Check for updates

Article

Policy Futures in Education

Governance, management and accountability: The experience of the school system in the English-speaking Caribbean countries

Policy Futures in Education
2015, Vol. 13(4) 500–517
© Author(s) 2015
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1478210315572652
pfe.sagepub.com
SAGE

Disraeli M. Hutton
University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica

Abstract
This paper seeks to explore the implementation of three of the critical elements required to improve performance in the education system: governance, accountability and management. The paper examines the education reform processes conducted by five Caribbean countries: Jamaica, Cayman Islands, Guyana, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, along with those represented by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. The individual countries along with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States have all embraced and implemented at some level the elements of governance, accountability and management as a part of their strategic planning arrangements between 1990 and 2010. The review shows that clear efforts were made by these countries to address the issue of governance, accountability and management although with varying levels of success. The most notable achievement was that the democratization and decentralization of the education process in these countries seemed to be a central strategy being used to strengthen governance, management and accountability. However, the implementation needs to be deepened so that stakeholders, especially at the school level, can have a greater say and make a more worthwhile and meaningful contribution to the process.

Keywords
governance, accountability, management, Caribbean, decentralization

Introduction

The weak performance of the public education system in Jamaica has led to the call from a variety of stakeholders for better governance, greater levels of accountability and

Corresponding author:
Disraeli M. Hutton, School of Education, Faculty of Humanities and Education, University of the West Indies, Mona, Kingston 7, Jamaica.
Email: disraeli.hutton@gmail.com or disraeli.hutton@uwimona.edu.jm

improvement in the management of schools and support systems. This call is not limited to Jamaica. Across the Caribbean region, there is dissatisfaction with the overall quality of the education output. A review of the strategic plans over the past 10 years of countries such as Jamaica, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Cayman Islands and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) shows that all have attempted to address these issues, at least from a planning perspective. Good governance which is expressed by effective management and accountability is being emphasized as the important underpinning factor for improving schools' and students' performance, especially when implemented within a decentralization framework. A signal feature of this framework is that it provides for school leaders in Caribbean countries to have greater autonomy over some of the critical decisions that will affect how they function. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that not only does governance define the processes or rules instituted within the education system, but it also revolves around the distribution of power in making decisions at each level of the sector (UNESCO, 2008). As a companion component of good governance, accountability emphasizes the need for leadership to be answerable for its stewardship, thus strengthening good governance and empowering stakeholders and beneficiaries alike. Examining the management component, Wolff and de Moura Castro (2000) noted that education reform should focus on public school management. Such management will seek to provide the leadership within the school with authority and sufficient remuneration. In addition, this type of management will help to determine whether authority figures are qualified, provide feedback and gain appropriate rewards based on their performance.

The framework of good governance, accountability and management is being highlighted in how schools are organized and run in many Caribbean countries. As advocates of the western democratic system of governance, it is expected that these tenets be demonstrated not only by central government but also by those institutions that operate as part of the structure of government. The question is to what extent the countries have sought to implement systems and strategies to improve governance, accountability and management in the public education system.

Theoretical framework

The term 'good governance' is introduced because if governance is characterized as bad, it would be hardly likely for it to be accountable and more so accountable to its citizenry. Graham et al. (2003: 1), in defining good governance, said:

> It is about how governments and other social organizations interact, how they relate to citizens, and how decisions are taken in a complex world. Thus governance is a process whereby societies or organizations make their important decisions, determine whom they involve in the process and how they render account.

In order to understand and interpret governance, one has to evaluate the role of the critical players in the process. At the national level the four main players or sectors are 'business, the institutions of civil society (including the voluntary or not-for-profit sector), government and the media' (Graham et al., 2003: 2). What should be noted is that the influence of each sector is dependent on its power base in the particular society. Therefore, for one country civil society may be a dominant sector while in another society government may be the main power broker. At the education level, the World Bank (2008: xi) identified a number of definitions extracted from the literature to include: (a) the legislative and regulatory

framework for education provision and governance; (b) the structure, roles, and responsibilities of the central education ministry and its decentralized offices; and (c) the local steering mechanisms for secondary schools (e.g. boards of governors and parent–teacher associations).

There is a general consistency to the approach of governance, management and accountability in the education system, although the implementation may be at different stages of maturity or readiness from one country to another. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Office of Democracy and Governance (2003) published a number of functions that good governance system should provide for its education system. These include functions framed to:

(1) institute the legal and constitutional framework necessary to support the effective delivery of education to its citizens;
(2) create policies which are supported by appropriate legal parameters to facilitate equality in education;
(3) facilitate the process of decentralization by establishing standards of accountability and transparency;
(4) provide for the participation of the people in both the fashioning of and playing the watch dog role for the public services, including education; and
(5) encourage the active participation of civil society groups working collaboratively to provide educational services with a focus on issues such as access and quality.

Graham et al. (2003: 1) declared that governance can be viewed from a 'global, international, national and community' perspective. From the global perspective, governance will holistically address the problems affecting education within countries as aptly demonstrated by UNESCO (2008); however, this could also mean addressing the disparities and power relationships between rich and poor countries. At the national level, the concerns for governance are within the boundaries of the specific country, which could involve governance at any level – from the central government, local, districts, among others. Overall governance is of paramount importance at the organizational level as management of a company is accountable not only to its shareholders but also to its customers and employees alike, whether the organization is private or public. Finally, at the community level, governance issues are addressed although in most cases there is no legal framework to support them. Nevertheless, there is usually a critical mass that could use the power of numbers to make a difference. Graham et al. (2003) identified five principles of good governance which were first described by the United Nations Development Programme in 1995. Although these principles have gone through some alternation, they continue to represent the standard bearers for organizations. The following summary highlights the five principles:

(1) Legitimacy and voice: All stakeholders should get the opportunity to participate in the decision making process which is underpinned by a consensus building approach and negotiation.
(2) Direction: Both government and people have a strategic view of what is required to address the needs of citizens and the nature of good governance itself. This vision must take into full consideration the cultural, historical and social context that will underpin their decision.

(3) Performance: Responsiveness and relevance are important principles that govern performance. These will be capped with effectiveness and efficiency, which address government's ability to satisfy people's needs and do so while resources are used prudently.
(4) Accountability: This focuses on the need for decision makers at all levels of governance, in both public and private sectors, to be answerable to the general public and the specific stakeholders. In addition, accountability also involves the provision of access to information as required by the citizens on a timely and comprehensive basis.
(5) Fairness: It addresses the question of equity and the need for people to be treated with respect while at the same time being given the opportunity to deal with their personal needs and desires. In addition, the laws and regulations should be fair and applicable to all persons without preference or prejudice. Ahmed (2000: 225) defined accountability as making those who are authorized for providing 'services answerable to the beneficiaries and other stakeholders regarding both process and outcome of a program . . . openness and transparency in management and a participatory approach in planning, making key decisions, and evaluation are necessary conditions for accountability.' In relation to accountability in education, the World Bank (2008: xi) defined it as 'the processes by which the education system holds itself answerable for delivering the appropriate services and meeting its goals for educating students.'

Anderson (2005: 1) identified three types of accountability: '(a) compliance with regulations, (b) adherence to professional norms, and (c) results driven.' The compliance and regulations model represents the traditional approach to accountability where the emphasis is on responding to the dictates of the bureaucratic system. Adherence to professional norms represents a system of accountability where the standards are set by those who are liable for implementing the education system. This would include the professional teachers' and principals' organizations. The results driven model, which is currently being emphasized within education systems worldwide, focuses on the performance of the students.

The World Bank (2008) defines accountability from a slightly different perspective. They also identified three types of accountability: (a) upward accountability which is similar to compliance and regulations, (b) downward accountability, which focuses attention to those who are the object of the education system, namely, the learners and (c) outward accountability which considers the community and those who participate in the funding and general maintenance of the education system.

Drilling down into the components of accountability, the World Bank (2007) identified four tangible elements of the framework for analysing accountability. These include: (a) voice, which is the extent to which the community and citizens in general are empowered to hold the political directorate and those responsible for developing and implementing policies; (b) compact, the extent to which the goals and responsibilities related to education policies are effectively communicated to the public; (c) management denotes the organizational support in place to empower those charged with the implementation of the education policies; and (d) client power denotes the ability of citizens to enhance the level of accountability for the outputs of the education system. As it relates to dealing with the poor and economically disadvantaged, the World Bank identified four tenets for providing services to them. These tenets include: '(i) increasing their choice and participation, (ii) giving citizens a stronger voice, (iii) making information widely available, and (iv) strengthening the

rewards for delivering effective services to the poor and penalizing those who fail to deliver' (as cited in Barnett, 1996: 13).

Accountability, which is an essential component of governance, is receiving significant attention in education systems worldwide. Slogans such as 'No Child Left Behind,' represent the guiding standard for evaluating the progress being made by the American education system. Likewise, 'Every Child Can Learn . . . Every Child Must Learn', is the Jamaican equivalent. These are just two examples which signal that accountability is a major concern for educational outcome. Anderson (2005: 9), describing the systems of accountability as they apply to the education worldwide, stated:

> Results-based systems rely upon widespread communication of results to parents and the general public. Many results-based systems generate school report cards or school profiles for distribution to general audiences. These reports include summaries of the performance of students or subgroups of students as well as information about resources (for example, per student expenditures), programs (for example, participation in accelerated courses), and behaviour (for example, student attendance).

There have been criticisms regarding the narrow focus on results-based systems for demonstrating accountability in educational performance. One concern is that it focuses on quantitative types of outcomes and not enough on qualitative ones. Nevertheless, there are few countries which are not embracing the result-based approach to measure performance and set targets.

The role of management in the school system is increasing in importance. Central ministries are expected to operate with a greater level of efficiencies and their effectiveness in ensuring that targets are met has become central to the demand for accountability. Management is seen as an integral part of leadership and it is difficult to separate. Bass and Bass (2008: 651) reminded us of the tendency to limit management to functions such as planning, organizing and controlling and fail to take into consideration the fact that management also means 'getting work done through others.' Northouse (2013) further clarified this view and pointed out that leadership and management are both similar and different in a number of respects. They are concerned with both people and goal achievement. On the other hand, they are different because management for example is about ensuring order and stability while leadership is about producing change and movement. Focusing on management, World Bank (2008: 4) defined management

> as the processes and practices designed to realize objectives at all levels of the education system: who carries out what responsibilities, how the various parts of the system communicate with each other, and how 'checks and balances' work among the levels.

Further elaborating on the elements of management, Bass and Bass (2008: 654) cited Kotter (1990) who pointed out that 'management is concerned with consistency and order, details, timetables, and the marshalling of resources to achieve results. It plans, budgets and allocates staff to fulfil plans.' Positioning management as in the middle of the three levels of structures in organizations – technical, managerial and institutional), Hoy and Miskel (2005: 40) said that it is 'responsible for administering the internal affairs of the organization and for mediating between the organization and the environment.' Examining the needs for management within a context where the requirements have expanded and become more demanding and difficult to solve and within the international perspectives, Baker (2009: 191) posited that 'as countries increasingly turn to improving

education to address an ever more complex world, many governments give school leadership more responsibility for implementing and managing significantly more demanding education programmes.'

Management is clearly an important role that must be performed effectively if accountability and good governance is to be demonstrated by schools. The interrelation of these elements is mostly recognized and included and treated as indicators that will demonstrate effective performance.

Regional and international perspectives

The start of the new millennium witnessed a number of Caribbean countries including Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Cayman Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana developing strategic plans. The countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) were also engaged in a process of restructuring their education system. The goals proposed by the various strategic plans were about issues such as equity, access, quality and human resource development, which are themselves functions of governance and accountability (Hutton, 2008). For countries such as Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago a greater focus is placed on issues related to governance, accountability and management. The realization of the goals of most of these plans seems to be progressing lethargically. This is because the resources needed for the effective implementation of these plans are not available, especially as a result and impact of the world financial crises in 2008.

In May 2007, the Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in the Caribbean attended by representatives from central and local governments, public service officers, civil society and regional and international organizations concluded 'that without governments which trust and are trusted by the people, strengthening national strategies to achieve public accountability, policy development and the delivery of services would be difficult to achieve' (Regional Report Forum, 2007: 1). The forum also pointed out that even when the services are provided by government the people's attitude to them will be determined by the level of visibility and transparency that is present. The explanation provided by the Forum for the lack of responsiveness by governments is due to the fact that they were born out of a bureaucratic structure which is top down; therefore, they do not exhibit the type of relational structure to adequately respond to the people. Coupled with the government's lack of responsiveness is the issue of visibility which deals with the level and quality of information that is available to the people. The Regional Report Forum (2007: 2) concluded that:

> The lack of access to information and absence of opportunities for civil society participation in public policies and programmes weaken inclusiveness in public governance in these countries. Expanding limited opportunities of civic participation in service delivery and accountability mechanisms were identified as related and primary challenges of building trust in the Caribbean countries.

The problem with governance and accountability is a feature not only of the Caribbean but also Latin America, which forms a part of the regional grouping of countries. Like the Caribbean sub-region 'the colonial states in Latin America mirrored the organization of European society and established a distinct social pyramid' (World Bank, 1999: 18). One of the areas of focus of the World Bank is to support the effort of Latin American and Caribbean countries to effect successful decentralization 'by reengineering education

ministries, supporting governance reforms and improvements in information that ensure accountability, and assisting countries in identifying changes in incentives that could alter the behaviour of providers and affect the sustainability' (World Bank, 1999: 11).

This issue extends to other regional groupings in the world. Addressing the issue of accountability in the sub-Saharan Africa region, the World Bank (2008: xii) pointed out that both civil society and government alike are demanding greater accountability for performance, especially of the secondary education system. Those targeted and being held liable for the performance of students included '... staff, principals, teachers, parents, or students. (Further), the system should be accountable for ensuring students learn and for reporting to parents and the community on the status of that learning.' However, the concerns for accountability are not limited to the developing countries and emerging states. In the United States, the poor performance of American students on the Third International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) in 1997 led to the call for action to get schools to perform 'at the level necessary for economic supremacy' (Anderson, 2005: 3). In emphasizing the global nature of the call for greater accountability for students' performance, Anderson (2005: 4) said that:

> Reviews of accountability programs throughout the world provide evidence that accountability is an international issue. England has a national curriculum accompanied by assessments and measures for rating schools. France, Hong Kong, China, Japan, and others use national assessments to measure student and school progress and to make decisions about each. Many European systems use examinations to determine student access to the next level of education.

The New Zealand school system provides a good example of the implementation of accountability in the education system. Since 1989, the responsibility for governance was taken from government agencies and assigned to school boards of trustees, which were democratically elected. With further reform of the system, today each school is governed by a board and the

> members are elected, selected, co-opted or appointed to act on behalf of the school's community to ensure that the school continuously improves student progress and achievement outcomes. The board is accountable to its parents and community for those outcomes so it needs to think carefully about how it identifies with and communicates with that community. (Ministry of Education, New Zealand, 2010: 3)

What is remarkable is that school boards have been a part of the Jamaican system for many years. One could safely argue that school boards in Jamaica have a significant level of autonomy, but ultimately, many of the decisions that are made at the board level must be ratified by the central ministry. Interestingly, for other regional neighbours such as Antigua and Barbuda, the school boards are not yet a part of the education structure, but this has been proposed as one of the changes to be implemented in its 2012 to 2017 strategic plan. The real question, however, is: *Does the level of autonomy granted to New Zealand school boards truly represent a decentralization of the education system?*

Accountability is sometimes viewed as a distinct component of governance while for others it is treated as one of the three-pronged system of governance, accountability and management. From whatever perspective governance and accountability are viewed, the involvement of citizens and the impact on their lives and wellbeing remain the central issue. What is clear and strongly supported by the literature is that poor, emerging and developed countries alike are actively engaged in the process of increasing accountability in

education. For many of them providing access, which is at the basic level, is also the primary goal; however, for developed countries, the emphasis within the education system is placed on guaranteeing the performance of all learners.

The role of the teachers has become even more crucial at this time. As Anderson (2005: 8) pointed out, the teachers will have to tailor

> their teaching for students from diverse backgrounds, exhibiting a range of motivations and prior experiences . . . instead of a consistent methodology yielding differentiated results, teachers are expected to differentiate their methodologies to yield consistent results for diverse student populations.

Although not developed countries, Jamaica and other Caribbean countries are striving to achieve the education goals that their developed counterparts are currently pursuing. The mantra 'Every Child Can Learn . . . Every Child Must Learn' is a clear recognition that differentiated methodology of teaching is one aspect of the charge to accomplish this ambitious goal.

Governance, management and accountability in the Caribbean education system

Wolff and de Moura Castro (2000: 14) noted that very few studies have assessed management issues in the region or have found why some institutions are more efficient than others; in addition, institutions are not entities built on the basis of 'identity, cohesion and commitment' and lack exchange between parents and community. Despite these claims, some countries across the region have made the effort to institute measures to improve governance and achieve greater accountability through their reform programmes. The impact of these changes will take time to be realized. Of course, the best indicator is the improvement in students' outcome and overall academic performance. The five countries which will be discussed are: Jamaica, Cayman Islands, Guyana, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, along with the OECS[1] countries. All countries have taken specific steps to address governance, accountability and management within their school system. Though there are some similarities, each country tackles different objectives with the aim of improving performance within the education sector.

The Jamaican experience

The Task Force on Educational Reform (2005: 12) identified accountability for performance as an important area of concern for all levels of the education system. Owing to this, a new approach to governance was necessary; also, this report outlined a 'new model for governance where students are at the centre of the system and every institution is focused on, and held accountable for, serving the students.' Elaborating further on the proposed model for effective governance and accountability, the Task Force on Educational Reform (2005) pinpointed the leaders and managers of the schools as being answerable and accountable for the achievement of students. The Jamaican regional entities, along with the National Education Quality Assurance would be responsible for providing the necessary support and control to ensure that targeted areas of performance were realized.

The central ministry would also be restructured to deal with policy matters, thereby facilitating the decentralization of the education system by increasing the responsibility and authority at its lower levels (Task Force on Educational Reform, 2005).

The transformation of the education system must be viewed within the context of the modernization of the Jamaican public sector. The report from the Public Sector Reform Unit (PSRU) (2003) targeted the Ministry of Education Youth and Culture (MoEYC) along with the Ministries of Health, Transportation and Works, and National Security, and Justice as the important ministries that should commence the modernization process. The report described the overall mission as that which will

> drive forward the implementation of the agenda for modernizing government, improving the quality, coherence and responsiveness of public services and for promoting a strong and professionally well-managed public sector, capable of enabling and facilitating the achievement of the national goals. (Public Sector Reform Unit, 2003: 12)

Hutton (2008: 96), highlighting the importance of this integrated process for improved performance and accountability, said that 'within this framework, the transformation of the education system must be treated as part of the national effort on reform, which will provide the broad contextual basis for the authentic change to benefit all aspects of the Jamaican society.' The issue of governance and its main focus was highlighted by the Public Sector Reform Unit (2003: 18) as '(a) access to government, consultation and participation; (b) public sector accountability; (c) corporate governance and accountability; and (d) machinery of government issues, which includes parliamentary scrutiny, devolution, and horizontal management, that is, cross-government cooperation.' These principles are expected to guide the operation of government and the way entities govern the Jamaican citizenry.

The Task Force on Educational Reform (2005) aligned its approach to governance with one of the goals of the Dakar Conference which stated that participating governments must 'develop responsive, participatory and accountable systems of educational governance and management' (UNESCO, 2000: 19). The Dakar Conference further elaborated the goal which outlined that:

> Reform of educational management is urgently needed—to move from highly centralized, standardized and command-driven forms of management to more decentralized and participatory decision-making, implementation and monitoring at lower levels of accountability. These processes must be buttressed by a management information system that benefits from both new technologies and community participation to produce timely, relevant and accurate information. (UNESCO, 2000: 19)

Unlike some of the Caribbean countries such as Antigua and Barbuda, schools in Jamaica are managed by boards comprised of representatives from the stakeholders including parents, students, administration, community, central ministry, political directorate, among others. Among the responsibilities of the board are the implementation of policies and the recruitment and dismissal of staff, including the principal (note, however, that final approval must come from the central ministry). Governance in the education system is being strengthened by making the local regional entities (which are being given the legal authority) perform some roles independent of the central ministry. This is in keeping with the stated goal of the education transformation process to decentralize the education system so that it can become more accountable to those directly charged with realizing the outcomes. In fact,

the model recommended by the Task Force on Educational Reform (2005) includes the following actions to strengthen governance and management in the education system:

(1) Strengthening governance and management at the school level.
(2) Establishing the Regional Educational Authorities to support schools.
(3) Restructuring the Ministry of Education to become a policy ministry.
(4) Restructuring the support institutional framework (Task Force on Educational Reform, 2005: 36).

While the National Education Inspectorate (NEI) was identified as a part of the new governance structure established, its role does support the effort of the Ministry of Education to better accountability for the performance of schools. The NEI, which has responsibility for the inspection of school and regional operations, is one of the main entities tasked to measure the performance of schools. The NEI did its first inspection of school in 2010 of 30 schools at the primary and secondary level (Ministry of Education, Jamaica, 2010). The second inspection was conducted between 2011 and 2012 and it involved 205 schools. The assessments were done against set performance criteria and published for public consumption, which is in keeping with good governance and accountability. Recommendations were made and support promised to assist those schools that were underperforming (Ministry of Education, Jamaica, 2013). Increasingly, civil society along with the teachers' organization and stakeholders have become a part of the voice for greater accountability in the education system. Governance, management and accountability are being treated as three important elements in the quest to improve the performance of students in the Jamaican education system.

Every indication suggests that the education ministry, central government and the other key stakeholders are committed to improving the quality of governance, management and accountability. However, this seems to be a slow process because critical changes such as the creation of regional authority and the restructuring of the central ministry are yet to be realized; nine years after the Task Force report on education reform was published.

The Cayman Islands experience

Ministry of Education, Cayman Islands Government (1999) produced the Vision 2008 strategy which would guide the development of the country from 1999 to 2008. Strategy 4 identified the need for the country to 'enact legislation which will facilitate greater citizen participation in governance' (Ministry of Education, Cayman Islands Government, 1999: 10) which is reflected in the strategy to promote accountability of government. This obviously established the basis for the education system to implement the necessary policies to support a new culture of governance and accountability which would include all stakeholders in the country. In 2005, the Cayman Islands held a conference titled 'Defining Challenges, Finding Solutions, Together' where locals with a vested interest in the education sector voiced their concerns regarding the challenges being experienced the education system (Cayman Islands Government, 2005). In responding to these challenges the participants made a number of recommendations including the reduction of bureaucracy within the sector; and the implementation of better and thorough school management systems along with outlined roles and responsibilities with a more supportive approach to schools (Cayman Islands Government, 2005).

Arising from the conference, the document 'National Consensus for the Future' outlined as one of its goals, the establishment of a new model of governance for the education service.

Among the objectives to be achieved included: (a) placing the interest of the students at the centre of the business of education; (b) making the needs and interests of students central to decisions that are made around education matters; and (c) increasing the authority to make critical decisions related to the education at the level of the schools which will have to implement these decisions (Cayman Islands Government, 2005).

Governance would also be enhanced by improving the quality of management and leadership, developing competent leaders, and facilitating school cooperation. On the matter of accountability, emphasis is to be placed on assessing the performance of schools based on established standards and making administrators more accountable for education expenditures (Cayman Islands Government, 2005).

A national stabilization plan was implemented in 2011. One of the goals of the plan was to enhance the leadership and governance of the education system. In evaluating the effort of the education system to improve governance and accountability in the education, the 2012–2017 strategic plan highlighted the role played by educators, parents and private sector partners, to develop a set of interventions that focus on improving student outcomes. Other successes identified include:

> (a) encouraged a 'servant leader' approach for all senior leaders, (b) led campaigns to value educators and education, (c) developed national policies in critical areas, (d) aligned resources and funding with strategic priorities, and (e) established a Principals' Consultative Council. (Ministry of Education, Cayman Islands Government, 2013: 5)

This is clearly an indication that strides were made in improving the governance of the education process. The new strategic plan continues to emphasize the need to strengthen governance as outlined both in the stated mission and values of the plan. The new plan has outlined that 'monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be in place to ensure that the Plan is effectively and efficiently implemented. These mechanisms include structured timelines, action plans, targets and milestones' (Ministry of Education, Cayman Islands Government, 2013: 10). In terms of governance, the plan indicated that 'input will be sought from stakeholders on a continuous basis. We value the feedback from the consultation process and will continue to use a model of stakeholder engagement to provide input and oversight throughout the implementation of the Plan' (Ministry of Education, Cayman Islands Government, 2013: 11).

The Guyanese experience

In Guyana, steps were made at the beginning of the 21st century to make amendments to Chapter 39 of the Guyanese law which forms the legal framework of education (Ministry of Education, Guyana, 2004). In this respect, this framework has steps towards addressing pertinent issues within the system which has encompassed: (1) measures to comprehensively decentralize education at the regional level; and (2) altering education management by making the Central Ministry solely a policy-making division, charged with monitoring and evaluation rather than the implementation of policies (Ministry of Education, Guyana, 2004).

Management reforms in Guyana were occurring at the public sector level and by extension also affected reform of this nature in the education sector (Ministry of Education, Guyana, 2004). To date, literature does not support the view that much progress has been made in reform efforts since 2004 and even as recently as 2008. The Ministry of Education, Guyana (2004) outlined the current reform characteristics that aim

to target the governance of school boards and reform objectives that seek to provide a more cohesive and potent ministry, with a high level of accountability; additionally, the commitment of students, parents and communities to the education process as added extension. These steps have also been extended into the 2008 draft on education reform as there was a need for quality facilitation of education in order to help children not benefiting from the education system; likewise, this reform enables the restructuring of the ministry that includes a central body, decentralization of education management according to the specific region, as well as a system of school committees and parent associations (Draft Education Sector Reform and Innovation, 2008).

All these areas require strengthening and an assessment of the reform attempts in order to move ahead. For instance, though decentralized education was born in the legislation of 1980, it has been hampered by the lack of performance of roles and responsibilities that should have been divided between the education ministry and Ministry of Local Government (Draft Education Sector Reform and Innovation, 2008). Stakeholders are also important to this process and what has been outlined in Guyana's Education Strategic Plan (2002) is an integral understanding of the role of the stakeholders, who were engaged by the Ministry of Education between 2003 and 2007 in discussions about strategic issues and to identify the challenges of the ministry.

One of the key areas that the Ministry of Education, Guyana (2002) is geared towards addressing is the management of the system and its improvement. Extensive effort has been put into exploring the jobs and outlining the duties of the staff; however, there were three main areas that the ministry thought should be tackled first and foremost: the introduction of new technology that aids daily management process, the oversaturation of crisis management which focuses extensively on the present situation and fails to plan for the future and little research knowledge on the workings of the ministry (Ministry of Education, Guyana, 2002). Not all strategies needed for education reform are of the same nature, some are integral to the start of other strategic processes. As outlined in Guyana's Education Strategic Plan (2002) it was found that improved management leads to a more accountable and decentralized system which then facilitates improved levels of participation, higher standards, and better prepared and supported teachers.

The Belize experience

The Education and Training Act of 2010 governs the legislative and policy aspects of education in Belize, but it does not outline protocol for the delivery of education, nor has the act 'been fully interpreted in regulations, resulting in continuing poor coordination and lack of clarity around standards, which makes it difficult to effectively manage and monitor performance' (Ministry of Education, Belize, 2012: 17). According to the Ministry of Education, Belize (2012) the current scenario does not permit good accountability and proper school performance monitoring – this is demonstrated in: (a) the lack of decision in relation to where schools should be opened; (b) there being no defined system used to appoint principals and management; (c) there being no defined system for checking school performance; and (d) minimal accountability between schools and parents.

In the Belizean education system measures to make room for alterations to the education system are being undertaken by the Education Sector Strategy (ESS) which seeks to promote management that improves accountability in learning achievement through the use of targets to measure progress; moreover, this strategy allows players in the system to determine their

roles and actions in regards to participating in the success of policy objectives (Ministry of Education, Belize, 2012). The ESS structures its goals to attain five key outcomes:

> Schools are governed and managed in accordance with requirements in the rules; increased accountability of schools to parents and local communities for school performance; improve management effectiveness of MOEY and District Education Centres; quality assurance system based on common minimum standards of service applied across all educational institutions; MOEY publishes through website annual report of performance against targets of Education Sector Strategy (Transparent). (Ministry of Education, Belize, 2012)

The management of the education system in Belize is based on a church–state system, where the government owns only a portion of the education system, which has failed to reach its full impact, with a regular approach to creating standards that make achieving quality a task (Ministry of Education, Belize, 2012). In this respect education reform in Belize has not presented significant outcomes within the sector thus far; however, at the current time, it presents viable strategies that seek to push the agenda for the years 2011 through 2016. One of the strategies introduced to the school system in Belize is the Quality Child Friendly School Initiative (QCFSI) which seeks to 'strengthen school leadership through increased autonomy, responsibility and accountability, and improve the quality of student experience' (Ministry of Education, Belize, 2012: 15). According to the Ministry of Education, Belize (2012) the usefulness of the initiative speaks to the basis that achieving institutions know what works and know the areas that need alteration.

The QCFSI has the ability to provide the foundation for school leadership and increasing the quality of education; also, in schools where leadership is implemented and outcome-driven then schools will be more able to assist others, which extends to creating schools as places of good practices and support for teacher development (Ministry of Education, Belize, 2012). Though it is not clear about the extent of the impact of the QCFSI, responses from the principals who participated in the pilot gave positive responses; likewise, additional feedback shows that principals appreciated some level of autonomy to change curriculum, allocate resources and work with other schools and officials (Ministry of Education, Belize, 2012).

The Ministry of Education, Belize (2012) notes its commitment to provide the education system in Belize with increased accountability bridged between schools and parents; hence, this commitment comes in the wake of the low levels of expectation surrounding weak ties between schools and the communities. As it stands to date, these objectives stand in an elusive state, but gradually, we should expect 100% completion by the year 2016. To achieve this, the ministry has outlined its policy objective to strengthen governance within the sector, targets that involve: (a) the institution of PTAs that perform functions outside of fundraising; (b) parent–teacher consultations held twice per year; and (c) a qualitative report on the child's progress (Ministry of Education, Belize, 2012).

The Trinidad and Tobago experience

Reform has been an integral element within the landscape of the Trinidad and Tobago education system since 1968, with focus in 1993 on leadership development, which had been a product of ideologies that centre on reform as the answer to increasing the prospect of national development (De Lisle, 2009). Trinidad and Tobago's first taste of reform stretched from 1968 to 1993 under the 'Fifteen Year Plan' which sought to change

the education model to a more modern one; however, this was not met with much success as the plan created a hierarchical system of four school types based on the colonial suppression that existed before (De Lisle, 2009). Moving from the lack of success from previous reform attempts, another reform came between 1993 and 2002, known as the 'White Paper' which attempted to institute onsite management, special education management as well as decentralization and school improvement (De Lisle, 2009). From De Lisle's (2009) perspective education reform has failed to be effective because of leadership, administrative processes and the institutions themselves.

Management was identified as the first critical area in the school system that needed improvement; additionally, in accordance with the creation of a national model for all levels of the education system, the Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago (2007) proposed a guiding philosophy that also includes a focus on school management. This improvement would entail changes to administration and curriculum delivery. Administration enhancements would mean that teachers could be promoted to positions such as principals and vice principals, while curriculum delivery would mean that a classroom teacher could become a mentor to students (Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago, 2007). Another element that is critical in management is school based management which is defined as the method of 'empowering, restructuring, and reculturing schools to enable them to fulfil their expected functions'; furthermore, school based management also envisages the involvement of all stakeholders within the community whom are advised to support the initiative (Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago, 2007: 6).

Currently, within the ministry's strategic plan for 2011–2015, three goals were formulated: fostering a quality education system, developing a high performing system and including stakeholders in the process of transforming the education system (Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). Within the new reform strategies being undertaken between 2008 and 2012, accountability can be understood within the context of quality management. Quality management development means that the ministry will have to ensure monitoring, feedback as well as improvements needed within the system; furthermore this has been complemented by continuous meetings with stakeholders providing updates on the education standards within the system that will guide administration and management in order to improve functionality (Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago, 2008).

What this strategic plan seeks to do is to push the Ministry forward as an entity that is transformed and prepared to lead and to provide the atmosphere needed for a successful sector. Already previous reform strategies have improved access to education, early childhood intervention and training of teachers to facilitate better student outcomes (Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). While the Ministry is currently reforming and decentralizing its processes, one of the key strategies that has been proposed is an emphasis on 'leadership, governance and integrated management', whereby the government will seek to

> (a) develop the institutional capability and capacity of the Ministry's staff to effectively pursue and achieve the Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives; (b) adopt/adapt and Implement best practices in Leadership and Governance Processes; (c) re-design and align the existing organizational structure to improve the efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation and management of operational and transformational strategies and processes . . . (Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago, 2012: 16)

The Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) experience

Education reform in the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) began in the 1990s with the Foundations for the Future (FFF) and subsequently built the structure for the implementation of Pillars for Partnership and Progress (PPP) which examines the developments of the countries in the OECS during the implementation of the FFF between 1994 and 2000 (Miller et al., 2000). The PPP takes into account the progress made by the last reform effort conducted between 2000 and 2010 with strategies that seek to create an education framework similar to CARICOM and to review teacher training and preparation initiatives (Miller et al., 2000).

According to its latest sector reform report in 2012, the education reforms in the past two decades have produced several achievements. While the current plan is left without the challenges faced in the past decades, the new priorities are clearly laid out for the coming period. Some of these achievements include: the integration of universal early childhood education in some states; increased access to basic education and with the instatement of new National Education Bills in six member states the harmonization of the sector has be projected forward (OECS, 2012).

The PPP sought the formation of a mutual accountability approach which means that 'each partner must be accountable to the others and all partners must hold each other to its part of the bargain' (p. 12). The partners include the various stakeholders (i.e. Ministry of Education, students, teacher and school unions, the private sector and the OECS Secretariat, etc.) throughout the region, who share equal responsibility for educational developments in the region; also, within this mutual accountability approach, each partner within the system is required to push the provisions of the reform in order to enable the production of quality educational outcomes (Miller et al., 2000). The mutual accountability approach is employed in the strategies which sought to increase the democratization and decentralization of the management of the primary school system. The decentralization process involves an arrangement of boards that are linked to individual schools or assigned to school districts. The members of the boards will be nominated by key stakeholders including teachers, parents, church leaders, among others. In addition, the boards will be linked to the National Education Advisory Council which would manage day-to-day school activities and form bonds with schools and their community (Miller et al., 2000).

During the year 2012, the drafting of the OECS Education Sector Strategy (OESS) which was built on the progress of the FFF and impact assessment from the PPP, followed a more strategic path to attain the development of 'leadership, management and accountability systems within the education system in the region' (OECS, 2012: 1). Other areas within the strategy framework include: teacher development, teaching and learning quality, curriculum and strategies for assessment and improvement to early childhood development services (OECS, 2012). In the wake of the PPP, there is still more work to be done in the area of leadership and management, with a need for access and priority towards a higher professional approach to this area of reform (OECS, 2012).

In order to improve school governance, the OESS (OECS, 2012: 11) proposed the establishment of school boards and other bodies of governance where necessary. Emphasis was placed on the need for education ministries to provide support for the management of schools 'through de-centralized governance structures involving the wider community.' Recognizing the need for effective leadership and management, the strategic objectives of the OESS (OECS, 2012) proposed to develop leadership in the system by instating qualified leaders supported by boards and other official bodies; create programmes to specifically train

school leaders by having access to such development programmes; and third to improve the frameworks of accountability, knowledge management and legislation that schools operate by through the revision of these frameworks and decisions surrounding these frameworks to be made by the schools. These leadership and management strategies can also be seen in light of previous examinations of management. Research on discipline in schools in the OECS noted that teachers felt left out of the system due to the lack of deliberation between the Ministry and the department, as well as 'a tendency to make decisions unilaterally, coupled with a micromanagement approach resulted in lack of school empowerment to deal with discipline issues . . . moreover, it is often not clear how the ministry delegates authority' (OECS Education Reform Unit, 2006: 23). This implies that the current reform tenets can facilitate the mitigation of such problems, but are yet to be realized.

Conclusion

Effective governance, management and accountability are central in improving the performance of schools. Bezzina and Cutajar (2013: 17) speak of the challenge of 'encouraging and facilitating a collaborative culture and sustaining a mentality of shared governance and collective accountability. . .' especially in an environment of change and transformation. The countries of the region must continue to deepen their attempts to develop a culture where stakeholders who are directly affected by the education process are fully involved in governance, management and accountability. The fact is that the more the education system can demonstrate its stewardship regarding the use of scarce resources to improve education performance, the greater the support it will receive from the stakeholders. Central to the success of the education system is the type of governance that is in place. The decentralization of the education system to allow for schools to make decisions about the implementation of the education process will certainly lead to the improvement in the quality of governance. In fact, the allocation of responsibilities based on the strategic assignment of roles between central and local entities of the education system will improve the quality of governance substantially. Finally, the management of the education process must be guided by the efficient use of resources, establishment of targets for performance and the employment of standards which are of world quality to guide the management process. If all three elements related to the effective operation of the education system are properly integrated, the required improvement in the outcomes of the education system will be realized.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Notes

1. The OECS is made up of nine countries which include: Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Montserrat, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The other two countries, Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands, are associate members.

References

Ahmed M (2000) Promoting public–private partnership in health and education: The case of Bangladesh. In: Wang Y (ed.) *Public–Private Partnerships in the Social Sector: Issues and Country Experiences in Asia and the Pacific*. Manila: Asian Development Bank Institute, pp. 219–291.

Anderson JA (2005) Accountability in education. Education Policy Series, International Institute for Educational Planning and The International Academy of Education, Paris and Brussels. Available at: http://www.iaoed.org/files/Edpol1.pdf (accessed 6 July 2011).

Baker D (2009) Leadership to learn: School leadership and management styles. In: Davidson M and Jensen B (eds) *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS*. Available at: http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/43023606.pdf.

Barnett WS (1996) Economics of school reform. In H. Ladd (Ed.), *Holding schools accountable - performance-based reform in education* (pp. 299–327). Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

Bass BM and Bass R (2008). *The hand book of leadership: theory, research, & managerial applications* (4th ed.). New York: NY: Free Press.

Bezzina C and Cutajar M (2013) The educational reforms in Malta: The challenge of shared governance. *Journal of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management* 41(1): 3–20.

Cayman Islands Government (2005) National consensus on the future of education in the Cayman Islands. Available at: http://www.gov.ky/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/CIGHOME/FIND/ORGANISATIONS/AZAGENCIES/MEH/DOCUMENTS/EDREPORT.PDF.

De Lisle J (2009) An institution deeply rooted in the status quo: Insights into leadership development and reform in the education sector of Trinidad and Tobago. *Social and Economic Studies* 58(1): 69–93.

Draft Education Sector Reform and Innovation (2008) Education sector reform and innovation. Available at: http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Guyana/Guyana_Draft_Ed_Reform-and-Innovation_2011.pdf.

Graham J, Amos B and Plumptre T (2003) *Principles for Good Governance in the 21st Century*. Ottawa, Canada: Institute on Governance. Available at: http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UNPAN/UNPAN011842.pdf.

Hoy WK and Miskel CG (2005) *Educational administration: theory, research and practice* (6th ed.). New York: NY: The McGraw-Hill Companies.

Hutton DM (2008) A conceptual framework for guiding the transformation of the Jamaican public education system. *Journal of the University College of the Cayman Islands* 2: 93–113.

Miller E, Jules D and Thomas L (2000) Pillars for partnership and progress: The OECS education reform strategy 2010. Available at: www.oas.org/udse/3ministerial/contenidos/informacion_apoyo/ingles/pillars.doc.

Ministry of Education, Belize (2012) *Improving Access, Quality and Governance of Education in Belize: Education Sector Strategy 2011–2016*. Belmopan: Ministry of Education, Belize.

Ministry of Education, Cayman Islands Government (1999) The key to the future: A guide to the nation strategic plan 1999–2008. Available at: http://www.gov.ky/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/CIGHOME/CAYMAN/VISION2008/KEYDOCUMENT.PDF.

Ministry of Education, Cayman Islands Government (2013) Cayman Islands strategic plan for education 2012–2017. Available at: http://www.education.gov.ky/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/MEHHOME/EDUCATION/STRATEGICPLAN/CAYMAN%20ISLANDS%20STRATEGIC%20PLAN%20FOR%20EDUCATION%202012-2017%20-%20FINAL_31.01.13.PDF.

Ministry of Education, Guyana (2002) *Education Strategic Plan 2003–2007*. Georgetown: Ministry of Education, Guyana.

Ministry of Education, Guyana (2004) Development of education: National report of Guyana. Available at: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Natreps/reports/guyana.pdf.

Ministry of Education, Jamaica (2010) *National education inspectorate report. Report conducted 2010*. Jamaica: Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Education, Jamaica (2013) *National education inspectorate report. Report conducted between September 2011 and March 2012*. Jamaica: Ministry of Education.
Ministry of Education, New Zealand (2010) *Effective Governance: Working in Partnership*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago (2007) *The National Model for Education in Trinidad and Tobago*. Port of Spain: Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago.
Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago (2008) *National Report on the Development of Education in Trinidad and Tobago*. Port of Spain: Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago.
Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago (2012) *Education sector strategic plan: 2011–2015*. Port of Spain: Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago.
Northouse PG (2013). *Leadership: theory and practice* (6th ed.). New Delhi, India: Sage Publishers.
OECS Education Reform Unit (2006) Comprehensive study of school discipline issues in the OECS: research report summary. Available at: http://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/spmapping/Implementation/CP/Regional/2006_Discipline_OECS.pdf.
OECS (2012) OECS education sector strategy 2012–2021. Available at: http://www.oecs.org/uploads/edmu/OECS-Education-Sector-Strategy-2012-21_web.pdf.
Office of Democracy and Governance (2003) Approaching education from a good governance perspective: USAID resource guide for joint DG/educational programmes. Occasional papers series. Available at: file:///C:/Users/10016639/Downloads/APPROACHING%20EDUCATION%20FROM%20A%20GOOD%20GOVERNANCE%20PERSPECTIVE.pdf.
Public Sector Reform Unit (2003) *Government at your Service: Public Sector Modernization Vision and Strategy, 2002–2012*. Kingston: Public Sector Reform Unit.
Regional Report Forum (2007) The regional forum on reinventing government in the Caribbean: Building trust in government: Improving public management through civic engagement. Regional forum report, 7–8 May 2007, Bridgetown, Barbados. Available at: http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan027006.pdf (accessed 6 July 2011).
Task Force on Educational Reform (2005) *A transformed education system report (revised edition)*. Kingston: Jamaica Information Service.
UNESCO (2000) Education for all: Meeting our collective commitments adopted by the World Education Forum. Dakar framework for action. Dakar, Senegal, 26–28 April 2000.
UNESCO (2008) *Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Wolff L and de Moura Castro C (2000) Secondary education in Latin America and the Caribbean: The challenge of growth and reform. Working paper no. EDU-111. Available at: http://www.unicef.org/lac/Secondary_education(1).pdf.
World Bank (1999) Educational change in Latin America and the Caribbean. World Bank. Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/1999/01/437909/educational-change-latin-america-caribbean.
World Bank (2007) *What is School-based Management?* Washington, DC: World Bank.
World Bank (2008) Governance, management, and accountability in secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa. World Bank working paper No. 127. Available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFRREGTOPSEIA/Resources/No.3Governance.pdf.