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# Politics, Accountability, and Learning: Insights from the RISE Programme's Political Economy Case Studies

PE 14

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## Abstract

The RISE (Research on Improving Systems of Education) Programme political economy team focused on “adoption” (PET-A) examines the political conditions required to put learning at the center of an education system. This work stream has produced 12 historical case studies and three synthesis papers which draw on this rich material. This paper is part of the latter effort and offers a comparative analysis across five of the countries with RISE Country Research Teams (Ethiopia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Vietnam), as well as additional case studies focusing on Chile and Peru. Building on the RISE systems framework (Pritchett, 2015), our political economy analysis incorporates issues of competing interests, power, and political strategy. We focus on the promoters and blockers of learning-oriented education reform and their respective powers and strategies to parse out the political contestations that are endemic to the reform processes that impact system coherence around learning. In this paper, we present a binding constraints framework to explore what a politics for learning might look like and examine areas of intervention that present critical bottlenecks impeding a country's ability to deliver learning outcomes which, if addressed, pose the potential for large impact relative to other constraints. We draw upon the PET-A country case studies to include analysis of different factions and reform champions within government, including but not limited to the executive office (president/prime minister), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, competing ministries, decentralized government levels, and local leaders. In doing, we elucidate how politics permeate nearly all accountability relationships in education systems and the likelihood that any given program will positively impact learning.



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## **Politics, Accountability, and Learning: Insights from the RISE Programme’s Political Economy Case Studies**

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“Politics is not the obstacle; it is the way change happens.”

--David Hudson, Clarie McLoughlin, Heather Marquette, and Chris Roche (2018:7),  
Developmental Leadership Program

“Just as the formation of nations has been a highly contested process, so, too, the construction of systems of instruction has been marked by frequent conflict. This is not surprising: Given the central role of schooling in meeting conditions for societal survival and in the production of freedom, any method that is compulsory and spends public funds is likely to be controversial.”

--Ernesto Shiefelbein & Noel McGinn (2017: 315), *Learning to Educate*

## **1. Introduction: the politics inherent in accountability relationships**

“Good education reforms are stymied by politics.”

“Political forces foster rent-seeking behavior and corruption that doom countries to poor learning outcomes.”

“Leaders need to cultivate the ‘political will’ to support learning-oriented reforms.”

“We know what to do to improve learning outcomes, but we don’t know how to navigate the politics”

These refrains, and many similar, are common among education policymakers and analysts in the international educational development community. But, just as politics can prevent well-intentioned reforms from taking root, no well-intentioned reforms ever take root except through political processes. Thus, we are motivated by Hudson et al (2018) in seeking to contribute to a “body of case evidence to better understand how and why politically-informed change happens (or doesn’t).” We also recognize that education is contested terrain –just as much at the heart of nation-building and socialization as it is the bedrock of learning and human capital formation. As Shiefelbein and McGinn (2017) note, conflict and political contestation are pervasive in the creation and development of education systems and their objectives.

The RISE (Research on Improving Systems of Education) Programme created two political economy research teams, one of which focused on “adoption”—or, how the political conditions have been (or could be) fostered to put learning at the center of an education system, while understanding the challenges to doing so. This work stream has produced 12 historical case studies based loosely on a political settlements approach as well as three papers which draw on this rich material to learn from it. This paper is part of the latter effort and is comparative analysis across five of the countries with a RISE Country Research Teams (Ethiopia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Vietnam), as well as additional case studies focusing on Chile and Peru. A complete list of linked case studies are in Table 1 below.

In his 2015 RISE working paper, Pritchett writes of “creating” education systems and acknowledges that there are lots of components to that creation to include designing, diagnosing, and developing. Our contention is that part of that creation is political, and this comprises the focus of this paper: the role of politics in fostering or blocking the creation of education systems that are coherent for learning.

*Table 1 Complete List of RISE PET-A Country Case Studies*

<b><u>The Political Economy of Regulation: Chile’s Educational Reforms since the Return of Democracy</u></b>
Pablo González, Andrés E. Fernández-Vergara, Gemma Rojas, and Luis Vilugrón
<b><u>Reforms for Another Planet: The Global Learning Crisis, Political Drivers and Expert Views on Egypt’s Edu 2.0</u></b>
Hania Sobhy
<b><u>The Political Economy of Educational Reform and Learning in Ethiopia (1941-2021)</u></b>
Alec Gershberg, Asnake Kefale, and Belay Hagos Hailu
<b><u>Ideas, Policies and Practices: Tracing the Evolution of Elementary Education Reform in India since 1975s</u></b>
Priyadarshini Singh
<b><u>The Political Economy of the Learning Crisis in Indonesia</u></b>
Andrew Rosser, Phil King, and Danang Widoyoko
<b><u>Impacts of Political Breaks on Education Policies, Access and Quality in Nigeria (1970 – 2003)</u></b>
Chidi Ezegwu, Dozie Okoye, and Leonard Wantchekon
<b><u>Contested Identities; Competing Accountabilities: The Making of a ‘Good’ Public Schoolteacher in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan</u></b>
Soufia A. Siddiqi
<b><u>Reforming Education in the Context of Weak States: The Political Economy of Education Reforms in Peru 1995-2020</u></b>
María Balarín and Mauricio Saavedra
<b><u>The Politics of Improving Learning Outcomes in South Africa</u></b>
Martin Gustafsson and Nick Taylor
<b><u>What Is the Point of Schooling? Education Access and Policy in Tanzania since 1961</u></b>
Ken Ochieng' Opalo
<b><u>The Politics of Education and Learning in Vietnam: Contributions to a Theory of Embedded Accountabilities</u></b>
Jonathan London and Bich-Hang Duong

The RISE framework rests on the assumption that the outcomes of a system emerge from interactions between relationships of accountability and design elements in that system (Kaffenberger and Spivack, 2022). It builds on the 2004 World Development Report framing of service delivery systems, including education systems, as a set of principal-agent relationships between these actors (World Bank, 2004). The framework describes the interactions between actors in an education system, including citizens (parents, children, and communities); executive, legislative, and fiduciary authorities; education authorities and organizations; and frontline

workers (school leaders, head teachers, teachers). The actors in a system have a set of interconnected roles in these relationships. These relationships of accountability are categorized as *politics* (or formal political processes), which describes accountability of the highest authorities of the state to its citizens; *compact*, which refers to the accountability of education authorities to the highest authorities of the state; *management*, or the accountability of frontline education providers to education authorities; and *voice and choice*, which is the accountability of frontline providers to children, parents, and communities. See Table 2, as well as Spivack (2021) and Pritchett (2015) for more detail on these relationships of accountability. The RISE framework also organizes the many ways that education system actors interact using five policy design elements which describe the principal-agent relationship in terms of what the principal expects the agent to do (*delegation*), how the principal equips the agent to deliver (*finance*), and how it monitors (*information*) and incentivizes this delivery (*support* and *motivation*). Further details on these design elements can also be found in Spivack (2021) and Table 2 below.

Table 2 The RISE 5x4 education systems framework

Five features of each relationship of accountability (Principal (P) to Agent (A))	Principal-agent relationships			
	<b>Politics:</b> Citizens and the highest authorities of the state	<b>Compact:</b> Highest authority of the State to Education authority	<b>Management:</b> Education authorities and schools, school leaders, and teachers	<b>Voice &amp; Choice:</b> Service recipients (parents/children) and providers of service (schools, school leaders, teachers)
<b>Delegation:</b> What the principal wants the agent to do.				
<b>Finance:</b> the resources the principal has allocated to the agent to achieve assigned task.				
<b>Information:</b> how the principal assesses the agent's performance				
<b>Support:</b> preparation and assistance that the principal provides to the agent to complete the task.				
<b>Motivation:</b> How the principal motivates the agent, including the ways in which agent's welfare is contingent on their performance against objectives.				
Performance of agent is the endogenous outcome of the interactions between the agents, which are parameterized by the features of the relationship. Systems deliver learning when strong relationships of accountability align across design elements around learning objectives				

[Spivack \(2021\)](#) adapted from Pritchett (2015)

Coherence, or incoherence, in these interactions determine the emergent properties of the system. While perfect coherence across all relationships of accountability and policy design elements is not necessary for learning, the RISE framework hypothesizes that some degree of coherence or alignment is needed. Key elements of an education system may be coherent for purposes other than learning, with the considerable success in expanding enrolment achieved by many education systems in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) as a relevant example (Pritchett 2013). In many countries, the contemporaneous decrease in learning levels indicates that these systems were coherent for enrolment, but not learning (Beatty et al., 2018; Le Nestour, Moscoviz, and Sandefur 2022). Opportunities for coherence and incoherence also exist across relationships of accountability in one or more design element and across design elements in one or more relationships of accountability. Using relevant examples, we discuss different kinds of incoherences in Section 3, and use vignettes pulled from the RISE country case studies to explore these kinds of interactions in Sections 4 through 8.

Our political economy analysis builds on the RISE systems framework but attempts to go beyond it by explicitly incorporating issues of competing interests, power, and political strategy. In particular, we focus on the promoters and blockers of learning-oriented education reform and their respective powers and strategies as we seek to parse out the political contestations that are endemic to reform processes that impact system coherence around learning. We examine how these can create good outcomes (e.g., Vietnam and, to some extent, Chile); promote aggressive ‘big results now’ type actions and their abandonment (e.g., Tanzania); engender persistence in traditional modalities of promoting access (e.g., Ethiopia); dampen technocratic progress due to chaotic and discontinuous national politics (e.g., Peru); or lead to good reforms being modified or blocked in the political process (e.g. teacher reform in Indonesia). We draw upon the PET-A country case studies to include analysis of different factions and reform champions within government, including but not limited to the executive office (president/prime minister), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, competing ministries, decentralized government levels, and local leaders.

The power, alliances, resources, communications strategies, and implementation strategies of these actors are considered using vignettes pulled from the PET-A case studies. In addition, our work seeks to identify open and latent reform opponents and supporters (donors, NGOs, business community, church, private schools, parents and teachers’ unions) and their respective power, resources, and communications strategies.

We attempt to discern whether incoherences we identify arise for other possible reasons such as simple lack of technical or organizational skill, or lack of awareness that the issue matters. Where these explanations are not sufficient, we draw out the political reasons why the links are broken. Where possible, we will attempt to make suggestions on how the political barriers and opportunities might have been better identified.

## 2. Clarifying definitions of politics

The RISE 5x4 framework calls one of the principal-agent relationships “politics,” which focuses on the relationship between citizens and the highest authorities of the state. However, there are clearly political aspects inherent in all the relationships of the 5x4. For instance, in discussing how to use the 5x4 framework to understand the coherence (or lack thereof) of accountability in an education system, Spivack (2021 p. 12) provides the following example:

“Teacher training programmes are a critical activity through which education authorities support frontline school leaders and teachers, but they often fail to improve learning outcomes. These activities fall within the “Management–Support” cell of the matrix... Applying the systems framework can reveal the incoherences at the root of why a seemingly well-designed programme can fall short of a goal to improve student learning outcomes.”

Table 3 The RISE 5x4 education systems framework: teacher training

Five features of each relationship of accountability (Principal (P) to Agent (A))	Principal-agent relationships			
	<b>Formal Political Processes:</b> Citizens and the highest authorities of the state	<b>Compact:</b> Highest authority of the State to Education authority	<b>Management:</b> Education authorities and schools, school leaders, and teachers	<b>Voice &amp; Choice:</b> Service recipients (parents/children) and providers of service (schools, school leaders, teachers)
<b>Delegation:</b> What the principal wants the agent to do.				
<b>Finance:</b> the resources the principal has allocated to the agent to achieve assigned task.				
<b>Information:</b> how the principal assesses the agent's performance				
<b>Support:</b> preparation and assistance that the principal provides to the agent to complete the task.			e.g., Teacher training as part of a new curriculum or pedagogical approach	
<b>Motivation:</b> How the principal motivates the agent, including the ways in which agent's welfare is contingent on their performance against objectives.				
Performance of agent is the endogenous outcome of the interactions between the agents, which are parameterized by the features of the relationship. Systems deliver learning when strong relationships of accountability align across design elements around learning objectives				

Spivack (2021) adapted from Pritchett (2015)

Yet we know that political forces play a key role in shaping the possibilities of what kinds of teacher training programs may be adopted; how such programs are implemented (supported, undermined, etc.) given the management relationship between education authorities and schools, school leaders, and teachers; and the likelihood that any given program will positively impact learning. This paper uses seven country case studies to examine the politics inherent within the relationships of the RISE 5x4<sup>1</sup>, thus enhancing our understanding of the relationships between politics, accountability, systems approaches, and learning. The paper then contemplates how such insights might be utilized by champions of education reform who must navigate the politically charged environments of education reform.

Based on an idealized notion of politics as an accountability relationship, the 5x4 framework embeds a normative notion that those who exercise sovereign power "ought" (in a normative sense) to derive this authority from the "consent of the governed." This term refers to the idea that the legitimacy of state power is only justified through the consent of the society over which that power is exercised. At the same time, the 5x4 is intended to be a descriptive framework and in many countries state power may be only weakly derived from the consent of the governed. In these cases, the highest authorities of the state reject the necessity of this consent and instead attempt to invert this accountability relationship, making the citizens accountable for contributing to the purposes of the state.

To mitigate confusion between the *politics* accountability relationship as described by the 5x4 above (i.e., the relationship between citizens and the highest authorities of the state), and the *political* dynamics inherent in each cell of the 5x4, we adopt language borrowed from Levy and Walton (2013) to describe the principal-agent relationship in the RISE 5x4 between citizens and the highest elected authorities of the state (including inversion of this relationship as described above) as *formal political processes*, while continuing to use the term *politics* to refer to the processes of contestation taking place at all levels of accountability relationships, and indeed between design elements of the education system as well. This shift is reflected in Tables 3 and 4 as well as all tables that follow.

### **3. Introducing the “binding political constraints” framework**

Our entry point for exploring how political contestations create (in)coherence as understood within the RISE 5x4 is displayed in Table 5. We examine categories of incoherence across the various principal-agent accountability relationships (formal political processes, compact, management, and voice and choice) as well as design elements (delegation, finance, information,

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<sup>1</sup> While this paper does not describe each country case in depth, we refer the reader to both the cases themselves and case summaries available at <https://riseprogramme.org/research?f%5B0%5D=country%3APolitical%20Economy%20-%20Adoption>



support, and motivation).<sup>2</sup> We refer to these incoherences as binding political constraints<sup>3</sup> following Gershberg (2021) (see Table 5).

Incoherence between design elements for learning outcomes might occur in a system where a state indicates a desire to improve learning outcomes by announcing a set of reforms targeting foundational literacy (delegation) but fails to allocate sufficient finance to the reform because most expenditures are tied up in recurring teacher salaries (finance). Political forces could make this incoherence likely, or hamper reforms intended to address the incoherence. Incoherence between accountability relationships might occur in a system where the state indicates that foundational learning is a priority (delegation), allocating additional funds to education (finance), but then fail to set out metrics by which educational agencies will be evaluated (information), creating confusion about how additional resources are to be spent within the sector (Kaffenberger & Spivack 2022). Political forces could also make this incoherence likely, or hamper reforms intended to address the incoherence.

In reviewing the seven case studies for vignettes that describe politics that enabled or hampered learning, we found that examples tended to cluster more heavily within the compact and management accountability relationships. While formal political processes and voice and choice relationships hold key insights to relevant political dynamics and will be explored in a future paper, time constraints and the results of the heat map that emerged from our readings of the case studies led us to focus primarily on vignettes within and across the compact and management relationships in this paper. Table 4 below presents our heat map, with darker cells representing those which contain relatively more examples.

*Table 4 Heat map of examples of politics in case studies*

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<sup>2</sup> Because, as defined here, incoherence in policy adoption necessarily occurs *between* different accountability relationships and/or design elements, we collapsed individual rows titled delegation, finance, support, information, and motivation in the original binding constraints table from Gershberg (2021) into rows that simply capture incoherence between design elements, and incoherence between accountability relationships. In later sections, we address the further possibility of incoherence between both design elements and accountability relationships, as is indeed common in multiple case studies.

<sup>3</sup> By binding constraints, we are referring to critical areas of intervention that present critical bottlenecks impeding a country's ability to deliver learning outcomes which, if addressed, pose the potential for large impact relative to other constraints. This is adapted from the economic reform literature and more specifically from the Hausmann, Rodrik, and Velasco Growth Diagnostic (2005).

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>				
<b>Finance</b>				
<b>Information</b>				
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Motivation</b>				

Authors calculations

Based on our review of the case studies, we aggregated the frequency and strength of examples in the table above. We cannot say anything generalizable about this frequency, but we can note that future work might pay particular attention to contestations in this realm.

Table 5 Binding political constraints to political coherence in the compact and management accountability relationships

<b>Principal-Agent Relationship</b>	<b>Location of Incoherence</b>	<b>Conceptual Question</b>
<b>Compact</b>	Incoherence between design elements within the compact relationship	In systems where this is a binding political constraint to a compact coherent for learning outcomes, we see the highest state authorities adopting rhetoric that signals one or more sets of priorities to Ministry of Education (MoE), while either adopting actions that indicate another set of priorities or failing to make related changes to other rows (delegation, finance, support, information, and motivation).
	Incoherence between the compact relationship and other relationships within the same design element	In systems where this is a binding political constraint to a compact coherent for learning outcomes, we see misalignments between the priorities/actions of the highest state authorities to the MoE, and the MoE to frontline education providers, and/or end users to frontline educators.
<b>Management</b>	Incoherence between design elements within the management relationship	In systems where this is a binding political constraint to a management relationship coherent for learning outcomes, we see the MoE adopting rhetoric that signals one or more sets of priorities to frontline educators, while either adopting actions that indicate another set of priorities or failing to make related changes to other rows (delegation, finance, support, information, or motivation).
	Incoherence between the management relationship and other relationships within the same design element	In systems where this is a binding political constraint to management coherent for learning outcomes, we see misalignments between the priorities/actions of the MoE to frontline providers, and the citizens to highest state authorities, the highest state authorities to MoE, and/or end users to frontline educators.

Adapted from Gershberg 2021

Finally, our analysis builds on the work of Brian Levy, whose 2022 PET-A synthesis organized the ways in which formal political processes influence education systems using three kinds of political-institutional context. In *dominant* contexts, power is centered around a strong political leader or party with a hierarchical approach to governance that flows from the highest executive offices to the education ministry and on to districts and schools. In *impersonal competitive* contexts, the political settlement is distributed across several key actors and contestations take place following impersonal rules (high rule of law) and impartial enforcement mechanisms (low clientelism). In *personal competitive* contexts, the political settlement is again distributed across multiple actors, but contestations take place via self-enforcing deals (low rule of law) that are based on existing relationships (high clientelism). In each of the vignettes discussed in the sections that follow, we note how these political-institutional contexts shape approaches to policymaking and policy implementation in case study countries.

#### **4. Political incoherence between design elements in the compact relationship**

In the compact relationship between the highest governmental authorities and education authorities, there exists the potential for both coherence and incoherence between the different policy design elements of delegation, finance, support, information, and motivation. Here we introduce vignettes from the Ethiopia and Tanzania case studies to illustrate the way that the politics of regional ethnic federalism and of contestation, respectively, contribute to incoherence in the compact relationship of accountability that undermine the formation and implementation of policies intended to improve learning.

##### **4.1 Ethnic federalism and curricular inconsistency in Ethiopia**

Our first vignette considers Ethiopia during the ethno-linguistic federalist political coalition era spanning 1991-2019, best known as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) era. It discusses politically driven incoherence in the compact relationship between delegation, information, and motivation design elements and its consequences for learning outcomes. Ethiopia is described as a dominant context that has experienced large-scale shifts over three major periods regarding both political leadership and the goals of the education sector (Levy 2022). Despite the scale of these shifts, major sources of continuity since the 1940s are the twinned goals of “enhancing the socio-economic development of the country and the legitimacy of the ruling elite” (Gershberg, Kefale, and Hailu, 2023, p. 48).

Education policy has been claimed as an utmost priority to each of the time periods presented in the case study, which span the Imperial, Derg, and EPRDF regimes. This is evidenced most recently by the timing of EPRDF's 1994 Education and Training Policy, which was developed even prior to the drafting and adoption of a new national constitution. Levy describes the expanded educational access during this era as “part of a broader transition to the ‘form’ of multi-party democracy, without actually surrendering political control” (Levy 2022, p. 10). This

‘form’ has its similarities to ‘isomorphic mimicry’ (Pritchett, Woolcock and Andrews 2010), and was formally democratic but exhibited a strong dispensation toward repressive semi-authoritarianism. The provision of social services, particularly education, represented a core element of state legitimacy and its consolidation of power. This resulted in an approach to education that prioritized massive expansion in line with the government’s developmentalist orientation, but also prioritized decentralization of education in line with its federal arrangement.

The politics inherent in the implementation of its decentralized federal arrangement present our first instance of incoherence through its implications for the compact relationship of accountability between the highest government officials and regional governments responsible for providing education. EPRDF’s highly decentralized government places responsibility for primary education with regional governments. This includes selecting the language of instruction; writing, printing, and distributing textbooks; and writing and administering regional exams at the end of the second year of primary school. The result is curricular inconsistencies across regions, including the grade at which English instruction commences following initial instruction in more than twenty different languages across the country. This sets the stage for incoherence between the policy design elements of information and support in the compact relationship of accountability. As these exam results cannot be compared across regions, the MoE lacks the information needed to support struggling regions. Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) performance is generally poor nationwide but varies significantly across regions. Yet efforts to standardize regional exams have run against concerns about undermining regional self-governance and thus ethnic identities, indicating further incoherence between the delegation and information design elements within the compact relationship.

Despite EPRDF’s heavy reliance on donors like the World Bank and USAID, national-level decisionmakers have maintained an impressive level of policy autonomy, resisting pressure to implement recommendations like abbreviated primary school that don’t align with their priorities. This is in part following from the relative coherence of the regime’s ideological and policy framework, against which they are able to make their case in instances of unwelcome donor pressure. However, learning outcomes remain low, which Gershberg, Kefale, and Hailu argue is related to limited accountability for performance within the decentralized system (2023). At the *woreda*<sup>4</sup> level, political leaders have the greatest incentive to increase access and student pass rates (as compared to other educational priorities) in order to avoid criticism. This has led to tampering with assessment results before they are reported to zonal and regional level, which indicates additional incoherence between information and motivation design elements in the compact relationship. It almost goes without saying that reform processes that underestimate the intransigence inherent in regional self-governance and ethnic identities have a likelihood of being politically incoherent, yet the design and implementation strategies (particularly those

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<sup>4</sup> In Ethiopia, woredas refer to districts below the regional state and zonal levels.

touted by the donors) seem to have assumed otherwise. Table 6 below offers a visualization of these incoherences across multiple design elements within the compact relationship.

*Table 6 Political incoherence between design elements in the compact relationship: Ethiopia 1991-2019*

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>		Regional governments are responsible for primary education, including LOI, textbooks, and regional exams at end of P2		
<b>Finance</b>				
<b>Information</b>		Decentralisation has resulted in curricular inconsistencies across regions, including the grade at which English instruction commences. EGRA performance is poor but variable across regions, but efforts to standardise exams ran against concerns about undermining regional self-governance		
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Motivation</b>		Woreda leaders are incentivized to increase access and student pass rates, so to avoid criticism assessment results may be tampered with before they are reported to zonal and regional level		

Gershberg, Kefale, and Hailu (2023)

#### 4.2 Contestation of Universal Primary Enrollment in Tanzania

Our next vignette focuses on the period of 1967-1977 in Tanzania, starting from the launch of President Nyerere’s Education for Self Reliance policy. It discusses politically driven incoherence in the compact relationship of accountability between policy design elements of delegation, finance, and motivation, and explores the ways that changes in education policy objectives were informed by shifting political settlements. Since its independence in 1961, Tanganyika - which merged with Zanzibar to become Tanzania in 1964 – has been defined as a dominant context with stable leadership, although there have been dramatic swings in what that leadership has defined as the purpose of education across sub-periods.

During the early independence years (1961-1967) the government set an explicit target ceiling of 50 percent for the primary enrolment, as manpower planning was the primary purpose of the education system. By 1967, the ruling Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) (later known as Chama Cha Mapinduzi or CCM) had consolidated into a one-party state and had moved from the party-based pragmatism of the early independence years to socialist developmentalism. This surfaced significant internal tensions between TANU’s ideological aims regarding education, which tended toward ambitious but “poorly planned rapid reforms” (Opalo 2023, p. 20) on the one hand, and the capacity of state bureaucracies to implement policies in practice on the other.

The 1967 Arusha Declaration outlined Nyerere's vision of socialism under *Ujamaa*<sup>5</sup> and launched his landmark Education for Self Reliance (ESR) program which increased centralization of education policy and provision around the overarching purposes of civic education, nation-building, and socialist agrarian development. In 1969, nationalization of schools and reorganization of local government more generally served to foreclose potential sources of deviation from these educational purposes, reflected by the replacement of technocrats within the MoE with party ideologues.

Prior to this, local governments had elected officials that could raise revenue via taxation and were in charge of basic education. This offered some local leeway to innovate during implementation or otherwise adapt or subvert top-down policy directives. As TANU blamed this leeway for exacerbating subnational disparities, the national government abolished the local government system and replaced it with regional administrations. New TANU guidelines subordinated government operations to the party and eroded technocratic influence, which had until then been focused on Nyerere's previous policy of expanding education in line with fiscal and administrative capacities. This created political incoherence between the delegation and motivation design elements within the compact relationship, visualized in Table 7 below. Primary schooling became a terminal tier of education, and the curriculum was reformed to emphasize "functional literacy for participatory socialist citizenship and technical skills for improving agrarian productivity" (Opalo 2023, p 37).

In 1974, factional competition from within TANU pushed forward the deadline to achieve universal primary enrolment (UPE) from 1989 to 1977, an announcement that caught the education bureaucracy by surprise and marked an abandonment of the planning timelines that had emerged from technocratic evaluations of Tanzania's fiscal and administrative capacity to achieve UPE. In response to popular demand, this new approach to UPE was implemented by waiving fees which further undermined the state's fiscal capacity to deliver on its promises and created further political incoherence between the finance and motivation cells in the compact relationship (see Table 7 below). Beyond ideological arguments about the necessity of UPE, promising expanded access to education enhanced TANU's political legitimacy, which Levy points out is common across all PET-A countries with a dominant political settlement (2022).

Combined with the broader economic crises facing the nation, region, and world in the 1970s and 1980s, Tanzania failed to achieve UPE by 1977. The UPE policy was officially abandoned in the 1980s, not to be reintroduced until 2001. Tanzania achieved near-universal primary enrolment in 2007 but was unable to maintain it and the percentage of primary aged out of school youth has hovered between 15 and 18 percent since 2014 (UNESCO 2022). Combined with the financial crisis and stagnating learning levels beginning in the 1970s, TANU and ESR's

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<sup>5</sup> Directly translated as *fraternity* or *familyhood* in KiSwahili, Ujamaa is better understood as "cooperative economics" and was the socialist basis for Nyerere's national development project.

failure to meet their ideologically accelerated timeline ultimately boosted the influence of technocratic advisors in the structural adjustment period that followed.

Thus, in systems where incoherence between design elements is a binding political constraint to a compact coherent for learning outcomes, we see the highest state authorities adopting rhetoric that signals one or more sets of priorities to MoE, while either adopting actions that indicate another set of priorities or failing to make related changes to other policy design elements. In Ethiopia, the intransigence of the ethnic federalist arrangement in an otherwise centralized system led to curricular inconsistencies and assessments of learning that couldn't be compared across regions, preventing MoE from obtaining the information needed to ensure equality of learning outcomes at the national level. In Tanzania, the dominant context during TANU's turn toward socialist developmentalism meant that contestation between ideological and technocratic actors resulted in policies that ignored fiscal administrative realities at the expense of learning quality.

Table 7 Political incoherence between design elements in the compact relationship: Tanzania 1965-1980

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>		Nyerere's stated policy objective was to ration access to education in line with fiscal-administrative capacity		
<b>Finance</b>		State financial capacity constraints dictated rationed access to education in the near term and longer time horizons to achieving UPE		
<b>Information</b>				
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Motivation</b>		Ideological factions within TANU pushed to shift educational policymaking from technocrats to the party, which pushed UPE deadlines up by over a decade in spite of constrained implementation capacity		

Opalo (2023)

## 5. Political incoherence between compact and other accountability relationships

Next, we'll consider the other side of the compact relationship. Beyond incoherence within design elements, there is also potential for coherence and incoherence between the compact relationship and other accountability relationships in the 5x4, which include politics, management, and voice and choice. We use a different set of vignettes from the Ethiopia and Tanzania case studies to show how contestation and electoral pressures related to path

dependencies, respectively, are drivers of incoherence between different relationships of accountability within the same design element with negative impacts on learning.

### **5.1 Contestation of reform priorities in Ethiopia**

This vignette considers the period of 1974-1991 when Ethiopia was led by the Derg military regime, and discusses politically driven incoherence in contestation of reform priorities in the delegation design element between the compact and voice and choice relationships of accountability. Political actors within Ethiopia's dominant political settlement have worked to expand access to education in pursuit of broader political legitimacy for decades. During the Derg regime, enhanced educational access was also a part of the way in which the military government demonstrated its responsiveness to segments of the population that had been historically excluded (Levy 2022), launching an adult literacy campaign and generally prioritizing access to those living in the rural countryside.

The increased attention paid to rural areas occurred in the context of the Derg's shift to Marxist-Leninist ideology, which emphasized education as a tool for development as well as the inculcation of Marxist-Leninist ideology and the value of production. The implications of this shift for educational expansion are discussed further in Section 6.1 below, but for this vignette it is important to recognize that this also meant that external education policy advisors, curriculum experts, and teacher trainers from the United States and western Europe were replaced by the soviet advisors from East Germany, eastern Europe and the USSR. While the Derg's priorities were likely shaped to some extent by the guidance of their new patrons, the resource constraints of a war economy and the West's continued willingness to engage despite the alliance shift to Soviet camp meant that western donors remained important to development, especially in education, health, and humanitarian assistance sectors. Symbolic of the west's continued influence, English remained the language of instruction from junior high forward, keeping the development and procurement of teaching and learning materials largely dependent on the English-speaking world.

It was from this position of political strength that in 1983, an all-Ethiopian task force convened the Evaluative Research on the General Education System of Ethiopia (ERGESE) which convened teachers, students, and parents to develop recommendations ranging from teacher profession improvements to student counselling services. In comparison to a similar review of the education sector conducted at the end of the Imperial era (and the subject of Section 7.1 below), ERGESE was quite participatory: pulling its core study group from Addis Ababa University, the task force was comprised entirely of Ethiopians. However, it still did not comprise "credible national debate on education, or that stakeholders expressed their views freely" (Teshome 2008 and Tefera 1996 in Gershberg, Kefale, and Hailu 2023).

However, rather than a good-faith solicitation of meaningful input, these consultations turned out to be tools to galvanize support by legitimizing the regime's preferred policies and the preferred



policies of their soviet bloc advisors. Notably, this was the case even though ERGESE was itself financed by western donors and institutions, namely UNICEF, the World Bank, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The recommendations emerging from ERGESE were never implemented as the committee failed to address issues that the government perceived as the shortcomings of the education sector, and the government quietly shelved ERGESE recommendations in favor of a Ten-Year National Perspective Plan which took a decidedly different direction. This highlights a key political incoherence between those involved in the compact relationship and those involved in the management and voice and choice relationships, visualized in Table 8 below. As the Derg regime had reoriented the purpose of education to include inculcation in Marxist-Leninist ideology, this may go some way in explaining why the recommendations were shelved<sup>6</sup>. That is, the stakeholders involved in ERGESE didn't appear to have identified inadequate Marxist-Leninist ideological emphasis as one of the education system's biggest problems and couldn't (or wouldn't) reshape their recommendations into something more aligned with this purpose. Ignoring the politics creating this incoherence amounted to unrealistic "wishful thinking" that failed to foster reforms to improve learning.

Table 8 Political incoherence between compact and other accountability relationships: Ethiopia 1974-1991

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>		ERGESE recommendations were never implemented as the committee failed to attempt to answer what the government perceived as the shortcomings of the ed sector		ERGESE involved teachers, students, and parents to develop recommendations ranging from teacher profession improvements to student counselling services
<b>Finance</b>				
<b>Information</b>				
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Motivation</b>				

Gershberg, Kefale, and Hailu (2023)

## 5.2 Saliency of schooling over learning in Tanzania

This vignette covers the past two decades in Tanzanian history, starting from the reinstatement of its UPE policy in 2001. It describes politically driven incoherence in the delegation policy design element between formal political processes, compact, and voice and choice relationships of accountability, and the consequences of this incoherence for learning outcomes. Following the reintroduction of multi-party politics in 1992, the CCM party transformed itself from a one-party

<sup>6</sup> This is an example of what Pritchett (2018) called "socialization" or "nation-building."

state to a party that consistently won elections across most levels of elected office. Despite this continued dominance, CCM's politicians came under greater expectations of electoral responsiveness and popular demands have become harder to ignore. In the case of education, elected officials have a strong incentive to invest in increased access and at least signal a degree of commitment to improving learning outcomes. As budgetary constraints force some degree of tradeoffs between these two goals, “the combined effects of electoral incentives and lack of administrative and fiscal capacity reinforce the political bias towards the provision of schooling – often at the expense of learning” (Opalo 2023, p 8).

In his case study, Opalo emphasizes that this is in part a consequence of the *longue durée* of poor school access in Tanzania despite decades of promises to expand it. As discussed in Section 4.2, after achieving UPE in 2007 nearly one in five primary-aged children are out of school fifteen years later. Given this backsliding in schooling access, political incentives remain decidedly in favor of improving enrolment numbers while concerns about learning quality have trended downward in recent years. Following the reintroduction of UPE in 2001, levels of concern about education among Tanzanian women surveyed by Afrobarometer were not correlated with their opinions of government performance in the education sector, or their overall rating of the president, members of parliament, or members of the LGA assemblies. The link between schooling expansion and electoral support is complicated, however, as previous research from the RISE Tanzania Country Research Team found that incumbent parties' vote share increases after promising to build new schools but decreases after schools are built as implementation is typically messier than promised and construction costs are shouldered by the local community (Habyarima, Opalo, and Schipper 2020).

As elsewhere, education's influence on electoral outcomes is conditional on the political salience of the sector. Schooling tends to be more salient than learning, and vote choice is more likely to be driven by factors that are access-related, attributable, and readily visible, like school construction and the abolition of fees, rather than quantifiable learning outcomes. This is in part due to parental tendencies to attribute their children's academic successes to innate intelligence or parental investment than the efforts of politicians (Opalo 2023) and is formed in a national context of persistently limited educational access since independence.

Discussions of salience beg the question: salient to whom? Access to schools is clearly salient to the Tanzanian electorate, as seen in Table 9 below. Yet as part of the broader global community, and in the eyes of many policymakers, there is also tremendous salience to the “learning crisis” and the global policy diffusion that has emerged from that discourse. A policy consensus in favor of mass learning as a core goal of the education system emerged in 2005. Efforts toward this goal have been tempered by path dependencies related to historical under-investment in fiscal-administrative capacity, as well as an historical secondary school system that was tailored to elites to such an extent that even members of the upper middle class were shut out of public

provision and lacked private options. As noted in Table 9 below, education policymakers have come under increased external pressure from global regimes like the Sustainable Development Goals and broader discourses relating to the learning crisis. Reforms like the 2005 Competency Based Curriculum and the 2013 Big Results Now! initiative have sought to focus the system on improving learning levels linked to a set of quantifiable outcomes, creating political incoherence between relationships of accountability in the delegation design element.

Importantly, the CCM party has lost its role at the core of education policymaking. The dominant policy actors in the sector during the period under discussion include “government policymakers in various specialized agencies and institutions, as well as global education policy experts” (Opalo 2023, p 22). In a context with weak institutions, dominant policy coalitions are able to override formal institutional avenues to formulate and implement policy, shaping ideas about the goals of education and their implementation. As weak state and institutional capacity weaken political incentives, how policymakers navigate the tradeoff between expanding enrolment and improving learning outcomes lies increasingly with their own normative commitments (Opalo 2023, 2022). Unfortunately, the case does not offer insights on how to promote such commitment. Nonetheless, technocratically minded policy coalitions have been able to maintain considerable (if not absolute) emphasis on learning despite clearly stated citizen preference for schooling. Opalo concludes that this approach is not going to help Tanzania to solve its part of the learning crisis anytime soon, but it goes some way to explaining why, in the face of voter pressure toward (and frankly, the comparative ease of) opening new schools, there remains any focus at all on learning.

Table 9 Political incoherence between compact and other accountability relationships: Tanzania 2001-Present

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>	International regimes exert pressure on leaders to focus on learning outcomes. Electoral incentives indicate that access is more salient than learning	2005 Competency Based Curriculum and the 2013 Big Results Now! initiative focused on improving quantifiable learning outcomes		In a context of persistently limited access to schooling, parents and communities express preferences for school construction and fee abolition, even at the explicit cost of lower learning outcomes
<b>Finance</b>				
<b>Information</b>				
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Motivation</b>				

Opalo (2023)

Thus, in systems where incoherence between the compact relationship and other relationships within the same design element presents a binding political constraint to learning outcomes, we see misalignments between the priorities and actions of the highest state authorities to the MoE, and some combination of citizens to the highest state authorities, the MoE to frontline education providers, and end users to frontline educators. In Ethiopia, contestation between MoE (representing the dominant political settlement) and a broad technocratic coalition meant that well-researched reform suggestions were shelved in favor of more ideologically-based priorities at the expense of improving learning. In Tanzania, path dependencies related to decades of unfulfilled promises of schooling provision translated into electoral incentives to increase access and an acceptance of the tradeoff for learning quality.

## **6. Political incoherence between design elements in the management relationship**

In the management relationship between the highest governmental authorities and education authorities and frontline educators, there exists the potential for both coherence and incoherence between the different policy design elements of delegation, finance, support, information, and motivation. To do so, we use vignettes from the Ethiopia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Peru case studies to illustrate a plethora of ways that the politics contributes to coherence and incoherence in the management relationship of accountability. We highlight the prevalence of political incoherence for learning within the management relationship and underline our assertion made in Section 2 regarding the importance of considering politics beyond formal political processes.

### **6.1 Contestation of educational expansion in Ethiopia**

Our first vignette in this section returns to Ethiopia's Derg regime (1974-1991) and discusses politically driven incoherence in the management relationship between delegation, finance, and support design elements as educational scope and access were expanded at a time of shrinking education budgets with negative consequences for learning outcomes. The purpose of education under the Derg regime, like that of the Imperial regime before it, was to prepare young people for careers in government bureaucracy. Unlike the Imperial regime, the Derg also expanded the education sector's remit to include the goal of forming socialist citizens. This presented the potential for political incoherence between policy design elements in the management relationship of accountability between education and frontline education providers. Socialist countries with whom the regime was aligned exerted a substantial influence on education policy and implementation, with advisors from socialist countries playing particularly important roles in curriculum development. Newly introduced elementary and secondary subjects were aligned with the curricula of other socialist countries and included agriculture, production technology, political education, home economics, and introduction to business.

Forming socialist citizens also required the expansion of educational access a substantial increase in enrolment. The 1976 Programme for National Democratic Revolution proclaimed free education to the masses, distilled as “education for production, education for scientific inquiry, and education for socialist consciousness” (Tefera 1996 in Gershberg, Kefale, and Hailu 2023, p. 15). This was a political imperative, as education was necessarily a part of legitimizing and building support for the Derg regime.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, an insurgency in the north of the country and several smaller ethnonational insurgencies elsewhere required a substantial increase in defense budgets. In response, the portion of the government budget dedicated to education declined, which resulted in significant drops in per student expenditures. As most of the education budget went to teacher salaries, this dramatically constrained teacher remuneration just as demand for more teachers reached a fever pitch. Predictably educator quality declined, highlighting the political incoherence between delegation, finance, and support design elements in the management relationship visualized in Table 10 below. The shortfall in trained elementary school teachers was met in part by an influx of untrained and unqualified *digoma* teachers who were recruited as high school students and thus had not themselves finished high school. In addition to the teaching responsibilities for which they were inadequately prepared and supported, teachers were co-opted by the local government to support administration and implementation of political and economic development programs. At this time, elementary school instruction was required to take place in Amharic, limiting access in areas where Amharic wasn’t spoken and preventing both teachers and students from understanding the language of instruction, textbooks, or teaching and learning materials. This, plus overcrowded classrooms, led to a decline in English language proficiency of both teachers and students.

Learning outcomes, particularly on internationally comparable metrics, further declined thanks to an overemphasis of ideology over core subject as well as further resource allocation to the construction of schools that did not meet minimum standards. Pedagogical conditions deteriorated in the absence of proper planning, sufficient qualified teachers, and adequate infrastructure. As discussed in a previous section, this outcome is not purely the result of poor governance, but a predictable result given features of the dominant political settlement as it prioritized education for state and ideological legitimacy rather than foundational learning. In this way, political incoherence between delegation, finance, and support resulted in low learning outcomes throughout the Derg period, despite increases in access.

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<sup>7</sup> The political dynamics in the Ethiopian educational reforms during the Derg regime dovetail well with Paglayan’s (2022) “theory of education as a state-building tool that is deployed when mass violence threatens the state’s viability” and the function of a “mass education system designed to teach obedience” and respect for authority.

Table 10 Political incoherence between design elements in the management relationship: Ethiopia 1974-1991

	Formal Political Processes	Compact	Management	Voice & Choice
Delegation			New curricular subjects were introduced, and school access was expanded	
Finance			Percentage of education as part of the government budget declined, resulting in significant drops in per student expenditures	
Information				
Support			Pedagogical conditions deteriorated in the absence of proper planning, sufficient qualified teachers, and adequate infrastructure	
Motivation				

Gershberg, Kefale, and Hailu (2023)

## 6.2 Teacher recruitment, clientelism, and deprofessionalization in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

We offer two strong vignettes which exemplify political incoherence between design elements in the management relationship from the Pakistan PET-A case study which focused on the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). KP’s political settlement can be described as a personalized competitive political settlement, but as Siddiqi (2021) points out, this political settlement may better be described as *on its way to* sustained competitive decision-making as Pakistan has not yet completed its third complete civil election cycle following years of military rule. In this personalized context, educational policies are formulated and implemented in the space of competing bureaucratic and political domains that are served by a variety of socio-cultural logics—some formally notified, but many personalized interpretations of formal regulations which lack consistently-applied rules of the game.

Our first vignette from KP considers a case wherein the efforts of an apolitical teacher’s union to improve learning outcomes are drowned out by informally organized groups of teachers advocating for single-issue policy changes that create political incoherence between the information, support, and motivation cells of the management relationship of accountability. Public teachers are recognized as specialist bureaucrats through a 2011 Act of KP Assembly, which has expanded their ability to assert pressure on “the bureaucratic domain of educational decision-making...without necessarily operating as technical collectives” (Siddiqi 2021, p. 70).

The All-KP Primary Teachers’ Association (APTA) is the only deliberately apolitical teachers union in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They proudly advocate on impersonalized grounds, marshalling “evidence, research, and other educationally-relevant principles” (Siddiqi 2021, p. 70). This approach stands in contradistinction to other teacher groups, including more informally

organized teacher cadres who lobby educational decisionmakers using more personalized discourses, typically related to single-issue bread and butter demands. In a personalized competitive context like Pakistan, APTA's unwillingness to engage in more "personalizable logic" amounts to the union ceding crucial political and discursive space to others who will. Two striking examples involve non-APTA teacher cadres recruited via political patronage networks, rather than through formal teacher qualification routes. In the first example, underqualified teachers on short term contracts led protests in 2014 in the Prime Minister's neighborhood that resulted in their appointment as full-time permanent government officers shortly before the next election cycle in 2017.

Underqualified teachers hired through patronage networks in the early 1990s were sacked by a new administration in the mid-1990s as part of a purge of all clients appointed by the previous regime. After a fifteen-year delay, the legislative alliances forged via this patronage network resulted in a court decision that reinstated all political appointees from the early 1990s including teachers with full pay. A court order set up a separate teacher training path for this cadre of returning teachers because their original recruitment criteria was not based on teaching or content knowledge qualifications. Most will reach retirement age and leave the teaching workforce in the next few years. Siddiqi's commentary on this case is worth quoting at length:

*Justice was inevitably interpreted and awarded through an apparent need to "institutionalise" bureaucratic norms, not through nuanced attention to technical performance (how well the teachers amongst these sacked employees had been able to improve student learning). The missing emphasis on the significance of the education process in an apparent dispensation of justice to teacher-bureaucrats who were, in fact, teacher clients to an elite political patron, is demonstrative of public sector inefficiencies. As Levy and Walton (2013) note, these types of inefficiencies can arise from multistakeholder governance arrangements in elite clientelistic systems – in other words, where power can be transacted by multiple actors using their respective socio-cultural capital, but in the interest of competing social outcomes." (Siddiqi 2021, p. 72-73)*

In both examples, we see political incoherence for learning between design elements of motivation and support in the management relationship of accountability, as visualized in Table 11 below. As aspiring "specialist bureaucrats," contractual hires were able to convert to a permanent status via the political (and legal, in the latter example) enactment of their bureaucratic aspirations. The result is a management relationship that is fragmented by the demands of multiple agents, in a reversal of the principal-agent relationship between education decisionmakers and frontline educators. Given the nature of these political contestations, it is not clear how any substantive reforms in the management relationship of accountability could have fostered coherence around learning.

Table 11 Political incoherence between design elements in the management relationship: Pakistan 1990-2017

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>				
<b>Finance</b>				
<b>Information</b>			APTA teacher's union advocates for educational policymaking using impersonalised approaches like evidence and research, while other stakeholders (including non-APTA teachers)	
<b>Support</b>			1990s: Unqualified teaching cadres hired through political patronage networks were rehired 15 years after being sacked, with a separate teacher training path devised to provide the teaching skills and content knowledge they didn't have when originally recruited	
<b>Motivation</b>			1990s: Underqualified teachers hired through patronage networks in the early 1990s were sacked by a new administration in the mid-1990s, then reinstated with full pay 15 years later, leaving 5-7 years to be formally trained before they retire 2014-17: Underqualified teachers on short term contracts led protests in the PM's neighbourhood that resulted in their appointment as full-time permanent government officers shortly before the next election cycle	

Siddiqi (2021)

In our second vignette from the Pakistan case study, we examine a different kind of political incoherence for learning within the management relationship via KP's recent teacher recruitment policy that, in its attempts to rapidly fill vacant teaching positions, has resulted in the deprofessionalization of KP's public teacher workforce.

The 2011 Elementary and Secondary Education Department (ESED) teacher recruitment policy represented an effort to improve the quality and quantity of the teacher workforce, particularly in difficult-to-fill rural postings. Rather than employing any assessment that might engage with technical elements of teaching, ESED's process for new teacher induction uses general standardized testing as a proxy for pedagogic ability. Previous requirements included professional teacher qualifications like a Certificate of Teaching or B.Ed, which were removed in favor of "generalist recruiting" which encouraged individuals with at minimum a 2-year Bachelor's degree in any subject to consider teaching as a career, although this in effect attracted people who had performed too poorly in their preferred career track and instead fallen back on teaching as a matter of economic survival.



Further limiting the potential of this policy to improve learning, the degree requirement has come to stand in for teacher training in the face of severe teacher shortages. Instead, newly certified but untrained teachers are deployed to schools armed with tablets containing asynchronous training materials to follow at their own pace. These qualifications do not capture whether teachers want to or will stay in rural posts, and a requirement that teachers remain on post for the entire year is not enforced. Under the new recruitment policy, primary teachers are allowed to select four or five schools in their local district. However, districts cover a large geographic area and teachers spend up to 25 percent of their salary commuting from their home village to their assigned school elsewhere in the district. Rural villages have complained to local governments, expressing a preference for less qualified teachers (likely from the villages themselves) but who are willing to stay and work. Disregard for these voices has resulted in a recruitment policy that is incoherent for learning, as seen in Table 12 below. The demands placed on teachers in rural postings are quite specific, yet their evaluation and progression is governed by “generalist bureaucratic discourse and its ensuing rules” which are themselves incoherent with Weberian bureaucratic functioning ideas (Siddiqi 2021, p. 77).

KP’s public schools require teachers with a sense of professionalism and motivation to work through the challenges of real classrooms; by removing applicant filters related to education, the incoherence that follows is not only the result of poor governance and limited resources, but the deployment of politics in decision-making that has resulted in teaching posts that remain vacant. Teachers were recruited and evaluated using metrics that are unrelated to pedagogical practice, indicating incoherence between information and motivation. Motivational issues related to remaining in rural village schools were not adequately addressed by recruitment policies, leading to further incoherence. Socio-cultural logics equating teacher quality with the possession of any kind of two-year degree have thus undermined the pedagogical beliefs and practices needed to improve learning quality.

Table 12 Political incoherence between design elements in the management relationship: Pakistan 2017-Present

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>				
<b>Finance</b>				
<b>Information</b>			Teachers are recruited for rural village posts based on their completion of any 2-year degree, rather than completion of teacher training	
<b>Support</b>			Recruited teachers are asked to select schools within their home district to increase the likelihood they will stay for the school year, but districts are large, and postings are often far from home	
<b>Motivation</b>			Holding a degree does not guarantee that teachers will remain on post in a rural village for the contracted school year, and policies requiring their completion of the school year are not enforced	

Siddiqi (2021)

### 6.3 Clientelist path dependencies in teacher career paths in Indonesia

Our next vignette focuses on Indonesia in the post-New Order era (1999-present) as decentralization efforts provide cover for the localized retrenchment of clientelism in teacher career paths. It discusses politically driven incoherence for learning in the management relationship of accountability between policy design elements of delegation, finance, information, and motivation. As a dominant political context, both the character of Indonesia’s leadership and the goals of the education sector have remained largely stable with incremental adaptations over long periods of time. While Indonesia’s score on the V-Dem clientelism index places it somewhere between personalized and impersonal, its relatively weak formal rules mean that the decentralization that followed the post-New Order embrace of democracy has allowed local education governance to retain clientelist aspects of its authoritarian past (Levy 2022).

The Indonesia case study authors conclude that “Indonesia’s ‘learning crisis’ has its origins in the political dominance of predatory political, bureaucratic and corporate elites” over the past five decades (Rosser, King, and Widoyoko 2022). Despite increasingly effective contestations by progressive and technocratic forces at the national level, predatory forces still predominate at the local level. Although Indonesia’s 3 million-strong teacher workforce means it offers one of the lowest teacher-student ratios in the world, teacher quality (as measured by subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, and frequency of absences) remains poor. While teacher training and pay contribute to this, the politics involved in teacher career trajectories exercise considerable downward pressure on teacher quality for improved learning outcomes.

Teacher promotions and appointments are awarded to political allies or to the highest bidder, creating little incentive for teachers to excel in subject knowledge or pedagogy. Rather, it incentivizes the cultivation of linkages to senior administrators and political figures, while limiting their teaching bandwidth as external income opportunities are pursued. This patronage dynamic creates incoherences between four of the five design elements in the management relationship: the information used to promote and appoint teachers (who they know, not what they know or how well they teach); delegation and motivation that incentivizes the cultivation of linkages to powerful patrons in school administration and local politics rather than pedagogical skill; and finance as teachers are pushed into additional income generating activities like tutoring in order to afford the hidden fees of professional advancement via bribes to senior administrators and political leaders (see Table 13 below). With the implementation of education policy focused on servicing a predatory agenda, rather than on improving learning outcomes, path dependencies from an earlier era remain a potent source of political incoherence for improved learning outcomes.

*Table 13 Political incoherence between design elements within the management accountability relationship: Indonesia 1999 - Present*

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>			Teacher promotions and appointments are given to those who cultivate linkages to senior admin and political figures	
<b>Finance</b>			Teaching bandwidth is constrained as teachers pursue external income opportunities in order to afford bribes required for advancement	
<b>Information</b>			Rather than based on student learning outcomes or teacher qualifications, promotions and appointments are given to political allies or to the highest bidder	
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Motivation</b>			This minimises incentives for teachers to excel in subject knowledge or pedagogy	

Rosser, King, and Widoyoko (2022)

#### **6.4 Annual school plans and education production targets in Vietnam**

This vignette considers politically driven education production targets in the annual school plan process and discusses politically driven coherence and incoherence in the management relationship of accountability between delegation, finance, information, and motivation. While the case study authors do not specify a specific time period for this example, we have assumed this takes place roughly in the present era. With a political settlement variously described as single party dominant corporatist or communist corporatist (Levy 2022, London and Duong 2022), Vietnam is characterized by the dominance of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) at

every level of its political system. To the CPV, education, particularly mass education and ideological indoctrination, has represented a top national policy and political security priority for the better part of the last century.<sup>8</sup> For better and worse, the most important determinants of the education system lie in the multifaceted realms of politics and association life, which are pervasive from the level of policymaking down to the daily management of Vietnam's 63 provinces, 700+ districts, 11,000+ communes and urban wards, and tens of thousands of schools. However, the high levels of societal involvement in education cannot be reduced solely to the influence of the CPV. Significant out-of-pocket financial contributions and popular demands for increased accountability for education quality and relevance belie a tremendous amount of political will beyond party organs. Put differently, Vietnam was successful in improving learning outcomes because they wanted it, a pattern seen in the educational transformations of other educational success stories like Japan and Korea (Crouch and Spindelman, 2023).

In this vignette, we show how reporting practices, which are mandated as part of political and managerial oversight, illustrate the way that party structures and processes are used to hold schools, principals, and teachers accountable in ways not seen elsewhere in the region or much of the world. Vietnam's success aside, this can nonetheless contribute to political incoherence within different policy design elements in the management relationship, as the embedded organs of the CPV hold frontline educators accountable not necessarily for learning, but instead for meeting politically pre-determined targets that approximate learning.

Schools are required to submit an annual plan to provincial- and district-level education authorities detailing the outcomes that schools will strive to achieve by the end of the school year. These outcomes, or achievement targets, look similar to physical production targets from the central planning era, and institutional memory of these kinds of targets within the CPV may go some way to explaining why outcomes are operationalized this way. Once approved, achievement targets are then aligned with spending proposals to determine how many teachers receive training, meet the teachers' standards, and even the number of teachers who will be awarded the "Excellent Teaching" title. These targets are determined not through a careful review of current student and teacher capacities, but in alignment with political goals which also shape how many students pass the graduation exam and how many outstanding student awards will be distributed. As targets are seen not as an aspiration but as an expectation, for which falling short holds real consequences, this creates political incentives at the classroom and school level that are incoherent (or less-than-coherent) for learning. The annual plan is treated by teachers and inspectors alike as a political obligation rather than a tentative proposal, and most school leaders and teachers feel the need to fulfil the assigned tasks for fear of being disciplined by the Party unit or demoted in their career path.

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<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that education reform motivated by nation building and socialization need not lead to incoherence—a concern voiced in Pritchett (2018).

This feeling of anxiety regarding the fulfilment of political commitments has its roots in the CPV, which has worked tirelessly to promote the narrative of its indispensability against the ongoing threat of “peaceful evolution,” or an American-pushed slide into capitalist democracy. London and Duong describe an “ambient sense of political paranoia” (2022, p. 52) that pervades social life. This underlines that the incoherence identified in this vignette is driven by politics, rather than poor governance or misalignments between policy and governance. While aspects of these political methods seem more aligned to process compliance than the promotion of learning, it is nonetheless the case that these political commitments carry real weight, as they are regularly discussed in the “political work” of schools and bureaucratic agencies throughout the system. However, there appears to be adequate overlap between this process compliance and progress toward learning, at least the kinds of learning that are measured on internationally comparable tests. Vietnam is recognized as a high-achieving outlier in terms of learning outcomes and years of schooling, far in excess of the levels predicted by its per capita income. Table 14 below visualizes the political incoherence that CPV’s embeddedness leads to within the relationship of accountability between education authorities (including party members), schools, and teachers within the management column of the RISE 5x4.

Table 14 Political incoherence between design elements within the management accountability relationship: Vietnam (Present)

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>			Schools submit annual plan to provincial- and district-level ed authorities with intended outcomes which are then treated as political obligations	
<b>Finance</b>			Each school’s achievement targets are aligned with spending proposals, which help determine financial allocations for training and advancement	
<b>Information</b>			The number of passing and outstanding students at each school are considered politically derived targets	
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Motivation</b>			Teachers and school leaders risk demotion or disciplining by Party unit if outcomes are not met	

London and Duong (2022)

### 6.5 Contestation of teacher reforms in Peru

This section’s final vignette covers the period of 2001-2006 in Peru, starting from the attempted teacher career reforms under the Toledo administration’s first Minister of Education. It discusses politically driven incoherence in the management accountability relationship between delegation, information, and motivation. Peru’s political settlement is described as a medium clientelist, impersonal competitive context (Levy 2022), although the Peru case study authors and indeed ongoing political developments in Peru trouble the notion of how truly “settled” its political

settlement might be. Despite messy top-level politics and persistent churn at the governmental, ministerial, regional and local levels, substantial learning gains have been achieved over recent decades. Peru's discontinuous education policy process has resulted in a "protracted incrementalism" that tends to muffle key aspects of successive education reforms. In a context where political instability and general institutional weakness mean that strategic priorities are subject to repeated political resets, "small incremental gains may be achieved by one administration only to be dismantled by another and then be re-established, often partially, at a later stage" (Balarín and Saavedra 2023, p. 15).

While Peru had 20 education ministers between 1995 and 2021, in some instances we see the political backlash from a single minister reverberating long after their removal. In the case of Nicolás Lynch Gamero, Minister of Education for just under 12 months spanning 2001-2002, a broad consensus regarding the need for comprehensive teacher career path reforms was not enough to enact meaningful policies due to incoherent politics within different design elements in the management relationship of accountability.

Bypassing a relatively stable coalition of education technocrats and civil society organizations operating just below the level of cabinet politics, Lynch called his own group of experts to draft a five-year plan for the education sector, with separate commissions working on higher ed reforms and basic education. The basic education commission conducted a diagnosis which proposed a new merit-based Teacher's Career Law. Approached in a top-down manner, reforms also failed to involve teachers or the national teachers' union (SUTEP) in policy design processes. Further, reforms took an overtly confrontational approach toward teachers, disqualifying them from participation in the policy reform process as well as the teaching career in general. The Teacher's Career Law proposed the use of regular performance assessments alongside formative feedback loops, supported by incremental salary increases. Lynch came from the political left and took a highly confrontational approach to SUTEP, referring to them publicly as conservative and self-serving. He established a poorly designed national teachers' assessment which evaluated general knowledge rather than pedagogy or relevant subject matter. While the case study does not explain whether the design of this assessment was due to incompetence or political motivation, its design raised a political furor. This ignited considerable incoherence between the delegation, motivation, and information design elements of the management accountability relationship (see Table 15 below). By the time his commissions' key policy proposals were ready for dissemination, Lynch had been sacked and all related work outputs were shelved. Teachers responded by staunchly refusing to participate in this – or any – assessment, a stance that outlasted not only Lynch's ministerial tenure but that of the entire Toledo government (2001-2006).

Lynch was but one of three Ministers of Education during the Toledo government's first three years. Rapid ministerial turnover was a desperate response to low and dropping public approval

of the Toledo government in general, which he attempted to resolve with a series of highly visible cabinet reshuffles. Low political approval stemmed from the general weakness of the government’s party, which was a superficial coalition cobbled together to win the election and which lacked a clear programmatic agenda.

The political rancor generated by this policy meant that despite broad consensus regarding their need and importance, no teacher reforms of any significance were defined or implemented until 2005. With the speed of the ministerial churn exemplified in this vignette, although each new policy team had near-complete freedom to redefine policies and priorities at will, they frequently recycled previous policies using new vocabulary and were replaced before recommendations could be rolled out. This constant reinvention and rebranding of old policies has generated considerable delays in implementation and confusion (or outright rejection) among frontline education providers. Thus, in a context like Peru, Ministers of Education who ignore the need to craft a political settlement with frontline education providers do so at the risk of undermining the implementation of their reforms, and indeed at the risk of losing their cabinet role altogether.

Table 15 Political incoherence between design elements within the management accountability relationship: Peru 2001-2006

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>			Diagnostic study on teacher career trajectories commissioned by a highly confrontative education minister found the need for comprehensive teacher career reform	
<b>Finance</b>				
<b>Information</b>			Teacher career reforms required participation in a poorly designed teacher’s assessment that failed to measure pedagogy or content knowledge; teachers subsequently refused to participate in any assessment for four years	
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Motivation</b>			Inflammatory and top-down approaches to teacher career reforms met with significant teacher resistance and stymied progress on reforms that were widely accepted as necessary	

Balarin and Saavedra (2023)

Therefore, in systems where incoherence between design elements within the management relationship is a binding political constraint to learning outcomes, we see MoE adopting rhetoric that signals one or more sets of priorities to frontline educators, while either adopting actions that indicate another set of priorities or failing to make related changes to other design elements. This section involved considerably more vignettes than previous sections, highlighting the prevalence

of political incoherence for learning within the management relationship and underlining our assertion made in Section 2 regarding the prevalence of politics beyond formal political processes. In Ethiopia, the financial realities of expanding curriculum and access while shrinking budgets resulted in deprofessionalization of teaching and diminished learning outcomes. In Pakistan, similar efforts to deprofessionalize teachers were mired in clientelism and recruitment of teachers using criteria which were incoherent with improved learning. Teacher recruitment in the Indonesia vignette demonstrated further use of clientelism in teacher advancement which deprioritized learning. In a very different example, strict expectations of adherence to annual school plans with goals set not by teacher and student capacities but political aims result in strong learning outcomes but place tremendous (and often conflicting) pressures on teachers. Finally, the contestation of specific teacher reforms in Peru led to a backlash against any teacher reforms despite the cost to learning outcomes.

## **7. Political incoherence between management and other accountability relationships**

Next, we'll consider the other side of the management relationship. As with the compact relationship in Section 5, there is further potential for coherence and incoherence between the compact relationship and other accountability relationships in the 5x4, which include politics, management, and voice and choice. We use vignettes from the Ethiopia and Chile case studies to show how contestation and process compliance, respectively, are drivers of incoherence between different relationships of accountability within the same design element. While both vignettes involve instances of contestation between different actors, the distinction between the two cases regarding details, contexts, and outcomes extend far beyond the differences one might expect from incoherence across the design elements of delegation (as in Ethiopia) versus the information (as in Chile).

### **7.1 Further contestation of educational expansion in Ethiopia**

This vignette focuses on reforms to educational provision during the final years of the Imperial regime (1941-1974) and discusses politically driven incoherence in the delegation design element between all four of the relationships of accountability. During the Imperial regime, Ethiopia's dominant political settlement was characterized by the absolute rule of Emperor Haile Selassie I. The primary objectives of the state were modernization and centralization, and the purpose of the education sector was to train personnel to staff modern governmental bureaucracies. To this end, education provision was necessarily elitist and largely excluded the majority of the country, particularly those living outside of urban centers. In line with its goal of modernization, the Imperial regime made some attempts to expand educational access but this was tempered by a countervailing need to carefully manage expansion to keep pace with the economy's absorptive capacity for higher skilled graduates. As local capacity was not well developed, the regime depended heavily on foreign consultants and education advisors, leading to an outsized foreign impact on policy direction and implementation. By the 1970s, American influence had become stronger than British, but the American's advice was not necessarily



relevant to the needs of the country. In 1972, the emperor commissioned an Education Sector Review (ESR) in response to social upheaval led by unemployed graduates who hailed mostly from urban areas, given the lack of educational access in rural localities. Its mandate and activities shrouded in secrecy, the ESR convened stakeholders across higher education, government, international organizations, and, at least nominally, some teacher's associations and school principals. Of the approximately 160 people involved, roughly one third came from Haile Selassie I University, while nearly all the rest were international consultants and representatives from international organizations.

The review recommended reforms to restrict further expansion of secondary school in favor of expanding access to primary school in rural areas, thereby addressing or at least acknowledging the urban and elitist bias of earlier education provision. However, by expanding access to previously uneducated rural communities, recommendations did little to address the anger of the unemployed graduates who were responsible for fomenting the social upheaval. Within the delegation policy design element, this gave rise to explosive political incoherence between the accountability relationships of formal political processes, management, and voice and choice (see Table 16 below). The review was soundly rejected by urban teachers and students who saw themselves as the core constituents of the education system, saw no direct personal benefit to the proposed reforms and were able to exercise a louder voice than rural teachers and students due to their proximity to decisionmakers. Compared to the later ERGESE review discussed in Section 5.1 above, the ESR was not launched from a position of political strength, but rather by a regime weakened by economic crisis and protests. The public release of the ESR's recommendations coincided with a famine crisis which was unlikely to have enhanced its receptibility among already outraged urban constituents.

States characterized by dominant political settlements are able to, at least temporarily, override the cautions of technocrats and “ignore (or suppress) any direct representations emanating from civil society stakeholders” (Levy 2022:10). In this case, however, opposition to the review's recommendations ultimately contributed to overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie I. Political incoherence between efforts to enact accountability between the management relationship and at least some students and teachers in the voice and choice relationship led not to the more equitable distribution of primary schooling (as the review intended), but to the dramatic exercise of accountability within the politics relationship via the end of imperial rule.

Table 16 Political incoherence between management and other accountability relationships: Ethiopia 1941-1974

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>	Opposition to the Review's recommendations contributed to overthrow of emperor	Education Sector Review convened higher ed, gov, int'l orgs, nominally some teachers assoc and school principals to assess ed system in terms of its capacity to promote econ dev and nat'l integration	Recommended reforms to control entry to secondary and expand access in rural areas	Rejected by urban teachers & students who saw no personal benefit to reforms
<b>Finance</b>				
<b>Information</b>				
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Motivation</b>				

Gershberg, Kefale, and Hailu (2023)

## 7.2 Improving national assessment for process compliance in Chile

This vignette covers the period spanning 1990 to the present in Chile starting from the publication of national assessment scores in 1995. It discusses politically driven coherence in the information policy design element between all four relationships of accountability and unpacks potential reasons why this improved coherence did not have bigger consequences for learning outcomes. In the democratic period post-1990, Chile presents a relatively “impersonal competitive” context characterized by generally coherent policies and institutions, including heavy investment in the measurement of learning outcomes used to inform subsequent policies (Levy 2022). Thus, and distinct from most other examples in this paper, this vignette offers an instance of politics working in nonetheless unexpected ways to enhance coherence for improved learning outcomes, although the improvements occurred at a much smaller scale than might have been predicted.

An inheritance from the dictatorship years (1973-1990), the Quality Measurement System of Educational Quality (SIMCE) was initially designed for application to a small nationally representative sample of schools as a temperature gauge of overall education quality (González, Fernández-Vergar, Rojas, and Vilugrón 2023). While SIMCE scores showed improvement year over year beginning in 1990 – and any improvements were readily attributed to government policies – technical limitations of the assessment meant that scores were not comparable across students, schools, or years and any perceived improvements were illusory. In 1995, the government began publishing raw SIMCE scores by school, which were reported by the media as a sort of benchmarking between schools despite MoE efforts to explain the confounding

influence of student socioeconomic status on, and thus incomparability of, raw scores. This set the stage for initial incoherence between the information design elements of the compact and voice and choice relationships, as seen in Table 17 below. Adjustments to the SIMCE score methodology ultimately emerged from a surprising set of circumstances: salary negotiations between the MoE and national teachers' association. Under the salary agreement, wage increases were only guaranteed to those teaching in schools that scored in the top quartile of a six-component index that included SES-adjusted SIMCE scores, SIMCE score progression over multiple years, and equality of opportunities.

Under the dominant political coalition's commitment to "growth with equity," the weight given to each index component was subject to further political negotiation. To achieve a 50 percent reduction in the gap between the poorest quintile and the population average, an MoE-commissioned panel estimated the need for 50 percent more resources allocated to each disadvantaged student as well as a correction for peer effects. While the MoF did not initially accept the correction for peer effects, an independent senator caucusing with the right-wing opposition demanded its inclusion in exchange for his support during the legislative process. In the end, the legislation found support from groups on both sides of the political spectrum as it reinforced the voucher system (supported by the right), while correcting for individual and group disadvantage (supported by the left). As shown in Table 17 below, this allowed processes initiated in the management relationship of accountability to be made more coherent via interactions with the formal political processes relationship.

Although starting from a higher base, Chile's progress over the past two decades on PISA scores has not risen at the rate seen in Peru, a frequent comparator, despite institutions and policies that can be characterized as generally coherent and improving. This may be an example of process compliance, wherein movement toward coherence became an end in itself rather than in service of raising learning outcomes. Levy (2022) suggests that "(p)erhaps the risk of confusing form with function is greatest in precisely those competitive contexts where the possibility of a high-performing, coherent impersonal system, though not yet achieved, seems tantalizingly close" (Levy 2022, p. 16). Perhaps it is Chile's proximity to technocratic success that lost it some of the broader focus on less-measurable indicators that nonetheless are necessary for improvement in learning outcomes. The formalistic culture of Chile's education policy environment thus may foster the kind of process compliance that obscures bigger-picture visions, undercutting initiative and motivation among public officials (Levy 2022).

Table 17 Political In/Coherence between management and other accountability relationships: Chile 1990 - Present

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>				
<b>Finance</b>				
<b>Information</b>	Despite higher per-student costs, methodology changes were ultimately achieved with bipartisan legislative buy-in	From 1990, gov't celebrated year-over-year SIMCE score improvement, but weak testing methodology meant scores were not comparable between students/schools/years.	Teachers' association salary negotiations led to adjustments of SIMCE score methodologies, enhancing comparability and adjusting for SES	Raw SIMCE scores were reported by the media to benchmark schools against one another despite warnings against this interpretation
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Motivation</b>				

González, Fernández-Vergar, Rojas, and Vilugrón (2023)

In systems where incoherence between the management relationship and other relationships within the same design element is a binding constraint to learning outcomes, we see misalignments between the priorities and actions of the MoE to frontline providers, and the citizens to highest state authorities, the highest state authorities to MoE, and/or end users to frontline educators. In Ethiopia, contestation between education system actors of reforms that attempted to expand access to learning more equitably were met with resistance so powerful that it ultimately toppled the Imperial regime. In Chile, contestation between left- and right-wing factions of the legislation resulted in better information to inform decision making but this failed to make as large an impact on learning levels than expected, indicating the presence of a sort of technocratic process compliance rather than deep coherence for learning.

### **8. Incoherence between both design elements and accountability relationships**

The previous sections highlighted vignettes that presented binding political constraints to coherence that ran across multiple accountability relationships, or across multiple policy design elements. Given the level of complexity inherent in each case study context, each vignette in previous sections could be fleshed out with further details that implicate additional cells in the RISE 5x4. Based on our interpretations of each case study, we chose to highlight the most important binding constraints found in each vignette.

In the following vignettes, the most important binding constraints run across both the key accountability relationships and policy design elements that make up an education system. In Vietnam, often-contradictory expectations of teachers and relatively limited data to inform decision making is overcome by the power of political will. Meanwhile in Peru, formal political processes that are messy in the extreme and technocratic coalitions tightly focused on thin

indicators of learning result in a protracted incrementalism. Both vignettes describe political incoherences running across multiple directions of the RISE 5x4 which affect the formation and implementation of education policies where perhaps paradoxically result in higher-than-expected learning outcomes in both countries.

In systems where incoherence between multiple design elements and relationships of accountability is a binding political constraint to political coherence for learning outcomes, we see complex sets of alignments and misalignments between and across multiple rows and columns of the RISE 5x4. In Vietnam, the remarkable educational success is the result of a sincere desire for and commitment to quality education for all by the Vietnamese people that is demonstrated through their embedded societal engagement at all levels of the education system. In Peru, technocratic coalitions have quietly built the kind of political legitimacy needed to transform education policy and implementation while elected and appointed officials cycle through the highest levels of government and MoE, resulting in a protracted incrementalism that has nonetheless performed impressively well given Peru's political turmoil. Both vignettes reveal the complexity behind scores on international assessments that lead their respective regions, yet represent completely different contexts with different rules of the game.

### **8.1 Overcoming contradictions and weak information in Vietnam**

This vignette covers the period of 2013 to present in Vietnam and discusses contradicting pressures overcome by teachers to achieve remarkable educational success. It discusses politically driven incoherence and incoherence in the delegation policy design element between formal political processes and management relationships of accountability as well as between delegation, information, and motivation design elements in the management relationship of accountability. Beyond its presence as a high-achieving outlier, Vietnam is unique among the RISE country case studies as its top-down approach to governance is complemented by embedded societal engagement at every level of government. The Vietnamese case thus offers a compelling example of both coherent and incoherent politics across accountability relationships and design elements. CPV has maintained a consistent focus on education for processes of state formation, party legitimacy, and shared nationalist vision of socialist modernization and citizenship through the country's independence struggle years and beyond. Helpfully for Vietnam, the dominant character of CPV's leadership and the goals of the education sector have remained stable, with incremental adaptations, for decades (Levy 2022). Education policy has thus been wielded as an instrument of political leadership, class struggle, and the promotion of socialist modernization. However, the link between learning and political commitment to (and policies regarding) education is fuzzier.

Education policies formally mandate comprehensive data collection on a range of indicators covering teacher, student, and school performance. However, decentralization means that in practice information is not frequently collected and even less frequently used to inform decision

making in most provinces. Thus, political incoherence arises within the design elements of the management relationship as motivation is clearly activated by education's role in the national project, yet relevant information about learning is not available to teachers, schools, or communities. Combined with the lack of specification of learning norms and poor coordination between the provincial and national levels, this results in 63 provinces with 63 different education systems (London and Duong 2023). Yet the nature of Vietnam's political settlement means that the organization and operation of service delivery units and official government structures hang together fairly effectively thanks to their penetration by organs of the CPV. London and Duong suggest that the presence of a perpetual organized parallel political process within official government structures improves accountability within the management relationship, at least accountability to national political priorities.<sup>9</sup>

Teachers show up to teach on time, for example, because of a culture of accountability via the CYP's political organization demands consistent attention to education at all levels. The CYP contains five million members, and at least one fifth of the country's population has direct links with the CYP. However, the density of party membership varies by region and there exists considerable variation in life experience and normative orientation across its members despite being subject to party norms and compliance procedures. While only a minority of education bureaucrats and teachers are party members, most principals and administrators are either party members or key members of grassroot party cells who play a role in steering decision making and in monitoring and evaluating organizational and individual performance.

The educational effects of this approach to accountability highlight a number of key contradictions. On the one hand, they incentivize a normative conformity that lends itself readily to rote-style learning. When rote curricula are reformed toward other pedagogical approaches, the political conservatism common among school principals and more senior teachers tends to stymie efforts to move beyond outdated curricula and teaching methods. On the other hand, teachers have been placed at the forefront of reform efforts to improve learning outcomes through reorientation towards the development of competencies rather than content-based pedagogies. Through the 2013 Fundamental and Comprehensive Education Reform, teachers nationwide attend intensive professional trainings where they are expected to demonstrate the autonomy, creative thinking, and problem-solving competencies they are to develop in students. Yet they are simultaneously expected to demonstrate patriotism and a love for socialism, while strictly complying with the CPV party line as well as all policies and laws. These contradictory expectations necessarily feed into political incoherence in the delegation design element across the accountability relationships of formal political processes and management (see Table 18 below) This arises as both education policymakers and teachers are asked to navigate the economic need to promote critical, creative, and independent thinking on the one hand, and the political need to maintain social control via normative conformity. While the RISE 5x4

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<sup>9</sup> It is not clear how this might be relevant in other country contexts, but it is worth noting that it may be possible.

highlights the fact that all teachers are accountable to multiple principals (education authorities and parents), the conflicting expectations described above and the consequences of running afoul of party directives create additional pressures on members of the teaching profession.

Through party structures and processes, the embedded presence of a perpetual political process amounts to a powerful force for accountability to national-level education policy goals. To the extent that those goals relate to measurable, internationally comparable learning outcomes, we see the success of the Vietnamese education system as an outlier when compared to other lower middle-income countries. Table 18 below highlights political coherences and incoherences across both relationships of accountability and policy design elements.

Table 18 Political in/coherence between design elements and accountability relationships: Vietnam 2013-Present

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>	The CYP is a perpetual political process operating in a manner that is enmeshed in all accountability relationships with a particularly strong focus on education		Teachers are expected to develop student’s creative thinking and problem solving, while demonstrating commitment to country and party. Principals and administrators (but not teachers) tend to be party members, providing intense oversight to individual and school performance	
<b>Finance</b>				
<b>Information</b>			Decentralized processes of information-gathering and use mean that data is thinly collected and rarely used in most provinces	
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Motivation</b>			Education policy has thus been wielded an instrument of political leadership, class struggle, and the promotion of socialist modernization, with learning outcomes as a means to achieve this	

London and Duong (2023)

## 8.2 Protracted incrementalism and thin indicators amidst political turmoil in Peru

This vignette examines more closely the political dynamics between top-level turnover in ministerial administrations and technocratic forces that have coalesced just beneath the highest ministerial authorities. It discusses politically driven incoherence in the delegation policy design

element between the compact and management relationships of accountability, in the information policy design element between the compact, management, and voice and choice accountability relationships, and in the compact relationship between design elements of delegation, finance, and information. In his PET-A synthesis, Levy describes these technocratic forces as strong learning-oriented coalitions that offset the massive dysfunction observed at the highest political levels. While he locates these technocratic coalitions ‘immediately beneath the political chaos’ (2022, p. 22), their work nonetheless remains political.

Emerging at the end of Fujimori’s authoritarian regime (1990-2000) the actions of this technocratic coalition encompassed formal and informal interactions among elite education sector stakeholders including representatives from the Ministry of Finance (MoF), donors, and international regimes like Education for All, Global Partnership for Education, and Millennium/Sustainable Development Goals. In 2006, the Strategic Planning Secretariat (SPS) emerged as a mini-MoF within the MoE, staffed with former MoF employees and aligned with MoF priorities. This can be seen as a mechanism by which the highest authorities of the state (including MoF) sought to create and enforce accountability in the compact relationship, where MoE as the agent had sought to push back on the delegation and finance power of the principal (see Table 19 below).

The case study authors refer to a “technocratic settlement” in education that has coalesced around standardized test results and regular, easily measured indicators. This settlement has been heavily influenced by international agencies as well as the MoF which, via its approach to results-based budgeting informed by learning assessments and through its presence in the MoE via the SPS, has emerged a powerful presence in the formation of education policies. Having successfully aligned policy processes with desired improvements, this coalition can be credited with many of the improvements seen over the past years and represents an avenue for more iterative processes of policy formulation and adaptation. Through these iterations, the coalition has quietly managed to build enough political legitimacy and trust in its educational policy formulations that they are able to push back with some effectiveness against more idiosyncratic ideas proposed by politically appointed Ministers of Education (Levy 2022).

Levy (2022) describes the turn toward technocratic governance as a post-dictatorship trend observed both in Chile and Peru. In Peru, President Alan Garcia met with the World Bank’s education representative immediately after taking office, where he was pitched the idea to use data from a national learning assessment for second graders to inform the direction of Peru’s education system. To ensure its usefulness as a dependent variable for economists, the assessment was simplified from previous evaluations that had been conducted less frequently with a smaller sample of students and designed to generate rich information to inform pedagogical approaches and generate policy recommendations. The new standardized assessment tested all second graders nationwide in math and Spanish every year, a massive logistical feat the difficulty of which displaced all other efforts to gather thicker learning indicators. Using the



results of this assessment as the sole input for MoF’s new results-based budgeting approach, “nothing that did not have a direct impact on those narrowly defined learning results would be funded” (Balarín and Saavedra 2023, p. 45).

Efforts to improve scores on the two measured learning outcomes led MoE finance specialists in SPS and MoF to sideline more transformative teaching and learning reforms in favor of tricks to improve national and international test results in the short term. The primacy of this indicator as the primary dependent variable for economic calculations elevated the MoF’s status as an education policy actor beyond its existing fiduciary responsibility for the use of public resources, allowing a pair of test scores to stand in for deeper knowledge about educational processes, their contributions to teaching and learning, and how long they might take to show results. MoF stakeholders thus tended to overrule more transformative long-term ideas from the MoE’s pedagogy team in favor of a definition of “what works” as improving test results as (financially) efficiently as possible.

In an effort to boost client power, World Bank representatives convinced other members of the technocratic coalition that parent voice would be inspired by publishing census information and poor school results on annual standardized tests rather than the previous deeper education assessments. This can be seen as an effort to make learning, rather than just schooling, more salient to families and provide them with the information needed to hold teachers and schools accountable for learning. Imported from elsewhere and posed in a top-down manner, this idea failed to understand the more complex reasons why parents struggled to hold teachers accountable for low learning, and instead increased pressure on teachers to teach to the test while failing to invigorate the voice and choice relationship of accountability (as noted in Table 19 below).<sup>10</sup> Rather than enhancing client power, the data generated was ultimately more useful to policymakers than parents.

In contrast to the loud and messy politics playing out on a national scale, the work of defining policy agendas and developing reforms thus plays out in what Culpepper calls ‘quiet politics.’ This refers to “battles that take place away from the public spotlight. Low salience political issues are decided through... a strong lobby capacity and the deference of legislators and reporters toward managerial expertise” (Culpepper 2010, p. 4). The process of defining the purpose of Peru’s educational system, and what is meant by learning, took place quietly in the background (Davies 2023). In line with quiet politics, technocratic approaches are often averse to

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<sup>10</sup> We do not in any sense attempt to settle the legitimate debate around the benefits in some circumstances to “teaching to the test.” In fact, the Peruvian PET-A case study, while lamenting the near-singular technocratic focus on standardized test results, also indicates that the national exams that emerged after Peru’s strikingly poor first-time PISA results did support some improvement in learning, in part by strengthening accountability. However, the key critique for our discussion is that the assessments did not reflect agreed-upon learning objectives as the MoE pedagogy team, teachers, teachers unions and surely many education specialists/researchers don’t seem to agree that using assessments of 2nd graders accurately captures, say, whether students learn anything after 2nd grade.

open debate, making policy development the exclusive terrain of elite experts, rather than parents, teachers unions, or other stakeholders at the front lines of education provision. In this way technocratic coalitions are “increasingly able to win de facto insulation from back-and-forth political resets” (Levy 2022, p. 14). While politicians and technocratic coalitions often disagree about the purpose of Peru’s educational system and the means to fulfill it, the high rate of politician turnover has meant some degree of victory through attrition for technocratic forces.

Just because policy recommendations are evidence-based doesn’t mean they are apolitical; the framing of a particular problem and selection and application of evidence is itself always prone to bias and shapes policy agendas in particular ways. As Peru’s technocratic coalition has endorsed an understanding of learning as something that is best understood via an annual census for second graders, it has constrained the government’s definition of student learning and what should be funded in service of that goal. Via the exercise of quiet politics, technocratic coalitions in Peru have moved some ways toward improving learning, albeit in a narrow manner that may lack the scope to understand more complex educational processes that hold the potential improve teaching and learning over the longer term. The formation of technocratic coalitions that span both the principal and agent roles of the compact relationship complicates what Levy characterizes as “the tidy hierarchical logic of the long route” of accountability (2022, p. 22). The protracted incrementalism and measurable improvement on national and international assessments that we see in Peru over the past three decades may represent the best possible outcome given the messiness its formal political processes during that time. Whether the technocratic coalition’s policies are truly coherent for learning depends on which definition of learning one uses.

Table 19 Political in/coherence between design elements and accountability relationships: Peru 2001-2019

	<b>Formal Political Processes</b>	<b>Compact</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Voice &amp; Choice</b>
<b>Delegation</b>		Amidst high ministerial turnover, a technocratic coalition was forged between donors, MoF, SPS, and other elites that is more aligned for learning but complicates the principal-agent relationship	The technocratic turn has increased emphasis on short-term tricks to improve test results has overshadowed broader transformations in teaching and learning practices	
<b>Finance</b>		MoF's increasing involvement in MoE often overrules MoE's pedagogy team in favor of a simplistic definition of "what works" as improving test results as inexpensively as possible		
<b>Information</b>		Rather than being used by parents, assessment data was ultimately more useful to policymakers and the technocratic coalition	System progress is measured annually by performance on 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade assessments in math and language subjects, and the financial efficiency of that progress	Donors advised that published assessment information would inspire parents to hold schools accountable, but this did not materialize
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Motivation</b>				

Balarín and Saavedra (2023)

## 9. Final thoughts

In their case study on Vietnam, London and Duong (2022) describe education policy as best understood as a form of political practice. In this paper we have embraced this description and explored a selection of RISE PET-A case studies to find more examples of politics spanning each cell in the 5x4 framework. We have considered the power, alliances, resources, communications strategies, and implementation strategies of these actors in the education systems of seven countries, identifying open and latent reform opponents and supporters. We have developed and tested a framework to think about binding political constraints to political coherence across the relationships of accountability and policy design elements that comprise the

RISE 5x4, and in the paper applied the framework to fourteen vignettes from seven country case studies. Where possible, we discussed how the politics surfaced by this framework—and the key conflicts, political contestations, and power struggles—might have been identified *a priori* and used by reform champions to improve learning outcomes.

In his synthesis of the PET-A case studies, Bruce Ross-Larson asserts that “recent literature on the politics of education and learning does not go far enough in its analysis of politics” (2023, p. 24). Pritchett (2018) set the goal of developing a robust theory of the political economy of learning, laid out what it *would need* to explain, and argued that understanding how educational change happens (preferably *a priori*!) requires a deeper grasp of the political motivations and behaviour of governments and policymakers. This paper, the binding constraints framework it presents across seven countries, and its exploration of what a politics for learning might look like represents an effort to carry the analysis yet a little closer to that goal, by elucidating how politics permeate nearly all accountability relationships in education systems.

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