



Solomon Islands

SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

SABER Country Report
2013

Policy Goals

Status

1. Autonomy in Planning and Management of the School Budget

The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) manages the Solomon Islands Grant Policy, which constitutes the largest share of education financing at the school level. The head teacher and School Committee, in collaboration with the community, are responsible for preparing and executing the operational budget and have the ability to raise additional funding. Salary for teaching staff is managed at the central level.

Emerging
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2. Autonomy in Personnel Management

The Education Authority has complete autonomy over the appointment, deployment, and transfer of teaching staff; the MEHRD sets standards and entry requirements for teaching staff. There is no clear policy that explicitly states who has the legal authority to appoint and deploy non-teaching staff.

Emerging
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3. Participation of the School Council in School Governance

The School Committee is representative of the school and community and is established through a transparent, democratic approach for three-year terms. Main responsibilities pertain to developing the Whole School Development Plan, annual budgets, and supporting school operations. The School Committee does not have a voice on matters such as learning inputs or curriculum.

Emerging
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4. Assessment of School and Student Performance

Both school and standardized student assessments exist in Solomon Islands and results can be used to inform and enhance pedagogy and school operations, however policy is not specific. Results are to be shared with Education Authorities (EAs), schools, and parents.

Established
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5. Accountability to Stakeholders

Mechanisms are not well established to enable stakeholders to demand accountability through use of school and standardized student assessment results. Policy exists to govern school operations and use of financial resources, including implementing sanctions for inappropriate use or non-compliance.

Emerging
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Introduction

In 2011, the World Bank Group commenced a multi-year program designed to support countries in systematically examining and strengthening the performance of their education systems. Part of the World Bank's new Education Sector Strategy,¹ this evidence based initiative, called SABER (Systems Approach for Better Education Results), is building a toolkit of diagnostics for examining education systems and their component policy domains against global standards, best practices, and in comparison with the policies and practices of countries around the world. By leveraging this global knowledge, the SABER tools fill a gap in the availability of data and evidence on what matters most to improve the quality of education and achievement of better results.

SABER School Autonomy and Accountability is the first of three SABER domains to be implemented as part of phase two of the Pacific Benchmarking for Education Results (PaBER) initiative. Funded by AusAID, the PaBER initiative aims to link policy with implementation to identify areas to strengthen policy, improve knowledge dissemination, and improve the quality of education and student performance across the Pacific. Specifically, the PaBER project focuses on the primary level of an education system. The project concept and determination of three pilot countries – Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea – was agreed upon at the Pacific Forum Education Ministers Meeting of October 11-13, 2010. The project is being coordinated through the Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA).

Country Overview

The Solomon Islands consists of over 900 islands – 300 of which are inhabited – and a total landmass of 28,369 square kilometres. The country, which is home to 531,000 people, is divided into nine provinces, and its capital city is Honiara. The country's population is quite young, with nearly 57 percent aged 24 or younger. Solomon Islands is a multicultural, multi-ethnic society with more than a hundred different indigenous languages. Over 73 percent of the population are Protestant, of which the Church of Melanesia has the largest congregation at nearly 33 percent. The second largest organized religion is Roman Catholic, which accounts for 19 percent of the population.

Self-government was achieved in 1976 and Solomon Islands gained independence in 1978. The country's type of government is a parliamentary democracy, with elections held every four years.

Economically, more than 75 percent of the labour force is engaged in subsistence farming or fishing. The country is rich in natural resources, including timber and commodities such as canned tuna, palm oil, copra, and cocoa. The country is home to pockets of undeveloped minerals, including lead, zinc, nickel and gold. The Central Bank estimates a 4 to 5 percent rate of economic growth in 2013.

Like many of the Pacific island countries, Solomon Islands is prone to major natural disasters. Tropical cyclones are increasing in frequency, causing extensive and recurring flooding and wind damage in some parts of the country. In February 2013, an earthquake and tsunami struck the eastern shores of Solomon Islands.

I. Education in the Solomon Islands

The Education Act 1978 is the foundational legislation that establishes the structure, mandate, and responsibilities of the education sector and the actors within. Specifically, the Education Act establishes the three levels of governance within the education system: Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD), which is the central authority; Education Authorities (EAs), which are the sub-national authorities; and, schools. The Education Authorities (EAs) are approved by the MEHRD and are responsible for managing their respective schools (namely private, public, and mission schools). There is at least one EA per

¹ The World Bank Education Sector Strategy 2020: Learning for All (2011), which outlines an agenda for achieving "Learning for All" in the developing world over the next decade.

province, and an EA can have schools in multiple provinces.

The strategic vision and direction of the education system is captured by the MEHRD's longer-term Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015, as well as the associated three-year National Education Action Plan (NEAP).² This framework guides operations and underpins donor support, which is mainly channelled through the Education Sector Wide Program.

The MEHRD consists of 12 divisions/units:

- Curriculum Development Division;
- Early Childhood Education Division;
- Education Inspectorate Monitoring Unit;
- Education Resource Unit;
- National Examinations and Standards Unit;
- Planning, Coordination and Research Unit;
- Primary Division;
- Secondary Division;
- Support Division (Administration & Accounts);
- Teaching Service Division;
- Teacher Training Development Division;
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

Presented in Table 1, the education system consists of four levels: early childhood education; primary school; secondary school; and post secondary school education and training.

Level of Education	Age	Grade/Year
Early Childhood Education	3 – 5	Pre-school
Primary School	6-13	Grade 1 to Grade 6
Secondary School	14+	Forms 1 - 6
Post Secondary School Education & Training	19+	Form 7, TVET, college and university

Source: MEHRD Performance Assessment Framework 2009-2011

Table 2 presents select education indicators for Solomon Islands. As a percentage of GDP, the country allocates 6.05 percent of public expenditure to education, or some 26 percent of total government expenditure. The primary and secondary levels of education receive the largest share of education funding, nearly 30 percent and 21 percent, respectively. The country has achieved near universal net enrollment at the primary level, and at 96 percent the transition rate from primary to secondary school is high. Solomon Islands has an average pupil-to-teacher ratio of 35 to 1, and the percentage of students who repeat grades in primary schools is nearly 9 percent.

Public Expenditure on Education	
As percentage of GDP	6.05
As percentage of total Government Expenditure	26
Distribution of Public Expenditure per Level (%)	
Early Childhood Education	1.8
Primary	29.8
Secondary	20.8
Tertiary	10.8
Pupil/Teacher ratio in Primary	35:1
Percentage of repeaters in Primary	8.8
Primary to Secondary transition rate, 2007	96.3

Source: MEHRD Performance Assessment Framework 2009-2011

² MEHRD National Education Action Plan 2007-2009; MEHRD National Education Action Plan 2010-2012; and MEHRD National Education Action Plan 2013-2015.

II. The Case for School Autonomy and School Accountability

School autonomy and accountability are key components of an education system that ensure educational quality. The transfer of core managerial responsibilities to schools promotes local accountability; helps reflect local priorities, values, and needs; and gives teachers the opportunity to establish a personal commitment to students and their parents (Box 1). Benchmarking and monitoring indicators of school autonomy and accountability allows any country to rapidly assess its education system, setting the stage for improving policy planning and implementation.

Box 1: What are School Autonomy and Accountability?

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

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

School autonomy is a form of a decentralized education system in which school personnel are in charge of making most managerial decisions, frequently in partnership with parents and the community. More local control helps create better conditions for improving student learning in a sustainable way, since it gives teachers and parents more opportunities to develop common goals, increase their mutual

commitment to student learning, and promote more efficient use of scarce school resources.

To be effective, school autonomy must function on the basis of compatible incentives, taking into account national education policies, including incentives for the implementation of those policies. Having more managerial responsibilities at the school level automatically implies that a school must also be accountable to local stakeholders as well as national and local authorities. The empirical evidence from education systems in which schools enjoy managerial autonomy is that autonomy is beneficial for restoring the social contract between parents and schools and instrumental in setting in motion policies to improve student learning.

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

The empirical evidence from SBM shows that it can take many forms or combine many activities (Barrera et al. 2009) with differing degrees of success (see Box 2). Unless SBM activities contribute to system closure, they are just a collection of isolated managerial decisions. Therefore, the indicators of SBM that relate to school quality must conform to the concept of a system, in which the presence or absence of some critical components within the system allow or preclude system closure.

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

Box 2: Different paths to School-Based Management are fine as long as they allow for system closure

In many countries the implementation of SBM has increased student enrollment, student and teacher attendance, and parent involvement. However, the empirical evidence from Latin America shows very few cases in which SBM has made a significant difference in learning outcomes (Patrinos 2010), while in Europe there is substantial evidence showing a positive impact of school autonomy on learning (Eurydice 2007). Both the grassroots-based approach taken in Latin America, where the institutional structure was weak or service delivery was hampered due to internal conflict, and the operational efficiency approach taken in Europe where institutions were stronger, coincide in applying managerial principles to promote better education quality, but driven by two different modes of accountability to parents and the community. One in Latin America where schools render accounts through participatory school-based management (Di Gropello 2004) and another in Europe where accountability is based on trust in schools and their teachers, (Arcia, Patrinos, Porta and Macdonald 2011). In either case, school autonomy has begun to transform traditional education from a system based on processes and inputs into one driven by results (Hood 2001).

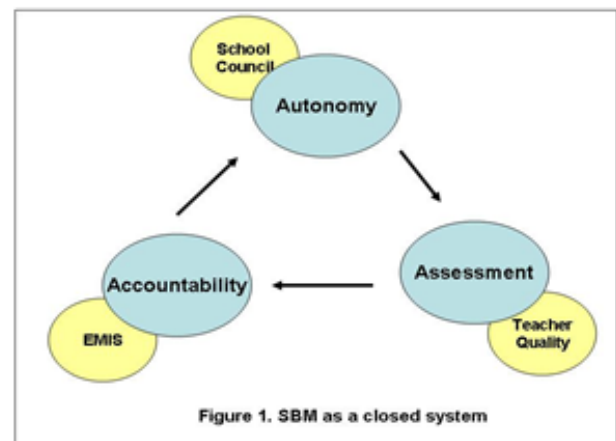
When do SMB components become critical for learning?

The improper functioning of a school or a school system can be a substantial barrier to success. The managerial component of a school system is a necessary but insufficient condition for learning. One can fix some managerial components and obtain no results or alter some other components and obtain good results. What combination of components is crucial for success are still under study, but the emerging body of practice point to a set of variables that foster managerial **autonomy**, the **assessment** of results, and the use of the assessment to promote **accountability** among all stakeholders (Bruns, Filmer and Patrinos 2011). When these three components are in balance with each other, they form a “closed system.”

Defining a managerial system that can achieve closure is conceptually important for school based management, since it transforms its components from a list of managerial activities to a set of interconnected

variables that when working together can improve system performance. If an SBM system is unable to close, are partial solutions effective? Yes, in a broad sense, in which schools can still function but their degree of effectiveness and efficiency would be lower than if the system closes. In this regard, ***SBM can achieve closure when it enforces enough autonomy to evaluate its results and use those results to hold someone accountable.***

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



Source: Arcia and others 2011.

Note: EMIS – Education Management Information System.

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

Results on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) suggest that, when autonomy and accountability are intelligently combined, they tend to

be associated with better student performance (OECD, 2011). The experience of high-performing countries³ on PISA indicates that:

- Education systems in which schools have more autonomy over teaching content and student assessment tend to perform better.
- Education systems in which schools have more autonomy over resource allocation and that publish test results perform better than schools with less autonomy.
- Education systems in which many schools compete for students do not systematically score higher on PISA.
- Education systems with standardized student assessment tend to do better than those without such assessments.
- PISA scores among schools with students from different social backgrounds differ less in education systems that use standardized student assessments than in systems that do not.

As of now, the empirical evidence from countries that have implemented school autonomy suggests that a certain set of policies and practices are effective in fostering managerial autonomy, assessment of results, and the use of assessments to promote accountability. Benchmarking the policy intent of these variables using SABER can be very useful for any country interested in improving the performance of its education system.

SABER School Autonomy and Accountability: Analyzing Performance

The SABER School Autonomy and Accountability tool assists in analyzing how well developed the set of policies are in a given country to foster managerial autonomy, assess results, and use information from assessments to promote accountability. Below are the five main policy goals that can help benchmark an

education system’s policies that enable school autonomy and accountability:

1. **School Autonomy in the Planning and Management of the School Budget**
2. **School Autonomy in Personnel Management**
3. **Role of the School Council in School Governance**
4. **School and Student Assessments**
5. **Accountability**

Each of these indicators has a set of sub-indicators that make it possible to judge how far along an education system’s policies are in enabling school autonomy and accountability. Each indicator and sub-indicator is scored on the basis of its status and the results classified as Latent, Emerging, Established, or Advanced:

Latent ●○○○	Emerging ●●○○	Established ●●●○	Advanced ●●●●
Reflects policy not in place or limited engagement	Reflects some good practice; policy work still in progress	Reflects good practice, with some limitations	Reflects international best practice

A *Latent* score signifies that the policy behind the indicator is not yet in place or that there is limited engagement in developing the related education policy. An *Emerging* score indicates that the policy in place reflects some good practice but that policy development is still in progress. An *Established* score indicates that the program or policy reflects good practice and meets the minimum standards but there may be some limitations in its content and scope. An *Advanced* score indicates that the program or policy reflects best practice and it can be considered on par with international standards.

³ Examples of high performing countries that have implemented school-based management policies and frameworks include the Netherlands, Canada, and New Zealand among others.

III. Solomon Island's Performance: A Summary of Results

A summary of the results of the benchmarking exercise for Solomon Islands is shown below, followed by a breakdown by Policy Goal and indicator.

Summary. Budgetary autonomy is *Emerging*. Through the head teacher and School Committee, development and execution of the operational budget takes place at the school level. The school also has some authority to raise additional financial resources. The largest share of school financing is received through the Solomon Islands Grant Policy (SIGP), which is managed by the Ministry of Education and Human Development (MEHRD). The MEHRD is also responsible for determining the salary chart for teaching staff and paying their salaries. Personnel management is *Emerging*. Appointment, deployment, and transfer of teaching staff is the sole responsibility of the Education Authority (EA). The MEHRD manages national registration and the database of eligible teaching staff. Appointment and management of non-teaching staff (known as auxiliary staff) takes place at the school level. Participation of the School Committee is *Emerging*. Current legislation and policy regarding the establishment and role of School Committees need to be developed to make them clearer. The School Committee plays an active role in preparing the Whole School Development Plan (WSDP), annual budgets, and supports school operations. The School Committee does not have a voice regarding learning inputs such as materials and curriculum. School and student assessment is *Established*. The Whole School Inspection is a comprehensive approach, however in practice it is not implemented every year nor in every school. There are three types of standardized student assessments: diagnostic assessments, national examinations, and school-based assessments (SBA); results are not mandated to be used to enhance school performance. Accountability to stakeholders is *Emerging*. There are regulations in place for complying with rules for financial and school operations accountability. However, mechanisms are not well established to distribute assessment results and be used to hold schools and the education system accountable for their performance to parents and communities as well as the public.

1. Autonomy in the Planning and Management of the School Budget is Emerging

This policy goal focuses on the degree of autonomy that schools have in planning and managing their budgets. In order to evaluate policy intent, the scoring rubric makes clear which areas should be backed by laws, regulations, and/or official rules in the public record. School autonomy in the planning and management of the school budget is considered desirable because it can increase the efficiency of financial resources, give schools more flexibility in budget management, and give parents the opportunity to have more voice on budget planning and execution.

The Solomon Islands Grant Policy (SIGP), which is designed and managed solely by the MEHRD, is the primary source of financing for school operations. The legal foundation for the approach is provided through the: Education Act 1978; Solomon Islands Redrafted Financial Instruction 2010; and the National Coalition for Reform and Advancement Policy Statement 2010. Through the SIGP, the school receives a financial stipend per child. Additionally the SIGP provides a school-level stipend to assist with administrative and operating costs, as well as an additional allowance to schools located in remote locations.

Determining how resources are to be used is guided by the three-year Whole School Development Plan (WSDP) and the associated Annual Management Plans (AMP) for each year of the WSDP (see Box 3). The MEHRD provides guidelines for preparation of the operational budget entitled School Financial Management Guidelines & Manual. The head teacher acts as the accounting officer. The main role of this function is to ensure that full and accurate record of funds are received, paid, and maintained in accordance to the regulations for complying with WSDP rules of financial management.

In Solomon Islands non-teaching staff are referred to as auxiliary staff, and include positions such as security, janitorial services, and administration. As explained in more detail in Policy Goal 2, current legislation does not clearly state who has authority for appointing and managing auxiliary staff. In practice, individual schools fulfill this responsibility and pay salary for auxiliary staff through their operational budget. There is not an established pay scale, and auxiliary staff are not considered public servants like teaching staff are.

However, schools are required to adhere to the Ministry of Labour's General Minimal Wage Law.

Box 3: The Whole School Development Plan (WSDP)

The WSDP initiative was introduced by the MEHRD in 2008 to improve quality and management of education. Through a collaborative approach that leverages input from teachers, students, parents, and community members, each school determines its own strategic direction, objectives, and operating plans, which are reflected in a three-year WSDP and associated Annual Management Plans. The WSDP cycle consists of the following seven stages:

- 1) The school establishes a School Committee (or school board for secondary level);
- 2) In collaboration with students, teachers and the community, the School Committee conducts a self-assessment by evaluating the school's current policies and comparing them against established standards;
- 3) In consultation with community stakeholders, the School Committee identifies the priority areas of focus and the vision for the school;
- 4) From the determined areas of focus, the School Committee prepares the WSDP to articulate the school improvement activities and operations; costs activities, develops budget for the WSDP and prepares AMPs for each year of the WSDP;
- 5) The School Committee helps implements the WSDP and AMPs;
- 6) The School Committee monitors the implementation of the WSDP and meets at least every three months;
- 7) The WSDP and associated AMP are evaluated by the School Committee and community stakeholders and results disseminated.

Salary expenditure for teaching staff is treated separately from that of non-teaching staff in Solomon Islands. The MEHRD has the legal authority to determine all teaching salaries. Specifically, the Teaching Service Handbook 2011 states that salaries for teachers within the approved teacher establishment shall be paid in accordance with the Scheme of Services and the Unified Salary Structure approved by Cabinet. There is no consultation with parents, community members or other education stakeholders to determine the salary levels. Salaries are paid centrally by the Government Treasury on behalf of education

authorities, and therefore are not included in the school's annual budget.

With the approval of the School Committee (see Policy Goal 3 for more information), schools may also raise additional funding through alternative means, such as community fundraisers and donations from private businesses or local Non-government Organizations (NGOs). It is important to note, however, that the school may not implement tuition fees or refuse a child's access to education for financial reasons. In some schools, the SIGP constitutes 100 percent of the school's budget, whereas in other schools the SIGP represents the largest share of financial resources.

Although the community is actively engaged in development of the WSDP, there are no specific consultations with the community regarding the preparation, approval, and execution of the budget. Rather, the head teacher and School Committee are solely tasked with the responsibility of preparing and executing the school budget on an annual basis.

1. Legal authority over the planning and management of the school budget is Emerging		
Indicator	Score	Justification
Legal authority over management of the operational budget	Established ●●●○	Head teacher and School Committee prepare and execute operational budget; MEHRD provides financing through grant system.
Legal authority over the management of non-teaching staff salaries	Latent ●○○○	There is no policy stating who has authority over non-teaching staff and their salaries.
Legal authority over the management of teacher's salaries	Emerging ●●○○	MEHRD is solely responsible for determining teaching staff salary and associated pay scale.
Legal authority to raise additional funds for the school	Established ●●●○	Schools have considerable autonomy to raise additional funding.
Collaborative budget planning and preparation	Advanced ●●●●	Head teacher and School Committee have complete autonomy to determine expenditure in line with school's vision and local needs.

2. School Autonomy in Personnel Management is Emerging

This policy goal measures policy intent in the management of school personnel, which includes the principal, teachers, and non-teaching staff. In Solomon Islands, appointing and deploying principals and teachers can be centralized, or it can be the responsibility of regional or municipal governments. In decentralized education systems, schools have autonomy in teacher hiring and firing decisions. Budgetary autonomy includes giving schools responsibility for negotiating and setting the salaries of its teaching and non-teaching staff, and using monetary and non-monetary bonuses as rewards for good performance. In centralized systems, teachers are paid directly by the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Finance under union or civil service agreements. As a result, in centralized systems schools have less influence over teacher performance because they have no financial leverage over teachers. Inversely, if a school negotiates teachers' salaries, as private schools routinely do, it may be able to motivate teachers directly with rewards for a job well done.

In Solomon Islands, all teaching staff (including head teachers and other positions of responsibility) must be registered with the Teaching Service Office (TSO) within the Teacher Service Commission (TSC).

Legal authority to appoint and deploy teachers resides with EAs. According to the MEHRD Teaching Service Handbook 2011, each EA is required to advertise, interview, and select candidates for vacant teaching posts. During this process the EA is mandated to inform the TSC of all advertisements of positions and conduct in the recruitment process, including verifying that the applicants are registered teachers prior to interviewing them. Upon selection of the successful candidate, the application package is submitted to the TSC. The TSC has 30 days to accept or reject the appointment based on whether the candidate has suitable credentials for the position.

Legal authority to transfer teaching staff also resides with the EA. Each EA can transfer staff within their jurisdiction, provided that the TSC is informed of the move. Teaching staff can also be transferred from one EA to another. To do this, the transfer must be approved by both participating EAs, and the recipient

EA must receive a brief report on the teacher along with all relevant records and information.

The EA is also responsible for the evaluation of the school principal. It determines the principal's tenure, transfer or removal, and is mandated to keep the TSC informed of all decisions.

The responsibility for managing non-teaching or auxiliary staff is not adequately documented in legislation. The MEHRD National Education Action Plan 2007-2009 states that the school is responsible for matters that pertain to school operations, however this does not explicitly refer to auxiliary staff. In practice, the head teacher and School Committee are responsible for appointing and deploying auxiliary staff to align with the school's local needs. The prominence of auxiliary staff varies from school to school, and tends to be less numerous in rural locations where communities have a more active role in school operations.

2. School autonomy in personnel management is Emerging		
Indicator	Score	Justification
Autonomy in teacher appointment and deployment decisions	Emerging ●●○○	Education authorities have legal authority to appoint, deploy, and transfer teaching staff.
Autonomy in non-teaching staff appointment and deployment decisions	Emerging ●●○○	No policy adequately states the responsibility for managing non-teaching staff.
Autonomy in school principal appointment and deployment decisions.	Established ●●●○	Similar to teaching staff, appointment and deployment of head teacher is managed by Education Authorities.

3. Participation of the School Council in School Governance is Emerging

The participation of the School Council/Committee in school administration is very important because it enables parents to exercise their real power as clients of the education system. If the committee has to cosign payments, it automatically has purchasing power. The use of a detailed operational manual is extremely important in this area, since it allows committee members to adequately monitor school management

performance, help the principal with cash flow decisions, and become a catalyst for seeking additional funds from the community. The use of such manuals by the School Committee is thus a good vehicle for promoting increased accountability and institutionalizing autonomy.

It is important to note that change management studies have provided evidence that bringing stakeholders together to plan and implement meaningful activities also contributes to behavioral change in institutions—and schools in particular. Collective school planning activities can provide a mutual vision and shared sense of accountability for parents and school staff. It aligns expectations with regards to how both parties commit to supporting the school. These processes provide an enabling environment for better governance.

Although the School Committee is bestowed responsibility in Solomon Island's education system, the legal underpinning of the School Committee is not embedded in the Education Act 1978. Rather, the existence, role, and responsibilities of the School Committee are noted across three policy documents: (i) the MEHRD Policy Statement and Guidelines for Basic Education in Solomon Islands 2009, (ii) the National Education Action Plan 2007-2009, and (iii) the Teaching Service Handbook 2011. However these documents do not provide the full range of details, nor is there a single manual or policy document that School Committee members can readily refer to. To address these shortcomings, the MEHRD recently established a taskforce to review and update the Education Act 1978. Formal inclusion and documentation of the School Committee will be examined as part of this process.

Each school is required to have a school constitution, detailing the roles and responsibilities of the School Committee. The School Committee partakes in the planning of the WSDP, which includes determining the vision and direction of the school, costing the plan and preparing annual budgets corresponding to their school grant allocation, and monitoring the use of the school's funds. The School Committee also promotes community support for the school, liaises with the MEHRD and EA and co-monitors the implementation of the national curriculum, school operations, and compliance with standards and policies.

While the MEHRD determines the amount of transfers to schools and has financial oversight authority, the School Committee does have legal authority to have a voice on budget issues. Within the framework of the Grant Policy, the School Committee has a role in planning and executing expenditures for non-salary budget items at the school level. Final responsibility for preparation of the expenditure aspect of the operational budget is the head teacher in collaboration with the School Committee.

Outlined in the MEHRD Teaching Service Handbook 2011, the School Committee does not have legal authority to voice an opinion on personnel decisions, including appointment, deployment, or transfer of staff. This responsibility lies at the sub-national level with the EAs. In practice, School Committees can liaise with the EA to inform and advocate for the best teachers in their schools.

Outside of the WSDP, the MEHRD has not developed formal instructions or manuals for organizing community volunteers to participate in school activities. More proactive schools articulate the role of the PTA and stipulate guidelines for its role in formal documentation.

The aforementioned three policy documents outlining the role of the School Committee do not establish legal authority or voice for the School Committee on learning inputs to the classroom, such as textbooks, core and non-core subjects, or teaching and learning inputs.

The MEHRD Manual for School Committee or Board Training provides for transparency in community participation. Policy indicates that the School Committee should be comprised of 7 to 11 members, and membership should not exceed two professional (teaching) staff, four students, and five community members. There must be gender balance among male and female members and students. Open elections for adult members must be held every three years to correspond with the development of the WSDP. Student representation is determined annually through student elections (Year 6 for primary level). While policy says that a minimum of four meetings of the School Committee should be held in a year and details the way they should be conducted, it does not provide guidelines or mandate the calling of general assemblies for reporting to the wider community.

3. Participation of the School Council in School Governance is Emerging		
Indicator	Score	Justification
Participation of the School Council in budget preparation	Established ●●●○	School Committee is responsible for determining expenditure budget with school.
Participation in financial oversight	Established ●●●○	School Committee determines annual expenditure budget with school.
Participation in Personnel Management	Latent ●○○○	The School Committee has no legal authority on appointment, deployment, or transfer matters of teaching staff.
Community participation in school activities	Latent ●○○○	No clear guidelines are provided except for the National Action Plan 2007-2009 that articulates the role of community and parents in school activities.
Community participation in learning inputs	Latent ●○○○	School Committee has no legal oversight or authority on learning inputs.
Transparency in community participation	Advanced ●●●●	School Committee members serve three-year terms; elections and clear guidelines facilitate transparent structure approach.

4. Assessment of School and Student Performance is Established

School assessments can have a significant impact on school performance because they encourage parents and teachers to agree on scoring rules and ways to keep track of them. Measuring student assessment is another important way to determine if a school is effective in improving learning. A key aspect of school autonomy is the regular measurement of student learning, with the intent of using the results to inform parents and community members, and to make adjustments to managerial and pedagogical practices. Without a regular assessment of learning outcomes school accountability is reduced and, improving education quality becomes less certain.

In Solomon Islands there are two methods used to assess schools. First is the Whole School Inspection (WSI), which is a holistic approach that evaluates all aspects of a school's performance and is articulated in the Whole School Inspection Handbook for School Inspectors. To apply this method, a group of inspectors from the MEHRD observe a school in action to determine the quality of the education the school provides.⁴ The WSI serves as an avenue for improving school performance by identifying areas of strength and aspects of the school that require improvement. Findings from the WSI are presented in report form by the MEHRD. The second assessment method is Teacher Appraisal and is outlined in the Teacher Appraisal Handbook. The basis of the teacher appraisal is the teacher's Terms of Reference, self-review report, and agreed appraisal objectives for the year. Historically, school inspectors from the MEHRD have conducted Teacher Appraisal.

The Whole School Inspection Handbook for School Inspectors and the Teacher Appraisal Handbook outline the use of the results from the two assessments to make school adjustments. According to policy for the Whole School Inspection, the head teacher and School Committee must prepare an Improvement Action Plan that articulates the activities to be carried out over the next 12 months to enhance the school's performance. Activities will vary from school to school, depending on need; yet the Improvement Action Plan could include pedagogical, operational, and personnel adjustments, as necessary. In practice, the MEHRD lacks the requisite human and financial resources to implement the WSI across all schools. For Teacher Appraisal, the teacher and head teacher use results to develop and implement a set of improvement activities to strengthen areas of need, such as introduction of new teaching methods or strategies. The nature of the intervention is more

⁴ The WSI process includes classroom observations, review of school records and documents, interviews with key stakeholders (including head teacher, teachers, students, School Committee members, and community members). For further information about the WSI and process, refer to the Whole School Inspection Handbook for School Inspectors in Solomon Islands, August 2012.

specific to pedagogical improvement rather than operational and personnel. In addition to the above noted specific policies, the MEHRD Policy Statement and Guidelines for Learners’ Assessment in Schools provides guidelines for the use of school assessments, however it is not specific to the WSI or Teacher Appraisal. Collectively, these policies do not clearly articulate that results must be used to make operational and pedagogical improvements, and both the frequency and intensity of the two assessments are limited.

There are three types of standardized tests used to assess students: diagnostic assessments, national examinations, and school-based assessments (SBA). The diagnostic assessment, Solomon Islands’ Standardized Test of Achievement (SISTA), is implemented on a three-year cycle at Year 4 and Year 6 of the primary school level and is sample-based. It assesses the level of literacy and numeracy of students, and helps identify trends in student performance. The only national examination administered at the primary level is the year 6 Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance (SISE). The other two, Solomon Islands Form Three (SIF3) and Solomon Islands School Certificate (SISC), are administered at Year 9 and Year 11, respectively. The SBA includes standardized course work, tests, and projects, and is administered at the school level. Results are combined with the national examination results using national weighting guidelines to form a final mark. National examinations and SBA are implemented annually.

Similar to classroom assessment, the MEHRD Policy Statement and Guidelines for Learner's Assessment in Schools 2010 provides a brief overview of the type and purpose of standardized student assessment and provides general guidelines on how the results can inform classroom and school improvements. For instance, the results may be used to identify methods to improve student learning and teacher training, monitor learners' achievement in subject areas, or inform learners, parents, employers, and schools about learning achievements. However, the MEHRD does not mandate that results must be used to make classroom and school enhancements. The National Examinations and Standard Unit (NESU) analyze standardized student results.

Policy does not clearly stipulate how results from each type of standardized student assessment should be

communicated with education stakeholders. Rather, the MEHRD Policy Statement and Guidelines for Learner's Assessment in Schools states that results are to be shared with EAs, schools, parents/guardians (for students’ individual results) and other key stakeholders. In practice, anecdotal evidence suggests there is a disconnect between policy and implementation of assessment strategies. Some schools report that they do not receive results in a timely manner, and that this ultimately diminishes their ability to use them as an

4. School and Student Assessment is Established		
Indicator	Score	Justification
Existence and frequency of school assessments	Established ●●●○	School assessment consists of Whole School Inspection and teacher appraisal, both of which are administered annually.
Use of school assessments for making school adjustments	Emerging ●●○○	Policies do not clearly articulate that results must be used to make school adjustments (pedagogical, operational, or personnel).
Existence and frequency of standardized student assessments	Advanced ●●●●	Diagnostic assessments are implemented every three years; national examinations and School-based Assessment every year.
Use of standardized student assessments for pedagogical, operational, and personnel adjustments	Emerging ●●○○	Policy does not clearly state that results must be used, but rather articulates that the purpose of standardized student assessments is to inform school operations and improve learning environment.
Publication of student assessments	Established ●●●○	Results are to be shared with EA, school and parents/guardians, however policy does not clearly distinguish by type of results and standardized student assessment.

avenue to enhance student performance.

5. School Accountability to Stakeholders is Emerging

Accountability is at the heart of school-based management (SBM). The systemic connection between budgetary and personnel autonomy, parent participation in the financial and operational aspects of a school, and the measurement of learning outcomes are all aimed to reinforce accountability. Only by being accountable to parents can schools create a sustainable and high-quality educational system. The following indicators below address aspects of accountability that can be implemented within the framework of SBM.

Standardized student assessments provide a lens into school performance, and therefore can be a valuable tool to achieve accountability. However, in Solomon Islands, the MEHRD Policy Statement and Guidelines for Learner's Assessment in Schools focuses on how to implement standardized student assessments, and does not provide guidelines for the use of results. For this reason, there is not a strong accountability mechanism to ensure effective use of results to improve student learning and performance.

In regards to analysis of school and student performance, the MEHRD Policy Statement and Guidelines for Learner's Assessment in Schools does provide a general statement that MEHRD will regularly report about assessment results and comparable standards of attainment across the country, provinces, and EAs. However, the policy does not clearly state the requirements for the MEHRD to conduct comparative analysis of student assessment results across EAs, geographical regions, or for previous years. As a result, the data collected from the standardized student assessments cannot be fully utilized.

For the purpose of financial accountability, the Government of Solomon Islands established the Financial Management Regulations, which (i) govern the use of monies at each level of the education system, and (ii) articulate compliance and reporting requirements. In addition, the MEHRD Up-dated Policy Statement and Guidelines for Grants to Schools in Solomon Islands 2012 and the School Financial Management Guidelines and Manual 2009 establish specific requirements at the school level pertaining to the development and execution of the school budget. For example, all cheques, which are the primary means for schools to make payments, require two signatories;

both the head teacher and the treasurer, chairman, or another member of the School Committee must sign. Additionally, all expenditures must be considered eligible by the abovementioned guidelines, and the school must submit financial statements and retirements (receipts) to their EA twice per year (deadlines are June 30 and December 15). The EA is responsible for reviewing and ensuring that the use of funds are appropriate and aligned with the WSDP. The EA submits consolidated reports for each school to the MEHRD. Schools that do not comply with the rules and regulations are subject to strict sanctions, and under certain circumstances future transfer installments of budget funds may be withheld.

The MEHRD does not have a program in place to reward schools that demonstrate efficient and effective use of financial resources, although it is considering introducing one in the coming years.

There are some regulations in place to enforce accountability in school operations. For instance, schools must adhere to the Health and Safety Standards, and the WSI looks at operational issues pertaining to schools, including access, quality and management. In 2012, the MEHRD also developed the Policy Statement and Guidelines for School Infrastructure in Solomon Islands; however, the specific standards for the guidelines have yet to be finalized.

There are no regulations to link rewards for best practice and compliance. Schools that do not comply with regulations face sanctions, including possible closure (depending on the severity of the violation).

Solomon Islands do not perform well in the area of learning accountability. The reason for this is that there are no requirements to simplify and explain results of assessments to the public (aside from individual results, which are provided to the student and guardians). In order to utilize student assessment results to enhance learning outcomes, a system must be in place to ensure that parents and education stakeholders are provided the results and afforded the opportunity to voice their opinion and provide feedback.

5. Accountability to Stakeholders is Emerging		
Indicator	Score	Justification
Guidelines for the use of results of student assessments	Latent ●○○○	There are no concrete guidelines for the use of results of student assessments.
Analysis of school and student performance	Emerging ●●○○	Comparative analysis of student assessments conducted nationally and for EAs; results not distributed to parents.
Degree of financial accountability at the central, regional, and school level	Established ●●●○	Financial accountability mechanisms regulate use of resources at each level of education system.
Degree of accountability in school operations	Established ●●●○	Some regulations for accountability in school operations are in place, but do not link rewards to performance.
Degree of learning accountability	Latent ●○○○	No requirements to explain results of student assessments to the public.

IV. Enhancing Education Quality: Policy recommendations for Solomon Islands

1. Autonomy over planning and management of the school budget (Emerging)

A primary objective of policy is to ensure consistency and quality across schools by providing clear and objective guidance. Currently, there is no policy on hiring and management of auxiliary staff at schools. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there may be large discrepancies across schools in how auxiliary staff are managed and utilized, and it is possible that in some instances the use of non-teaching staff does not adhere to best practice. It is recommended to formally state in policy that schools have the authority to hire and manage non-teaching staff.

Furthermore, there are no standards for compensation of auxiliary staff. Transparency is also an important element of a contractual agreement, and without knowledge of how other schools operate there are likely large disparities across the education system in terms of remuneration. To address this issue, one possible policy recommendation is for the MEHRD to leverage its central convening power to collect data across all schools. With this data, the MEHRD can develop policy documents to inform schools of the decision-making authority over non-teaching staff, the appropriate pay scale, the relative importance of auxiliary staff in light of their local context, and provide standard Terms of Reference for positions. The MEHRD should develop the aforementioned policy documents and be responsible for ongoing policy development and coordination with schools and EAs in this area.

Another policy recommendation pertains to community involvement regarding the preparation, approval, and execution of the operational budget. The WSDP aims to achieve high collaboration between education stakeholders at the school level, however the WSDP does not clearly state the role of the community. The MEHRD should consider revising the WSDP to articulate the specific role of the community at each stage of the WSDP.

2. Autonomy in Personnel Management (Emerging)

Despite the decentralized approach to education service delivery, the school level does not have a strong voice in teacher management, including appointment, deployment, and transfer of teaching staff. According to

policy, this area is the responsibility of the EAs. In practice, the schools and EAs may demonstrate a more collaborative approach than is documented in policy, but the level of collaboration will vary from school to school. In this area, a framework should be developed that leads to better collaboration between EAs and the school level, and includes a formal channel for the schools to have input. Through the head teacher and School Committee, the school level is well positioned to know their needs for teachers and as such could be better engaged as part of the recruitment, deployment, and transfer process.

3. Role of School Committee on School Governance (Emerging)

As part of the planned review and update of the Education Act 1978, it is recommended to consolidate the policies establishing the existence, role, and responsibilities of the School Committee which are currently spread out across three policy documents. In addition, the MEHRD should consider expanding the functions of the School Committee to increase involvement in school operations and activities. Personnel decisions currently rest at the sub-national level and this may be appropriate. However, the Ministry could consider a policy to allow the School Committee a voice in the appointment, transfer, and removal of teachers. The legal authority would still rest at the sub-national level. This will contribute to effective placement of human resources to meet the requirements and context of the school.

Currently, the School Committee has no legal authority to voice an opinion or oversee learning inputs, such as choice of textbooks and classroom materials. In some cases, the School Committee does liaise with MEHRD and Education Authorities to co-monitor the appropriate implementation of the curriculum, school hours and infrastructure, and health and environmental standards. To ensure that a school is able to utilize the most applicable inputs to maximize student learning, a policy allowing School Committees authority to at least voice an opinion on a variety of learning inputs is recommended.

Another policy recommendation, which supports the recent training, is to provide schools with a comprehensive manual that outlines the responsibilities and roles of the School Committee that would serve as a valuable reference guide. The manual should provide

clear guidelines on how to engage the wider community in school activities including how to organize volunteers, plan, implement, and even evaluate activities. It should also include the calling of general assemblies and for reporting progress and relevant information pertaining to school operations and ongoing development to the wider community.

Lastly, the MEHRD should give consideration to the composition of the School Committee. As the primary stakeholder and recipient of education, involving students in the School Committee is commendable. However, as currently structured, 2-4 students can be part of the process, which may account for upwards of 20-45 percent of voting rights. This may represent an area where a modified approach is required to reflect the age and contributions of the student contingency. One policy option is the mandatory formation of a student council in each school to ensure that students are able to voice their opinions without being full members of the School Committee.

4. School and Student Assessment (Established)

The Whole School Inspection (WSI) is a holistic approach to that assesses all aspects of a school's performance. However, due to insufficient human and financial resources, the WSI is only applied in a small subset of schools. The majority of school's are not inspected and there are no data to indicate whether schools' meet established safety and operations standards. In light of limited resources, the MEHRD should consider devising a policy that places greater emphasis on the expansion and utilization of the WSI as a tool to ensure that schools are operating at a high level and to equip the MEHRD will sufficient data to craft strategies to improve operations of poorly performing schools.

In addition to expanding the breadth of the WSI, to reap the full benefits of school and student assessments, data must be accurately analyzed and incorporated into the education system to continually make adjustments to enhance learning outcomes. Policies surrounding the use of student assessment could be strengthened to mandate schools to utilize results to make pedagogical, operational, and personnel adjustments. Specifically, a feasible and impactful policy recommendation is to mandate that results from student assessment be used to assist school head teachers in the strategic placement of teachers within the school as well as to

enhance pedagogy. The result is better matching of teachers' skillset with classroom needs and pedagogy to support areas that require improvement.

Along with the aforementioned approaches to improve upon school and student assessment, policy pertaining to the publication of student assessment results could be strengthened. Specifically, policy could stipulate a reasonable timeframe for the MEHRD to process data and provide to EAs and schools. This would embed an accountability mechanism and provide greater transparency to lead to receipt of student assessment results in a timely manner.

5. Accountability to Stakeholders (Emerging)

Student and school assessments can be effective tools to inform education stakeholders and the public at large as to the efficacy of the education system and provide a tool to demand accountability in the education system. It is recommended to include in the MEHRD Policy Statement and Guidelines for Learner's Assessment in Schools, guidelines for the use and dissemination of student assessment results. This would assist in strengthening the accountability mechanism to ensure effective use of results to improve student learning and performance. The MEHRD should consider making assessment information publically available, including a comparative analysis of data at the national level against previous years and also across education authorities. Analysis of results at the national level will shed light on the trajectory of the education system and the achievements of recent policies and interventions. At the sub-national level, the approach should not be designed to shame poorly performing EAs, but rather to utilize the available evidence to document areas for improvement and possibly to enable research into what factors contribute to better performing EAs and their schools.

In terms of financial accountability, Solomon Islands has strong policies and procedures in place. While sanctions are in place for misconduct, the introduction of rewards to schools that demonstrate efficient and effective use of financial resources would be a good next step. There are some regulations in place to enforce accountability in school operations. Some policy strengthening in this area would be warranted as well as the introduction of regulations to link rewards for best practice and compliance.

V. Comparison Solomon Islands Level of School Autonomy and Accountability with Papua New Guinea and Samoa

Table 3, below, presents the comparison of results from the SABER-SAA policy assessment. Both Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Samoa achieve an *Established* rating in autonomy in budget planning and approval, whereas Solomon Islands is rated as *Emerging* in this policy goal. Each of the three countries employs a student fee scheme that is administered at the central level. The school level, in partnership with the associated Board of Management/School Committee, determines how resources are used. The primary reason for Solomon Islands *Emerging* rating is the absence of adequate documentation in financial management of non-teaching staff.

PNG and Solomon Islands, which received a rating of *Emerging* for policy goal 2, both have subnational levels of government – Provincial Department of Education and Education Authority, respectively – which are responsible for determining the recruitment and deployment of teaching staff. In Samoa this function is managed by the central Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, however the education system has a two-level format consisting of the central ministry and school level.

Although PNG and Samoa are both rated as *Established* in Policy Goal 3 on the participation of the school council in school governance, the two countries have very different systems. Through the School Learning Improvement Plan (SLIP) initiative in Papua New Guinea, two entities – the SLIP committee and the Board of Management (BoM) – operate within the scope of the school council in school governance. The SLIP committee is tasked with developing the vision and strategic objectives of the school, and the BoM is responsible for quality assurance. In Samoa the School Committee – comprised of the school principal and local community members – plays an active role in setting the vision of the school and in ongoing school operations. The MESCC provides some support to equip committee members with the requisite skills and competencies to perform their duties, although these tend to focus on financial management issues and less on quality education inputs and methods.

In Solomon Islands participation of the School Committee – comprised of the head teacher, teaching staff, community members and students – is *Emerging*. The committee plays an active role in preparing the Whole School Development Plan (WSDP), annual budgets and supports school operations, however policy documentation is not well developed. Furthermore, the School Committee has limited involvement in the non-financial input and operations of schools.

Each of the three countries has achieved an *Established* rating in the assessment of school and student

performance policy goal and *Emerging* for accountability to stakeholders policy goal. The biggest area for improvement relates to the dissemination of results, lack of analysis, and use of school performance results by the public for better accountability.

Table 3: Level of Development of Policy Goals Across Three Pacific Countries

SAA Policy Goals	Level of Development		
	Papua New Guinea	Samoa	Solomon Islands
1. Autonomy in Budget Planning and Approval	Established ●●●○	Established ●●●○	Emerging ●●○○
2. Autonomy in Personnel Management	Emerging ●●○○	Latent ●○○○	Emerging ●●○○
3. Participation of the School Council in School Governance	Established ●●●○	Established ●●●○	Emerging ●●○○
4. Assessment of School and Student Performance	Established ●●●○	Established ●●●○	Established ●●●○
5. Accountability to Stakeholders	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Clark Matthews (Consultant), under the supervision of Angela Demas (Senior Education Specialist, Human Development Network) and Kazuro Shibuya (Senior Education Specialist, Human Development Network) who both provided technical analysis and feedback. The report benefitted from the data collection efforts and insight of Adrian Alamu (PaBER Assessment Officer, Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment) and Seema Prasad (PaBER Assessment Officer, Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment). The author is grateful to the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development for their input, support, and validation of data. The data cited in this report are based on reviews of official laws, regulations, decrees, and other policy documents. For further information on the SABER Initiative and SABER SAA, see <http://saber.worldbank.org/index.cfm>.

Acronyms

AMP	Annual Management Plan
EA	Education Authority
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development
NEAP	National Education Action Plan
NESU	National Examinations & Standard Unit
PaBER	Pacific Benchmarking for Education Results
SBA	School-based Assessment
SBM	School-based Management
SIGP	Solomon Islands Grant Policy
TSC	Teaching Service Commission
TSO	Teaching Service Office
WSI	Whole School Inspection
WSDP	Whole School Development Plan

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The Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) initiative collects data on the policies and institutions of education systems around the world and benchmarks them against practices associated with student learning. SABER aims to give all parties with a stake in educational results—from students, administrators, teachers, and parents to policymakers and business people—an accessible, detailed, objective snapshot of how well the policies of their country's education system are oriented toward ensuring that all children and youth learn.

This report focuses specifically on policies in the area of School Autonomy and Accountability.

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