. School Councils can have a voice on the selection or separation of teachers, but it has no legal authority to make decisions on personnel changes.	Yes. School Councils have the legal authority to hire and fire teachers.
<b>SAAS Indicator 2C</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Do School Councils have legal authority to hire and fire the school director?	No. School directors are selected and managed at the level of the Ministry of Education or at the municipal level.	No. The School Council can ask for the hiring and firing of a director but the decision is made by the national or sub-national authorities	Yes. School Council has the legal authority to hire and fire the school director

Source: Authors

The indicators for autonomy in personnel management give clear signal to teachers that the School Council has authority over them; it hires them, it oversees their salaries and their performance, and are their source of additional support. This realization should make teachers more responsive to parent’s needs. In some school systems in Europe, where teachers are contracted under collective agreement or under civil service rules, the degree of autonomy over personnel administration is limited. In these countries—as will be seen later—the central and local governments have in place a very stringent selection process, in which most of the initial effort goes into selecting the best teacher candidates. In these case one could argue that the role of school autonomy on personnel management is done at the very beginning—through the selection process undertaken by local governments.

The third set of indicators is shown in Table 6. This set relates to the participation of the School Council in the management of school finances. The participation of issue of the school council in school finances has several links to autonomy and accountability. First, it allows for the school to render financial accounts to parents, which fosters efficiency in resource use; it allows for school councils to seek additional funds for the school from non-governmental sources; it allows for schools to articulate the financial implications of their work plans in a way that school councils can understand, and it can help school councils demand more resources or better financial accountability at other levels of government.

<b>Table 6. SAAS Indicator 3: Participation of the School Council in School Finance</b>			
<b>SAAS Indicator 3A</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Does the School Council assist the school in the preparation of the school budget?	No. School budgets are prepared at the national level	Yes. School Councils have a voice on non-salary expenses at the school level but the director makes the final decisions.	Yes. Schools Council participates in the preparation of the school budget

SAAS Indicator 3B	Strength of Indicator		
	Low	Medium	High
Do School Councils have legal authority to approve the school budget?	No. Only the government has authority to approve the school budget	No. School Councils may be consulted but budget approval is done at the municipal level.	Yes. Schools Council have legal authority to approve the school budget
SAAS Indicator 3C	Strength of Indicator		
	Low	Medium	High
Is there a manual or set of instructions describing the participation of the School Councils in the preparation of the school budget?	No. School Councils are not expected to participate in the preparation of the school budget	No. There are only manuals regulating the procedures for expressing their voice on budget issues.	Yes. Schools Council have manuals regulating their roles and responsibilities in the preparation of the budget
SAAS Indicator 3D	Strength of Indicator		
	Low	Medium	High
Do School Councils have legal authority to supervise the implementation of the school budget?	No. School Councils are not expected to supervise the implementation of the school budget.	No. School Councils can have a voice on the implementation of the school budget but no supervisory authority.	Yes. Schools Council legal authority to supervise the implementation of the school budget.
SAAS Indicator 3E	Strength of Indicator		
	Low	Medium	High
If School Councils participate in the preparation and approval of the school budget is this budget used as an input in the general budget prepared by the Ministry of Education?	No. Budgetary decisions are made at the national and sub-national levels	Yes. The budgets are sent to the national and sub-national levels as recommendations for the final allocation of resources.	Yes. National and sub-national authorities use these budgets as their main input for the final transfer of resources to the school

Source: Authors

The participation of the school council in school management it is linked to school autonomy because it is part of the local school management team, and it is also linked to accountability because it forms part of the budget approval and supervision process. Such dual role can sometimes generate conflicts of interest, as in the case of schools that receive funding on the base of student enrollment. In such cases it is possible for a school council to play plausible deniability and let the school inflate enrollment to get more funds from the central government. Obviously, like any crime, it can happen as long as supervision and the enforcement of rules remain weak.

#### 4.2 SAAS Indicators of school Assessment

School assessments may take many forms, but it should deal with two main issues: the integrity of the assessment process and the use of yearly assessment of teachers and students to evaluate school performance. The main idea of the indicators for school and student assessment is that the school and its community take assessments as a routine task to be performed at the school. By making this task routine it is bound to become a managerial tool and not a punitive tool. Within this indicator the School Council could well contract a third party to conduct the assessment. Table 7 presents the set of indicators for assessment, and its links with accountability.

<b>Table 7. SAAS Indicator 4: Assessment of school and student performance</b>			
<b>SAAS Indicator 4A</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Do schools perform yearly assessments of school and student performance?	No. Schools do not assess school or student performance on a regular basis.	Yes. Schools have assessments of school and student performance but not on a yearly basis.	Yes. Schools have yearly assessment of school and student performance
<b>SAAS Indicator 4B</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Are schools assessments used for making administrative or pedagogical decisions aimed at improving school and student performance?	No. Schools do not assess school or student performance on a regular basis.	Yes. Schools use their assessments to make short-term administrative and pedagogical adjustments	Yes. Schools use the yearly assessments to track the impact of short and long term administrative and pedagogical adjustments on school and student performance
<b>SAAS Indicator 4C</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Do schools perform yearly assessments of learning outcomes using standardized tests?	No. Assessments are not standardized	Yes. Assessments are standardized but results are not comparable from year to year	Yes. Assessments are standardized and comparable from year to year
<b>SAAS Indicator 4D</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Are schools assessments using standardized tests used for making administrative or pedagogical decisions aimed at improving school and student performance?	No. Schools do not assess school or student performance on a regular basis.	Yes. Schools use the results to make short-term administrative and pedagogical adjustments	Yes. Schools use the results to track the impact of short and long term administrative and pedagogical adjustments on school and student performance
<b>SAAS Indicator 4E</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Are the results of the assessment of school and student performance made public to parents?	No. Assessments are only available to the educational authorities and to school personnel	Yes. Assessments are made public but no comparisons are made with similar schools or with previous years	Yes. Assessments are made public with comparisons made with similar schools and with previous years

Source: Authors

### 4.3 SAAS Indicators of School Accountability

In order to be consistent with the use of assessments as managerial tools, accountability should also be routine and objective. To that effect the proposed indicators rely on the social and economic context of the school to make comparisons with other schools of similar social and economic conditions. The main idea here is that accountability has a context and that context is important for evaluating progress. As a result, teachers may feel encouraged to see school assessments taking into account internal progress throughout the years, as well as progress relative to schools of similar levels of social and economic conditions.

Accountability with a context means that the publication of the results of student performance and the position of the school relative to years past, as well as in relation to schools in similar conditions can be empowering to teachers and parents. Table 8 presents the set of indicators for accountability. They include indicators for financial accountability. The indicator of financial accountability is important

because it can be used as a source of support for teachers and the director. Parents tend to look teachers and directors more favorably if they are well aware that the production of good results often is tied to adequate funding. As academic accountability becomes more routine—a fact that is strongly associated with SBM—then financial support can be forthcoming.

<b>Table 8. SAAS Indicator 5: School Accountability</b>			
<b>SAAS Indicator 5A</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Is there a manual regulating the use of the results of the yearly assessments of school and student performance by the School Council?	No. Assessments are only available to the educational authorities and to school personnel	Yes. School Councils have guidelines for using the assessments, but the recommendations do not include personnel actions	Yes. School Councils have guidelines for using the assessments, including recommendations about personnel actions
<b>SAAS Indicator 5B</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Is the school assessment of school and student performance part of a national or regional assessment system?	No. Assessments are set by the school for its own use	Yes. Assessments are components of a national or sub-national exercise but there is no long term plan for the use of the results	Yes. Assessments are components of a national or sub-national exercise and they form part of a long term plan for the use of the results
<b>SAAS Indicator 5C</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Are the results of the assessments used to compare school performance with schools in similar conditions?	No. Assessments are managed by the national and sub-national authorities for their own use	Yes. Assessments results at the school or sub-national level are made public but school-specific data are only known by school authorities.	Yes. Assessments results are made public at the school level and comparisons are made with other schools and regions.
<b>SAAS Indicator 5D</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Do School Councils have the legal authority to hire external auditors to perform financial audits at the school?	No. School Councils have no legal authority over the school financial affairs	No. School councils can be consulted over the school finances but legal authority is outside of their realm	Yes. School Councils have legal authority to perform external financial audits
<b>SAAS Indicator 5E</b>	<b>Strength of Indicator</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Is there a manual to guide the School Council in the use of financial audits to evaluate school performance?	No. School Councils have no legal authority over the school financial affairs	No. There is a manual guiding the participation of the School Council that excludes financial audits because the Council lacks legal authority over the school finances	Yes. School Councils have a manual for guiding them in the use of external financial audits in school accountability

Source: Authors

## **5. A Field Application of the Autonomy and Accountability Assessment Scale**

This section reports on the application of the assessment scale in several countries in Europe. The main reason for applying it in the European context first is that school autonomy and accountability in high performing countries do not generally conform to the forms taken in Latin America. However, to create a valid scale, their operating characteristics—backed by the fact that their education system produces good learning outcomes—should be considered during the refinement process of the assessment scale.

School autonomy as a tool for managerial efficiency has been an evolving policy in most European countries since the 1970's. Traditionally, schools in Europe—especially in the primary and lower secondary levels—were centrally managed, especially in areas related to personnel and curricula. By 2010 all countries in Europe had implemented different types of school autonomy, mainly through the funding and supervision of schools by municipal governments (Eurydice 2007). Since school autonomy was associated with the different patterns of decentralization, it did not have a common approach to school management—school autonomy had different characteristics from country to country. As a result, the use of benchmarking indicators is necessary to analyze how school autonomy shapes school-based management.

Similarly, accountability has been a recurring theme in Europe but in a more formal and systematic way—through regional efforts at measuring student learning, where the educational authorities and society at large are the ones enforcing accountability. The presence of strong formal institutions and a long tradition of professional development in the teaching profession may have reduced considerably the need to render accounts directly to parents (Miljevic 2009).

The analysis of autonomy and accountability was done in two phases: first, personal interviews were conducted with leading education researchers and policy analysts in Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Spain, and The Netherlands. In addition, interviews were conducted with technical staff at the Eurydice program of the European Commission in Brussels, and at the OECD headquarters in Paris. Second, Education profiles and data for each of the six countries were analyzed, and then the scoring matrix was filled out with the aid of a questionnaire. Below is a summary of the main findings.

### **5.1 Budgetary autonomy in budget and personnel management**

In all of the countries surveyed, school budgets are not geared toward teacher incentives; teachers are generally civil servants, even in cases such as the Netherlands, a high performing country where the School Board has a substantial role in school management and supervision. As a result, these countries finance education on the basis of civil service salaries, with contributions from municipal governments for infrastructure maintenance and school materials. In essence, in these six countries teacher salaries seem to be necessary but insufficient conditions for accountability.

Two common threads were found in all the countries:

- a. Teacher salaries were competitive with the salaries of other professions, such as engineering and medicine; in Denmark, Finland, Spain, and the Netherlands teacher salaries are slightly higher than the GDP per capita, while in Hungary they are about 90% of GDP per capita (OECD 2008: 440)
- b. Teacher selection was highly demanding

These two factors may help explain why teachers unions concentrate their efforts on in-service training needs, on working conditions, and on professional development; unions behave as guilds, not as adversarial institutions.

It helps that in all countries demographic pressure is low. The student-age population for primary and secondary school represents about 15% of the total. In contrast, in Central America, the student-age population is close to 30% of the total. As a result, the demand for teachers does not face the short pressures of countries with population growth above replacement rates. Ironically, the Netherlands may be facing a shortage of young teachers because old teachers are still working and the population is growing so slowly that the cohort of new entrants to the profession is not large enough to cover the impending growth in demand, especially in the new immigrant population (de Vijlder 2001). It also helps that these countries have developed highly demanding teacher training programs and strict teacher selection processes.

## **5.2 School and student assessment**

All countries assess teachers and students, but assessment methods are highly diverse. The extreme approach is found in Finland, where each school decides on how to assess teachers and students, using the information internally only. According to the OECD (2008), school and student assessments are used to provide feedback to schools, with no intent to use results to affect school financing, rewards or sanctions to schools or teachers. The key issue here is that, whatever they do, they take it seriously, using the assessment results to make changes to their methods, their resource mix, and their teacher training. Do they take assessment seriously because selected teachers are interested in being good professionals, and because of the trust placed in them by society?

## **5.3 School Councils, parental participation and accountability**

In some of the high-performing countries parents are passive observers; they only visit the school for ceremonies or when they have individual issues, especially related to discipline or special education needs. In the Netherlands the School Board is the main actor at the local level. The presence or absence of a strong role for school councils differs from the model of SBM in that School Councils in Europe take mostly an advisory role, leaving school management to the professionals. Even in the Netherlands, where the School Board is very important in the system, professionals play a role. Large school boards, administering 30 to 50 schools, are professional organizations that pay their members to do their supervisory job. Again, the lesson learned here is that parents do not need to be the center of accountability if there are already well-running institutions that complement teachers of good quality. In fact, the above model suggests that if a school system is supported by a strong institutional framework, parent participation in school councils—and the use of school councils as quasi-government institutions enforcing accountability—is a second-best solution.

## **5.4 SBM and decentralization**

During the interviews it became clear that despite their high performing status, the countries themselves can be highly critical of their own system. However, they are in a constant process of evaluation and renewal. In particular, as in the case of the Netherlands and Spain, ethnic and regional inequalities have become motives of concern.

In particular, the issue of decentralized government has become central to education policy. Some analysts interviewed point out that decentralized education can help get parents and students closer to the providers of education, ensuring better access to pedagogical and managerial methods more in tune with their needs. Such an approach, if taken to the limit, may result in a fragmented education system where standards may be reduced and local community values may become too parochial to benefit society at large (Ritzen, van Domelen and de Vijlder 1997).

Still, *decentralized education is a common factor in all of the systems reviewed*, where municipal governments have a substantial say in the financing of education, in education content, and in education accountability. All of the countries included in this report are decentralized, and all of them have clear rules for the fiscal transfers at the central and municipal levels. Inasmuch as they represent a new model of governance in which citizens are closer to the providers of public goods, decentralization has a strong impact on education accountability and, by extension, on education quality.

## 5.5 SAAS Application Results

Each SAAS sub-indicator was given a value of 1 (Low), 2 (Medium), or 3 (High) depending on the response to the questionnaire, and the overall score for all sub-indicators were classified in four-category scale: Latent, Emerging, Established, and Mature. The following color scale is used to symbolize the degree of implementation of each sub-indicator Table 9.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Categorization of Total Score for SAAS Indicators 1 and 2</b>	<b>Categorization of Total Score for SAAS Indicators 3, 4 and 5</b>
<b>Latent</b>	1,2, 3	5,6,7
<b>Emerging</b>	4,5	8,9,10
<b>Established</b>	6,7	11,12,13
<b>Mature</b>	8,9	14,15

The results of applying the SAAS are summarized in Table 10. For each country Table 10 lists the scores for each SAAS sub-indicator [1 (low), 2 (medium) or 3 (high)] based on the responses to the questionnaire. The row totals for the sub-indicator scores are categorized into Latent, Emerging, Established and Mature depending on the total score obtained for each sub indicator.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The semantics of this classification may change from study to study. If one uses the McKinsey [REF] scale an analogous categorization would be: Poor, Fair, Good, and Great.

Table 10. Country Scoring on SAAS and SAAS sub-indicators						
Country	SAAS Indicator Score					SAAS Value
<b>Budget Autonomy</b>	<b>1A</b>	<b>1B</b>	<b>1C</b>			
Denmark	3	2	2			7
Finland	2	1	1			4
Hungary	3	3	3			9
Poland	2	2	1			5
The Netherlands	2	1	2			5
Spain	3	2	3			8
<b>Personnel Autonomy</b>	<b>2A</b>	<b>2B</b>	<b>2C</b>			
Denmark	1	3	2			6
Finland	2	3	3			8
Hungary	2	1	1			4
Poland	3	1	3			7
The Netherlands	1	3	3			7
Spain	1	1	1			3
<b>Participation Finance</b>	<b>3A</b>	<b>3B</b>	<b>3C</b>	<b>3D</b>	<b>3E</b>	
Denmark	3	3	3	3	3	15
Finland	1	2	2	3	2	10
Hungary	1	1	1	1	1	5
Poland	3	2	3	2	2	12
The Netherlands	3	3	3	3	2	14
Spain	1	1	1	1	1	5
<b>Assessment</b>	<b>4A</b>	<b>4B</b>	<b>4C</b>	<b>4D</b>	<b>4E</b>	
Denmark	3	3	3	3	2	14
Finland	3	3	2	3	2	13
Hungary	3	3	1	2	1	10
Poland	3	3	3	3	1	13
The Netherlands	2	2	3	3	3	13
Spain	3	3	1	1	1	9
<b>Accountability</b>	<b>5A</b>	<b>5B</b>	<b>5C</b>	<b>5D</b>	<b>5E</b>	
Denmark	1	3	2	3	3	12
Finland	1	1	1	3	2	8
Hungary	1	1	2	2	2	8
Poland	2	3	2	3	3	13
The Netherlands	3	1	1	3	3	11
Spain	1	1	1	1	1	5

Source: Questionnaire results

A quick look at the wide variation in the distribution of colors in the Row Total Score suggests that school autonomy and accountability take many forms, and that there is no pattern that explains the high level of educational performance. At most, there seem to be a trend towards medium levels of implementation in the sub-indicators used for the assessment.

Individually, sub-indicators 4A (Do schools perform yearly assessments of school and student performance?); 4B (Are schools assessments used for making administrative or pedagogical decisions aimed at improving school and student performance?); and 5D (Do School Councils have the legal authority to hire external auditors to perform financial audits at the school?) show consistently high scores

across all countries. Otherwise, there is wide variation in the sub-indicator scores and no discernable pattern.

## 6. Conclusions

Although SBM could be seen as a series of actions leading to improved autonomy, assessment and accountability, the implementation of those actions must be seen within the context of a system. Even when implemented as planned, SBM is a continuum of activities that should be interrelated and with a context. In isolation, SBM activities may improve the performance of process variables, such as school attendance, but may yield inconsistent results in terms of gains in test scores. If SBM is considered as a managerial system that includes the periodic assessment of teachers and students and the incentives for improving teacher quality, then the impact of SBM activities related to increased autonomy and accountability may yield improved learning more consistently than at present.

Summarizing the results, SAAS values show that school autonomy—as a tool for increasing accountability and inducing improved learning—works well in contexts where formal educational institutions are weak and, by inference, where governments are unable to provide public goods of sufficient quality. In this context, which may include many governments in developing countries, School-Based Management activities are necessary but insufficient conditions for producing education of good quality and for improving learning. In such cases, education systems achieve closure only when good teaching complements accountability. *SBM can create the conditions in which good teachers can flourish*, but it cannot replace bad teachers.

Inversely, autonomy and accountability in SBM are not a necessary condition for success in education systems where formal educational institutions are strong, especially in the area of training and selecting good teachers. The strength of educational institutions also includes teacher incentives, which may be the sum of competitive salaries, professional development, professional pride, and a collective sense of mission. In these conditions, which are found in many high performing countries in Europe, *trust* is the main element of accountability. Parents trust the system and support the system because the empirical evidence—shown by the results in international testing exercises such as PISA—indicates that the system is producing very good results. Nevertheless, trust and professionalism flourish in a context of school autonomy, even in high-performing countries. Also, participation has its own merits.

What it is conceptually important here is that, in order to produce and maintain a climate of trust, the school systems in Europe relies on a management style that fosters personal incentives and personal accountability without much prodding from the outside. Such incentives may include school-based management practices such as: highly demanding criteria for choosing teachers, competitive salaries, opportunities for professional growth, and academic freedom. In contrast, in Latin America where school autonomy developed as a result of generalized weaknesses in the institutions and in the institutional framework, autonomy and accountability had to revert to the original stakeholders: parents and the community.

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