Under what circumstances does enhancing community accountability and empowerment improve education outcomes, particularly for the poor?

A realist synthesis

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PROTOCOL

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List of abbreviations

CAE   Community accountability and empowerment

CMOCs Context-Mechanism-Outcome Configurations

DfID   Department for International Development

LMIC   Low and Middle Income Countries

RMIT   Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

WVA   World Vision Australia

1. Background

1.1 Aims and rationale for current review

This realist review seeks to address the question: 'Under what circumstances does enhancing community accountability and empowerment improve education outcomes, particularly for the poor?'[1]

Community accountability and empowerment have been seen as potential solutions to address widespread problems in education in low and middle-income countries. Problems have included low levels of student participation, low quality teaching, teacher absence and loss of instructional time, insufficient resources (including failure to allocate resources and the misdirection of allocated resources), and lack of parent involvement in and support for education. A variety of community accountability and empowerment policies, strategies, and interventions (hereafter, for simplicity, 'interventions') have been developed in response to these problems[2]. Many of these interventions are not unique to the education sector, and originate within a set of established or emerging fields, variously known as 'participatory governance', 'social accountability', 'transparency and accountability', 'voice and accountability', and 'active citizenship'. The methods, policies, and theory or discourses of interventions in these fields are often shared or at least overlap. However they are applied in different parts of a policy cycle, at differing levels of governance and are initiated or used by diverse sets of actors in a wide array of contexts. Further, methodologically diverse approaches are applied to monitor and evaluate interventions, and it is not always clear exactly how the interventions generate outcomes in particular domains, such as education.

To make policy and program decisions, governments and funding bodies need a clearer sense of which interventions 'work', in what contexts, for whom, in what respects, and how (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). They also require a much clearer sense of what it takes to ensure that interventions can be effective and of conditions that maximise outcomes in domains of interest. This is what a realist review seeks to provide (Pawson, 2006a).

This analysis aims to improve understanding of the links between community accountability and empowerment and education outcomes in low and middle income countries, and to clarify the circumstances in which community accountability and empowerment interventions do improve education outcomes, particularly for the poor.

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[1] The question included in the registered title review read "increasing" rather than "enhancing" community accountability and empowerment. It has been amended in response to feedback from one expert reviewer to allow for the possibility that interventions may improve the quality of and/or increase the extent of accountability and empowerment.

[2] For simplicity, we subsequently refer to these generically as 'interventions' or as community accountability and empowerment interventions.

1.2 Definitional and conceptual issues

1.2.1 Defining key terms

Each of the key terms in the review question - for example, 'community accountability', 'empowerment', 'education outcomes' and 'the poor' are interpreted in a variety of ways in the literature.

"Community Accountability"

For the purposes of this study, we understand the term 'community accountability' to refer to the ability of communities (and for this review, primarily local communities) to hold governments, funders, bureaucracies and service providers accountable to them for the provision of services and opportunities that meet basic rights. Key elements of accountability include transparency of decision-making, answerability, enforceability and the ability to sanction (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008, p5-6).

"Education Outcomes"

The right to education is established in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While the precise and locally appropriate application of the right to education will depend on the context, General Comment 13 on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights prescribes that "education in all its forms and at all levels shall exhibit the following interrelated and essential features":

- availability (including "buildings or other protection from the elements, sanitation facilities for both sexes, safe drinking water, trained teachers receiving domestically competitive salaries, teaching materials, and so on");

- accessibility - meaning non-discrimination, physical accessibility and economic accessibility;

- acceptability – "the form and substance of education, including curricula and teaching methods, have to be acceptable (e.g. relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality) to students and, in appropriate cases, parents…"; and

- adaptability –"…to the needs of changing societies and communities and respond to the needs of students within their diverse social and cultural settings."

Any improvements in relation to any of these four features will, for the purposes of this review, be considered to be both 'an education outcome, particularly for the poor' in its own right, and an intermediate outcome with the potential to improve other education outcomes. We note that there may be trade-offs between these outcomes (that is, improvements in one area will not guarantee improvements in another, and in fact may come at the cost of declines in another). In so far as the literature allows, therefore, we will not consider outcomes in isolation from each other. Education outcome indicators are diverse and may include enrolments,

attendance or standardised test results (e.g. Kremer 2003), teacher absenteeism (Chaudbury et al 2006), school failure, repetition and drop-out (Gertler et al 2007).

"The Poor"

The review question focuses attention particularly on outcomes for 'the poor'. We will be guided by World Bank definitions (less than $2/$1 a day) but note that different authors may either not define the term or use different indicators. It will be necessary for the review to include such different indicators where they are used. We note also that 'the poor' are likely to include groups who are marginalised or disenfranchised in social and political, as well as economic, terms (exactly who such disenfranchised and marginalised groups are will, of course, vary across countries and cultures: the terms signify disenfranchisement or marginalisation relative to other groups within the same society or community). Such groups may not automatically participate in or benefit from all forms of CAE intervention or alternatively, may be a particular focus for interventions; and their education outcomes may be more or less affected. The review will code for and attend to these groups, regardless of the particular nomenclature used by authors.

"Empowerment"

Dozens of definitions of 'empowerment' are in use amongst development practitioners, scholars and organisations. Often the term is undefined, or is employed with multiple meanings. Underlying this confusion are the complexity, multiple meanings of and theoretical debates about the word 'power'.

For the purposes of this review, we assume that empowerment is both a process and an outcome. It involves both agency and structure and interactions between them, and involves building the capacity of individuals and groups to make meaningful choices and changing power structures and institutions, both formal and informal, which perpetuate inequality. It is multidimensional and can include social, economic, political, material and psychological dimensions (DFID, 2011b).

"Empowerment" can refer either to individual empowerment or to collective empowerment. Individual empowerment refers both to attitudes and beliefs and to the individual's capacity to influence decisions affecting their lives. Collective empowerment refers to increasing the power of collectives (here, communities) to make choices and influence policy makers and officials, and staff at different levels of service provision systems. Given the review question ('community accountability and empowerment'), this will be the primary sense of the term used here, although we acknowledge that individual empowerment can in some circumstances contribute to collective empowerment.

Collective (or community) empowerment often has a particular emphasis on increasing the power of the various disenfranchised groups within a community, and we include this sense in our review. We also include gender empowerment because of its importance in education outcomes for girls. We note, however, that the relationships between community accountability and empowerment interventions and improved education outcomes for girls are by no means clear cut. Explicit attention will be given to gender issues where they are addressed in the

primary studies considered in this review. This will be an area both for further theory development and for attention in coding throughout the review.

For the purposes of this study, interventions will be included where:

- interventions are intended to empower communities, rather than individuals. This is because the focus in the question is on 'community accountability' – that is, on communities as collective entities being able to hold officials and service providers to account. An example of the implication is that transferring control of school funding to local community structures would be 'in scope' but conditional cash transfers to individuals would be 'out of scope'; AND

- interventions operate at the community level – that is, they build structures and processes by which local communities operate collectively, or groups within communities operate collectively, rather than working at the level of "the state to the citizenry". Again, this reflects the focus in the question on community accountability. An example is that building or democratising local councils may be 'in scope' but reforming electoral systems at a state or national level would be 'out of scope'; AND

- interventions are specifically intended to generate outcomes in relation to education; or (where they were identified by means other than searching for empowerment interventions as defined here) where they identify specific outcomes in the education domain. This reflects the structure of the question, "improving education outcomes, particularly for the poor".

The use of the word AND in this list is intended to signify a 'Boolean operator' – interventions must meet all three criteria to be included. This is intended to delimit a manageable number of empowerment focused interventions in keeping with the original funded question. However, should the pool remain too large, the processes described in Section 2.4.1 below will be used to select the most appropriate studies.

Empowerment, Accountability and Education Outcomes

The relationship between empowerment and accountability is unclear, with various studies indicating that empowerment may be a process that generates accountability or it may be a product of accountability. The assumption in our initial rough theory is that accountability and empowerment are mutually constitutive (i.e. each contributes to generating the other).

The relationship between accountability and empowerment and education outcomes is also unclear. Firstly, it is difficult to attribute development outcomes to accountability or empowerment interventions (Mansuri and Rao, 2004; Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008). Secondly, it is difficult to attribute education outcomes to particular initiatives (Hanushek, 1995). The assumption in our initial rough theory is that accountability and empowerment are mutually reinforcing contributors to improved education outcomes (see Appendix 1).

In this study, we will treat our definitions of accountability and empowerment as working definitions and sensitising constructs; code definitions of key terms in the

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studies and compare them with our constructs; and refine our definitions as part of the process of theory refinement in the later stages of the study. This will avoid invalidating the internal logic or theory of change of the particular studies and guard against failing to 'see' evidence because it does not fit neatly with our pre-determined constructs.

These specific difficulties are in part because of the nature of causal processes in complex social programs. Causal processes are not simple or linear. Using education systems as an example: The broader policy context (such as education governance, policy, and funding nationally, and at progressively more local levels of governance) interacts with local aspects of the education system (such as teacher and pupil attendance, behaviour, and performance, or parental involvement) which in turn are affected by the infrastructure used for teaching and learning (such as desks, chairs, textbooks or toilets) and with features of the local community (such as culture, religion, cohesion, conflict, and so on). Changes in any one of these aspects can generate other changes which can ripple up, down or across other levels of the system.

Program planning and evaluation terminology

A number of program planning and evaluation terms (process, short-term outcome, intermediate outcome, outcome, impact and so on) are also used differently by different authors. For the purposes of this review, we will use the term 'short-term outcome' to refer to shorter-term changes in the circumstances of communities or stakeholders as a result of the intervention; 'intermediate outcome' to refer to outcomes which precede later outcomes and which may contribute to, or be necessary steps on the way to, such later outcomes; and 'impact' to refer to long-term outcomes, because this is relatively common practice in international development circles. For example, participation by community members in a public meeting is a short term outcome of earlier processes of organising; a shared vision may be an intermediate outcome resulting from that public meeting; collective action may be a longer term but still intermediate outcome following from the shared vision; and increased attendance by girls may be an impact resulting from changes made through collective processes. The term 'process' must necessarily be able to refer to a number of different things: processes within interventions, process evaluations, processes of change and so on. Again, while we will adopt consistent nomenclature for ease of understanding, different uses by authors of materials used in the review will not preclude the use of their materials in the review. It should be noted that whether this review can distinguish between short and long term outcomes will depend on the time-scales examined in, and information provided by, the documents under review.

Finally, realist review itself uses some key terms in particular ways: most notably, 'context', 'mechanism', and 'outcome'. The term 'outcome' in realist terminology includes short, medium and long term outcomes (the latter traditionally referred to as 'impact'). Because we are using a realist approach, all of these will be included in our analysis. Because what constitutes 'short', 'medium' and 'long' term outcomes will vary according to the complexity of the intervention, its timeframe

and the local context, we will not adopt fixed definitions of these terms. Where possible, we will record the sequence in which outcomes are attained in each study, and use this information to refine understandings of processes of change within and across interventions.

'Mechanism' refers to causal powers or processes that generate outcomes (and not, as is commonly the case in intervention literature, interventions themselves or strategies or activities used within interventions). In relation to interventions, this review is guided by Pawson and Tilley's notion of 'program mechanisms'. This approach suggests that the 'causal powers' of interventions involve an interaction between a resource, opportunity or requirement introduced by an intervention and the 'reasoning' of a subject, in such a way as to generate a changed decision, which generates different behaviour, which generates different outcomes. 'Context' implies particular features of context that affect whether mechanisms fire, or which mechanisms fire (See also Appendix 1).

A 'rough theory' has been developed to guide this review which takes account of these complexities (discussed further below and attached as Appendix 1). It positions empowerment and increased accountability as intermediate and interacting outcomes of community accountability and empowerment interventions; improvements in availability, accessibility, appropriateness and adaptability of education as intermediate outcomes of increased empowerment and accountability; and improvements in school completion and education performance as high level outcomes indicators. It also posits mechanisms by which each of these different levels of outcomes might be generated and circumstances in which those mechanisms are most likely to operate. Realist review methodology means that evidence for (or against) different aspects of the theory can be drawn from different sources, and that differences in contexts can be taken into account. The aim is thus to generate a comprehensive and differentiated picture of the processes by which, and circumstances in which, community accountability and empowerment improves education outcomes.

1.3 Policy and practice background

Since the 1990s, community accountability and empowerment interventions have been advocated to improve educational outcomes by improving the quality of educational services and the participation by students and families in these. In many cases these initiatives have been part of a broad focus on rights-based development.

The accountability in these interventions refers to the relationship between the State and the community in terms of the transparency of decision making, answerability (requirement to justify decisions) and enforceability/ability to sanction (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008). Community accountability can also involve questioning the standards to which public organizations are held, and the extent to which these are responsive to the needs of the community (Joshi, 2010). 'Voice' is therefore important component of these initiatives – processes for the community to express their preferences, opinions and views. Citizens' Voice and Accountability initiatives have become increasingly important since the 1990s (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008).

Three motivating factors for community accountability initiatives have been identified (Arroyo and Sirker, 2005): the increasing focus on increased development effectiveness; improved governance; and empowerment. Formal decentralization policies and the development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Programs in many countries provide a foundation for these initiatives. They seek to reduce misallocation, misuse and waste of public funds (caused by corruption or mismanagement) and inefficiencies in public services, and to contribute to achieving stated aims regarding pro-poor development and rights-based development.

Key elements of accountability include transparency of decision-making, answerability, enforceability and the ability to sanction (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008, p5-6) and other actions by social actors to hold public officials to account or to support attempts to hold them to account (Social Accountability Source Book, p11).

Many different types of initiatives have been implemented for this purpose – some by civil society and some by state bodies. These include budget analysis, participatory budgeting/community expenditure tracking, public expenditure tracking, sectoral expenditure tracking, lifestyle checks (which monitor the assets of public officials for excessive expenditure inconsistent with salaries), monitoring of public service delivery, citizens' charters, citizens' juries, citizen report cards, public hearings, citizen scorecards, integrity pacts, procurement monitoring, transparent online transactions, and e-procurement.

Citizen feedback strategies can be part of community accountability initiatives, including: public hearings, public forums, citizen advisory boards, study circles, government contract committees, and direct feedback (either in person, by mail, electronically or by phone), investigative journalism, public commissions and citizen advisory boards (Malena et al, 2004; Arroyo and Sirker, 2005).

1.4 Research background

There is a growing body of work examining the impacts of community accountability initiatives in general and on educational outcomes in particular. Several reviews have summarized the state of knowledge in the area of community accountability initiatives, noting the mixed results that have been achieved, and the need to understand more about how various strategies work differently in different contexts.

A recent document which undertook preliminary mapping of the evidence base concerning empowerment and accountability noted the considerable variation in results:

> "Even studies using the same method (for example RCTs) often yield different outcomes in different contexts, suggesting that success or failure is very dependent on context." (DfID, 2011, p.1)

A recent review, undertaken by the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre in 2010, concluded:

> "Several studies conclude there is a need for more evidence of why certain accountability mechanisms work well in certain contexts. There does not appear to be any research available which seeks to compare the results of different mechanisms, or attempts to draw any overall conclusions about which mechanisms are the most effective and why. Rather, the available evidence is mainly in the form of reviews of the outcomes of specific mechanisms, in specific cases." (GSDRC, 2010, p. 1)

The 2009 review of social accountability in World Bank Operations highlighted a number of successful and unsuccessful initiatives. They identified a number of lessons on designing and implementing effective social accountability. The specific tool used was seen as less important than who was involved and how (in terms of underlying principles and values).

> "Social accountability is as much about changing mentalities, building relationships, and developing capacities as it is about technical tools" (Agarwal et al, 2009, p. 6).

They concluded that it is important to pay attention to understanding stakeholders and existing power relations, to identify supporters and build coalitions between stakeholders to create a critical mass or tipping point. Using both sanctions (e.g. public shaming) and positive incentives (e.g. public recognition) together was seen as effective.

The quality and accessibility of information provided was seen as a "key determinant of the success of social accountability". Finally, accountability interventions needed to avoid 'elite capture' by focusing on engaging the marginalized and the weak.

A 2008 review undertaken by the Overseas Development Institute for the Evaluation Core Group (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and UK), analysed 90 community voice and accountability interventions in ten countries, and five case studies undertaken in five different countries (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008). While they found examples of positive impact from the interventions, these were mostly at the level of changes in behaviour and practice 'especially in terms of raising citizen awareness, empowering certain marginalized groups, and encouraging state officials' (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008, p. v). They found difficulties in scaling up and sustaining the initiatives and inappropriately high expectations about the time needed to achieve change. They also found problems with the theory of change underpinning the interventions, which were understood to work as follows:

> [I]ncreasing citizens' voice will make public institutions more responsive to citizens' needs and demands and thereby more accountable for their actions. This combination of voice and accountability will in turn i) generate outcomes that will directly contribute to broad developmental outcomes, such as the MDGs; or ii) will have considerable influence on other (intermediate) factors believed to impact poverty reduction and other broad development objectives. (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008, p. ix).

The 'misguided assumptions' underpinning this were:

> "An assumed automatic relationship between enhanced citizens' voice and improved government accountability.
>
> An assumption that citizens' voice represents the interests, needs and demands of a homogeneous "people".
>
> An assumption that more effective and efficient institutions will naturally be more transparent, responsive and ultimately accountable.
>
> A related assumption that CV&A interventions can be supported via a traditional focus on capacity building of formal institutions.
>
> An assumption that democracy leads to improved developmental outcomes (including poverty reduction)." (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008, p. xi).

Bruns, Filmer and Patrinos' (2011) review of the effectiveness of information for accountability at the school level described three main channels by which this information could be expected to contribute to improved learning outcomes - by increasing choice (where parents had options about where to send children to school), by improving and increasing parents' participation in schools, and by increasing 'voice' and enabling parents to lobby governments for improved services.

There have also been many studies of specific interventions. Some studies have found community management to be an effective strategy. These interventions however included other components, such as devolved school-based management, which were also seen to contribute to the observed effects. A comparative case study of schools in the Philippines found that community managed schools were more transparent and efficient in their use of resources (Jiminez and Paqueo, 1996), and studies of EDUCO schools in El Salvador found that students were more likely to continue studying (Jiminez and Sawada, 2003) and less likely to miss school because of teacher absences (Jiminez and Sawada, 1999). In Mexico, the Quality Schools Program, which included parent associations in designing, implementing and monitoring educational improvement plans, decreased drop-out rates, failure rates and repetition rates, and qualitative data suggested this was due to increased parent participation in the school and supervision of homework (Skoufias and Shapiro, 2006). In Kenya, a school-based management initiative which included greater parental oversight as well as smaller class sizes and more teacher incentives increased student test scores (Duflo, Dupas and Kremer, 2007).

Strategies that focus on providing communities with information have had mixed results. A particularly influential case in Uganda began with a Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) found that schools were receiving on average only 20% of central government spending on a large grant program that covered nonwage expenditure in primary schools. The government began publishing in local newspapers details of the monthly grant transfers to districts - an initiative that, it was claimed, led to significantly less leakage of funds, increased school enrolment and improved student performance (Reinikka and Svensson, 2005). However a later re-analysis of the case has questioned whether the observed changes were also significantly affected by other concurrent changes, including abolition of school fees, and increased requirements for fiscal accountability to donors (Hubbard

2007). A review of PETS examples concluded that they did not achieve changes if they did not "feed back into processes at the level where the information was collected in order to improve local awareness of entitlements and to build stronger demand for accountability from the bottom." (Sundet, 2008, p. 18)

A community information campaign that provided information on school performance in three Indian states increased teacher presence and effort but had only a modest effect on student learning (Pandey et al, 2009). Three different interventions (including providing information and training) were implemented in India to inform parents about, and encourage them to participate in committees that decide resource allocation, monitor and manage school performance - but with no impact on community involvement in the schools, nor the further outcomes of teacher effort or learning outcomes (Banerjee et al, 2010).

A preliminary review of the literature suggests multiple mechanisms (in the realist sense of the term) through which empowerment and community accountability may contribute to improved learning outcomes (Refer to Appendix 1 Table 1).

The literature also identifies elements of context that affect these mechanisms either positively (that is, enabling positive mechanisms to fire) or negatively (that is preventing positive mechanisms from firing or enabling mechanisms that generate undesirable outcomes to fire). Aspects of context which can operate positively include reciprocal strengths in civil society and state structures (for example, capacity for 'voice' on the part of civil society needs to be matched by capacity for 'accountability' on the part of state structures) and for adequate channels of communication between these (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008); adequate resourcing and 'absorptive capacity' for civil society organisations (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008); systematic capacity building for local committees alongside support, guidance and materials for teachers (Glassman et al, 2007); citizen belief in the efficacy of interventions (Banerjee et al, 2008) equitable participation in consultation and decision making processes (e.g. Rose 2003, Condy 1998); the role of local NGOs and coordination and timeliness in responding to complaints (Social Accountability Source Book, 2004). Aspects which can operate negatively include power imbalances between communities and teachers (Banerjee et al, 2008) and the absence of positive features just described. Differences in communities (Bray, 2003) and in the roles of local NGOs (e.g. Miller-Grandvaux et al, 2002) may operate positively or negatively.

1.5 Authors, funders, and other users of the review

The review has been funded by DFID as part of a joint call, with 3IE and AusAid, for systematic reviews of evidence in relation to a number of matters of policy interest. The three funding bodies compiled a list of potential questions for which research teams could tender.

The review team comprises members who share interests both in the content of the review (international development, governance and accountability, empowerment, and education) and in the review methodology (realist synthesis). Members are drawn from a major NGO involved in community accountability and education interventions in LMIC, who have a direct interest in applying the

outcomes of the review in their own work but who can also contribute field-based experience and expertise to the review process; academics with backgrounds and interests in international development and education; and a researcher with particular expertise in realist synthesis (including in international development), together with involvement in a current project to develop methodological guidance, publication standards and training resources for realist synthesis (Greenhalgh et al, 2011).

Realist synthesis has been selected as the appropriate methodology because it is specifically designed for use in relation to complex and varied interventions applied across multiple contexts, and for investigating questions requiring depth of understanding rather than 'a verdict' on a family of programs. Because it provides depth of understanding of how programs work and the contexts in which they work, the product of a realist review can be used to select appropriate interventions for particular circumstances or to refine interventions for different contexts.

It is anticipated that the outcomes of the review will be used:

- by funding bodies, in relation to funding allocation decisions for accountability initiatives and /or strategies to improve education outcomes that may require accountability components - these include both donors and in-country governments, including national and state/provincial education departments and central agencies with responsibility for social accountability initiatives or processes;

- by policy staff in government and non-government organizations, to refine policies and programs that seek to improve accountability to communities and/or education outcomes;

- by program implementation staff in government and non-government organizations, to refine interventions to improve their effectiveness in diverse contexts.

1.6 Review questions

The question for this review is:

"Under what circumstances does enhancing community accountability and empowerment improve education outcomes, particularly for the poor?"

The focus on education is a product of the interest of the review funding bodies, rather than reflecting a theoretical perspective about community accountability and empowerment working differently in education as compared to other sectors. Nevertheless it provides one way of delimiting the literature, and may provide an interesting comparison with other reviews which have focussed on particular interventions (e.g. Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys, or community scorecards).

Following consultation with the funding body for the review (DFID), the agreed foci for the review are:

- low and middle income countries (LMIC), because these countries are where the greatest population of poor and very poor people in the world reside;

- primary school education, because the Millennium Development Goals specify ability for all children to complete primary school as the goal for 2015;

- within primary school education, a focus on girls and on marginalised populations, because current evidence suggests that they are frequently disadvantaged in relation to education;

- public (that is, government-provided) education in the first instance, because this is the domain for which governments are most directly accountable. However other providers of primary education are not excluded from the review, especially where they provide services for poor children (for example, through scholarships);

- interventions which have, as their primary intention, improving accountability of governments and education service providers to communities and which target, or demonstrate outcomes in relation to, education. Empowerment of communities is both a likely process within, and a likely outcome of, accountability-related interventions. In such cases, empowerment may itself generate impacts on education, separately from those generated by accountability, and these processes and outcomes are within scope for the review. However, there are a wide range of interventions which can empower communities and which may impact on education that bear no relationship to accountability of governments and service providers to local communities. These are outside of scope for the review;

- interventions which entail local level participation or implementation, because education is ultimately delivered at the local level and that is the level at which improved education outcomes must be generated. There are a number of approaches to social accountability which operate at the political level (for example, national governments to the broad citizenry) and/or which entail horizontal accountability (involving accountabilities, checks and balances between the political, bureaucratic and judicial arms of government). While these may improve education outcomes and remain in scope in so far as they do, they are less likely to target education specifically, less likely to involve local stakeholders across a wide range of communities, and less likely to tackle some local barriers to improved education outcomes. Priority is therefore afforded to interventions which require local participation.

This still leaves a potentially broad pool of studies, with a number of different intervention types under consideration. The extent to which this is problematic for the review will depend, not on the range of interventions per se, but on the range of mechanisms through which they operate and hence the range of contextual features affecting the operation of those mechanisms. Strategies for managing the scale of the review are discussed in section 2.4.1 below.

2. Methods used in the review

2.1 Realist synthesis methodology

This study uses realist synthesis, a qualitative review methodology designed to develop, test and refine theories about the ways in which interventions work, the contexts in which they do and do not work and the differentiated patterns of outcomes that they generate (Pawson, 2006a). The results from a realist synthesis are recommendations along the lines of "In situations [X], complex intervention [Y], modified in this way and taking account of these contingencies, may be appropriate" (Greenhalgh et al, 2011).

There are a number of differences between realist synthesis and other review methods (Pawson, 2006b). The first is the realist structure of the review question, which does not ask "does this work" or "what is the net impact of this intervention type". Grounded in a realist understanding of causation, realist reviews ask questions such as "by what mechanisms does this program operate, in what contexts does this mechanism fire as intended, for whom does it work and for whom does it not work, what sorts of outcomes are generated (both intended and unintended), how do patterns of outcomes vary in different contexts or for different sub-groups", and so on. This explains the revision of the original question proposed for this review ("Does community accountability and empowerment affect education outcomes, especially for the poor?") to "In what circumstances does community accountability and empowerment affect education outcomes, especially for the poor?" The phrase "in what circumstances" is interpreted, in realist terms, as meaning "in what contexts and by what mechanisms".

The second difference is that the fundamental focus of the review is the theory underpinning a program (or family of programs) rather than the program itself. In this review, the key theories relate to "community accountability" and "empowerment" and their relationship to education provision and thus to education outcomes. A number of different program approaches may seek to build accountability and empowerment; and/or very similar programs may be modified to suit local contexts, but still seek to work through the same basic mechanisms. The purpose of the review is to investigate whether or not programs do fire the mechanisms that they intend to fire (here, building accountability to communities and empowerment of communities); whether those mechanisms then generate the outcomes that they are intended to generate (here, improved education delivery particularly in primary education, in turn generating improved education outcomes), for the intended populations (here, the poor).

The third difference relates to the literature search strategy, which is iterative, rather than completed before the synthesis itself is undertaken, and which is not based purely on pre-defined search terms. There is some evidence to suggest that reference and citation tracking, and tracing key authors, is more useful for realist reviews than searching based on search terms.

The search processes for this review are described in more detail in section 2.3.2 below.

The fourth difference relates to selection of sources. In realist synthesis, sources are selected on the basis of their relevance to aspects of theory, rather than to the specific program type or the domain. In this review, it may be possible to draw on research on community accountability for health (e.g. Björkman and Svensson, 2009) rather than education, or on literature related to governance (e.g. Lewis and Pettersson, 2009), decentralisation of governance (e.g. King and Ozler, 2004) community engagement (e.g. Bray, 2003; Condy, 1998); and broader education literature related to factors that improve student learning outcomes.

The fifth difference relates to the assessment of quality. Some other methods assess quality in part by the research methodology (for example preferring RCTs to quasi-experimental designs) and then by the quality of the application of that methodology. Whole studies are included or excluded on this basis. In realist synthesis, the inclusion and exclusion criteria are relevance and rigour, rather than method (Pawson, 2006a). There is no necessary preference for particular research designs (such as RCTs for a meta-analysis or case studies for a narrative review). Further, quality is assessed for the particular aspects of the material that will be drawn upon in the review. Particular inferences from a study may be reasonable even if other aspects of studies are flawed, and assuming that those inferences are relevant, they may be used in the review.

The sixth difference relates to the nature of the synthesis itself. Whereas the underlying logic of meta-analysis is aggregation, the underlying logic of realist synthesis is theory refinement. It aims to refine understanding of the ways in which, and contexts in which, programs generate particular patterns of outcomes. Consequently, the final product is also different: the product is not a verdict on a particular program type, but an improved theory which can be applied to other programs or policies.

These differences in methodology are reflected throughout our methods, described in more detail below.

2.1 User involvement

2.1.1 Approach and rationale

There are three levels of engagement for users in this project.

Firstly, a small number of users are involved as members of a core research team. They are NGO and University stakeholders who self-nominated or were approached by the instigators of the review. They have direct experience in international development, education, and civic accountability policies and programs to contribute to the review process. They also expect to be able to use the review findings in their own policies and programs, and/or future research. Because of their participation in wider international development and academic networks, it is also expected that they will be able to contribute to raising awareness of the review and its findings in those networks, which may increase uptake and utilisation of the findings.

Secondly, an End User Group is currently being established. Membership of the group will include the funding body for the review (DFID), other international development funding bodies with an interest in community accountability and empowerment interventions and/or education; NGOs and in-country practitioners in community accountability and empowerment interventions, and relevant research and advocacy bodies. Attempts will also be made to engage in-country education officials and central government agencies with responsibility for social accountability initiatives, although we anticipate difficulty in recruiting from this group.

Each of these groups has particular interests in relation to community accountability and empowerment and therefore both contributions to make to, and a stake in the outcomes of, the review. Attempts are also being made to include, within this membership, representation from major continents, to build awareness of contextual differences that may affect the operations of community accountability and empowerment interventions or aspects of the review itself and how it may be used.

The roles of the End User Group are to provide advice on:

- framing and language issues, to enhance perceived relevance to end user groups;

- contextual factors that likely to affect perceived relevance and utility of the report;

- strategies and opportunities to enhance knowledge translation and uptake of the report in different contexts and for different stakeholder groups.

It is also anticipated that members of the End User Group may suggest additional resources of relevance to the review. Given the likely geographic dispersal of group members, we anticipate that it will function primarily by email contact, with questions or documents distributed and individuals replying from their own perspectives. However, a group discussion via teleconference may be scheduled if required.

Thirdly, a website is being established for the review. Once the research protocol is approved, it will be placed on the website. So too will lists of the particular community accountability and empowerment interventions in relation to which research studies have been identified and the bibliographic details of those studies. An invitation to contact the research team, to suggest additional policies or interventions and their associated publications will be included on the site.

The website is primarily intended to create awareness of the review, in the hope that this may contribute to interest in, and uptake of, its findings. We intend monitoring the number and if possible sources of hits to the site, and the number of questions, comments and contributions received, in an attempt to ascertain whether or not this preliminary aim (awareness) has been achieved.

2.3 Identifying and describing studies

2.3.1 Defining relevant studies: Theory building

A two stage process was used to develop the initial theories that will underpin the remainder of the research process.

In the first stage, members of the research team met for a two day workshop, which:

- identified which of the terms in the research question needed to be defined or operationalised and discussed aspects of those definitions. This contributes to theory building by delimiting the scope of the issues to be addressed;

- brainstormed initial lists of the barriers to positive education outcomes for the poor in developing countries and suggested ways in which accountability and empowerment might be expected to address those barriers. This contributed to theory building by constructing a typology within which both activities and intermediate outcomes could be located;

- drafted initial maps of the theory of change for interventions intended to build community accountability and empowerment, including identifying a number of mechanisms which might operate for different stakeholders at different stages in the process.

In the second stage, on the basis of the outcomes from the workshop, the initial literature search (described in the next section) was conducted. This identified a range of published and grey literature resources, some of which were read to contribute to the development of the initial theory. These documents were also retained to start the process of reference and citation scanning for the more rigorous search to be conducted after approval of the protocol.

On the basis of this work, an initial rough theory has been developed to guide the remainder of the review. It is provided in Appendix 1.2.

2.3.2 Defining relevant studies: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

As described above, the inclusion criteria for realist review are relevance to the theories under test and sufficient rigour - assessed using appropriate criteria for the research methods of the particular study - to support the particular evidence or conclusions used in the review.

Relevance to the theory under test, in this review, implies studies:

- of interventions which are intended to generate accountability to communities and/or to empower communities to act in relation to accountability (as noted earlier, interventions may aim to generate empowerment and work through and/or generate accountability to communities; aim to generate accountability to communities and work through and/or generate community empowerment, or aim to generate both accountability to communities and community empowerment). Both pilot and ongoing interventions are eligible;

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- that examine relationships between accountability to communities and education outcomes;

- that examine relationships between community empowerment (as defined) and education outcomes.

Priority for outcomes studies will be afforded to:

- research and evaluation studies conducted in low and middle income countries (LMIC) as defined by the World Bank;

- in relation to primary education;

- in government and community-based schools;

- using community accountability and empowerment strategies;

- written in English - potentially relevant non-English sources will be reviewed with the help of automatic translation services and key sources and sections will be professionally translated where necessary;

Other inclusion criteria will be:

- outcomes studies, published after 1995.

Exclusion criteria for outcomes studies will be:

- studies relating only to tertiary education;

- studies relating only to adult and vocational education;

- studies relating only to private schools with fee structures that preclude participation by poor people (note that studies relating to private schools that are accessible to poor people will not be excluded);

- studies related to corporate responsibility;

- research conducted in high income countries;

- outcomes studies published prior to 1995;

- written in languages other than English;

- studies that are not relevant to any aspect of the theories under test.

Studies written in languages other than English are excluded only because of the budgetary constraints of the project.

It is (at least theoretically) possible that studies may concurrently meet inclusion and exclusion criteria. For example, there may be a study which relates to accountability to communities but which was undertaken in private schools with fee structures that preclude participation by poor people. Decisions about inclusion or exclusion in this instance will be made on the basis of relevance to the aspect of the theory under test. For example, were it to be found in such a study that the mechanism generating accountability operated effectively because students were members of high income or high status families, the study would be unlikely to be relevant. However, it is also possible that such a study may throw light on the operations of some other mechanism - one that should operate in the same way in

government schools accommodating poor students. In that case, the study may be considered relevant and included. Any exceptions to the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria described here will be identified in the report.

2.3.3 Identification of potential studies: Search strategy

The search strategy will proceed iteratively in four phases:

(i) Initial, relatively unstructured scan to identify literature for use in developing tentative theories, undertaken as part of the protocol development process.

This initial scan was undertaken by WVA staff and volunteer members of the research team and based on:

- a limited list of search terms: Community empowerment, Community accountability, Social accountability, Participatory governance, Participatory budgeting, Participatory budget monitoring, Participatory planning, Community score cards, Civic driven change, Community driven development, Social auditing, Score cards, Community /citizen reports, Citizen watch/Participatory expenditure tracking;

- names of programs identified during the initial workshop (e.g. Citizen Voice in Action, an WVA initiative);

- websites of key organisations involved in or funding community accountability and empowerment work, and of research consortia working in education in developing countries;

(ii) Detailed search to identify literature that can be used to elucidate, test and refine those tentative theories

This structured search aims to identify all outcome studies of direct relevance to the research question, and will be undertaken by a contracted informaticist.

The detailed search will also include reference, citation and author tracking to identify the most theory-relevant studies available as traditional search-term based searching is likely to not locate all relevant material – for example Greenhalgh and Peacock (2005) reported that this strategy identified only around 30% of the references used in a complex review.

The detailed search will include:

- Search terms:

  accountability, active citizenship, budget analysis, citizen-led accountability, citizen report cards, citizen scorecards, citizen voice, citizen watch, citizens' charter, citizens' jury, civic-driven change, collective empowerment, community accountability, community-driven development, community empowerment, community expenditure tracking, community management, community report cards, community score cards, decentralisation, decentralization, empowerment, engaged citizenship, e-procurement integrity pacts, lifestyle checks, monitoring of public service delivery, participatory budgeting, participatory expenditure tracking, participatory

governance, participatory planning, participatory spending, procurement monitoring, public expenditure tracking, rights-based accountability, sectoral expenditure tracking, social accountability, social audit, transparent online transactions, voice, voice and accountability.

AND Schools / government schools / primary schools / community schools / school improvement OR Education / primary education

AND Developing countries / international development / poor countries/ low-income countries/middle-income countries/ LMIC (in addition, searches will be undertaken without the geographic inclusion criteria, and sources will then be filtered to exclude sources which only refer to high-income countries)

- Bibliographic databases:

APA-FT: Australian Public Affairs – Full Text (Informit); Cambridge Journals Online; Contemporary Women's Issues ; Country Studies (Library of Congress) ; Expanded Academic ASAP (Gale) ; Factiva; IngentaConnect; JSTOR: The Scholarly Journal Archive Icon; MAIS: Multicultural Australia and Immigration Studies; netLibrary; OECD iLibrary; Political Science: SAGE full-text collection (SAGE) ; Project Muse; ProQuest; UN wire; UNESCO Information Sources

- Journal publishers' web pages and hand searching of key journals:

  Wiley, Sage journals on line, Taylor and Francis;

- Citation searches of key authors/papers as identified in the initial search:

  CiteseerX, Google Scholar, Web of Knowledge, and other search engines as appropriate

- Reference lists of key authors/papers as identified in the initial search

- References on key web sites including:

Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and Pacific (ANSA) http://www.ansa-eap.net/, South Asia Social Accountability Network (SasaNet) www.sasanet.org, Affiliated Networks for Social Accountability (ANSA Arab World), Research for Development (R4D) http://www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d/, Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty (RECOUP), http://recoup.educ.cam.ac.uk/ Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) http://www.create-rpc.org/, Assessment, Survey, Evaluation Research Centre, (ASER) http://www.asercentre.org/

- Requests to members of the End User Group, the Practitioner Group and other networks, including through the project website, for provision of materials;

(iii) Ongoing reference, citation and author tracking to identify the most theory-relevant studies available.

All reviewers will continue to identify potential documents through these means throughout the review process;

(iv) Final, very refined searches, again operating concurrently with the synthesis process, to collect additional materials that may be required to elucidate particular aspects of theory.

These searches cannot yet be described, but the search processes used will be comprehensively documented and reported in the final report.

Searches of these sources will be limited so as to identify studies conducted after 1995.

Two End-Note libraries will be established to manage the literature. The first will comprise titles and abstracts or all identified literature; the second will comprise those documents retained after the initial application of inclusion and exclusion criteria (see next item).

2.3.4 Screening studies: Applying inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria will be applied successively to (a) titles and abstracts and (b) full reports. Full reports will be obtained for those studies that appear to meet the criteria or where there is insufficient information to be sure. These documents will be imported into the second Endnote library. The inclusion and exclusion criteria will be re-applied to the full reports and those that do/did not meet these initial criteria will be excluded. Included documents will then be imported into NVivo9 for analysis.

2.3.5 Characterising included studies

Studies which remain after application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria will be coded for the type of policy, program or intervention, the countries in which it was implemented, years of implementation covered in the study, and study design. (See discussion of the draft coding tool, below). This will assist in mapping the literature against the initial rough theory as well as in describing the literature in the review.

2.3.6 Identifying and describing studies: Quality assurance process

The website invitation to suggest interventions and studies may assist in identifying any key sources that are not identified through the search strategies listed above.

Application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria will be undertaken by pairs of review group members working independently and then comparing their decisions and coming to a consensus.

Initial support for coding will be provided by Dr Westhorp (the team's expert in realist synthesis) and Professor Rogers. Each coder will read and code three documents. Dr Westhorp will read and code all documents. Professor Rogers will read and code the three documents initially coded by Dr Westhorp. Dr Westhorp will a) review the coding undertaken by all other team members and provide detailed comment on their coding, and b) provide her copy of the coded document

to the initial coder for comparison (Professor Rogers will provide these same forms of feedback for Dr Westhorp). Disagreements will be resolved by consensus.

2.4 In-depth review

2.4.1 Moving from broad characterisation (mapping) to in-depth review

One of the differences between realist synthesis and other forms of review lies in the sorts of literature that can be used for different stages of the work. The overall logic of a realist review moves from theory building to theory testing. In theory building, any relevant text can be used – that is, texts are not restricted to primary studies. In theory testing, primary studies of direct relevance to the aspect of the theory under test are selected. The first phase of narrowing down the literature will, therefore, consist of identifying primary studies that provide credible evidence in relation to particular segments of the rough theory (generating accountability to communities, generating empowerment in relation to accountability and/or education, contributions of accountability to education outcomes, and contributions of empowerment to education outcomes).

If there are sufficient primary studies that address both accountability/empowerment and education outcomes, these will be selected as the studies for in-depth review. Should that not be the case, realist synthesis allows for evidence to be drawn from different domains (for example, evidence in relation to generating accountability could be drawn from the health sector so long as the mechanisms under consideration are the same).

Given that different studies can provide different elements of evidence even within a segment of the theory, it is by no means certain that any further narrowing down of literature will be required. However, should it be so, the key focus of the review question is on 'the circumstances in which' community accountability and empowerment generate improved education outcomes, especially for the poor. In realist terms, this translates as 'the circumstances (i.e. features of context) which are necessary for particular kinds of community accountability and empowerment mechanisms to fire, in such a way as to generate improved education outcomes, particularly for the poor.' The second phase of narrowing down the literature will therefore be to identify the studies that provide the most credible evidence of the influence of context on mechanisms and outcomes. Depending on the range of literature that is found, this might be approached by:

- selecting particular interventions which have been tested in multiple contexts (different regions, countries, or sites within countries) and for which there is good information about relevant features of context;

- selecting specified mechanisms (e.g. 'increasing the perception on the part of the agent responsible for a particular action that breaches will be detected') that are fired across multiple types of community accountability and empowerment interventions and examining the contextual features which are necessary for those mechanisms to fire.

Which of these strategies is employed will depend on the range and quality of data available.

The coding guide that has been developed (see next item) includes codes for the name of the intervention; the regions, countries and sites for which data is provided in the text; and for the quality of data that the text provides about context, mechanism and outcome. It also includes a code for 'high, medium or low priority for in-depth analysis' along with capacity for annotation to explain the basis on which the rating was assigned. Items which are rated as high priority by each of two reviewers will automatically be assigned for in-depth analysis, and items which are identified as high priority by either of two reviewers will be discussed by them. Items which are rated as medium may still be used if required for explication of specific issues or questions.

In the final report, studies that are included in the in-depth review will be 'mapped' against the theory under test so that it will be apparent which studies have provided evidence in relation to which aspects of the theory.

2.4.2 Detailed description of studies in the in-depth review

In-depth description of studies included in the in-depth review will be undertaken using a coding guide that has been developed to assist consistency of coding across the review team (see Attachment 2). The guide is structured into two broad sections. The first section codes for information about the document and the study or studies to which it relates. It records bibliographic information, basic program descriptors (e.g. name of policy or program, countries in which it was implemented, years of implementation covered in the study), basic study descriptors (e.g. process, outcome or impact evaluation, study design and so on), and whether the document is a priority for inclusion in an in-depth review (should this be required). The second section of the coding document comprises items which are necessary for a realist analysis of evidence - information about context, mechanisms and outcomes, and how these are linked in specific context-mechanism-outcome configurations. This is described further below.

This information will enable a detailed description of the documents and studies included in the review (e.g. number of studies included, number of interventions reviewed). It will also enable some procedural decisions to be made during the review process (e.g. regarding inclusion of studies in in-depth reviews).

2.4.3 Assessing quality of studies and weight of evidence for the review question

One of the differences between a realist synthesis and a meta-analysis is that a realist synthesis can incorporate valid and credible evidence that is embedded in an otherwise flawed study, whereas a meta-analysis screens studies in terms of their overall validity. As a result, studies are not necessarily assessed as a whole, excluded on the basis of overall quality, or apportioned overall weights.

Pawson (2006) suggests that the appropriate criteria for quality assessment in realist reviews are relevance and rigour. Relevance means relevance to a specific element of the theory under test (rather than relevance of the whole study to the whole review question, as may be the case in other methods). Rigour refers to adequate methodological rigour to support the specific finding or inference which is drawn upon in the review (rather than the overall rigour of the whole study).

This may involve appraising specific pieces of evidence in terms of construct validity (whether it has been adequately shown that it measures or describes what it sought to measure or describe: this will, for example, be important in relation to education outcome indicators), statistical conclusion validity (whether it has used statistics appropriately, especially for drawing inferences), and internal validity (whether it has adequately addressed selection bias and other possible explanations for observed patterns). By implication, this requires that studies should have been explicit enough about their methods for particular items of evidence to be linked back to particular methods for data collection and methods of data analysis: assessing whether this is the case is in itself a form of appraisal of the quality of the studies. Where this is not possible, judgements will be made on a case by case basis and the rationale for the decision will be recorded.

External validity is a particular strength of realist synthesis and is approached quite differently. The linkage sought is between specific features of the context and the mechanisms whose operations those aspects affect. This may be assessed by appraising, within a study, the strength of evidence that a particular aspect of the context is important, either to mechanisms or to outcomes; or (more usually) by comparing aspects of context that are hypothesised to be significant across different studies.

Because these assessments are necessarily 'fine-grained', they are best undertaken during detailed analysis of the document. They will therefore be undertaken by the lead reviewer responsible for analysis of the particular document. Second reviewers will, during their reading of the document, note any concerns they may have about the quality of the research or the conclusions drawn and raise these with the lead reviewer. Disagreements will be resolved by consensus between the pair. Professor Rogers will be available to support other team members in appraisal of specific aspects of studies if required. Evidence which is considered inadequate for its particular purpose will not be used in the report. Any reservations about the quality of evidence which is used in the review will be noted in the review report.

All reviewers will be provided with a copy of the current version of the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (Pluye et al, 2011) to assist in their assessment of the quality of studies, but will apply the criteria to the relevant aspects of the studies rather than the studies as a whole.

2.4.4 Synthesis of evidence

Selection of outcomes indicators

In traditional quantitative review methods, 'synthesis' consists in large part of statistical manipulation of outcome indicators across the range of retained studies, and reviews therefore rely on prior identification of specific outcome indicators. Protocols therefore usually identify (and indeed the EPPI-Centre pro-forma requests) identification of outcomes indicators as the first step in description of the methods to be used for synthesis. However, one of the great strengths of a realist synthesis is that outcome indicators need not be consistent across studies and need not be pre-determined. The realist method aligns types of evidence against aspects of theories of change in order to identify which aspects of the

theory are supported and which are not. In this review, this means that any indicator - intermediate or longer term, process or outcome - used in a selected primary study can be included in the analysis. Further, intermediate and final outcome indicators used in primary studies and not related to our initial rough theories can be added as they are identified, and used to refine the theories if appropriate. Finally, evidence of different sorts of outcomes can be used at different points along the theory chain. For example, evidence from evaluation studies of interventions might identify short-term outcomes (perhaps changes in girls' participation rates in schools) while evidence of trends in education outcomes from national education data sets (perhaps changes in girls' graduation rates) might be used to examine somewhat longer term outcomes. This has the potential to assist with assessment of the likely contribution of interventions to outcome patterns.

There are, however, still two reasons to identify potential outcomes for a realist review. The first is that realist review works by establishing a rough theory which it seeks to refine, and anticipated outcomes form part of that theory. The second reason relates to the logic of analysing CMOCs. A mechanism is by definition a causal process that generates an outcome: in strict terms, mechanisms cannot be identified without reference to outcomes. Contexts are important because they influence whether and how mechanisms work. The important features of context therefore cannot be identified without having first identified mechanisms. The 'sequencing' of analysis is therefore to work 'backwards' from outcomes to mechanisms and thence to context. This process can be undertaken at a number of different levels of abstraction, as required for different questions or issues within the review.

One dilemma with this approach is that interventions are sometimes less than clear about their intended outcomes. McGee and Gaventa (2008) have suggested that "without clarity on what each [initiative] seeks to change or aims to achieve, it is difficult to gauge their success of assess their impact" (p 5). We note that this presumes a particular type of theory of change (one in which intended outcomes are pre-determined and the goal is to conduct interventions to 'cause' them). There is another type of theory of change, variously described as 'developmental', empowerment-based, or strengths based, in which communities themselves determine the outcomes of interest and the processes by which they will work towards them. It may be possible to allocate studies to 'pre-determined' or 'developmental' approaches and compare the outcomes claimed and the strength of evidentiary support for those claims.

Whether or not this is the case, the review has no choice but to work with the studies available, with all their strengths and weaknesses (including weaknesses in outcome measures, capacity to identify the contributions of interventions to outcome patterns, and so on). As a result, actual outcomes will be identified during the process of coding (as part of the process of identifying context-mechanism-outcome configurations). However, our initial scan of the literature and the work undertaken to develop the initial rough theory suggest both intermediate and longer term outcomes indicators for education, and for accountability and empowerment themselves.

Longer term education outcomes indicators may be expected to vary widely across studies, and include enrolment rates, age of entry to primary schooling/rates of over-age entry to schooling, dropout rates, progression through years of schooling/age for year of schooling, completion rates at various year levels, and achievement on standardised tests (see earlier references, and http://www.create-rpc.org/research/findings/).

Intermediate outcome indicators for education may relate to attendance rates for both teachers and students, quality of facilities and resources, budgets, governance, parental participation, student behaviours and so on.

Some studies may use other indicators of student learning and these will be identified and coded throughout the review. It is also possible that some studies will identify short- or intermediate-term learning for groups other than students (adults in the community, service providers, researchers and so on). These will also be coded and reported as outcomes.

Outcomes for accountability include improved responsiveness of decision-makers to community priorities, reduced levels of corruption, and improved behaviours by agents.

Intermediate outcomes for accountability may relate to increased access to relevant information (for example, initial budget allocations and actual budget expenditures), evidence of increased voice for communities and/or for marginalised groups within communities (for example, representations to decision-makers about community priorities), higher levels of monitoring by communities and/or by decision-makers at all levels, greater transparency about the outcomes of monitoring including at local levels (for example publicity about the findings being made accessible at local levels), more relevant sanctions, increased rates of application of sanctions and so on.

Outcomes for empowerment include evidence of direct participation in decision-making, influence of community perspectives in decisions, implementation of community-influenced decisions and control over (or increased influence in relation to) resources.

Intermediate outcomes for empowerment may relate to increased participation in accountability initiatives, in particular by poor and marginalised groups; establishment or strengthening of community level structures or organisations with agreed roles in accountability initiatives and/or education; strengthening of local leadership; increased collective self-efficacy (and potentially individual self-efficacy), strengthened social capital and greater access to resources.

Because this is realist synthesis, it will not 'measure' educational outcomes or other outcomes, nor prescribe how these should be measured. Instead, it will report on how the different studies have measured outcomes and synthesise the evidence.

Synthesising data

Realist synthesis maps items of evidence against elements of theory. As noted above, a coding guide has been developed to build consistency of coding across the review team. The second section of the guide comprises items which are necessary for a realist analysis of evidence, including but not limited to identifying the intervention's theory of change, activities, contexts, mechanisms and outcomes. It also provides some suggestions for annotation during coding. The draft coding guide will be reviewed after each reviewer has completed coding the first two or three documents, with a view to adding and refining codes.

Coding and initial synthesis will use the included studies to test each element of the initial theory. Included studies will be divided into four sets. Sets will be constructed so that all initial materials relating to a particular intervention (e.g. CVA) are in one set, in order to enable comparisons for that intervention across contexts; and such that approximately equal workloads are represented in each set. Each reviewer will take 'lead responsibility' for one set and 'second reviewer' responsibility for another. The lead reviewer will code documents in detail, while the second reviewer will read the documents and review the analysis drafted by the lead reviewer. Differences will be resolved by consensus.

As reviewers complete coding of documents, they will construct CMO tables (or elements of tables), recording both the evidence itself and the source from which it is drawn and map the tables against the initial rough theory. They will also prepare potential refinements to the CMO statements included in the initial rough theory (see below). Should judgements be required about inclusion or exclusion of evidence, these will be made by the pairs of reviewers responsible for analysis of the particular documents, using Pawson's suggested analytic techniques of juxtaposing findings ("for instance, when one study provides the process data to make sense of the outcome pattern noted in another", 2006, p 74), reconciling (by identifying contextual or implementation differences which explain apparently contradictory sets of findings), and if necessary adjudicating between studies on the basis of their quality.

As the review proceeds, therefore, CMOCs (context/mechanism/outcome configurations) will be developed for different aspects of the theory under test. We anticipate that this will result in a minimum of four sets of CMOCs relating to the accountability, empowerment, the contributions of accountability to education outcomes and the contributions of empowerment to education outcomes. These CMOC sets will, in their structure, consolidate the data and demonstrate the strength of evidence for various elements of the theory.

In the final stage of synthesis, the review team will meet for a two day workshop to review and summarise the CMOC sets, to construct a more abstracted and refined set, and on that basis to develop a middle range theory which explains the pattern of outcomes. The middle range theory itself may or may not draw on extant theory in accountability, empowerment or education.

2.4.5 In-depth review: Quality assurance process

A number of features will contribute to quality assurance during the in-depth review.

As noted above, initial support for coding will be provided by Dr Westhorp (the team's expert in realist synthesis) and Professor Rogers. Each coder will read and code three documents. Dr Westhorp will read and code all documents. Professor Rogers will read and code the three documents initially coded by Dr Westhorp. Dr Westhorp will a) review the coding undertaken by all other team members and provide detailed comment on their coding, and b) provide her copy of the coded document to the initial coder for comparison. (Professor Rogers will provide these same forms of feedback for Dr Westhorp). Disagreements will be resolved by consensus.

Each document will be read by two reviewers, and the draft of sections of analysis drafted by lead reviewers will be checked by a second reviewer who has also read the primary sources.

Members of the research team who are not undertaking coding and analysis will review and critique the draft report prior to its submission.

2.4.6 In-depth review: Deriving conclusions and implications

The draft report will be circulated to the End User Group. All members of the End User Group will be invited to provide their feedback in relation to conclusions and implications and all comments will be provided to all members of the review team. Once the feedback from End User Group members is received, the review team will meet for a final teleconference to agree conclusions and implications and add those to the draft report.

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Appendix 1.1: Authorship of this report

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Appendix 1.2 Initial Rough Theory

The initial 'rough theory' that we describe below differs from other sorts of program theory in four ways.

Firstly, the theory is not a program theory for a particular program (e.g. Citizen Voice and Action) or intervention (e.g. Participatory Expenditure Tracking Surveys). Rather, it is a theory for a 'family' or class of interventions, all of which intend to generate change by building community accountability and empowerment. It is, in realist terms, a 'middle range theory' - one which is specific enough to use in relation to a specific study but abstract enough to apply across programs or contexts. The specific theories of change for specific interventions will be coded during analysis and may be compared back to this more general theory during the theory refinement process.

Secondly, the theory is structured in realist terms and it therefore defines 'mechanisms' in a particular way. Mechanisms are not program strategies or types of intervention (for example, community score cards), but underlying processes that generate changed outcomes (we use Pawson and Tilley's construct of program mechanisms, described further below). The theory also identifies potential contextual features that may affect the operations of those mechanisms. It should be noted here that mechanisms and contextual features are sometimes described, in other sorts of theory, as "assumptions underpinning the theory of change". That is, by listing potential mechanisms and potential contextual features, we will have identified many potential assumptions, but have used different language to describe them (this language reflects realist philosophical constructs about the nature of reality and the nature of causality which are beyond the scope of this protocol to describe, but see for example, Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006; and Sayer, 1992 for descriptions). Other types of assumptions will be coded as they are identified throughout the review process: this is included in the coding guide.

Thirdly, the theory we describe below is not a singular theory, positing a specific causal pathway to a limited set of outcomes. Rather, we have identified a number of potential mechanisms for different levels of an overarching hierarchy of outcomes. This is for three reasons: 1. Any intervention (for example, community scorecards) may trigger a range of different mechanisms (for example, building agreement amongst community members about valued outcomes which facilitates local goal setting and planning, or increasing the perception on the part of the agent that rewards for effective or high quality performance will follow from monitoring). 2. This review will consider a range of different interventions, which may operate through the same or different mechanisms. 3. Realist philosophy assumes multiple causation (many causal processes contributing to any outcome), some of which operate concurrently (and are therefore reflected on the same level of the hierarchy of outcomes) and some of which operate sequentially (and therefore appear on different levels of the hierarchy of outcomes). The purpose of this initial rough theory is not to delimit the mechanisms to which attention will be paid, but to sensitise the review team to a range of potential mechanisms for which evidence may be sought.

Fourthly, the theory does not - and does not need to - specify exact definitions of intermediate outcomes or longer term impacts. Because its analytic techniques are different from other forms of review, a realist approach can incorporate the full range of definitions, process indicators, outcome indicators and impact measures used in primary studies.

The realist position in relation to attribution (implying that an intervention 'caused' an outcome) and contribution (implying that an intervention was one of a number of factors contributing to an outcome) is also relevant to the nature of the rough theory below. A realist approach assumes multiple and contingent causation and therefore assumes that contribution is the best outcome that might be demonstrated.

The questions

The rough theory for the question to be addressed in this review can be conceptualized as responding to a linked set of questions, that is:

The problem:

- What are the barriers to improved educational outcomes, particularly for the poor, in developing countries?

- What are the sorts of problems that community accountability and empowerment interventions can address and the opportunities such interventions can exploit?

- What is the overlap between the two: that is, which of the barriers to improved educational outcomes are caused (contributed to) by the sorts of problems that community accountability and empowerment can address? Or, framed the other way around: how do the sorts of problems that community accountability and empowerment can address manifest in the education domain, and how do they contribute to lesser or worse education outcomes, particularly for the poor? Or, which of the opportunities that community accountability and empowerment interventions can exploit will address barriers to education outcomes?

The mechanisms:

Assuming that accountability and empowerment interventions primarily improve education outcomes by two main pathways - improving education systems or services and generating community engagement with education - which in turn generate better education outcomes:

- What are the main mechanisms by which accountability and empowerment interventions generate increased accountability, of whom, to whom and for what? What are the main mechanisms by which community accountability generates improvements in education systems or services?

- What are the main mechanisms by which accountability and empowerment interventions contribute to empowerment, and who is empowered relative to whom? What are the critical mechanisms by which empowerment of local communities generates improvements in education systems or services?

- What are the main mechanisms by which community empowerment and accountability interventions contribute to gender equity and/or improved education outcomes for girls?

- What is or are the relationship(s) between accountability and empowerment?

- Which of the improvements to education systems or services best create improved education outcomes for the poor?

The circumstances:

Assuming that all interventions require certain pre-conditions to be effective, and that all program mechanisms only operate in some circumstances:

- What are the key contextual conditions, at which levels of which systems, which affect the operations of each of the identified mechanisms?

- In what ways do those conditions affect the operation of the mechanisms?

- How do the interactions between conditions and mechanisms affect the outcomes that are generated, particularly for the poor?

The problem

For ease of reading, we begin by summarising the types of problems that community accountability and empowerment interventions may feasibly address.

The problems that community accountability and empowerment interventions may feasibly address include:

- corruption, and in particular, diversion of funds or materials away from their intended purposes for private gain; clientelism, nepotism; and failure to provide services for which payment has been provided at organisational or individual level (the latter including, in this case, low attendance of teachers at schools)

- elite capture of interventions (where intervention strategies are broad-based and specifically include marginalised groups)

- lack of understanding of community needs on the part of decision-makers, or differences in priorities between decision-makers and communities, meaning that services do not meet community needs;

- failure of policies or service delivery systems to meet conditions described in UN rights documents (and in particular, availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability of education services as described in the UN Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), meaning that services are differentially available to different communities or different populations within communities;

- lack of understanding of rights and entitlements on the part of communities, failure of trust in governments or service providers on the part of communities, or fatalism on the part of communities, meaning that they do not act to redress problems arising from a) - c) above;

- poor quality services, meaning that services which do exist do not achieve outcomes as well as they otherwise might;

- community norms or expectations that affect the priority afforded to the service provided (in this case, education) or to the sub-populations for whom the service is seen to be a priority (for example girls as compared to boys, children with disabilities as compared to those without, children of different caste, cultural or religious groups, and so on).

It should be noted in relation to the last point that there are a range of other problems that contribute to low participation at school – most obviously, extreme poverty requiring children to work, either for money or at home – which would not be expected to be addressed by community accountability and empowerment interventions, at least in the short to medium term.[3] The point here, however, is that community norms and expectations are one of the influences on participation and that those norms and expectations may reasonably be expected to be influenced by community accountability and empowerment interventions.

Barriers to improved educational outcomes which may be addressed by community accountability and empowerment interventions may be conceived as falling at the local level and the systems level. The systems level comprises central (i.e. national and/or state) political and administrative decision-making structures and processes, policies and procedures as well as the systems (structures and processes) that link and manage central-local relationships. Barriers may be in relation to physical facilities, curriculum, teachers and teaching, budget, parent and student behaviours, and governance. The two levels for these sets of issues are represented in the table below.

Issue	Local Level	Systems Level
Physical facilities	Adequacy of school buildings (including toilets, kitchens) Access to and adequacy of furniture (e.g. desks & chairs) Availability of teacher accommodation	Infrastructure (including roads, bridges & transport to enable access to schools)
Curriculum	Quality and perceived relevance of curriculum Availability of teaching and learning resources (books, pens, chalk, IT)	Curriculum policies, standards and systems

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[3] It is feasible that community accountability and empowerment interventions may, in the long term, develop local economic capacity which may then impact on participation in education.

Under what circumstances does enhancing community accountability and empowerment improve education outcomes, particularly for the poor? A Realist Synthesis

Issue	Local Level	Systems Level
Teachers and teaching	Availability of teachers Teacher attendance Teacher skills and pedagogy Teacher behaviours (e.g. bullying, harassment, assault, sexual assault)	Teacher supply Teacher training
Budget	Adequacy of local budget for core functions Corruption (misallocation or misuse of funds at local level)	Adequacy of national budget Funding policies and systems Corruption at central or regional level
Parent and student behaviours	Student attendance Parent participation in education Priority afforded to education Student social norms & behaviours (bullying, harassment, assault, sexual assault)	Community norms and institutions (including law) in relation to education, teacher and student behaviours Enforcement systems for norms and laws
Governance	School governance Local accountability systems within the school, and between school and community Financial administration systems	Systems governance Political governance Financial monitoring and accountability systems

As noted above there are other barriers to improved education outcomes for the poor that community accountability interventions should not, in their own right, be expected to address, most notably poverty. There are also a range of sequelae of long term poverty that community accountability interventions cannot address in the short to medium term, including (for example) lower educational status of parents, irreversible health impacts of malnutrition, and so on.

The mechanisms

Our rough theory sees community accountability and empowerment as related, not least in the sense that any increase in accountability of decision-makers to communities reflects less asymmetry in power between the two. However,

different types of interventions (or 'the same' intervention in different contexts) may influence accountability and empowerment in different ways. The two remain, therefore, conceptually distinct.

A realist explanation of the mechanisms involved requires two levels of explanation: how is it that the intervention generates accountability, empowerment or both; and how is it that accountability or empowerment generates improved education outcomes, particularly for the poor? This dual level of analysis is necessary firstly, because it is possible to hypothesise changes in accountability or empowerment that do not result in improved education outcomes, or which result in improved education outcomes but not for the poor; and secondly because mechanisms may 'fire' or 'fail' at different stages in different contexts.

Our understanding of accountability theory suggests that accountability requires answerability – that is, both community voice in relation to the issue and transparency of information in relation to the issue; systems for monitoring and effective rewards and sanctions. Accountability always occurs in social contexts, and involves some form of evaluation by self (or more commonly in this context) others. Structures and processes for evaluation themselves do not necessarily directly influence behaviours: "Rather, it is the expectations surrounding potential evaluations which are at the root of our responses." (Frink and Klimoski, 2004, p 3)

Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggest that program mechanisms involve an interaction between a resource or opportunity provided by a program and the reasoning of those affected by it. Describing program mechanisms therefore involves identifying the resource, the reasoning, and the changed decisions that generate different behaviours that generate different outcomes (the changed behaviours may be seen as early level outcomes or as part of the overall process of change).

Community accountability and empowerment interventions may contribute to increased accountability by:

- directly providing information to communities, thus increasing transparency of information and motivating communities to work for change (for example by highlighting discrepancies between budgets allocated and those actually received at local level);

- facilitating processes that enable communities to analyse information about both their own needs and the services under consideration, to set local priorities in response, and to plan actions to achieve their priorities. These agreements at the community level are a pre-requisite for community voice;

- changing community perceptions in relation to their rights and entitlements, thus building their motivation to advocate and otherwise act to ensure those rights;

- establishing or strengthening communication systems between communities and decision-makers, at least at the local or regional level, which enable community voice to be heard;

- increasing the perception on the part of the agent (the person or body responsible for a particular action) that breaches will be detected and/or that sanctions will follow from detection;

- increasing the perception on the part of the agent that rewards for effective or high quality performance will follow from monitoring;

- establishing or strengthening structures to undertake monitoring at the community level;

- establishing or strengthening structures across multiple communities, thus strengthening capacity for shared advocacy on systems-level issues;

- establishing appropriate local level rewards and sanctions and systems for their implementation;

- advocating for improvements to systems level rewards and sanctions and their implementation;

- directly sanctioning systems failures through established political or legal systems (e.g. voting incumbents out of power, or taking legal action against breaches).

Increased accountability may improve education outcomes by:

- increasing the proportion of allocated funds that reach their intended destination and which are utilised for their intended purposes, thus ensuring that appropriate school facilities, staff and teaching and learning materials are available for students, and potentially reducing fees (increasing availability);

- improving behaviours by teachers – increasing attendance, decreasing negative behaviours such as discrimination, bullying, harassment or assault, and/or improving pedagogy and teaching skills – thus improving the amount of teaching time, improving the quality of relationships between teachers and students, and increasing the quality of teaching (increasing acceptability and quality);

- improving the quality and relevance of curriculum to local needs, including the needs of poor and very poor students and families (increasing adaptability);

- improving the quality of school governance, potentially contributing to any or all of the mechanisms already described;

- advocating for equivalent or supporting changes at systems levels;

- building reciprocity between communities (particularly parents and students) and education authorities, such that parents and students fulfil their roles and expectations (e.g. ensuring that students attend school);

- improving students' experiences of schooling, sustaining or building their motivation to learn;

- over time, building new social norms and institutions which support and facilitate quality education for all.

Community accountability and empowerment interventions may contribute to empowerment by:

- establishing a sense of shared vision, positive possibilities and opportunities which generates motivation to work collaboratively;

- increasing the skills of individuals and communities to undertake actions required for accountability: seeking information, working collectively, analysing information, problem solving and planning, managing their own organisations and so on;

- increasing the participation of otherwise marginalised groups - including the poor, students themselves, girls as students, and students with disabilities - in community structures and processes, including decision-making processes;

- building or strengthening relationships within communities, building both bonding and bridging capital that communities can draw on in implementing their plans (Social capital refers to the properties of social relationships which have productive capacity – that is, properties that enable people or groups to do things as a result of the relationship that they could not do alone. 'Bonding capital' describes the product of relationships within groups, providing group members with both material and social support. 'Bridging capital' is the product of relationships across social groups, providing access to new relationships and new resources at the local or regional level. 'Bridging capital' is the product of relationships across social groups);

- building more positive beliefs, norms or expectations about the roles that community members can play directly in education services (e.g. joining school boards, volunteer teaching) and in accountability initiatives relating to education;

- building individual and collective self-efficacy (that is, positive expectations and beliefs about performance in and outcomes of particular tasks in particular contexts);

- increasing community-owned assets (e.g. school facilities, or equipment for use in accountability processes).

Increased empowerment may improve education outcomes, and in particular, education outcomes for the poor, by:

- changing dynamics in local decision-making, so that increased priority is afforded to the needs and interests of poor students;

- increasing community and parent participation in school governance, teaching and support for students;

- increasing student voice within school governance;

- increasing student self-efficacy in relation to learning.

These mechanisms will not operate singly and may not always operate positively. Our initial assumption is that accountability and empowerment are mutually constitutive (i.e. each contributes to generating the other) and that they are joint contributors to improved education outcomes for the poor. This review seeks to identify the strength (or otherwise) of evidence to support each of these hypothesised mechanisms and the relationships between them; and to identify any additional mechanisms triggered by the interventions which contribute to outcome patterns. In so doing, it will provide the basis to 'support, refute or refine' the theory.

The circumstances

Realist analysis sees reality as comprising multiple levels and layers of open systems, each interacting with the others, and with causation operating both up and down the levels of systems (Mark, Henry and Julnes, 2000, p 156). Programs operate in and through these existing systems. Many kinds of programs have long implementation chains, involving funders, central policy bodies, regional offices and authorities, implementation agencies, local staff and local communities (Pawson, 2006). The circumstances in which accountability and empowerment interventions generate improved education outcomes will therefore comprise interacting influences from international, national, regional and local levels; from political, policy and education domains; from cultural and beliefs systems; from economic and geographic conditions; and from the circumstances of local communities. Characteristics of interventions will also affect whether and how outcomes are generated. These will include the strategies or activities used (different strategies fire different mechanisms), the 'fit' between interventions and local circumstances, and the fit between the scale of the intervention (local, regional, national) and the level at which the particular problem(s) to be solved exist (local responses will not necessarily resolve problems at the regional or national level).

On the basis of the preliminary scan of the literature undertaken to date, and from the experience of the research team, we posit the following sets of circumstances as being particularly conducive to generating improved education outcomes. However, we note that these circumstances will in some instances also be the intermediate outcomes of accountability and empowerment interventions. That is, where sufficient of these circumstances exist for accountability and empowerment interventions to proceed, other circumstances which do not exist in the first instance may be created over time, thus creating contexts in which improved education outcomes for the poor are more likely. This is consistent with the realist tenet that programs change the contexts in which they operate (Pawson and Tilley 1997).

This table comprises a significant element of our 'initial rough theory' to be refined through the synthesis.

It should be noted that we have not, as yet, aligned features of context against particular mechanisms from the lists above, or specified the specific outcomes that

they generate. This is a necessary stage for constructing CMOCs (which provide integrated statements: in X context, Y mechanism generates Z outcome) and will be undertaken as part of the process of the review. However, the 'Implications' column of the chart begins the process of describing 'what it is that matters' about the particular feature for supporting the operation of particular mechanisms and/or provides brief description of some elements of potential mechanisms related to those features.

It should also be noted that this table is framed in the positive: it identifies features of context which are likely to be conducive to community accountability and empowerment and to the generation of improved education outcomes. The implicit logic includes the obverse: that the absence of these conditions is likely to militate against community accountability and empowerment and therefore the improved education outcomes to which they may have contributed. We will, in the course of the review, also code for other specific circumstances which undermine community accountability and empowerment and/or generate negative outcomes.

Table 1: Implications of context

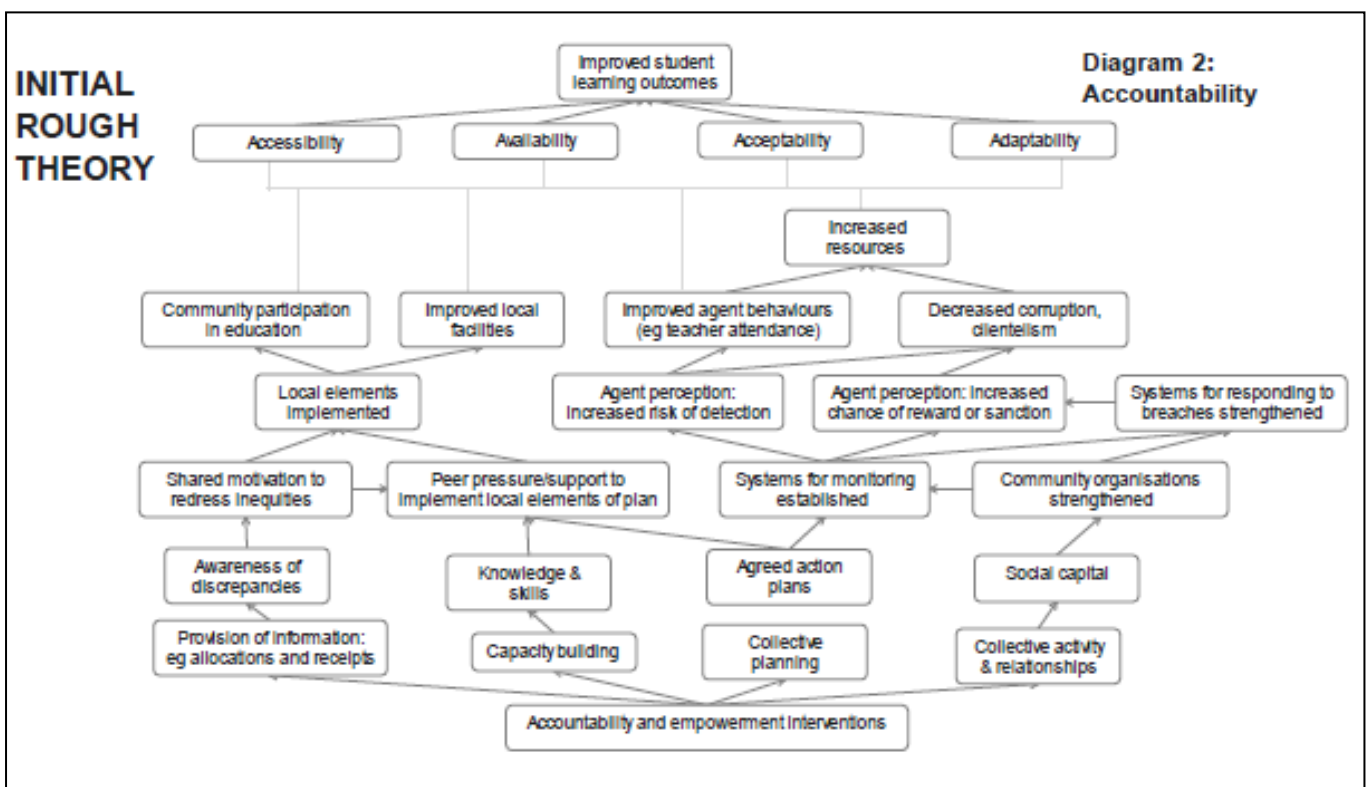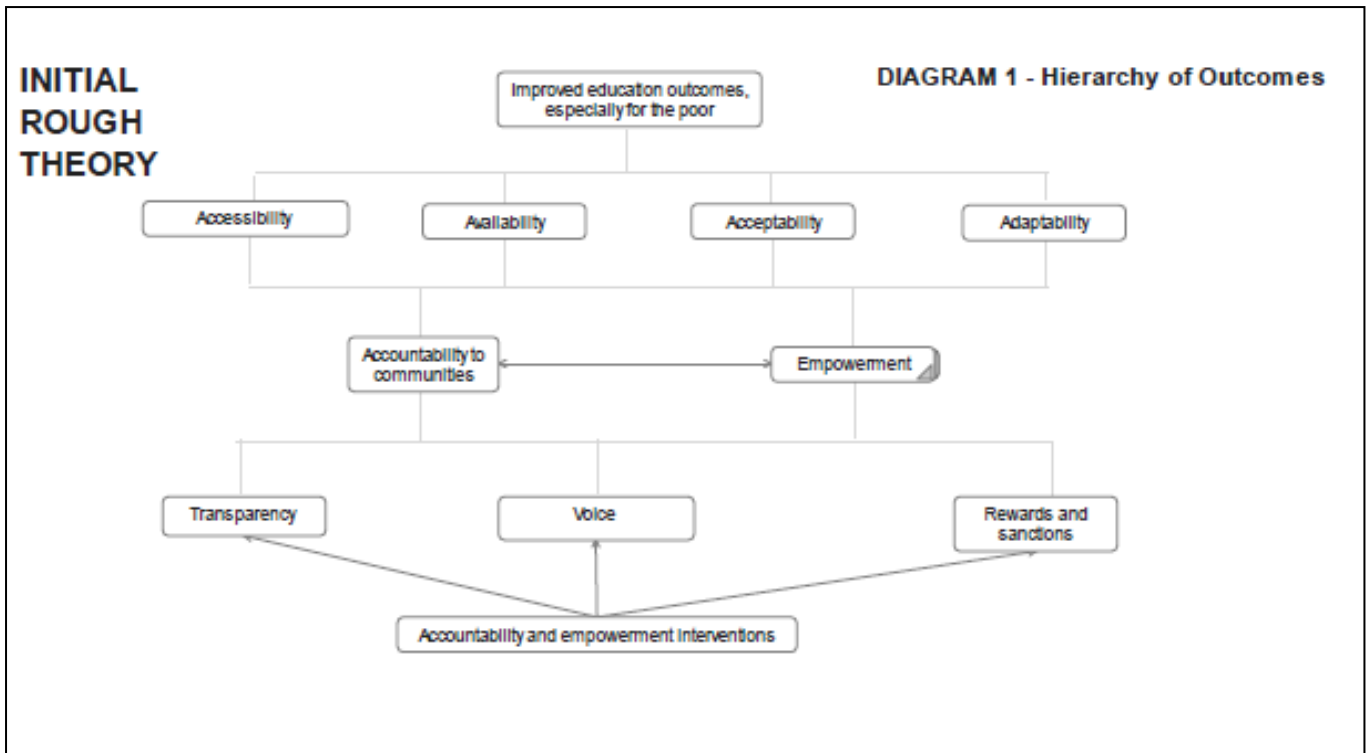| Elements	Initial theory statement re: circumstances	Implications
Funding donor requirements	Donor requirements support, both in principle and in practice, decentralization, democratization, and accountability. Donor requirements support rights-based access to education.	Consistency between program objectives and requirements and funding objectives increases access to funding, reduces administrative complexity and provides a tool for advocacy to national governments where necessary.
National political system and broad policy directions	Political system is broadly democratic or democratizing, and/or has established structures for participation in policy development. Cross-government policy directions support decentralization of decision-making.	Systems exist through which citizen voice can be heard. Policy directions support local priority setting and tailoring of implementation to local needs. Education policy directions are consistent with broader policy directions, increasing political support. 'Reciprocal strengths' between state structures and civil society.
National education policy	Education policy supports equitable access, availability, acceptability and adaptability of education systems; decentralization of education decision-making within broad policy frameworks; participation in local education decision-making; and accountability of education providers both to central government and to local communities.	Broad consistency between policy directions and program objectives. Policy directions support local priority setting and tailoring of implementation to local needs. Policy sets a framework for monitoring, answerability and sanctions.
National education funding system	The funding pool for education is adequate to provide at least core funding for education infrastructure and operating costs at local level. Administration systems for education funding enable equitable allocation of funds to	Funding is available to local communities to provide basic school infrastructure, pay staff and purchase teaching and learning resources. Funding is distributed to regions and administrative systems enable monitoring, which is

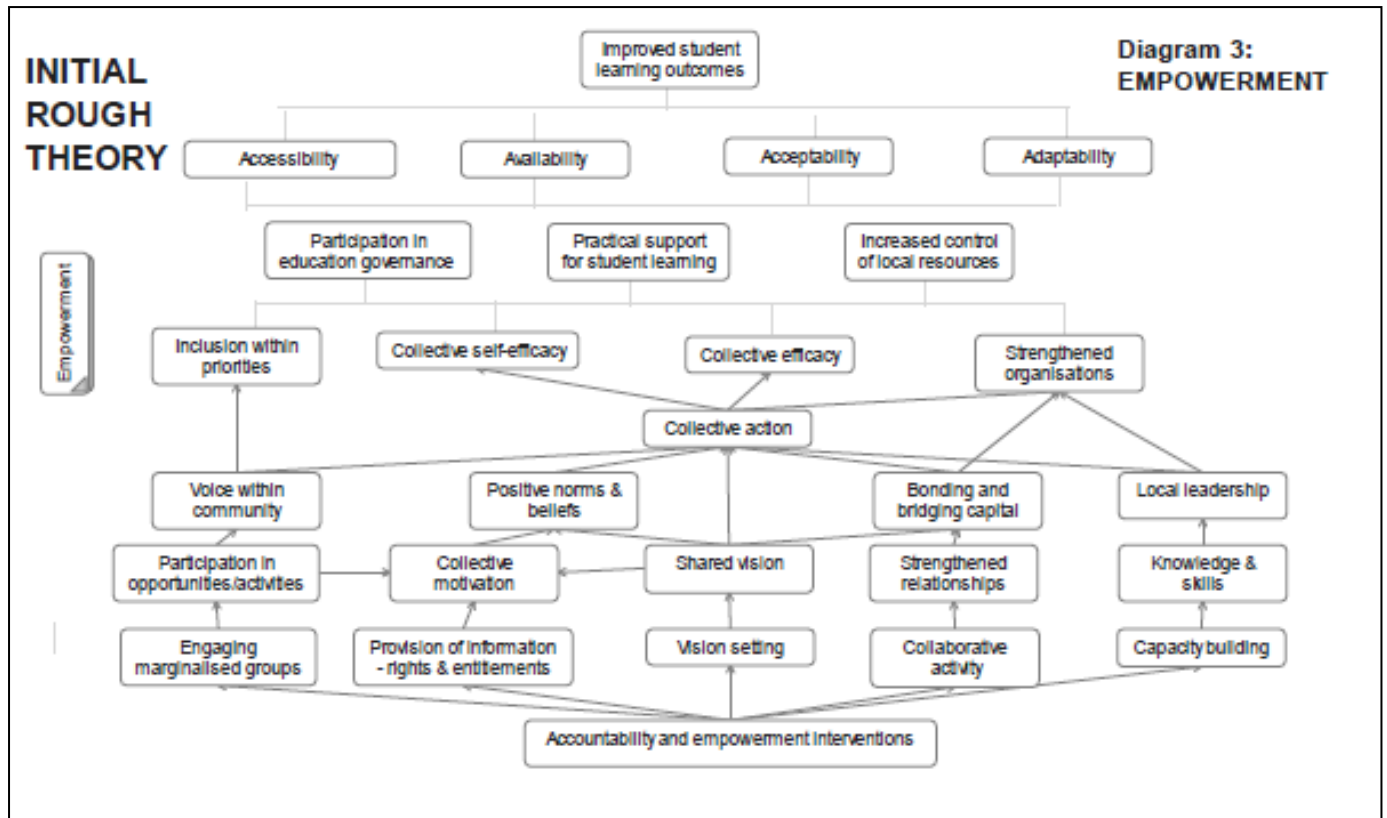|		
	regions/localities, timely distribution of funds and accurate monitoring of distribution against allocations.	critical for accountability.
Political and bureaucratic culture (national, regional and local levels)	Political and bureaucratic culture values ethical behaviour. Systems exist to identify and respond to corruption.	Social pressure from peers and higher levels of systems for politicians and bureaucrats to operate in accordance with policy. Reduced likelihood and rate of misappropriation of funding. Sanctions can be applied when corruption is identified.
Established civil society institutions	Established channels of communication between state and civil society. Cultural expectations of contributing to policy decisions.	Cultural support and role models for participation in decision-making.
Local power relations	Teachers and other school staff are respected by communities, and communities are respected by teachers and other school staff. There is adequate participation (both in terms of representation and involvement) of diverse groups, including marginalized groups, within community structures.	School teachers and other staff do not see themselves, and are not seen by communities, as being of such high status that they can safely ignore community wishes. Breadth of participation safeguards against elite capture of program resources and opportunities.
Local community relationships	Communities are relatively homogeneous OR relationships between cultural and religious sub-groups are relatively peaceful. Cultural norms include concerns for rights of marginalized or disadvantaged groups.	Diverse community members are able to collaborate on issues of common concern.
Nature of barriers to education outcomes	At least a proportion of the barriers to improved education outcomes can be addressed at local level.	Communities are able to achieve improvements in circumstances that have positive impacts on education. A sense of success builds motivation and resilience to address longer term issues or issues requiring central government attention.

Nature of accountability intervention	There is a match of intervention strategies to culture, power relations and the nature of barriers to education. Specific features of interventions which affect outcomes may include the underlying theory of change (for example, strengths-based/appreciative cf. problem focused); extent of capacity building; responsiveness to local priorities; facilitation and conflict resolution skills of local workers; facilitation of horizontal and vertical relationships to build dialogue.	A variety of specific features of interventions may affect whether and how they work in different contexts. Interventions which are tailored to local circumstances are more likely to be effective.
Nature of participation in accountability intervention	Local leaders participate in interventions. Marginalised groups participate in interventions. Parents participate in interventions. Students participate in interventions.	Participation of local leaders provides mandate and legitimacy for the intervention at local level. Participation strengthens local leadership capacity. The voice and perspectives of marginalized groups are included within local plans. Participation strengthens capacities of marginalized groups. Parents' intrinsic motivation to support education builds sustainability. Parents develop capacity to support both the provision of education and their own children's learning. The voice and perspectives of students are included in local plans. Students are empowered within school settings and motivation to learn/self-efficacy are increased.

Under what circumstances does enhancing community accountability and empowerment improve education outcomes, particularly for the poor? A Realist Synthesis

INITIAL ROUGH THEORY

DIAGRAM 1 - Hierarchy of Outcomes

Improved education outcomes, especially for the poor

Accessibility · Availability · Acceptability · Adaptability

Accountability to communities ← → Empowerment

Transparency · Voice · Rewards and sanctions

Accountability and empowerment interventions

INITIAL ROUGH THEORY

Diagram 2: Accountability

Improved student learning outcomes

Accessibility · Availability · Acceptability · Adaptability

Increased resources

Community participation in education · Improved local facilities · Improved agent behaviours (eg teacher attendance) · Decreased corruption, clientelism

Local elements implemented · Agent perception: Increased risk of detection · Agent perception: increased chance of reward or sanction · Systems for responding to breaches strengthened

Shared motivation to redress inequities · Peer pressure/support to implement local elements of plan · Systems for monitoring established · Community organisations strengthened

Awareness of discrepancies · Knowledge & skills · Agreed action plans · Social capital

Provision of information: eg allocations and receipts · Capacity building · Collective planning · Collective activity & relationships

Accountability and empowerment interventions

Appendix 2: Draft Coding Guide

Category	Codes
Publication [Study] Citation details (author, title, source) Bibliographic source of citation	
Place(s) of implementation Code the country or countries in which the policy or program operates(as stated by the authors) Specify the country or countries included in the study (if different)	Region Country / countries Site/sites
Years of implementation Code the years in which the program or policy was implemented and the years covered by the research/evaluation if specified	Years of policy / program implementation Years covered by research or evaluation
Policy or Program name Code the name of the program if specified	
Program part of a broader policy framework/ scheme Code information that will identify the broader policy or program	Name of broader policy or scheme Host country Government policy / scheme Funding donor policy / scheme NGO policy / scheme / program
Funding sources Code program funding and evaluation funding sources if different.	Program funding - Host country (source) Program funding - Funding donor Program funding - Other Evaluation/research funding – as part of program funding Evaluation/research funding – separate to program funding

Publication [study] focus Code the intent of the publication from which data is being extracted i.e. to report on the formal program evaluation etc	Evaluation report Research report / question
Process, outcome or impact evaluation Code the form(s) of evaluation presented in the report	Process Outcome Impact Mixed
Study approach and/or design Code the relevant features of study approach or study design. Annotate implications of design for realist analysis	RCT (including pseudo-RCT design) Comparative study with/ without concurrent controls Case series (pre-test/post-test; prospective) Case study / comparative case study / nested case study Qualitative only Quantitative only Mixed methods Realist design Participatory design Other named design Design not specified
Priority for in-depth review Code this item as high, medium or low priority for inclusion in an in-depth review phase (if required). Annotate: reasons for rating as high, medium or low. If high priority, annotate: aspect of rough theory for which the study is relevant	High priority Medium priority Low priority

Program aim [focus] Code the main program objectives as detailed by the authors. Only programs with specific education aims should be coded using education codes. General approaches which might have outcomes in education are to be coded as 'other'. Programs may be coded in several ways.	Accountability – Education Accountability – Other Empowerment – Education Empowerment – Other Education outcomes – Poor/very poor Education outcomes – Marginalised/disenfranchised Education outcomes – General Human rights Gender issues / outcomes Other
Theory Code and identify program theory/elements of program theory, where they are explicitly identified by the authors.	Program logic (theory of action) Program theory (theory of change) Program approach (e.g. strengths based, appreciative, empowerment)
Substantive theory Code and identify underpinning theories, where they are explicitly identified by the authors. Ensure names of specific formal theories and theorists are coded where they are identified by the authors	Substantive theory – accountability Substantive theory – empowerment Substantive theory – education Other Theorist(s)
Orientation Where program and substantive theories are not explicit, code author statements that highlight implicit theory (e.g. program use of either an empowerment or an accountability approach.) (Annotate)	Accountability Empowerment Program approach

Assumptions Code and/or annotate underlying assumptions in the program model, and identify whether implicit or explicit	(E.g. "that there is one community"; "that marginalised groups and powerful groups in the community will cooperate in relation to service providers rather than engage in competition or conflict")	
Schooling sector(s) Specify the sector(s) which are addressed / intended to be addressed by the program's actions (as stated by the authors)	Junior Primary Primary Secondary Adult Other education Non-education	Government Private Community Religious Other
Priority area If specified in the policy or program, code for the priority area(s) which are addressed/intended to be addressed by the program's actions (as stated by the authors)	Physical facilities (e.g. school buildings, toilets) Infrastructure (e.g. accommodation, transport) Funding and funding administration (school level) Funding and funding administration (system level) Teachers and teaching ("Practise") Teacher supply Student behaviours (e.g. attendance) Community norms and institutions School governance Education system governance Curriculum Other ……………………………………………………	
Adult and community targets for the program Which sectors of or roles in the community did the program target or aim to involve? Code all that apply	Community – roles not specified OR Students Parents Whole family Teachers School Principals School Boards Community Leaders	

	Regional authorities
	Policy makers
	Politicians
	Other…
Geographic setting	Metropolitan zone
	Peri-urban zone
	Rural zone
	Remote zone
	Whole state/country
	Multiple countries
Settings for action Code all that apply	Whole community – settings not specified
	OR
	Home
	Community organisation
	Local council
	School
	Other (specify):
Community features Code for features of communities that the authors have identified as important Code for features of communities that the rough theory predicts are important Code other features of communities that appear to affect whether or how programs operate.	Community size
	Language(s)
	Religious groups
	Marginalised groups
	Extent of conflict
	Power relations within community
	Mobility/Transient communities (e.g. feeding camps, itinerant herders, child soldiers)

Program description	
Code details	program strategies/activities.
	how the program was implemented
	who implemented it.
	duration/time span
	intensity (e.g. brief visits by facilitators or trained local resident facilitators)
Outcomes assessed;	
Code for: Individual, community, intermediate or longer term; education; accountability; empowerment; other.	Education outcomes: enrolment rates, age of entry to primary schooling/rates of over-age entry to schooling, dropout rates, progression through years of schooling/age for year of schooling, completion rates at various year levels, and achievement on standardised tests
	Intermediate education outcomes: attendance rates for teachers, attendance rates for students, quality of facilities and resources, budgets, governance, parental participation, teacher behaviours, student behaviours
	Outcomes for accountability: responsiveness of decision-makers to community priorities; reduced levels of corruption, clientelism; improved behaviours by agents
	Intermediate outcomes for accountability: increased access to relevant information, evidence of increased voice for communities and/or for marginalised groups within communities, higher levels of monitoring by communities and/or by decision-makers at all levels, greater transparency about the outcomes of monitoring including at local levels, more relevant sanctions, increased rates of application of sanctions
	Outcomes for empowerment: direct participation in decision-making, influence of community perspectives in decisions, implementation of community-influenced decisions and control over (or increased influence in relation to) resources
	Intermediate outcomes for empowerment: increased participation in accountability initiatives, in particular by poor and marginalised groups; establishment or strengthening of community level structures or organisations with agreed roles in accountability initiatives and/or education; strengthening of local leadership; increased collective self-efficacy; increased individual self-efficacy, strengthened social capital and greater access to resources

Program Adaptation/Tailoring Code for adaptations of program to suit local circumstances/conditions	Program locally developed de novo (i.e. a unique, local community developed program) If the program was developed elsewhere or adopted from elsewhere, code for adaption/tailoring of program to local context/circumstances
Dynamic program adaptation	The extent to which and ways in which the program was dynamically modified to fit provider preferences, community needs, values and cultural norms on the basis of any formative feedback
Community participation Code for ways in which the community participated in the program	Establishing overall program goals Designing and developing the program Managing the program in the local area Participating in program activities (e.g. vision setting, planning, monitoring) Evaluating the program and its outcomes

Recruitment and engagement (inclusive of response & follow-up rates) How were communities and participants identified, engaged and recruited?	Strategies to identify and recruit participants Voluntarism/pressures to participate Incentives to participate Reach/proportion of community who participated
Participant's attitudes toward the program Community /participant responses to the program – NB Potentially important as mechanisms	Quality of program Ways in which the program was implemented locally Utility of program Intermediate outcomes of programs
Context – Implementation Code 'environmental' characteristics that explicitly or plausibly affected the program implementation, according to the author(s)'	physical, social, political, historical, and economic features of context that affected program implementation

point of view	
Context – Affecting Mechanisms Code explicit statements by the authors that link effects of the context on the mechanisms that program fired / intended to fire.	Political, economic, cultural, power relations, participation features of context that affected whether and how the program generated outcomes
Sustainability Detail any discussion by the authors regarding the continuation or extension of the program inclusive of any planning conducted at the outset of implementation	Strategies to ensure continued monitoring / accountability initiatives Strategies to ensure continued community participation in and support of education
Evaluation of the program If separate to research design, code for elements of program evaluation	Evaluation design processes Evaluation design Participation in evaluation (including by community) Key observations/results/findings
Author conclusions: overall . Code author conclusions Annotate any comments or notes you may have that may not be in agreement with the author's point(s) of view.	Effectiveness/efficacy of program approach Issues/dilemmas Recommendations for change Contexts/Mechanisms/Outcomes Implications for further research
CMOs Code for any/all aspects of CMOs Annotate thoroughly with ideas in relation to CMOs	Elements as per initial rough theory Amendments/refinements to elements of initial rough theory – including contradictions/evidence that aspects of theory do not work, or do not work in particular contexts Additions to initial rough theory

Additional publications that may provide complementary or supplementary information on the program or for the review		55

This coding guide was adapted from a data extraction tool originally developed for use in a realist review of interventions for Aboriginal Children and Young People's Wellbeing. Adapted with permission of the authors.

Appendix 3: Classification of countries as low-income or middle-income

Based on World Bank lending groups

Afghanistan	Congo, Dem. Rep	Kiribati
Albania	Costa Rica	Korea, Dem Rep.
Algeria	Cuba	Kosovo
American Samoa	Djibouti	Kyrgyz Republic
Angola	Dominica	Lao PDR
Antigua and Barbuda	Dominican Republic	Latvia
Argentina	Ecuador	Lebanon
Armenia	Egypt, Arab Rep.	Lesotho
Azerbaijan	El Salvador	Liberia
Bangladesh	Eritrea	Libya
Belarus	Ethiopia	Lithuania
Belize	Fiji	Macedonia, FYR
Benin	Gabon	Madagascar
Bhutan	Gambia, The	Malawi
Bolivia	Georgia	Malaysia
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ghana	Maldives
	Grenada	Mali
Botswana	Guatemala	Marshall Islands
Brazil	Guinea	Mauritius
Bulgaria	Guinea-Bisau	Mayotte
Burkina Faso	Guyana	Mexico
Burundi	Haiti	Micronesia, Fed. Sts.
Cambodia	Honduras	Moldova
Cameroon	India	Mongolia
Cape Verde	Indonesia	Montenegro
Central African Republic	Iran, Islamic Rep.	Morocco
	Iraq	Mozambique
Chad	Jamaica	Myanmar
Chile	Jordan	Namibia
China	Kazakhstan	Nepal
Colombia	Kenya	Nicaragua
Comoros		

Niger	Tunisia
Nigeria	Turkey
Pakistan	Turkmenistan
Palau	Tuvalu
Panama	Uganda
Papua New Guinea	Ukraine
Paraguay	Uruguay
Peru	Uzbekistan
Philippines	Vanuatu
Romania	Venezuela, RB
Russian Federation	Vietnam
Rwanda	West Bank and Gaza
Samoa	Yemen, Rep.
São Tomé and Principe	Zambia
Senegal	Zimbabwe
Serbia	
Seychelles	
Sierra Leone	
Solomon Islands	
Somalia	
South Africa	
Sri Lanka	
St. Kitts and Nevis	
St. Lucia	
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	
Sudan	
Suriname	
Swaziland	
Tajikistan	
Tanzania	
Thailand	
Togo	
Tonga	

Under what circumstances does enhancing community accountability and empowerment improve education outcomes, particularly for the poor? A Realist Synthesis

(World Bank http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups)

Low-income economies ($1,005 or less)

Afghanistan	Gambia, The	Myanmar
Bangladesh	Guinea	Nepal
Benin	Guinea-Bissau	Niger
Burkina Faso	Haiti	Rwanda
Burundi	Kenya	Sierra Leone
Cambodia	Korea, Dem Rep.	Somalia
Central African Republic	Kyrgyz Republic	Tajikistan
Chad	Liberia	Tanzania
Comoros	Madagascar	Togo
Congo, Dem. Rep	Malawi	Uganda
Eritrea	Mali	Zimbabwe
Ethiopia	Mozambique	

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Lower-middle-income economies ($1,006 to $3,975)

Angola	India	São Tomé and Principe
Armenia	Iraq	Senegal
Belize	Kiribati	Solomon Islands
Bhutan	Kosovo	Sri Lanka
Bolivia	Lao PDR	Sudan
Cameroon	Lesotho	Swaziland
Cape Verde	Marshall Islands	Syrian Arab Republic
Congo, Rep.	Mauritania	Timor-Leste
Côte d'Ivoire	Micronesia, Fed. Sts.	Tonga
Djibouti	Moldova	Turkmenistan
Egypt, Arab Rep.	Mongolia	Tuvalu
El Salvador	Morocco	Ukraine
Fiji	Nicaragua	Uzbekistan
Georgia	Nigeria	Vanuatu

Ghana	Pakistan	Vietnam
Guatemala	Papua New Guinea	West Bank and Gaza
Guyana	Paraguay	Yemen, Rep.
Honduras	Philippines	Zambia
Indonesia	Samoa	

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Upper-middle-income economies ($3,976 to $12,275)

Albania	Ecuador	Namibia
Algeria	Gabon	Palau
American Samoa	Grenada	Panama
Antigua and Barbuda	Iran, Islamic Rep.	Peru
Argentina	Jamaica	Romania
Azerbaijan	Jordan	Russian Federation
Belarus	Kazakhstan	Serbia
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Latvia	Seychelles
Botswana	Lebanon	South Africa
Brazil	Libya	St. Kitts and Nevis
Bulgaria	Lithuania	St. Lucia
Chile	Macedonia, FYR	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
China	Malaysia	Suriname
Colombia	Maldives	Thailand
Costa Rica	Mauritius	Tunisia
Cuba	Mayotte	Turkey
Dominica	Mexico	Uruguay
Dominican Republic	Montenegro	Venezuela, RB

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