Should Communities Be Managing, Governing or Supporting Schools?

A Review Essay on the System Conditions under Which Different Forms of Community Voice Can Improve Student Learning

Jason Silberstein

Abstract

There are many different potential roles that parents and communities can play within education systems. This essay reviews the different ways that parents and communities can exercise their individual and collective voice within local schools. It develops a typology to distinguish between three different forms of voice and explores the enabling conditions in the wider system that each form of voice requires to improve student learning outcomes.

The dominant form of voice in many current education systems is "school management", which is commonly exercised through school management committees. The essay diagnoses how other parts of the system—the state, the bureaucracy, and teachers—have constrained school committees into playing a limited "school management" role. Because they are generally granted circumscribed responsibilities related to the day-to-day running of the school, school management committees have failed to make consistent, significant improvements to either school accountability or student learning.

"School governance" is an alternative, stronger form of voice. "School governance" entails giving parents and community members greater latitude to determine the kind of education offered in local schools, somewhat analogous to how a board sets a vision and is owed justifications against results for major decisions made by an organization's management. This would necessitate giving school governing bodies greater responsibility over setting the curriculum and choosing school leadership. Furthermore, since parents do not always or necessarily prioritize student learning from among other competing educational goals, focusing "school governance" on learning would also require strengthening the central state's capacity to fulfill key responsibilities such as setting and measuring progress against learning standards. "School governance" would therefore face steep political and implementation challenges, and would have to be accompanied by parallel, government-led reform to other parts of the education system.

The system conditions for parents and communities to play an effective "school governance" role are exacting. "School support" is a more modest but potentially more workable form of voice in many current systems. Where "school management" and "school governance" ask parents and communities to hold local schools accountable, the "school support" paradigm emphasizes actions that individual parents and community members can take in collaboration with teachers to directly support children's learning. However, there are many cases where more parent and community involvement is not necessarily better. Parents and community members need specific, structured opportunities that complement good teaching in the classroom for "school support" to translate into improved learning outcomes.

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Introduction

At the level of principle, few would disagree with the idea that parents and communities have a critical role to play in local schools. But exactly what kind of relationship between communities and schools can improve student learning in developing countries?

Any answer to this question must reckon first with school committees. While there are many potential forms the community-school relationship can take, school committees have become the development sector's go-to paradigm. It is difficult to fully map school committee's global footprint, but figures from the World Bank give some indication. From 2000-2006, 10% of World Bank education projects worth a collective USD $1.7 billion – nearly one quarter of the Bank's total spending on basic education during that period – included a component of school-based management (Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, and Fasih 2009). This trend held or intensified in more recent years.[2]

These projects have been accompanied by a growing body of rigorous empirical work that estimates the causal impact of school committees on different educational outcomes. Reviews of this body of work arrive at a shared consensus that school committees have by-and-large failed to have consistent, large impacts on learning outcomes (see Section 1 below for a more nuanced interpretation of this literature). However, nearly all studies of school committees focus on evaluating specific changes to program design, such as providing them better information or small block grants. Few generalizable patterns about how to improve the committees, and why they struggle to improve learning outcomes, have emerged.

What if the devil is not in the details, but in the system? What if it's not the program design specifications of a school committee that's the problem, but the match – or mismatch - between school committees and the structural constraints imposed on them by other parts of the education system? As Mansuri and Rao (2013) observe in their magisterial reassessment of participatory development, "almost all econometric studies of participatory interventions focus on the communities themselves rather than the context within which they operate" (page 292). This analytic and empirical review essay is an attempt to begin to answer their challenge. It asks not if school committees "work" to improve learning but, rather, "under what conditions" have school committees emerged as the dominant form of the community-school relationship? Moreover, what alternative kinds of school-community relationship are possible, and what are the system conditions needed to enable them to improve learning?

Section 1 contextualizes the community-school relationship within the larger education system, and theorizes the different forms the community-school relationship can take. I also briefly summarize literature on the theory and impact of school committees.

Section 2 assesses why other parts of the system – the state, the bureaucracy, and teachers -

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[2] According to a World Bank project database, 29 primary education projects incorporated a school-based management activity between 2000-2006, compared to 48 projects between 2011-2017 (the seven most recent years for which there were publicly available data). This was extracted in late 2022 from the World DataBank at datatopics.worldbank.org/Education by searching: "School management: school-based management"; "primary education"; all countries; and time periods 2000-2006 vs. 2011-2017, and then counted all unique projects (if the project had the same name and fiscal year, but included multiple project components with SBM, I only counted it once).

have shaped and sustained school management committees as the dominant form of parent and community voice. I argue that a common set of system conditions constrain school committees into playing a narrow "school management" role, limiting their impact on both accountability and learning.

Following from this diagnosis, Section 3 theorizes an alternative kind of voice that allows parents and communities to play a more substantive "school governance" role. I also propose a minimum, relatively radical set of system conditions necessary to make "school governance" a viable way to hold local schools accountable for learning.

In the many places where the conditions are not ripe for "school governance", is there an alternative form of voice that might improve learning? Section 4 explores what I characterize as the "school support" model, and the enabling conditions for school support to systematically improve student learning. Successful examples of "school support" usually provide a tight structure for parent and community involvement that complements classroom-based efforts to improve learning.

1. Different forms of the community-school relationship

How to conceptualize an education system, and the different potential roles parents and communities might play in it, is a vexed question. The systems framework proposed by Pritchett (2015) – based on the influential 2004 World Development Report – describes an education system as a series of relationships of accountability. The "long route" of accountability determines what happens in schools by passing through the dashed arrows of politics (relationship of citizens to state), compact (state to organizations), and management (the relationships of accountability within implementing organizations). The "short route" of accountability, in contrast, influences what happens in schools through the direct relationship between families/communities and schools (solid arrow).

Figure 1: The RISE systems framework
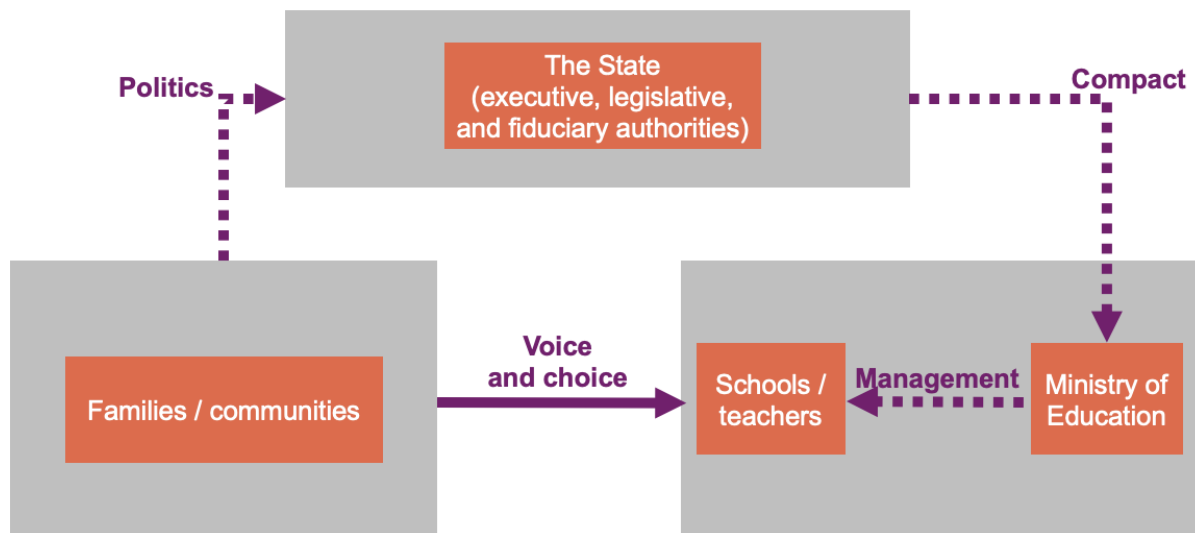
Source: Adaptation of WDR 2004 and Pritchett 2015

The short route provides families and communities two distinct ways to hold schools accountable for the kind of education they provide: voice and choice. In the classic formulation by Hirschman (1970), when the quality of an organization - such as a school - starts to deteriorate, its members have two possible options: stay and use whatever leverage they have to improve the organization (voice), or exit and join an alternative organization (choice).

Both voice and choice can each be exercised at the family level and the community level, as shown in Table 1. Research on voice has, for the most part, focused on community-wide modes of voice that aggregate the limited power of individuals – and solve collective action problems – by choosing representatives for the group (World Bank 2003). These groups are usually formed to exercise accountability over schools. School management committees are probably the most widespread vehicle for voice, and are often formed on a school-by-school basis and exist independently of local government. However, there are slightly more diluted forms of voice where community representatives have a say over multiple schools in a locality. Elected officials in local government with direct responsibilities for nearby schools, or elected members of a legally independent entity with direct control over a school or schools (e.g. school governing bodies in South Africa or school districts in the US), are also forms of voice. The line between local politics and "voice" at the local level is sometimes blurry.

Voice also exists at the family level. These forms of voice can be broadly categorized under the umbrella of "parental involvement", and encompass the different ways that parents support teachers. For example, parenting and the home environment – ranging from values to nutrition to help with homework – are hugely important determinants of learning. Whereas the community-school relationship is usually framed in terms of accountability, the family-school relationship is often framed more in terms of collaboration and support.[3]

Unlike voice, choice is usually conceptualized and studied only as an individual family-level phenomenon. The most familiar example of school choice is the high and increasing proportion of families in the developing world who, dissatisfied with low quality public schools, are "voting with their feet" and moving to a nearby private school that they perceive better meets their child's needs. Choice also exists within public school systems, such as in systems where "money follows the student" (e.g. Chile), or during the application process to selective public secondary schools.

Families choose and move between schools without necessarily meaning to catalyze a change within a given school. However, when enough individual families exit, choice *can* act as a powerful signal to a school that it needs to change (although there is no guarantee that this signal will cause change, and the need to incentivize public sector schools to "listen" and respond to family choice is often part of the justification for "money follows the student" reforms). The way that individual choices are aggregated into neighborhood education markets, and the ways that policy can intervene in market equilibria by addressing various market failures, is the subject of recent research (e.g. Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja 2017; Das, Harma, Pritchett and Silberstein 2023).

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[3] Support and accountability are not mutually exclusive concepts. Support is, in fact, a key dimension of accountability, although this is underrecognized. Pritchett (2015) explicitly adds "support" to its description of the different aspects of relationships of accountability. This matches the intuition that is not fair to hold someone accountable for achieving a goal unless they are adequately supported to accomplish that goal, and have been endowed with adequate capacity, training and resources.

Table 1: Modes of voice and choice

	Family-School	*Community-School*
Voice	Parental involvement • Parents' direct support for their child's learning (e.g. supervision of homework) • Parent-teacher conferences	School management or school governance by: • School committees (for 1 school) • Governing bodies (for 1 school) • Local government (for multiple schools)
Choice	Exit • Moving a child out of one school into a preferred school (e.g. from a public to a low-cost private school) • Application choices during school transitions (e.g. to secondary school) • Voucher policies where "money follows the student" • Private tutoring[4]	Local education market • Each school - public and private - offers a different basket of educational services at a different price-and-quality point

There is no single answer as to whether voice or choice is more influential. Among Hirschman's key insights was that the effectiveness of voice or choice depends on which mechanism an organization is responsive to. In his analysis, poorly performing public services, including public schools, often provoke exit but are sensitive to voice: "the organization is in effect equipped with a reaction mechanism to which it is not responsive" (122). Moreover, the families that are the first to leave public schools for private alternatives are often the most vocal (51). Elite exit, the unsung counterpart to "elite capture", can hamstring voice.[5] It is no wonder, then, that the education sector has devoted significant effort to strengthening voice in public schools, in particular through school committees.

School committees in theory

School committees are, in a sentence, a way to decentralize decision-making in local schools to a community-level institution outside of the government. As an idea, school committees – and user committees more generally – have waxed and waned in international development. Mansuri and Rao (2013) offer a brief intellectual history of participatory development, which encompasses

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[4] Private after-school tutoring – also called "tuition" in South Asia – is ubiquitous for both public and private school students in many contexts (see Bano 2022), and can be conceptualized as an additional dimension of school choice where families are not just choosing between local public and private schools, but between those schools plus a basket of additional non-school educational services.

[5] In focusing on how the community-school relationship is shaped by the wider system, this paper brackets questions – particularly around elite capture and elite exit – relating to who is represented by voice. This is not to imply that who is, and is not, represented is a non-trivial issue for learning. Perhaps the most-cited bugbear of participatory development is elite capture. As a form of "induced participation" without "organic" roots, school committees are particularly vulnerable to low participation and domination by local elites who – provided it is worth their while – may coopt them to represent their own interests and reinforce preexisting inequalities. Mansuri and Rao (2013) provide a good overview of the evidence and issues involved, such as the relative cohesion of the community, whether committee are democratically elected, and the differences between single-issue user committees (which they term "participatory development") and local politics (which they term "decentralization").

different reforms aimed at decentralization (especially to the community through user committees, or to local government through political decentralization). Since World War II, they trace out two distinct waves when participatory development has been in vogue, varying with the global geopolitical environment, intellectual trends, and the cyclical faddishness of the development sector. Participatory development was popular during the postcolonial 1950s and 1960s, particularly as an expression of democratic values in the context of Cold War; receded in favor of large-scale, centralized investments in agricultural and industrial policy in the 1970s and 1980s; and then saw renewed interest in the 1990s, culminating in the kind of explicit support articulated in the WDR 2004 for the "short route" of accountability.

In developing countries, the main justification for decentralization to the school level is usually a public management argument, which is that doing so can provide stronger accountability, better service delivery, and higher learning outcomes (Mansuri and Rao, 2013).[6] This argument often relies on some or all of the following planks. Education has multiple potential purposes (Moore and Spivack 2022), and teaching is more like a complex craft than a one-size-fits-all service (Pritchett, Newman, and Silberstein, 2022). This means that local discretion and flexible decision-making are needed, which are precisely what the large scale bureaucracies of the "long route" are notoriously ill-suited for and might be better accomplished by communities and schools themselves (Pritchett 2014). Communities have stronger incentives to make decisions in the interests of their children than anyone else in the system; they know more about their schools and can tailor education to local needs and preferences better than technocratic "experts" in the Ministry of Education ever could; and they can use local information and relationships to monitor schools more efficiently than more distant civil servants (Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, and Fasih 2009; Bruns, Filmer, and Patrinos 2011; Mansuri and Rao 2013). Where the long route of accountability for providing education is weak or broken, the short route of accountability can potentially serve as a more efficient alternative.

Do school committees work?

Many rigorous evaluations have tested the impact of school committees in practice. There are now multiple reviews that synthesize the literature on school committees (Westhorp et al. 2014; Mansuri and Rao 2013; Bruns, Filmer, and Patrinos 2011; Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, and Fasih 2009). All of these reviews offer some version of the following conclusion: school committees may have meaningful impacts on parent or community member involvement in schools, and some impact on important school inputs (like student and teacher attendance), but they do not have any significant impact, on average, inside the classroom or on student learning outcomes. However, "on average" hides substantial heterogeneity: some school committee interventions increase learning, and some have no or even a negative impact on learning. Meta-reviews find more variance *within* the category of interventions like school committees than between that category and totally different kinds of interventions (Evans and Popova 2016).[7]

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[6] Other, usually secondary justifications for school committees include: increased community satisfaction and therefore higher community financing and involvement (Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, and Fasih 2009); more equitable, pro-poor decision-making (Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, and Fasih 2009); training in democratic governance (Mansuri and Rao 2013); and the intrinsic value of giving "citizens greater say in decisions that affect their lives" (Mansuri and Rao 2013).

[7] A brief note on methods. This paper is an attempt at generative synthesis, meaning that it draws on selected empirical studies to arrive at a new set of conceptual generalizations about the role of school committees in education systems. In terms of both method and goals, it should not be confused in any way with a "systematic review" that attempts to estimate the "typical" causal impact of school committee-like programs. Without a way to account for the multidimensional "design space" which drives heterogeneity of program impact (Pritchett 2017), the conclusions of

There are two critical questions that must accompany any discussion of "what works" in relation to school committees.

First, there is the issue of the confused "what" - what is a school committee? School committees do not constitute a clear or homogenous category of intervention. One of the only useful generalizations about school committees is that they are incredibly heterogenous. Barrera-Osorio et al (2009) offer two useful continuums on which to order this diversity. School committees differ on the degree of decision-making power devolved to them. Weak committees may serve in an advisory role, stronger committees may have more substantial monitoring responsibilities, and the strongest bodies may wield independent power over the financial, managerial, and operational decisions facing the school. School committees also vary along a second key dimension, which is their membership. Different models may variously empower the head teacher, teachers, parents, community members, or a balanced representation from all groups. If school committees can range from an empowered school board that hires the school principal to an informal collection of community members only called upon for fundraising, it doesn't make much sense to talk about a single "school committee" effect. This would be akin to evaluating the impact of a family of medicines on an illness without specifying the exact drug or dosage: one should not be surprised to find "mixed effects".

The second question is "what are the system conditions under which school committees have evolved into the most widespread form of the community-school relationship?" School committees exist, and may be more or less effective, in relation to the features of the system they are operating within. As the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel put it in judging "community involvement in school management" as a "promising but low-evidence" intervention, "more work in testing various designs is needed to understand when and why this works, including a study of composition, government structures, and complementary mechanisms, all of which appear to be important for effectiveness" (World Bank 2020, p.17). The next section is an attempt to find patterns in the existing evidence and build a theory for how common system-level conditions mediate the form - and impact - of school management committees.

2. The Management Equilibrium

This section looks at how different parts of the education system interact with school committees and jointly compel them to play a limited "school management" role in local schools. Focusing in turn on the state, the education bureaucracy, and teachers, it asks *why* each part of the system supports the particular community-school relationship that is school management committees. It also identifies the constraints each respective part of the system commonly places on these committees, resulting in limited forms of school management.

The state and school committees

"systematic reviews" often have limited practical value. Table 17 of Popova and Evans, analyzing (McEwan 2015), shows that "school management or supervision" interventions have an in-category standard deviation higher than out-of-category interventions (where out-of-cateogory interventions include types of programs as diverse as teacher training, deworming drugs, ed tech, etc.) McEwan (2015) reviewed 66 studies (all RCTs focused on primary school in low and middle income countries that measured learning outcomes) and defined "school management and supervision" as "attempts to improve the management and supervision of schools by providing training to school officials or local school committees in management and in the hiring, monitoring, and assessment of teacher performance".

One of the state's most compelling interests in education is to exercise control over socialization. Schools not only teach children skills, they also socialize children in a particular worldview whether that be a version of history, loyalty to a state, attitudes toward religion, or fluency in a language. Schools are vital to the nation-state's project of inventing and reproducing itself. Pritchett (2018) argues that the state's overriding motive to control the socialization function of schooling is what leads almost all states to effectively nationalize education and actually run their own schools, rather than simply paying for them. States can't entrust the process of socialization to private schools - or parents – because the beliefs associated with socialization are not "third party contractible" – it is very difficult to check whether someone, even a child, actually believes something, and therefore very hard to enforce a contract based on this outcome. Empirical work has confirmed that state schools deserve to be conceptualized as a tool of state power as much as a social service. For example, Paglayan (2021) busts the myth that democratization drove the rise of public schooling, using a dataset covering 109 countries over 200 years to show that "most of the expansion of primary schooling took place before democracy emerged," and enumerates the many flavors of socialization that motivated non-democratic regimes to setup and run schools.[8] States thus have strong reasons to expand schooling but maintain control over what happens in schools.

To run its schools, and exert control over them, most developing countries expanded schooling via the large, centralized "spider" bureaucracies that are ubiquitous today (Pritchett 2013). This was not inevitable, but rather chosen over alternatives such as private schools or local control. These bureaucracies operated with what James Scott called "high modernism", a faith in expert-led government programs over local know-how and autonomy (1998). In these systems, where power was firmly centralized and exercised through bureaucratic modes of organization, reforms aimed at strengthening the community-school relationship were not ignored, but they were interpolated and implemented in a very particular top-down way. Mansuri and Rao (2013) helpfully explain this paradox by distinguishing between examples of "organic" and "induced" participation. Organic participation – such as the participation that powers social movements, organized labor, and local collective action – "is driven by motivated agents, is contextually sensitive and long-term, and is constantly innovating in response to local realities" (284). In contrast, state-led attempts to induce local participation rely on directives that are legible to the bureaucracy and which it can implement in a one-size-fits-all way across localities. This process, what Scott called "seeing like a state", reduces and flattens the forms that the community-school relationship can take into a "project" – such as school committees - with tightly prescribed rules around operations and reporting. This is not a cynical or deliberate process, rather it is an "emergent property" (Pritchett 2015) of the system whereby the organizational form of the bureaucracy prefigures the kind of community-school relationship it can foster.

The result of states with a compelling interest in maintaining control over schools trying to use large bureaucracies to induce participation via school committees is well-illustrated by a RISE study from Nigeria. Bano (2022b) uses survey and ethnographic data to take stock of the 10,000 "school based

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[8] One striking example from Paglayan (2017) is that the historical record shows that states invested in public education following periods of conflict, possibly to instill values or loyalty to the victorious regime. She shows this empirically by tracing differential investments in education following civil wars in Europe and Latin America. It is worth noting that while states may have self-interested reasons to control the socialization process, the ability of schools to create a common, shared identity between students from vastly different backgrounds is also often celebrated as a legitimate if not central purpose of public education.

management committees" (SBMCs) scaled up across Nigeria through a UKAID-funded program running between 2008-2017.[9] The study's main finding is that SBMCs are a prime example of isomorphic mimicry, a phenomenon - borrowed by the social sciences from nature[10] - where an organization adopts the outward characteristics of other successful organizations to appear legitimate, but does not actually develop the underlying capability needed for success (Boli, Ramirez, and Meyer 1985; Pritchett 2018). SBMCs provide the form of voice without any of its substance. At the school level, this means that SBMCs function as mouthpieces for the state, not the community: "In practice the stated commitment to be listening to what the community wants is replaced by dictating to the community what to expect and what to contribute" (Bano 2022b, p.11) with a "focus on teaching communities to make very specific apolitical demands" (p.18). In this way, "decentralization can be used to tighten central control and increase incentives for upward accountability rather than to increase local discretion", essentially transforming the community-school relationship into an extension of the bureaucracy itself (Mansuri and Rao, p. 192). At least in Nigeria, the unexpected consequence of school committees is that they strengthen the state.[11]

This counterintuitive helps explain why a government like Nigeria would invest at scale in school committees – a nominal attempt to devolve state power - even when they have little demonstrated evidence of significant impact (in terms of learning or any other outcome). School committees, in this light, are a case study for what James Ferguson, an anthropologist who did fieldwork in Lesotho in the 1990s, memorably dubbed the "anti-politics machine". Whereas states and their partners in the development sector generally perceive the expansion of government services and projects as progress, Ferguson views this "state-centeredness" as the means through which the state projects power. Development, viewed from this perspective, is not a "machine for eliminating poverty that is incidentally involved with the state bureaucracy; it is a machine for reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power, which incidentally takes 'poverty' as its points of entry" (Ferguson 1994, p.255). Returning to the Nigerian case, donors channel their resources (and relationships) through the central government, allowing the government to nominally demonstrate its adherence to international "best practices" around school committees and decentralization even as the program functionally allows the government to expand its size and bureaucratic reach. For Ferguson, the troubling upshot of this mode of development was that it "turns the problem of poverty into a technical issue to be addressed through projects" – like school committees – "rather than into a political problem" (256). As Bano (2022b) keenly observes, school committees are a vehicle for making "specific apolitical demands" on schools that simultaneously gives the state a free pass by avoiding deeper, more 'political' changes that redistribute power within the system. SBMCs in Nigeria function as anti-politics machines, Ferguson writ small.

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[9] The Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) was a £124 million programme. ESSPIN supported SBMCs across 6 Nigerian states, among many other projects. The model for SBMC support was subsequently adopted at the national level. For details see https://www.esspin.org/.

[10] "Some moths, for example, have coloration on their wings that look like eyes; some flies look like bees and have even evolved to buzz like a bee but do not actually have stingers; the scarlet kingsnake has the same yellow, red, and black banded coloration of the deadly poisonous eastern coral snake, but without the bother of actually having venom" (Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock 2017, p.31).

[11] Muralidharan and Singh (2020) describe a similar pattern in Madhya Pradesh, India in their evaluation of a program aimed at implementing school-level improvement planning. The Indian bureaucracy's attempts to implement a decentralized process were similarly doomed to isomorphism, transforming an effort to grant local discretion into an exercise in top-down paperwork. As with the SBMCs in Nigeria, the Indian program had no impact on learning outcomes.

The state's top priorities for education have important ramifications for the space afforded to the community-school relationship. When the state's top priorities for education are control over socialization and the expansion of bureaucratic state power – as opposed to improving student learning – then sustained investment in school management committees makes sense. A state concerned with socializing its citizens has a strong motive not to afford schools local control (such as flexibility over curriculum) in ways that might weaken the state's own control. A state concerned with expansion, and operating through the organizational logic and "grammar" (Aiyar et al. 2021) of large bureaucracies, will pursue isomorphic, rather than structural, decentralization. The form of the community-school relationship that results - school management committees - have a circumscribed, apolitical mandate where they act more as extensions of the bureaucracy rather than independent bodies, leaving schools solely accountable to the state.

The bureaucracy and school committees

The constraints the compact relationship places on the form and mandate of the community-school relationship are enacted in practice within the management relationship (between the Ministry and schools). Given the unwillingness of those in power to meaningfully decentralize it to levels where voice can wield it (Kingdon et al. 2014), school committees are afforded local control over very narrow domains of a school.

This means that most school committees are weak, and only able to exercise a limited form of "school management". For example, the typical school committee in Malawi exists mainly as a vehicle for the head teacher to raise additional funds from the community (Watkins and Ashforth 2019). More generally, Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, and Fasih (2009) review school committees authority in developing countries across five key domains: school budgeting; hiring and firing of staff; curriculum; inputs (like textbooks and infrastructure); and monitoring of teacher and student performance. In developing countries, it is rare for school committees to have control over the school budget (except for capitation grants that are a small fraction of the overall budget); rare to have control over hiring and firing; very rare to have any input over the curriculum; and de facto rare to monitor teachers or student learning.[12] It is only common for committees to have substantive oversight over school inputs (Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, and Fasih 2009, p.99). It is no accident that school committees are almost universally referred to as school *management* committees in development discourse. Their delegated authority is confined to "management" tasks related to the day-to-day functioning of the school. It does not include control over setting a school's purpose, which is transmitted via multiple avenues but is especially encoded in the curriculum, or control over any levers of accountability to enforce that purpose via budgeting, staffing, or monitoring. School management committees often don't actually manage very much.

This diagnosis helps explain many commonly observed symptoms about how school committees work in practice.

With narrow management powers, school committees are often unable to change how parents or community members make claims on schools. In relatively centralized systems, those where

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[12] The main exceptions noted by Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, and Fasih (2009) where developing countries have developed "strong" school management committees were during post-conflict periods in Central America countries, such as El Salvador's EDUCO program.

substantive levers of power reside at the District level and up, school committees are toothless. Local accountability is impractical, and school committees become dormant.

Pratham, one of the world's largest and most respected organizations working on education, learned this the hard way. Pratham works in India, where each state operates its own centralized "spider" education system. In the mid-2000s in Uttar Pradesh - India's largest state, with over 200 million people - village education committees (VECs) existed by law and on paper, but remained largely a fiction in practice: 92% of parents did not know about the VEC, and only 38% of VEC *members* knew they belonged to it (A. V. Banerjee et al. 2010). Crucially, VECs possessed only indirect power, which they could exercise mainly through sending reports or requests to civil servants at higher administrative levels (the block level). Pratham participated in an experimental study to test three different ways of mobilizing the community: providing information on VEC rights and responsibilities; providing information on local students' foundational learning outcomes; and training community members to take direct action and volunteer in remedial learning programs for children. The well-known results, published in Banerjee et al. (2010), showed that only the third intervention, the one that took place outside the system, had any impact on learning outcomes, whereas "schools seemed immune to large-scale community action."

A recent pair of studies, (Bano 2022a; Bano and Oberoi 2020), document the remarkable organizational evolution that followed wherein Pratham essentially had to unlearn many of the community engagement strategies that underpin the "school management" model. The organization has turned away from efforts to help VECs hold schools, much less higher-level bureaucrats, accountable (Bano 2022a). Instead, the organization has created ways of engaging individual community members through non-school programs and catalyzing collaborative relationships between parents and teachers. And Pratham - an organized, massive, quasi-social movement with support from civil society "grasstops" and policy elites - likely represents an upper bound on projecting school committees' voice as an instrument of accountability within a centralized system.

Another symptom of school committees' limited "management" role is the increasingly familiar finding that giving parents and communities more information has highly heterogenous effects. Many studies find that the provision of information has no impact on learning (e.g. Banerjee et al. 2010; Lieberman, Posner, and Tsai 2014; Barrera-Osorio et al. 2021) while some cite it as among the most cost effective educational interventions ever (Kremer, Brannen, and Glennerster 2013). This is partly because "information" is a highly heterogeneous category that refers to very different types of interventions[13]. It is also because parents, even when given high quality information that moves their priors, often don't have the power to act on it.

The idea that information only "works" in the presence of certain complementary conditions is the subject of a newer literature. Lieberman, Posner, and Tsai (2014), trying to explain the non-impact of their experiment (which gave parents information on student learning outcomes, and information on ways to hold schools accountable), propose an extended causal chain for information to lead to action. The final two links of this chain are that parents "think that their efforts will have an impact"

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[13] (Tresnatri et al. 2022) offer examples of four different types of information interventions often directed at parents: information on student learning outcomes; information on school quality or performance; information on the returns to education; information on ways to support children at home. It is not difficult to think of additional sub-categories of information interventions, such as providing information on the rights and responsibilities of school committees), or publishing information on school financing.

and that "if they think that generating real change will require collective action, that others in the community will act with them" (p.80). Along the same lines, Fox (2015) posits that information interventions to strengthen voice rely on two rarely met assumptions: that information will motivate collective action, and that collective action will have sufficient power to influence public sector performance. Bintoro (2021), reviewing 18 studies with components of social accountability, writes that information only leads to results when combined with community participation and levers of "enforcement" vis a vis service providers. Kosec and Wantchekon (2020) have perhaps the most succinct and empirically backed formulation. They claim that information only leads to change when parents and communities also have the incentives and power to act on it, a pattern which they test and validate across 48 studies in developing countries that provided information to attempt to improve service delivery.

Voice, granted limited managerial powers through school committees, has little recourse to action even when it receives actionable information. In contrast, when parents and the community do have control over more substantive levers of accountability, more information can be highly effective. Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja (2017) perform a remarkable experiment where giving all parents in treatment villages report cards, which included their child's test scores and the quality of their child's school relative to other local schools, improved test scores in some low-performing private schools, caused other low-performing private schools to shut down, lowered private school fees, and modestly improved test scores in nearby government schools. Even more remarkably, this one-off injection of information led to sustained impacts on learning outcomes in treatment villages *8 years later (*Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja 2019*)*. Information was so effective in this case because it was introduced into competitive village-level education markets, meaning that parents could use the credible threat of exit to a nearby school, and the boost to voice that accompanies choice[14], to ensure local schools responded to the new information. This stands in contrast to the powerlessness of the voice commonly wielded by parents, communities, and their representative school management committees.

In line with the state's motives to safeguard control over schools, the bureaucracy affords little space to school committees. The main levers of accountability – setting the school budget; making human resource decisions; selecting the curriculum; and monitoring outcomes – are largely left outside school committees' remit. Instead, the bureaucracy outsources specific managerial responsibilities to school committees that largely have to do with inputs, such as fundraising for the school, spending a small discretionary budget, or monitoring teacher attendance. School committees are effectively absorbed into the "management" relationship, and endowed with limited power that makes any direct relationship of accountability between them and the school unenforceable.

Teachers and school committees

At the school-level, what kinds of resistance or affordances do teachers offer to school committees? There is some evidence that teachers see "school management" decisions by school committees as

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[14] Hirschman (1970) emphasizes the ways that voice and choice are interdependent. Easy exit makes it tempting to never exercise voice. Conversely, when exit is difficult or impossible – such as from a country – people often must turn to voice through protest or politics. Voice and choice are thus often stronger when they are balanced. Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja (2017) offer some evidence that "parent engagement" – a proxy measure for voice - increased more or less commensurately with the test score increases seen in private and government schools.

illegitimate forms of accountability. This is linked to limitations, real or perceived, on the capability of parents and community members.

A clear example of this sort of school-level resistance to school committees' authority comes from a social accountability program, Kiat Guru, implemented in around 200 schools in Indonesia. This program ran three different interventions which each tested a different relationship of accountability between community user committees and local teachers. As reported in (Gaduh et al. 2020), the first treatment instituted a "teacher scorecard" which clarified the community's expectations for teachers (~.1SD increase in test scores, small increase in teacher attendance); a second treatment implemented the same scorecard, but incentivized it by linking the community's monthly judgments to teacher bonus pay (~.1SD increase in test scores, small decrease in teacher attendance); while a third treatment used the scorecard, but linked the bonus pay to camera-monitored attendance (~.2SD increase in test scores, moderate increase in teacher attendance). A pair of follow-up studies analyzed qualitative data collected during Kiat Guru to understand these differential results (Hwa et al. 2022; World Bank 2020b). They find that teachers felt that the task of evaluating their teaching was incommensurate with the user committee's capability: "the subjective and more technically demanding [second treatment arm] was seen as a less appropriate fit given the capacities and educational status of local community members relative to the teachers they were evaluating" (Hwa et al. 2022). Conversely, the third treatment arm was better accepted, and more successful, since the incentives were tied to the camera data, an objective measure.

The Kiat Guru user committees' perceived capability partly rests on their relative social status. This fits with other studies which emphasize that relationships of accountability are embedded in broader social relationships. Watkins and Ashforth (2019) provide a rare thick description of the exercise of voice in rural Malawi, drawing on 83 interviews and an extensive archive of journals documenting everyday life in villages between 2000-2020. They find that community members' low social, educational, and financial status relative to teachers severely constrains voice. School committees and parent teacher associations have circumscribed interactions with school staff, and exist mainly as vehicles for fundraising. Only local chiefs, part of the traditional hierarchy outside government, have enough social capital – to convene people and enforce norms - to bridge the gulf between the community and the school: "'If there is ever to be 'voice' in the local communities, it would be organized and led by chiefs" (18). In contrast, parents' legitimacy as economic principals is called into question by their social status.

The other factor that contributed to the perceived low capability of Kiat Guru user committees was parent "capacity". If school committees are assigned responsibility for tasks which they have insufficient capacity to accomplish, this might trigger resistance from teachers. This can help explain results from studies where strengthening school committees' management of school grants has negative effects on teacher attendance, trust between parents and teachers, and student achievement (Asim 2019; Barrera-Osorio et al. 2021). Beasley and Huillery (2017), studying the short-term impacts of grants to school committees in 1000 schools in Niger, explicitly link their disappointing results to poor parent decision-making. In their experiment, parent-led school committees directed the new funds toward specific categories of spending, like school infrastructure, and underinvested in teaching and learning. They conclude that parents may be "willing but unable" to make optimal management decisions for schools due to low capacity, such as lack of time and expertise in how to increase the quality of education.

The idea that community participation is not an unalloyed positive, and instead must be commensurate with community capacity, is also borne out in Khwaja (2004). The author develops a helpful distinction between "non-technical" decisions, which benefit from or even rely on local inputs and knowledge, and "technical" decisions, which involve investments the community cannot make on its own and require the involvement of an external agent. By exploiting variation in community participation in both the technical and non-technical aspects of infrastructure projects across 99 communities in Northern Pakistan, Khwaja (2004) finds that participation in non-technical decisions improves outcomes and, conversely, that participation in technical decisions worsens them[15].

It is not hard to extrapolate Khwaja's reasoning into the classroom, and imagine teachers' frustration with parents making "technical" decisions which they are ill-suited for. These technical decisions are often the kind of responsibilities attached to the "management" role, such as school budgeting or judging teacher performance. The latter, for example, is one of the most complex tasks in education systems. Even principals in private schools, equipped with information from classroom evaluations (on things like teacher attendance and classroom management skills), have far from complete information about a teacher's true value-add to student learning (Brown and Andrabi 2023). Teacher resistance to community evaluations like the Kiat Guru program may partially reflect legitimate frustration with the limitations of communities and parents being asked to micromanage educational decisions which they don't have the capacity - in terms of know-how or bandwidth - to take.[16]

Beyond the school level, teachers also sometimes collectively resist efforts at local accountability through their unions. Teachers in some contexts may have a vested interest in protecting the status quo, especially when civil service contracts offer job security and comparatively high incomes, and have the organizing clout through their unions to influence the politics of education at the highest levels. Perhaps the best example of this kind of resistance from teachers comes from the literature on contract teachers, one of the few well-studied attempts to delegate strong "school management" responsibilities to school committees. Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer (2015) evaluate the impact of Kenyan school committees hiring an additional teacher on a short-term, non-civil service contract, and the marginal impact of combining similar contracts with light-touch training to the committee on contract teacher hiring, monitoring, and review processes.[17] They found that the contract teachers spent more time teaching than regular teachers and modestly raised test scores, and that the training component helped committees effectively manage the program and limit unintended consequences (which included civil service teachers reducing their effort following the contract hire, and hiring of relatives of existing teachers).

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[15] In the context of the infrastructure projects being studied, an example of a "non-technical" decision might be deciding on the community's financial and in-kind contributions for project upkeep, while a technical decision could be selecting the project site. The most rigorous specification in Khwaja (2004) relies on community fixed effects, meaning that it is using variation in a single community's participation on multiple infrastructure projects carried out there. This specification shows significant results on the paper's main outcome measure, the current state of project maintenance: "A 10% increase in community participation in nontechnical decisions results in a 5.5 percentage-point rise in maintenance, but the same increase in participation in technical decisions results in a 3.8 percentage-point fall in maintenance."

[16] Leaving them to professionals i.e. principals vs. to bureaucracy which will just make irrelevant rules

[17] The program evaluated, the "Extra Teacher Program", was implemented between 2005-2007. It built on longstanding norms and practices established during the Harambee movement for similar hiring by local schools, with the difference being that this program was funded by the government rather than private funds from the community.

Bold et al. (2018) study the adaptation of this program from an NGO-implemented intervention to a government program implemented through the bureaucracy. Like the earlier study, they find significant impacts on learning - of up to 0.8 SDs - when the program was implemented by an NGO with local control over teacher contracting by trained committees. The program still worked pretty well when implemented by the government with teacher contracting done by the bureaucracy (up to 0.5 SDs increase in test scores). However, there was no impact at all when the program was implemented by the government with local control over teacher contracting. Versions of the program that threatened bureaucratic power were actively undermined by the system.[18] In the longer term, the program's perceived threat to civil service teachers triggered full-scale political resistance from The Kenya National Union of Teachers, including lawsuits, protests, and a national strike (Kingdon et al. 2014). Kenya ultimately scaled-up a politically acceptable version of the program – with centralized hiring, high teacher pay, and low local accountability - despite its lower impact on learning in the evaluation.

When local control through strong school committees threatens the interests of organized labor (teachers and bureaucrats), it is often vulnerable to systematic reversal even when successful at raising learning outcomes. Unions were able to resist community "school management" and maintain a version of the civil service management they prefer. In some systems, the pressure to protect inflated public sector teacher wages (Pritchett and Aiyar 2014), or the pressure to maintain the state's ability to use centralized teacher hiring and assignment as a patronage mill, may be as powerful a reason for the State to run and control schools as the socialization motives discussed earlier.[19] In the words of Fox (2015): "Voice should always expect reprisals. The true test is whether challenge can be sustained in the face of anti-accountability vested interests." If parents and communities are to be given substantive local control, they must be able to hang on to these powers in the face of dynamic feedback loops in the system.

Where the agent doesn't view their principal as legitimate, accountability can encounter limits or outright resistance. This is the case with some of the common "school management" responsibilities assigned to school committees. School committees are often tasked with responsibilities they are not good at – or are not perceived as being good at by teachers – due to their social status and their limited expertise around how to improve teaching and learning. School committees need to have authority that is commensurate with their capability in the eyes of teachers. At the macro systems level, many efforts at local control are vulnerable to political challenge from teachers' unions, which often have a vested interest in the status quo and, in many contexts, a potent means to mobilize and defend it.

The original question posed by Section 2 is how the other parts of the system variously allow room for or constrain the community-school relationship. The previous subsections explored how much

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[18] (Kingdon et al. 2014) point out that bureaucrats, as much as teachers' unions, have incentives to undermine real decentralization: "Bureaucrats have vested interests in their jobs, in the money they control, and in their autonomy to allocate money and make education decisions as they see fit. They will resist reforms that threaten their jobs and sources of power – as school choice and genuine decentralisation tend to do, for example – and support reforms that do the opposite, such as those that expand the size of the system."

[19] This argument - that unions and politicians have a vested interest in maintaining centralized arrangements for collective bargaining, and teacher hiring/assignment, and in avoiding stronger forms of local control - could have just as easily fit with the discussion of the compact relationship.

power and what kinds of responsibilities the system is willing to entrust to the community, and how a number of common, overlapping system dynamics ultimately support school committees invested with a limited mandate for "school management".

3. The Governance Equilibrium

School committees exercising "school management" have failed to consistently contribute to significant gains in learning. I have argued that this reflects an equilibrium where school committees are designed as isomorphic bodies by the state, subordinated by a powerful bureaucracy into a narrow array of tasks, and regarded as illegitimate managers by teachers.

Should reformers then give up on school committees?

This section theorizes a different form of the community-school relationship – the "school governance" paradigm - which might allow communities to play a role in improving learning. It also establishes a minimum – yet exacting - set of enabling system conditions for "school governance" to succeed.

What the governance equilibrium might look like in practice

To make the community-school relationship substantial rather than hollow, communities and parents must be entrusted with greater latitude to determine the kind of education offered at local schools. To give their voice a measure of independence from the bureaucracy, they must be given more levers of accountability over schools. This would also help make community members legitimate economic principals in the eyes of teachers, but only if they hold responsibilities commensurate with their capability.

Putting these principles into action means giving communities more power than they enjoy under the "school management" equilibrium, but also different powers. School governing bodies would have responsibility for setting and enforcing their vision for local schools. At the same time, they would be kept away from the school's operations, processes, and classroom practices, which are all "technical" considerations best left to school management – some combination of school staff and local bureaucrats – in order to achieve that vision. Table 2 takes the five key domains of school responsibility identified by Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, and Fasih (2009), and outlines a division of responsibilities consistent with the "school governance" equilibrium.

Table 2: A broad division of responsibilities under the "school governance" equilibrium

Domains of responsibility	School governance	School management
	School governing body sets vision for local schools	School and District staff work to achieve the vision on a day-to-day basis
Monitoring	Monitor outcomes, convene public meetings	Monitor inputs (e.g. teacher attendance)
Human resources	Significant control over who teaches at the school (e.g. responsibility for selecting, evaluating, and deciding to	Control over teacher careers (e.g. select from a pool of candidates, assignment, promotion,

	continue the employment of school management)	evaluation, continuation of employment)
Curriculum	Review and adopt non-core curricular goals (e.g. those not related to learning)	Instruction, pedagogy, assessments
School budgeting	Approve budget, raise private funds	Plan and manage budget
Inputs (buildings, textbooks, learning materials)		Choose inputs

At least two major aspects of this school governance equilibrium depart, in rather radical ways, from the status quo in many current developing countries. First, it is predicated on a much higher degree of decentralization than currently exists in many or most systems. While my conception of "community voice" is flexible and is not necessarily tied to the school level (see Table 1), this does mean something close to Pritchett's (2013) conception of "locally operated schools" which means control by a unit of local government (as opposed to the "middle tier" such as Districts). Perhaps the most radical implication of this kind of decentralization is that the community needs significant control over who teaches at the school, such as by contracting school management who in turn has a say over teachers at the school. This runs squarely counter to politically sacrosanct civil service systems in many countries. However, given the centrality of teaching to education, "if schools are not allowed to choose which teachers will teach, then local operational control is just rhetoric" (Pritchett 2013, p.223).

Second, Table 2 proposes local flexibility around the non-learning goals in the curriculum. This seems in particular to challenge the state's interest in controlling socialization (as outlined in section 2). Is there a way to open up some space for local control over educational goals, as codified in the curriculum, but in a way that respects or is consistent with the legitimate socialization goals of the State? Moore and Spivack (2022) suggest that this is possible. They argue that a national education system "marching in lockstep" via tightly prescribed goals and practices is insufficient to improve performance due to the diversity of problems, solutions, and even definitions of the problem present across the system. At the same time, they recognize the legitimate need for the system to centrally define and measure progress against key social and public goals for education. They square this circle by proposing a degree of "flex" in the system toward both educational means (practices) *and* ends (goals). If the State maintained tight control over core goals, including non-negotiable aspects of socialization, but loosened control over additional educational goals to the local level, then it might allow "the society as a whole to find a reason to be strongly committed to the educational enterprise," in effect creating "a 'big tent' with many different interests all being advanced favorably compared to the existing status quo" (pp.13-14).

These departures from the status quo may make the "school governance" equilibrium seem offputtingly abstract. In answer, Bano (2022c) draws on ethnographic fieldwork to offer a detailed portrait of school governance working at scale in contemporary Nigeria. The study conducted focus group discussions and fieldwork over a 4-year period with communities in Kano, a state in Northern Nigeria, to explore why non-state Islamic/Quranic schools are far numerous and popular in Kano than state schools (23,000 vs. 6,000 in a 2003 school census).

In Kano, state schools relegate the community to the usual "school management" role of unenforceable monitoring and accountability. They offer a curriculum so mismatched with the local labor market and social order it is producing a generational crisis of alienated youth that leaves the community feeling "worse off". The curriculum fails to deliver economic opportunity since the quality of education is not good enough to access formal sector jobs; it raises aspirations for an urban middle class lifestyle it can't deliver on; and it promotes values that challenge or erode traditional values. In response, the community has exited state schools en masse for non-State Islamic and Quranic schools.

These schools are highly responsive to local ideas about the kind of education children should be getting. The most popular "Islamiyya" curricula fuse the state's "academic" curriculum with additional community goals, especially an emphasis on *adab* (moral training). Rather than narrow the ends of education to economic success in the formal sector, these schools reflect multiple, locally defined ends such as local employment, social cohesion, and particular ideas of "the good life". At the same time, these schools offer a modern education in that they are state-accredited, offer their graduates the same certifications as state schools, and in some cases employ government-paid teachers in a kind of informal PPP. As Moore and Spivack (2022) hope, these schools also recommit the community to education and motivate strong community engagement. They attract more community resources, teaching is relatively attractive and teachers are more motivated in terms of their on-the-job effort, and the schools are widely regarded as producing superior learning outcomes relative to state schools.

It is telling that this example of school governance over local schools comes from the non-state sector. As in other work (e.g. Andrabi et al. 2022), understanding how unconstrained non-state schools respond to the community reveals something important about the constraints that state schools are operating under. The communities in Kano want the "flex" in the curriculum that is part of "school governance", and when schools respond the community and parents respond in-kind in ways that seem to improve learning (although (Bano 2022c) makes no causal claims). At the same time, it is clear that the system conditions that might enable voice – as opposed to choice - to play a "school governance" role in state schools are not yet in place in Northern Nigeria.

Enabling conditions for the governance equilibrium to improve learning

The potential for communities to play a "school governance" role that improves learning in local government schools depends on two enabling conditions in the wider education system. These are that the decentralization required for "school governance" is genuinely authorized and supported by the rest of the system, and that "school governance" efforts do not occur in isolation but rather are complemented by specific government-led commitments to learning.

Condition 1: the rest of the system needs to be supportive

A key prediction of the RISE systems framework is that the different parts of the system must "align" and pull in same direction to achieve a particular outcome. Schools are a primary battleground for this tug-of-war since they have competing principals, namely communities (via the "short route") and the state and education bureaucracy (via the "long route") (Pritchett 2015; Silberstein and Spivack 2023). Furthermore, during any transition from "school management" toward "school governance", the community starts from a position of overwhelming weakness. Simply granting "school governance" responsibilities to school committees is unlikely, in and of

itself, to allow them to be effective unless they are backstopped by support from other parts of the system. Absent this support, as explored through the lens of contract teacher reforms in Kenya in section 2, any devolution of power remains vulnerable to "reprisals" and even wholesale reversal.

(Bano 2022e) offers further empirical support for this dynamic. The paper is based on a document review and interviews with staff of the CARE Foundation, which runs a respected school turnaround model that has dramatically improved dropout rates and matriculation exam results in nearly 1000 government schools in Pakistan. The model is centered on tackling the "anti-work" culture that pervades government schools through injecting a critical mass of CARE-trained teachers into the school, introducing specific teaching practices, and enforcing new practices through strict monitoring. However, CARE schools are a victim of their own success. Their chief challenge is being taken back over by the bureaucracy and backsliding in business-as-usual. As one CARE senior staff member puts it: "Once we improve the school, the district government comes to spoil it." The bureaucracy disciplines school-level positive deviants because they are threats to the status quo (and bureaucrats also want to control the increased school budget and related patronage opportunities that attend successful, higher-enrolment schools). The implication is that CARE, or another form of local governance like a school governing body, is contingent on the higher parts of the system: "improved horizontal governance cannot replace the need for effective vertical governance structures".

Another piece of positive evidence for the idea that communities need external support to be successful comes from Pradhan et al. (2014). The authors use an unusually multi-pronged randomized control trial to evaluate 7 different school committee interventions in Indonesia. Most interventions varied program design variables such as giving school committees larger grants, training them about their responsibilities, and instituting more democratic committee election processes. One intervention changed the system conditions under which the committee operated, specifically by "linking" the committee via joint planning meetings to the local village council. Only interventions involving this link to politically powerful local government increased test scores (by about .2 SD on an Indonesian language test after two years). School committees, in this case operating under the "school management" paradigm[20], needed another co-sponsor in the system to lend them the legitimacy to actual induce changes in schools.

Perhaps the best articulation of the enabling environment needed for successful "school governance" comes from Fox (2015). The author reviews 25 quantitative evaluations of social accountability (voice) interventions across sectors, and analyzes them according to two distinct theories of change. He finds that attempts to *only* strengthen voice yield mixed results, and considers them "weak" forms of social accountability. Stronger and more successful forms of social accountability rely on "sandwich" strategies that simultaneously strengthen voice and "teeth", defined as the state's capacity to respond to voice. In his view, voice directed against unaccountable incumbents will inevitably, and necessarily, provoke resistance, and is therefore reliant on coalitions with other supportive actors embedded in the state and society – audit bodies, information access

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[20] At the time of the study, school committee were functioning as fundraising bodies for the school. The study was aimed at enacting a 2002 government decree which gave school committees a greater advisory role in school affairs, such as "making recommendations on school expenditures, teacher qualifications, and school facilities" and promoting parental involvement in the school (Pradhan et al 2014, p.109). This puts these committees squarely within the "management" paradigm.

reforms, grievance redress mechanisms, the legal system – to stand a chance. In Fox's memorable formulation: "Voice needs teeth to have bite" (p.357).

Condition 2: complementary government-led commitments to learning

For "school governance" to deliver on its promise to improve accountability and service delivery, it needs something more. It needs to happen within a broader environment of government-led systems change where the government is committed to the "purpose of learning", and is delivering on this commitment through a "technical core" (Kaffenberger 2022) that can adequately perform specific technical practices best or only able to be done at a centralized level of the system.

"School governance" cannot be automatically counted on to deliver a commitment to learning because communities and families do not always, or innately, prioritize learning. This is not to suggest that communities and families do not have their children's best interests at heart. They do. Instead, it means that local definitions of "quality" education trade-off multiple and sometimes contested "dimensions of value" (Moore and Spivack 2022) which may – or may not – prioritize learning. As Savage (2012) explores from the perspective of both donors and aid recipients in Malawi's education sector, local "ownership" is a deeply contested idea where "more" is not normatively or automatically good, and indeed is often in tension with the achievement of development outcomes (pp.181-183).

For example, the municipality of Sobral in Brazil has become one of the most celebrated global case studies of how to achieve dramatic gains in foundational learning at reasonable scale (for example, see Crouch 2020, and Loureiro and Cruz 2020). However, a lesser-remarked feature of Sobral's story was parents initial resistance to the reformist mayor's vision. In particular, parents resisted the consolidation of small, rural schools which reduced the total number of schools by 1/3 and necessitated busing of some students. This echoes other research showing the premium parents place on distance as a criteria for choosing between schools (e.g. Solomon and Zeitlin 2019). However, this reform was also a key aspect of Sobral's subsequent successful campaign to improve foundational literacy, allowing for less multigrade, more similarly levelled classrooms within the larger consolidated schools, and allowing for more efficient targeting of resources (Loureiro and Cruz 2020).

Bano and Dyonisius (2022) explore how District-level voice manifests in Indonesia's decentralized system by pushing different Districts to prioritize different definitions of "quality" education. Neighboring districts with a shared history prioritize divergent educational goals according to local incentives. Karawang, an urbanizing district with a growing industrial workforce, thinks of "education as certificates for jobs". To gain the credentials valued in the local labor market means passing a standardized exam, leading Karawang to uphold norms of widespread cheating and delay implementation of a national computerized testing reform designed to significantly reduce cheating and, as a result, rationalize exam scores (Berkhout et al. 2020). In contrast, the nearby district of Purwakarta prioritizes "character education" and has implemented the computerized testing program to protect exam integrity, driven by the local society and polity's emphasis on traditional moral values. While the central government should not monopolize the fraught process of defining the purpose of education, it must uphold learning as the first among competing priorities or run the risk that "school governance" would deprioritize it.

The assumption here is that the local priorities for education are susceptible to goals set higher up in the system. There is good reason to think this is true, and that community and parental demand for learning depends, in no small part, on the relative value placed on learning by the wider education system and society. Drawing on qualitative interviews and an archive of journals[21], Watkins and Kaler (2016) show how the core meaning of education in Malawi is to earn a credential via school-leaving examinations. Credentials carry social, economic, and cultural capital - status, jobs, and moral worth – that is entirely delinked from learning. Parents' judgment of the quality of a school and teacher depends on whether their child passes or fails the all-important test: "Currently, there is no reason that teachers, parents or students should care about the learning students do in the course of their schooling, except insofar as it enables them to pass tests and exams" (20). Their key insight is that better aligning the content of the exam with learning could drive systemic change in the system, in terms of both community demand and classroom practices, and still respect the established "meaning of education." The exam, in Malawi, is the system's implicit steering wheel. If the government uses the exam to establish learning as a determinant of success, parents will reprioritize learning in their hierarchy of educational goals. Conversely, in systems where learning is not a key determinant of success, more voice may not move the system toward learning.

The second enabling condition for "school governance" is a government able to perform necessarily centralized technical functions. The local level is well-positioned to carry out certain functions while the state is indispensable to carrying out others. Devolving governance responsibilities to the local level is not an all-or-nothing proposition, it must be balanced by a functional center. Fung and Wright (2001) get at this balance in their propositions for "empowered participatory governance," which include "devolution" to empowered local decision-making units, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, "centralized supervision and coordination" which broadly monitors local units, shares information and innovations between them, and holds them accountable (qtd. in Mansuri and Rao 2013).

Pritchett and Pande (2006) drill further into the idea of allocating functions to the level of the system best able to perform them. They are responding to the vexing question of how to enable the lowest tier of Indian government – the Panchayati Raj institutions – to effectively deliver on their mandate (in many Indian states) to govern primary education. They propose a litmus test for assigning a function to a level of the system based on "first principles" of economics and accountability. For example, they assign responsibility for "setting standards for learning achievement, monitoring performance, and disseminating information" to the central state. The economic rationale is that assessing learning has significant economies of scale (good assessments are technically involved and expensive to develop), large externalities (information is a public good), is necessary for equity (e.g. to produce a standardized metric for redistribution), and low heterogeneity of demand at the local level (everybody wants a similar assessment). The accountability rationale is that assessing learning requires little discretion (it should not vary according to local context), is not transaction intensive (it does not require repeated interactions at the local level), and is difficult to observe based on locally available information (it requires a technically sophisticated assessment, at least to measure mastery of learning beyond the very basics). Using similar reasoning, the authors develop a high-level division of responsibilities across the levels of the system. The responsibilities allocated to the State and District level have been roughly translated to the last column of Table 3 below.

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[21] The Malawi Journals Project paid 20 Malawi youth to maintain journals of conversations in everyday settings between 1999 and 2015, with a focus on HIV/AIDS. For details see https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/113269.

Table 3: A division of school-level and centralized responsibilities under the "governance" equilibrium

Domains of responsibility	School governance School governing body sets vision for local schools	School management School staff work to achieve the vision on a day-to-day basis	Bureaucracy/State (adapted from Pritchett and Pande 2006, Table 8)[22]
Monitoring	Monitor outcomes, convene public meetings	Monitor inputs (e.g. teacher attendance)	Assess and disseminate information on learning outcomes, monitor school processes
Human resources	Significant control over who teaches at the school (e.g. responsibility for selecting, evaluating, and deciding to continue the employment of school management)	Control over teacher careers (e.g. select from a pool of candidates, assignment, promotion, evaluation, continuation of employment)	Teacher hiring, salary structure, and training/coaching. School governing body training.
Curriculum	Review and adopt non-core curricular goals (e.g. those not related to learning)	Instruction, pedagogy, assessments of student progress	Core curriculum design (e.g. setting learning goals and standards), oversight of school-level approaches to instruction
School budgeting	Approve budget, raise private funds	Plan and manage budget	
Inputs (buildings, textbooks, learning materials)		Choose inputs	Support technical aspects of infrastructure planning

The technical practices in the final column of Table 3 are not merely "nice to have", they are preconditions for the local level to successfully deliver on its responsibilities in columns 2 and 3. A good empirical example of this comes from a recent diagnostic study of the education system in Gauteng province, South Africa (Fleisch et al. 2022). The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 made school governing bodies (SGBs), with a majority of elected parents, the highest decision-making body in the school. Their substantial powers include the ability to hire (but not fire) principals and teachers; the ability to levy compulsory school fees (in the wealthier 40 percent of schools); and the right to determine the language policy of the school. SGBs have "significant real voice" that – as their name suggests - falls somewhere closer to "governance" than "management".

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[22] See also Pritchett (2013) for a more generalized description of "pull apart" systems and the assignment of responsibility to the level best able to perform it (Tables 6.5 and 6.6 on pages 221-222).

However, a recent diagnostic study argues that, despite their powers[23], these bodies have struggled to have any impact on learning chiefly due to a systemic lack of good information on learning outcomes. The main available proxy for learning outcomes is the Grade 12 National Senior Certificate pass rates, leading to a marked lack of attention to learning in the earlier grades. Wielding "school governance" power, but flying blind, SGB voice is effectively "muted" toward learning.

The challenge is not to simply redesign and rebrand school management committees as school governing bodies. "School governance" is vulnerable and messy. In a world of second- or third-best policy choices, these are not disqualifying attributes, especially relative to the counterfactual of distant and unaccountable bureaucratic control. However, the bar is high. For "school governance" to have the space to potentially improve accountability and service delivery at any scale, it must take place within a wider context of government-led systems change. The short route of accountability, in other words, is not a path toward fixing a dysfunctional long route. As summed-up by Mansuri and Rao (2013), "Local participation appears to increase, rather than diminish, the need for functional and strong institutions at the center" (p.11). This strongly suggests a sequencing of reforms. The scope for relying on "school governance" as a viable strategy to increase learning outcomes will vary between the developed and developing world, and within the developing world (Bano 2022e), but is overall probably (much) narrower than the widespread investment in school management committees would suggest.

4. The Support Equilibrium

If the preconditions for "school governance" are not present in many, if not most, developing countries, is a community-school relationship that can improve learning outcomes at scale a non-starter? Or are there possibilities for voice to play an alternative role?

One possibility is to reorient voice away from accountability and toward "school support". By support, I mean systematic ways for individual parents and community members to collaborate with teachers to support children's learning.

The intuition that parents are a primary determinant of their child's learning is not particularly controversial. The pathways of parent influence on learning are diverse: parents are the primary caregivers during early childhood development; they inculcate children with particular expectations and aspirations and belief in their own ability; they expose children to written and oral language, or not; they are involved in more prosaic activities like parent-teacher conferences, disciplining children, or helping them with their homework. In the USA, the influential Coleman Report (1966) concluded long ago that the home environment explained more variation in student outcomes than schools themselves. Many more recent empirical studies have confirmed the importance of parents. Vietnam's status as a high-performing outlier in the developing world is due partly to parents' deep engagement with their children's education, a product of a specific history and culture that venerates learning, as well as policy decisions such as the high out-of-pocket costs families shoulder for public education (London 2021). In Pakistan, children of mothers with a basic (primary school) education were entirely insulated from learning losses following a major natural disaster that eventually cost

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[23] The study also notes, without much elaboration, that legislation also specifically limits school governing bodies' power over curriculum, assessment, and teacher training, which are delegated to the school staff under the management of the education civil service.

affected children an average of 2 years of lost learning (Das, Daniels, and Andrabi 2020). The positive effects of parenting are not limited to more advantaged families. Another qualitative study that identified children from Pakistani government schools who had succeeded against the odds by completing higher education and securing good jobs, and then retrospectively interviewed them as adults, found that the most important factor motivating them was parental encouragement expressed through avenues – such as "moral support" (e.g. to take studying seriously) – that were also available to poor, illiterate parents (Bano 2022d).

Another suggestive study comes from Uganda, where Atuhurra, Winter and Nishimura (2022) document emergent forms of community-school interaction that developed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Uganda had some of the longest school closures in the world, leading to experimentation with different models of "home-based learning." Using descriptive baseline data from an ongoing RCT and complementary qualitative interviews in 150 communities in a poor sub-region with low adult literacy, the authors highlight a gradual but profound shift toward a "collaborative partnership model" between the community and teachers. For example, there was a sharp rise in the number of teachers conducting home visits and co-developing strategies for families to directly support their children's learning through at-home timetables and engaging older siblings as tutors. The study explicitly contrasts the principal-agent model of the community-school relationship, where families collectively seek to hold schools accountable, with a more horizontal relationship where parents and teachers collaborate as joint "principals", and schools catalyze parent involvement in ways that support their individual children's learning.

The hard question is not whether parents can impact learning outcomes, but rather whether the home environment is a policy-relevant variable at all. Parenting is hard to budge. There is little a country can do to acquire Vietnam's specific historical experience or cultural identity. A mother's education is not amenable to change, at least in the short term. Parental involvement, on the other, might be more amenable to policy. Positive deviants, like those in Pakistan and Uganda, are striking examples of "organic" community participation, however it is far from obvious that the identified behaviors can be "induced" at scale throughout the system.[24] Are there systematic ways to generate parent involvement, with the current parents in a system, in ways that improve learning?

What the support equilibrium might look like in practice

A leading engineer of the "support" model for the community-school relationship is Pratham. Drawing on 3-months of intensive fieldwork in India, using both interviews and ethnographic observation, along with a comprehensive document review, Bano (2022a) explores where Pratham has turned since abandoning the "management" model. The author offers a thick description of Pratham's alternative philosophy to participation wherein "learning communities" of parents and teachers, centered on a shared concern for a child, assume joint responsibility for cultivating student learning. The organization accomplishes this by defining specific ways for individual parents to take direct action. First, the organization often runs a village report-card exercise, engaging community members in assessing foundational learning outcomes of local children, but channels the resulting energy toward constructive voluntarism. Under the long-running "Read India" program this largely consisted of community members running remedial classes – following the tight structure provided

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[24] The RCT cited in Atuhurra, Winter and Nishimura (2022) is testing whether specific positive deviance strategies for the parent-school relationship can diffuse and improve learning. Whatever the results, which are pending, this is still an academic-led study, and so is not designed to validate whether positive deviance can scale through government systems.

by the "teaching at the right level" (TaRL) approach – both in and out of government schools. A newer set of activities, begun in 2018, is developing a broader set of activities to engage wider swathes of the community. This includes parents, including illiterate mothers, asking teachers for routines and habits they can do at home to directly support their child's learning, such as reviewing their child's notebooks (to signal their importance even if they cannot check the content) or looking at picture books with their child (which they can understand even if they cannot read them).

As illustrated by Pratham's example, there are two marked contrasts between voice as support, and voice as accountability. First, the support mode relies on mobilizing individual parents and community members. This sidesteps the immense challenge of creating and sustaining a community body that faithfully represents the interests of the whole community. It also poses significant new challenges. The more parents are only involved in their own child's education, as opposed to participating in a collective platform, the greater the risk of reinscribing inequality between parents such that more motivated or literate families become even more advantaged. A second point of departure for the support mode is that it seeks to co-exist with, rather than assert ownership over, local schools. This has the great pragmatism of aligning with the status quo in many systems where, as demonstrated above, the state, the bureaucracy, and teachers all have strong reasons to resist local control, and few of the requisite commitments or capabilities to enable it. At the same time, at least in relation to the "governance" equilibrium, it is a far more sober and limited vision of voice.

Perhaps the support vs. accountability dichotomy is a false one. The co-founder of Pratham, Rukmini Banerji, proposes a more staged strategy: "There is a lot of talk in the development world about accountability. But perhaps we need to work hard at a prior task, that of building engagement…holding others responsible or accountable comes later" (qtd. in Bano 2022a). For Banerji, "support" tactics may be useful in and of themselves, but they are also a means to the eventual end of accountability. It is worth noting that Pratham is still very much involved in holding the system accountable for learning, but it does so through its work administering and publicizing ASER, a citizen led assessment of foundational learning outcomes, which the organization leverages to act as a pro-learning lobby that is increasingly aligning politics and politicians around learning. Pratham has not abandoned the idea of accountability, but it has shifted the part of the system it pursues accountability through. This is a rather stark recognition that in polities and systems where the long route is strong but unaligned to learning, relying on the short route to hold schools accountable for student achievement is likely a form of "premature load-bearing" (Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock 2017).

Enabling conditions for the support equilibrium to improve learning

Beyond Pratham's "learning communities," there are more cautionary tales of parental involvement. A common finding is that interventions are effective in bringing about significant changes in parent participation, but that this often fails to translate into positive changes in student learning outcomes. When is parent involvement more motion than progress?

An instructive example of when "more" parental involvement is not always "better" comes from a recent study in Indonesia (Tresnatri et al. 2022). An intervention conducted during Covid-related school closures sought to increase parent involvement in the education of around 5000 students across 130 primary schools. Parents' baseline relationship with schools fit into the "management" paradigm where schools largely sidelined parents: parent groups helped maintain school infrastructure and schools communicated to parents about fundraising, but parents stayed away

from engaging with teachers in part due to imbalances in social status. The intervention sought to shift this equilibrium by asking teachers to send monthly letters to parents on their child's learning progress, and by sending leaflets to parents on how to support their child's learning at home.[25] These light touch interventions provoked significant changes in both parent and teacher behavior. Parents increased their direct support to children (by about .2 SD) and communicated more with teachers (.14 SD). Teachers reported higher motivation (.2 SD) and an index of teacher support to students increased by over .3 SD. These big movements are doubly noteworthy because of their low cost – less than USD $1 per student over 14 months - and triply so because they were implemented through the local education bureaucracy.

These results may seem to have limited external validity since the intervention took place during the extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, other similar information interventions during the "normal" course of schooling have found that parents are able and willing to change their behavior. For example, Barrera-Osorio et al (2021) find that a 5-hour training aimed at activating parents in rural Mexico had substantial effects on parents organizing school events (15 percentage points), communicating with teachers (13 percentage points), helping with homework (7 percentage points), and reducing behavior that required disciplinary action by the school (6 percentage points), and that the effects were larger for indigenous parents (with a history of systemic marginalization).

However, in Indonesia all this encouraging movement did not translate into improvements in learning (this was also true in Mexico). Parents' own limited literacy and numeracy constrained the ways in which they were able to support their children.[26] Parents also lacked effective inputs and guidance from teachers. Due in part to the remote environment, teachers provided parents with inaccurate assessments of children's learning progress, and mainly provided parents assignments rather than directing parents toward specific kinds of support. Parent involvement was therefore misdirected toward practices that were unproductive or even counterproductive at increasing achievement, such as a focus on completing assignments on time regardless of their child's understanding of the material, or helping their child cheat on quizzes meant as formative assessments.

Parent involvement is clearly not a substitute for quality classroom-based teaching. Shifting the burden of instruction to parents, as happened during Covid-related school closures in much of the world, is unrealistic (not to mention unsustainable). But could parental involvement be a complement to teaching? The Indonesian study speaks to a sizable store of untapped potential energy among parents, but also the difficulties of productively conducting that energy. If parental involvement is a complement to poor classroom teaching and pedagogical practices, then it will only reinforce them. In a school where teaching is aligned to learning, can parental potential energy be conducted in ways that will reinforce these good practices and further increase learning outcomes?

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[25] The leaflets included information on: potential benefits to children from parental involvement; ways for parents to accompany the child studying; how to create a conducive study environment at home; the importance of reading together with the child; how to motivate and discipline children to learn; and ways to communicate with the child's teacher, including through a "response" section on the monthly letters (Tresnatri et al 2022).
[26] While this is a main conclusion of the paper, this is slightly undercut by the fact that a full 90 percent of parents in the study had basic reading, writing, and math skills. It stands to reason that parental involvement might be more productive at levels of

One example of where parent involvement directly complements pro-learning practices is from JICA's School for All project. Begun in 2004 in Niger, it now runs in over 50,000 schools across 8 African countries[27]. School for All evolved through a long, adaptive process of dedicated experimentation to arrive at its present marriage of school committee reforms and TaRL-based remedial classes (Crouch and Spindelman 2023, p.103-106). Maruyama, Igei, and Kurokawa (2021) describe and evaluate the model as implemented in 2018-19 in 140 primary schools in Madagascar. In Madagascar, school management committees predated the project but were largely dysfunctional. The first phase of the model seeks to reinvigorate the SMCs through instituting democratic elections (1 day of training) and then jointly training the SMC and school leadership on creating a school action plan (2 days of training). However, the goals and activities of the action plan are tightly structured. The process starts with an assessment of foundational reading and math skills, the results of which are publicly shared, and planning centers on organizing extracurricular remedial classes using the TaRL approach. JICA then provides 7 days of training to teachers and community volunteers on TaRL, along with tailored workbooks to implement the extra classes. After only 4 months of supplemental instruction, the program increased test scores by up to .56 SDs (and even more when evaluating the ability to "apply" a skill rather than simply "knowing" it).

A few features distinguish the School for All model. It returns to the school committee model, and while it pushes the committee toward democratic elections, it doesn't rely on broad-based mobilization of parents to engage in their individual child's learning, or run up against the related constraints that follow from parents' variable capability. At the same time, it reimagines the school committee as a form of "support", not accountability, for the school. The committee exists to ratify and socialize the common goal of improving foundational learning; to provide volunteers to assist government teachers, who lead the remedial classes; and to provide needed financial and in-kind contributions for class inputs. Most strikingly, it recognizes that both parents *and* teachers alike need highly structured guidance – or guardrails – for their actions to improve foundational learning. The community's potential energy is routed in a tightly prescribed fashion to particular ways of supporting teachers, who are provided equally structured pedagogical support for changing their teaching practices.

Why not simply implement TaRL or another structured pedagogy approach without the school committee element? Maruyama, Igei, and Kurokawa (2021) does not provide any evidence that their community-led TaRL performs better than other government- or civil society-led modalities (Banerjee et al. 2016). They posit, but do not prove, that the community-led approach offers a more "stable" supply of community volunteers, and less chance of demotivation and effort substitution by government teachers. Further work could isolate the possible "complementarities" (Mbiti et al. 2019) between active school committees and structured pedagogy. At the very least, the model practically establishes a viable third path for implementing TaRL where government or civil society are not committed or able (but a donor is). Conceptually, it demonstrates a third path – beyond "management" and "governance" – for school committees to play a "support" role in improving learning, and the tight structure needed to enable this support to be effective.

Conclusion

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[27] https://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/field/2021/20210601_01.html

There are many potential forms that the community-school relationship can take. This essay has examined three potential ways that parents and communities can exercise voice in local schools: through school management, school governance, and school support. The scope for these different forms of voice to flourish at scale in a particular country, and for any of them to play a significant role in improving student learning outcomes, hinges on conditions in the wider education system.

The reigning paradigm for voice in the development sector currently revolves around a limited form of "school management" enacted through school management committees. This equilibrium is conditioned on a set of constraints that the state, the bureaucracy, and teachers commonly place on voice. The state is content to create school committees that are mostly form without function: while they formally exist, the committees are not afforded real latitude to shape the kind of education offered in local schools. This allows the state to appear to embrace decentralization, even while real power, and control over the socialization function of schooling, remains with the state. The bureaucracy typically enacts the state's priorities by making school management committees into extensions of itself, allotting them responsibility over narrow and depoliticized domains of school operations. Teachers (and bureaucrats) also often resist more assertive forms of "school management", mistrustful of local capability and able to mobilize to defend collective bargains, such as advantageous civil service contracts, that have been struck with centralized management in many contexts. Under variations of this prevailing set of system conditions, efforts to improve the efficacy of school management committees have not resulted in significant, widespread impact. For instance, parents and communities are often offered different kinds of information, but have little ability to act on it – at least via voice – due to the limited powers of school management committees.

School management committees are coherent with current systems precisely because they are designed and implemented in ways that do not challenge the status quo. This also means they are severely limited in their ability to improve learning. Governments, donors, and others seeking to cultivate a form of voice that can improve learning have good reason to be skeptical of continued investment in variants of limited "school management".

"School governance" is an alternative form of voice that offers parents and communities more local control over schools. "School governance" bodies would give communities and parents a distinct set of responsibilities than the ones they are currently assigned in school management committees. This would include a partial say over local schools' core educational goals (as expressed in the curriculum), as well as some say over who leads local schools and teaches in them. At the same time, it would limit parent and community responsibility over the "technical" and pedagogical processes necessary to achieve a school's goals.

In this sense, "school governance" is a fairly radical proposal that carries real political and implementation challenges. To overcome them, the transition from "school management" to "school governance" would have to be accompanied or preceded by state-led reform in other parts of the system. Firstly, it would require the state and the politics of education to support real decentralization, and to build the state's capacity to respond to voice (Fox 2015). Absent this enabling condition, attempts at "school governance" would be vulnerable to reversal. Secondly, it would require a state able to carry out key centralized functions – like creating learning standards, assessing progress against them, and disseminating results – which are necessary to align voice toward the purpose of learning. If these system conditions were not in place, then there is a real risk that "school governance" would deprioritize and fail to systematically improve learning outcomes.

If school management committees are mostly half measures, and the enabling conditions for a stronger form of "school governance" do not yet exist in many places, should we give up on voice as a lever for improving learning? A third possibility is for voice to forgo "accountability", at least in the short term, and turn instead toward supporting schools. Programs focused on "school support" harness voice at the individual level, and offer ways for parents and community members to directly support children's learning.

However, a growing number of successful and unsuccessful examples of "school support" (in Section 4) show that parents and community members are not innately or automatically able to support teachers and schools in productive ways. For "school support" to improve learning, parent and community involvement needs to be channeled toward specific activities by an external actor. This fits with the developed literature showing that teachers themselves often do not possess the know-how to improve their teaching on their own, and are most successful when programs provide tightly structured support to help them improve from low baseline levels of content and pedagogical skills (Hwa, Kaffenberger, and Silberstein 2020; Crouch 2020; Pritchett, Newman, and Silberstein 2022). Programs which offer similarly structured opportunities for parents and community members to become involved in local schools can complement parallel reforms directed at improving teaching inside the classroom.

Research and policy need a new typology that can distinguish between different forms of voice, and how these forms of voice depend on different sets of system conditions. School management, school governance, and school support offer three context-aligned "entry points" (Levy 2023) for the community-school relationship to realistically improve learning outcomes in local schools.

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