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Reclaiming and Reconceptualizing Accountability

Joseph Hailpern

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RECLAIMING AND RECONCEPTUALIZING ACCOUNTABILITY

by

Joseph Abraham Hailpern

M. Ed, University of California Los Angeles, 2007

BA, National Louis University, 2003

Todd Price, Ph.D., Dissertation Committee Chair

Angela Elkordy, Ph.D., Committee Member

George Litman, Ed.D., Dean's Representative

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Abstract

This body of work contributes to the exploration of the intended and unintended consequences of the policy levers, referred to as education accountability policy, that have driven entire systems toward the inclusion of student performance data into educator performance ratings and the impact on the profession. Only from an extensive understanding of where we have been can a reimagined path forward be born to serve our youth and society better. This mixed methods dissertation does so by uncovering the legal landscape that defines the policy levers and bringing educators together in focus groups to delve deeply into these levers' impact on the profession.

RECLAIMING AND RECONCEPTUALIZING ACCOUNTABILITY

Joseph Hailpern

Curriculum, Advocacy, and Policy

Approved:



Chair, Dissertation Committee



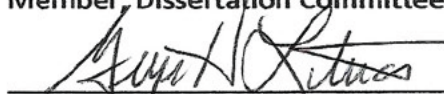
Director, Doctoral Program

Angela Elkordy

Member, Dissertation Committee



Dean, National College of Education



Dean's Representative

07/03/2023

Date Approved

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Dedication

This one is for my team.

Inbal, for her unwavering love and support over the years.

Meital, Amitai, Nadav, and Yaniv, for inspiring me to fight for the best world for you to grow up in.

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I would like to thank the following people, without whom I would not have been able to complete this research, and without whom I would not have made it through my disseration!

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My colleagues over the years who have supported me and provided a place for me to learn and grow as an educator.

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Chapter 1 Introduction/Foundation of the Study

Introduction

The United States National Commission on Excellence in Education's (1983) report *A Nation at Risk* proclaimed, "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and as a people" (p. 5). Reading it alone, one might not know that this statement was written in 1983 as a reflection on the state of American public education. The sentiment has transcended the years to the present day as the battle to define what makes a school great continues. This dissertation was conceived while working with teachers and administrators in an era of increased accountability for educators in the United States of America.

Over the past decades, educational issues of mutual concern to teachers and society have arisen concerning evaluating teachers and their effectiveness with their students. As Gould (1996) shared, "Few tragedies can be more extensive than the stunting of life, few injustices deeper than the denial of an opportunity to strive or even to hope, by a limit imposed from without, but falsely identified as lying within" (p. 83). It is therefore understood why the consciousness of America and communities throughout the world have longed to educate their youth and know that the system of education is good for the individual and good for the society. John Dewey (1907) wrote, "Whenever we have in mind the discussion of a new movement in education, it is especially necessary to take the broader or social view." This dissertation provides a framework for a definition of school accountability that reestablishes public schooling as a key contributor to society's benefits, strengthens the teaching profession, and meets the governing requirements of local bodies.

One area of mutual interest to educators and evaluators is how a teacher effectiveness rating is derived and using student performance data to inform that determination. Perhaps the inclusion of student performance data received so much attention because every teacher seems to have a recipe for enhancing the experiences and outcomes of their students, and the variability among these recipes is enormous (Hattie & Anderman, 2013). The recent shift to incorporate student performance data systematically in the reporting of the health of our schools is a culmination of a century of defining and redefining what accountability truly means. While this effort is rooted in a worthwhile cause of strengthening our school system, I posit that the opposite effect has taken shape. Using data from standardized assessments, sometimes even multiple measures require a finely tuned sense of scientific process and has imposed a paradigm shift in the education sector. Thomas Kuhn (1996) named the issue by defining the need in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn defined a paradigm as a “guidepost of assumptions, principles, and methods from which the members of the community work. It is a set of norms that tell a scientist how to think and behave, and although in science there are rival schools of thought in science, there is still a single paradigm that all scientists accept uncritically” (p.8). Building on Kuhn’s definition of a scientific revolution and the prevalence of debate about public schools in America, it is an oversimplification to claim to know what works in schools and contain a national or state system to that definition.

Kuhn (1996) described the disruption or avoidance of the paradigm as a crisis. We are a nation still in a “crisis” regarding accountability. Alternatively, at the very least, we remain at risk. The professional community lacks consensus on what accountability means. Even with states lining up state policy to mandate annual testing, the question of the execution of an adequate assessment of the health of the public education system remains. The value of student

performance data, standardized assessments, and standard learning objective measures contribute to the debate. So too, do the necessities of care for the child who needs food, shelter, and clothing and how these elements lead to opportunities for learning. As a result of this nagging debate, we must explore the intended and unintended consequences of the policy levers, referred to as education accountability policy, which have driven entire systems toward including student performance data in educator performance ratings. Only then might we be able to ascertain the impact on the profession to be more accountable and see where the revolution or a new accountability model might reside.

In examining the historical context that led to our current state of educational accountability and determining to what degree the movement has helped or hindered the dynamics of educator effectiveness, we must go back nearly a century. When studying the impact on educators as a profession and a subculture unto their own, it is undeniable that research and careful observation of teachers is necessary to fully understand classroom cultures and dynamics (Good et al., 2013). Because the issue of the health of American public education is complex and not new, we must visit critical points in history from which we can all learn. From these selected moments in education accountability history, I sought to provide guidance for future accountability frameworks to be developed by policymakers and informed by educational professionals. As a mixed methods study done in the legal and social science domains, it was important to gather information and be nimble to the needs of the research. The goal was, through research, to articulate a model for education that would harness the societal demand for school accountability while simultaneously empowering the guardians of our classrooms to fulfill the students' potential in their charge.

The bare assumption made at the outset of this study was that children lose when political parameters like education reform efforts are not aligned with or supportive of the industry they are intended to impact. When these parameters are about reporting and not people, then children, families, and communities are no longer the focus. It means the benefits of these policies are no longer directly expressed as a result of the intended goal. It is time for American policymakers to recognize that for education reform efforts to benefit school communities, policy and consideration of ideas must be catapulted by the benefits students receive based on their experience in schoolhouses that are as varied as the population they serve.

Background of the Problem

My lens as a researcher and practitioner offers a unique opportunity to provide research and careful observation of teachers as is necessary to fully understand classroom cultures and dynamics (Good et al., 2013, p. 145). I brought to this research years of experience as a classroom teacher, 15 years in school administration, and countless hours in consultation with educators as a coach, mentor, supervisor, and evaluator. Every aspect of my teaching and administrative experience has occurred under the cloud of the *No Child Left Behind Act (2002)* and the attendant boom of an assessment-crazed industry trying to define accountability. Several motifs resonated in my research of education reform efforts and the impact those reforms have had on our institutions of learning. These motifs of caring, trust, motivation, and retention all mark the failure of our public education system at various points in history and provide for the hope required to keep envisioning a new day where our alignment for accountability is true. Popham (2001) noted that teachers want to improve their skills, but they also want to keep their jobs. An evaluator whose responsibilities change due to the inclusion of summative information might as well abandon hope of getting a teacher to reveal their instructional flaws forthrightly.

As a result, this exploration defined the dichotomy that claims American public schools as a failure and are also our only hope for the future.

Benefits-focused schools and policies show essential characteristics of caring relationships. The literature intersecting education and caring “express opportunities for human connectedness and social justice which can only be achieved by caring people in caring communities” (Bergman, 2004, p. 151). If states can find a way to express care through policy, they become key players in modeling for our children the way not only parents care for their children, but the obligation organizations, schools, districts, and states have in caring for their communities as well. Tanner (2022) defined compliance-laden systems like annual state testing as protectionist accountabilities and systems that lead to a caring community as institutional accountability. We need a new vision for accountability that honors the circumstances that require both to exist at the same time.

Problem Statement

This dissertation was conceived as a result of my working with teachers and administrators in an era of increased accountability in the State of Illinois and in American public education at large. Legislative action has long played a role in the narrative around education. This narrative has ebbed and flowed between education being the cradle of American democracy, citizenship, and world power, all the way to the cause of high unemployment, a struggling economy, and a student body unprepared for higher education. This narrative, no matter the vantage point, has always sought a solution model derived from organizational management more closely aligned to the business world for accountability structures. Time after time, education has failed to develop a model of accountability that acknowledges the nonlinear development of the child. The varied growth in key areas of learning is required to be accounted

for and paired with instructional pedagogy that hinges on research as a base of reason. This is complicated and as such, the governing arena around public schools has responded with accountability reforms imposed on the profession in a manner for better or for worse.

The gap in knowledge evident in each educational convening has been the inability to directly influence or articulate what educational accountability is defined as in relation to educational reform efforts. Fields that have exponentially more freedom in defining the markers of success have developed models that education can learn from, such as sports and medicine.

The metrics used for evaluating potential and determining who gets the Major League Baseball contracts are almost all data driven. The “five-tool” baseball player has an incredible market value. Running speed, arm strength, hitting average, hitting power, and fielding are the main components of a strong player (Babb & Smith, 2003). Players with these skills grab the attention of baseball scouts everywhere and can command huge salaries for their well-rounded game. Though they are not directly related to each other, these data points together carry great value in making baseball decisions such as whom to draft or offer a long-term contract. For coaches who help kids learn a range of skills at a high level, they too reap the rewards of that growth and show the strength of an organization. Who decides that these skills are the determining factors for success? The experts in the field have decision-making authority. In this example, the determining criteria are data driven, but that decision was made by those in the profession rather than outside it.

The medical field has its own version of the five-tool player. In an annual check up the patient’s “vitals” are checked—height, weight, heartbeat, reflexes—and the doctor gets a snapshot of the patient’s current state of health of whether there are any imminent concerns. Then based upon the medical history taken at the office visit or the results of the vitals check, the

doctor on occasion decides to do more diagnostic tests, such like blood work or other labs. They use this information along with past data to determine the patients' health trajectory and provide guidance to that end. The best doctors can use seemingly unrelated points along a continuum over time to tell a story of a patient's health and well being. Who is responsible for monitoring these predetermined vitals and selecting the correct criteria? Mounds of medical research along with practical expertise from practitioners in the field determine these criteria.

So in evaluating the American school system and, more importantly, the American public school student, why did it take so long to consider incorporating data into the equation? Why do educators not have the same say as other professionals in the conversation? This task can be downright daunting. John D. Philbrick (1885) conducted a school survey in hopes of defining what excellence is in American schools. His methods a century and a half ago were not that different from ours today. We study school systems in America and abroad, find what we identify as the best, and try to adopt it into our system. However, there is a flaw in our assessment of our schools and a flaw in our assumption that the adoption of what works somewhere else will have similar results in our system or community. The flaw is simple. Our assessment of public education often leaves out looking at the teacher as the primary strength of the system and leaves out the specific skill areas that are demarcated by research as most important. Instead, our evaluation of our programs and schools are left to the local school board, state boards of education, and the federal government trying to legislate progress and definitions of growth. Or worse, left to companies to assess progress on the use of specific tools for the benefit of business growth, not broader student success.

The definition of effectiveness is of utmost importance as educators "shall not rate themselves as leaders of children, but as makers of society" (Kliebard, 2004, p. 53). The guiding

question of this study look at how teachers' perspectives amalgamate in legislative action directed at the teaching profession and define the effectiveness of the public education system. It strives to investigate the educator's professional and social capital related to teaching and learning and how those types of capital are transferable into legislative action. With specific consideration for historical patterns of domination and control over women by men, a feminist viewpoint must be considered. In addition, the dissertation determines the factors that separate or join teachers to accountability measures initiated by state and federal authorities. Are there areas of success that can be replicated or has the movement created a moment of disrepair altogether?

The dissertation explores the historical setting that enhanced a contemporary education movement and ascertains how it affected its human capital capacity. In my dissertation, I sought insightful information concerning how local school decision-makers and legislators could enhance the projected accountability program. Mages et al. (2018) confirmed that the legislators and local schools' decision-makers can connect the societal needs for the school accountability in regard to vesting the guardians of our classrooms to accomplish the abilities of the students they overlook. As a result, it is implicitly presumed when the parameters such as education changes are near configured into the industry they affect, the learners suffer. Leaders among other interested parties should acknowledge that education reforms can benefit the learners if the program's techniques and ideas are entangled with the health sector instead of the customer overloaded markets.

New concerns are emerging about whom to be held accountable for the success or failure of the American public school system. The manner of holding those responsible and how the process's execution can enhance education is of utmost concern. Education policy execution constitutes dissimilar veracities of people. The students and teachers may regard policy

implementation as transformation; they influence their routine practices of managing academic institutions, dispensing teaching services, and learning. With the national policymakers, implementation entails moving the new policy down to schools and districts. The local and regional policy developers may imply developing choices regarding the primacies and the utilization of resources. Allen and Burgess (2020) viewed education policy implementation as a technical stage of the whole policy process where decisions are to be made by the key stakeholders such as the teachers and administration across all system levels. Because numerous stakeholders and policymakers require policies to be practical and improve education, they must share a typical understanding of execution to work collaboratively on the course.

This dissertation illuminates the scope of integration and interest of educators based on contemporary theories and the new sophistication in education strategy making at both the local level and beyond. This section sets the part by announcing the topic, highlighting the executioner's hurdles, and briefly overviewing existing investigative agendas. This dissertation's question extensively explores how the educator's voice is entrenched in the legislative action directed at the training profession and defines the public teaching scheme's efficiency. It inspects the educator's professional and social capital linked to training and learning. It also involves the manners in which money enters lawmaking action. The dissertation examines specific factors or connect teachers to responsibility measures introduced by the federal and state powers.

Taking empowerment theory in critical social work, this study includes a survey about teachers acting as institutional agents to enable their authentic empowerment but also impact their world in some significant way. It was informed by focus groups organized by role or educators in the classroom and educators in leadership roles to bring voice to the survey data gathered.

The ontological view of the teacher and the teaching experience were critical in identifying the end legislation can play a role in institutional accountability. The teaching experience is in this ontological view, a view that incorporates and considers the integrating and conceptualizing of diverse forms of information that must be used to evaluate a profession and policy geared toward a common population. Ecofeminism is an essential viewpoint for understanding the problematic interrelationships between human and nonhuman environments in a multicultural global society. At times taking policies crafted in statehouses and Congress can sometimes feel like a nonhuman environment as it relates to the inner workings of a schoolhouse led by and for a predominantly female workforce (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004, p. 56).

Considering the theory of core social work, the dissertation will entail a survey concerning adopting one's capacity as an organizational agent that allows for the educator's authentic enabling. Teachers' ontological perspectives and experiences are imperative for uncovering what sort of lawmaking can enhance institutional accountability. The ontological perspective reveals ecofeminism, which backs up the deliberation of the problematic interrelations between human and human settings in diverse cultural societies. It is in this perspective that a focus group, beyond the initial survey, will unearth the experiences of educators and the myriad of institutions of accountability in their work.

In the entire dissertation research, I considered the historical legislative actions at the state and federal levels and assess the extent to which teachers' interest is efficiently considered. Numerous policy considerations have devastated the process and tried to find how the past informed the present efforts. Moreover, finding how such efforts and ideas related to the administration and management of schools regarding accountability is core to moving forward

since the local movements are present where there is a chance for the teacher's voice to be apparent.

Taking note of how the formal policies are enacted from both political and cultural insinuations is essential in this study. As Chang and McLaren (2018) noted, pedagogy is beyond an educational technique and policy (p. 783). Cultural conflicts determine the background of organizational schooling. Enhancing open chances, accomplishments, teamwork, and communication offers a unique chance for reflection. Furthermore, the open opportunities which are established by the institutions of schooling are strongly supported by the pedagogical model which is immensely affected by the policies enacted outside the classroom context (Mbiti, 2016). I conducted surveys of teachers and focus groups with teachers and administrators. The teachers' commonalities and exceptions were examined through their responses to the surveys. And the focus groups served as a point of extension to the themes derived from the survey, which gathered the practitioners' lived experience. Mainly, I considered new ideas and models for the legislative action in education and numerous stakeholders, such as teachers. The school improvement model operates from the stance that educational institutions advance fastest when they have skillful and focused leaders sanctioned to make advanced high-quality, local decisions to be held accountable locally and nationally for robust and fair results (Bulaitis, 2017). Such administrators improve their schools to extend their influence over many other schools to benefit more children.

Accountability plays a significant role in strengthening the education system, and it is accepted that responsibility increases the rate of improvement in many schools. It is presumed that the goal of the academic institution's accountability and other related accountability-based interventions is to develop learning and instruction. If a school is transparent, educators, among

other stakeholders, can be held accountable. Schools tend to be responsible for certain aspects such as students' performance and their overall conduct. On the other hand, teachers are held responsible for instruction delivery, whereas students are responsible for school actions and behavior. Education is globally observed as the mainstay in development (Bulaitis, 2017). To this end, accountability and the mission of bettering school outcomes gain the attention of policymakers to parents to the business community and every entity in between. Education is the foundation of literacy, technological development, skills acquisition, and the ability to attach the growth environment's natural resources. Apart from it being lucrative in economic development, it has been associated with numerous issues.

In a school context, accountability is often associated with the administration of insufficient education resources to permit proper use of the present resources to attain the principle goals. All schools may wish to give the best to their students, but if inadequate funds illuminate a threat, then the school will just perform per its capacity. The involvement of responsibility in the education administration activities helps augment service delivery and control disorderliness in the organization, hence escalating effectiveness. It is essential to acknowledge that education accountability is a critical aspect entwined with the subordinates in the institutional setting. The inadequacy of enough teachers and facilities, among other necessary resources to comprehend the educational objective, are a core tussle (Mnguni, 2019). This issue could become ineffective since the governments obliged to fund education sufficiently have not been able to conform to the onerous duty. Apart from these hurdles, there are practical issues inherent in the institutional administrative procedure, organizational process, and education model commodity. In the current setting, academic institutions have not made imperative

progress in achieving their core objectives. This condition tends to create jeopardy in the economic development of a nation.

Discourse within the political arena suggests that leaders are losing faith in education as a tool for attaining social awareness, economic development, and political astuteness, among others. Even in the face of a subsidized education system, the key benefactors, such as parents and students, are still disadvantaged in their effective use of educational resources. Some parents have sought alternatives to their children's education process even though education has been affordable in many states. Almagtomea et al. (2019) noted that the need for accountability in the governance and administration of schools in the U.S has become more essential because of the request for constructive transformation in its educational system and the high demand for the prolific products that will enhance the excellent attainment of the resources. This increased demand for academic and education outcomes and accountability in the education sector sparked my concern to develop my dissertation on the topic.

Throughout my dissertation, I have developed the concept of education accountability based on a broader perspective. Morally et al. (2020) saw responsibility as preparedness to explain or illustrate something to the critical stakeholders for different purposes. In the research process, accountability in the education system is presented as responsibility for one's activities and the performative results of those activities. It is merely the act of being accountable to the key parties in the education and accountability for the resources deployed in the education setup. The dissertation analyzes how all the available education system resources are adopted and applied for substantial effectiveness and productivity.

A challenge experienced in implementing accountability in the education system includes an unclear definition of the educational goals. This hurdle makes execution and purpose

attainment difficult. The incapability of a school model to uphold innovations is determined by the dynamic prerequisites of the ever-evolving society. It is important to note that there are groups in each community with specific wants, welfare, wishes, cultures, and aspirations that often conflict with each other, making the enforcement of accountability in the education system unsuccessful (Albright & Marsh, 2022). Many school administrators do not command total leadership receptiveness from their administrative constituents, which encompasses an obstacle to accountability.

Another challenge is the lack of trained educators to carry out the goals that the school has set up as a target to achieve and equip its learners. Teachers must be made more effective when it comes to accountability in the education system. The fact that many teachers are not effectively involved in various processes in the schools is a threat to getting the best out of the learners in the schools. Teachers should be good at evaluating the students, observing, and taking a standardized assessment to ensure that all the learners are at par. This means that for teachers to make the best out of the learners, the priority should be getting all the children to qualify and ensuring none is left behind. That is how teachers can be made accountable in the education system.

Essentially, education policies have showcased a dramatic transformation in the education sector. As this is the case, numerous accountability system types entail conforming with rules, results motivated, and professional norms compliance. These systems help school leaders to perform their roles more effectively. School administrators require the need to be enthusiastic about the success of their teachers while at the same time having a proper comprehension of themselves phenomenologically to be robust about their activities (Allen & Burgess, 2020). Defensible, practical, and responsible systems are constructed upon aligning

objectives, capital, evaluation, approvals, and rewards (Ukpong, 2019). Little evidence posits that performance-based accountability, when aligned with results over the inputs, can lead to a pragmatic improvement in the education system. Incentives have been reconfigured to punishment to coerce conformity. In this case, rewards such as performance-related teacher pay have devastating effects.

Through writing a review concerning schooling, it is essential to note that formal policies also have cultural and political implications when and where they are enacted. According to Mnguni (2019), *pedagogy* refers to more than educational methodology and technique. It relates to the cultural politics that were the context of the institution of schooling, which is why Mnguni implored that a school in conjunction with its leader and teachers must have a pedagogy to be successful. It is here we must not ignore the power of working with people (Gebreiter & Hidayah, 2019). Creating open opportunities for struggle, accomplishments, communication, and teamwork creates relationships, common ground, and a positive opportunity to reflect on my dissertation.

The research component focused on surveying teachers and focus groups with teachers and administrators. I explored their experiences, as shared through responses and then discussion, for motifs, commonalities, or exceptionalities that might inform answers to the guiding questions. I looked at capital of teachers as a subculture participating in legislative efforts that impact them, primarily through use surveys but also with documents from referenced laws from the subjects. Additionally, focus group discussions on the lived experiences served as a site for expanding upon the ideas of accountability impact in education. These two sources of data provided parallels to what teachers articulate through the interview process. I close by

offering ideas for a new model for legislative action in education and one that takes into account the interests of multiple stakeholders, including the most notable teachers.

Statement of Purpose

Working under the premise that all students can learn when given the right conditions and support, it seems to me that what we need to monitor success across our public education system is the ability of teachers to help foster the skills, concepts, and thinking needed to be productive and evolving members of our communities. But wait, if we are assuming that all kids can learn, should we not also assume that all teachers can and are doing this fostering already? We need a system that demonstrates evidence that our teachers are up to the challenge of educating today's youth. We need a system that demonstrates on an achievement scale and on a diagnostic level that we are or are not performing in key areas as a nation, a state, a district, a grade level, a classroom, a teacher, and a student. We know what we are looking for. The research is clear. Let's start using it. Let us legislate the role of expertise back to the experts in the classrooms and leave the lessons of the past century to the past.

I do not believe that accountability was ever an issue that teachers were adverse to in the education industry. It is teachers who are asked to face students the morning after devastating hurricanes. It is the classroom communities that want to send their children to do the day after a school shooting, so a teacher can face the children with their professional armor intact. Teachers on a daily basis have to face the struggles of students in the classroom and work with parents to solve issues directly. Accountability from a legislative angle must respect the fact the teachers are already managing expectations. Teachers desire accountability for their profession, for themselves, and for their students. Any accountability measure that does not respect these tenets is doomed to fail.

However, let us practitioners take this responsibility with great care and, through appropriate legislation and negotiation, ensure that our expectations also reflect evolving research. Where would the legal profession be without past precedence? They rely on history to better help them defend and define future cases. Medicine is no different. Practice matters and those fields are regulated by market conditions more so than professional and legislative oversight. Still, doctors must understand what to expect during complex procedures, outcomes to think through when prescribing medications, and knowing when to recommend something as medically best for the patient as a result of knowledge gained while staying current in the field of medical research. Educators must be held to the same standard for

We want kindergartners to identify letters and numbers by a certain date, otherwise, we get concerned. We want students reading at grade level by the end of third grade at the latest or else fear them never catching up. We look for various levels of empathy at different ages depending on their social-emotional developmental level. Can legislators use their knowledge and backgrounds to create laws and surveys that determine the strengths of our system? No way! But they can legislate reform through avenues of experts that are in the field working alongside kids and using current research.

Could we count our system as a success if the vast majority of students, say 80% of them, after completing third grade were reading at or above grade level? Research suggests this is a critical marker of long term success, so why wouldn't we? What about a kindergartner learning his letters or her numbers? Moreover, do not forget the sixth grader who needs to be able to follow directions for a science lab experiment, make errors, make adjustments, and then be able to articulate what happened and why.

Although these are detailed examples of what students might be expected to do, ample studies support some of these indicators at every grade of schooling and across every subject area. If we know what it takes for students to be successful at every year of school, should not a barometer for measuring success be whether students achieved those skills along the way and to what degree a teacher helped get them there? Creating a vision of accountability for schools that mirrors the evolving American child requires bold leadership and legislation that trusts in their teachers first and foremost. This vision builds from trust in educators to a future where products of strong American public schools become citizens and workers engaged in a global marketplace. Let us start demanding that teachers stop telling us about great things, but rather show us and create a model of accountability that requires the expertise of the teacher, the research of the university, and the support and funding of our government.

Research Questions

The questions that guided this study look at a two-pronged approach to teacher accountability.

1. How can the teaching force conceptualize and reclaim the narrative of teaching in an accountability-focused era?
2. How can policymakers conceptualize legislation around accountability in education so that they differentiate for districts and schools the way we want teachers to differentiate for students?

The first prong is about the teacher's capacity for control and change in their profession. Asking, how can the teaching force conceptualize and reclaim the narrative of teaching in an accountability-focused era? This question intentionally presents the change in teaching and effectiveness, as a defining element of professional accountability, as something in the control of

teachers as a group. The notion of reclamation is one of action and teachers being a driving force for change (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005).

The second research question comes from the legislative angle which asks how can policymakers conceptualize legislation around accountability in education so that they differentiate for districts and schools the way we want teachers to differentiate for students? This question again assumes a level of control and accountability for the political narrative that rests on legislative shoulders. It seeks to know whether legislation can be universally written, yet applied with a certain degree of individuality that local governing bodies require.

The research component focused on surveying teachers as individuals from starting, middle, and end of career vantage points. I attempted to see if their experience, as rated by them, carries any motifs, commonalities, or exceptionalities that might inform answers to these guiding questions. I primarily used surveys with individuals who associate with a school district, state labor organization, or other educational institution to conduct my research. I included documents from referenced laws from the subjects. These references provided parallels to what teachers articulate through the interview process and help define the hypothesized space that exists between legislative goals and teacher behavior in the profession.

I conducted two focus groups of educators. The first was educators working in a teaching role. The second was educators working in administrative roles. My intention was to see if the various definitions of accountability, the role of leaders in mediating board, state, and federal policies could be broken down and build upon the base of knowledge gleaned from the survey data to create new ideas and pathways for schools to be accountable.

Beyond the surveys, I reviewed literature that involves workplace motivations, teachers as a caring body, and the connection between the administrator-teacher relationship and the

teacher–student relationship. I was curious to see how the way we expect teachers to motivate students each day differs in the relationship between administrators and teachers in the school as well as with broader groups like legislative bodies. If legislation is intended to enact outcomes in a professional body as vast as teachers one might assume there would be evidence to glean from talking with teachers and administrators via focus groups, a survey, and literature review.

Theoretical Orientation of the Study

Pragmatism provides the framework for this study in terms of methodological and epistemological assumptions. Pragmatism is an ideal fit for this study as it strives to provide “practical solutions to practical problems” (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 138). Educators work in a laboratory of trial and error. They are in a constant state of problem-solving and developing themselves as practitioners. Grounded theory has a theoretical foundation rooted in pragmatism and supports this mixed methods study to integrate with the social science of teaching and learning (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). This study assessed factors that contribute to the overall evaluation of teachers and parts of the process that are used to create the overall evaluation of the school system. Identifying approximate answers to the research questions was the best-case scenario and warranted inquiry. After identifying those factors I then put forward a new model for evaluation of the instructional program that could be more inclusive of stakeholders than the preceding examples from which this research is derived.

Additionally, with specific consideration for historical patterns of domination and control over women by men, a feminist viewpoint must be considered. “Authentic human liberation and social justice can only be achieved by caring people in caring communities” (Noddings, 2005, p. 12). Benefits-focused schools and policies show essential characteristics of caring relationships. If states can do this through the policy they become a key player in modeling for our children the

way adults care for their children, as well as the obligation organizations, schools, districts, and states, have in caring for their communities as well.

Significance of Work to the Field

There is ample space in the field of education for this work to contribute. While the pendulum swings in the political world, so too does it waver in education. For the past century quality in the teacher education programs and the professional landscape itself have been the subject of enormous debate (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). However, no matter the turbulence around schooling, there is often great cooperation around education legislation that is intended to move our system forward. There seems to be no doubt and even consensus that improvements are needed.

On a national level, efforts to have been made over the past 30 years with the renewal of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965)*, also known as *No Child Left Behind Act (2002)* and the *Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)*. *Title IX* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* are two other hallmark education laws that have been monumental efforts to make schools more accessible and supportive of the students that serve. Yet even with these movements and bipartisan commissions that produce reports such as the *A Nation at Risk (1983)* report change has been slow to come to American schools.

Despite stagnation, the hallmark legislative efforts to move education forward have long been coupled with landmark judicial rulings that more clearly define efforts and misinterpretations of legislative work. That so much effort goes into striving for a better school system is a testament to the universal desire we all have for schools that provide for a common good. Yet the lack of systemic movement forward is an indication that the focus of the policies may need more support to define how to make the most impact going forward without the

divisiveness that has. This work looks to contribute to the defining focus for future efforts to make real lasting change for our children and their educators and move us from crisis to revolution (Kuhn, 1996, p. 26).

Limitations of the Work

The limitations of the study connect to the geography of the participants. School systems operate with varying degrees of local control and regional, state, or national systems of operation. The scope of this study could not cover the nuances of geopolitical variation across the nation. Strategic systems were needed to ensure that variances could be discerned. Additionally, the current national climate for education and the ultimate goals or purposes of the experiment that is public education must be resolved in order for any real gains to be achieved on the issue that benefits schools and society. As a grounded study, the limitations of this work did not impair my ability to develop a new system of accountability for recommendation broadly.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.

–Alice Walker

Introduction

Since the inception of American public schools, accountability has been a necessary ingredient to define expected outcomes. One of the complexities of evaluating literature that includes policy is that policy is more than a mere text of legislation and accompanying regulations. It includes the ideals and discourse that underline the policy (Jenkins-Smith & Eller, 2005). From accountability for access to achievement, varied meanings have been relative to the era of definition and the contemporary issues of public schooling at the time. Accountability and the defining elements that impact teachers as practitioners have been heavily studied as a matter of policy and practice. Hattie and Anderman (2013) noted in their meta-analysis of student achievement that broad success could be had when the focus is right (p. xix). However, the collective understanding of accountability as a key term has taken on different meanings over the last century.

Ultimately what educators, policymakers, and parents alike want is to know what works in schools and use that information to impact each child because student achievement is at the heart of every aspect of school (Guskey, 2013). It is reasonable to assume that parents everywhere in every era of public education only wanted the very best for their children. Many of the eras are concretized historically by polarizing battles fought in courts, in the streets, and ultimately settled in schoolhouses across the country masterfully cared for by educators. Even still, lingering battles are very much still at the forefront of discussion today. As such, it should

be no surprise that the literature spans the entire existence of public schooling in America and this topic will be written about and researched until a replicable system is feasible.

Accountability of Adults With Children Broadly

Accountability for adults in relation to children is not new, not in the education domain specifically nor any other significant manner in which adults generally interact with children. The documented debate over the role of parents can be found in the late 17th century, where the legal principle of *parens patriae* has roots. Derived from the United Kingdom and embedded in the American legal landscape in *Louisiana v. Texas (1900)*, this principle identifies care for its children as a role for the nation (Himes & Chief, 2004). Legal principles like *parens patriae* eventually influenced the scope of formal systems of education, but it took and continues to take generations to find consensus on what this means. It is important not only to acknowledge that our current struggles to define accountability over the last century of our well developed schooling system in America are not new.

Schools were not the only place where debate over adult relationships with children was taking place. The Illinois Supreme Court ruled against a father seeking to raise his child as he saw fit in *Fletcher v. People (1869)*. Even then the court ruled that parental “authority must be exercised within the bounds of reason and humanity” (*Fletcher v. People, 1869, p. 395*). The judge reasoned for the blind son because his father had locked him in a cellar during the cold winter for reasons not documented.

“Reason and humanity” as the standard bearing words in the ruling suggest common understanding and common sense of reason. In law, the basis for defending a claim often rests with reasonable doubt or what actions a reasonable person would make in the same circumstance. Herein lies the rationale for the inclusion of jury trials in the United States

Constitution. “In a civil case, a jury of citizens will determine community standards and expectations in accordance with the law” (National Judicial College, 2017). This standard, set in law, is a mirror image of how we as a society are grappling with defining the merits of reasonable schools, expectations for children in their formative years, and how we determine the value of the system.

As the American school system in the late 19th century developed and became a centerpiece of every community, so too did the role of the teacher. For the past 120 years American society has debated the purpose of schooling and its’ responsibility to the community via the role of the chief learning designer, the teacher (Kliebard, 2004). Whether the curriculum through the teacher is a preparatory exercise for social efficiency or a problem-solving mechanism valued by the learner, the teacher role has been a consistently vital component of American schooling (Kliebard, 2004, p. 131).

The role of the teacher has been the subject of debate since its inception. Whereas parents were people children were granted at birth, teachers were “picked” persons from given criteria so set by the decision-makers of the time (Ross, 1901/1969, pp. 164–165). This ability to choose who becomes a teacher has been seen as a tool for social control and an opportunity to engage each individual in the merits of their life’s purpose.

While the developed world has not determined common criteria for what makes a successful parent or raised child, much time has been spent debating the effectiveness of public education. Tyler (1949/2013) rose to prominence in the 1940s with *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, in which he laid out the essential elements of a school experience. Essentialism in education asserts that common and essential ideas and skills belonging to a certain culture should be taught to all citizens at the same level at especially primary school

level. To do this, the teacher's authority in the classroom is emphasised and the subject matter is the center of the curriculum. He presented a model of education that included four components for the proper development of an education system. The fourth component was measuring success, or accountability. In asking how we can determine whether these purposes are being attained, Tyler proclaimed to all his readers that assessment of the intended outcomes is a negotiable part of any quality place of learning. In fact, being an educational essentialist, he would contend it was merely essential.

Green (2014) noted two factions of the school debate as "accountability" and "autonomy" movements. Both of these movements are grounded in the view of the teacher as a naturally skilled professional. Accountability advocates push for testing and other metrics to find the statistical best and worst of every staff. Accountability, under Green's definition, is also a lagging indicator. The autonomy movement supports the notion of teachers as skilled professionals that need space to work to be at their best looking forward like lawyers and doctors with best practices and precedence to rely upon as a backstop for future work.

What is important to understand about accountability within the context of this scholarly work is that accountability here is defined as what works best at the intersection of policy and practice. Accountability, true accountability will benefit the professional practice of educators and be supported by policy at all the levels needed to function and fund the mechanism of American public schools. It must be acknowledged that many reputable arguments can be made for what constitutes accountability in our school system. Yet we seem fit to allow various stakeholder groups to just talk across each other even though there are ample recipes for success scattered in classrooms across the country (Hattie & Anderman, 2013, p. xix). This discussion is not about there being no evidence or agreement on accountability. It would be too general to say

that every teacher, even those that struggle, has had great success at times. This scholarly work studies the intersectionality between the policy prescriptions of accountability and the various ways teachers come to that discussion.

Accountability Through Access

Accountability as accessibility is one premier way to view the intersection of policy and practice in schools. The *American with Disabilities Act*, *Title IX*, and *Brown v. Board of Education*, are all examples of accountability in public schools through the vantage point of access.

One of the most well-known examples of school accountability on a political plane was the beginning of racial integration of public schools via the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*. This accountability defined as access and who could share in the opportunity to learn was a distinctly different view of accountability from other eras over the past century. Though the Supreme Court decision was in 1954, we still are grappling with this debate of accountability today. In *50 Years After Brown v. Board of Education: The Promise and Challenge of Multicultural Education*, Zirkel and Cantor (2004) pointed out that school desegregation does in fact lead to better outcomes for students. Why does this need to be restated 50 years after the Supreme Court offered its ruling? It is a testament to the degree to which education discussions have changed over half a century, or not at all.

While chronological historians would reasonably see racial integration of schools as something that took place in the Civil Rights era when the written rules began to formally change, educational practitioners know better. The intersectionality of race on the many topics that consume our attention about education makes it more applicable to being a motif of the American education system rather than a decision made in time. As such this aspect of

accountability, as an access point to schools, continues to be an area of major concern professionally and politically.

There have been and continue to be so many ways in which accountability was less a focus on achievement and more a focus on access. “Equal access to educational opportunities for all students was a primary goal of Brown” (Zirkel & Cantor, 2004, p. 5). Yet long before courts were asked to weigh in on racial integration, the guardrails of the school system were being heavily negotiated in the early growth and expansion years of the Ivy League. Harvard sent President James Conant south to provide elite educational access to students from the Midwest through scholarships to the institution. In the debate over criteria for the scholarships, Conant sought to diversify the pool of candidates by moving away from solely using achievement based tests. “What [President] Conant didn’t like about achievement tests was that they favored rich boys whose parents could buy them top-flight high-school instruction” (Lemann, 2000, p. 38). These were the very students who already had access to his school. He wanted to award his scholarships to very bright boys from every corner of the country.

At this time in 1934 Harvard, in a decision-making process to determine who would get their coveted scholarships, sought partners to help sift through the applicants. Since Conant was against the use of achievement tests, but members of his board were advocates of testing, a compromise was struck to balance the evaluation of candidates with SAT scores and transcripts and recommendations (Lemann, 2000, p. 38). The fallout on the religion of testing in public schools for the next 80 years would be profound.

The federal government can have an immense influence on this topic and has sought influence over the public schools in America in four distinct and indirect ways. These influences create a constantly changing dynamic that has become germane to school leaders and even

comical at times. These influences can take place from the “bully pulpit” of the secretary of education’s office to drive influence and awareness. The federal governments’ issuance of categorical aid to schools has created an influence on the heels of funding. This funding is also used to direct research and development of resources to strengthen the delivery of content to public schools universally.

The analysis of the recent developments in the area of teacher accountability reform efforts traces back nearly 30 years. The time determination is rooted in the historical context of education reforms where nearly all major reform efforts have taken 30 years to mature and take effect. It has arguably been a little over 30 years since the last major reform effort took effect, the *Individuals with Disability Education Act of 1989*.

Accountability Through Assessment

The overarching motif in the literature around school based accountability efforts is in how we define the success of the institution. *No Child Left Behind*, the 2001 reauthorization of the *1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act* aimed at narrowing the achievement gap between the nation’s highest and lowest achieving students (Tatto et al., 2012). This act served as a catalyst for the inclusion and execution of student testing in a framework that would be used to define the success of the child, the school, the district, and ultimately the state (Weiss & May, 2012, p. 45). The problem, however, was that the inclusion of high-stakes testing, like NAEP and PISA for national ranking comparison purposes, resulted in a marketplace for assessments and vendors that soon spun out of control.

In 2001, the inclusion of state-mandated annual testing in reading and math became the norm in schools. By 2005 the vendor marketplace for test preparation of these mandated assessments alone exceeded \$320 million dollars (Olson, 2005). The policy mandate brought in a

new era that cannot be altered alone by any federal act because it imposed state legislation independently for access to funding. The state legislature in Illinois, Senate Bill 7 or the *Performance Evaluation Reform Act*, requires the inclusion of performance data in teacher performance reviews with or without the federal mandate.

Education is a rapidly changing sector across the globe. Changes in education relate to the pedagogical approaches used in teaching and learning, the type of schools, the gender gap among the instructors, funding levels and sources, and the policies controlling the role of teachers and students in education. In the last 30 years, critical changes in education have focused on reducing turnover rates, augmenting the capacity of community schools, growing women's representation in the teaching profession, and implementing team-based teaching.

Accountability Impact on Teacher Motivation and Retention

Trust might be the most obvious motif to present throughout the literature that augments accountability in the education sector. Many researchers have affirmed that numerous education actors are predisposed by the extent of trust available, among other factors such as social, economic, and political agency. A compromise in the attainment of accountability effectiveness in the education sector is from a lack of integration and cooperation among the government officials, school leaders, and teachers toward pursuing common goals and a shared set of objectives (Yan, 2019). In the past decade, education matters grew into mutual apprehensions of teachers and society. This has impaired teachers in their effectiveness with the learners—a core joint predisposition where the student performance utterly determines the teacher's effectiveness.

Motivation as a theme in the literature has many tangential components worthy of study given that any reasonable person would agree that at its best education includes a group of humans who are motivated in both teaching and learning. However, it should be recognized that

many agencies at the local, state and federal levels of government, when they want to impact education, act from a position of motivation through policy. How policy is perceived and received has a great deal to do with whether the intended influencers, educators, feel championed, supported, coerced, or compliant. Motivation and policy interwoven with the workplace reality of student data as a piece of the evaluation framework for educators, manifests the bridge to study incentives in the workplace. Delving into why teachers have been cast as “recalcitrant ‘worker bees,’ rather than professionals who understand the context and individualized instruction” is essential for theorizing how to reconstruct the conversation toward accountability (O’Neil, 2004, p. 142). These issues will help us understand what the external forces pressed upon the profession were striving toward. What drives people to do more or better has been around since the Industrial Revolution when efficiency models for factories began to take shape. Over time the notion of improving the workforce through incentives has broadened. The literature, while focusing some on incentives, is also prevalent on other motivating factors that improve workplace performance like commitment.

Throughout the literature, one cannot read about motivating factors for teachers without also considering the reasons for burnout, the process by which a new teacher decides to change careers (Cassel, 2001). The 1990 study of teacher commitment in the classroom showed that there were two major predictors of commitment to teaching. They were the prevalence of intrinsically related work incentives and the perception of aversive conditions in the workplace (Martinez-Pons, date). The literature contributes to the conversation about education accountability in how the levers of accountability interface with a profession already with a well-documented history of commitment issues to resolve.

Over the past 30 years, teacher commitment has been a recurrent topic of research on teacher motivation. It is the commitment of the teacher, their intrinsic desire to be a part of the school community and the broader profession that determines the degree to which factors may or may not have an influence over their work production. “They need not only to understand but also to do a wide variety of things, many of them simultaneously” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 359). Commitment is developed through a relationship that is nurtured between the teacher and administrator and the teacher and other teachers. But the longstanding question has remained, what propels a teacher to enact the wide variety of things that they know and can do in the classroom? Is the efficiency and the efficacy with which a teacher commits to their students and the school something that can be accelerated with external reward or is it something you develop? Or is it something you have to be born with? The underlying answer to these questions would result in much greater clarity over the issues of improving the workforce through workplace incentives.

Throughout the literature on factors that influence teachers in the workplace were measures that fell into two distinctly different categories, extrinsic and intrinsic. The defining line for any measure was the root rationale for its initial inception. Using the measure as a reward for a job well done or to encourage a better outcome than currently exists is the measuring gauge. As an example, Bartell (1987) examined merit pay among an array of other rewards for a job well done. The inception of merit pay in this case was to reward what was already good about the workplace (Bartell, 1987). For a high achieving community who has reserve funds and schools they are proud of, this form of pay serves as a thank you. In contrast, the use of merit pay can serve as a mechanical hare leading the race dogs around the track (Mernane & Cohen, 2011).

The implication that things need to be better and if teachers can make that happen, teachers can earn money for the work has become a very popular concept.

While many have tried and continue to try to include merit pay as a viable option for teacher performance there has been a wide range of research discussing the merits of monetary incentives to improve the teaching force (Mernane & Cohen, 2011). Some directly contradict the notion that monetary compensation alone or other extrinsic rewards will enhance the profession of teaching.

In a view commonly associated with many school conditions, Arthur Land (1986) wrote that extrinsic reward systems alone oversimplify the human element of the workplace, specifically that of the teacher. Land's study feels far more relevant today than 35 years ago, given the perpetual attempt to adopt extrinsic rewards. Land further posited that any and all motivation systems need to be somehow tied to the personal wants and needs of the teacher themselves (p. 6). This would be daunting in a system that employs millions across this country alone. However, when employing an ethic of care, as Noddings (2005) suggested, towards the teachers in an effort to enhance the intrinsic motivation in the workplace, Land had a point.

Teaching and the many facets of the job that it entails is very complex. Land (1986) provided a simple look at how Maslow's hierarchy can be used to determine the basic needs of teachers as a starting point for incentivizing the profession. He concluded that any benefit the salary of teachers may have on students is too narrow of a focus. There were just too many overriding factors such as local wealth being just one. The base salary of the teacher in communities where local property value drives funding sources for schools is closely aligned to the affluence of the local community. Enhancing that salary based upon performance in a high performing area or an area with great economical resources becomes altogether too predictable

and may leave the teachers feeling as if they cannot actually control that factor (Land, 1986, p.12). To this end, defining the factors that motivate teachers in the classroom is challenging just as determining the degree to which a teacher has had an impact on student performance is daunting.

As Land's (1986) work relates with studies on identity and the teacher condition, the human element only gets more emphasis as it relates to performance at work. The degree to which a teacher is connected to their students, or to their union, or to their identity as a woman or a man, or any other factor can obviously vary and these works spanning over 40 years show that to a marked degree.

Where Bartell (1987) suggested that teacher behavior be treated similar to student plans where we reward and reinforce the behaviors we want to see expressed more often (p. 7). Land (1986) countered that teachers may not have control over some significant factors that influence how they feel about their work. He found that for teachers who share a significant dissatisfaction in the workplace, their struggle is one of power and the influence of that power. He found that when teachers feel control over their environment they are more likely to feel satisfied in their work (p. 13). This can be an overwhelming challenge in the case of federal *No Child Left Behind* laws, state legislation like Illinois Senate Bill 7, and local governing bodies management of evaluation, curriculum, and other benefits.

Motivation and retention in the teaching profession have been key discussion areas in the last decades. Institutions prioritize teacher motivation because of the responsibility of the instructors in imparting knowledge and skills to learners. Most researchers admit that satisfied teachers are more productive and can easily influence students' achievements. However, teacher motivation and possible retention depend on effective management at the school level. In cases

and institutions with well-structured teaching and learning systems, with appropriate instructional motivation techniques, teachers tend to be committed and responsible. Motivation is regarded as a derivative word, which refers to the approaches an institution, an individual, or a group of people use to convince others to act in a certain way for need satisfaction. Motivation is also considered as an inner state that energizes, moves, channels, and sustains behavior towards a goal. Learning institutions and teachers' employers are responsible for ensuring that they are adequately motivated to teach and impart the required knowledge and skills to students.

However, an assessment of Pakistani private secondary schools shows the opposite. Nawaz and Yasin (2015) investigated teacher retention and motivational levels across five chain networked secondary schools in the Bahawalpur region. From the assessment, the researchers identified salary as the main incentive for teachers in the past decades. Teachers who receive competitive remunerations are effective in their profession and report significantly high retention levels. The researchers confirmed that paying educators competitive salaries reduces teachers' turnover in private secondary schools. The study also found that when salaries are not paid on time, private secondary school teachers switch to other teaching jobs in private schools. The late payment of salaries demotivates instructors, as they are unable to meet their needs. Other motivators of teachers in the 21st century identified in the assessment include but are not limited to appraisal, positive students' behavior, presence of staff rooms, and friendly teaching environments.

Han et al. (2016) determined the definition of teacher motivation in the last decades, teaching effectiveness, the influencing factors for teacher motivation, and the relationships between teacher motivation and students performance. Based on studies conducted in Australian schools, they affirmed that the last decades in the United States, Asia, Australia, the United Kingdom, and other European countries have experienced an increasing teacher shortage. The

studies also revealed that intrinsic motivation is leading among the factors influencing teachers to undertake their teaching duties effectively. Han et al. found that the desire to work with children and adolescents, the potential for intellectual fulfillment, and a means to make a social contribution to society are key intrinsic factors motivating teachers to enter the profession. In the United States, teacher turnover rates and attrition levels continue to increase. A 2012 Schools and Staffing Survey by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) noted that turnover rates in the south stand at 16.7% while the figure is 10.3% in the northeast. The turnover rates vary according to teachers' wages, government support and investment in education, and teaching and learning resources available in the classrooms. The survey also found that in Title I schools serving children from poor families, the turnover rate is more than 50%. Mathematics and science teachers report higher turnover rates than instructors for other subjects. In terms of racial representation and possible effect on education, the research disclosed that the turnover rates are 70% for teachers attached to institutions with a larger Black population than those in White-dominated institutions. Among the reasons cited for the high turnover rates among teachers in the United States include poor working conditions, lack of governmental support through funds and resources, shift to teaching jobs, and negative attitudes towards assessment and testing procedures.

Women as Dominant Demographic in Teaching

There is extensive writing about the relationship of feminism to teacher identity. "For what it means to be a man or a woman has a great deal to do with how human beings think about and experience our worlds" (Grumet & McCoy, 1997, p. 426). The effect of a male-dominated legislative and administrative core to a female dominated teaching core is extensive. Linda Alcoff (1998) introduced the concept of positionality, defining identity to the network of

relationships which can be static and changing (p.16). The manner in which a teacher commits to their work and feels supported in it is critically related to that network.

Over the years, the teaching profession has been female-dominated. Countries, such as the United States and nation-states in Africa, Europe, and Asia have reported significant increases in the number of female teachers in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. In Slovenia, similar to many countries worldwide, the teaching profession was one of the first occupations to become accessible to women. Kos et al. (2019) noted that among the 16,014 teachers in Slovenian primary schools between 2014 and 2015, 88% were women. At the same time, among 6,088 teachers employed in Slovenian secondary schools, 66% were women. However, the case is different in tertiary institutions where men dominate the teaching profession. Between 2015 and 2016, the percentage of male to female teachers was 59.7% to 40.3%, indicating that more male teachers are employed in colleges, universities, and technical training colleges in Slovenia.

The case for the United States is different because, as Stoet and Geary's (2020) noted, the gender gap in access to education in tertiary institutions and the undertaking of teaching careers in the country continues to grow. They indicated that fewer men than women enroll in tertiary institutions. They noted that the underrepresentation of men in education started in the 1990s and has frequently occupied national policy debates. Stoet and Geary showed that women continue to dominate the teaching profession and more men seek alternative courses and careers in their postsecondary studies. Robinson et al. (2017) maintained that 75% of teachers are women in the United States and the female superintendent representation is also high. The scholarly affirmations inform that the gender gap between female and male teachers will continue to rise in

the future because as time progresses, women continue to outperform men in academics; thus, they are likely to pursue the teaching profession.

Women as a core element of the school structure in America provides an opportunity to explore what benefits the system gleans from women as the main workforce. Noddings (1984) suggested that the strength of the student–teacher relationship is one built around the ethic of caring. By addressing the expressed needs of children and developing their individual talents, intrinsic motivation, and joys of learning. From this, it is natural to consider how one might characterize the administrative relationship with teachers and whether it could be strengthened in the same way, through caring (Noddings, 1984). Caring in a relationship that has power dynamics at every turn such as teacher to student, administrator to teacher, or legislator to educator can have a monumental impact. Guinier and Torres (2002) noted that power-with relationships are not a vanguard movement but rather a process of oppressive resistance that builds incrementally. This work highlights voice as a metaphor for human development. It identifies how epistemological stances are deeply connected to the kind of education contexts people have access to. What would be the impact of nurturing the voices of teachers while still allowing policymakers, often men, to do their governing in a vacuum apart from the schools their policy is concerned with?

Similarly, Noddings (1984) warned against motivating students with bribes, a common argument against merit pay for teachers as well. The fear is that extrinsic rewards are temporary and adjust the commitment of teachers only for a period of time to their effect and can be harmful when not invoked.

Accountability Through Community Schools

Community schools equip learners with foundational and integrated educational and social skills. Community schooling is a strategy that learning institutions adopt to cooperate with other actors that have traditionally operated independently in service of children and their families (Heers et al., 2016). Currently, functional community schools exist in the United States and Europe. In Europe, they are located in the Netherlands, Scotland, England, and Sweden. The presence of such schools is attributed to the different cultural, institutional, and social conditions of the students and the communities in which the schools operate. As of 2013, about 5000 community schools in 44 states and the District of Columbia served approximately 5.1 million students. In Europe, as of 2011, the Netherlands had 1600 community schools in primary education and 420 in secondary education (Heers et al., 2016). England proposed that all the 23,000 schools be transformed into extended schools to offer specialized education that matches the country's social, cultural, and institutional variations. FitzGerald and Quinones (2019) added that many states and a growing number of towns are investing in the community school model as a means to address educational and place-based inequities in the United States. The case is valid for Pennsylvania, where school leaders are championing the race to ensure the effectiveness of community schools. In recent years, school leaders and educational policymakers have focused on full-service community schools, which is growing in importance and is widely implemented in underresourced urban schools (Min et al., 2017). The research shows that community schools are increasing in importance, and most educational stakeholders are considering their implementation as strategies to reform the educational sector and enhance the achievement level of students.

Accountability Through Increased Efficacy Among Teams

The need to reform the education sector and instill positive work ethics based on teaming and collaboration has been a concern in the recent past. Kunnari et al. (2018) attested that current policymakers and educational stakeholders have changed from traditional subject-based teaching to a learning-focused approach in teaching and competence-based learning that entails creating innovative pedagogical practices based on team teaching, collegial collaboration, and networking. Modern education believes in the power of collective efficacy and resilience in changing the face of teaching and learning and ensuring higher achievement outcomes. Swanson et al. (2019) stated that team-based learning is common in higher education institutions' classrooms. The increased use of team-based learning in schools is associated with improvement in students' end of course performances, great achievements in tests, and increased student–teacher and student–student engagement. Students also report that team-based learning is enjoyable, and gives them foundational knowledge and skills for improving their performances and understanding class content. Throughout history, the effectiveness of teaching teams have been tested, and the results indicate a positive correlation between teaching and learning outcomes and the pedagogical approaches. Krammer et al.'s (2018) study of 321 arts teachers assessed instructors' perceptions of teaching teams. They found that teachers working in self-selected teacher teams show more positive ratings for enjoyment, shared responsibility, collective self-efficacy expectations, and job satisfaction. Krammer et al. also found that allowing teachers to select their teammates is a potential step to increasing the effectiveness of the teaching teams.

Teaching and learning approaches are changing. As witnessed in other sectors where technology integration is taking center stage, education is also focusing on the identification and

implementation of new approaches to increase the teaching and learning outcomes. One of the recent developments in the last thirty years that addresses educational accountability relates to the changing gender representation in schools. Notably, in countries, such as the United States and Slovenia, more women than men are pursuing teaching careers. The changing gender gap in education has also affected leadership roles in the institutions. Another key area concerns community schools. Community schools are increasing in importance, mostly in Europe and the United States. School leaders and state governments in the U.S. are transforming institutions to community schools because of the perceived efficacy in the types of learning and teaching in such classes. Team-based teaching and learning is also a concern in current education systems. In all these contexts, teachers' motivation and retention play a vital role that policymakers and teachers' employers must address. Institutions and key stakeholders in education invest in approaches to increase teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by changing institutional policies, creating friendly teaching environments, and modeling incentives to increase motivation and retention and reduce turnover rates.

Summary

The race to publish studies about accountability has been trending for the better part of the last century. If there was a panacea to address the professional and production needs of American public schools, it would have spread like wildfire by now. It is clear by the ongoing relitigation of hallmark judicial ruling that while progress has been made, most roads are left to travel. Our school system still grapples with access issues related to race, ethnicity, language, and special education status. We still use assessments that keep the pipeline to college limited in scope. Accountability in the literature and its impact on the professional motivation and retention of teachers is a natural concern and one that only grows with the ever changing dynamics of the

teacher placement. Despite all we do know, we are also still learning about how community schools and the efficacy of teams can contribute to momentum in school communities. We are still trying to highlight the important influence women have had on the teaching profession, even while impossible accountability reforms have come and gone through the decades.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter addresses the methodological and epistemological assumptions that provide a foundation for the study. These assumptions further justify the chosen research design and techniques which garner a more cohesive understanding of how education reform policy, and accountability policy specifically help or hinder the public school teaching profession. Grounded research theory, as the primary methodology of investigation for this study, derives from the qualitative research approach. However, this dissertation is a mixed methods study design utilizing surveys, focus groups, and a policy review. Results will take the shape of new ideas that can be considered to bridge education toward a new era of accountability.

The questions guiding this study look at a two pronged approach to teacher accountability.

1. How can the teaching force conceptualize and reclaim the narrative of teaching in an accountability-focused era?
2. How can policymakers conceptualize legislation around accountability in education so that they differentiate for districts and schools the way we want teachers to differentiate for students?

The first question concerns teachers' capacity for control and change in their profession. As a profession, educators have sought greater domain expertise regarding governing themselves to counter the wave of legislation tasked with measuring the quality of schools and the success of educators as individuals. Asking, how can the teaching force conceptualize and reclaim the narrative of teaching in an accountability-focused era? This question intentionally presents the change in teaching and effectiveness, as a defining element of professional accountability, as

something in the control of teachers as a group. The notion of reclamation is one of action and teachers being a driving force for change. Educators as a group must be a part of this work. Yet educators as a group are as diverse as the nation itself. Therefore, understanding the current state of the profession is a necessary component for the reimagination and reconceptualization of the profession under the defining elements of accountability.

The second research question comes from the legislative perspective, which asks how can policymakers conceptualize legislation around accountability in education so that they differentiate for districts and schools the way we want teachers to differentiate for students? This question again assumes a level of control and accountability for the political narrative that rests on legislative shoulders. It seeks to understand whether legislation can be universally written, yet applied with a certain degree of individuality that local governing bodies require.

In this study, a blending of qualitative and quantitative methods supported a well rounded approach to investigating the research questions. Understanding the culture of teachers through quantitative methods, while effective, does not illuminate the complexities that exist in the society of educators. A qualitative grounded approach supports the interest of hypothesizing a new relationship for the public school educator and the public representative in government. The experiences of the participants in the study provide ample opportunity to understand the community of educators and how that community receives, responds to, and counters legislative action about teaching and learning. While this research relies on procedures recognized by qualitative researchers, it also demands “redefinition to meet the complexities of social phenomena” that is teaching (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p 234). Additionally, the data collection and analysis were interrelated processes in this research. The study of legal texts informed the

development of the survey questions. The responses only furthered the textual study and helped refine the scope of the concepts and categories studied.

This study is rooted in the relationships between educators and their lived experience and policymakers who influence and augment texts that are interpreted in the workplace of educators. The latter, whose work is intended to influence the profession and behavior of educators merits study through a hermeneutic approach. Teachers as a group with intersectionalities across every domain of human existence require us to constantly come to an existential understanding of teachers and teaching in America (Gallagher 1992). Furthermore, Furman and Gruenewald (2004) argued that ecological problems are experienced differently by different social groups. Teachers, while a profession unto themselves, are a social group that has commonly reared its existence in the bounds of policy, parenting, and professionalism. Any analysis of this group and how the professional identity may or may not be impacted by external forces must include an analysis of the tensions between racism, classism, environmentalism, and economic development that influence the ecological landscape of human connectedness.

The research component focuses on collecting the voice of educators in two ways. First, surveying teachers as individuals from starting, middle, and end of career vantage points. The second is through focus groups of educators working in a teaching role and educators working in a leadership capacity. The study supports the effort to make meaning of the experiences of educators, as rated by them, with any motifs, commonalities, or exceptionalities that might inform answers to the research questions. Moving from semirandom responses to curated interviews generated a scaffolded array of information about educator beliefs, definitions, and experiences to glean insights from. The analysis of legal texts includes documents from referenced laws from the subjects and those in the realm of educational accountability over the

past three decades. The lived experience and textual review, helped me define the hypothesized space that exists between legislative goals and teacher behavior in the profession.

Analysis of the surveys was also done in a grounded approach to uncover understandings and to make new meaning. The survey sample was not designed to identify an individual story. Rather, the survey and the analysis were done to glean happenings that facilitate, interrupt, or prevent the work of teachers. In this case “work” is defined by supporting the progress of students to academic, social, and emotional success while also feeling connected to the policy entanglements that surround the education domain. Beyond the surveys, I have noted motifs from the literature, including workplace motivations, teachers as a caring body, the connection between the administrator-teacher relationship and the teacher–student relationship, and the concept of teaming. I was curious to understand how the way we expect teachers to motivate students each day differs in the relationship between administrators and teachers in the school as well as with broader groups like legislative bodies. If legislation is intended to enact outcomes in a professional body as vast as teachers one might assume there would be evidence to glean from talking with teachers via a survey and literature review.

The focus groups were intentionally designed to gather individual stories and give space to participants to expand and articulate about their work. The focus group did not have to assume a common understanding of accountability. Rather time was given at the beginning to ask each participant to share their definition of accountability, reform, and their experiences with both in their settings. The focus group was designed to allow participants to interact and build upon each other’s responses, ask questions for clarity and help unearth the complex dynamic that is well entrenched in the educational system at large.

The policy analysis and interpretation of textual data was guided by scholarship regarding the hermeneutic interpretation of legal texts (Binder & Weissberg, 2000). Again, noting that the text cannot be static in the context of a school, a grounded approach to reading the policy language and reframing it from the interwoven nature of the classroom is a necessary approach.

Rationale for Research Approach

I worked in a social constructivist and pragmatic framework using surveys of educators for my research design and following up on the survey data with focus groups of educators in a teaching and administrative role. I inquired about the impact of policies around today's educators on their motivations to enter, stay, or leave the profession. I was interested in learning what the positive and negative aspects of working in a profession with such external forces are and to what degree they can be controlled or modified if such an impact is negatively affecting sustainability or commitment. To do this I had to review the current research, but also take into account the human element of motivation. Using a social constructivist lens I sought to construct meaning of the responses about teachers and their profession (Creswell, 2017, p. 25).

Given that pragmatic research is looking at the outcomes of the research and what works best, I wanted to see if there were overlapping trends and themes that could be discerned between the readings and the textual analysis (Creswell, 2017, p. 28). Focus groups provide depth and anecdotes of the trends from the survey data shared by practitioners. Are there competing forces externally or internally that override these forces in a way that could be noted as consistent or useful in building the workforce of the future? I wanted to learn if the forces that cannot be controlled or predicted could somehow be leveraged for better and if there was research to answer how that lever should be pulled.

The survey asked educators about how they understand and feel about policies that impact their profession. The focus groups tapped into how the agency of a sample of teachers and administrators can be actionable. It was important to investigate how they work to develop an understanding of politics, shield or open themselves up to/from the circumstances and everything in between. As Lakoff (1997) said, some understanding is rooted in a hidden belief that unearths when stoked. As such, an additional purpose of mine is to begin to uncover some of these hidden aspects and identify how and maybe why they develop at various points in a career. Ultimately one goal of this study is to further the reimagination of education accountability policy in this country and use the teacher perspective to influence a rationale for including the professional who is charged with execution, in the design process.

Research Setting and Context

Educational accountability in general has broad definitions depending a lot on context for what one is accountable for or to. Much of the broadness stems from the pluralistic nature of societal rules that define how we, as a community, interact with children, including our own kin to meet the end goal of raising contributing adults. Push this more narrowly from interacting or raising children to educating in schoolhouses and we arrive at a debate honing over the past 150 years with expert opinions from everyone who has ever attended school to those in the field claiming domain expertise. Defining educational accountability in the policy discussion is critical to provide the basis for “common understanding and shared meaning while also facilitating decision making and resource allocation” (Callahan & Moon, 2013). It is this policy arena that serves as the debating center in terms of defining the common scope of what education should provide and “whether these purposes are being attained” (Tyler 1949/2013).

The vast experience from every former student to their parents to child can overwhelm the debate over to what end educational accountability seeks. Surely the need for an educated citizenry that can better mediate the present political climate is worth the fight as was intended when the notion of public education was devised (Adams et al., 1972). Between the definitions of accountability for child rearing and formal school outcomes we have policy makers who strive to provide guidance and oversight over the taxpayer-funded entities like the American public education system. All of these vantage points are worth their merits in discussing the many pathways for success in sustaining for the next generations of citizens. However, for this dissertaion, we rest in the space of educational accountability while leveraging just a few child rearing defining moments in history to lend to the perspective of how formal schooling success is measured.

Research Sample and Data Sources

Invitations to participate in the survey were sent to individuals who were associated with a school district, state labor organization, or other educational institution to conduct the research. Focus group participants were collected specifically from districts or schools that have made intentional efforts to focus on educational accountability, by their own definition. The survey data solicited from educators was procured through two organizations with wide ranging reach and reputation in the education community. The National Education Association agreed to share the link and introductory letter to their state affiliates during the collection window. Additionally, the Midwest Principals' Center, representing 43 school districts in Northern Illinois also shared the survey with their membership to be presented to educators.

The survey generated 1329 responses, just under 2% percent of the total reach of the survey invitation of 70,000. More than half of the respondents were from K–8 school settings,

but there was ample participation from high school and educators that identify as working in “other” settings (Table 1).

Table 1

Grade Level Taught

Grade	<i>n</i>	%
Elementary K–5	512	38.5%
Middle school or junior high school	386	29.1%
High school	227	17.1%
Other	204	15.4%

One of the research goals at the outset was to discern between the perspective of educators based on not just the setting they teach in by grade band, but also by how long they have been in the profession. Table 2 shows the success in the outreach by experience. More than 21% of respondents had less than 10 years of experience compared with 40.6% of respondents with 11–20 years of experience and 26.5 % of respondents with 21–30 years of teaching experience.

Table 2

Years Worked in Education

Years worked	<i>n</i>	%
1	40	3.0%
2–3	28	2.1%
4–5	38	2.9%
6–10	207	15.6%
11–20	539	40.6%
21–30	352	26.5%
30+	125	9.4%
Total	1329	100%

Data Collection Methods

Following approval from the National Louis university Institutional Review Board on December 3, 2019, I began collecting data from reputable sources following all necessary conventions of research ethics. Data was collected via a survey of current educators. A Google form was used, including an opening page statement where an overview of the study and consent were collected. From December 9, 2020, to February 10, 2021, responses to the survey were collected. All of the communication and collection transpired through email. I was the sole collector of respondent data and transfer of data from the survey form to SPSS for analysis took place at the conclusion of the data collection period.

After the initial data collection period and from conferencing with the doctoral committee in August of 2022, the committee recommended I seek additional input from several focus groups to help triangulate the data. Survey data, policy reviews, and a combination of two focus groups made up of educators in a teaching role as well as educators in an administrative role became the newly composed data set for this research.

Data Analysis Methods

To collect survey responses, I created a Google form to garner consent through a series of questions. Data were then transferred into SPSS Statistics for digital support with analysis. In the software, frequency tables, cross-categorical tables, and correlation analysis were conducted. After the running of the data tables, trend analysis was conducted to identify areas worth noting. Educators volunteered to join a focus group to discuss education accountability for this research study. I created another Google form to garner consent through a series of questions and signed consent was gathered using digital signature processes through DocuSign to accommodate the virtual and geographic barriers required by the global pandemic. Focus group conversations were

held, recorded, and transcribed. The transcription was then analyzed using a thematic coding system to identify trends and areas of comparison or contrast to the other data elements called sentiment and topic analysis.

Sentiment and Topic Analysis

Sentiment analysis was conducted on any survey responses that allowed for open text responses and the transcription of the conversation amongst focus groups participants.

Sentiment analysis is the process of computationally identifying and categorizing opinions expressed in a piece of text. For the task of sentiment analysis, a powerful transformer model called DistilBERT-base-uncased-finetuned-sst-2-english was used. The model is fine-tuned on The Stanford Sentiment Treebank (SST-2), a corpus of fully labeled parse trees that allows for a complete analysis of the compositional effects of sentiment in language. It was also trained and evaluated on the General Language Understanding Evaluation benchmark (GLUE), a massive collection of resources for training, evaluating, and analyzing natural language. This particular model performs binary sentiment classification on new text inputs (“positive” and “negative” outputs). The model assigns a probability value to both negative and positive. Whichever class has the higher probability becomes the prediction for any given text input.

In addition, transformer models are also quite useful for performing topic analysis. In contrast to sentiment analysis, this task can involve any number of classes as the output. An effective method involves utilizing a clustering head to the transformer architecture that outputs a probability distribution for a set of predefined topics. When the model attempts to classify new, unseen data, it outputs each of the predefined topics that were used in training or fine-tuning along with a corresponding probability score for each. The class with the highest probability will be chosen as the model prediction.

Issues of Trustworthiness

As the nature of this study relies on the participation of educators via a survey link, leveraging professional organizations for outreach was essential to casting as wide a net as possible. State labor organizations affiliated with the National Educators Association were a prime source for outreach. A degree of vetting was undertaken prior to agreeing to sending the link out to members on the researchers' behalf. Professional organizations for building leadership like the Midwest Principals' Center provided a great opportunity as well. As leaders of school buildings have the same invitation ability as a professional organization, but they also have the capacity to set aside time to gather the voice of educators in a study important to their work.

Confidentiality Clause

I will not discuss or share any of the research information with anyone other than with the researcher or others identified by the researcher. I will keep all research information secure while it is in my possession.

Limitations and Delimitations

The area of research is vast and ever changing. As such the most notable limitation of the study is the incompleteness. The National Center for Education Statistics has a record of nearly 3.5 million public school teachers employed in the United States in 2021. This study, though relying on reputable organizations for outreach, does not nearly cover every state, region, or range of teachers to make certain meaning. In an environment as unique as the classroom setting, certainty shall not ever be expected.

Additionally, any review of the legal landscape in education will find itself stuck in the court of appeals and public opinion. Accountability policy at the local school level, nestled in states and their policies, has a complicated history with America at large.

Like the continual improvement expected in schools, this study can inform and help lawmakers and educators ask better questions of one another. Although a potential weakness of this study is the external conditions that constrain the scope of the research (e.g. asking educators currently working full time to respond in addition to their normal duties), asking people currently connected to the subculture that is teachers was of utmost importance to the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the data collection, analysis of the data itself, and the rationale for how the analysis was conducted. The data are survey results from 1,329 participants and two focus groups. The purpose of this mixed method design is to triangulate the data using more than one method to study the research questions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The survey respondents share a common identifier of being educators. The focus group participants were a curated group of leaders and teachers who are working in systems that identify themselves as actively working on accountability. How this work is being done was not discerned, but each of the participants had engaged in professional learning and activities in their community around accountability in the schools.

Anchored by the research questions, the analysis requires cross-tabulation of data sets to identify trends or points of interest that would inform a basis for any conclusions. In this research, conclusions are a creation of something new from information previously known. Specifically, the positionality of educators with respect to local, state, and federal education reforms contributes to the understanding of motifs in the literature of trust, motivation, retention, and care. It is the dilemma of the American public school system that intrigues me as a researcher. Throughout the literature, there is ample evidence of policy and procedural gestures to account for the public education system. Yet stagnation persists. This is because the impact for particular groups of students or types of schools may well differ depending on how the system is designed (Loeb & Figlio, 2011). Our quest for right-sizing accountability broadly aligns the interests of society with regard to public schools and the unique needs of each community is what this research is intended to inform. The educator survey met some of those requirements,

and focus groups were added to triangulate the data with deeper, more personal insights from practitioners in the field.

The questions guiding this study first look at the teacher's capacity for control and change in their profession. Asking how the teaching force can conceptualize and reclaim the narrative of teaching in an accountability-focused era. To delve into this question is to address one of the premiere contemporary educational phenomena. This question intentionally presents the change in teaching and effectiveness as something in the control of teachers as a group. However, teachers reside as individuals who help makeup not only the workforce but also often a constituency of dissent for the external systems imposed upon them. The analysis of the survey data helped me to uncover the degree to which educators are positioned to make strides on this issue of reclamation of their profession.

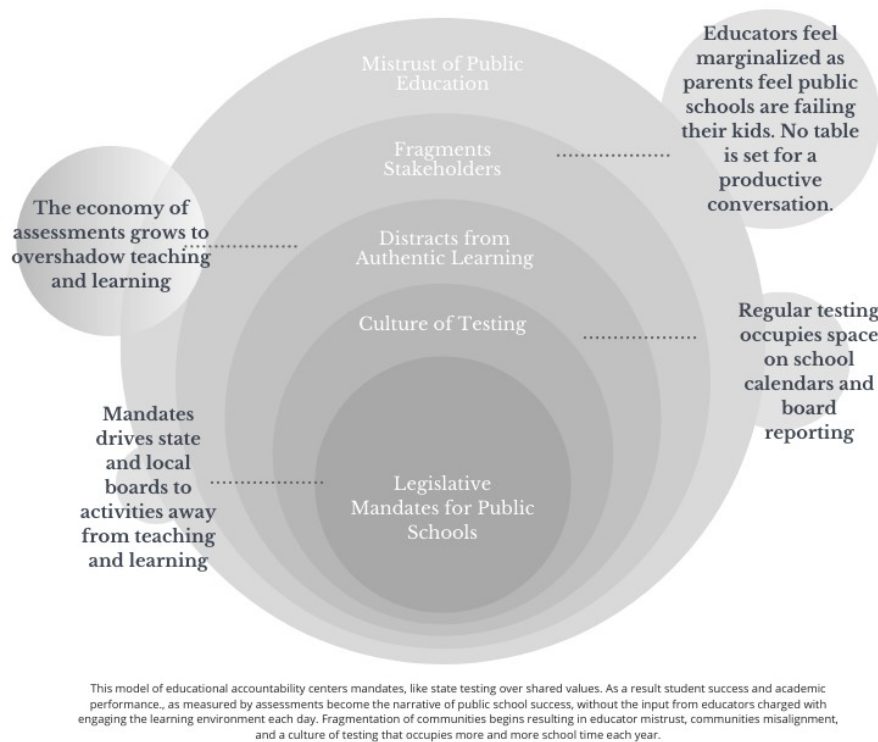
The second research question looks at policy as a lever and asks how policymakers can conceptualize legislation around accountability in education so that they differentiate for districts and schools the way we want teachers to differentiate for students. Just as the initial question looks at the issue of public school in America as something educators can control from in the profession, this question looks to find a way for legislators to help, rather than hinder, the profession from the policy influence perspective. The policy influence perspective accepts the right of certain institutions to desire evidence of success from public schools.

Most recently, the evidence requested has been performative data that highlight attainment of a measure of schooling. Three decades into education accountability via mass testing and attainment monitoring, it is clear that assessment policy alone cannot transform public schools. The policies are placing influence in places that no longer contribute to bettering the public and communities if they ever were. Instead, they muted the conversation about what

schools are meant to be for communities. They have stifled the visionary conversations about shared values and a culture of belonging which educators in the classroom and leading say is what should be at the center of healthy schools. Instead, policies at the federal and state levels have required professionals in education to focus squarely on content delivery and monitoring. This problem has resulted in a decades-long destabilization of public schooling that is ripe for correction.

Figure 1

Traditional Accountability



In Fiscal Year 2023, the Department of Education had a budget of \$175.81 billion. Presumably this money was invested into programs and staff that support the success of public education broadly. Every U.S. state has a similar, often more direct funding pathway for schools in their purview. Therefore, it is reasonable for there to be requests or even demands for evidence

of success or progress. What the success criteria are and who determines the metric is of critical importance to educators.

Additionally, state legislatures and the federal government have contributed to the current environment through policies. As was mentioned in the literature review, this initially was about access and who had the opportunity to participate in the public school system. These policies were directed at those who could participate. Even then, there was a policy-influenced perspective born out of integration and IDEA Act. Now that the policies have evolved to the measurement of success, the policy influence is imposed more on the actions of the educators whom are held responsible for the success

This question assumes a level of control and accountability for the political narrative that rests on legislative shoulders that shows care for the outcome but defers choice in the benefits defined by local control. The focus groups allowed for much more targeted inquiry into this question from those in positions to speak to the political influence of educators.

Thematic categories were derived from the survey and used as a starting point to create questions for the two focus groups. These categories were rooted in the literature review documents and limited in scope to the following:

Table 2

Categories of Education Accountability Derived from the Literature Review

Thematic Category	Defining Characteristics
Standardized Testing	This category focuses on the use of standardized tests as a measure of student achievement and school performance. It includes discussions on the design, implementation, and impact of standardized tests on educational accountability.
Teacher Evaluation	The methods and criteria used to evaluate teachers' performance and effectiveness in the classroom. It

	encompasses research on different evaluation models, the role of student test scores in evaluations, and the link between teacher evaluations and accountability.
School Performance Measures	The metrics and indicators used to assess school performance, such as graduation rates, attendance, student growth, and college readiness. It examines the effectiveness and limitations of these measures in holding schools accountable.
Data-driven Decision Making	The use of data to inform educational policies and practices. It includes research on the collection, analysis, and utilization of data to identify areas for improvement, track progress, and hold stakeholders accountable.
School Autonomy and Governance	The balance between school autonomy and accountability. It explores the relationship between school governance models, such as charter schools or district-managed schools, and the mechanisms in place to ensure accountability for student outcomes.
Equity and Access	The role of educational accountability in promoting equity and access to quality education. It examines how accountability measures can address achievement gaps among different student groups and ensure equitable distribution of resources.
Stakeholder Engagement	The involvement of various stakeholders, including parents, community members, and policymakers, in the accountability process. It investigates the impact of stakeholder engagement on educational outcomes and the extent to which accountability systems incorporate diverse perspectives.
Policy and Accountability Systems	The development, implementation, and evaluation of educational accountability policies and systems. It includes research on policy effectiveness, unintended consequences, and best practices for designing comprehensive and fair accountability frameworks.

These categories served as a starting point to focus in on a more nuanced definition and understanding of accountability that would be further informed by the participants in the focus groups.

Description of Focus Groups

In addition to the survey responses, the data was tabulated with data collected amongst two curated focus groups. Focus group participants were recruited from a pool of educators in two categories. Educators who primarily work in student-attached roles, such as classroom teachers was group one. The second group was educators who work primarily in a leadership capacity.

These focus groups were facilitated by me, the researcher, with a protocol of questions derived from the data initially gathered during the survey portion of the research. The survey responses were organized into themes that were used to create a series of predictable prompts for the two focus groups to respond to in conversation. This quantifiable data of the survey being integrated into the qualitative approach of focus groups provided ample opportunity to analyze and delve into the data collected.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), there are nearly 3.5 million public school teachers in the United States. In this study, the organizations that agreed to invite educators to participate represented nearly 70,000 educators. These invitations spanned locally controlled school districts, state labor organizations like affiliates of the National Education Association, and a regional school leaders organization, the Midwest Principals' Center. Given the wide reach, 1,329 educators, or just under 2%, gave consent and responded to the survey questions. This sample size, however, was sufficient to glean trends and impressions of the questions posed and to ascertain the degree to which further information might be

required. In this case, a series of focus groups were added to the data collection after a review of the survey data to bring a more focused voice to the data.

The only requirement for participation in a focus group was that no participant could be a current colleague of another participant. This restriction was to limit the overlap in experiences and therefore stifle sharing of experiences. The administrator focus group included five superintendents from major metropolitan areas, including Chicago, Cleveland, Houston, and Atlanta. The educator focus group included five educators whose careers span from 5 years to 31 in the profession. All five educators were in direct instruction roles and teaching in major metropolitan areas of Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago.

From the focus groups, additional coding of the transcripts and sentiment analysis narrowed the thematic categories to only those that were purposeful to the topic of this research and the data among both participant groups and the survey data. These categories include defining accountability, the impact of the educator's proximity to change, trust, professional autonomy, and the educator's professional identity.

Defining Accountability

Overall, K–12 educational accountability has evolved over the past 50 years to focus on measuring and improving student outcomes, as well as holding schools and districts accountable for their performance based on specific performance measures and standards. As a result, it was not surprising for participants to talk about and around accountability involving student outcomes and standards, specifically about state accountability systems that set standards for student performance and hold schools and districts accountable for meeting those standards in a prescribed manner. This includes measures such as standardized tests, student growth, and achievement gaps. One superintendent from Houston shared how his state is “very heavily

focused as a state on the STAR test, which is our state standardized assessment” and then quickly noted, “We try to fight against that (standardized assessments) at every opportunity, but it is quite the mountain.” These various systems were referred to by many names depending on the state or region of the person.

Superintendents in the leadership focus group spoke about being in the era of “Yelp reviews” for schools. They shared the experiences taking place right now, where they live in two distinct worlds of accountability. The first and most prevalent is “state ratings based,” and the other world is community-based. The state ratings dictate the participant’s job security and public perception. It is significant enough that it cannot be ignored. The community-based benefits accountability is a growing movement to reconnect school communities and make the perceived benefits of public schools a reality. During our discussion, the energy among the leaders was palpable when talking about accountability as a community benefit measure rather than some form of compliance or assessment-driven activity done in the classroom. There was a broad consensus that the various ways states assign rankings on schools are eroding trust in the policymakers who develop said policies. As a result, the administrator group found common ground in defining accountability as a dual system, including state ratings and community-based accountability. As one participant said, “We have really tried to live within that kind of dual system that we’re in to shed that bureaucratic skin and really try to be transformative as opposed to performative.”

Additionally, the administrator focus group spoke with one another about the pathway for communities to do the work of education accountability together. The stressors in the conversation were based upon areas of reform strategies that seem beyond the control of the leaders. Policies, circumstances unique to communities, and mounting external pressures

weighed on the minds of these leaders. When talking about how they engaged community groups about goals for making their systems more functional, focused, and beneficial, they were passionate and even enthusiastic.

Teachers and administrators' interface with this definition uniquely from one another. From the educator focus group, it was evident that accountability is something that impacts their lived experience in two ways. The first is the external pressure put on the profession to simply be better. This pressure is a constant force imposed by the onslaught of media and political spin used at election time to churn up support by defining what schools are or not to the public. The other way accountability is experienced is internal. Accountability efforts like state testing manifest in the school schedule, but they also offer the profession as a whole to consider whether the actions of the group are leading students towards success on the measure. Between the external and internal experiences, germane to the group, was a host of other ways in which accountability interfaces with educators and propels or hinders them in their work.

One educator of more than two decades in the profession shared that accountability is really personal. For her, in a medium size elementary school, prioritizing relationships is what accountability is all about. Her experience in different eras of accountability is defined by her relationships with her building leadership. When asked about her feelings to influence decisions or approaches to the implementation of new accountability ideas, she felt strongly that when the relationships are there, her influence is strong. Another educator response that resonated with the group was from a veteran teacher who also has the role of being a union leader in her district. She said, "I think it's my responsibility to my students, my family, my teammates, and my administration, and also to myself, to hold myself to a really high standard." Her notion of professional responsibility is what drives her, not new policy or tests.

One educator referenced early on in her professional journey a focus on input accountability or the approach that emphasizes holding schools and districts accountable for the resources they receive and the processes they follow. She spoke highly of her onboarding process to the district where she is employed and had strong memories of the approach to “branding” and curriculum alignment that went into making sure new people were prepared. She reasoned that these supports, while helpful, were likely required elements of a system wide approach to accountability at the time.

Among the group of leaders, the greatest consensus over defining accountability was when talking about accountability to the people. While much debate exists over the unending battle for who owns public schools and who has a right to participate in the experiment that is public education, the administrator group shared a nuanced perspective about how to actualize that once a student enters the school. They defined accountability, as a “survival tactic,” as one superintendent called it, to be responsible to each child and family without all the other accountability noise. This definition, that accountability to the profession and to schools should birth some benefits to the society at large, really captured the attention of others participating in the focus group.

Another participant who sits in a superintendent role in the Midwest area said the “model in Ohio is extremely compliance based.” We were once an A through F system in the state of Ohio and it just does not help us move the needle. It is a political tool. In reality, “accountability for me is understanding what it means, and for us, it’s responding to the hopes and dreams of our community and our parents. Not necessarily being beholden to a state test, and the state rating, which we have just been on since prior to COVID. So, we have an A through F rating system, which is probably 90% percent focused on standardized tests.”

This lack of consensus for what to call at first represented to the researcher a lack of focus for the profession. In reality it speaks to the various paths each state and local community and schools are on that are truly challenging to measure equitably, let alone define. As a result, these focus groups resulted in fascinating conversations about how people in significant positions of influence in a community and a district superintendent equated their state system of accountability to Yelp.

Trust

Trust was not an explicit topic for any one member of the groups but rather a motif that lingered throughout the entirety of the conversations with every participant. In educational accountability, we often start with the question, what can you measure? I heard from my focus group participants that this is just the wrong question to start with. For policy and laws to be based on what you can measure is the opposite of what research supports educators to do in the classroom, where their starting questions often resemble “What do you want your students to know and be able to do?” So the premise of the question “What can you measure?” is rejected by the groups, both direct instruction educators and district leaders alike, that are to be influenced by the policies and implement them at the ground level.

The survey data captured the reality that trust of decision-makers lessens the further from the community you get. So federal policymakers are trusted by schoolteachers less than local boards of education. This lack of trust in lawmakers’ commitment to education and to teachers feeling unsupported in their efforts to educate students creates barriers to the profession that allows any meaningful reforms to be taken seriously when executed by staff working in the schools.

Teachers articulated the feeling that lawmakers prioritize performative actions like standardized testing over other transformative aspects of education, such as creativity, critical thinking, and social-emotional learning. This leads to a lack of trust in lawmakers' understanding of what is best for students and to teachers feeling pressure to teach to the test rather than to the needs of their students. To rectify this model educators must be brought into the conversation about how to best evaluate the effectiveness of school in conjunction with identifying the benefits schools should provide the community. Only then can trust be built between the adults who would be codifying the way values and skills matter for a community.

When education policies and reforms are enacted with teachers adequately consulted with or listened to, it can lead to policies that do work well in practice. The superintendent leading a district just outside of Cleveland, Ohio, has needs of a rural community with proximity to urban needs as well. His community values developing the skills to run a family farm as much as being able to gain acceptance to Case Western Reserve University. He needs an accountability policy that allows the space for educators to create both pathways that will measure their success and provide the students' families with the measures they need to know they are on track. This type of work will lead to a trust in lawmakers' understanding of the complexities of education and to teachers feeling empowered in shaping education policy. Until then his board is resolved to ignore the Yelp-style reviews that they say results from the state rating system based on standardized test scores.

In the educators' survey, trust was a key indicator of importance among the group. Over 60% of participants ($n = 819$), indicated that they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement "I trust the people writing changes or reforms into federal law." That number increased to 63.5%, or 845, for the item "I trust the people writing changes or reforms into state law."

These data stand in stark contrast to the trust shown toward people writing changes or reforms into local law. To these questions, responses indicating disagree or strongly disagree reached 43.2% and the agree or strongly agree peaking at 32.6%. This was significantly higher in comparison to the federal and state responses of 6.3% and 6.7%, respectively.

Table 4

Trust in Federal Lawmakers

Likert-style agreement anchors	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely disagree	488	36.7%
Disagree	331	24.9%
Neutral	426	32.1%
Agree	69	5.2%
Extremely agree	15	1.1%

Table 5

Trust in State Lawmakers

Likert-style agreement anchors	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely disagree	463	34.8%
Disagree	382	28.7%
Neutral	395	29.7%
Agree	63	4.7%
Extremely agree	26	2.0%

Table 6*Trust in Local Lawmakers*

Likert-style agreement anchors	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely disagree	270	20.3%
Disagree	304	22.9%
Neutral	322	24.2%
Agree	355	26.7%
Extremely agree	78	5.9%

After identifying the root location of mistrust among educators, the survey inquired about what activities related to accountability impacted educators. Differently from asking about blind trust in process and decision-making, the next series of questions asked a reflective question to see if the perspective about trust between educators and certain decision-making entities would change after being impacted by accountability reforms. In this case, they showed a strong mistrust for those writing state laws, 52.8%, and next to that local to the district, 29.6%.

Table 7*Root Location of Impactful Reforms*

Likert-style agreement anchors	<i>n</i>	%
Federal based	185	13.9%
State based	701	52.8%
Only my district	393	29.6%
Only my classroom	50	3.7%

Asking educators about trust on a systemic level can look a lot like a blame game. So pairing the survey responses with the focus group data helped me understand a great deal about what it means for there to be trust between those who craft policy and those who have to execute the implementation of policy. The superintendent focus group was able to lean in on questions of trust very easily. “Like you said, like what are the hopes and dreams of the community? If the policy is not about helping us answer that question, I do not trust it.” It is this simplicity that allows superintendents to chart their own course when they find alignment with their boards. For teachers the options are less flexible, and the job is more prescribed with curriculum and resources that have to be delivered. In this way trust morphs into a wedge that pushes against educator autonomy.

Professional Autonomy and Identity

Noddings (2005) wrote, there is no one true self apart from the ideal self that is always under construction through multiple authorship. Though writing about the individual, the notion of self-retaliation and continual improvement is a core anchor in many organizations that rely on human labor and human dependent outcomes. This can be the reality for entities responsible for caring as well, like school systems. Why would it be any less important or expectant for the bodies of state and local districts to be situated in a constant state of renewal and reflection about becoming their best self for their evolving communities of care?

The notion that a community can be well situated for continual improvement, be on the path towards a common group and consensus, then be disrupted by policy and by politics is a matter worthy of investigation. When assessing professional capacity for change, having support is essential. There were 533 survey responses from educators with 11–20 years of experience. Asking if they have the support they need to implement changes or reforms, 471 or 88% were

evenly distributed among strongly agree (120), agree (127), neither agree nor disagree (127), and disagree (107). One of the observations of the educator focus group is that those with more experience have stronger opinions to share on the topic of education accountability. Therefore, it was striking to see responses paired with a relatively even distribution of responses.

Table 8 shows the total responses from the sample. This data leads to more questions about whether the capacity for change is merely situational or whether the profession at large is in a place of apathy towards the topic altogether.

Table 8

Total Responses

Likert-style agreement anchors	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely disagree	127	9.5%
Disagree	204	15.3%
Neutral	302	22.7%
Agree	421	31.7%
Extremely agree	275	20.7%

In the focus groups, I had the chance to hear professionals doing the work describe the journey of employment in education during this accountability era. From managing politics of the annual unveiling of state report card season to enduring the unrelenting media frenzy that the “release” of school ratings causes in a community relating those ratings to a measure of success, to the placating the priority of a critical series of lessons to the timing of spring testing, all professional identity was an unavoidable motif. The relationship between accountability reform efforts and how educators view their role was profound. Educators in the direct instruction focus

group shared feelings of help and hopelessness almost at the same time. One veteran shared:

I sometimes feel like really empowered to do things. And then I'm met with like, no, there is a member of my team who is not going to like that, or there's this complaint. And then there's all kinds of obsolete restrictions around change. And so if you end up feeling a little powerless.

As a group, the educators supported this idea that power and identity in the profession are fleeting ideas. They both keep educators engaged and hopeful for the future and also make each day and each challenge so difficult to endure. Noddings' (1984) idea of self retaliation and continual improvement is the lynchpin of human dependent outcomes was before me listening to these educators as they talked about their work and their experience under the cloud of accountability. It offered both the abuse and the opportunity to be agents of change.

When reflecting on his own identity and why accountability matters, one of the superintendents said, "There are two types of educators. There's one that looks out the window and there's one that looks in the mirror." He was speaking to the importance of the community of educators on a massive scale across the country, down to the individual alone in front of a group of students taking back the role teachers have in the conversation of defining educational success. Feeling like the right to define what it means to deliver a quality product has been stolen from uninformed constituents who have agendas is a worthy battle. In his own district he shared about the relationship working with the teacher union. Asking out loud, "Why do we feel this adversarial relationship with our union?" he spoke about the pressure imposed by outside forces for there to be tension about who educators are and how they do their job in his community. In a moment of authenticity that felt in the focus group much like he was describing the journey to be in his district, he shared, "talking to you now, speaking of accountability, taking some

accountability for it, it is a blame game. And it's sad to see a profession that I feel so passionate about, like and I don't mean to sound melodramatic, but crumbling."

Relating back to the literature and Land's (1986) work related to studies on identity and the teacher condition, the human element only gets more emphasis as it relates to performance at work. So when educators described their experiences with accountability and reforms, they commonly shared as one member of the instructor focus group did "the implied meaning behind that is we need to reform education, because what we're doing isn't working, which is not necessarily a negative statement." However, the way accountability has been defined, portrayed, and shared outside of education has created "society's collective abuse of teachers. Over the last few years, it feels very negative, as if to say if only you would work harder, if only you would have more credentials or more levels of expertise that we would not need to have reform." These expressions of negativity about the profession and the public view of educators led our focus group into questions related to teachers, as a subculture, capacity for change. The survey data showed (Table 9) an even perceived ability to influence change. In talking with educators and district leaders, it became apparent that the definition of influence was almost as illusive as accountability. The focus group responses were peppered with retorts of "influence to who, to what, for what purpose?" As I reflected on the turn of the discussion from hopes and dreams to abuse of the profession, it became clear that there was much more to unpack embedded in these groups.

Table 9*Perceived Ability to Influence Change*

Likert-style agreement anchors	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely disagree	171	12.9%
Disagree	362	27.2%
Neutral	302	22.7%
Agree	352	26.5%
Extremely agree	142	10.7%

Proximity to Change

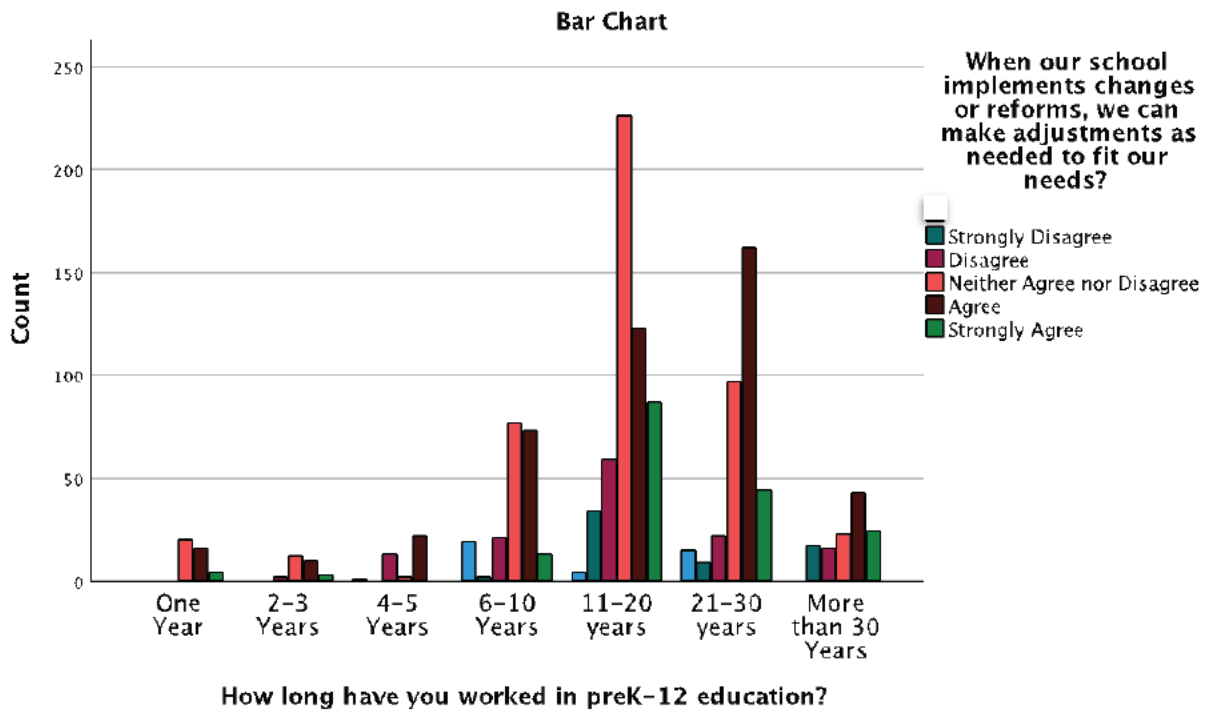
Beyond educators’ ability to make adjustments when needed, the survey measured the perception of influence for change by educators. The difference between these two questions is subtle and purposeful to discern differences. Decision-making is more about one’s leadership, while influence is about one’s power in a context (Peyton et al., 2019). Survey responses influence mirror data about capacity for action. As a result, the focus group was used to gain better insights into how power and influence exist around school reform.

Educators amplified their ability to act and influence equally. This body of research supports the claim that the capacity for change exists in the workforce. Both the survey and the focus groups demonstrated that educators can enact change and oftentimes feel supported to make a change. Survey responses from educators show increased agreement that educators have the ability to make adjustments to fit unique needs, based on the prompt “when our school implements changes or reforms, we can make adjustments to fit our needs.” Although neutrality

was noted most prominently by staff with 11–12 years of experience, agreement to this prompt grew steadily the more veteran the respondents were (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Perceived Ability to Make Adjustments



Yet while experience in the profession leads to potentially higher confidence to act towards change, more than 50% of the same respondents acknowledged waiting changes out until the new regime rolls in (see Table 7).

Table 7

Movement in Relation to Reform

Likert-style agreement anchors	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely disagree	119	9.0%
Disagree	150	11.3%
Neutral	353	26.6%
Agree	435	32.7%
Extremely agree	272	20.5%

Note. I move forward as I have in the past until the reform or change comes and goes away.

Focus group participants discussed this differently. Educators talked about waiting for a less preferred building leader or superintendent. The leadership group, made up of superintendents, spoke about staying in their roles long enough to act. If they can, then they see opportunities to build community and connections with politicians who write laws as well. Yet the motivation to tackle such herculean feats seems dimmer today than at any point in the recent past for those interviewed.

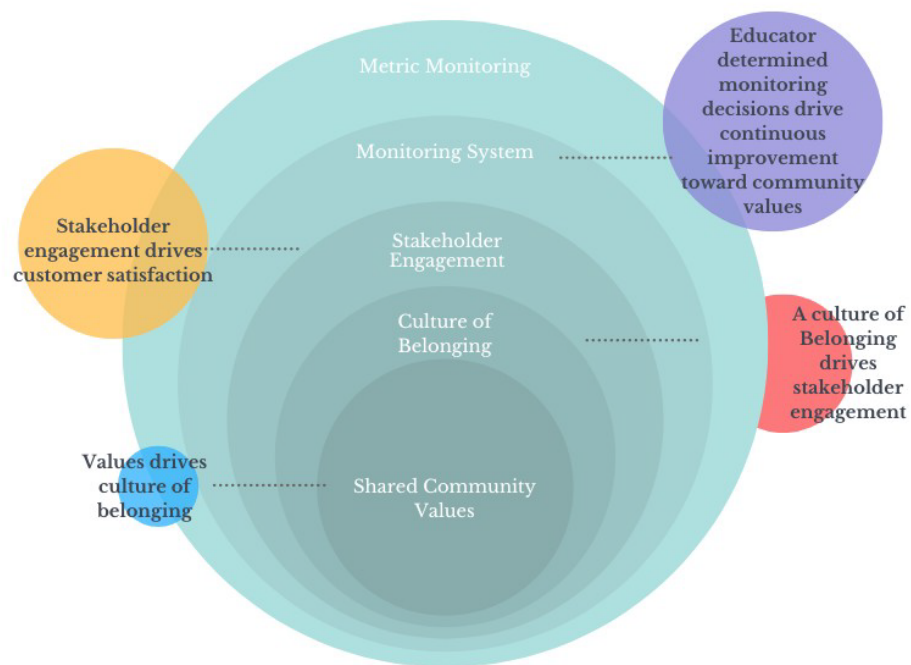
Superintendents, although in a position similar to that of a CEO in relation to their schools, are also the middle managers of education policy. They recommend policy, write procedures, and are responsible for input and execution. They also serve as the conduit for hopes and dreams, as was mentioned repeatedly in the leadership focus group. To reach for hopes and dreams you first need to name them. In the experience of these leaders, very few people will identify test scores as the basis for their success metric. As such, they want and need the ability to build systems that work towards those hopes and dreams and can be measured on a periodic and performative level. Leaders see accountability as a way to ensure that their district is meeting

state and federal requirements for performative tasks like student achievement. It must be incumbent on those in policy making roles to all those proximate to the place of change to have a say in goal setting. Just as a teacher is tasked with the delivery of content and engagement of students, regardless of student readiness or ability for which they must adapt and account, the district leader must have that same ability in the context of accountability for the work.

Figure 3 comes from the conversations with educators during the focus groups about how a system could be developed that situates them better for actionable change. This figure outlines a new framework for accountability oriented in the manner shared by survey and focus group participants. Centering shared values with everything else built around them is a vital step.

Figure 3

Educational Accountability



Educational accountability is the system that balances transformative and performative actions on a scale that calibrates to the needs of a specific community. It includes putting transformative actions at the center of organizational planning and owned by the community at large and performative actions in the decision-making realm of those charged with bringing about student success and academic performance.

Summary

The results in the chapter highlight the importance of creating an environment where systems encourage educators to view accountability as an opportunity for growth and improvement, rather than as a burden or punishment. This shift in mindset can help educators to focus on what really matters in education: supporting the growth and development of students. To do this it is essential that a redefining of what educational accountability is takes place.

Educational accountability is the system that balances transformative and performative actions on a scale that calibrates to the needs of a specific community. It includes putting transformative actions at the center of organizational planning and owned by the community at large and performative actions in the decision-making realm of those charged with bringing about student success. Transformative actions lead to community-held ideals about what the outcomes of a strong school experience will provide the community, also known as benefits. Performative actions are the tasks required to complete the school experience that measures individual and collective trajectory against goals or benchmarks often measured through standardized assessments.

The results discussed in this chapter contribute to developing a framework for reconceptualizing accountability in education that centers communities and the people, not the performative tasks like standardized tests. Though this is something that has been tried time and again, it is a worthy exercise to endure on behalf of the public good that are public schools. It is essential work to reconnect the trust of communities to their educators and to their lawmakers on a local, state, and federal level. Trust is an element that sits at the center of accountability efforts and is a defining characteristic that helps or hinders implementation or execution.

Defining and redefining accountability is a necessary task. It serves to ensure that participants in the framework know what the transformative and performative goals are for individuals and groups. It also is based on the idea of collective accountability which emphasizes the importance of local communities and educators in determining the goals and standards for accountability. This approach differs from traditional forms of educational accountability in US public schools, which are often based on standardized test scores and other metrics that are determined at the state or national level. It also provides educators with a context for their work that will help define their identity in the community and profession. It will also define the range of work where professional autonomy resides. If a framework like this can be lifted in communities across the country, there is hope that educators and all members of the school community will feel proximate to the decisions being made to change from where we are to where we want to go in public education.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, & Future Considerations

Introduction

The importance of creating an environment where systems encourage educators to view accountability as an opportunity for growth and improvement, rather than as a burden or punishment cannot be more evident by the research. This shift in mindset can help educators to focus on what really matters in education: supporting the growth and development of students. To do this, it is essential that redefining what educational accountability is takes place. This dissertation redefines educational accountability as the system that balances transformative and performative actions on a scale that calibrates to the needs of a specific community. It includes putting transformative actions at the center of organizational planning and owned by the community at large and performative actions in the decision-making realm of those charged with bringing about student success and academic performance. Transformative actions lead to community-held ideals about what the outcomes of a strong school experience will provide the community, also known as benefits. Performative actions are the tasks required to complete the school experience that measures individual and collective trajectory against goals or benchmarks often measured through standardized assessments and social-emotional monitoring. By differentiating between these two distinct components of an accountability framework, communities, including all school stakeholders, can share the decision-making about values and outcomes without barriers to performative progress that come from educator domain infringement.

The findings discussed in Chapter 4 contributed to the framework I developed to reconceptualize accountability in education that centers on communities and the people rather than on performative tasks like standardized tests. However, it identifies performative tasks as

something left to the expertise of the education workforce for curation and execution. Though ownership over the rights to define accountability in schools is something that is the center of political debates across this country, it is a worthy exercise to endure on behalf of the public good that is public schools. It is essential to work to reconnect the trust of communities to their educators and their lawmakers on a local, state, and federal level. Trust is an element that sits at the center of accountability efforts and is a defining characteristic that helps or hinders implementation or execution.

Defining and redefining accountability is an essential task. What we have learned through the past 100 years of educational accountability is that the definition evolves with the pressing needs of each generation. It serves to ensure that participants in the framework know what the transformative and performative goals are for individuals and groups. It also is based on the idea of collective accountability, which emphasizes the importance of local communities and educators in determining the goals and standards for accountability. This approach differs from traditional forms of educational accountability in US public schools, which are often based on standardized test scores and other metrics that are determined at the state or national level. It provides educators with a context for their work that contributes toward defining their identity in the professional community. It will also define the range of work where professional autonomy resides. If a framework like this can be lifted in communities across the country, there is a chance that educators and all members of the school community will feel proximate to the decisions being made to change from where we are to where we want to go in public education.

The importance of creating an environment where systems encourage educators to view accountability as an opportunity for growth and improvement, rather than as a burden or punishment cannot be more evident by the research. In fact, being proximate to change was a

major theme from the data and one that directly links educators to the mission of impacting students in schools positively. It is one of the nuances of the data, that educators articulate not only being able to make impactful decisions in their roles, but that they are called to do so. If only the external levers for change, such as policy mandates that impose on the system, would be supportive of this effort to leverage educators as agents for change. This shift in mindset can help educators to focus on what really matters in education: supporting the growth and development of students in a more focused manner. To do this, it is essential that a redefining of what educational accountability is takes place.

Educational accountability is the system that balances transformative and performative actions on a scale that calibrates to the needs of a specific community. It includes putting transformative actions at the center of organizational planning and owned by the community at large and performative actions in the decision-making realm of those charged with bringing about student success and academic performance. Transformative actions lead to community-held ideals about what the outcomes of a strong school experience will provide the community, also known as benefits. Performative actions are the tasks required to complete the school experience that measures individual and collective trajectory against goals or benchmarks often measured through standardized assessments.

The findings discussed in this chapter will contribute to developing a framework for reconceptualizing accountability in education that centers on communities and the people, not the performative tasks like standardized tests. Though this is something that has been tried time and again, it is a worthy exercise to endure on behalf of the public good that is public schools. It is essential to work to reconnect the trust of communities to their educators and to their lawmakers on a local, state, and federal level. Trust is an element that sits at the center of

accountability efforts and is a defining characteristic that helps or hinders implementation or execution.

Defining and redefining accountability is an essential task. What we have learned through the past 100 years of educational accountability is that the definition evolves with the pressing needs of each generation. It serves to ensure that participants in the framework know what the transformative and performative goals are for individuals and groups. It also is based on the idea of collective accountability, which emphasizes the importance of local communities and educators in determining the goals and standards for accountability. This approach differs from traditional forms of educational accountability in US public schools, which are often based on standardized test scores and other metrics that are determined at the state or national level. It provides educators with a context for their work that contributes toward defining their identity in the professional community. It will also define the range of work where professional autonomy resides. If a framework like this can be lifted in communities across the country, there is a chance that educators and all members of the school community will feel proximate to the decisions being made to change from where we are to where we want to go in public education.

Discussion

There is an identity that is formed and transformed through the engagement process of colleagues in a workplace. This is a unique endeavor in a school where meals are shared, bathroom breaks happen in unison and the business topic of the day is almost always a person and their experience. This simple but huge detail, the notion that the nature of the work is entirely around people matters more than anything. Having leadership that supports the discussion of people, experiences, and problems people are having or successes people are sharing is critical to the health of an organization. Law firms celebrate the court case victories.

Businesses celebrate the monetary rewards of good revenues. Schools celebrate the rewards of people as they learn and grow. Having a leader that understands the fundamental difference in how the community is shaped where the rewards and chief struggles involve people directly matters.

School leaders are responsible for spreading the gospel that intelligence is not entirely fixed (Farenga et al., 2010, p. 2). Their role is to constantly push teachers and parents to understand that while children come to school with certain abilities and knowledge that their specific school environment is created specifically to maximize learning potential. It is generally understood that “individuals are not born with fixed, unchangeable levels of intelligence” (Gottfredson, 1994, p. 958). This is so very important because if educators and leaders do not believe this statement, then what is their purpose? To help children stay the course? And if this is to be believed, what purpose do legislation and efforts for reform serve at all?

Instead, school leaders must help the adults in children’s lives see that there are specific ways that knowledge and skill acquisition can be enhanced in school and at home. Pea (1993) introduced the concept of distributed intelligence to help lay people compartmentalize the ways we acquire knowledge and skills. This type of intelligence is broken up into three parts: physical, social, and symbolic resources. Teachers must develop an understanding of who they are phenomenologically so they can be stronger in their work. So again, how do we marry the ideals of relationships based, learning, and living with the proclamatory nature of legislation?

Beginning with the research questions, I set out to uncover how the teaching force can redefine and reclaim the narrative of teaching in an accountability-focused era. I then sought to understand what would be needed for policymakers to conceptualize legislation around accountability in education so that they differentiate for districts and schools the way we want

teachers to differentiate for students. The data yielded categories of trust, professional autonomy, professional identity, and proximity to change. In many ways, these categories exemplify the hypothesis at the beginning of this research, that educators are a marginalized group in their own profession. The policies imposed on the educator workplace and the expectations that parents and broader society have about the ways in which schools should be held accountable for the development of children create a dynamic that has education at a tipping point worthy of not only investigation, but a metamorphosis.

The result of this dissertation is a call to renewal of a framework for reconceptualizing accountability in education by shifting educator focus from a compliance-oriented or performative approach to a growth-oriented or transformative approach. Traditionally, accountability in education has been viewed as a means of ensuring compliance with standards and regulations. However, this dissertation has found that this approach can be limiting and counterproductive because it often focuses on ratings or punishments rather than growth.

Tanner (2022) a framework for reconceptualizing accountability in education based on the idea of “responsive accountability,” which emphasizes the importance of local communities and educators in determining the goals and standards for accountability. This approach differs from traditional forms of educational accountability in US public schools, which are often based on standardized test scores and other metrics that are determined at the state or national level.

Here I am proposing a new approach to accountability that is based on several core principles. Accountability should focus on supporting growth and improvement, rather than simply enforcing compliance to standardized tests. Collaboration among educators, administrators, and other stakeholders is critical for promoting growth and improvement. Accountability should promote equity by addressing systemic inequalities and ensuring that all

students have access to high-quality education. Data should be used to inform decision-making and support growth, rather than simply to evaluate performance. Accountability should be grounded in a commitment to professionalism and continual learning.

By emphasizing these principles, accountability encourages educators to view accountability as an opportunity for growth and improvement, rather than as a burden or punishment. This shift in mindset can help educators to focus on what really matters in education: supporting the growth and development of students.

This new framework emphasizes the importance of local communities and educators in setting goals and standards for accountability. It is about removing the lay bodies like boards of education from decisions that must be made by educators. This approach involves a shift away from a narrow focus on test scores and toward a more holistic view of student achievement that takes into account factors such as student engagement, critical thinking skills, and social and emotional learning. This approach will lead to more meaningful and effective forms of accountability that better reflect the needs and values of local communities.

Overall, while traditional forms of educational accountability in US public schools have emphasized the importance of standardized test scores and other metrics, this new framework for reconceptualizing accountability in education places greater emphasis on the role of local communities and educators in determining the goals and standards for accountability.

Redefining Accountability

Education is an industry that is ripe for change. The data is clear that the definition of accountability in education is different to the individual. One of the most challenging aspects of making sense from the survey data came from identifying that the common definition of accountability across over 1000 respondents was disparate from one another. Even with a

common definition given at the beginning of the focus groups, the unique lived experience and understanding of accountability by an educator could not be discounted. Those with more years of experience have lived and worked in various eras of accountability rooted in different areas of focus. This has to change.

Transformative actions are the type of actions that involve a significant shift in an individual's beliefs, values, and assumptions about the world. It requires a critical examination of existing knowledge and a willingness to challenge and potentially change one's worldview. Transformative actions are also associated with personal growth, self-discovery, and a deeper understanding of oneself and others. These actions are more difficult to manage, but it is essential that they not be ignored.

Performative actions, on the other hand, are focused on achieving specific outcomes or goals, often measured by standardized tests or assessments. The emphasis is on acquiring skills, knowledge, and behaviors that can be performed or demonstrated in a specific context. Performative learning is associated with traditional education models, where students are expected to memorize information and demonstrate their knowledge through assessments.

It cannot simply be about scores on a standardized test, or attendance, or what any one viewpoint of school sees. It has to be broader and more targeted at the same time. It is time to define educational accountability as the system that balances transformative and performative actions on a scale that calibrates to the needs of a specific community. It includes putting transformative actions at the center of organizational planning and owned by the community at large and performative actions in the decision-making realm of those charged with bringing about student success and academic performance. Transformative actions lead to community-held ideals about what the outcomes of a strong school experience will provide the community,

also known as benefits. Performative actions are the tasks required to complete the school experience that measures individual and collective trajectory against goals or benchmarks often measured through standardized assessments.

This definition recognizes the place of several common accountability approaches that we have seen enacted over the past decades. They are performative and as such, revolve around the measurement of success of students across a range of concepts and skills over time. What this definition requires is that decisions of these performative actions be placed in the decision-making realm of those charged with bringing about student success and academic performance. It honors school performance accountability which is the hallmark approach to holding schools and districts accountable for their performance based on specific performance measures, such as school ratings, accreditation status, and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. These performative tasks have a place in this newly defined accountability space that allows for performance to be recognized. However, it puts the onus on educators who are responsible for building up student capacity for performance at the table to select which measures make the most sense.

Even in a standards-based accountability system, where clear academic standards for what students should know and be able to do, and then holding schools and districts accountable for meeting those standards, there is a place in this newly minted definition of education accountability. Imagine the work of aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessments to the standards where the only obligation from the policy is that educators responsible for the implementation are included meaningfully in the decision-making process.

The literature on performance-based use included using methods and metrics to hold schools and districts accountable for specific performance measures, such as student

achievement, teacher effectiveness, and school climate. Alternatively, value-added accountability, or the approach that involves measuring the progress students make over time and holding schools and districts accountable for the growth they achieve. This includes using measures such as student growth percentiles, value-added models, and other statistical methods to estimate the impact of schools and teachers on student learning.

Trust

The core issues of trust in education that make teachers mistrust lawmakers often stem from a lack of collaboration and communication between policymakers and educators, as well as a lack of alignment between policies and the needs of students and teachers. Coming into this research I expected several topics to rise to the top. The lack of funding and resources for schools can make it difficult to provide high-quality education to all students as expected. Educators speaking to the mistreatment of the profession by outsiders or the strain of teaching during a pandemic might fill up the focus group space. I even expected, as the research led me to believe, that issues of retention and motivation might be overwhelming issues worthy of discussion. However, this was not the case. Trust, as the absence of communication and collaboration about measuring and publicly rating the intimate work of learning and teaching was heavier on educator minds than anything else.

Teachers feel that lawmakers prioritize political agendas over the needs of students and educators, which leads to policies that are not in the best interests of students. This leads to a lack of trust in lawmakers' motives and to teachers feeling that their concerns are not being heard or addressed. It creates a barrier between educators and a key measure of their work that society at large must resolve. Real estate agents look at school ratings. Families moving into town look at school report cards. Home values are often tied to the strength of community schools. But what

makes a community school such is the community itself, not the test scores. We need to include transformative data that highlights the ways in which schools are helping young people be inspired, engaged, and thriving to be their best self. Test scores only capture a narrow view of that, and in this new definition of education, accountability would still be available in the profile of performative data. However, the transformative information is where educators will regain their trust in the legislative process related to education.

Professional Autonomy and Identity

Education accountability reforms have significantly impacted the professional autonomy and identity of educators in America. The past 100 years of education policy related to accountability, for the most part, did not directly impact the role of educators. Making space for learners marginalized in society who, by breaking down legal barriers and gaining access, changed the classroom dynamic but not the teacher's fundamental role. Fast forward to the past three decades, where local, state, and federal policymakers have iterated on various policy methods to account for educator effectiveness via student achievement. You have a policy that directly targets the what and how of teaching. It has permeated schoolhouses and penetrated the profession in a way that requires mass recalibration about what it means to be an educator in America.

Increased emphasis on performative actions like standardized testing has placed a greater emphasis on data and testing to measure student progress and teacher effectiveness. Standardized testing received an accelerant-like boost from federal programs like the *Race to the Top*, where states were incentivized to include teacher effectiveness ratings based on student performance metrics into law. Unions were critical of the program's emphasis on standardized testing and using test scores to evaluate teachers and schools. Teacher unions argued that the *Race to the*

Top program focused too heavily on test scores and ignored other factors contributing to student success, such as poverty, inadequate resources, and the need for wraparound services. It was not the inclusion of data that educators objected to. Rather it was the prominent placement of the data at the center of school improvement instead of data being a byproduct of great schools that was problematic.

This data placement at the center must change in a new education accountability model. Data and student performance are outcomes of a quality experience. They are byproducts and should be placed appropriately as such in the performative aspect of an accountability framework, not at the center. The educator focus group of this dissertation was consistent with their support for efforts to improve education outcomes and their concerns about the potential impact of specific policies on their profession and the broader education system. They were also clear that the focus on tests takes away from the focus on community, the focus on relationships, and the focus on content.

In the proposed framework, much of the assessment economy of schools can remain intact. The inclusion of assessments and data has been beneficial components to utilize. They have been negative to have at the center of the education lifecycle, sometimes more so than even students. Educators have had to become more adept at analyzing and using data to inform their instructional decisions. However, time is taken to administer tests and attend to data days. Educators in my focus groups spoke about the added element of selecting education resources that meet grade-level standards but also could be measured in line with the new industry standard assessments. This added layer of performative outputs on classroom activities changed the focus of educators.

Not only did the focus of educators change, but so did the focus of parents and administrators. Greater scrutiny of teacher performance has led to an increased focus on teacher evaluations and performative accountability measures. Educators have come under greater pressure to perform well and to demonstrate their effectiveness. This has led to a shifting role for teachers, with a greater focus on being data-driven, results-oriented, and accountable for student progress. The changes in how teachers approach their work, emphasizing collaboration, data analysis, and continual improvement, are great. However, the data has shown that if educators had a choice, they would not choose performative tasks like assessments.

The external pressure from legislation to produce results via standardized assessments is real. Education accountability reform has increased pressure and stress for educators as they work to meet high standards and demonstrate their effectiveness. This has led to concerns about burnout and job satisfaction among teachers. At the beginning of this dissertation, it was thought that pressure would result in motivation and retention issues. Instead, the results have shown clearly that the profession sits at a point of stagnation that must be addressed. That educators would rather wait out leadership tenures and transitions is a poor sign of life for educators. In a new accountability model, we can re-engage educators and administrators to bring life back into the profession, teams, and communities.

Overall, education accountability reform has changed the professional identity of educators in America by placing greater emphasis on data and testing, increasing scrutiny of teacher performance, shifting the role of teachers, and increasing pressure and stress on educators. While these changes have helped to raise the bar for education in America, they have also presented challenges for educators and led to concerns about the impact of accountability on the teaching profession.

Proximity to Change

There are differences in the professional perspectives on educational accountability between classroom teachers and superintendents. Classroom teachers view educational accountability from a more direct and immediate perspective as they teach and assess their students daily. Educators describe their view of accountability as a way to measure their effectiveness and identify improvement areas in their instruction. They also see accountability as a way to ensure that students are meeting academic standards and making progress toward their educational goals. These education accountability events fall under the performative action side of this new accountability framework.

The literature on educational accountability has led the profession astray of progress. Decades of accountability reform and research were designed and applied to impact educator motivation and retention. However, the evidence from this study of survey participants indicates that educators are not lacking motivation. They are not looking to leave the profession either. They noted clearly that they are more likely to wait out leadership than to act. They are, however, inclined to participate and act. They recognize their proximity to change and merely need to have systems in place that put their voice in the correct position. As content delivery and assessment owners, educators are in a prime location to contribute to the expectation setting of performative tasks. They are keenly aware of the cadence of the school year and the degree to which concepts, skills, and attainment are expected year over year.

In considering how to leverage the current strengths of our system to enact change relative to a newly defined accountability structure, one must look at where those with proximity to change find their voice valuable. Educators in the survey and focus groups identified their proximity to change as most evident in their instructional setting. Trust between educators grows

as the reference point for measurement moves closer to their proximity. So instead of deciding how and when to assert performative actions in a school in the hands of state or federal bureaucrats, let us shift the recommendations to those in the classroom striving for success. It seems only practical to have educators participate with those they trust the most to enact laws of accountability, which are highest at the local level.

On the other hand, superintendents view educational accountability from a more systemic perspective, as they are responsible for overseeing the overall performance of their district. They describe their view of accountability as a way to monitor the progress of all students across the district, identify areas for improvement in district-wide policies and procedures, and allocate resources effectively to support student success. It is in this definition of “supporting student success” that superintendents identify their true value for transformative impact. It is in this transformative space that leaders know when to focus on performative goals rather than something more integral to the community like kindness for others. The perspective of those proximate to the current situation matters in this context.

Overall, while both classroom teachers and superintendents share a common goal of improving student outcomes, they have different perspectives on how best to achieve this goal through educational accountability and their perspectives should be accounted for separately.

Addressing the Research Questions

How can the teaching force conceptualize and reclaim the narrative of teaching in an accountability-focused era and how can policymakers conceptualize legislation around accountability in education so that they differentiate for districts and schools the way we want teachers to differentiate for students? This begins with an active professional voice that ensures performative tasks are appropriately placed outside the center of the work. When you ask

educators about their goals for students, almost never is success on standardized assessments included. This is true for parents and communities as well. We need to support our educators in reclaiming ownership of their domain expertise and identify the transformative goals for classrooms, and schools first with the performative metrics selected after. In no other profession are decisions as high stakes as this made without research and professional input.

To do this, time must be dedicated to discussing what high-level goals are for schools and students. These hopes and dreams conversations are essential to capture adults' focus on the essential needs of children. Shared community values transcend the academic seat time of school. These values, when named and targeted, help drive a culture of belonging among members of the community. When members of a community feel that they belong, engagement becomes more readily possible, and the work of educators to nurture that community to learn concepts and skills can take place (see Figure 2). Regular check-in opportunities to assess the degree to which progress is being made, and teams have to be formed to carry the work forward. This is not something that will have a week of testing set aside in the calendar. It will require maintenance and attention by educators, by leaders, and by boards of education.

In considering what some of the activities might be, the table below has a start. The transformative activities nestled at the top are the priorities of the community. They are not ever a thing. Instead, they are ideals that will be strived for in perpetuity, but school is an essential player. Hopes, dreams, happiness, kindness, engagement, climate, and culture are the words that were mentioned in the focus groups by people when talking about where they want to spend their time. The performative activities at the bottom are currently embedded in many educational institutions. What this new model will change is the placement of these activities at the center of the educational universe.

The table honors the requirements of the state to impose assessments but shifts activities that are more valuable to communities into the center. Requirements are kept, but the focus has shifted.

Table 6

Two Types of Activities Toward a New Education Accountability Model

Transformative activities	Frequency
Measures a pathway toward the hopes and dreams of the school community	Identified and revisited quarterly to allow for chance or situational needs
Measures a pathway toward the hopes and dreams of the broader community	Identified and revisited quarterly to allow for chance or situational needs
Measures happiness in school	Monthly check in by educators
Measures student abilities to engage outside of school community	Monthly check in by educators
Kindness	Monthly check in by educators
Culture and climate for educators	Monthly check in by educators
Culture and climate for students	Monthly check in by educators
Culture and climate for outside stakeholders	Monthly check in by educators
Performative activities	Frequency
Acquisition of grade level content and skills	Determined by educators for summative, formative determination
Progress towards state standards	Determined by educators for summative, formative determination
LEA mandated metrics	Determined by LEAs
State mandated metrics	Determined by state entities

Limitations Transferability

The limitations of the work continue to be the geography of the participants and variability of laws and environments across settings. So many school systems operate with varying degrees of local control and regional, state, or national systems of operation. This

research cannot adequately examine the nuances of geopolitical variation across the nation. Rather it identifies the need to have strategic systems in place to ensure that variances can be discerned. This leaves much work to accomplish beyond this research which recommends a resetting the table in educational accountability.

Additionally the current national climate for education and what the ultimate goals or purposes of the experiment, that is public education must be resolved in order for any real gains to be achieved on the issue that benefits schools and society. Transformative work can be limiting for those lacking the imagination to dream big.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are communities and even educational service centers representing multiple school communities engaged in early stages of this benefits based work that puts what is referred to here as transformative actions ahead of performative actions. They do so at the risk of public exposure of their efforts to counter the state system for school monitoring. It would be beneficial to study these communities to see how their school communities change regarding professional autonomy and identity, trust among stakeholders, and having a shared vision for what it truly means to be accountable in schools. In success, there will be models worthy of replication.

Reflections

Closing over 2 decades into the teaching profession, I certainly have acquired a longer list of questions than answers about the purpose of schooling. Before I can even consider the function of teaching and learning, I am drawn to questions about order, reform, societal shifts, and societal stagnation. “Within a social justice context, school leaders are being called on to take up the role of transformative intellectuals, public intellectuals, or critical intellectuals—, that is, individuals who engage in critical analysis of conditions that have perpetuated historical

inequities in schools and who work to change institutional structures” (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005, p. 202). What does it say about our educational system that our social order is as segregated and disparate as ever before? As I read about education and work in the profession, I am constantly working to reconcile how what I think and feel about education jives with what I read, experience and want. This feeling is enhanced even more by the experiences I now face as a father of four school age children. Now my reality of being a school professional and a former student are segueing with the life many have of the school customer experience. I feel my experiences on all ends of the home to school relationship provide me a unique perspective, one that others have spoken from before, to question our system and the need for varied levels of change ahead.

What does it say when the National Commission on Teaching and America’s future publishes their report 50 years after *Brown v. Board of Education* about a two-tiered educational system? Their recommendations mirror recommendations of past reports for defining what it means to be a nation at risk. In the report they asked for a mere acknowledgment of the actual inadequacies of schools across the country. In the report they asked explicitly for policymakers both local state and National to listen to teachers and students about what is required to improve the condition outcomes for students in the educational school system. Among other recommendations, Carrol et al. (2004) wrote that I need to nurture well-qualified professionals into the teaching ranks and establishing standards by which teachers can work towards providing access to education to students is critical.

Most vividly my experiences in the assessment-crazed culture of our schools has contributed to my view of how we collect evidence of learning, evidence of teacher impact, and evidence of instructional design. The authenticity of experiences appears to be muddled to the

point that school work produces nothing more than Stepford students. How can we, as a society, accept laws that require a common standard of learning, a common achievement level of status, but desire innovation and creativity in the post graduate world? We know more than to accept this in our school system. We know that school children are the functional product of a loving home and a supportive community. We know that students' experiences as it relates to a veritable assortment of demographic and economic factors, matters. So why then do we force ourselves to accept legislation that pushes the audience, educators, away so far that it is no longer a question about whether they care, but can they comply?

My experiences in the formal walls of public school have always been a challenge since I never conformed as a student or teacher to the expected paradigms presented to me. As a school leader where I have now spent the vast majority of my professional years, I question more about schooling than ever before. These broad issues occupy my professional thinking and have me interested in pursuing the next frontier of educational service as it relates to leadership, assessment, and the structure of schooling. My feelings are magnified by the relationship I have with schools as a parent and the never ending struggle to know what actually happens inside those walls my daughter and sons call school.

I often wonder about the different ways that I have come to know and understand myself as it relates to the organization of schooling. Charles Vest (2005), the former president of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in *Pursuing the Endless Frontier*, wrote extensively on his phenomenological development while serving at its helm. His emphasis on defining the leadership characteristics of the university and then each department and team member modeled for all school organizations that leadership can help anyone thrive.

Management involves doing things right and leadership involves doing the right things right (Vest, 2005, p. i), This semantic difference makes it easy to see why so many schools and districts thrive and fail at the whim of the people who wield influence. The line that separates a school manager and an instructional leader can be discerned in a number of ways. It is getting more clearly defined with every meta study of what makes a principal “effective.” However, those studies can only define the role of the school leader in an oversimplified and impersonal manner. I write this with the strong belief that the personal role of the educational leader and their independent relationship with each staff member, student, and community member play an integral part in the success of their leadership. The same can be said for the measured success of each teacher in their class, grade level team, and school.

The role of the school leader is immeasurable, yet can be easily defined. School leaders simply need to stage (Culbert, 2005) for the success of their teachers while simultaneously gaining an understanding of themselves phenomenologically so that they can be stronger in the context of their work. The “engagement with others in cultural practice” cannot be overstated as it relates to developing identity in a school (Rodgers & Scott, year, p. 735). The emotions of teachers connected with one another and their perceived leader is far more powerful than the relationship teachers have with a research-supported way of behaving in another school setting. Yet all of this consideration for relationships in the workplace and relationships as it stands for school leaders and teachers is conflicted when we look at educational policy and accountability measures. How the bridge between policy and nationalistic goals that may be ideal get married to the need for the nuance of the school community is part of this research dilemma.

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Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

Invitation to Participate

Demographic Data

1. Which area best describes your educational setting?
2. Which of the following best describes the grade level of the students you teach this school year?
3. What best describes your primary teaching role?
4. How long have you worked in preK-12 education?

Your Perspective On Change

5. Which of the following changes or reforms has directly or indirectly impacted you in the past four years? (Select all that apply)
6. Briefly, share the change or reform that has impacted your classroom experience the most in the past four years.
7. School change or reform can be rooted from many places. Which of the following best describes the root location of reforms that have impacted you the most in the past four years?
8. In considering the impact school change or reform has on your classroom, which best describes the impact over the past four years?

Input & Influence Locally on Reform

9. When our school implements changes or reforms, we can make adjustments as needed to fit our needs?
10. I have the support I need to implement changes or reforms.

11. Plans for changes or reforms are discussed with me or the teaching staff in advance of the implementation.

12. I can influence the plans being made at our school for the implementation of changes or reforms.

How Much Reform or Change

13. How would you describe the amount of change or reform experienced by you in the past four years?

14. I move forward as I have in the past until the reform or change comes and goes.

15. The amount of required change or reform makes me reconsider the profession altogether.

16. The changes or reforms that come my way have made me a better educator on behalf of students.

17. The changes or reforms that come align with my philosophy of teaching.

18. Just when I get comfortable with the change or reform, it is gone or changes.

19. This is the same change or reform we had in the past, we're just calling it something else.

Plans for changes or reforms are discussed with me or the teaching staff in advance of the implementation.

20. I can influence the plans being made at our school for the implementation of changes or reforms.

Influence

21. The premise of most changes or reforms in school are positive.

22. I trust the people writing the changes or reforms into Federal law

23. I trust the people writing the changes or reforms into state law.

24. I trust the people writing the change or reforms into local law.

25. I am given an opportunity to provide feedback on changes or reforms before implementation.
26. I am aware of who represents me with the local governing body of my school.

Appendix B: Focus Group

Invitation to Participate

My name is Joseph Hailpern and I am a Doctoral Student in the Curriculum, Advocacy, and Policy Doctoral Program at National Louis University. I am conducting a study entitled “Educational Accountability: A Look Into Policy.” The first phase of this study took place in December 2019 when I surveyed teachers and asked them to respond to a series of questions related to accountability reform efforts in public schools.

This second phase of the study involves a **focus group who are involved in accountability reform efforts within their school community over the past two to three years**. The participants in this focus group will engage in a group interview that will allow participants to react to one another and co-construct responses within a shared space. Teachers will participate in their own focus group while administrators will have their own space.

If you are interested in contributing to the study and furthering your own learning in the area of educational accountability, please [click here](#) to review the dates for participation.

Thank you,

Joseph Hailpern

Appendix C: Focus Group

Prompts and Discussion Starters For Educators and Administrators

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Overview of Research and the Focus Group Phase of the Study
- Defining Educational Accountability -
- Defining Educational Reform
- In what ways are these intertwined?
- What are your impressions of education reform initiatives?
- How have activities related to reform impacted you as an educator?
- Who do you hold responsible for the creation of the reform activities you have been involved with?
- Do you feel like you are informed about what aspects of your work are related or because of reform efforts?
- Do you feel like you have the influence to impact the reform efforts in the scope of your position?

Appendix C: National Louis University IRB Approval



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Office of the Provost
122 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60603-6162

www.nl.edu
P/F 312.261.3729

December 3, 2019

Joseph Hailpern


Dear Joseph Hailpern:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has received your application for your research study "Education accountability: A Look at Policy" IRB has noted that your application is complete and that your study has been approved by your primary advisor and an IRB representative. Your application has been filed as Exempt in the Office of the Provost.

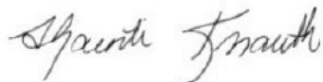
IRB: ER00692

Please note that the approval for your study is for one year, from December 2, 2019 to December 2, 2020. As you carry out your research, you must report any adverse events or reactions to the IRB.

At the end of your approved year, please inform the IRB in writing of the status of the study (i.e. complete, continuing). During this time, if your study changes in ways that impact human participants differently or more significantly than indicated in the current application, please submit a Change of Research Study form to the IRB, which may be found on NLU's IRB website.

All good wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Sincerely,



Shaunti Knauth, Ph.D.
Chair, IRB

Appendix D: National Louis University IRB Extension Approval



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Office of the Provost
122 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60603-6162

www.nlu.edu
P/F 312.261.3121

July 1, 2022

Joseph Hailpern


Dear Joseph Hailpern:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has received your application for amendment of your research study "Education accountability: A Look at Policy". The amendment with extension is approved.

IRB: ER00692
Amendment approved 28-Jun-2022

Please note that the approval for your study is for one year, from **2-Dec-2022 to 2-Dec-2023**. As you carry out your research, you must report any adverse events or reactions to the IRB.

At the end of your approved year, please inform the IRB in writing of the status of the study (i.e., complete, continuing). During this time, if your study changes in ways that impact human participants differently or more significantly than indicated in the current application, please submit a Change of Research Study form to the IRB, which may be found on NLU's IRB website.

Please also ensure that your Human Subjects Research (HSR) certification stays active throughout any amendments to your research period.

All good wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Sincerely,



Shaunti Knauth, Ph.D.
Chair, IRB