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Accountability and Regulation in Education: A BETTER WAY

Research review for ASTI by
Dr Caitríona Fitzgerald
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FOREWORD

Accountability and regulation in education are not new. In the Irish context, the Education Act 1998 provides the statutory framework for several regulation and accountability mechanisms including the functions of schools; functions of patrons and establishment and operation of boards of management; the school plan; functions of principals and teachers; curriculum; parents' associations and student council. The Act also provides the statutory basis for, and the functions of, the Inspectorate which are premised on ensuring accountability to society, parents and learners.

Accountability is a process, aimed at helping institutions and individuals meet responsibilities and reach goals. It is also a statement indicating that institutions and individuals are obliged, on the basis of a legal, social or moral justification, to provide an account of how they met their responsibilities. Effective public policy achieves a balance between the obligatory dimension and the process dimension. Trust in the teaching profession is the key to achieving this balance.

However, accountability and regulation in education cannot be reduced to legal instruments or inspection and evaluation procedures in schools. Accountability is at the heart of the education project as teachers assume ethical responsibility for the education and care of their pupils. There is widespread societal recognition of the civic and social value of education and the profound contribution that the teaching profession has made to the social, cultural and economic development of Ireland over many decades.

The high level of trust in teachers and the teaching profession is an aspect of Irish education which is acknowledged in the national and international literature. One of the many 'societal learnings' from the pandemic has been a deeper understanding of the work of teachers, the importance of relationships between students and teachers and the role of schools in supporting the holistic growth and wellbeing of students.

The introduction of the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 represents a disturbing departure from the established culture of high trust in the teaching profession. It is based on the mistaken premise that students and their parents are 'clients' in the education service rather than partners in highly complex communities. Communities which are, moreover, always dynamic, diverse and changing in response to external economic, social and cultural forces. In order to counteract this narrow neoliberal narrative of education as a service with clients, the ASTI commissioned research to locate the charter-type model of school accountability and regulation in a wider conceptual context. Dr Caitríona Fitzgerald has provided an important critique of this narrow narrative which the ASTI is confident is shared not just among the teaching profession but across the wider society.

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ASTI President

Dr Caitríona Fitzgerald *is a Research Assistant in the Educational Research Centre. She has an extensive background in educational and sociological research, including receipt in 2016 of the John and Pat Hume Scholarship to complete a Ph.D. in Sociology in Maynooth University. Dr Fitzgerald is a member of the Executive Committee of the Irish Federation of University Teachers. She has undertaken the work for this report in an independent capacity, so the content and views expressed are not those of the Educational Research Centre.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSL - Centre for School Leadership

CPD - Continued Professional Development

DE - Department of Education (formerly the Department of Education and Skills)

EU - The European Union

GERM - Global Education Reform Model

IEA - The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement

NAE - The National Agency for Education

NCCA - The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NPM - New Public Management

OECD - The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment

PIRLS - Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

SMI - Strategic Management Initiative

SSE - School Self-Evaluation

SSI - The Swedish School Inspectorate

TC - The Teaching Council

TIMSS - Trends in Mathematics and Science Study

TPL – Teacher Professional Learning

TU – Trade Union

US - The United States

WES - Whole School Evaluation

WES-MLL - Whole School Evaluation - Management, Leadership and Learning

Introduction and report objectives

This report reviews national and international research literatures that highlight the impacts of regulation and accountability in education. The main objective of this report is to provide a review of current charter-type models of education regulation and accountability (See Appendix 1 for information about the methodology used for this review).

Report overview

Section 1: Locating the wider accountability context

This first section locates the broader (global) context of the rise of regulation and accountability in education systems. Literatures reviewed draw attention to some of the key policy directives that have made accountability a firm fixture on international education policy agendas (such as an emphasis on innovation, economic growth and competitiveness in society through achieving sustainable standards in education). The complex nature of accountability is also demonstrated though the numerous typologies of accountability identified in literatures. More attention is given to charter-type models of regulation and accountability as this is the focus of this review. Overall, literatures assert that the over-reliance on market mechanisms reflected in global education policy essentially shrink the state and redefine the citizen as a consumer of education services (Ozga, 2020; Skerritt, 2019; Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009; Mattei, 2012; Conway & Murphy, 2013; O'Donnell, 2014; Ball, 2016; Erdağ & Karadağ, 2017).

Section 2: Accountabilities in education policy in Ireland

This section discusses the rise of accountabilities in Ireland's education system since the 1990s evident in the introduction of new concepts such as the Strategic Management Initiative (Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009) and New Public Management principles (Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009; NESC, 2012; O'Donnell, 2014). Particular attention is given to the impacts of charter-type models of accountability on schools' autonomy, teacher professionalism, school leaders and workload as well as school culture and relationships. Research literatures draw attention to issues reported by school leaders and teachers – such as feelings of disempowerment and stress due to increased workloads – associated with the increased focus on regulation and accountability (O'Donovan, 2015; Lynch, Grummell & Devine, 2012; Pendola, 2019; Rawdon et al, 2021).

Section 3: Changes in education policy in Nordic countries - Sweden's case

To examine regulation and accountability in other education contexts, this section explores some of the wider impacts associated with privatisation and charter-type accountabilities in Nordic countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark). Sweden is identified as a case for further exploration as pre-1990 it was recognised as an exemplar of centralised universal provision of

free education premised on welfare state ideals. The rapid encroachment of neoliberal principles in the 1990s have transformed Sweden's welfare approach towards education into 'a decentralised quasi-market and goal-orientated system' (Lindgren, 2016, p.239; Wallenius et al, 2018; Carlbaum, 2016; Lundahl, Erixon-Arreman, Holm & Lundström, 2013. This market-led approach is argued to have negative impacts on school autonomy, teacher professionalism, school leadership and workload as well as school culture and relationships due to increased competition and accountability.

Section 4: Concluding observations - negotiating accountabilities; a new way forward?

This final section offers conclusions and recommendations with a view to exploring ways of negotiating charter-type models of regulation and accountability in education. 'Intelligent' accountability (Sahlberg, 2007, 2011) is referred to as an alternative model of accountability because it is recognised as being more congruent with developing democratic schooling cultures, as well as delivering quality outcomes and education experiences for school communities. The role of trade unions is also recognised as key to navigating a way through charter-type models of regulation and accountability in education.

SECTION

1

Locating the wider accountability context in education

This section locates the broader (global) context of accountability in education. Key typologies of accountability are briefly discussed after which charter-type models of education accountability identified in research literatures are described and discussed in terms of the impacts on education policy.

Education accountability

Accountability as a way of demonstrating effective and quality education is a core concern for governments and schools as are the potential impacts of accountability models at system, school and individual levels. Since the 1990s, the rise of globalisation and governments' faith in education as a means of fulfilling economic imperatives has fuelled the increased interest in education policy discourses around regulation and accountability mechanisms within education systems (Ozga, 2020; Skerritt 2019; Wallenius et al, 2018; Brown et al, 2016; O' Donnell, 2014; Conway & Murphy, 2013; Mattei, 2012; Møller, 2009; Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009; Barber, 2004).

In addition, research about school improvement and effectiveness demonstrates that schools and teachers make a significant difference towards students' educational experiences and outcomes (Barber, 2004; Gilleece & Clerkin, 2020). The role of teachers and teacher quality are central to school improvement efforts as well as influencing student achievement (O' Donnell, 2014, p.11). Moreover, teacher effects (as distinct from school effects) are found to exceed school effects when progress over time is accounted for (Gilleece & Clerkin, 2020, p.34; Møller, 2009). Although it can be 'liberating' for teachers to know that their actions really can make a positive difference towards children's lives, this expectation can also place an 'awesome responsibility' (Barber, 2004) on teachers' shoulders.

Given this, it is now a widely held expectation that schools and professional teachers are held accountable for fulfilling educational policy and, for governments to gather and analyse information from schools about how young citizens are being schooled. Equally, the government should 'feel the full glare of accountability' (Barber, 2004, p.22) coupled with the expectation that it will provide the necessary resources to ensure the best educational practices are developed, upheld and maintained in schools (Møller, 2009).

However, ongoing tension between political and professional spheres about responsibilities and educational power create significant issues for the implementation of educational accountability. Møller (2009, p.38) draws attention to the 'diffuse borderline between political and professional responsibility' further complicated by differing political agendas about education accountability. She argues that the political right are concerned about the potential abuse of school-level control if the processes of governance are taken over by teachers. From this perspective control of school-level management must be assured. Whereas the political left argue deregulation will decentralise blame and that choice will create an inequitable situation where students who have more resources will do better than those who do not, thus widening the education inequality gap (Møller, 2009).[1]

Divergent political agendas for delivering education accountabilities highlight a fundamental dilemma for schools and teachers as there are different connotations implied when one is being held and/or feeling accountable for their actions (Conway & Murphy, 2013; O'Donnell, 2014). Therefore a fundamental task for schools and teachers is to negotiate the tension between being held and feeling accountable by the state and its citizens to deliver effective schooling practices as well as managing the impact(s) caused by accountability processes (Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009; Wallenius et al, 2018; O'Donnell, 2014).

Accountability – a multidimensional concept

'Accountability' in itself is a multidimensional concept (Ranson, 2003; Møller, 2009; Chen 2016). The notion of accountability is fundamentally connected to trust because it is a 'social practice pursuing particular purposes, defined by distinctive relationships and evaluative procedures' (Møller, 2009, p.39, Ranson, 2003). Within this social practice, there are four key components of accountability; social actors, goals, an explanation, and consequences (Chen, 2016). At an individual level, accountability is a way of ensuring that one must account for their actions and the results of their actions (Møller, 2009).

At a professional level, teachers are accountable to their peers for their actions within their professional remit (Møller, 2009). For instance, in Ireland, the Teaching Council's Code of Practice is a key document that sets out the standards of professional knowledge, skills, competence and conduct expected of registered teachers (Teaching Council, 2016). In addition, teachers are morally responsible for responding to students' and parents' needs in addition to contributing to the public good through the state (Møller, 2009; O' Donnell, 2014; Wallenius et al, 2013; Conway & Murphy, 2013).

1 For instance, differing political views were evident in a recent Dáil debate about the upcoming Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill, 2019. People Before Profit see that the Bill places the obligation to deliver quality education on schools as opposed to the government (For more information see: *Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 [Seanad]: Second Stage (Resumed) – Dáil Éireann (33rd Dáil) – Thursday, 8 Jul 2021 – Houses of the Oireachtas)*.

At an institutional level, accountability defines a relationship of control between different stakeholders 'located in hierarchical practices of bureaucracy' (Møller, 2009, p.38) that encompass evaluative procedures to ensure the proper use of authority and that roles, rules and values are adhered to (Erdağ & Karadağ, 2017).

According to Barber (2004), in order for the benefits of accountability to be best realised, social actors need to ...'know what their goals are, that progress towards those goals is measured and that success is rewarded and failures are addressed' (p.8). The model(s) of accountability utilised also inform goals and whether they are shared or not, the manner in which these goals are measured and rewarded and, how failures are addressed. This presupposes that no matter what 'model' of accountability is implemented it will invariably produce 'complex reactions' (Elmore & Fuhrman, 2001, p.72) in school systems and schools. As such, the devil is in the detail when it comes to designing accountability models because many of the arguments about accountability systems are 'inevitably and rightly about how rather than whether' (Barber, 2004, p.15) they ought to be implemented.

Models of regulation and accountability

Models of regulation and accountability essentially offer a theoretical ideal. In practice, school leaders and teachers must manage overlapping and competing accountability systems as well as political, legal, bureaucratic, professional and market-led external pressures from multiple sources (Chen, 2016; Erdağ & Karadağ, 2017). Notwithstanding, this review has identified four basic models (market, performance, professional and bureaucratic) (Erdağ & Karadağ largely form the basis of combined definitions of accountability. The plethora of accountability typologies identified in education literatures alone[2] are an indication of the nuance and variation of emphasis placed on the processes of accountability associated with differing accountability models. Although an overlap is observed between accountability models, key differences emerge in the variation and degree of emphasis placed on the methods used to 'improve' education processes, practices and outcomes. Some countries' education systems are also recognised as being either 'hard'/'soft' or, 'high', 'moderate' or 'low' depending on the country-specific emphases placed on the methods used to demonstrate education quality assurance and evaluation (OECD, 2013).

Charter-type models of accountability and the wider policy context

The market reforms first introduced in the United States and England in the 1980s were informed by neoliberalism and New Public Management (NPM) principles, a core aim of which was to modernise the public sector and to make it more efficient and transparent through

2 Appendix 2 provides a brief description of Managerial, Professional, Performance and Bureaucratic/ Hierarchal accountability models which are relevant to the teaching profession.

market-oriented policies (Hood 1991 in Chen, 2016). In this context a charter-type (i.e., market-led) model of regulation and accountability is defined as one that

> ...'involves accountability to parents as customers, and is tied in with models of accountability in the private sector, where accountability to consumers is achieved, in theory, via market mechanisms. This new public accountability is seen to occur through stakeholder involvement rather than electoral participation' (Mattei, 2012, p.248).

Given this, charter-type models of education accountability place emphasis on the provision of a service (i.e., education) to customers (i.e., parents and students) via market-led mechanisms (e.g., school league tables). Under this model, it is anticipated that wanting rewards and avoiding punishments motivates the school community to meet the goals set by school leaders through performance enhancing incentives (such as whole-school performance measures). Furthermore, by fostering greater parental school choice, proponents of this approach argue that a situation where schools compete for enrolment empowers parents, gives students a more central role in the design of education programs within their schools and increases school accountability in delivering education (Schneider & Buckley 2003; Barber, 2004; see also Friedman, 1994). Proponents also assert that this accountability approach provides feedback which can be used to drive ...'continuous improvement which encourages the public to keep faith' in the public education system. As such, greater trust in public education is expected to reduce an overreliance on private alternatives which 'would [otherwise] result in the slow but sure strangulation of public services' such as education (Barber, 2004, p.12-13).

Literatures also assert that charter-type (i.e., market-led) models of accountability have a prominent influence on education policy as well as extending the reach of accountability models across education systems (Ozga, 2020; Skerritt, 2019; O'Donnell, 2014; Conway & Murphy, 2013; Connell, 2013a; Lynch et al, 2012; Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009). Ozga's, (2020) research, for example, shows that ...'the governing of education has changed from traditional hierarchical and bureaucratic forms to more horizontal, networked and distributed forms involving new political actors' (p.23; Mattei, 2012; Skerritt, 2019). These 'new political actors' - such as sponsors for funding education programmes, think-tanks, consultants and philanthropists - are now actively participating in the delivery of education services (Skerritt, 2019) as well as contributing towards curriculum development. In Ireland, Jessop (2004) refers to this situation as 'de-hierarchisation" - the horizontal handover of political power from the state to private actors (in Skerritt, 2019, p. 263; Ozga, 2020). According to Ozga (2020) (and others), the implementation of market-led solutions within governance and education systems fundamentally impact people working in schools and in other education institutions in terms of how 'they are able to act politically to defend their interests and mediate policy "scripts"' (p.23; Mattei, 2012; Skerritt, 2019)[3].

Furthermore, literatures highlight concerns about the methods used to gather and assess information about schooling processes and outcomes. For example, the 'audit systems' (Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2014, p.13) associated with NPM policies foreground delivering 'value for money' and accountability for results (Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009; Lynch, et al, 2012). Under the remit

3 In this context, the Irish government's commitment in the Programme for Government to develop a Citizens Assembly for Education (CAFE) needs careful scrutiny.

of school improvement, emphasis is placed on practices that foster parental choice, competition, goal setting, an account process, and standardisation which can be negative in the form of punishments or positive in the form of rewards (Chen, 2016; Ball, 2016; Conway & Murphy, 2013; O'Donnell, 2014; Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009). Data also plays a central role in this process as it creates and distributes 'particular meanings of accountability' generated through statistical methods used to measure and monitor schools' performance and outcomes against other schools' (Ozga, 2020, p.21; Carlbaum, 2016).

Overall, literatures assert that the over reliance on market mechanisms reflected in global education policy essentially shrink the state and redefine the citizen as a consumer of education services. Consumers' education choices are increasingly informed by widely distributed information from league tables informed by data gathered, for example, through international assessments and standardised tests (Ozga, 2020; Skerritt, 2019; Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009; Mattei, 2012; Conway & Murphy, 2013; O'Donnell, 2014; Ball, 2016; Erdağ & Karadağ, 2017). Several authors disagree that such models of accountability will directly lead to improved schooling, teaching and learning, as well as better student achievement and education outcomes (Møller, 2009; Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009; Conway & Murphy, 2013; Connell, 2013a; O'Donnell 2014; Lindgren, 2016; Skerritt 2019; Ozga, 2020). Others also assert that this form of governance does not produce socially just outcomes, rather it actually widens the education equity gap between students who have the resources and supports and those who do not (Heimans, Singh & Barnes, 2020; Ball 2016; Connell, 2013b; Westling-Allodi, 2012; Apple, 2006).

Holding these broader 'global' issues about education accountability in mind, Section 2 refers to literatures that concentrate on the rise of new accountabilities in Ireland since the 1990s. These literatures also draw attention to aspects of charter-type models of regulation and accountability already taking root within the Irish education landscape.

SECTION

2

Accountabilities in education policy in Ireland

This section examines the impacts of accountabilities in education in Ireland. It also provides an overview of the key concepts that have informed the development of education policy in Ireland and the subsequent change in focus towards models of regulation and accountability since the 1990s. The implication of these changes is discussed in relation to (i) schools' autonomy, (ii) teacher professionalism, (iii) school leadership and workload and, (iv) school culture and relationships.

The development of 'new' accountabilities in education policy in Ireland

> It is not a question of why education accountability is necessary, rather, it is a question of accountability '*for what*' and '*to whom*'? (Conway & Murphy, 2013).

Education accountability in Ireland has traditionally been underpinned by bureaucratic and hierarchical structures (Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009; O'Donovan, 2015). Ireland is historically recognised as taking England's lead in terms of education policy and direction, indeed, the Irish government was seen to 'copy England' in this regard (Irish Education Studies 1994 in Skerritt, 2019, p.264; Coolahan et al, 2017). From the 1960s onwards England's level of influence on Irelands' education policy has waned substantially. Furthermore, Ireland's membership to the European Economic Community in 1973 demonstrates its move towards the internationalisation of the Irish economy. Now, changes in focus and direction of education policy is also attributed to EU and US influences (Skerritt, 2019; Coolahan et al, 2017; O'Donnell, 2014; Lynch et al, 2012; O'Hara, McNamara & Boyle, 2007).

Several literatures identify landmarks in the evolution of education policy in Ireland (Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009; Lynch et al, 2012; Conway & Murphy, 2013; O'Donnell, 2014; Coolahan, et al, 2017; Skerritt, 2019). Gleeson & O'Donnabháin (2009), for instance, chart the approach towards a 'new' form of management into Irish public policy from the mid-90s in the form of the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI)[4]. This change in policy focus also signifies the arrival of a new culture of management in the guise of NPM policy principles that emphasise neoliberal ideals. From an education policy perspective, NPM principles are manifest in accountability

4 SMI was adopted in 1994 to modernise the civil service and to address what was regarded as 'fragmented' approach to decision making (Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009).

processes that foreground quality assurance in education, school and teacher performance management and the devolution of responsibility to schools away from the state (Gilleece & Clerkin, 2020; Skerritt, 2019; O'Donnell, 2014; Conway & Murphy, 2013; Lynch et al, 2012).

In addition, terminology synonymous with the market sector has been evident in education policy discourses in Ireland since the 1990s (Skerritt, 2019; Kirwan & Hall, 2016; O'Donnell, 2014; O'Hara et al, 2007; Gleeson & O' Donnabháin, 2009). For example, the White Paper on Education Charting our Education Future (1995) uses market-led terms and it demonstrates the EU's directive for increased accountability at school level (O'Donnell, 2014; Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009; Lynch et al, 2012). The paper identifies accountability as one of five educational principles involving the operation of 'appropriate processes to evaluate the effectiveness of educational policy, provision and outcomes ... [in order to ensure] value for money' (in Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009, p.30). Gleeson & O'Donnabháin's, 2009 analysis of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) strategies also highlight a liberal use of market-led terms which reflect consumerist language such as "customer/client interests and needs" (DES, 1997, p.10), "deliver a high quality education" (DES, 1997, p.21) and, "appropriate legislative, financial and accountability frameworks" (DES, 1997, p.22) (in Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009, p.30).

Successive DES strategy statements continue to emphasise the 'service delivery' of a quality education. For example, the Secretary General's introduction to the DES 2005/2007 Strategy Statement highlights the DES's commitment to deliver quality education service to fulfil the 'needs of our customers, clients and learners at all levels' (in Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009, p.31). The economic downturn and subsequent bailout in 2008/9, and the 'bad news' about Ireland's Programme for International Student Assessment survey (PISA) scores in 2009 (Cosgrove et al, 2010) are also identified as key events that have moved Ireland's education policy towards the ...'attainment of results-type accountability for schools in relation to literacy and numeracy' (Conway & Murphy, 2013, p.28; Skerritt, 2019; O'Donnell, 2014; Sloane et al, 2013; Lynch et al, 2012). This move is demonstrated by the reform of mathematics education introduced in 2010 (Kirwan & Hall, 2016), as well as the national strategy for literacy and numeracy introduced in 2011 (Skerritt, 2019; Conway & Murphy, 2013). More recently, the Action Plan for Education (2016-2019) and the Action Plan for Education 2019 provide the wider framework for current strategies such as the forthcoming Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill, 2019[5] which also uses terms that clearly reflect market-led ideals and directives.

Next, the potential effects of market-led discourse on education policy in Ireland is explored in relation to (i) school autonomy, (ii) teachers' professionalism, (iii) school leadership and workload as well as (iv) school culture and relationships.

(i) School autonomy

The influence of NPM principles on education policy is evident in the move towards the decentralisation of decision-making and responsibility to school level away from the government in the form of school inspections and self-evaluation (O'Donnell, 2014; Skerritt, 2019; Lynch et

5 The Bill was published in 2019 and as of July it is at stage 8 of the Oireachtas process.

al, 2012). Notably, after the introduction of the Education Act (1998), increased calls for accountability led to a greater emphasis on school inspection, autonomy, planning and evaluation (Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009; O'Donnell, 2014). The 1998 Act is central to how autonomy is exercised, but since its implementation, several other bodies now significantly contribute towards this process, namely the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) through curriculum development, the Teaching Council through quality assurance in the profession, and the DES Inspectorate (NESC, 2012), through school inspection.

For instance, Whole School Evaluations (WSE)[6], the move towards School Self-Evaluation (SSE)[7] and the subsequent implementation of WSE-Management, Leadership and Learning (MLL)[8] clearly demonstrate increased emphasis on school accountability and autonomy via external inspections and internal reviews (O'Donnell, 2014; Conway & Murphy, 2013). Under this remit schools shoulder most of the responsibility for developing and guaranteeing the delivery of quality education (Brown et al, 2020). Although WSE and SSE are still regarded as a relatively low-stakes policy in Ireland (Skerritt, O'Hara & Brown, 2021), the forthcoming Parent and Student Charter Bill (2019) could create more surveillance of teachers' work at an individual and collective level through management-led consultations within schools (Skerritt et al, 2021, p.8).

DES research and consultation papers (2015a and 2015b) also show governmental commitment towards decentralisation through increased school autonomy (Skerritt, 2019). Discussions in these DES papers favour increased school autonomy – an approach adopted by the English academy model, charter schools in the US and 'Free' schools in Sweden (Skerritt, 2019). Under these education models, it is envisaged that decentralisation of decision-making empowers parents, students, patrons and communities to participate in school decision-making processes, as well as giving schools more autonomy for staffing and curriculum development tailored to students' specific needs (Skerritt, 2019, p.267). It remains unclear how the model of autonomy referred to in the DES papers (2015a and 2015b) will be developed in the Irish context and to what extent. However, according to Skerrit (2019), there is already a sense of 'endogenous privatisation'[9] evident in market-led education policy discourses in Ireland.

(ii) Teacher professionalism

> ...'*performativity and accountability agendas are radically undermining the professionalism of teachers in the hunt for measures, targets, benchmarks, tests, tables, audits to feed the system in the name of improvement*' (Ball, 2016, p.1046).

According to Conway & Murphy (2013), since the response to PISA 2009, there is evidence of an endorsement of the "rising tide" of accountabilities that concentrate on

6 The intention of WSE (introduced in 2003/2004) is also evident in White Paper on Education (1995).
7 SSE are supported by DES Looking at Our Schools (LAOS) (2003) intended to support the development of a culture of self-review and evaluation that would be driven by schools themselves (NESC, 2012, p.22).
8 WSE-MLL was introduced at post-primary level in 2011.
9 Endogenous privatisation refers to when schools are privatised from within. In the UK, the impact of market-led policies has led to schools operating increasingly in the manner of private companies (i.e., schools advertise against their competitors and parents and students are recognised as consumers of education services.)

compliance with regulations in teacher education (p.28). As part of their review of changes in education policy (1997-2012), they also refer to the prominent role played by the Teaching Council[10] in developing compliance with regulations in teacher education. Since its establishment in 2006 the Teaching Council has published several policies that have set out a range of accountability mechanisms across teaching registration and the quality assurance and accreditation systems for programmes of teacher education. According to Conway & Murphy (2013) the work of the Council so far has 'tended towards specifying more explicitly than heretofore the professional standards and expectations of teachers and teacher educators' (p.26).

Literatures also highlight concerns about the overuse and reliance on external accountability agendas informed by performance management accountabilities that alter how teachers' responsibility is seen to support quality teaching and learning (O'Donnell, 2014; Connell, 2013a; Conway & Murphy, 2013; Lynch et al, 2012). This situation is illustrated by the establishment of 'Fitness to Teach' in 2016, an inquiry process whereby anyone (including the public), employer or a teacher, can make a complaint to the Teaching Council about a registered teacher - after school-based procedures have been exhausted (OECD, 2020, p.17).

On this basis, Solbrekke & Sugrue (2014) recommend that current teacher education needs teacher educators who are cognisant of the hegemonic influence of the NPM and how it could threaten teachers' ability to fulfil their duties as professionals. Some authors urge teachers to combine their efforts and take the lead in trying to resolve the tensions created by competing accountabilities by 'promoting forms of accountability that are publically acceptable' (Møllar, 2009, p.42). (Box 1. provides examples of publically acceptable and alternative forms of accountability).

Box 1. Examples of publically acceptable and alternative forms of accountability

Education policies in Finland since the 1990s encourage alternative forms of accountability. For example:

1. Curriculum focus
Rather than focusing on literacy, numeracy and science, teaching and learning in schools in Finland concentrate on ...'deep, broad learning, giving equal value to all aspects of the growth of an individuals' personality, moral character, creativity, knowledge, and skills' (Sahlberg, 2010, p103).

2. Standardised testing
Instead of an over-reliance on test-based accountability, Finnish policy and practice encourage a culture of shared responsibility and trust in the education system ...'that values teacher and principal professionalism in judging what is best for students' (Sahlberg, 2010, p103). Teachers ...'improve their schools through professional collaboration of networks, from evidence, and from literature in their trade' (Sahlberg, 2020, p.106).

10 The Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers (2007, updated in 2012 and 2016) details four core values (care, respect, trust and integrity) as well as six broad Standards of Professional Conduct (Professional Values and Relationships, Integrity, Conduct, Practice, Professional Development and, Collegiality and Collaboration) that underpin teachers' work.

(iii) School leadership and workload

> *'The challenge for school leadership is to mediate the tensions between continuities and discontinuities'* (O'Donovan, 2015, p.244).

Historically, school leadership was built on a hierarchical system of governance with the school leader positioned at the top of that system. This was especially the case in religious run voluntary secondary schools, which had a very weak middle management system (O'Dononvan, 2015, p.244). Far from the historical top down approach, the focus of education policy in Ireland is now on ...'the relationship between leadership, school improvement and sustaining change' (Harris, 2005 in O'Donovan, 2015, p.243-244). New emphasis on educational leadership is also evident as is the overall expansion of school principals' remit which is inscribed into the Teaching Council's Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers (2016). In addition, the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) also defines leadership as starting with the teacher in the classroom. Coolahan et al's (2017) review of the Irish education system see this new emphasis is also reflected in the establishment of the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD). They assert that the traditional role of the Inspectorate has been changed substantially and now involves a variety of forms of inspection, with an emphasis on co-professional relationships with teachers as well as more public reporting for accountability and evaluation purposes (Coolahan et al, 2017). The new managerial framework espoused by NPM principles also shows an increased focus ...'on the product not the person, both in terms of what is attained and what is counted and countable' (Lynch et al, 2012, p.22).

This change in focus highlights the complex and challenging role of a school principal, whose leadership and identity is developed in response to mediating external variables, in the form of policy directives and accountability processes within the school community (O' Donovan, 2015; Lynch et al, 2012). Furthermore, there is an unease that under NPM principles school leaders will be ...'re-shaped in the neoliberal imagination as a managerial class' akin to corporate managers in the business sector (Connell, 2013a, p.107; Lynch et al, 2012). When school leaders are identified as school 'managers', their focus is ultimately on school performance, how well their school compares to others and, what they can do to get ahead of the competition. This scenario is facilitated by the increased emphasis on data-driven modes of accountability supported by EU policy and visible in the work of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)[11] and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). These organisations facilitate the production of vast amounts of data generated through large-scale comparative studies of student achievement (namely, PISA[12], TIMSS[13] and PIRLS) which are administered across the globe (O' Hara et al, 2007). In particular, the OECD's sway is demonstrated by the significant level of importance placed on PISA surveys which are now widely accepted as benchmarks of good performance in education systems across the EU and elsewhere (Ozga 2020; Skerritt, 2019; Brown et al, 2016; Conway & Murphy, 2013;

11 The OECD was established in 1961, this timeframe coincides with Ireland's move away from England as the main source of policy influence towards the EU.

12 The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) measures 15-year-olds' reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills. The first study was administered in 2000.

13 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), are flagship studies of the IEA operating since 1995 and 2001 respectively.

Sloane, Oloff-Lewis & Kim, 2013; Sahlberg, 2011; Grek, 2009). Indeed, being in the top ten performing PISA countries is seen to demonstrate a country's ability to deliver quality education.

The NESC (2012) recognises that 'a lot of data is generated' in the education system through State exams and national and international assessments, and used by the DES to improve standards and quality in schools (p.23). However, it identifies a deficit in primary and post primary schools' use of data generated from such assessments (NESC, 2012, p.23) whereby the situation is 'less satisfactory at post-primary level' (DES, 2011 in NESC, 2012, p.39). The NESC (2012) recognises the need to develop teachers' 'technical expertise' to bridge the gap between student achievement data and using it for benchmarking and information purposes (p.23). Yet, literatures highlight that the "rising tide" of 'new' accountabilities (Conway & Murphy, 2013) increase school leaders and teachers' workloads as there is an increased expectation for them to use data to fulfill policy remits and deliver results that 'demonstrate' school improvement in the form of increases in students' achievement (Pendola, 2019; O' Donovan, 2015).

Overall, literatures draw attention to the Irish post-primary system whereby current 'administrative workloads, accountability measures, legislative requirements and budgetary cutbacks' (O' Donovan, 2015, p.244; Lynch et al, 2012) essentially undermine principals' ability to be strong leaders of learning in their schools.

(iv) School culture and relationships

The complexities associated with achieving education accountability also poses significant challenges for principals and teachers to develop their school communities into places of democratic participation wherein 'leadership is collaborative in nature' (O' Donovan, 2015, p. 244; Pendola, 2019). Significant efforts have been made by schools to include parents' and students' voices. However, for students (in particular) research still finds that their opportunities to participate in democratic processes decrease as they progress through the school system (de Róiste et al, 2012) even though they express a desire to participate in decision-making processes at school (Fleming, 2013; Harrison, McNamara & O'Hara, 2020).

Given this, principals and teachers are tasked with the challenge of negotiating ways of accommodating collective consensus within complex communities operating within a complex era of 'new' education accountabilities. For example, SSE as a form of accountability, is moving away from being the sole responsibility of school principals towards a collaborative and democratic process including parent and student voices (Brown et al, 2020). Democratic processes, as such, require teachers to embrace a heretofore different approach towards decision-making at classroom and school level as traditional culture and understanding suggests that teachers worked behind a 'closed door' where they had 'virtual autonomy in the classroom' (O'Donovan, 2015, p.263; Brown et al, 2020).

Notwithstanding, Brown et al's (2020) research highlights the lack of CPD programmes for principals and teachers to improve awareness about stakeholder involvement in democratic processes. For instance, they found that 'only 8% of school leaders' reported that their school gets training on how it can facilitate parental and student involvement in democratic processes

such as SSE (p.518). Brown et al (2020) assert that this situation poses a significant hindering factor to facilitating parents and students in the SSE process (p.518).

This issue is compounded by schools' social mix, where schools with a higher proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds report lower parental involvement than schools with a higher proportion of students from middle-class backgrounds (Byrne & Smyth, 2010). Furthermore, school communities are comprised of a myriad of stakeholders from differing backgrounds, abilities and perspectives which requires a nuanced skillset applicable for building consensus among a diversity of social actors. Careful consideration and more research in particular into how student voice plays out in classroom practices at post-primary level (Skerritt et al, 2021) is required to achieve a balance between stakeholders' right to voice and teachers' right not to feel undermined and over scrutinised. If democratic processes are to be successfully embedded within schools' ethos and practice, a change in cultural practices in conjunction with the provision of the necessary supports and resources are paramount factors in this process. Current research about teachers' professional learning (TPL) from Rawdon et al. (2021) also highlights the need to recognise teachers as agentic professionals and to ensure that TPL offers them an opportunity to build on their existing knowledge (p.113). Findings also show that teachers want more of a sense of ownership and management of TPL to prioritise what best suits their schools' needs (Rawdon et al., 2021).

What direction are we moving towards?

Numerous authors draw attention to how education policy in Ireland is shaped by the NPM agenda, demonstrated by the move in education policy towards ...'the global education reform logic[14] ... and a reconfiguration from low or moderate high-stakes accountability' (Conway & Murphy, 2013, p.29; Skerritt, 2019, O'Donnell, 2014; Lynch et al, 2012). Moreover, the notion that models of accountability that foster competition and choice lead to better equity and quality in education has been strongly criticised on the grounds that these methods do not produce socially just and 'better' outcomes (Ozga, 2020; Ball, 2016; O'Donnell, 2014; Conway & Murphy, 2013; Møller, 2009) - particularly in terms of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Byrne & Smyth, 2010).

Literatures also draw attention to practices that reflect the change in Irish education towards 'high-stakes' forms of accountability at post-primary level. For example, Conway and Murphy (2013) assert that such forms of accountability are easily observed in the 'iconic status' attributed to Leaving Certificate results based on individual student performance. Evidence of high-stakes consequences are also reflected in the high percentage of principals (89%) who reported between-school-competition in relation to school intake (Byrne & Smyth, 2010, p.39). This scenario is fuelled by the 'league-table system by default' created by the media whereby several newspapers report the percentages of students from different schools that progress to higher education (Lynch et al, 2012, p.17; Gilleece & Clerkin, 2020). The media's role has a significant

14 This refers to the global education reform movement (GERM) identified by Sahlberg (2007, 2011) as part of his framework which he uses to compare the logic that underpinned the Finnish education reform with global trends in education.

influence on the agenda of school leaders who now need to keep abreast of the hype generated around what is the 'best' school and how 'their' school compares to others (Lynch et al, 2012, p. 17). In addition, the publication of school reports from Whole School Evaluations on the DES website since 2006 (Gilleece & Clerkin, 2020, p. 43; Conway & Murphy, 2013), could also be seen to add to competition between schools. The increased use of private grind schools[15] also provide evidence of other market-led activities creeping into the education system at post-primary level, where private actors are providing education services that traditionally were provided by the state (Skerritt, 2019). Nonetheless, Skerritt (2019) sees that Ireland's education system is still in the 'fortunate position' whereby policymakers can cease to implement policy that fosters external privatisation (Skerritt, 2019, p.274). Furthermore, Coolahan et al (2017) assert that a 'striking feature' of the Irish education system is the high level of respect and status afforded to teachers' role and, the high quality of applicants attracted to the profession which 'form a valued strength of the contemporary schooling system' (Coolahan et al, 2017, p. vii).

Given this, some authors suggest that teachers need to decide collectively how they can fulfill their professional duties in a way that is consistent with upholding standards and the purposes of quality teaching and learning that goes beyond market-led goals (O' Donnell, 2014) whilst exercising individual and collective agency. As part of this process, Ball (2016) urges all educators ...'to become increasingly critically reflexive, [and] politically aware'... (p.1046). This is not an easy task, but teachers' willingness to work collectively to protect their conditions is a long standing tradition of teacher unions in Ireland (Lynch et al, 2012, p.18) which suggests that the teaching profession will find a way through these complex times[16].

The next section examines the impact of charter-type models of regulation and accountability in Sweden's education system. The objective of this is to explore how these models of accountability negatively impact on other education systems and schooling contexts.

15 Research conducted by Clerkin et al (2020) still finds that 'shadow education' such as grinds was less common at post-primary level in Ireland than in any of the comparison countries, and was lower than the TIMSS international average (p.68).

16 For example, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) if utilised effectively as a form of TPL could provide teachers the opportunity to foster supportive and collaborative relationships within and across schools for the overall purpose of school improvement (See Rawdon et al, 2021).

SECTION

3

Changes in education policy in Nordic countries

This section provides a review of literatures that examine the implementation of charter-type (i.e., market-led) policies adopted in the Swedish education system. As with Ireland's case, particular attention is given to impacts on (i) school autonomy, (ii) teacher professionalism, (iii) school leadership and workload as well as (iv) school cultures and relationships. Sweden is identified as a case for exploration as it is a cautionary example of how an education system can be considerably altered in a relatively short timeframe and suffer negative impacts due to the adoption of NPM policy that fosters freedom of choice, deregulation, evaluation and managerialism (Lindgren et al, 2016, p237; Wallenius et al, 2018; Carlbaum, 2016; Liljenberg 2015; Westling-Allodi, 2013; Lundström & Parding, 2011).

Education privatisation in Nordic democratic welfare states

In the 1970s Nordic countries such as Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark were heralded as a 'Nordic Nirvana' (Lister, 2009) in terms of their egalitarian, welfare-approach towards public policy and education. However, as a result of education reforms from the 1990s onwards, neoliberal principles have encroached at differing levels[17] on these socially democratic welfare-states' respective education systems (Sahlberg, 2007,2011; Westling-Allodi, 2013; Verger, Fontdevila & Zancajo, 2016; Wallenius et al, 2018). Nordic discourses about achieving a 'global competence' whilst maintaining the tradition of the 'egalitarian Nordic comprehensive school' have placed pressure on some Nordic countries to comply with these competing ideals (Wallenius et al, 2018, p.133; Sahlberg, 2007, 2011).

Two key factors are attributed to this change in focus. Firstly, the move away from social democratic ideals in education policy towards neoliberal principles is largely attributed to the generation of a 'legitimacy crisis in the welfare state' (Verger et al, 2016, p.57; Carlbaum, 2016). Conservatives argued that the provision of education on a universally 'free' basis was untenable due to the excessive costs associated with such a model. This situation was seen to contribute towards the financial crisis in Sweden and Finland (in particular). Severe budget cuts to education ensued and the rhetoric that the education system in Nordic countries in general was

17 Out of these Nordic countries, Finland is seen to have been less affected by market-led policies whereby governance in education has not changed due to increased accountability processes (Wallenius et al, 2018; Sahlberg, 2007, 2011).

bad value for tax payers' money opened the door to market-led ideologies, albeit at varying levels of intensity. Secondly, Sweden and Norway's respective decline in PISA survey scores are seen to have put pressure on governments to introduce education reforms which strengthened the need for national performance measures (Verger et al, 2016, p. 57; Westling-Allodi, 2013; Carlbaum, 2016; Wallenius et al, 2018). Both of these scenarios (i.e., financial unrest and 'bad news' from PISA 2009) are not too dissimilar to Ireland's change in focus towards NPM principles in education policy, which promise more 'value for money' as well a more effective and efficient education system overall (Conway & Murphy, 2013; Gleeson & O' Donnabháin, 2009).

The case of Sweden is now explored in more detail in terms of the ongoing impacts on education provision due to its change in focus towards education policy.

Sweden – still a 'Nordic Nirvana'?

Pre-1990 Swedish schooling was underpinned by social democratic welfare principles, centrally regulated, comprehensive and free at the point of use. Since then, the Swedish education system has undergone a rapid and an extensive transformation, informed by policy characterised by market-led and managerial accountabilities (Wallenius et al, 2018; Liljenberg 2015; Lundström & Parding, 2011). Sweden is also seen to show ...'a more full-blown "school market" than most other countries' (Lundström & Parding, 2011, p3; Wallenius et al, 2018).

Although free access to education[18] is still a non-contested issue in Sweden (Lundahl et al, 2013, p.510), the establishment of the voucher scheme under a conservative-led government in 1992 facilitated a dramatic transformation of the Swedish education system. Under the voucher scheme 'Free' (i.e., private) schools were allowed to receive public funding according to student demand (Verger et al, 2016, p.59; Alexandersson, 2011; Carlbaum, 2016). The aim of the voucher scheme was to create more school choice by promoting a difference in the types of schools and pedagogical choice available. It was also anticipated that new school providers would come from non-profit sectors – i.e., teacher organisations, parental associations and community groups. This situation proved not to be the case as there was an overall lack of interest from non-profit cohorts to set up 'Free' schools. Instead the gap in non-profit school provision was filled by for-profit providers (Wiborg, 2015). Also, the scheme 'inadvertently' increased competition and inequalities between public (municipal managed) and 'Free' (i.e., privately run) schools, whereby the latter were given substantial resources to operate since the voucher represented 85% of the average costs of a pupil in the public sector (Verger et al, 2016, p.59; Alexandersson, 2011; Wiborg, 2015).

As a result of the voucher scheme there has been a sharp increase in 'Free' schools from '60 in 1993 to 709 in 2009' (Wiborg, 2015 in Verger et al, 2016, p.59; Carlbaum, 2016; Lundström & Parding, 2011). Contrastingly, from 2003-2012 public school enrolments substantially decreased

18 All children and young people in Sweden still receive free education from primary to upper secondary level, and tertiary level.

(Verger et al, 2016, p.60). Further to this reform, in 1994, Sweden launched a web portal to show manifold statistical indicators at school-level. It was also the first out of other Nordic countries to introduce a goal-orientated evaluation model with compulsory standardised testing as well as publicly disseminating school-level evaluation results (Wallenius et al, 2018).

Now education in Sweden is delivered via a 'quasi-market' system based on school vouchers and parents and students' right to freely choose between publicly funded schools owned and managed by municipalities or independently run 'Free' (private) schools (Lindgren et al, 2016; p.239; Carlbaum, 2016; Alexandersson, 2011). Some 'Free' schools are run by education companies[19] who publicly trade on the stock market which means shareholders can gain from profits made (Lundström & Parding, 2011, p.3). Sweden's education policy space has also become overcrowded with competing evaluation systems that overlap in their remit resulting in 'multiple accountability problems' (Lindgren et al, 2016, p.238; Carlbaum, 2016). In addition, segregation and inequalities are on the rise due to competition for students and funding between public and 'Free' schools (Alexandersson, 2011; Westling-Allodi, 2013; Carlbaum, 2016; Lindgren et al, 2016). To explore these issues in more detail, the next paragraphs examine the impacts of charter-type (market-led) education reforms on different aspects of schooling in Sweden, starting with school autonomy.

(i) School autonomy

Decentralisation in the Swedish education system has yielded to 'centralised and performance-based policies' for education governance at school level (Lindgren et al, 2016, p.240; Wallenius et al, 2018). Furthermore, the scrutiny and regulation of schools has intensified to ensure the delivery of a 'quality' education and evaluation system (Liljenberg, 2015).

Performativity and accountability focused policies in Sweden are demonstrated by the establishment of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (SSI). School inspections are conducted on a five-year cycle, the areas of focus being goal attainment, results, school leadership and the development of students' individual rights[20] (Carlbaum, 2016; Westling-Allodi, 2013). The SSI publicly publishes the results of school inspections on its website. However, the work of the SSI is argued to have promoted the 'politics of blame' (Thrupp, 1998) whereby little contextual attention is given to schools and teachers who are 'blamed' for low expectations and overall school performance (Carlbaum, 2016; Westling-Allodi, 2013; Lundahl et al, 2013). Moreover, the current regulatory system in Sweden is argued to make 'failure' inevitable as ranking always results in a top and a bottom position (Lefstein, 2013 in Carlbaum, 2016, p. 135; Westling-Allodi, 2013). According to Lefstein (2013), this practice creates the situation where schools' weaknesses are publicly available and as such the school community have to manage being 'blamed' for their 'alleged underperformance' (in Carlbaum, 2016, p.135).

19 The independent school company Kunskapsskoln had a turnover of 650 million SEK in 2008 (Lundström & Parding, 2011, p.3).

20 The SSI was established in 2008. The inspection process includes a survey amongst parents, students and teachers. Interviews are also conducted with school leaders and often with teachers and students (Carlbaum, 2016, p.137).

Likewise, Wallenius et al (2018) find that constant scrutiny of the quality of education keeps school leaders and teachers under the microscope (p.137), thus adding to the already increased pressure created from administrative burdens (Lindgren, 2016). Under this system, the notion that the government is in control is promoted and reinforced through its inspection systems of eradicating failing schools and failing teachers (Lefstein, 2013 in Carlbaum, 2016; Westling-Allodi, 2013). Not surprisingly, literatures caution against over inspection as it tends to produce a negative climate that takes attention away from the intended functions of evaluation and inspections which are to support school development (Lindgren et al, 2016, p.253; Westling-Allodi, 2013). Literatures also highlight that over inspection and scrutiny of teachers' work reduces trust and it takes away teachers sense of professional ownership.

(ii) Teacher professionalism

The decentralisation reform in Sweden in the 1990s also aimed to provide more scope for teachers to make decisions in schools (Verger et al, 2016, p.59). In the case of private schools, greater autonomy is seen as beneficial for teachers as it gives them a greater influence over their work which also results in higher work satisfaction (Chubb & Moe, 1988 in Lundström & Parding, 2011). Some authors also identify conflicts that arise as a result of educational reforms as a starting point to develop positive changes that could empower teachers to use their 'relative autonomy'[21] to improve the quality of education (Vedder & Dowd, 1999, p.314).

Teachers' use of 'relative autonomy' is mooted as an 'ideal method' to overcome conflicts by developing 'networks' of teachers and expert systems which could strengthen school resources as well as promoting consensus building (Vedder & Dowd, 1999, p.323). Yet teachers must also negotiate tensions between their professional duty, and the logic of bureaucracy and the market (Lundström & Parding, 2011) whilst providing individualised teaching, raising student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps. In this regard, literatures draw attention to data and results-driven performance accountabilities whereby the cause of low school inspection results tends to be attributed to schools and underperforming teachers (Carlbaum, 2016; Lindgren et al, 2016; Westling-Allodi, 2013; Thrupp, 1998).

This situation has affected the popularity of teaching as a profession in Sweden and it poses a threat to the quality of teaching overall (Wallenius et al, 2018, p.137; Carlbaum, 2016; Westling-Allodi, 2013). This issue is also highlighted by an OECD (2015) report which finds that teaching in Sweden is regarded as 'a low-status and relatively unattractive profession, partly due to the heavy workload, relatively low salaries for experienced teachers and limited opportunities for appraisal and feedback' (p.7). Some authors suggest that there are few expressions of collective resistance by teachers and other staff to the numerous forms of education's marketisation (See Lundahl et al, 2013, p.507; Lundström & Parding, 2011). Yet others point out how Swedish trade unions used a two-fold strategy (including actions of public resistance, public campaigns as well as galvanising teachers at school-level)to fight against the negative government narrative about teachers' alleged lack of professionalism (Basica, 2014 in Verger et al,2016, p.163).

21 This term refers to the space that teachers have (or a space they can create) to determine the curriculum or the organisations of schooling (Vedder & O' Dowd, 1999, p.317).

Literatures in general draw attention to the pressures associated with competing logics which teachers must negotiate as part of their professional practice. This is not a new phenomenon as traditionally the tension for teachers in Sweden has been between the logic of the teaching profession and that of bureaucracy (Lundström & Parding, 2011, p.4). However, this dynamic has now been further complicated by the precedence placed on a market logic in schools which clashes with teachers' professional values (Lundström & Parding, 2011) which can limit their autonomy to make decisions about their work and how they use their time. Furthermore, research finds that the complexity of demands, norms and priorities teachers face tends to differ according to the professional ethos that guides their actions as well as the dominant culture of their respective schools (Lundahl et al, 2013). This situation could also foster the potential for reduced collegial support between professionals in incidences where some agree with the implementation of market-led incentives and others do not (Lundström & Parding, 2011).

(iii) School leadership and workload

As a result of Swedish reforms, school leaders have gained a high degree of autonomy in allocating resources and budgeting, planning the work of the school, and staff administration (Lundahl et al, 2013). Nevertheless, market-led reforms are argued to have also changed the professional identity of school leaders from being a pedagogical leader to a manager (Liljenberg, 2015) to ensure that schools 'perform', 'produce' or 'deliver' sufficiently well (Lundahl et al, 2013, p.503). Research also finds that some school leaders 'seem to struggle' with the need to balance external demands and their own standards for acting as professional educational leaders (Møller, 2009, p.42). The impacts of such changes are also evident in a report by the OECD (2015) which finds that school leaders and their employers do not accord sufficient priority to pedagogical leadership. Heavy workloads, unclear relationships and distrust are also seen to have contributed to a high turnover in schools in Sweden (p.7).

However, some authors assert that not all school leaders experience the same level of pressure or expectation as others and that external managerial accountabilities are seen as opportunities to learn and to develop (Ek, 2012 in Liljenberg, 2015; Lundström & Parding, 2011). Research also finds that although school leaders describe challenges – such as the potential conflicts between collaboration and competition – most of them seem to handle changing conditions in pragmatic ways (Lundahl et al, 2013, p.506). Likewise, research findings from Liljenberg (2015) show that school leaders' pre-existing frameworks and practices inform their interpretation of and response to external pressures (p. 472) as do their schools' norms and values. This suggests that school leader's perception of change as well as school climate play an important role in how they address external pressures. Nonetheless, this perspective could also be interpreted to suggest that the reason why some schools do better than others is largely down to their collective resolve and 'positive' perspectives, and not due to issues associated with structural and/or contextual factors such as school social mix, resources and professional skill-sets.

(iv) School culture and relationships

Schools in Sweden have had to adapt quite quickly to accommodate market-led reforms which have also impacted on school culture and relationships. Lundahl et al (2013), for instance, refer

to research that explored the effects of external marketisation on schools' internal work practices. Data from surveys with school leaders found that the competition between schools affected staff and students of their schools substantially. Furthermore, reforms introduced were largely at the expense of teaching and other educational work, and only a minority of school leaders reported that competition had raised student performance or wellbeing (Lundahl et al, 2013, p.505).

Other research explores the potential impact Sweden's education reforms could have on students' mental health. The curriculum guide (2011) for upper secondary education still includes clauses about fostering democratic citizens who are willing to contribute actively to extending democracy in work and social environments. Indeed, students in Swedish schools are actively encouraged to participate and contribute towards school life (Lundah et al, 2013, p.510). However, this approach must now be maintained within the context of a school environment that has an increased focus on goal attainment, student achievement and academic results. Emerging though inconsistent findings suggest that self-perceived characteristics of the climate of a school (such as school connectedness, teacher and peer relationships, safety and fairness) are positively associated with mental health (László, Andersson & Galanti, 2019, p.7). Yet the extent of how these factors are related to students' wellbeing is still not clear (László et al, 2019, p2).

Studies among Swedish adolescents also highlight that one of their most notable sources of stress is school-related demands and pressure (László et al, 2019) and that this may increase the risk of internalising problems that could negatively impact on their mental health. This finding suggests that teachers who place a lot of pressure on students to perform well, could inadvertently play a role in students' internalisation of external pressures. Why would teachers place extra pressure on students' performativity? As previously discussed, teachers also face additional stresses and pressure due to increased accountability and performance measures. In addition, student achievement is often attributed to teacher performance. Therefore this scenario could create a school culture that overemphasises results and academic performance at the expense of students' (and teachers') overall wellbeing at school.

In conclusion

On the one hand, Swedish reforms have encouraged diversity and competition between schools and increased local autonomy. On the other hand, the decentralisation of the responsibility for education from the central to the municipal and subsequently to schools has resulted in a fragmentation of educational responsibility (László et al, 2019; OECD, 2015). Under this market-led approach social segregation and inequalities in academic results among schools have also increased. Furthermore, Houtsonen et al's (2010) analysis of the impact of increased evaluations and accountabilities (facilitated by NPM) on teachers' perceived autonomy and daily work in Sweden, Ireland and Finland, concluded that despite the similarities in the policies adopted, Irish and Swedish teachers felt a greater influence of control and accountability procedures than their Finnish colleagues (in Lundahl et al, 2013, p.500).

Although Sweden's education reforms have been dramatic and swift, the shift towards neoliberal

ideals has not 'been all-encompassing' and democratic ideals about social justice and equality still largely prevail (Liljenberg, 2015, p.458; Lundahl et al, 2013). Nonetheless, Sweden was once an exemplar of egalitarian, public education provision, whereas now it is an example of how a market-led approach towards education reform can increase social segregation and inequality through competition as well as negatively impact on the teaching profession as a whole.

SECTION

4

Concluding observations

This review of charter-type models of regulation and accountability suggests that current education accountability discourses predominantly recognise schools as measurable entities, where outputs are increasingly evaluated, ranked and compared within and between other schools (Møller, 2009; Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009; Conway & Murphy, 2013; Erdağ & Karadağ, 2017; Mattei, 2012; Ozga, 2020). In general, education accountability processes appear to be more concerned with performance, regulation and surveillance rather than focusing on building local capacity, improving education and encouraging sustainable democratic processes in schools (Ranson, 2003 in Møller, 2009; Ozga, 2020; O'Donnell 2014; Conway and Murphy, 2013; Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009) (See also the several social objectives outlined under Sections 6 and 9 of the Education Act 1998).

Decentralisation, school autonomy, greater choice and competition underpin charter-type models of accountability and they are usually approached as trade-offs that include reciprocal accountability measures (Wallenius et al, 2018; Brown et al, 2016). Literatures reviewed highlight pitfalls associated with these 'trade-offs' which are briefly reviewed below in no particular order of importance.

- Increased autonomy can result in increased accountability measures, administrative burdens and workloads which place the people who work in schools under increased pressure. For instance, in conjunction with their teaching and learning responsibilities, teachers (and school leaders) also need to have the ability to develop and foster collective decision-making processes with a range of education stakeholders as well as possess the capacity to collate data generated through assessments, WSE and SSE to make informed decisions about school policy and practice (O Donovan, 2015). This situation is especially challenging for schools that do not have sufficient training, funding and resources necessary to fulfil such accountability remits (Brown et al, 2020; Møllar, 2009).

- Greater school autonomy also encourages democratic decision-making processes which can certainly have positive results when implemented correctly. However, schools need the appropriate resources and the combination of skill-sets to achieve this (Brown et al, 2020). Otherwise, efforts to develop democratic processes could be regarded as tokenistic by all parties involved – especially students (Fleming, 2013; de Róiste et al, 2012).

- Increased school autonomy could also mean increased privatisation of aspects of school management duties. School management boards that lack the required financial, legal and managerial expertise may necessitate buying in external professional services in order to fulfil these aspects of managerial duties (Skerrit, 2019).

- In terms of teachers' professionalism, the practices of accountability largely focus on control rather than trust. The provision of 'good services' are guaranteed by measuring and accounting, instead of relying on professional discretion (O' Donnell, 2014; Conway & Murphy, 2013). Long-term, this scenario risks losing teachers' enthusiasm and commitment which poses significant issues for schools (Møllar, 2009; Sahlberg, 2011) and for the profession as a whole.

- Literatures also highlight issues reported by school leaders and teachers - such as feelings of disempowerment and stress due to increased workloads - associated with the increased focus on regulation and accountability (O' Donovan, 2015; Lynch, Grummell & Devine, 2012; Pendola, 2019; Rawdon et al, 2021). It is still unclear how exponentially pressures on principals and teachers will expand under charter-type models of accountability (e.g., the forthcoming Parent and Student Charter, 2019) and what this could ultimately mean for the attractiveness and sustainability of the role as currently defined.

- Performativity accountabilities act as a counterbalance to increased school autonomy but they can also create high-stakes consequences in education. High-stakes consequences (such as the Leaving Cert.)(Conway & Murphy, 2013), the infiltration of de facto league tables generated by the media (Lynch et al, 2012; Gilleece & Clerkin, 2020) as well as external education providers (such as grind schools) (Skerritt, 2019) are already in place in the education system in Ireland. All of these accountability mechanisms can also change the dynamic in schools whereby teachers and students can experience more pressure due to the focus on results as a key indication of student achievement. Although recent research about the relationship between student wellbeing and school culture is inconsistent (László et al, 2019), it nevertheless highlights potential issues associated with an overemphasis on exam results at the expense of non-cognitive outcomes which should not to be overlooked in considerations about what constitutes an effective school (Gilleece & Clerkin, 2020; Møller, 2009).

Negotiating accountabilities

Accountability for *what* and *to whom*? remains a central question in discussions about accountability models in education. Further consideration is needed about the focus of accountability: is it mainly about the efficiency of the system or the quality of the personal, social cultural and moral development of students? And, does it demand a balanced approach embracing numerous different approaches? Gleeson & O´Donnabháin, 2009. These questions may help to tease out viable alternatives towards achieving accountability that is more congruent towards developing education systems rooted in democratic and socially just ideals that foster collaboration, equity and the joy of learning from each other and together.

A new way forward?

Literatures also offer suggestions and recommendations for negotiating this era of accountability. For instance, the role of teachers' perceptions about responsibility could provide a way of gauging the impact of 'new' accountabilities within education systems (Conway & Murphy, 2013).

Also, education systems that adopt 'intelligent' accountability (as is the case in Finland), can counterbalance charter-type models of accountability (O' Donnell, 2015; Conway & Murphy, 2013). Indeed, Pasi Sahlberg's (2007, 2011) framework for contrasting the logic of education reform in Finland with that of Global Education Reform Models (GERM) provides a useful tool for identifying how accountability can support different narratives of education reform based on widely differing contexts of influence, production and practice (Conway & Murphy, 2013). Sahlberg's framework highlights how trust and commitment are paramount in order to develop an intelligent model of accountability which supports teaching and learning for all students. In this regard, a move away from a policy of compliance to one of commitment is also recommended to build capacity and to develop policies that increase collective power at every level in the education system (O' Donnell, 2015). However, to achieve this requires a continuous team effort and teachers' belief that they can and do make a difference to students' lives (Møllar, 2009; Heimans et al, 2020).

Literatures also highlight the need for teacher educators who are cognisant of the hegemonic influence of the NPM and how it could threaten teachers' ability to fulfil their duties as professionals (Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2014). Some authors urge teachers to combine their efforts and take the lead in trying to resolve the tensions created by competing accountabilities by 'promoting forms of accountability that are publically acceptable' (Møllar, 2009, p.42), which highlights the important role of trade unions and governments in maintaining and establishing collaborative relationships (Basica & Osmond, 2013; See also Schleicher, 2020). Indeed, trade unions are a counterbalance to neo-liberal education reforms. However unions must also engage in future oriented strategies, and have the capacity and commitment to support teacher involvement in decision-making processes that critique issues in the system but also identify solutions and potential alternatives to issues raised.

Accountability in schools is a given, yet, the manner and model of accountabilities implemented needs ongoing careful consideration and development as the impacts of accountability produce 'complex reactions' (Elmore & Fuhrman, 2001, p.72) in schools and school systems. Given this, a balance needs to be struck between holding schools to account as well as allowing teachers the space and professional autonomy to do the right thing. A large part of this process relies on trust. Professional teachers trust in the government to provide the sufficient amount of supports and resources in order to have the capacity to engage in accountability processes. And, education stakeholders (such as parents and students) trust in schools to provide *all* students with the best possible education.

Improving children's education in school is hard work. Therefore it is crucial to demand that policy makers and governments invest the necessary funds and resources where they are needed most as well as providing relevant CPD opportunities and programmes for school leaders and teachers to support them in their work.

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APPENDICES

1. Methodology - key components

This review report is informed by a scoping review procedure that synthesised and assessed a range of literature relating to charter-type regulation and accountability models in education. For the purposes of this report, a scoping review procedure was utilised to:

- map literature (including two case studies (The Republic of Ireland and Sweden) on charter-type models of regulation and accountability,
- identify key concepts and,
- describe the some of the impacts of charter-type models of regulation and accountability in secondary-level education contexts in relation to school community, school autonomy, leadership and workload, teacher professionalism and, school culture and relationships.

Method, data collection and inclusion

A systematic-led approach was used to conduct an electronic search of research literatures in relation to charter-type models of regulation and accountability in education. Steps one to five below outline the approach used to conduct this review.

Step one: As part of this review, an initial search was conducted of the following websites: The Department of Education, statutory bodies (the Teaching Council, the NECS, the NCCA and the ERC), Irish and EU trade unions (ASTI, INTO and ETUCE) and EU-based organisations (the OECD, the IEA, and Eurydice).

Step two: Literature searches were undertaken on bibliographic databases EBSCO and ERIC. These databases were searched using the following terms:

- "Regulation and accountability" in conjunction with AND School AND Europe
- "Regulation and accountability" in conjunction with AND School AND Ireland
- "Regulation and accountability" in conjunction with AND School AND Sweden
- "Policy reforms" in conjunction with AND School AND Europe
- "Policy reforms" in conjunction with AND School AND Ireland
- "Policy reforms" in conjunction with AND School AND Sweden
- Schools in conjunction with AND Accountability AND Ireland
- Schools in conjunction with AND Accountability AND Sweden
- School culture OR school climate OR school environment
- "Accountability" in conjunction with AND Schools AND Policy AND Ireland
- "Accountability" in conjunction with AND Schools AND Policy AND Sweden
- "Management" in conjunction with AND Governance AND Schools
- "Democratic Schooling" in conjunction with AND Human Rights AND Student voice
- "School leadership"
- "Neoliberalism" AND Schools AND Sweden
- Evaluation AND Schools AND Sweden

Step three: Using the above search terms, the following key journals were selected for further in-depth searching:

- *Irish Journal of Education 1990 - 2020*
- *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*
- *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*
- *Journal of Educational Change*
- *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*
- *Policy Futures in Education*
- *Studies in Educational Evaluation*
- *Journal of the Educational Studies Assoc. of Ireland*
- *Irish Educational Studies*
- *Critical Studies in Education*
- *Oxford Review of Education*

Step four: Bibliographies and reference lists contained within items selected for inclusion were scanned for further potentially relevant material.

Step five: An additional web search was conducted with the specific aim of identifying grey, unpublished, policy and practice literature.

Data analysis

This research took the following steps to ensure the review process was conducted using a systematic-led approach. (See Table 1 below)

Analysis of literatures was purely descriptive and it involved narrative summary and the synthesis of literatures deemed pertinent to exploring the impact(s) of charter-type models of education accountability in education.

Table 1. Overview of the steps applied to the review and writing up process

Key stages applied to review and writing up process	
Step 1	Topic for review, objectives and sub-questions clearly defined.
Step 2	Protocol developed (i.e., inclusion & exclusion criteria) and screening process.
Step 3	Literature searches were conducted in three phases. *Phase one:* initial limited search of two online databases (EBSCO, ERIC). Initial search followed by analysis of the text words in the title and abstract of retrieved papers/reports, and of the index terms (subject headings) used to describe the articles. *Phase two:* The reference list of identified papers/reports/articles were searched for additional studies. This stage examined the reference lists of studies that were selected from full-text and/or included in the review.
Step 4	Results screened to ensure eligibility criteria was met for review.
Step 5	Relevant information was extracted from included studies.
Step 6	Evidence from review written up.

2. Descriptions of prominent education accountability models

This review has identified numerous models of accountability in education literatures alone which include; political and public accountability, managerial accountability, (Møller, 2009), professional accountability (Møller, 2009; Erdağ & Karadağ, 2017; O'Donnell, 2014) contractual, responsive, democratic accountability (Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009), market, bureaucratic accountability (Erdağ & Karadağ, 2017; Mattei, 2012), bureaucratic-professional, technical-managerial accountability (Ozga, 2020), performance accountability (Erdağ & Karadağ, 2017; Conway & Murphy, 2013; Mattei, 2012; O'Donnell, 2014; Gilleece & Clerkin, 2020), hierarchical accountability (Mattei, 2012) and, intelligent accountability (Sahlberg, 2007, 2011). Brief descriptions of accountability models pertinent to education are provided below.

Managerial accountability

The main focus under this model is ensuring that schools are held accountable for generating improvements in students' learning outcomes. This is based on the view that schools will do better if they are given clear information about their performance on national tests (Møller, 2009, p.40). Schools as collective entities accountable to the higher levels of the educational system (Møller, 2009; Mattei, 2012).

Professional accountability

This model focuses on the expertise of teachers whereby they are entrusted to manage school activities as they have the knowledge and skills to do so. For example, school boards of management and parents defer to teachers in the delivery of positive education outcomes. Professional accountability is horizontal (i.e., teachers are accountable to their peers). Emphasis is placed on leadership in teaching and decision making and to have highly trained teachers (Erdağ & Karadağ, 2017; Møller, 2009; Gleeson & O´Donnabháin, 2009; Ozga, 2020; Chen, 2016).

Performance accountability

Under this model, the focus of control is not the educational process but the results principals and teachers are held accountable for, namely, student achievement in exams and standardised tests which are used to evaluate their performance (Erdağ & Karadağ, 2017; Conway & Murphy, 2013; Mattei, 2012; Gilleece and Clerkin, 2020).

Bureaucratic/hierarchical accountability

Rules and compliance form the basis of this model. Teachers operate within a hierarchical system of rules and procedures, characterised by rewards and punishments. Schools are monitored for compliance to decide if goals are being met, if the rules are being followed and, when rewards and sanctions should be administrated and adjusted for maximum compliance (Chen, 2016; Erdağ & Karadağ, 2017; Mattei, 2012).