



**SYSTEM ASSESSMENT AND BENCHMARKING FOR EDUCATION RESULTS**

# **SABER**

**Assessment of School Autonomy and School Accountability in the Eastern Caribbean**

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## Abstract

A benchmarking of school autonomy and school accountability of school systems in the OECS was done using the scale developed under SABER, the System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results initiative created by the World Bank as part of its education strategy. OECS countries share similar education laws and regulation, but vary in the degrees of parent participation in schools, in the proportion of students educated in private schools, and in the analysis and use of standardized tests. The results of the assessment show that OECS countries need to align personnel management, parent participation, and student assessment to take advantage of the resulting synergies. In particular, personnel management needs more autonomy at the school level to align teacher incentives with student performance. All countries are highly centralized and school principals only have control over menial operating funds and funds collected from the community. Parents tend to trust the school, but are not well informed of school performance, lowering the opportunities for improving school accountability. Student assessment is routine and of good quality, but little or no analysis is done on the results, reducing the opportunity for improving system performance systematically. OECS Member States are not yet at the stage in which existing institutional arrangements can improve education quality at the pace desired by parents and society. As a result, school autonomy and school accountability should be promoted in the OECS to align teacher and parents incentives.

<b>Summary indicators of school autonomy and school accountability in OECS Countries</b>					
<b>Country</b>	<b>Budget Autonomy</b>	<b>Personnel Management</b>	<b>Parent Participation In School Finance</b>	<b>Student Assessment</b>	<b>Accountability</b>
Antigua & Barbuda	Emerging ●●○○	Latent ●○○○	Latent ●○○○	Established ●●●●	Emerging ●●○○
Dominica	Emerging ●●○○	Latent ●○○○	Latent ●○○○	Established ●●●●	Emerging ●●○○
Grenada	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○	Latent ●○○○	Established ●●●●	Emerging ●●○○
St. Kitts & Nevis	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○	Established ●●●●	Emerging ●●○○
St. Lucia	Emerging ●●○○	Latent ●○○○	Latent ●○○○	Established ●●●●	Emerging ●●○○
St. Vincent & Grenadines	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○	Established ●●●●	Emerging ●●○○

## **I. Introduction**

The objective of this note is to benchmark school autonomy and school accountability in six countries in the Eastern Caribbean, which are Member States of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). This assessment had two objectives: to bring awareness to participating countries about the crucial role that school autonomy and school accountability play in improving education quality, and to benchmark the state of school autonomy and school accountability among OECS Member States.

The benchmarking of the school systems in the OECS was done with the school autonomy and accountability scale developed under SABER, the System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results<sup>2</sup> initiative created by the World Bank as part of its education strategy (World Bank 2011). The purpose of this scale is to reinforce the monitoring and evaluation of education system performance to foster a better environment for teaching and learning. The goal of this effort is to align the personal and managerial incentives at the school level to produce increased student learning. The application of the assessment scale can be an important tool for education system reform if it is used as an instrument for planning and monitoring the enabling conditions for improving system performance (Arcia *et al* 2011a)

## **II. Why Should Schools be Autonomous and Accountable?**

Most school systems that excel in terms of student achievement give schools pedagogical and budgetary autonomy and conduct regular student assessments (Mourshed, Chijioke, and Barber 2010; OECD 2011). Therefore, benchmarking school autonomy and accountability through the use of simple indicators can be used to detect the conditions needed for increasing education quality.

School autonomy and school accountability influence education quality in two ways: First, by promoting efficiency in resource use at the school level. Transferring core managerial responsibilities to local schools tend to improve the efficiency in the use of local resources as school are able to buy more supplies and local services with less money than the amounts required in centralized operations. Moreover, school autonomy increases the participation of parents and the community, tailoring education resources to local priorities, values, and needs (Bruns, Filmer and Patrinos 2011). Second, by including parents in school management, accountability becomes part of school management, revealing areas for improvement in the school— such as teacher quality and parent participation in student life—which leads to better education quality and more student learning (Vegas and Umansky 2005).

Autonomy and accountability are key components of school-based management (SBM) and can be monitored through a series of SBM indicators. These indicators allow education systems to make rapid assessments of their own management practices and to connect managerial incentives with school and student performance. The implementation of school autonomy and accountability are crucial for establishing a new framework of incentives for teachers and parents which help improve learning outcomes, and for setting the right conditions for attracting better entrants into the teaching profession (Arcia *et al* 2011a).

For school autonomy and accountability to work effectively, school incentives must be aligned with parent's incentives and with institutional incentives to be able to channel staff energies in the same direction of improved education quality. However, implementing autonomy and accountability consistent with parent and institutional incentives takes time, since it requires the coordination of various managerial factors that determine autonomy and accountability at the school level, which can take several years to

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<sup>2</sup> A full description of SABER can be found at the following website:  
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:22710669~menuPK:282391~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:282386,00.html>

occur (Table 1). The available empirical evidence suggests that it takes about eight years before school autonomy and accountability start affecting learning outcomes (Barrera, Fasih and Patrinos 2009).

Managerial Factor	Strength		
	Low	Medium	High
<b>Teacher and Personnel Management</b>	Centralized hiring and firing	Regional hiring and centralized firing.	Local hiring and firing
<b>Budget planning and approval</b>	Centralized. Budget based on payroll plus an allotment for materials and utilities	Decentralized budget with regional variations. Budget based on payroll and equity considerations.	Decentralized at school level. Budget approved by the School Council and funds transferred directly to the school.
<b>Teacher assessment</b>	None	Routine evaluations, no direct accountability	Schools conduct routine evaluations that provide teachers and schools with incentives to perform better
<b>Student assessment</b>	None or based on local tests	Periodic standardized testing but results and their analysis not made public.	Routine standardized testing; results analyzed and made public. Results used in school management.
<b>Parent and Stakeholder Participation</b>	None or superficial. Parent-Teacher associations may participate in fundraising and social activities or in support of existing school management tasks.	Advisory role of School Councils in budgetary, operational, and personnel issues. School Councils may lobby for funds or personnel at local or regional government levels.	School Councils have legal authority over school management including the hiring and firing of personnel and the planning and supervision of the school budget.

Source: Expanded by the authors from Arcia *et al* 2011a.

The most recent empirical evidence on the effectiveness of SBM in improving learning comes from the analysis of the *Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)* test results for 2009. PISA results cover 15-year-old students from 66 countries who took standardized tests in reading, mathematics, and science. Several Asian countries were among those that produced the best results, as shown in Table 2, followed by several European countries (OECD 2009). Trinidad and Tobago is the only country in the Caribbean participating in PISA.

	Reading	Math	Science	Overall Ranking
Shanghai-China	556	600	575	1
Korea	539	546	538	2
Finland	536	541	554	3
Hong Kong-China	533	555	549	4
Singapore	526	562	542	5
Japan	520	529	539	8
Netherlands	508	526	522	10
Poland	500	495	508	15
Denmark	495	503	499	24
Hungary	494	490	503	26
Spain	481	483	488	33

**Table 2: 2009 PISA Scores for selected Asian, European Countries and Latin America and Caribbean countries in the SBM sample**

	Reading	Math	Science	Overall Ranking
Bulgaria	429	428	439	46
Thailand	421	419	425	50
Trinidad Tobago	416	414	410	51
Colombia	413	381	402	52
Brazil	412	386	405	53
Indonesia	402	381	383	57
Argentina	398	388	401	58
Panama	371	360	376	62
Peru	370	365	369	63

Source: OECD 2009. Table compiled by the author using data from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/54/12/46643496.pdf>

The OECD analysis of 2009 PISA data included the following associations between autonomy and accountability and overall test results:

- Countries where schools had more autonomy over teaching content and student assessment tended to perform better in the PISA test.
- In countries where schools publicized their test results, PISA scores in schools with autonomy over resource allocation were higher than in schools with less autonomy.
- Countries in which many schools competed for students did not systematically get better PISA results.
- Countries with standardized student assessment tended to do better than countries without standardized student assessment.
- Differences in PISA scores between schools with students of different social backgrounds were lower on average in countries that used standardized tests.
- Countries that allowed schools to compete for the best students did not obtain better PISA results than countries that sought to reduce inequality in educational access.

*The overall conclusions are clear. The most successful school systems in terms of academic achievement are those that give schools pedagogical and budgetary autonomy and that enforce regular student assessments. Moreover, success in academic achievement can be achieved without education inequality.*

### III.1 Key Indicators for the Development of School Autonomy and Accountability

There are five SBM indicators that can serve as a benchmark for judging the progress of the introduction of school autonomy and accountability. These indicators are based on an analytical framework developed by the World Bank's SABER initiative<sup>3</sup> that takes into account other components in the education system, and on the empirical evidence on the impact of school autonomy on school management and student learning (Arcia *et al* 2011b). The core indicators selected for benchmarking school autonomy and school accountability are:

- (i) School autonomy in budget planning and approval;
- (ii) School autonomy in personnel management;
- (iii) Active participation by the School Council in school finance;
- (iv) Routine assessment and publication of school and student performance

<sup>3</sup><http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,.contentMDK:22930156~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:282386,00.html>

- (v) School accountability to stakeholders.

Each of these indicators has a set of sub-indicators that make it possible to judge how far along each school is in the process of implementing each indicator (Table 3).

<b>Table 3: SBM Indicators and Sub-indicators of Autonomy and Accountability</b>
<b>1. School autonomy in budget planning and approval</b>
1A. Does the school principal have the legal authority to manage its operational budget?
1B. Does the school principal have the legal authority to set and manage staff and teacher salaries?
1C. Does the school principal have the legal authority to raise other funds in addition to the transfers received from national or local governments?
<b>2. School autonomy in personnel management</b>
2A. Are decisions to hire and fire teachers managed by the school principal?
2B. Do School Councils (which may include the school principal) have the legal authority to hire and fire teachers?
2C. Do School Councils have the legal authority to hire and fire the school principal?
<b>3. Participation of the School Council in school finance</b>
3A. Does the School Council assist the school principal in the preparation of the school budget?
3B. Do School Councils have the legal authority to approve the school budget?
3C. Is there a manual or set of instructions describing the participation of the School Councils in the preparation of the school budget?
3D. Do School Councils have the legal authority to supervise the implementation of the school budget?
3E. If School Councils participate in the preparation and approval of the school budget is this budget used as an input in the general budget prepared by the Ministry of Education?
<b>4. Assessment of school and student performance</b>
4A. Do schools perform yearly assessments of school and student performance?
4B. Does the school use student assessments for making administrative or pedagogical decisions aimed at improving school and student performance?
4C. Do schools perform yearly assessments of learning outcomes using standardized tests?
4D. Are the results of standardized tests used for making administrative or pedagogical decisions aimed at improving school and student performance?
4E. Are the results of the assessment of school and student performance made public to parents?
<b>5. School accountability</b>
5A. Is there a manual regulating how the School Council can make use of the results of the yearly assessments of school and student performance?
5B. Is the school's assessment of school and student performance part of a national or regional assessment system?
5C. Does the school use the assessments to compare school performance with schools in similar conditions?
5D. Do School Councils have the legal authority to hire external auditors to carry out financial audits at the school?
5E. Is there a manual to guide the School Council in how to use financial audits to evaluate school performance?

Source: Arcia *et al* 2011a.

The assessment consisted in the filling out of a questionnaire in which the intent and meaning of each question was discussed during the assessment process. Respondents were a mix of education analysts, education officers, statisticians in charge of educational statistics, and education administrators. There were between three and four respondents per country, a situation that allowed for the development of a consensus in the responses.

Each of the six OECS Member States was assessed for each sub-indicator. The responses for each sub-indicator were given a value of 1 (Low), 2 (Medium), or 3 (High). The aggregate values of each group of sub-indicators were classified in four categories: *Latent*, *Emerging*, *Established*, and *Mature*. A *Latent* score indicates that the policy behind the indicator is not yet in place. An *Emerging* score indicates that

the implementation of the program or policy is in progress. An *Established* score indicates that the program or policy is in operation and meets the minimum standards. A *Mature* score indicates that the program or policy is in operation and reflects a best practice.

### III.2 Country Results

Tables 4a-4f show the individual country descriptions of autonomy and accountability<sup>4</sup>. These descriptions are based on existing documentation of each education system, supplemented with the results of the assessment and the comments of participants in the assessment. Since all of the six countries belong to the OCES their characteristics are similar, but with some variations, especially in St. Kitts and Nevis and in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where personnel policy seems to be more flexible than in the other four countries, and where parent participation seem to be better organized.

<b>Sub Indicator</b>	<b>Score</b>
<i>Budget Autonomy:</i> Budgets are centralized at the MoE, which pays teachers directly. Teachers are rarely dismissed—they are usually transferred if a school asks the MoE for a different teacher. School principals only managed the non-salary budget, which is minimal. Schools do conduct fundraising events in their communities to improve the school facilities.	Emerging ●○○○
<i>Personnel Autonomy:</i> Teachers are hired at the central or at the district level, with no input from schools.	Latent ●○○○
<i>Participation:</i> Is not a factor in school operations. Parents visit the school only when they have a problem affecting their child. However, the Parent Teacher Association does make recommendations to the school about the budget. The recommendations are not binding.	Latent ●○○○
<i>Student assessment:</i> Regular and well managed implementation of OECS standardized tests at the end of secondary school. Results are used by the school to discuss internal modifications to their administrative and pedagogical practices. Assessment results at the school level are not made public to parents.	Established ●●●●
<i>Accountability:</i> School councils not given instructions about how to ask for accounts in student learning. Results are regularly reported at the national, district level and school levels, and comparisons are made between schools types of similar characteristics. However, no analysis is done to indicate degree of progress, or to use the results for making changes in resources or personnel. Parents cannot tell if the results suggest that <i>their</i> school is better or worse than similar schools in their district. Financial performance is solely supervised by the MoE and parents have no say on the efficiency of financial resource use.	Emerging ●●○○

Source: Author's interviews with country delegates

<b>Sub Indicator</b>	<b>Score</b>
<i>Budget Autonomy:</i> Budgets are centralized at the MoE, which pays teachers directly. Teachers are rarely dismissed—they are usually transferred if a school asks the MoE for a different teacher. School principals only managed the non-salary budget, which is minimal. Schools do conduct fundraising events in their communities to improve the school facilities.	Emerging ●●○○
<i>Personnel Autonomy:</i> Teachers are hired at the central or at the district level, with no input from schools.	Latent ●○○○
<i>Participation:</i> Is not a factor in school operations. Parents visit the school only when they have a problem affecting their child. The Parent Teacher Association does not have any say on the school budget.	Latent ●○○○
<i>Student assessment:</i> Regular and well managed implementation of OECS standardized tests at the end of secondary school. Results are used by the school to discuss internal modifications to their administrative and pedagogical practices. Assessment results at the school level are regularly given	Established ●●●●

<sup>4</sup> A summary of economic and education indicators for each country is listed in Table A1 in the Annex.

<b>Table 4b. Benchmarking Analysis of School Autonomy and Accountability in Dominica</b>	
<b>Sub Indicator</b>	<b>Score</b>
to parents.	
<i>Accountability:</i> Standardized test results only available for each student. Results are regularly reported at the national, district level and school levels, and comparisons are made between schools types of similar characteristics. However, no analysis is done to indicate degree of progress, or to use the results for making changes in resources or personnel. Parents cannot tell if the results suggest that <i>their</i> school is better or worse than similar schools in their district. Financial performance is solely supervised by the MoE and parents have no say on the efficiency of financial resource use.	Emerging ●●○○

Source: Author's interviews with country delegates

<b>Table 4c. Benchmarking Analysis of School Autonomy and Accountability in Grenada</b>	
<b>Sub Indicator</b>	<b>Score</b>
<i>Budget Autonomy:</i> Budgets are centralized at the MoE, which pays teachers directly. Teachers are rarely dismissed—they are usually transferred if a school asks the MoE for a different teacher. School principals only managed the non-salary budget, which is minimal. Schools do conduct fundraising events in their communities to improve the school facilities.	Emerging ●●○○
<i>Personnel Autonomy:</i> Teachers are hired at the central or at the district level. School Councils do have a say on removing a teacher from a school. In those cases the teacher is transferred to another position within the MoE.	Emerging ●●○○
<i>Participation:</i> Is not a factor in school operations. Parents visit the school only when they have a problem affecting their child. The Parent Teacher Association does not have any say on the school budget.	Latent ●○○○
<i>Student assessment:</i> Regular and well managed implementation of OECS standardized tests at the end of secondary school. Results are used by the school to discuss internal modifications to their administrative and pedagogical practices. Assessment results at the school level are not given to parents.	Established ●●●●
<i>Accountability:</i> Standardized test results only available for each student. Results are regularly reported at the national, district level and school levels, and comparisons are made between schools types of similar characteristics. However, no analysis is done to indicate degree of progress, or to use the results for making changes in resources or personnel. Parents cannot tell if the results suggest that <i>their</i> school is better or worse than similar schools in their district. Financial performance is solely supervised by the MoE, although the School Council has an advisory role on the use of financial resources.	Emerging ●●○○

Source: Author's interviews with country delegates

<b>Table 4d. Benchmarking Analysis of School Autonomy and Accountability in St. Kitts &amp; Nevis</b>	
<b>Sub Indicator</b>	<b>Score</b>
<i>Budget Autonomy:</i> Teacher salaries are centralized at the MoE, which pays teachers directly. School principals can hire and fire non-teaching staff and manage the non-salary budget. Schools do conduct fundraising events in their communities to improve the school facilities.	Emerging ●●○○
<i>Personnel Autonomy:</i> Teachers are hired at the central or at the district level. School Councils do have a say on removing a teacher from a school. In those cases the teacher is transferred to another position within the MoE. School principals do have a say about the teachers assigned to his/her school.	Emerging ●●○○
<i>Participation:</i> School Councils (PTAs) have an advisory role in school operations and on the school's operational budget. The advisory functions are outlined in PTA manuals.	Emerging ●●○○
<i>Student assessment:</i> Regular and well managed implementation of OECS standardized tests at the end of secondary school. Results are used by the school to discuss internal modifications to their administrative and pedagogical practices. Assessment results at the individual level are given to parents.	Established ●●●●
<i>Accountability:</i> Standardized test results only available for each student. Results are regularly reported at the national, district level and school levels, and comparisons are made between schools	Emerging ●●○○

<b>Table 4d. Benchmarking Analysis of School Autonomy and Accountability in St. Kitts &amp; Nevis</b>	
<b>Sub Indicator</b>	<b>Score</b>
types of similar characteristics. However, no analysis is done to indicate degree of progress, or to use the results for making changes in resources or personnel. Parents cannot tell if the results suggest that <i>their</i> school is better or worse than similar schools in their district. Financial performance is solely supervised by the MoE, although the School Council has an advisory role on the use of financial resources.	

Source: Author's interviews with country delegates

<b>Table 4e. Benchmarking Analysis of School Autonomy and Accountability in St. Lucia</b>	
<b>Sub Indicator</b>	<b>Score</b>
<i>Budget Autonomy:</i> Budgets are centralized at the MoE, which pays teachers directly. Teachers are rarely dismissed—they are usually transferred if a school asks the MoE for a different teacher. School principals only managed the non-salary budget, which is minimal. Schools do conduct fundraising events in their communities to improve the school facilities.	Emerging ●●○○
<i>Personnel Autonomy:</i> Teachers are hired at the central or at the district level, with no input from schools.	Latent ●○○○
<i>Participation:</i> Is not a factor in school operations. Parents visit the school only when they have a problem affecting their child. Parent Teacher Association does not play any role in school budget planning.	Latent ●○○○
<i>Student assessment:</i> Regular and well managed implementation of OECS standardized tests at the end of secondary school. Results are used by the school to discuss internal modifications to their administrative and pedagogical practices. Assessment results at the school level are routinely made public.	Established ●●●●
<i>Accountability:</i> Standardized test results only available for each student. Test results are regularly reported at the national, district level and school levels, and comparisons are made between schools types of similar characteristics. However, no analysis is done to indicate degree of progress, or to use the results for making changes in resources or personnel. Parents are informed about the ranking of <i>their</i> school relative to other schools, but the presentation of the rankings is difficult to interpret by the average parent. Financial performance is solely supervised by the MoE and parents have no say on the efficiency of financial resource use.	Emerging ●●○○

Source: Author's interviews with country delegates

<b>Table 4f. Benchmarking Analysis of School Autonomy and Accountability in St. Vincent &amp; the Grenadines</b>	
<b>Sub Indicator</b>	<b>Score</b>
<i>Budget Autonomy:</i> Budgets are centralized at the MoE, which pays teachers directly. Teachers are rarely dismissed—they are usually transferred if a school asks the MoE for a different teacher. School principals only managed the non-salary budget, which is minimal. Schools do conduct fundraising events in their communities to improve the school facilities.	Emerging ●●○○
<i>Personnel Autonomy:</i> Teachers are hired at the central or at the district level. School Councils do have a say on removing a teacher or a director from a school. In those cases the teacher is transferred to another position within the MoE. School principals do not have a say about the teachers assigned to his/her school.	Emerging ●●○○
<i>Participation:</i> School Councils (PTAs) have an advisory role in school operations and on the school's operational budget. However, PTA functions are still informal, functioning without a guide or manual.	Emerging ●●○○
<i>Student assessment:</i> Regular and well managed implementation of OECS standardized tests at the end of secondary school. Results are used by the school to discuss internal modifications to their administrative and pedagogical practices. Assessment results at the school level are regularly given to parents.	Established ●●●●
<i>Accountability:</i> Standardized test results only available for each student. Results are regularly reported at the national, district level and school levels, but comparisons are not made between schools types of similar characteristics. Also, no analysis is done to indicate degree of progress, or to use the results for making changes in resources or personnel. Parents cannot tell if the results	Emerging ●●○○

**Table 4f. Benchmarking Analysis of School Autonomy and Accountability in St. Vincent & the Grenadines**

Sub Indicator	Score
suggest that <i>their</i> school is better or worse than similar schools in their district. Financial performance is solely supervised by the MoE, although the School Council has an advisory role on the use of financial resources.	

Source: Author’s interviews with country delegates

The results from Tables 4a-4f clearly show that the areas of budgetary autonomy, student assessment, and school accountability the six countries are very similar. In the areas of participation in school finance issues, the country descriptions indicate that St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, should have an *emerging* score, which is higher than the *latent* scores of the other four countries. In the case of St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, parent councils do have a larger advisory role on the planning of the school budget than in the other four countries in the OECS..

The classification of assessment results is Established in all countries. A mature system should reflect best practices, but in the OECS case, the reporting of test results is not uniform. Each country presents scores differently, emphasizing the proportion of students that pass the test, but with little information and analysis of the results themselves. This is not an issue of accountability—it is a technical issue regarding the tabulation and presentation of results. As a result, the assessment indicator is considered as Established, which means that the mechanics of testing work well, but they are not at the best practice level.

On the issue of accountability the OECS has some ways to go to improve the current situation. Generally, the results of the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) tests are not analyzed to include reliable comparisons among schools or districts. Although published results inform parents about the relative placement of their school relative to others—parents know which schools are performing well and which schools are the worst performers—there is a widespread lack of knowledge about personnel and managerial inputs, the cost effectiveness of the input mix and other aspects of school-based management that can help explain the differences in school performance.

Generally, detailed exam results are only published in the country’s statistical abstract, which is not accessible by most parents, and the relationships between exam results and education quality and literacy are not analyzed. This lack of information for accountability has resulted in a system where students can go through primary education and still be illiterate. Moreover, given the nature of the exit exams, schools focus their efforts in ensuring higher passing percentages among students in the last year of school, rather than on enforcing education quality for the entire school.

Table 5 shows a summary of the assessment results, which are color-coded to facilitate analysis. The results clearly suggest that Antigua & Barbuda, as well as Dominica, and St. Lucia, are lagging slightly behind the other four countries in the OECS in the area of personnel management. In these countries schools have little or no say on the choice of teachers, while in the other three countries there is some room for requesting that non-performing teachers be transferred away or moved to a non-teaching position.

An area where St. Kitts & Nevis and St. Vincent & the Grenadines are ahead of the other four countries is in parent participation, where in these two countries PTA’s have at least a voice in school management, while in the other four countries PTA’s are considered as providers of additional resources but without an advisory role of a significant influence.

The overall climate of autonomy and accountability in the OECS is one of dormancy, where almost universal access to education has not led to increased learning. Since there is no body of policy in place to

create the same conditions for the selection and tenure of high performing teachers, the OECS does need to take a serious look at autonomy and accountability as mechanism for implementing sustainable incentives to parents and teachers to align their interest in increased student learning.

**Table 5. Summary indicators of school autonomy and school accountability in OECS Countries**

Country	Budget Autonomy	Personnel Management	Parent Participation In School Finance	Student Assessment	Accountability
Antigua & Barbuda	Emerging ●●○○	Latent ●○○○	Latent ●○○○	Established ●●●●	Emerging ●●○○
Dominica	Emerging ●●○○	Latent ●○○○	Latent ●○○○	Established ●●●●	Emerging ●●○○
Grenada	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○	Latent ●○○○	Established ●●●●	Emerging ●●○○
St. Kitts & Nevis	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○	Established ●●●●	Emerging ●●○○
St. Lucia	Emerging ●●○○	Latent ●○○○	Latent ●○○○	Established ●●●●	Emerging ●●○○
St. Vincent & Grenadines	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○	Established ●●●●	Emerging ●●○○

Source: Calculations by the authors

Overall, the results also show that three substantive areas of autonomy and accountability—student assessment, parent participation, and autonomy in personnel management—should be highly interrelated, but they are not in the OECS. Consequently *there seems to be a lack of alignment between personnel autonomy, parent participation, and student assessment, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain the synergy needed to get a sustainable move towards improved education quality*. Parents and teachers understand that if teachers are not accountable to parents and the school, they may make less effort to improve their performance. Inversely, if schools are autonomous and parents are the ones authorizing a teacher’s salary, teacher performance is bound to be better.

#### IV. Conclusions

In terms of **budgetary and personnel autonomy** the results show that there is room for growth. All countries are highly centralized and school principals only have control over menial operating funds and funds collected from the community. In one half of the cases school have absolutely no say over their budgets or their personnel. In other countries school principals and school councils can complain to local governments about non-performing teachers, who are transferred to other jobs as a result of the complaint from schools. The centralization of teacher salaries and teacher hiring and firing are to be expected because each of the six countries is small enough to allow some degree of operational efficiency in payroll management. The ability to hire and fire locally, however, is an issue that needs to be discussed in depth in each country, since it is independent of the scale economies of payroll management and is highly sensitive to local education conditions. The empirical evidence from Central America shows that even in poor communities where parents are almost illiterate, having the power to hire and fire teachers at the local level is a powerful tool for aligning teacher and parent incentives (Barrera, Fasih, and Patrinos 2009).

The **participation of parents in school finance** is also very low in four of the six OECS countries, the exception being St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where school councils have an advisory role on the use of non-salary school finances. According to interviews with delegates, parents in

the OECS implicitly trust the school to do its best to educate their children, but the reality is that they may suffer from blissful ignorance about the potential for improving education quality with existing resources. As long as parents do not have a benchmark about the quality of their school, they are bound to consider it good enough. In addition, if there is no parent participation in the administration of school finances (including salaries and payroll) they do not feel empowered enough to demand better performance from their schools, since they have little leverage with which to demand accountability.

In terms of **student assessment** there is some good news, as the OECS has been conducting assessments for years. OECS countries routinely conduct standardized testing in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades, and exit exams at the end of secondary school. As a result, they are in a position to analyze learning outcomes on a regular basis, and to use the analysis to improve system performance. If they do not analyze learning outcomes and do not report the findings is an issue that directly pertains to accountability.

Hence, in terms of **accountability** there is a substantial need for improvement. All countries make some effort at reporting test results, but none of the countries are focused yet on the analysis of test scores as a tool for rendering accounts to society and to parents. This is to be expected because of the current incentive structure, in which publicly funded schools have their own internal mechanisms for improving performance.

The lessons learned from countries like Finland—where schools and teachers are given complete autonomy to develop their own assessment system—suggest that school-based management is a significant factor for improving education quality only when established institutional structures, such as a centralized Ministry of Education, do not work well. In these cases there is a need for parents to assume some of the functions traditionally left to the arena of public goods, such as the administration of public education. In theory, school-based management based on school autonomy and school accountability, is a second-best solution. The key issue here is that in discussions with participants it seems that *OECS Member States are not yet at the stage in which existing institutional arrangements can improve education quality at the pace desired by parents and society*. As a result, school autonomy and school accountability should be promoted in the OECS to align teacher and parents incentives.

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## Annex

<b>Indicators 2009-2010</b>	<b>Antigua &amp; Barbuda</b>	<b>Dominica</b>	<b>Grenada</b>	<b>St Kitts &amp; Nevis</b>	<b>St Lucia</b>	<b>St Vincent &amp; the Grenadines</b>
Total population (000)	89.1	71.9	110.8	52	172	99.5
Annual population growth rate (%)	1.9	0.4	1.0	1.4	1.0	0.4
Life expectancy at birth (years)	73	74	66	70**	74	70
GDP per capita at current prices (US\$)	12,696	5,226	5,549	10,479	5,653	5,976
GDP per capita (PPP) US\$ ^	16,573	8,883	8,362	14,527	9,605	9,154
Primary completion rate (%)	...	72.3	...	...	...	...
Gross enrollment Rate (GRE) pre-primary (%)	73.7	77.6	97	83	67	79
Net Enrollment Rate (NER) Pre-Primary (%)	51.1	...	72	94	...	...
GRE Primary (%)	94	93.8	107	96	102.3	95.7
Net enrollment Rate (NER) primary (%)	80	71.8	62	...	96	86.7
GRE Secondary (%)	101*	105	65		94	91.8
NER Secondary (%)	102*	79.8	34		84	84.1
Percentage of repeaters	9.2		3.4		2.6	4.7
Primary to secondary transition rate (%)	82	100	85	73	93.7	68
Pupil teacher ratio (Primary)	13	15	17		19	16
Public expenditures in education as % of GDP	6.1	4.9	5.1		7.1	4.1
Public expenditures in education as % of Government expenditure	9.7	18.4	19		13.8	16.3

\* Preliminary—Subject to verification of population projections data.

\*\* Year 2000

Number marked in yellow estimated by the authors on the base of official statistics. These numbers are not yet available in official reports. Numbers marked in red need further verification because of data inconsistencies or errors in the estimation of the indicator.

Sources: Compiled by the authors from OECS Education Statistics Units; World Bank EdStats data; UIS, and Eastern Caribbean Central Bank data.