Philippines: Using open school data to improve transparency and accountability

Redempto S. Parafina
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Presentation of the series: Ethics and Corruption in Education

Several studies conducted over the last two decades have emphasized the negative impact of corruption on the economic, social, and political development of countries. Corruption increases transaction costs, reduces the efficiency of public services, distorts the decision-making process, and undermines social values. Studies have also shown a strong correlation between corruption and poverty: statistical regressions suggest that an improvement in the ‘control of corruption’ indicator by one standard deviation (two points) is associated with an increase of some $11,000 in GDP per capita (Sturm, 2013, in OECD, 2015). Moreover, corruption tends to contribute to the reinforcement of inequities by placing a disproportionate economic burden on the poor and limiting their access to public services.

As a consequence, fighting corruption has become a major concern for policy-makers and actors involved in development. In view of the decrease in international aid flows and increasingly stringent conditions for the provision of aid – due to growing pressure on public resources within donor countries and the pressure exerted by taxpayers on governments to increase transparency and accountability in resource management – fighting corruption is now regarded as a major priority on the agendas of countries and international agencies of development cooperation. The Drafting Committee of the World Education Forum expressed this concern in the following terms: ‘Corruption is a major drain on the effective use of resources for education and should be drastically curbed’ (UNESCO, 2000). In other words, to ‘ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning’ – the fourth of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals – the issue of corruption must be properly addressed.

A review of the literature highlights a number of global and sectoral attempts to tackle the issue of corruption. In the social sector, for example, several studies have been conducted on corruption in relation to the provision of healthcare services. However, it appears that the education sector has not received adequate attention from national education authorities and donors, despite there being numerous grounds for prioritizing the challenge of combating corruption in education:

- Public sector reforms aimed at improving governance and limiting corruption-related phenomena cannot produce significant results unless adequate attention is paid to the education sector, as, in most countries this constitutes the largest or second-largest public sector in both human and financial terms.
- Any attempt to improve how the education sector functions in order to increase access to quality education for all will be undermined if problems related to corruption, which have severe implications for the efficient use of resources and the quality of education and school performance, are not being properly addressed.
- Lack of integrity and unethical behaviour within the education sector are inconsistent with one of the primary aims of education: to produce ‘good citizens’ who are respectful of the law, human rights, and equity. They are also incompatible with any strategy that considers education as a principal means of fighting corruption.

In this context, IIEP launched a research project entitled ‘Ethics and Corruption in Education’. Corruption is defined as the systematic use of public office for private benefit that results in a reduction in the quality or availability of public goods and services. The main objective of this project is to improve decision-making and the management of educational systems by integrating governance and corruption concerns into
methodologies of planning and administration of education. More specifically, it seeks to develop methodological approaches for studying and addressing the issue of corruption in education and to collect and share information on the best approaches for promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity in the management of educational systems in both developing and industrialized countries.

The project includes publications on topics of relevance, such as, school financing, pro-poor education incentives, teacher codes of conduct, textbook production and distribution, and academic fraud. It also features monographs on success stories in improving management and governance, as well as case studies that facilitate the development of methodologies for analysing transparency and integrity in education management. *

Within this framework, IIEP conducted research to explore the recent development of school report cards and to examine cases in which report cards have proved especially successful in helping to improve transparency and accountability in education systems. This research included the preparation of case studies on the use of open school data in six countries from Asia and the Pacific – namely Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan (Punjab), and the Philippines – as well as two state-of-the-art papers on Africa and Latin America.

The current publication presents the case of the Philippines. It is based on interviews with key informants and a survey of 250 school-level actors and it compares the design and implementation of three major initiatives: School Report Cards (SRCs) and Transparency Boards (TBs), introduced by the Department of Education (DepED), and CheckMySchool (CMS), which is a civil-society initiative. The study investigates and compares the type of information published, the agencies publishing it, and how it is accessed; the most critical data for improving transparency and accountability; how different categories of stakeholders access the information and utilize it; the conditions required to have an impact on the level of transparency and accountability in the education system; and the limits of such processes.

It concludes by highlighting that the emergence of the current forms of SRC, TB and CMS initiatives signals a maturing culture of openness in the education system in the Philippines. It considers SRC and TB to be better models for accessing information while CMS is the preferred model for accountability. Within a set of recommendations, the author suggests integrating SRC and TB in to one implementing unit of DepED; formally recognizing students as SRC users; issuing guidelines on the documentation and reporting of SRC assembly meetings; setting calibration trajectory for SRC implementation; and studying institutional adoption of a CMS-type citizen-led initiative to strengthen the use of SRC.

IIEP is very grateful to Redempto S. Parafina for his valuable insights and would like to thank him accordingly. It would also like to express appreciation of all the people interviewed as part of this work and during the field work for their availability and kind collaboration.

Jacques Hallak** and Muriel Poisson***

* An information platform entitled ETICO has been created within the framework of the project and can be accessed at: http://etico.iiep.unesco.org
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Foreword

The number of countries offering the general public access to school data has grown rapidly over the past decade, encouraged by the development of information technologies and under pressure from social movements demanding the right to information and greater accountability in service delivery. A wide variety of initiatives have been developed to share school-level information in the form of ‘school report cards’. These cards provide key information about a school – including student enrolment, funding, number of teachers, teacher qualifications, pupil–teacher ratios, conditions of school facilities, textbooks, and student achievement. In some countries, governments have taken the lead in disseminating such data, relying on existing education management information systems. Elsewhere, civil society organizations have taken the initiative to produce school report cards for selected schools, placing emphasis on community engagement in data collection and use.

In recent years, the Asia–Pacific region has become a hub of increased activity in access-to-information initiatives and calls for more transparent and accountable governments. Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore have pioneered innovative and comprehensive uses of new technologies through, respectively, My School, Education Sector Indicators, and the School Information Service. Grassroots movements in India have successfully campaigned for right-to-Information acts in many states in recent decades, while initiatives aimed at displaying information through district report cards and school bulletin boards have spread throughout the country. Bangladesh now has more than a decade of experience in using school report cards with the support of civil society. And the Check My School initiative has spread from the Philippines to Cambodia and Indonesia. While few, these illustrations nevertheless highlight how school data are being opened up to the general public in the region.

It is widely acknowledged in the literature that public access to information is one of the most efficient means of improving transparency and accountability in the education sector. It gives education authorities the possibility not only of better monitoring educational progress and outcomes, but also of detecting bottlenecks in the system and taking adequate measures to address them. It also allows school communities to check whether they have received all the resources they are entitled to, in terms of funding, teachers, textbooks, and so on. Finally, it enables parents to exert pressure on school authorities and public officials to improve service delivery. Nevertheless, experience shows that the link between data, transparency, and accountability is not straightforward in practice, and needs to be unpacked carefully.

Indeed, while open school data are important, the information published is not always of the type needed to improve accountability in the management of education systems. In addition, when data are available to the public, they are not necessarily in easily accessible formats and people are often unaware of how to access and utilize those data. Moreover, sharing best practice in this area has not yet been achieved in a useful and systematic manner. In addressing these issues it will be essential to increase dialogue between key stakeholders, namely government education officers and planners responsible for data collection and dissemination, civil society organizations (CSOs) involved in the empowerment of citizens through information, and parent representatives.

This raises a number of questions:

- What data are most relevant to improve transparency and accountability in the system?
- What format is most likely to encourage school communities to make better use of data?
- What can be done to ensure that the data provided benefit more than a small proportion of the population, allowing them to make informed decisions?
• What mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure parents and communities can make proper use of data?
• What incentives are needed to help stakeholders improve their practice?

Such questions will become increasingly relevant as the amount of school data – and the number of countries adopting school cards – continues to grow. They are also timely, as there continues to be a lack of robust evaluations to assess the actual efficacy of such initiatives: evidence collected to date relies predominantly on desk reviews and anecdote.Posing such questions will be critical in ascertaining whether the conditions necessary to enable open school data to succeed are properly taken into account, together with other critical factors for improving transparency and accountability in a sustainable way.

In this context, the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) initiated a research project in 2014 on ‘Using open school data to improve transparency and accountability in education’, in order to compare the motivations, purposes, audiences, data sources, contents, uses, and impacts of school cards developed in different regions of the world.

The overall goals of this programme are to: develop an evidence base for the most critical data needed and the most effective open education policies for improving government transparency and accountability in education; help decision-makers and educational managers make informed decisions about the design and implementation of open education data policies, so as to promote transparency and empower citizens to fight against corruption; build the commitment and capacity of civil society organizations, media representatives, in addition to education officials in charge of access to information, to work together to develop access to more practical, effective, and usable educational data.

The research considers the conditions necessary for open education data to promote transparency and accountability in education. It pays particular attention to data published at school level through school report cards, assuming that the school level is particularly critical for citizens, to encourage them to make the best use of the information provided and to act upon it. It analyses the chain of action that must be followed in order to develop school report cards successfully, examining the steps involved at each stage of their design and implementation.

The main assumptions underlying the research are: first, open data initiatives are powerful tools to improve transparency, hold schools accountable, and reduce corruption risks in education; second, government-led initiatives are less likely than citizen-led initiatives to respond to users’ needs, engage them, and generate real impact – as they are often more supply- than demand-driven; and, third, all users do not benefit equally from open data initiatives. In the absence of adequate safeguards, such initiatives can enhance inequalities and result in ‘elite capture of information’. Within this framework, the research attempts to address the following questions:

• What is an enabling legal framework for access to information initiatives in the countries under analysis?
• What data are most critical in disclosing corruption in different areas, such as school funding, infrastructure procurement, or school and teacher management?
• Which information model has proven to be more effective: supply-driven (for top-down management) or demand-driven (for bottom-up control)?
• How can we ensure that the information is actually being used by the target audiences in the desired manner?
• What arrangements effectively facilitate participation of the general public?
• How can demand for information be created among a range of target audiences?
• What actions should follow the publication of school-level data to create a real impact in improving transparency and accountability in the education sector?
What adverse effects can access to information potentially have on existing education systems?

The research focuses on countries from Asia and the Pacific that have developed innovative projects in the area of open data in education in recent years, namely: Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan (Punjab province), and the Philippines.* In each participating country, national researchers have analysed in detail initiatives which aim to share access to school data with the general public in order to improve transparency and accountability, and fight corruption in education systems. They have compared, as far as possible, two types of initiative: government-led, where the collection and distribution of school-level information are initiated by the central authority of the country or of a jurisdiction; and citizen-led, where the collection and distribution of school-level information is initiated at the community level. The following activities were, accordingly, undertaken at country level:

- The analysis and collection of relevant documentation and laws related to the right to access information, including specific legislation related to the education sector, if any.
- A review of education data shared with the public at all levels of the system, but particularly at school level, that are produced and disseminated by government authorities or through large-scale civil society initiatives.
- A series of semi-structured interviews with key informants (people in charge of the implementation of right-to-information legislation, education sector managers, actors from civil society organizations involved in the empowerment of citizens through public access to data, members of parent associations, and representatives from the media).
- A survey of 250 school-level actors, using a multi-stage stratified sample method to illustrate the diversity of perspectives and perceptions on the usefulness of open education data, considering socio-economic, educational and geographical factors. Informants included head teachers, teachers, parent–teacher associations, parents, and community leaders.

Field surveys helped identify at the school level: the type of information published, agencies publishing it, and how it is accessed; the most critical data for improving transparency; how different categories of stakeholder access the information and utilize it; the conditions required to have an impact on the level of transparency and accountability in the education system; and the limits of such processes, particularly from a legal perspective. Their main findings are analysed in detail in a set of case studies published by IIEP as part of its series, Ethics and Corruption in Education. The current report presents the results of the case study conducted in the Philippines.

It is hoped that the results of this work will help build the capacities of education officials, as well as civil society representatives in charge of the management of school data, to develop access to practical, effective, and usable open data in education; to encourage further dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders within individual countries and in the wider region on the conditions of success for such initiatives to improve accountability in education; and, beyond this, to enable promoters of public access to information based in different regions of the world to learn from experiences reported in other contexts.

IIEP would like to thank Redempto S. Parafina for his valuable contribution and the interviewees for sharing their knowledge and experience. It would also like to express its gratitude to the high-level decision-makers from the six countries under review, who agreed to discuss the main findings of the research during a policy forum organized by IIEP in Manila, Philippines, from 24 to 26 January 2018.

*Muriel Poisson, Programme Specialist, IIEP

* The six case studies have been published as part of the IIEP Series on Ethics and Corruption in Education, and are available on the Institute’s publication website: www.iiep.unesco.org
This study was prepared under the supervision of Muriel Poisson, Programme Specialist at the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIIEP-UNESCO).
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### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIP</td>
<td>Annual improvement plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANSA</td>
<td>Affiliated Network for Social Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTA</td>
<td>Anti-Red Tape Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BESRA</td>
<td>Basic education sector reform agenda</td>
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<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Continuous improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>CheckMySchool</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil society organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>DepEd</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>E-BEIS</td>
<td>Enhanced Basic Education Information System</td>
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<tr>
<td>FOI</td>
<td>Freedom of information</td>
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<td>GPTA</td>
<td>General Parent Teacher Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>G-Watch</td>
<td>Government Watch</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>Learning Action Cell</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGC</td>
<td>Local government code</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGU</td>
<td>Local government unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOOE</td>
<td>Maintenance and other operational expenses</td>
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<td>MPS</td>
<td>Mean percentage score</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAT</td>
<td>National Achievement Test</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCR</td>
<td>National Capital Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTA</td>
<td>Parent–teacher association</td>
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<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Republic Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBM</td>
<td>School-based management</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<td>SDS</td>
<td>Schools division superintendent</td>
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<td>SED</td>
<td>School effectiveness division</td>
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<td>SEF</td>
<td>Special Education Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIP</td>
<td>School improvement plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPT</td>
<td>School–community planning team</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRC</td>
<td>School report card</td>
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<tr>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Transparency Board</td>
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Executive summary

In the Philippines, the use of school report cards (SRCs) dates back to the 1990s, when both government and civil society employed them to promote transparency and accountability in schools and public education authorities. They emerged and thrived in the context of progressive education policy reforms and anti-corruption laws. This case study examines two recent government-led initiatives, the School Report Card (SRC) and Transparency Board (TB) schemes, and a citizen-led initiative called CheckMySchool (CMS). The Department of Education (DepEd) introduced SRCs to the bureaucracy through a memorandum in 2009 and later, in 2015, through a formal department order. The Transparency Board was launched after an executive committee meeting resolved to adopt it in 2013. Its legal basis can be traced back to 2009 DepEd policy based on Republic Act (RA) 9485, which was issued in 2007. A non-government organization, the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability (ANSA), started CMS in 2010 as an online data-mapping project. It later evolved into a full-fledged participatory monitoring initiative.

This case study analyses and compares the effectiveness of selected SRC initiatives. It draws on desk reviews of related materials, interviews with 53 local and national stakeholders, and a survey of 278 parents, teachers, and community leaders in six schools in Guimaras (Guimaras was chosen because of its notable achievements in delivering both SRC and TB, and CMS initiatives).

SRC and TB, as government-led initiatives, have predefined, standard sets of information while CMS has none. This is primarily because SRC is governed by DepEd order and has a manual process of implementation. CMS information, on the other hand, is fluid as it primarily focuses on issues raised by stakeholders. Both SRC and CMS offer arenas venues for interactive discussion of collected information, while TB does not.

SRC information comprehensively covers the management, financial, and pedagogical domains of accountability while TB is limited to financial accountability. CMS is flexible as it is issue-based and demand-driven, but mostly it is engaged in the management domain. The DepEd policy-designed SRC (and to a certain extent, TB) is an information and communication tool, so does not proactively pursue public accountability, though it provides a venue for citizen query. And while sanctions for non-compliance with SRC and TB requirements may be imposed using anti-corruption laws, in practice they are not enforced at all. Conversely, public participation is inherent in CMS as a social accountability initiative, and it identifies and pursues redress of issues highlighted, especially in the case of government authorities’ responses and actions to improve services.

Key findings

• The survey and interviews suggest that stakeholders find the SRC initiatives useful. There is almost universal agreement among parents, teachers, and community leaders of the importance of posting school information. Teachers consider funding sources the most pertinent data in all schemes, while, for parents, school safety was the most important consideration in SRC and TB. School facilities topped the list of concerns of parents in CMS.

• The interviews validate the survey findings on information relevance. The accounts of respondents from DepEd management, school heads, student government, civil society, and local government affirm the relevance of SRC, TB, and CMS information. Interest and motivation, however, vary from group to group.

• The survey reveals that school-based stakeholders have high awareness of SRC and TB. They are more aware of these schemes than of CMS, but non-school stakeholders, such as local chief executives and national civil society organizations
(CSOs), know more about CMS than SRC or TB. The interview showed that student leaders have low awareness of SRC, TB, and CMS. Media respondents had not heard of any of the schemes.

- The data are considered accessible by all stakeholder groups, though the CMS is rated slightly higher than SRC and TB. School meetings are the preferred means of accessing school information across all survey respondent groups. Interviews also indicate a preference for interactive face-to-face meetings as a means of accessing information. In terms of timings, parents mostly access information at the beginning of the school year.

- In terms of usability, most parents reported that SRC, TB, and CMS data influenced their choice of school; a finding supported by the views of teachers. Parents, teachers, and community leaders are likely to use CMS rather than SRC or TB data to reveal the misuse of school facilities, equipment, textbooks, and other resources (though this was less pronounced among teachers).

- The findings on usability appear to confirm the stronger accountability bias of CMS as compared with SRC and TB. Stakeholders, nevertheless, still attribute a relatively high level of usability to SRC and TB, despite the fact that these initiatives were not designed for accountability purposes.

- More than half of teachers indicated that they have taken action because of SRC or TB data, as compared with less than half because of CMS. Almost one-third of parents took action based on CMS information and almost a quarter based on SRC or TB information. Fewer community leaders acted: one-fifth based on CMS and one-tenth based on SRC or TB information.

- Stakeholders’ use of SRC, TB, and CMS impacted on aspects of funding and management in the short term. The long-term impact was evidenced in terms of establishing better responsibilities for various stakeholders, particularly government authorities, and empowering communities, as well as in the institutional recognition of stakeholder engagement, change in political consciousness, and mainstreaming of multi-stakeholder engagement in school-based management.

- Stakeholders have widely different views on the conditions necessary for the effective implementation of SRC. DepEd management identify a need for a calibrated implementation of the policy, with proper balancing of interests, diligent oversight, and a link between SRC and planning. School heads anchor it in their own leadership, assuming a high level of trust, and stakeholders’ capacity to handle information.

- Parents, teachers, and community and civil society leaders value venues for face-to-face meetings and responsiveness of authorities. Teachers highlight effective implementation of the SRC initiative, noting the regular updating of information and the ease with which it can be found and used. For students, it helps to have promotions.

- In the survey and interviews, many of stakeholders said that opening up data poses no or low risk. The few cited risks were: variance or errors in interpretation, conflict between or among stakeholders, or theft and misuse, for example for political purposes. Most stakeholder groups support unconstrained publication of any kind of data, except for personal and private data, data that may endanger lives (e.g. data on funds inviting robbery in conflict areas), and those listed as exceptions by law or authority.

- The strategies identified by stakeholders to improve the impact of open data are capacity-building and better public engagement.

The study concludes that the development of the current forms of SRC, TB and CMS signals a maturing culture of openness in the education system in the Philippines. It considers SRC and TB as better models for information access, while CMS is the preferred model for accountability. No inequity in access was found during the study, given that dissemination takes place offline and through face-to-face interaction.
Recommendations

The recommendations to improve design and implementation are:

- **Integrating SRC and TB in one implementing unit of DepEd**: Two different units in the DepEd central office oversee SRC and TB, the School Effectiveness Division (under the Bureau of Human Resources and Organizational Development) for the former and the Planning Service (under the School Operations and Governance Division) for the latter. They separately issue policy, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation guidelines. They have separate responsible persons and separate databases. At the division level, there are also separate lines of command for the two initiatives. Given the allied and complementary purposes of SRC and TB, it is recommended that they be brought together in a single unit. This will facilitate easy integration of their common management agenda.

- **Formally recognizing students not only as beneficiaries but also as users of information in SRC policy**: Current practice provides limited involvement of students in the SRC process. It is recommended that SRC policy formally recognizes them as users of information, with their own unique needs and interests, perspectives, and representation. They should be informed and consulted on the rationale, purpose, design, and mechanics of the SRC. They should be invited to, or have representation at, assembly meetings when the SRC is presented. Ideally, a separate venue should be introduced for them, where they can ask about, comment on, or discuss issues concerning SRC information and the implementation of the initiative.

- **Issuing guidelines on the documentation and reporting of SRC assembly meetings**: The SRC should document meetings as part of the report. It should highlight the issues and concerns arising from discussions, and, in subsequent meetings, the school principal should review this to ensure issues have been addressed. This practice enhances the principal’s responsiveness to stakeholders and optimizes the use of assembly meetings as an accountability mechanism.

- **Setting calibration trajectory**: The calibration strategy worked well for DepEd in securing stakeholder support for SRC and TB. To sustain this effect, it is recommended that the DepEd look into the longer-term expansion of the schemes and set phases for its development. From being an information and communication tool, DepEd must plan for a transition to a school-based management (SBM) tool with transparency and accountability dimensions. For instance, development must be in the context of related anti-corruption laws, with explanations on related penalties for violations.

- **Studying institutional adoption of a CMS-type citizen-led initiative to strengthen use of SRC**: Schools and DepEd benefit from the unique role played by third-party initiatives, such as CMS, in promoting transparency and accountability, and the additional capacity such schemes can provide to parents, students, and even teachers and principals. Initiatives like this, however, are opportunistic and not widely used. It is recommended that the department look into the institutional adoption of a CMS-type citizen-led initiative, so it can be made available to all interested schools in the country.
1. Introduction

1.1 Background information on the Philippines

The Philippines has, in recent years, achieved broad-based economic growth and is considered as one of the most dynamic economies in the East Asia and Pacific region, having achieved an average annual growth rate of 6.3 per cent between 2010 and 2016. This growth, however, has yet to translate into better education services for the Filipino youth. This is reflected in the country’s medium to low performance against many of the indicators for the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on achieving universal primary education (MDG Watch, Philippine Statistics Authority, May 2016). While the government attaches a great deal of importance to education and recognizes its role in attaining inclusive growth and development, it must address social, political, and governance concerns in order to achieve its development goals on education, whether the MDG or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015.

![Map of the Philippines showing the three island groupings of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regions_of_the_Philippines#/media/File:Ph_regions_and_provinces.png)

Delivering education services in an archipelagic country comprising around 7,100 islands (grouped into Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao) is a challenge. Many of the islands are geographically isolated and have pockets of disadvantage, with poor and indigenous people often living in fragile communities that need the support and attention of government. In some areas, development has been disrupted by natural disasters and socio-political causes, such as leftist insurgency, Muslim separatist movements, and recently, terrorism, particularly in Mindanao.
On the political front, the history of the Philippines has been marked by the transition from the dictatorial, corrupt rule of Marcos to democracy, restored through the peaceful popular revolution of 1986. With the ratification of the new constitution, the people were able, once again, to elect officials to national and local positions. Another political milestone was the passage of the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991, which devolved various services to 81 provinces, 145 cities, and 1,489 municipalities. Education services, however, were not devolved and remained largely the responsibility of central government through the Department of Education (DepEd). Since the new political order began, fighting corruption has been a rallying call of various regimes, leading to laws reforming and disciplining the bureaucracy and creating the role of ombudsman. However, despite these efforts, corruption in government has continued in different forms and to different degrees. According to Transparency International’s list of the least corrupt countries in the world, the Philippines averaged 92 out of 175 countries between 1995 and 2016, ranking lowest (141) in 2008 and highest (36) in 1995. In 2016 it was ranked 101.

The Philippines is the 13th-largest country in the world (on 2016 figures), with a population of 103 million, which is growing at an annual rate of 1.6 per cent. The Family Income and Expenditures Survey (FIES) of July 2015, found the poverty rate in the Philippines to be 26.3 per cent while 12.1 per cent of the population are unable to meet basic food requirements. Half of the poor in the Philippines live in rural areas.

The Philippines is also a predominantly young country, with 57 per cent of the population below the age of 24 (based on 2010 census), which has significant implications for the education sector. The school age population (5–24 year olds) accounts for 41.8 per cent. In the school year 2015/16, DepEd recorded almost 24 million combined enrolments in basic education from kindergarten, primary, and secondary levels in both public and private schools. Between 2006 and 2016, there was a 1–2 per cent average enrolment growth per year in both primary and secondary levels. In the same period, there was a 120 per cent increase in kindergarten enrolments. The Philippines recently passed the K-12 law, which made kindergarten and an additional two years for senior high school mandatory for all learners.

The new demands of K-12, of course, create more pressure on the provision of teachers, facilities, and other education services. These do not yet take into account the around 1.1 million Filipino children aged between 5 and 15 years who are out of school, according to 2014 data (PIDS, 2016).

The government has responded to these needs with substantial investment in basic education. The Department of Education is the biggest bureaucracy (see Annex A for the DepEd organizational structure) and receives the biggest budget. Its allocation consistently increased, relative to the national budget, between 2005 and 2016, ranging from 2 per cent to 3 per cent of national GDP, though it is still notably below the international standard of 6 per cent. As a result, the sector still complains of shortages in facilities and human resources, which are blamed for the low quality of teaching and the low performance of learners in achievement tests and in securing employment after school.

1.2 SRC in the context of reform and anti-corruption policies

Since the 1990s, school report cards (SRCs) have been used in the Philippines in various forms and through both government and citizen efforts. As a tool to ‘inform the general public about school performance, so as to enable stakeholders to more effectively hold schools and districts accountable for education quality’ (IIEP, 2016: 20), SRCs would typically require access-to-information legislation. But even in the absence of such legislation in the Philippines, there were arguably effective applications of SRCs, in the form of transparency, accountability, and citizen participation initiatives, in the education sector. To a certain extent, progressive policy reforms and various anti-corruption policies have made them possible.
Foremost among these policies is the Governance of Basic Education Act (RA 9155, 2001). A key education reform measure, it mandates transparency and accountability at all levels of basic education, with a shift of power from the central office to schools and school principals, and a greater role for different stakeholder groups to take part in school governance. The legislation was supported by programmes, such as the Basic Education Reform Agenda (BESRA) in 2005, which promoted School-based management (SBM).

Other key policies for SRCs are the anti-corruption Code of Conduct of Government Officials and Employees (RA 6713, 1989), requiring government responsiveness to the public through information, consultations, and hearings; the Ombudsman Act (RA 6770, 1989), allowing the public access to ‘any government agency for assistance and information’; and the Anti-Red Tape Act (RA 9485, 2007), which introduces report card surveys for frontline services by the Civil Service Commission.

Taken together, these four vital pieces of legislation set the agenda for transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in the education sector. In 2003, for instance, DepEd was a pilot agency for the Integrity Development Review, a preventative measure against corruption set up by the Office of the Ombudsman, the Commission on Audit, and the Civil Service Commission. Since 2000, it is also monitored by civil society groups, such as G-Watch, Procurement Watch, the Transparency Accountability Network, the Education Network, and Social Watch Philippines.

1.3 Initiatives in focus

Three SRC initiatives were identified for this country case study. The first has the same name, School Report Card (SRC); the second is Transparency Board’ (TB); and the third is CheckMySchool (CMS). SRC and TB were initiated and are led by DepEd, while CMS is led by ANSA, a non-governmental organization.

School Report Card

DepEd introduced SRC as part of the school-based management (SBM) programme under the Basic Education Reform Agenda (BESRA) in 2005. According to Dexter Pante, chief of DepEd’s School Effectiveness Division (SED), SRCs were used as early as the 1990s. The book, Transforming Education on the Ground: Fifty Studies of School-based Management under Third Elementary Education Project (Bautista, 2005), for instance, traces it back to the department’s 10-year master plan on decentralization, which covered the years 1995 to 2005.

Through DepEd Memorandum No. 386, 2009, DepEd issued the Manual on School Improvement Planning, as part of the planning process to test the feasibility of using SRC nationwide. It referred to SRC as ‘a popular accountability measure’ to inform parents and the community of school performance and accomplishments (p. 24). This was only instructive however, as, unlike a policy, a memorandum does not command compliance.

In 2015, DepEd issued an official policy, Order No. 44, Guidelines on the Enhanced School Improvement Planning (SIP) Process and the School Report Card (SRC). It introduced SRC as a communication and advocacy tool ‘to increase community participation and involvement in school operations and activities’ (p. 29). The new guidelines did not mention accountability as a purpose of SRC, as it is not considered a criterion for the performance-based bonus (PBB), a cash bonus given to government employees who contribute to the accomplishment of the department’s targets and commitments.

Transparency Board

The use of TB in schools is a DepEd initiative, which emerged from an administration that anchored its political leadership on anti-corruption. Unlike SRC, no specific DepEd
order governs or explicitly cites TB. Its institutional adoption could be attributed to a management committee meeting convened by the DepEd Secretary in July 2013.1 In this meeting, the committee made a directive, which ‘require[d] all schools to have a transparency board displaying liquidation of school funds’ and showcased the division of Northern Samar as an example.

TB is not entirely devoid of policy basis. It can be traced back to the Anti-Red Tape Act (ARTA) of 2007, which the DepEd has sought to implement through a series of orders2 since 2009. ARTA requires government offices to ‘set up their respective service standards to be known as Citizens’ Charter in the form of information billboards which should be posted at the main entrance of offices or at the most conspicuous place, and in the form of published materials’.

This means that there was a legal basis for TB as early as 2009, even though it was not formally introduced until 2013.

**CheckMySchool**

CMS is a civil society initiative that aims to improve educational services continuously by employing participatory mechanisms in school governance. It started in 2011 as an experimental project of the ANSA Foundation in line with its remit to provide advocacy for access to information and social accountability. It was a test case for the use of an online mapping platform and other digital technologies for transparency and citizen participation. CMS emerged in the context of heightened interest in open government and open data. The ANSA Foundation signed a memorandum of agreement with DepEd to implement it. Its funding comes from the Open Society Foundation under the Global Partnership for Social Accountability.

CMS tries to address three issues, namely the poor condition of public school services, inefficient access to information and feedback, and weak community involvement in school governance.

CMS later evolved to address three main areas: information access, feedback, and issue resolution. All tasks require some stakeholder engagement (including with national and local government, civil society, school communities such as parent–teacher associations (PTAs), media, and the private sector) in training volunteers in constructive engagement and monitoring, and support for volunteers’ activities. The entire process is based on issues reported by stakeholders, either through the online mechanism or through offline collection led by area coordinators.

The sixth cycle of CMS in 2016 covered 893 schools in the country. Its reach, however, may be wider. The World Bank (2016) estimates school principals’ awareness of the initiative at around 15 per cent, which translates to around 6,000 public schools nationwide.

1.4 **Methodology**

This study was undertaken to examine and compare the efficacy of the selected SRC initiatives. Efficacy here is understood in terms of people’s perspective on how useful the SRC is to them, how responsive its format is, and how aware and capable they are in accessing and using it for improving the management of educational resources. Within this framework, the study sought to answer the following questions: What is an enabling legal framework? What are the most critical data to disclose? Which information model

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is more effective, supply-driven or demand-driven? How can demand for information be created? How can schools ensure that information is used in the desired manner? What is an effective set-up to facilitate public participation? What actions are required following data publication at school level to create real impact? What are the adverse effects of access to information on education systems? The findings of the study are expected to help decision-makers and education managers better design and implement open education data policies to promote transparency, accountability, and empowerment of citizens in the fight against corruption.

The study followed these steps:

1. Relevant laws and department policies on transparency and accountability, particularly related to SRC and TB, were collected and analysed.
2. The list of publicly shared education data was reviewed.
3. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders to provide important perspectives on transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in education. Most represented both school-level and national-level stakeholder groups of various sectors, as follows:
   - DepEd management (central office, division office, school heads)
   - Teachers’ association (national and school levels)
   - PTAs (national and school level)
   - Student leaders (National Capital Region and school level)
   - Civil society (national and local level)
   - Media (print and TV, national only)
   - Local chief executives (three municipalities)
4. A survey was conducted in selected sites to draw out in-depth insights into school-level stakeholders’ experience in using SRC. The stakeholders targeted for the survey were parents, teachers, and community members.

**Sampling.** The province of Guimaras was selected for the field survey because of its high performance in both government-led and citizen-led initiatives. Six schools were selected from three municipalities and five barangays, with a mix of urban and rural features:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School sites for the survey</th>
<th>Barangay</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nueva Valencia National High School</td>
<td>Barangay Poblacion, Nueva Valencia</td>
<td>Urban, 3rd class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nueva Valencia Central School</td>
<td>Barangay Poblacion, Nueva Valencia</td>
<td>Urban, 3rd class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Teresa National High School</td>
<td>Barangay Santa Teresa, Jordan</td>
<td>Rural, 3rd class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bugnay Elementary School</td>
<td>Barangay Bugnay, Jordan</td>
<td>Rural, 3rd class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supang National High School</td>
<td>Barangay Supang, Buenavista</td>
<td>Urban, 2nd class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Poblacion Elementary School</td>
<td>Barangay Old Poblacion, Buenavista</td>
<td>Urban, 2nd class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Prepared by the author*

These public schools have a total of 4,382 students. To manage the survey population, the total number of teachers was added to the targeted number of parents (one-quarter of all students) and the targeted number of community members (one-quarter of all teachers). The total survey population was then set at 1,139 and the number of respondents at 278 with a 5 per cent margin of error. This was distributed across the six schools and the parents were further distributed among the grade levels in each school.

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3. Unless indicated otherwise, the figures and tables in this book have been prepared by the author.
The survey was conducted during March and April 2017. The final count of respondents was 245 parents, 29 school teachers, and 9 community members from 6 schools in Guimaras. Four of the respondent parents were excluded in the sample because of significant omissions in the questionnaires; thus, reducing the final sample of data from parents to 241 cases.

1.5 Structure of the report

This report starts by establishing the national context for SRC in the Philippines and the methodology of the study. It proceeds with a review of the main features of the information model of selected SRC initiatives before surveying accountability models. Based on these models, the usefulness of SRC from the stakeholders’ perspectives is analysed, with sections on relevance, accessibility, and usability of information. The short-term and long-term impacts of the use of information are also discussed. Stakeholders’ perspectives on the conditions of success, limits, and strategies for the effective use of SRC are then presented. The case study ends with a conclusion and recommendations for the Department of Education.

Figure 2. Map of Guimaras (survey sites in green)
2. Main features

This section details the features of the three SRC initiatives, considering them as mechanisms for accessing information. It explores the process of data collection, data content, sources of the data, data comparisons, formats, and means of accessing the SRC data.

2.1. School Report Card

Process

DepEd has a manual for preparing the SRC. School personnel, with help from community stakeholders, must follow this manual in collecting and compiling SRC data from various sources, according to DepEd-prescribed templates and formats. When completed, ‘to ensure its ownership and accuracy’, the SRC is signed by the school head, PTA president, student body president, teacher representative or teacher club president, and the chair of the school governing council. The school heads are responsible for dissemination of the SRC. The schools do not usually send a copy of SRC to the division office, but division representatives visit the schools to monitor their compliance with the SRC requirements.

Figure 3. SRC dissemination process

Establish school team → Team collects pre-identified data → Team compiles data
School head disseminates ↓ Key stakeholders sign SRC ↓
Division office monitors SRC compliance

Content

DepEd’s enhanced SRC has 19 data sets, which are divided into three categories, namely: school profile, performance indicators, and status of school projects. The school profile includes information on the following:

Box 1. School profile
- Enrolment
- Health and nutritional status
- Learners’ materials
- Teachers’ professional development
- Funding sources
- School awards and recognitions

The previous SRC had 32 data sets, covering essentially the same data as the enhanced version, but it also had a section on the client satisfaction surveys, or surveys of school performance as perceived by teachers, parents, and students. DepEd removed the client satisfaction survey because, logistically, it was difficult to implement nationwide.

The selection of the pre-identified SRC data sets was informed by consultation with stakeholders. As Undersecretary Jesus Mateo said, ‘We make sure that our stakeholders are part of the conversation ... The SRC itself is designed in the context of those who will be using it. It will be the principals, the students, the parents, and probably some other stakeholders.’ (Interviewed 09/05/2017). The conversation includes consultations and workshops on the design and mechanics of SRC, which were conducted prior to its roll-out.
Box 2. Performance indicators

- Access
- Number and rate of drop-outs by cause

Quality data:
- Percentage of learners who completed the school year (promotion rate)
- National Achievement Test (NAT) - by mean percentage score (MPS)
- Literacy level

Governance data:
- School-based management assessment level
- Child-friendly school survey result
- Stakeholders’ participation
- Learner–teacher ratio
- Learner–classroom ratio
- Learner–toilet ratio
- Learner–set ratio

Figure 5. Sample performance indicator data on literacy level

PHIL-IRL results show an improvement in the pupils’ literacy. More pupils have moved from frustration level to instructional level in both English and Filipino.

Source: Figure drawn by the author using data published by Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Philippine Informal Reading Inventory.
Box 3. School projects

- Status of the annual improvement plan (AIP) and continuous improvement (CI) projects
- Other stakeholders’ accomplishments

Figure 6. Sample school projects data on status of AIP and CI projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Riprapping of School Grounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School Fencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Repair and Maintenance of School Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Construction of School Canopy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Feeding Programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Continuous Improvement (Programme funded by the Australian Government through PAHRODF).

Data sources

The majority of SRC data are held in the school–community planning template, a comprehensive data-gathering and -organizing tool used by the school–community planning team. The school head forms this team, provides orientation, and assigns data-gathering tasks. School and community-based meetings are used in gathering primary and secondary data. These data consist of the school profile, including the school’s geography, learning environment, teachers, children’s health and safety, status of priority improvement projects, stakeholder support to education, and fund sources and amount; and the situation of children/learners in terms of access: in and out of school, attendance and retention, and quality. The school head may also engage experts to provide additional data, such as on disasters, risks, and hazards.

Seven of the data sets may also be found in the Enhanced Basic Education Information System or E-BEIS (eight of the SRC indicators are not in E-BEIS). E-BEIS is a web-based platform with automated data collection and management. It has basic data, such as on enrolment, with various disaggregations, in terms of the age profile of students, number of classes by shift, personnel information, functional computers, school budget allocation, utilization and liquidation, etc. The data are collected at school level and are received and consolidated by the central office following online transmission. They are collected twice a year, after the start and by the end of the school year.

The other data may be extracted from the Child-Friendly School Survey, prescribed forms, and monitoring reports from project teams and various stakeholders, such as Learning Action Cells (LACs), PTAs, teachers’ clubs, and student governments.

DepEd’s School Improvement Plan Guidebook (Department of Education, 2015) provides comprehensive instructions with matrices and presentation techniques for these data sources.

Comparisons

The SRC indicators are standardized and must be consistently reported every year. This allows for historical comparison and trend analysis. Schools may also compare their performance with national standards in indicators such as classroom–teacher ratio and test results.
Furthermore, comparison with other schools in the same division or another division is theoretically possible considering the supposedly standardized application of the SRC based on policy. This will happen when SRGs are collected and consolidated into one repository, which in the future could be integrated into the E-BEIS.

The DepEd, however, must provide guidance on ways in which appropriate comparisons can be made. This is particularly important for inter-school comparison within or with another division; criteria for comparability must be set to avoid unfair and misleading assessment, and ensure context-informed analysis.

**Format**

The SRC of the Philippines can take the form of a brochure, factsheet, or informative paper document. It is prepared twice a year – in the middle of the year and at the end – as a reference material for the school meeting or assembly (October and March).

**Means of Access**

Based on policy, the SRC must be presented to stakeholders during school meetings or assemblies. The idea is for SRC to be the main reference document for the school head’s state-of-the-school address to the school community.

Aside from the assembly, the SRC must be seen in school, on the websites of division offices, or on bulletin boards (such as the Transparency Board) and other public areas. School journals or newsletters are also encouraged to allocate space for SRC. If resources permit, for example, from the school budget for maintenance and other operational expenses (MOOE), the SRC may be reproduced for distribution to the general public.

### 2.2 Transparency Board

**Process**

The school head prepares the documents that are posted in the TB every month. These do not need further processing or checking. The school head is responsible for updating the content of the TB. The division office visits the schools to monitor compliance with TB requirements.

![Dissemination of Transparency Board](image)

The aim of the Transparency Board is to account for school finances. It requires the posting of data on the school’s MOOE budget allocation. It comes from the national office and is downloaded directly by the schools through the school head as accountable official.

As a school’s income sources may not be limited to MOOE, the Transparency Board may report cash flows that include other sources, such as canteen fund, PTA contributions, fund-raising revenues, and other donations.

In one documented case, the PTA opted to have its own separate Transparency Board.
Box 4 lists the data that should be disclosed in the Transparency Board:

**Box 4. Transparency boards**

- Cash disbursements (or cash payments made by the school)
- Cheque numbers (if applicable)
- Payee particulars (name and other details of individual or corporate entity receiving the payment)
- Cash advances
- Payments

The payments pertain to or are classified into:

- Travel expenses
- Training expenses
- Office supply expenses
- Repairs and maintenance of school building

**Data sources**

The school head as manager/administrator is the main source of the financial data. There must be a school cash disbursement register to serve as official record and report of financial transactions.

For other incomes, recording and reporting practices vary.

**Comparisons**

As far as MOOE is concerned, the indicators are consistent and could allow for a yearly comparison and even for inter-school comparisons. As is the case with SRC, DepEd has no guidelines for the proper way of doing the comparative analysis.

The other data are variable, which makes comparison difficult.

**Formats**

The data reports in the Transparency Board are mostly presented in table or matrix form. They are usually copies of the actual financial reports submitted to central office.

They are signed documents prepared by bookkeepers or accountants, and duly approved by the school head. They are formatted in such a way as to show that the information is true, correct, and official.
Means of access

The Transparency Board is the medium of access in itself. Its operative requirement is the prominence of the bulletin board’s location on the school premises. It is usually found along pathways, a school entrance, or in a place specially designated for announcements in the school.

Information in the Transparency Board finds its way into the SRC. Thus, SRC access should also mean access to the financial information posted on the Transparency Board.

2.3 CheckMySchool

Process

The CMS secretariat conducts training for area coordinators on the process and tools of data collection. The area coordinators cascade the training to recruited school volunteers and, based on that, the volunteers identify issues, which should be validated with various stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, and students, concerned with or affected by the issues highlighted. The school head also certifies the list of collected issues.

The volunteers substantiate the collected issues by further accessing related school data. Afterwards, they use the monitoring findings for feedback to the mandated office. The office’s response then becomes the subject of follow-ups, with volunteers pursuing resolution of the issues. The volunteers’ experiences of the process are finally submitted as stories of change, which the secretariat reviews and clears for publication.

CMS has an upward reporting system, with the central secretariat the repository of processed information and disseminator through website or social media.

Figure 8. Dissemination of CheckMySchool

Volunteers identify issues → Engage stakeholders → Access data → Tell story → Resolve issue → Send feedback → Volunteers report to central secretariat → Central secretariat publishes reports and selected stories on website or social media

Content

CheckMySchool collects and reports any school issue. An issue is anything that concerns or affects the stakeholders’ experience of school services, prompting calls for improvement. Its data interest, so to speak, is issue-driven, need-based, and problem-oriented. The school issues are certified by the school head in a ‘commitment form’, which also indicates agreement in subjecting the issue to the participatory process of CMS. CMS classifies the issues as follows:

1. School building programme
2. Equipment
3. Student welfare
4. Teachers and personnel
5. Learning materials
6. Funds
7. Reporting

Relevant data are then accessed to substantiate the issue. CMS provides various tools for data access, such as ‘data updating’ and ‘community scorecards’. Data updating allows the volunteers to provide supplementary data through self-directed manual collection of data following a set form. In data updating, which is CMS’s most commonly used tool, the data collected are the following:

**Box 5. CheckMySchool**

- Enrolment
- Seats
- Toilets
- School personnel
- Rooms
- Water supply
- Electrical supply
- Computers and internet
- Budget
- Textbooks

CMS advises use of its own data-updating tool on a case-by-case basis. The best use of a tool with a comprehensive request for data is when a school has very limited data to share because its capacity to gather its own data is challenged or when available data seem unreliable and must be independently validated. Such a situation usually occurs in schools with poor record-management practices.

CMS decided to make data updating optional since the DepEd had already improved its E-BEIS remarkably, to the extent that validation or updating may already be superfluous.

Community scorecards, on the other hand, involve a participatory process of drawing out stakeholders’ insights into school services, as inputs with standards and indicators, and allow them to give performance ratings. The views of the government as service providers and the community as beneficiaries are separately generated and then synthesized at an interface meeting. The qualitative data from the scorecard process give CheckMySchool volunteers a balanced view of the issues.

**Data sources**

The school, its official records and documents, and the stakeholders themselves, are the primary sources of data for CMS. The stakeholders include the school head, teachers, parents, students, and concerned community members.

The stakeholders bring up the issues, which are captured in the commitment form and agreed by the school head. The school itself is a source of data, particularly when volunteers conduct manual counting of certain services, such as classrooms, seats, or textbooks.

**Comparisons**

CMS does not make any comparison of school data. Its data interests are too variable. It prioritizes immediate use of gathered data for feedback on particular school needs that require government attention.

Even its participating schools and area coverage change. It depends on the presence of issues in schools, the school head’s cooperation, and the availability of volunteers to undertake the process. Thus, continuity at the school level is not assured.
Data aggregation per year may show patterns in the issues identified, but this is currently not being undertaken.

**Figure 9. CMS data updating form**

![CMS data updating form](image)

Source: Check My School website: www.checkmyschool.org

**Formats**

CMS has a commitment form (see Appendix) which lists the issues raised in a particular school. It is duly signed by the school head to provide certification and indicate cooperation in the process of addressing the issues.

For the data updating, the volunteers use a form that must be filled out with the collected data. The volunteers come up with a report to the education authorities on the issues raised in or about the schools. There is no standard format for this report.
Box 6. Sample story of change published on CheckMySchool.org

More help for Guimaras Island schools, by Charrie Joy Villanueva

NUEVA VALENCIA, GUIMARAS – Our journey in helping public schools in Guimaras started in Unisan Multi-Grade School. The faces we saw back then were faces full of frustration. The school teachers and parents thought that help would never come. Their school is located on the island barangay of Guiwanon, a place that can only be reached through an hour’s boat journey, followed by a hike through rocky terrain.

Back in 2014, CheckMySchool volunteers were able to help Unisan Multi-Grade School secure funding for the repair of a classroom that was damaged by Typhoon Yolanda. Since that time, ‘a lot of blessings kept pouring in’ according to Ma’am Ligaya de la Cruz, the school’s teacher-in-charge,

We visited the island schools of Nueva Valencia again back in September 2017. Municipal Council Member and Committee Chair on Education Attorney Paul Vincent de la Cruz, CMS provincial coordinator Mrs. Ana Eva Villanueva, and other CMS volunteers joined the visit. This time around, developments in the school were already evident. What’s more, we were met with good news during the visit.

The Municipal Government of Nueva Valencia recently funded the repair of classrooms for Unisan MGS. DepEd Engineer Gencianeo informed Mayor Emmanuel Galila about the DepEd’s budget allotment, which they then used to improve the water system for Unisan MGS and all other schools in the island.

A different set of classrooms were repaired using funding from DepEd’s regular infrastructure fund. These repairs consisted of roof replacements, roof reframing, ceiling repairs, wall finishing, and classroom repainting. Another classroom was repaired using the PTA fund.

A new school building is scheduled to rise in Unisan MGS, according to Engineer Gencianeo. The new classroom buildings will address the increase in the school’s enrolment, based on their records.

According to Ma’am Ligaya, the CheckMySchool video reached and touched many private individuals.

They came to the island school and donated an amount to address the needs of the school. External assistance like that was a big help, especially because their school head also manages the Panobolon Elementary School, which is located in a different island barangay.

However, the school still had other unresolved issues, according to Ma’am Ligaya. They received donations for a laptop and printer from the ABS-CBN Bacolod City, but the school still does not have electricity. Additional toilets were still needed, as well as improvements to the pavilion.

Council member De la Cruz quickly responded and promised to talk to Mayor Galila about the solar panel that the local government could provide. Unisan MGS and Guiwanon ES could be potential recipients for this project. Regarding the repairs to the pavilion, we told them to draft a resolution, duly signed by the PTA president, to be sent to the office of Representative in Congress Lucille Nava. We can help follow up this request.
When it was time to leave Unisan MGS, warm smiles from the pupils and teachers sent us on our way. I would like to believe these were smiles of hope because they know that there are people who are trying to find ways to help them.

I recall Ma’am Ligaya saying, ‘Blessings do not come all at once. They come little by little, but they eventually do’. She was teary-eyed as we spoke, knowing they will soon receive solar panels for the school.

As for our volunteers, the journey continues. We are all more eager each day because we see our hard work bearing fruit. As volunteer Loreto Gandecela said, ‘If we don’t volunteer, who will? We don’t expect anything in return, but we’re still happy because people remember us as CMS volunteers who are always ready to help’.

Edited by: Vincent Romero

Means of access

The CMS volunteers keep the gathered data and a copy is submitted online to the central secretariat, which processes and consolidates the data for reporting purposes. It is important to note that CMS volunteers come mostly from outside the school, usually from civil society organizations; it may or may not directly involve school-based stakeholders, such as parents and teachers.

In the previous rounds of CMS, the data were uploaded on the website and a copy of the completed tool was displayed. This was subsequently deemed unnecessary and stopped.

Stakeholders get to know the results of CMS activities through exit meetings conducted with the school head, and at feedback sessions or dialogues held precisely to present the findings. These events are usually multi-stakeholder and open to the public.

To highlight the accomplishments, the CMS secretariat organizes a public presentation of its report and publishes selected stories on its website and social media.

2.4 Comparative insights

The main features of the SRC initiatives are summarized in Table 2. Analysis of these features yields the following insights.

1. The difference in the content of SRC and TB, as government initiatives, on the one hand, and CMS, as a citizen-led initiative, on the other, clearly shows the ‘supply’ bias of the former and the ‘demand’ bias of the latter. SRC and TB prioritize capture of a standard set of indicators for dissemination and reporting to the stakeholders. SRC is more systematically designed than TB because of clear policy support for it, which evolved from a memorandum to an order, both with a corresponding manual for implementation. TB targeted financial transparency, but singled out MOOE data. A school’s initiative to make it comprehensive and include all other income sources is commendable and indicates good appreciation of the intention of the initiative. The CMS data, on the other hand, consist primarily of ‘issues’ emanating from the stakeholders themselves. The initiative does not start with predefined standard sets of indicators about school services. It uses the latter for the purpose of substantiating the issues highlighted and as and when needed.

2. While all three initiatives identified certain documents as sources of data, CMS also identified stakeholders themselves as sources of data. CMS, in other words, allows school stakeholders to ‘co-create’ data that can be used to validate government reports. The government’s collection of data may already be detailed and comprehensive, but its criteria for selecting data may still be limited to its policy-level perspective and detached from ground-level realities of school operations. In cases
where government consultations are not properly undertaken or not undertaken at all, CMS can potentially fill in the data gap in favour of the community stakeholders.

3. SRC and TB have the strength of uniform implementation because they command policy compliance. They are also backed by government machinery and resources to ensure implementation and monitoring of compliance. The CMS, on the other hand, is opportunistic. It cannot command compliance, but must operate only in schools that express a need and an interest in cooperating. This difference in operation has some implications for the way in which the initiatives are designed to make comparisons. The SRC and TB need proper guidelines to ensure properly contextualized analysis when undertaking comparisons.

4. SRC and CMS recognize the importance of presenting data in face-to-face meetings. TB is limited to disclosure of information, but often makes use of the SRC’s interactive process. The biannual assembly meetings to present SRC data enable before-and-after comparisons and consolidate various data in three classifications (profile, performance, and projects). The face-to-face meetings in CMS, on the other hand, are feedback sessions, where both data and issues are presented, and may include follow-up meetings on a continuing basis, until the data are clarified or the issues are resolved.

5. The question of the means of access to the data of SRC and TB and CMS is also a question of who gets to access the data. SRC and TB aim to reach the general public, while CMS aims to reach both the government and the public. The SRC/TB data are shared with the public for information and discussion and this occurs mainly at the school level. While the division office directly oversees their implementation, there is no indication that the SRC/TB data, including the results of the discussion, are accessed and used by higher DepEd offices and local governments. By contrast, the CMS data are accessed and handled by civil society volunteers, who may not necessarily involve school-based stakeholders. CMS-collected data are also deliberately shared, not only with school stakeholders, but with higher DepEd offices and local government officials.

6. In simple terms, the information access model used by SRC and TB consists in consultation, posting of information, and face-to-face meetings. Central government conducts broad-based consultation with stakeholders about information needs. Based on that, it prescribes standard sets of information to be shared about schools. Finally, school principals meet with stakeholders at the start and end of the school year to discuss the posted information. For CMS, it consists of identifying issues, collecting the data, and facilitating discussion on data and issues. It starts with the school stakeholders’ issues, proceeding to the collection of data about the issues, and moving up to discussion with various stakeholders, in and out of school. In some sense, the information access model of SRC and TB can be said to be top-down, while that used by CMS is bottom-up.
Table 2. Summary data on the main features of the SRC initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SRC</th>
<th>TB</th>
<th>CMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Content** | • School profile (six indicators)  
• Performance (one indicator on access, three on quality, seven on governance)  
• Status of school projects (two indicators) | • School’s finances, particularly MOOE  
• Other cases: Canteen income, PTA funds, and other donations | • Issues  
• Services and facilities |
| **Data source** | • School community planning template  
• E-BEIS  
• Various reports | • School head or school’s cash disbursement register  
• Various reports | • School documents and reports  
• School stakeholders |
| **Comparisons** | • Consistent indicators allow for historical comparison, but no guidelines on ways to compare.  
• National standards, such as classroom–teacher ratio and test averages, are available and allow for comparison, but no guidelines on ways to compare. | • Consistent indicator on MOOE allows for comparison, but no guidelines on ways to compare.  
• Other data are dependent on the school and community initiative. | • None, collected data are too variable to allow for comparison. Data aggregation can show pattern in highlighted issues. |
| **Format** | • Brochure or informative paper document | • Financial statement or report in table or matrix form | • Filled-out forms (commitment form, data updating form, online reporting form) |
| **Means of access** | • Presentation to stakeholders during school meetings and assemblies  
• Posting of SRC in school or division websites, bulletin boards, and in other public areas  
• Space in the school journal or newsletter for SRC updates.  
• Reproduction of enough copies for distribution to the general public. | • Bulletin board  
• Inclusion in SRC | • Exit meeting  
• Feedback meeting  
• Website feature stories |
3. Analysis of the accountability models

This section reviews the accountability aspect of the three initiatives. It covers the domain of accountability, accountability models, lines of accountability, consequences for publishing information, and consequences after information is published.

3.1 School Report Card

Domain of accountability

The SRC has a comprehensive coverage of information, the disclosure of which feeds into the domain of accountability. It invites public inquiries into management, financial, and pedagogical accountabilities of schools.

Fifteen indicators for the SRC are management concerns, three can be considered pedagogical, and one financial.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 7. Indicators related to management accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Enrolment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Health and nutritional status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learners’ materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers’ professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Number and rate of drop-outs by cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Percentage of learners who completed the school year (promotion rate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School-Based Management Assessment Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child-Friendly School Survey result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stakeholders’ participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learner–teacher ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learner–classroom ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learner–toilet ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learner–set ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Status of annual improvement plan (AIP) and continuous improvement (CI) projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other stakeholders’ accomplishments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 8. Indicators related to pedagogical accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• National Achievement Test (NAT), by mean percentage score (MPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Literacy level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School awards and recognition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 9. Indicators related to financial accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Funding sources (and their shares in the total school budget)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accountability models

SRC combines what could be considered ‘pre-public participation’ and ‘formal sanction’ models of accountability. It involves pre-public participation because DepEd limits the purpose of SRC to information dissemination and communication, but it nevertheless provides stimulus to citizen demand. Through the SRC, stakeholders can inquire about issues and, based on that inquiry, apply pressure on school administrators to perform better.
The model of accountability through formal sanctions may also apply in SRC. RA 6713 and RA 7485 can provide a framework for it through their respective sections on penalties for non-compliance.

DepEd Order (DO) 44 s2015, which calls for ‘strict compliance’, appears to entail formal sanction, but it is vague and contains no details about the consequences of non-compliance.

**Lines of accountability**

With respect to data collection, dissemination, and use, stakeholders, such as teachers and PTA officers, are supposed to be part of the process of preparing the SRC. The school head finalizes it.

With respect to ensuring compliance with SRC requirements, the school head reports to the division office. The regional and central offices likewise have their respective oversight functions.

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**Box 10. Penalties for violating RA 6713 and RA 9485**

Penalties specified in section 11 of RA 6713:

a) Any public official or employee, regardless of whether or not he holds office or employment in a casual, temporary, holdover, permanent or regular capacity, committing any violation of this Act shall be punished with a fine not exceeding the equivalent of six (6) months’ salary or suspension not exceeding one (1) year, or removal depending on the gravity of the offence after due notice and hearing by the appropriate body or agency.

Penalties specified in section 11 of RA 9485:

After compliance with the substantive and procedural due process, the following shall constitute violations of this Act together with their corresponding penalties:

(a) Light Offence

(1) Refusal to accept application and/or request within the prescribed period or any document being submitted by a client;

(2) Failure to act on an application and/or request or failure to refer back to the client a request which cannot be acted upon owing to lack of requirement/s within the prescribed period;

(3) Failure to attend to clients who are within the premises of the office or agency concerned prior to the end of official working hours and during lunch;

(4) Failure to render frontline services within the prescribed period on any application and/or request without due cause;

(5) Failure to give the client a written notice on the disapproval of an application or request; and

(6) Imposition of additional irrelevant requirements other than those listed in the first notice.

Penalties for light offence shall be as follows:

First Offence – Thirty (30) days suspension without pay and mandatory attendance in Values Orientation Programme;

Second Offence – Three (3) months suspension without pay; and

Third Offence – Dismissal and perpetual disqualification from public service.

(b) Grave Offence – Fixing and/or collusion with fixers in consideration of economic and/or other gain or advantage.

Penalty – Dismissal and perpetual disqualification from public service.
**Consequences for not publishing information**

As the DepEd Order states, ‘strict compliance is directed’. It is assumed that there will be a consequence for the failure to comply, intentional or not, with the required publication of information in the SRC. Perhaps an administrative reprimand from a higher authority would be in order in the case of non-compliance. However, it is not clearly spelled out in the DO.

Viewed from the lens of anti-corruption laws, RA 6713 and RA 9485, non-compliance with SRC requirements entails penalties (see Box 2). The implementation of this law, however, is another matter. There has, as yet, been no case to test how these provisions could actually apply in the SRC.

**Consequences after information is published**

Compliance with SRC requirement helps schools improve their SBM assessment levels. There is no reward or benefit for the school head and employees involved in preparing it. On the other hand, the publication of SRC information must immediately result in informed stakeholders. This is the minimum effect that DepEd expects from SRC as an information and communication tool.

Beyond this objective, stakeholders may use the information on their own for whatever purpose they may deem appropriate. They may start inquiring about the school’s performance against the published indicators, as well as applying pressure on school officials to do better. How the school officials respond to these inquiries and pressure is not recorded.

### 3.2 Transparency Board

**Domain of accountability**

The Transparency Board has a specific domain, which is financial accountability. It requires accounting and disclosure of all school financial transactions. The MOOE budget allocation for each school, and other school incomes, remain sensitive subjects for discussion in many school communities. The budget is technically under the control and management of the school head. Such control can, when not properly monitored, result in the highly discretionary use of the fund by the school head. Questions regarding the use of the MOOE allocation often arise when school officials ask parents for help to raise more funds for school improvements and other expenses.

With the Transparency Board, the school head becomes accountable for school expenditure and can justify requests for fund-raising efforts based on it.

**Accountability models**

Like SRC, the Transparency Board combines what could be considered ‘pre-public participation’ and ‘formal sanction’ models of accountability. It can be said to be a pre-public participation model because it is limited to information disclosure and dissemination, but it nevertheless provides stimulus to citizen demand. Through the Transparency Board, stakeholders can inquire about certain expenditures and, based on that inquiry, apply pressure to school administrators to explain current spending or to be more prudent in future spending. A parent interviewed for this study provided a clear example of how a school head would provide proper reporting of finances in order to ensure counterpart funding from the village council.

The model of accountability through formal sanctions may also apply in the Transparency Board. RA 6713 and RA 7485 provide a framework for it through their respective provisions on penalties for violation or non-compliance.
**Lines of accountability**

Data collection, dissemination, and use are solely the responsibility of the school head. The school head reports compliance with the requirement of setting up a Transparency Board to the division office. The regional and central offices likewise have their respective oversight functions.

**Consequences of not publishing information**

No specific DepEd Order governs the Transparency Board, so there are no guidelines specifying penalties for non-compliance. As with the SRC, anti-corruption laws, RA 6713 and RA 7485, may be interpreted as governing the implementation of the Transparency Board. Thus, the respective penalties set out in these laws may be imposed on school officials for failure to disclose the required financial information.

Like SRC, the application of these provisions is yet to be tested in a case of non-compliance with the TB requirement.

**Consequences after publishing information**

Compliance with the posting of financial information in the Transparency Board helps the school improve its SBM assessment level. There is no reward or benefit for the school head and employees involved in preparing it.

As in the case of SRC, the publication of financial information must immediately result in informed stakeholders. This seems to be the minimum outcome that DepEd expects from the Transparency Board.

Beyond this objective, the stakeholders, especially the parents, may use the information for whatever purpose they deem appropriate. They may start inquiring about school spending on the basis of the disclosed information, as well as apply pressure on school officials to avoid unnecessary spending. How the school officials respond to these inquiries and pressures is not monitored.

### 3.3 CheckMySchool

**Domain of accountability**

CheckMySchool’s domain of accountability is quite flexible. It could have elements of management, financial, and pedagogical accountabilities as it welcomes and encourages disclosure on any issue that interests or affects the stakeholders. In the most developed version of its design, it claims to be ‘issue-based, demand-driven and problem-oriented’.

Based on recent implementation, CheckMySchool recorded high interest in accountabilities related to management, particularly for the most relevant inputs on education services. Financial concerns were rarely raised and no pedagogical concerns have been reported.

Through its flexible domain, CheckMySchool is able to identify the priority issues of the stakeholders.

**Accountability model**

Public participation is key to CheckMySchool’s approach to accountability. It encourages and guides stakeholders in using the data gathered to identify mandated government offices and demand accountability from them.

CheckMySchool introduces its volunteers as third-party citizen monitors. They check schools as interested parties representing civil society. They pursue accountability through ‘constructive engagement’, dialogues, problem-solving sessions, advocacy, multi-
stakeholder forums, and other techniques that apply public pressure to government agencies.

**Lines of accountability**

The collection, dissemination, and use of CheckMySchool data are the responsibilities of the citizen volunteers. In many cases, the volunteers mobilize school community members, such as parents, in the data collection. To ensure data validity, the volunteers must get the school head to certify its documentation. All CheckMySchool data, reports, or findings are submitted or presented to identified mandated government agencies, including the DepEd’s division, regional, and central offices, and the local governments units (LGUs) and other concerned agencies.

Finally, the volunteers must report the results of their data collection, dissemination, and use to the CheckMySchool secretariat. They use a system of online reporting (i.e. google forms), compliance with which is a precondition to the release of monetary support. The secretariat oversees the whole operation through a network set-up consisting of area coordinators handling a number of schools.

**Figure 10. Sample CMS online reporting form**

![Sample CMS online reporting form](source)

**Consequences for not publishing information**

A citizen-led initiative such as CheckMySchool secures the cooperation of government through its credibility and ability to constructively engage. When the CheckMySchool volunteers fail to follow the prescribed process of informing stakeholders and presenting reports to government partners and stakeholders, the initiative may be discontinued. School heads or division superintendents may withdraw their cooperation and stop CheckMySchool from operating in their jurisdictions.

Aside from the possible withdrawal of institutional support, the CheckMySchool secretariat also sets rules on non-compliance. It withholds or suspends the release of funding support until volunteers have conducted feedback or reporting of collected data to stakeholders.
Consequences after publishing information

One aspect of the design of CheckMySchool is to push volunteers beyond access and feedback on collected information. It culminates in issue resolution. Information serves as a basis for volunteers to follow up with the government offices mandated to address the reported issues. Resolution is construed in three ways: the mandated agency’s acknowledgment of the issue; agreeing to or committing to a solution to the issue; and implementing the agreed solution. These constitute effective public accountability, which must be the practical extended result of disclosure of and access to information.

Box 11. Sample story illustrating issue resolution as a result of disclosure and access to information

Schools admit misreporting enrolment data

Story contributed by Ana Eva Villanueva and Charrie Masculino

Owing to the sensitivity of the information, and at the request of school sources, we are not disclosing the actual name of the schools and school heads.

GUIMARAS – CheckMySchool monitoring uncovered misreporting of enrolment in Guimaras schools. Ana Eva Villanueva and Charrie Masculino, CheckMySchool coordinators in Guimaras, encountered these cases in the course of their monitoring.

Ana Eva recalled: ‘There were manipulations. When there’s excess enrolment in a school, and another has shortage of 30, one will borrow from the other. The shortage of teachers and classrooms is then fixed.’

Charrie added: ‘Schools that lend excess students to schools with shortage pretend that things are in order. They wouldn’t know that they already have shortage in teachers. It’s similar to stomach pain, which you wouldn’t tell the doctor about. How can the doctor cure it?’

A retired school principal confirmed and admitted the practice. He arranged the trading of 15 pupils with an enrolment-rich school. He had to do it because he had a very low enrolment of only around 15. He was targeting 30.

An elementary school and a former primary school also used a similar trick. The primary school only had around 15 pupils and needed augmentation.

A principal noted: ‘We had a verbal agreement about this arrangement. The school with low enrolment will be visited by teachers from another school with available teachers.’

Similar cases were documented in another elementary and primary school. The latter used to be an extension school of the former. It was still establishing itself and many pupils would still go to the better-known school in the area, which kept their enrolments low.

In one meeting with the local school board, Ana Eva called the principals’ attention to this malpractice. She asked, ‘What’s going on? How can you get additional teachers if you report this? How can you get additional school building if you don’t have correct information in your SIP [school improvement plan] and AIP [annual implementation plan]?’

The CheckMySchool monitoring changed this practice. Charrie said: ‘After our consultations and follow-ups, they realized that CheckMySchool was right. If they continued doing that, the division office would not see what they lacked. As of now, the problem has been stopped in the whole Guimaras. The schools are submitting correct reports to the division office and central office.’

The principals appreciated the feedback. One of them said: ‘We are grateful to CheckMySchool. If you hadn’t pointed out that problem, we wouldn’t have the new classrooms and teachers we now have.’
3.4 Comparative insights

The main characteristics of the accountability model followed by the three initiatives are summarised in Table 3.

A comparison of the accountability dimensions of the three initiatives yields the following conclusions.

1. SRC’s comprehensive coverage and TB’s financial focus are pre-defined by or emanate from the DepEd central office. The CMS, on the other hand, is flexible and bottom-up. DepEd has no choice but to pre-define the domain of SRC and TB because it has to set a policy that must be uniformly prescribed to all schools. There are locally initiated features in TB, which deviate from the prescription, but they generally remain in the financial domain.

2. The ‘pre-public participation’ model is characteristic of both SRC and TB because accountability is not explicitly factored into their designs. The information provides necessary preparation for the public to hold school officials accountable. The absence of an explicit directive from DepEd to use SRC and TB as accountability mechanisms puts the burden of use solely on the public. In some cases, school administrators prevent or discourage parents from asserting their right to inquire or demand because of the limited view that the school’s responsibility ends in providing information.

3. The model is completely changed when the two anti-corruption laws are applied. The laws have clear and explicit sanctions for non-provision of information and inaction on public queries. These, however, have yet to be applied in actual cases of failure to comply with SRC and TB requirements.

4. On the other hand, the public participation model is inherent in CMS, being a social accountability initiative. The extent and quality of the accountability is determined only by the extent of the model in practice. It has no direct ability to sanction wrongdoings or malpractices, but it can still rely on the applicability and effectiveness of the two anti-corruption laws. It has not explicitly invoked the laws in any case of non-compliance or unresponsiveness on the part of the school or any DepEd office.

5. For SRC and TB, it is clear that the school head is accountable for ensuring compliance. The DepEd bureaucracy likewise defines the oversight roles of higher offices. This, however, does not necessarily ensure perfect implementation. For CMS, accountability runs in two directions: one towards DepEd, particularly the schools, the other towards the CMS secretariat.

6. The consequence for not disclosing information should be stricter for SRC and TB. They are, after all, governed by official policies. Yet, while the schools are generally compliant, the DepEd order or instruction on SRC and TB is quite vague on the consequences of disobedience. The anti-corruption laws may be clear and explicit about the sanctions or penalties for violations, but schools do not automatically link the SRC and TB to them.

7. For CMS, the consequences consist of schools or DepEd offices severing ties with the initiative and volunteers not receiving funding support. The first impacts not just on the volunteers but on the initiative as a whole. It can depend on the depth of relationship of the volunteers with the school/DepEd officials and their stake in or level of tolerance of the initiative (i.e. how forgiving they can be). The second consequence impacts only on the volunteers. Thus, the consequences for the CMS initiative are more negotiable than the government-led initiatives. The consequences for SRC and TB, if taken seriously, tend to be more significant than those for CMS.
8. In terms of post-publication consequences, SRC and TB are neutral or opportunistic. Based on its accountability model, the public is free to use the information any way it chooses. It is up to the stakeholders, with their level of active engagement and assertiveness, to determine the implications of using the information. In contrast, CMS purposefully targets consequences after the access and sharing of information. It terms this ‘issue resolution’. Issue resolution can be said to have taken place to various degrees, namely acknowledgment of the issue, response to the issue (i.e. agreed solution), and actual result or realization of desired improvement. CMS articulates this dimension better, perhaps because of its advocacy role. DepEd is concerned with complying with the requirement of transparency, but needs to make stronger links between transparency and effective management, i.e. using information to improve the services.

9. SRC and TB were intended only as information and communication tools, but, being government initiatives, they could not avoid the application and effect of anti-corruption laws on them. These laws provide them with a framework through which to also function as accountability initiatives. Actual application is another question. The implementation of CMS, on the other hand, cannot be imposed on schools, whether as an access-to-information or as an accountability initiative. It has to rely on cooperation. But, once accepted, it can invoke the provisions of accountability laws.
Table 3. Summary data on accountability model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SRC</th>
<th>TB</th>
<th>CMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain of accountability</strong></td>
<td>Management (15 indicators); financial (one indicator); pedagogical (three indicators)</td>
<td>Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accountability models</strong></td>
<td>Pre-public participation. DepEd limits use of SRC for info dissemination and communication, but it provides stimulus to citizen demand. Formal sanction. RA 6713 and RA 9485 can provide a framework through sections on penalties for non-compliance. DO 44 s2015, which directs ‘strict compliance’ is vague and has no details on penalties.</td>
<td>Pre-public participation. Transparency effort provides stimulus to citizen demand, but DepEd has no explicit policy on ways to handle issues arising from the use of data from the TB. Formal sanction. RA 6713 and RA 9485 can provide a framework through sections on penalties for non-compliance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lines of accountability</strong></td>
<td>Data collection to use: Stakeholders → school head Accountability: School head → division office/regional office/central office</td>
<td>Data collection to use: School head Accountability: School head → division office/regional office/central office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequences for not publishing info</strong></td>
<td>Possible reprimand from higher authority because ‘strict compliance is directed’, but this is not spelled out. Prescribed penalties under RA 6713 and RA 9485</td>
<td>Prescribed penalties under RA 6713 and RA 9485.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequences after information is published</strong></td>
<td>Informed stakeholders; they are expected to use information independently, for whatever purpose they deem suitable.</td>
<td>Informed stakeholders; they are expected to use information independently, for whatever purpose they deem suitable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Analysis of stakeholders’ perspectives on the usefulness of this initiative

The study sought to understand ‘usefulness’ in terms of a range of advantages or benefits afforded by the application of SRC initiatives, particularly after the posting/sharing of information. The range of advantages covers the use of the information in discussion venues, in feedback mechanisms that should clarify roles and responsibilities of government offices, in imposing sanctions in case of any violation or anomaly, and in achieving results or actual improvements, which may have short- and/or long-term impacts.

4.1 Relevance of information

The survey found that 90 per cent of parents, 93 per cent of teachers, and all community leaders considered the publication of school data ‘very important’. Only one parent said it is ‘not so important’.

Table 4. Stakeholders’ assessment of the importance of the publication of school data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents (%)</th>
<th>Teachers (%)</th>
<th>Community leaders (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>89.74</td>
<td>93.10</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>9.83</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not so important</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important at all</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When rating the different types of data, between 48.55 per cent and 97.08 per cent of parents found the data ‘very useful’. They considered school safety (97.08 per cent), teacher qualification (93.78 per cent) and student attendance (92.53 per cent) to be the most useful indicators about the school. Interestingly, a number of parents (12.08 per cent) found student socio-economic profile a ‘not very useful’ indicator.

Table 5. Usefulness of various school data among parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very useful (%)</th>
<th>Quite useful (%)</th>
<th>Not very useful (%)</th>
<th>Not useful at all (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>84.58</td>
<td>14.17</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student socio-economic profile</td>
<td>50.42</td>
<td>36.67</td>
<td>12.08</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student attendance</td>
<td>92.53</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition, drop-out, promotion</td>
<td>48.55</td>
<td>37.76</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>6.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
<td>88.80</td>
<td>10.37</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher attendance</td>
<td>91.70</td>
<td>7.88</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher qualification</td>
<td>93.78</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding sources</td>
<td>89.63</td>
<td>9.96</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School income</td>
<td>84.58</td>
<td>12.92</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The teachers rated different types of data, with between 65.52 per cent and 100 per cent rating the data ‘very useful’. The data they considered most useful concerned school safety (100 per cent), number of students (100 per cent), school inspection (96.55 per cent), funding sources (96.55 per cent), number of teachers (96.55 per cent), and teachers’ attendance (96.55 per cent).

Table 6. Usefulness of various school data among teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very useful (%)</th>
<th>Quite useful (%)</th>
<th>Not very useful (%)</th>
<th>Not useful at all (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student socio-economic profile</td>
<td>65.52</td>
<td>34.48</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student attendance</td>
<td>93.10</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition, drop-out, promotion</td>
<td>93.10</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
<td>96.55</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher attendance</td>
<td>96.55</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher qualification</td>
<td>89.66</td>
<td>10.34</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding sources</td>
<td>96.55</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School income</td>
<td>89.66</td>
<td>10.34</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School income from school fees</td>
<td>78.57</td>
<td>21.43</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School capital expenditure</td>
<td>89.66</td>
<td>10.34</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School facilities</td>
<td>93.10</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School equipment</td>
<td>93.10</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The proportion of community leaders who rated the various types of data as ‘very useful’ ranged between 37.5 per cent and 100 per cent. Ten of the 20 items received a ‘very useful’ rating from all respondents. None of the items were considered ‘not very useful’ or ‘not useful at all’ by any of the community leaders.

**Table 7. Usefulness of various school data among community leaders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very useful (%)</th>
<th>Quite useful (%)</th>
<th>Not very useful (%)</th>
<th>Not useful at all (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>93.10</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student test scores</td>
<td>82.76</td>
<td>17.24</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition rate to secondary</td>
<td>82.76</td>
<td>17.24</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School inspection</td>
<td>96.55</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community involvement</td>
<td>93.10</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental satisfaction</td>
<td>89.66</td>
<td>89.66</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School safety</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very useful (%)</th>
<th>Quite useful (%)</th>
<th>Not very useful (%)</th>
<th>Not useful at all (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>87.50</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student socio-economic profile</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student attendance</td>
<td>87.50</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition, drop-out, promotion</td>
<td>62.50</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
<td>87.50</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher attendance</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher qualification</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding sources</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School income</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School income from school fees</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School capital expenditure</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School facilities</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School equipment</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student test scores</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition rate to secondary</td>
<td>87.51</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School inspection</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These results suggest that there is almost universal agreement among stakeholders as to the importance of posting school information. Several cases show that people do not only believe in the importance of posting information, but also appreciate the relevance of the posted information itself. The interviews align with these findings. A parent, for instance, said, ‘I’m interested in all of its content’. The national teachers’ association leader, meanwhile, struck a practical note: ‘Better than nothing.’

The question on usefulness of both government- or citizen-led initiatives likewise yielded high results. The vast majority (94.04 per cent) of parents felt SRC/TB were very useful while 94.74 per cent said the same about CMS. A similarly high proportion of teachers (96.55 per cent) considered SRC/TB very useful while 85.71 per cent said the same for CMS. Almost nine out of ten (88.89 per cent) community leaders said SRC/TB were very useful while 100 per cent said the same of CMS. None said they are not useful.

In terms of the responsiveness of each initiative’s data to need, the survey recorded the following range of responses:

- 0.86 per cent to 53.22 per cent for SRC/TB and 1.76 per cent to 48.82 per cent for CMS, among parents.
- 3.45 per cent to 58.62 per cent for SRC/TB and 3.57 per cent to 46.43 per cent for CMS, among teachers.
- 0 per cent to 55.56 per cent for SRC/TB and 0 per cent to 60 per cent for CMS, among community leaders.

For teachers, SRC/TB’s data on funding sources (58.62 per cent), repetition, drop-out, and promotion (44.83 per cent), and community involvement (44.83 per cent) are the most responsive to their needs, while CMS data on funding sources (44.63 per cent) and school facilities (46.43 per cent) are the most responsive to their needs.
SRC/TB data on school safety were most responsive to the needs of parents (53.22 per cent). School facilities, on the other hand, were the CMS data considered most responsive to need, according to 48.82 per cent of surveyed parents. Data on school funding sources, in both SRC/TB and CMS, reflect parents’ needs (41.63 and 40.59 per cent respectively).

Table 8. Comparison of SRC/TB and CMS in terms of responsiveness to needs, in percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Community leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SRC/TB CMS</td>
<td>SRC/TB CMS</td>
<td>SRC/TB CMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>36.05 25.88</td>
<td>41.38 42.86</td>
<td>22.22 20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student's socio-economic profile</td>
<td>7.73 9.41</td>
<td>13.79 17.86</td>
<td>0.00 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student attendance</td>
<td>35.19 25.29</td>
<td>17.24 17.86</td>
<td>11.11 40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition, drop-out, promotion</td>
<td>3.86 8.82</td>
<td>44.83 35.71</td>
<td>11.11 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
<td>24.03 25.88</td>
<td>17.24 25.00</td>
<td>22.22 40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' attendance</td>
<td>48.93 39.41</td>
<td>17.24 17.86</td>
<td>44.44 40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' qualification</td>
<td>34.76 27.06</td>
<td>13.79 14.29</td>
<td>55.56 60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding sources</td>
<td>41.63 40.59</td>
<td>58.62 46.43</td>
<td>44.44 20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School income</td>
<td>33.05 30.59</td>
<td>27.59 17.86</td>
<td>11.11 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income from school fees</td>
<td>9.44 8.24</td>
<td>10.34 21.43</td>
<td>33.33 40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School capital expenditure</td>
<td>28.33 33.53</td>
<td>31.03 14.29</td>
<td>0.00 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School facilities</td>
<td>34.33 48.82</td>
<td>41.38 46.43</td>
<td>55.56 60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School equipment</td>
<td>21.89 36.47</td>
<td>24.14 32.14</td>
<td>44.44 60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>31.33 35.88</td>
<td>24.14 21.43</td>
<td>11.11 20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students' test scores</td>
<td>12.88 8.82</td>
<td>6.90 17.86</td>
<td>0.00 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition rate to secondary</td>
<td>0.86 1.76</td>
<td>3.45 3.57</td>
<td>0.00 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School inspection</td>
<td>10.30 13.53</td>
<td>13.79 21.43</td>
<td>11.11 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community involvement</td>
<td>12.88 14.71</td>
<td>44.83 35.71</td>
<td>44.44 40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal satisfaction</td>
<td>17.60 17.06</td>
<td>24.14 14.29</td>
<td>0.00 20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School safety</td>
<td>53.22 48.24</td>
<td>24.14 35.71</td>
<td>0.00 0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among community leaders, 55.56 per cent chose SRC/TB data on teachers’ qualification and school facilities as the most responsive to their needs, while 60 per cent chose CMS data on teachers’ qualification, school facilities, and school equipment as most responsive.

While stakeholders generally consider SRC/TB and CMS information to be relevant, the interviews reveal that the reasons for this view differ widely.

DepEd management, from central to division level, see the relevance of SRC/TB information to policy, which they assume to be grounded in the needs of school stakeholders. As Undersecretary Mateo stated, policies should be consulted on with parents and community members as a matter of protocol. This protocol, however, was complied with only partly. School Effectiveness Division (SED) chief, Dexter Pante, noted that they have not directly consulted the parents on the identification of SRC data. ‘We just relied on the school head on what’s important for the parents,’ he said, ‘but we purposely identified school heads who have strong linkage with communities, hoping that they will also be able to articulate, based on their interaction with parents and community, their perceived
needs.’ Stakeholders’ responses to the SRC/TB data suggest that this indirect approach is working.

For the school heads, the interviews revealed that the relevance of SRC information is not so much a matter of interest, but, rather, of performance and reporting requirements. One described the relevance of SRC data in these terms: ‘So the monitoring team will know that school projects were implemented correctly.’ Another said: ‘So we can show where our funds go.’

For teachers’ association officials, the data are relevant in gauging the school’s performance and helping them fulfil their responsibility to inform the parents and the public about the school’s condition. As one teacher noted, ‘We look at the SRC first before we decide how many we can pass or fail. We need to pay attention to certain students to prevent high drop-out.’ Another respondent said the data enabled parents to ‘learn from teachers how public funds are used’.

For the PTA officers, the information is relevant because ‘we want to know the status of the school: is it improving, are our children studying well and safe, are we following standards?’, as one PTA official put it. The point was illustrated further in this way: ‘My children are in Grades 11 and 10 right now. I know how many rooms are available. Actually, next year, no rooms are available for Grade 12 and there are not enough chairs. As a parent, I look at that as an issue of need. Some may consider transferring their children to another school because of that situation. The others, because they are PTA presidents, will look into a possible solution.’

Parents are particularly keen on finances when they contribute or raise funds for the school. In addition, parents want to learn about the ‘teachers’ behaviour’ because it has impact on their children’s well-being.

Student leaders, meanwhile, see the relevance of information in terms of their aspiration to help ‘raise awareness’ and ‘make issues and problems visible’. They are concerned about complaints of bullying, computation of grades, use of school budgets, and improvements in school facilities. One said: ‘Our parents do not always visit us in school. We must be able to inform them in case they ask about the situation of our school.’

For civil society, the relevance of the information is seen through the lens of its advocacy agenda. For the media, it is all about publishable materials, the data that can be turned into stories. These are usually the aggregated data that have implications on policy.

While they had no knowledge of the SRC or TB, two of the three local chief executives interviewed appreciated the public sharing of any school information because education is at the top of their priority list. They put a premium on opportunities to be informed about the situation of schools in their areas and to help in addressing their problems.

Overall, given the varied uses stakeholders identify for accessing different information, it is more likely that the relevance of the information provided by open data initiatives will be accepted. However, stakeholders differ widely as to their reasons for thinking a particular type of information is relevant.

### 4.2 Accessibility of information

The survey of parents, teachers, and community leaders registered a relatively high level of awareness of the initiatives.

Across all three groups, there is higher awareness of SRC/TB than of CMS (parents: 98.75 per cent vs. 72.61 per cent; teachers: 100 per cent vs. 96.55 per cent; community leaders: 100 per cent vs. 55.56 per cent). Parents are more aware of SRC/TB than of CMS. All teachers interviewed, except for one, said they were aware of both CMS and SRC/TB. All nine community leaders were aware of the SRC/TB. A little more than half the community leaders were aware of CMS. This is to be expected, given the onsite presence of SRC/TB,
particularly the Transparency Board. In the interviews, there are notably more cases of stakeholders recognizing the Transparency Board but not the SRC. The two government-led initiatives, however, were bundled together (even in the survey) since the information in the TB is also incorporated in SRC and the SRC may also be displayed in the TB.

**Figure 12. Percentage of stakeholders who are aware of STC/TB and CMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Community leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>120%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Check My School website: www.checkmyschool.org

Among student leaders from the National Capital Region (NCR) and Guimaras who were interviewed, awareness of the initiatives was relatively low. One student leader admitted, ‘I’m not aware of SRC.’ Another noted, ‘We see the Transparency Board somewhere on the side, but we do not really understand what it is.’ One NCR-based student leader was aware of CMS because of his mother’s involvement in it. He noted, ‘I have prior knowledge of CMS. My mother, as part of PTA Board, got involved in it when I was in elementary school. It’s not visible anymore now that I’m in high school.’

### 4.3 Awareness among school-based and out-of-school stakeholders

Consistent with the survey, the interviews confirmed that school-based stakeholders are more aware of the SRC/TB than other out-of-school stakeholders.

Interviewees from LGUs, a national civil society organization, the national PTA, and the media, however, said that they are not well-informed about these two government-led open data initiatives in schools. They are more likely to have heard about the Transparency Board than the School Report Card. The school data may be too specific in nature for stakeholders with supposedly broader issues to address. A municipal mayor, for instance, admitted, ‘I haven’t heard of school Transparency Board and School Report Card. They haven’t been brought up in [local] school board meetings.’

Out-of-school stakeholders appear to have more knowledge of CMS than of SRC/TB, except for the media interviewee who had not heard of either the government-led or citizen-led initiatives. The networking and partnership-building strategy of CMS brought it to the attention of higher-level stakeholders, particularly the local government officials and national civil society groups, though familiarity with details varies. SRC/TB may turn out to be one of those initiatives that fail to become known in the wider community outside school.

Note, however, that for school-based stakeholders, particularly parents, the Transparency Board is more readily recognized than the SRC. Many know about the information and
mechanics of SRC without knowing that it is formally called SRC. Parent Janet Aleman remarked, ‘I have heard of SRC, but I’m not so sure. I’m confused about the terminology … they use. I think of students’ grades when I hear of report cards.’

4.4 Presentation and dissemination

The ease of understanding the presentation of data is rated similarly for CMS and SRC/TB among parents (94.08 per cent vs. 93.28 per cent) and teachers (96.43 per cent vs. 96.44 per cent), but community leaders (100 per cent vs. 77.78 per cent) find CMS easier to understand.

Figure 13. Presentation of data is easy to understand

Source: Check My School website: www.checkmyschool.org

The slightly better rating for the presentation and dissemination of CMS data may owe something to the involvement of community volunteers, information-users themselves, in their preparation. The volunteers can simplify school information and present it according to their understanding and the purpose they want it to serve. A CMS volunteer said, ‘Sometimes, we can’t understand their record in the school. We ask for explanation before we put it in the report.’

Regarding the dissemination of data, the SRC and TB have either a slightly higher or an equal level of appropriateness and efficiency as CMS. Parents registered at 96.55 per cent vs. 92.4 per cent; community leaders, 88.89 per cent vs. 80 per cent, and teachers at 96.43 per cent for both.

Interviews revealed that school heads are concerned about the reception of SRC/TB among stakeholders. A remark from a principal encapsulates this concern: ‘I’m not happy when people do not read it. I want to make it attractive and welcoming, such that even the banana and corn vendors will know about school affairs. We want it to become appealing and understandable regardless of the educational status of people.’

The DepEd central office is likewise concerned about the quality of the SRC as a communication tool. Dexter Pante said, ‘I haven’t seen the quality dimension yet [that is,] if the SRC is reader-friendly … if it is presented in a nice way, with good layout. I have seen many school report cards that are messy. It’s not helpful. It defeats the purpose of communication.’
**Figure 14.** Dissemination of school data is appropriate and efficient, in percentages

![Bar chart showing dissemination of school data among community leaders, teachers, and parents.]

Source: Check My School website: www.checkmyschool.org.

**Medium of access**

School meetings are the most common medium of accessing school information across all stakeholders (parents: 94.54 per cent for SRC/TB and 89.02 per cent for CMS; teachers: 89.66 per cent for both SRC/TB and CMS; community leaders: 88.89 per cent for SRC/TB and 100 per cent for CMS). Published reports also serve as a common source of information, along with postings in the school boards. Websites are still not widely used, registering only up to 10 per cent among teachers and less than 1 per cent among parents.

**Figure 15.** Ways of accessing school data among various stakeholders, in percentages

![Bar chart showing ways of accessing school data among parents, teachers, and community leaders.]

Source: Check My School website: www.checkmyschool.org.

The interviews validated the survey finding on the importance of discussion as a way of accessing information. There are various references to periodic meetings, such as assembly meetings, general assemblies, General Parent Teacher Association (GPTA) conferences, and state-of-the-school addresses, from different stakeholders. A student leader, however, commented: ‘We do not attend the school assembly. It’s only for parents.’ It is worth considering how students can be given special opportunities to join the conversation about SRC information.
Timing

For both SRC/TB and CMS, data were mostly accessed by parents at the beginning of the school year or, at least, prior to the start of the first grading period. Only 10 per cent of parents access the data of both initiatives at the end of the school year. Eight in 10 teachers interviewed access the data from both SRC/TB and CMS in the early part of the school year. Community leaders access data from both initiatives at almost any time of the year.

Figure 16. Period of access to open school data among various stakeholders

[Graph showing access periods for parents, teachers, and community leaders for SRC/TB and CMS]

Source: Check My School website: www.checkmyschool.org

In summary, the combined survey and interview data showed that school-level stakeholders have a different kind of awareness of open school data initiatives than out-of-school stakeholders. They find the presentation and dissemination of information acceptable, with only a slight preference given from time to time to either the government- or citizen-led initiative. Data are primarily accessed by the proactive provision of school meetings. Students, however, do not enjoy the same opportunities. The study also found that access to information is most prevalent at the start of school year.

4.5 Usability of information

While both SRC/TB and CMS were regarded in the survey as useful, with 94 per cent of parents rating both initiatives very useful, their actual usability is another matter. Across three school-level groups of parents, teachers, and community leaders, CMS consistently scored higher than SRC/TB for usability, the view of a single teacher excepted. The views on usability are derived from answers to questions about data:

- influencing parent's choice of school;
- revealing misuse of resources;
- revealing issues of ghost teachers;
- revealing issues of teacher absenteeism;
- revealing issues of misuse of school facilities;
- revealing issues of misuse of school equipment;
- revealing issues of misuse of textbooks;
- revealing issues of low quality of teaching/learning.

Nine out of 10 (91 per cent) parents reported that CMS data had influenced their selection of school compared with 88.14 per cent influenced by SRC/TB data. According to 96.55 per cent of teachers, the SRC/TB most influenced parents’ decision while 92.86 per cent attributed this to CMS.
Parents would be more likely to use CMS to reveal misuse of school facilities than SRC/TB, at 81.98 per cent vs. 71.49 per cent. The same applies to the misuse of equipment, 80.35 per cent vs. 69.36 per cent; misuse of textbooks, 80.81 per cent vs. 73.19 per cent; and misuse of resources, 80.35 per cent vs. 74.58 per cent. The view of teachers are similar but show a slightly but smaller difference. Community leaders significantly favour CMS over SRC/TB in terms of usability, with a difference of 80 per cent vs. 33 per cent in several cases.

**Figure 17. Comparison of SRC/TB and CMS in terms of stakeholders’ opinion on the usability of the initiative**

The stakeholders’ interview insights are consistent with the survey results and provide the proper context for them. The higher usability rating of CMS over SRC/TB confirms its accountability bias, which it pursues through public participation. DepEd’s SRC, on the other hand, is supposed to follow only the transparency track and is intended mainly for communication. DepEd management, represented here by Undersecretary Mateo and SED chief Pante, is very clear about this policy. Undersecretary Mateo emphasized that DepEd policy on SRC is informed by its understanding of the bureaucracy. He said:

> In every reform, you can’t make a drastic shift or change because it affects certain actions or behaviours. You have to take into account the context within which that reform could be effectively implemented. SRC was first designed as information rather than accountability because you have to look at the entire structure… A policy might be good for its intended purpose, but there could be unintended consequence.

Mr Pante elaborated on that issue of unintended consequences:

> In our official communication, the messaging really is that SRC is for communication, but the policy could serve a secondary purpose [of accountability]. We didn’t articulate that in policy. We expected that as a potential outcome of the School Report Card. Once schools become comfortable with opening up to the stakeholders, when they become comfortable sharing their data, then later on the secondary purpose of promotion of...
accountability [will be served]. That’s why we present the SRC as a developmental tool. It may soon be calibrated as a tool for accountability. But, for the short term, because our school heads are not yet comfortable with the concept, we have to introduce it in a subtle way.

Despite the limited purpose intended for the SRC and TB, stakeholders nevertheless still managed to see their use for accountability, as the survey and interviews showed. The school heads said they were able to directly and openly confront issues of corruption in the use of resources, especially MOOE, and in project implementation. Teachers and PTAs used the data to inquire about or receive updates on the use of school funds and certain projects. PTAs have augmented the school’s resources based on evidence of need.

For many stakeholders, the bottom line concerning the usability of the SRC/TB information is the increased level of trust in the school leadership. It becomes the antidote to the usual doubts about the capacity and integrity of school administrators. So, while DepEd does not expect the SRC/TB to lead to accountability, the stakeholders have taken it upon themselves to make it happen, intentionally or unintentionally.

Local stakeholders, on the other hand, speak of usability of information in CMS in a more dynamic language.

**Box 12. Usability of information in CMS as reported by local stakeholders**

- **Principal:** ‘If there’s discrepancy or substandard work, CMS reports it. If it’s given to concerned offices, it will definitely receive proper action.’
- **Teacher:** ‘The school’s needs are addressed by CMS. Repairs, for example. It may already be scheduled, but they help follow up.’
- **PTA:** ‘They check if the project has been completed. If they find out that it was not completed, they will move to ensure completion.’
- **Student leader:** ‘They help to raise our needs to authorities. CheckMySchool sends information to DepEd.’
- **Municipal Mayor:** ‘When I first encountered CheckMySchool last year, that’s when I discovered that many schools still need assistance. Since education is my first priority, I acted immediately.’

The accounts of CMS use of information have been mainly for engagement, feedback, and monitoring. Note the constant reference to CMS as an intermediary entity doing follow-up, monitoring, raising the needs to authorities, etc. Their civil society volunteers do things on behalf of the parents, teachers, students, and other concerned stakeholders, unless the volunteers are themselves parents or school-based stakeholders. This raises the question of what roles were actually played by the stakeholders in the use of information for transparency and accountability if the volunteers were civil society representatives. The other important question is to what extent these stakeholders have been empowered in the process.

Punishment for violations has also not figured clearly in the CMS accountability activity. Its pursuit of accountability has not resulted in sanctions for failure to disclose information. Instead, its work prioritizes positive consequences of sharing information, particularly the generation of solutions to poor quality of services. It could be driven by the framework of constructive engagement or by culture. The stakeholders tend to avoid risky confrontation, shaming, or legal administrative cases in order to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships. This approach could be a beneficial model in the use of information.

This is perhaps the same situation that DepEd management is anticipating when it speaks of calibrating the SRC from being a communication tool first. It is not only an operational or logistical matter (as Undersecretary Mateo pointed out), but a socio-cultural one. To reiterate, the sensitive relationship and dynamics between and among different school
stakeholders received higher consideration. The anti-corruption laws hardly figure in the use of SRC/TB and CMS because they can create a negative atmosphere of tension and distrust, which could render these initiatives useless rather than strengthening them.

Table 9. Summary data on usefulness of information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Info relevance</th>
<th>Info accessibility</th>
<th>Info usability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DepEd management</td>
<td>Consulted with ground-level stakeholders based on policy protocols.</td>
<td>Concerned about quality of SRC/TB, i.e. whether it is user- friendly.</td>
<td>Policy-calibrated use of information from communication to accountability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School head</td>
<td>For performance and office reporting requirement.</td>
<td>Concerned if stakeholders access data.</td>
<td>SRC/TB help to openly confront corruption issues and enhance stakeholders’ trust. Reporting issues through CMS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>For performance analysis and performing responsibility to inform stakeholders.</td>
<td>Prepare SRC/TB. Meet with principal to discuss information.</td>
<td>SRC/TB and CMS influence parents’ selection of school and reveal misuses. CMS helps follow up issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>For awareness of school conditions and identification of ways to help.</td>
<td>More aware of TB than SRC. Attend meetings to get information.</td>
<td>SRC/TB and CMS influence parents’ selection of school and reveal misuses. CMS monitors projects to completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>For their aspiration to raise awareness about the school conditions and school issues; to inform parents.</td>
<td>Not so familiar with SRC/TB. Not invited in assembly meetings to discuss school information.</td>
<td>CMS sends/raises issues with authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community members/civil society</td>
<td>For advocacy agenda.</td>
<td>Collected information is simplified. Meet with school officials to clarify information.</td>
<td>Help school address issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local chief executives</td>
<td>As input to local government programme on education.</td>
<td>SRC and TB data are not brought up in board meetings. CMS data were presented to meeting with the Mayor.</td>
<td>Additional information to help identify solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>As material for publishable stories.</td>
<td>Has not accessed SRC/TB.</td>
<td>As material for publishable stories.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Short-term impact

The discussion on usability indicates that information makes an impact not only because of the information itself, but because stakeholders take action based on it. The survey revealed that the SRC/TB and CMS prompted them to take action and the interviews provided some details of how the actions translated into results that made an impact, which may be short-term or long-term.

More than half of the teachers (55.17 per cent) indicated that they had taken action because of SRC/TB and 42 per cent because of CMS.
**Figure 18. Percentage of stakeholders who undertook action following the publication of school data**

![Bar chart showing percentage of stakeholders who undertook action following the publication of school data.]

*Source: Check My School website: www.checkmyschool.org*

**Table 10. Actions undertaken by stakeholders who acted on the posted data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Parents SRC/TB</th>
<th>Parents CMS</th>
<th>Teachers SRC/TB</th>
<th>Teachers CMS</th>
<th>Community leaders SRC/TB</th>
<th>Community leaders CMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pressure on education/school authorities to increase funding</td>
<td>23.21</td>
<td>31.37</td>
<td>43.75</td>
<td>41.67</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure on education/school authorities to reduce fund leakage</td>
<td>19.64</td>
<td>17.65</td>
<td>31.25</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure on education/school authorities to make better use of funds</td>
<td>33.93</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>68.75</td>
<td>66.67</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure on education/school authorities to increase number of teachers</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure on education/school authorities to increase the qualification of teachers</td>
<td>21.43</td>
<td>19.61</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure on education/school authorities to eradicate 'ghost' teachers</td>
<td>10.71</td>
<td>11.76</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure on education/school authorities to reduce teacher absenteeism</td>
<td>19.64</td>
<td>19.61</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure on education/school authorities to reduce corruption in purchase and use of school facilities</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>37.25</td>
<td>43.75</td>
<td>41.67</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure on education/school authorities to reduce corruption in purchase and use of school equipment</td>
<td>8.93</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>31.25</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure on education/school authorities to reduce corruption in purchase and use of textbooks</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>15.69</td>
<td>18.75</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure on teachers to improve education quality</td>
<td>32.14</td>
<td>37.25</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For both SRC/TB and CMS, the teachers’ actions took the form of pressuring education/school authorities to make better use of funds (68.75 per cent and 66.67 per cent, respectively), pressuring authorities to reduce corruption in the purchase and use of facilities (43.75 per cent and 41.67 per cent), pressuring authorities to increase funding (43.75 per cent and 41.67 per cent), and pressuring authorities to improve education quality (37.5 per cent and 33.33 per cent). One-third of the teachers also reported actions to pressure authorities to reduce fund leakage, and to reduce corruption in the purchase and use of school equipment and textbooks.

The parents also acted on the information, but to a lesser extent than the teachers. Almost a quarter (23.63 per cent) of parents said they took action on SRC/TB information while 29.31 per cent did on CMS. Based on SRC information, the parents’ actions included pressuring authorities to make better use of funds (33.93 per cent), improving education quality (32.14 per cent), and reducing corruption in the purchase and use of facilities (28.75 per cent). Prompted by CMS information, the parents said they acted to reduce corruption in the purchase and use of facilities (37.25 per cent), improve education quality (37.25 per cent), and make better use of funds (33.33 per cent).

Fewer community leaders took action. Only 11.11 per cent acted on SRC/TB information and 20 per cent on CMS. The actions on SRC/TB data included pressuring authorities to increase funding and reducing fund leakage. The actions on CMS data included pressuring authorities to reduce fund leakage, make better use of funds, and reduce teacher absenteeism.

According to the interviews, stakeholders’ use of SRC/TB and CMS as open data mechanisms made short-term impact mainly on management and funding. A special impact on improving school credentials was also cited based on the achievement on the level of school-based management level of accreditation. No impact on pedagogy was mentioned during the interviews, though in the survey teachers and parents cited actions to pressure authorities to improve education quality. Notably, student leaders from both NCR and Guimaras were silent about any short-term impact.

**Management-related short-term impact**

The management-related short-term impact can be inferred from the following accounts.

A principal remarked that the Transparency Board helped him as a school administrator build a trusting relationship with his stakeholders: ‘Based on my experience, trust is linked with the integrity of the school and principal. When they see the school practising real transparency and honesty, problems are arrested. When there’s conflict, I discuss it in meetings. Whatever issues and concerns they want to raise, they just need to go to my office. They should inquire. We are open.’

The teachers spoke of the regularity in updating information on school resources through the Transparency Board and School Report Card. An elementary school teacher said, ‘We’re updated on where money is used.’ A secondary school teacher added, ‘If there is inventory, we get to know the whereabouts of equipment. Electric fan, for example. At the end of the school year, all classroom equipment is accounted for.’

The initiatives are said to have made school officials more responsible in the actual use of school resources. Another secondary school teacher pointed out, ‘We became more conscious because we are being checked. We managed the resources better based on needs, pursued the right strategy, and improved governance of resources. If you don’t do that, their collected data will show it.’

PTA presidents cited TB as a means of ensuring proper use of assistance. A PTA officer from a rural area, who happens also to work for the village council, said, ‘School officials request assistance from the village council. And the village council provides that counterpart to them. The Transparency Board tells us if the financial support is used properly.’
Another PTA officer observed: ‘In school renovations, we get to see actual work. No corruption happens because we see how payments are made and how much. Corruption is prevented.’

For Mayor Galila, the school management’s acceptance of the idea of open data is itself an important impact. He said:

Some people react to the conduct of inspection and data-gathering of CheckMySchool. Some of them are from big schools. They see it as interference. How can right information reach the officials if you’re withholding a portion of the information? In my town, I encourage it. I have announced it during the meeting with all the school heads. We should be transparent. I told them I allow CheckMySchool to conduct inspection and gather data in all schools. Since then, resistance has been minimal.

Finally, the CMS volunteer coordinator shared an interestingly unique short-term impact boosting of the school-based management credentials: ‘We eventually discovered that if they [schools] have good records, good standing, and positive reception of CheckMySchool, they get additional points in SBM. They can include our involvement in SIP.’

Fuelled aspiration for awards and recognition for improved management performance is considered an impact because it indicates consciousness of and drive towards enhanced standards of service. It also reinforces the value of transparency, accountability, and citizen participation providing an incentive rather than a burdensome obligation. It makes an impact on the school because additional points are earned, but also on the school managers themselves because it represents a favourable perspective and attitude towards SRC initiatives.

Funding-related short-term impact

The following accounts illustrate funding-related short-term impact.

A high-school teacher praised CMS for generating additional funds from LGU. She recalled, ‘The school received assistance in securing funds or get answers to school requests. They [CMS] helped schools in following up LGU or other organizations in soliciting support.’

The CMS volunteer coordinator reported a number of cases when they had helped secure budgets for certain schools after the monitoring finding was submitted to authorities. She recalled, ‘Like what happened in Bugnay Elementary School, it really took so long. The last principal’s term had almost ended when the school building started. “Good you [CMS] were there,” said the last teacher-in-charge. “If not for your help, we won’t get any allocated budget.” Instead of one classroom, we got two approved. It was a big deal.’

She highlighted other, similar results, ‘Someone said, “Look at all our school problems, they’re gone”. The ceiling that was about to fall has received budget for repair and been fixed. The provincial government has improved our source of water through WATSAN [water and sanitation programme]. With these, the school realized how helpful CheckMySchool has been.’

4.7 Long-term impact

The interviews revealed that stakeholders’ use of SRC/TB and CMS as open data mechanisms made most long-term impact in establishing clarified responsibilities and empowering communities. Other long-term impacts cited were recognition of stakeholder engagement, change in political consciousness, and mainstreaming of multi-stakeholder engagement in school-based management. Student leaders from both NCR and Guimaras likewise recognized the long-term impact of the open data initiatives.
Establishing clarified responsibilities

On establishing clarified responsibilities, the following accounts are worth citing:

The national teachers’ union leader described the effect of the Transparency Board on teachers’ perception of their right and responsibility to be informed:

Before, the teachers didn’t have an idea. No teacher would dare question where the school’s MOOE was spent. She wouldn’t ask. She’s afraid of the principal. But, then, if the law says that the school principal or school head should post her expenses on the Transparency Board, she should follow that. Well, the teachers still may not dare ask, because that’s the prevailing culture, but at least she knows now and doesn’t need to ask.

Some teachers do ask, know whom to ask, and share with others their knowledge of how the system works. One teacher said: ‘If you’re not convinced of the information in the Transparency Board, you can go to the disbursing officer to get clarification.’ Schools that can afford it can employ a disbursing officer to take care of financial bookkeeping. As well as the school head, this officer can set an example for transparency and accountability if her office is open and accessible to school stakeholders’ inquiry and even scrutiny.

There is also direct attribution of stakeholders’ formal responsibility in crucial decision-making processes to SRC. A PTA president said, ‘We in the PTA contribute in the preparation of the SIP. We are called to give suggestions. It’s a requirement and we sign on it. I don’t want to sign without understanding what I’m signing.’

This was echoed by the national teachers’ union leader, ‘We have [the] school improvement plan. We have [the] annual procurement plan. Our members join the committee that prepares them. We are a signatory to that.’

Stakeholders’ experience of SRC/TB and CMS helped clarify the delineation of roles and responsibilities among government and non-government actors. Accounts below illustrate this delineation of roles.

The superintendent of Guimaras division remarked:

I was telling the principals, ‘You are the principal. If the PTA is not performing well in your school, you are a lousy principal.’ In the same manner, if you’re a PTA president and you’re not performing as PTA president – your job is only to collect [contributions] – then you’re a lousy PTA president. Why should you exist as a PTA when your job is only depending on the amount collected from the PTA? There are many responsibilities of the PTA. It has to be there as an organization, to assist the school in whatever manner. To raise funds, but not relying only on the collection of fees. They’re a support structure. There is no check and balance if there’s no one to check on us.

The PTAs’ ability to check depends on the information the school authorities make available to them.

An NCR student leader observed:

CheckMySchool is proactive. It provides check and balance. It counter-checks the school’s performance. There is SRC, on the one hand, and CheckMySchool, on the other. One from the government and the other from an NGO, which enhances it. CheckMySchool makes it a complete package to make the school more proactive in finding solutions.

A student leader emphasized the key role school authorities played in identifying solutions. He said, ‘Through CheckMySchool, the school authorities are urged to solve malpractices because these malpractices become visible to stakeholders.’

The PTA presidents emphasized the third-party impartiality of CMS, which gave them an unbiased view of school management. One said, ‘There’s SRC and Transparency Board, but it’s different when there’s a third-party mechanism as it validates the actual needs. It can give recommendations. That’s not easily seen. If you’re always here in the school, your familiarity can affect your view.’

A working mother serving as a PTA official added: ‘It’s better if [an] outsider gets to check the school. If only parents will check, we may not see because we have other work to do.'
It’s better to have more eyes.’ She saw how ‘our problems were raised and our needs seen in a better light, and the offices that can solve them identified’.

For one mayor, exposure to CMS changed his attitude towards his role as a local chief executive trying to understand a priority programme, such as education. He reflected:

I talked to other mayors. I won’t mention their names anymore. They are passive toward NGOs, but they know I’m supportive. I want to know the schools’ problems through CheckMySchool. That’s because the school heads do not always open up. They only ask for assistance … They only see us [mayors] as provider. We don’t get to know the problems and what options there are to solve them or what they have done already. They can tell me, ‘You may help in this aspect’. They can share the responsibility with me and I can feel that I’m part of the solution. I can suggest.

**Empowerment of communities**

Claims of impact on the empowerment of communities include breeding a culture of inquiry as a basis for empowerment. A teacher association president said, ‘As an association, we are after the students’ welfare. We want to know their concerns. Do they have chairs, tables, materials, facilities, books? Is there anything that we can do if they don’t have these? We can inquire about resources to provide those services.’

Direct experience of involvement, especially for students, is empowering. In this case, it is not so much the result that matters, but the process. A student leader observed, ‘Last year, we joined the meeting to solve the problems. There were many problems. We checked the damaged facilities in the classroom. We had a checklist. We reported the findings to the principal. We then met to discuss ways to solve the problems. We also helped work on programmes for the students.’

Partnership has also been empowering, as when stakeholders turn to CMS to act as a bridge between them and the school authorities. Another teacher association president said: ‘CMS does the follow-ups. If we have problems with the principal, CheckMySchool helps.’

An NCR student leader spoke of breaking the barriers of old practice, ‘Never did it occur to us that the school can become transparent. The traditional practice has always prevailed. Now we realized the supreme student government should also have access to information, and we should share it with our fellow students.’

The national teachers’ union leader emphasized the opportunities for speaking out, ‘Our teachers always speak out. Politically, their empowerment manifests even in canteen management… We are part of the audit team of the canteen funds. We’re part of the grievance committee. Even in the school governing council. These are manifestations that the system recognizes our teachers.’ He noted the maturing attitude towards cooperation, ‘Nowadays, there is recognition; in all fairness to the Department of Education, which started since the introduction of the law, RA 9155, Governance of Basic Education Act of 2002. There is recognition that the school head should cooperate with the civil society and community.’

The SRC experience prompted some parent groups to launch their own initiatives as they reflect on their own ability to empower themselves.

A PTA president commented, ‘Our intention in the assembly meeting is not only to provide the status of the association or update from the principal. We include a values-formation programme and information on school-related ordinances. We invite speakers. At the end of the day, the parents do not only listen to school updates. They also learn something on values formation.’

Another PTA president noted: ‘We conduct training to make us aware of the school’s and our responsibilities as PTA officials. We have our own Transparency Board.’ The PTA’s
Transparency Board presents copies of financial reports, board resolutions, and other important information on the operations of the PTA. Needless to say, it shows how the school’s TB has influenced the PTA community’s way of doing things. The adopted practice transcends the usual one-way, inward direction of empowerment. It marks a clear case of self-empowerment that also encompasses the empowerment of others. Another PTA president added, ‘According to CheckMySchool, we should be transparent to clearly see the situation. Parents will truly know if they will not only look, but [also] read, study, and pursue action on the information.’

The national teachers’ union leader made an important observation on what civil society stakeholders can do:

If civil society sticks to donating, it’s nothing; you were only used to cover up the government’s shortcomings. We can say that PTA’s presence is similar to that. Some of them can monitor, but they’re not yet assertive. We have a PTA in Pasay City which is going against the principal, but it’s only one. DepEd is not paying much attention to it, despite the clamour. I’m not saying that we pin down the principal, but that they give sufficient attention.

Interestingly, the idea of political empowerment through freedom of information came from one of the students. An NCR student leader pointed out, ‘If there’s [freedom of information] in the whole country, school transparency in schools will change the belief that corruption starts in politics. Through transparency and the authorities’ report on received funds, corruption is prevented. They tell the truth. They don’t lose the constituents’ trust because of their truthfulness.’

Undersecretary Mateo summarized the whole experience of empowerment in the context of school-based management, indicating progress in mainstreaming the ideas of multi-stakeholder engagement in school governance. He remarked:

The principals can be influenced. The parents became aware of that when SBM started. But it’s a long journey. When we started that, the perspective of our school head is that this is our kingdom, nobody can touch it. They initially shunned the idea of engaging stakeholders. Since there is a policy on SBM, they have no option but to engage, and because it is useful in coming up with the school improvement plan. But we have to face the reality that it’s not that simple. Each SBM implementation is unique. Somehow, it’s really dictated by stakeholders. Some stakeholders were able to operate on equal footing with the school authorities.

The impact of empowerment is evident when political leaders themselves start articulating it. A mayor’s support for open data initiatives is captured in this statement, which emphasizes the significance of parents’ involvement: ‘Our constituents need to understand people’s participation. We should activate PTAs for it at the school level. The parents can show concern for the schools when they care to be informed about the children’s needs.’
In summary, stakeholders’ actions emanating from the use of SRC/TB and CMS indicate both short-term and long-term impacts. These were manifested in the condition of school services, the school management system, school officials, local government officials, and the individual school and community stakeholders themselves. The survey suggested that the teachers were the most aggressive action-takers (at a high of 55 per cent), and their personal accounts appear to show that SRC initiatives had the most impact on them in terms of their interface with the authority of the principal, the interests of the stakeholders, and the school system itself. Being equipped with monitoring tools and being able to sign off on certain decisions, such as through SIP, AIP, and even procurements, strengthened their position. It would be interesting to find out how teachers view SRC as a means of assessing their own accountabilities and performance of duties.

The parents described more moderate actions, according to the survey (at most 29 per cent), and tended to rely on the organized PTAs or other sectors that can help them, such as teachers and third-party monitors of CMS. The SRCs, nevertheless, had some empowering effects on them, as shown in their initiating their own Transparency Boards and capacity enhancements.

The reported short-term impact on most stakeholders in terms of better management and augmented resources for the school, particularly from the principal and the local chief executive, indicates the practical usefulness of SRC. The longer-term impact in terms of clarified responsibilities and community empowerment, reported by most stakeholders, including the students and parents, indicates its transformative value.

The impact of SRC initiatives goes far beyond making people better informed, though this wider impact is perhaps less visible since it is often not fully documented, shared, or disseminated. The wider actions triggered by SRC information, though still limited, have nevertheless challenged the status quo, inspired self-reflection, and are slowly creating ripples outside the school.

The short- and long-term impact of open data, as perceived by various stakeholders, is summarized under Table 11.

### Table 11. Summary of the impact of open data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Short-term impact</th>
<th>Long-term impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DepEd management</td>
<td>Better management</td>
<td>Tested effectiveness of policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School heads</td>
<td>Better management (higher trust of management)</td>
<td>Empowered communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Better management (role in school decisions; additional resources)</td>
<td>Established responsibilities; empowered communities; recognition of stakeholder engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Better management (better-managed projects; additional resources)</td>
<td>Established responsibilities; empowered communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Established responsibilities; empowered communities; political consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community/civil society</td>
<td>Better management; additional resources; favourable SBM assessment</td>
<td>Established responsibilities; empowered communities; mainstreaming of stakeholder engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local chief executives</td>
<td>Better management</td>
<td>Established responsibilities; empowered communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Conditions of success, limits, and strategies for improvement

This section presents stakeholders’ perspectives on the conditions for the effective use of SRC, the limits and risks, and the strategies for improving it.

5.1 Conditions of success

The stakeholders cited various factors that determine the effectiveness of open data initiatives.

1. For DepEd management, the SRC/TB requires ‘calibrated’ implementation. Its policy objective may be confined to information and communication, but it is providing necessary preparatory steps to its acceptance as an accountability mechanism. As Undersecretary Mateo noted, given the size of DepEd bureaucracy they have to ‘give [stakeholders] some time to embrace it’. As the survey and interviews showed, this approach has worked in establishing almost universal interest in information among all school-based stakeholders. While usefulness varied from one type of information to another, no type of information was considered not useful and no one objected to the public sharing of relevant information. This atmosphere of adjusting to the opening up of information is paving the way for demand to emerge naturally. It is also creating a certain demand, not only among parents and students but also among principals, for better ways to present and disseminate the information. In the process, DepEd is able to gauge stakeholders’ level of comfort in sharing information and opening up the system to public scrutiny. This calibration helped to lessen resistance and instead brought out the real interest of stakeholders.

Part of this calibration is the balancing of stakeholders’ interests in the initiatives. DepEd has continuously taken the pulse, so to speak, of the bureaucracy while it also listened to other stakeholders through consultations and assessments to inform evidence-based policy decisions. Its grounded grasp of the behaviour of the bureaucracy kept it from impulsive moves that could have turned the principals against the initiatives or unnecessarily pitted them against the parents and teachers. The introduction of SRC as an information and communication tool attended to the growing, albeit often discreet, call for transparency from the school community, without antagonizing or threatening the principal’s leadership and authority.

2. The appropriate administrative condition for implementing the SRC initiatives also contributed to its effectiveness. DepEd did not design its SRC as a stand-alone mechanism. It is linked with the overall planning mechanism at school level. This provided a clear context for the information provided in both the SRC and the TB. The stakeholders’ participation in school improvement planning activity informs them of what to watch out for when the information comes out in the SRC or TB, especially when they are called to a meeting to discuss school issues. The SRC information likewise serves as parents’ reference point for inputs in the next school planning activity.

To a certain extent, SRC and TB are complementary. SRC data is posted in TB and TB information is part of SRC. Though not explicitly designed in that way, that is, nevertheless, how many schools saw it, indicating the integrated view of these initiatives.

Reinforcing this SIP-SRC link is the division office’s oversight function. Despite the absence of incentives and the almost complete absence of consequences for non-compliance, the division office’s diligent monitoring has been crucial in
ensuring the implementation of the initiatives. This oversight function, however, was characterized by guidance and prodding, rather than seeking compliance or disciplining non-compliance. The Guimaras superintendent, for instance, would remind principals of the value of transparency in this way: ‘When the community members are involved in school affairs, when they know where funds go, they are more inspired to support the schools. Trust is high in beautiful schools. When a school has good physical facilities, the students and teachers have high confidence. Support from PTA and external stakeholders is likewise high. But for inferior schools, where the community is not engaged, they look awful.’

This kind of mission-based message had a longer-term impact than those threatening principals with sanctions for non-compliance.

3. For the school heads, the effectiveness of the SRC/TB and, to a certain extent, CMS, was anchored in ‘leadership by example’, the level of trust in the leadership, and the stakeholders’ capacity to handle information. The willingness to open up and share information started with the school authority or the principal’s leadership. It set the initiatives in motion as well as ensuring their continuation. But more than this, the principal’s leadership by example lent credibility to the initiatives. Some stakeholders, particularly PTA officers, could have been sceptical of SRC and TB and considered them ‘mere decorations’, especially when they do not trust the principal. But school heads exemplifying the principles behind SRC/TB and demonstrating them in practice convinced stakeholders of their sincerity, and, as a result, they secured credibility for the SRC/TB mechanisms.

4. The school heads also considered the capacity of stakeholders to understand and analyse the information a requirement for the successful application of the SRC mechanisms. It is worth noting that only the school heads articulated this condition. This explains why some principals, notably one from a school in a rural area, insisted that certain information should be available only on a per-request basis. They acted as gate-keepers and, in stricter cases, controllers of school information, and wanted the people who accessed it to have the right capacities and to be responsible enough to handle it. They were cautious and more concerned with the implications of possible misuse or misrepresentation of information, including on the school’s financial situation, as a result of low capacity.

Contrast this with some principals who made an effort to simplify the presentation of information to accommodate people with low education. This was observed by a principal from a school in a relatively urban setting. Interestingly, the survey of parents, disaggregated by levels of education (primary, secondary, and tertiary), did not show significant differences in terms of the importance attached to open data, awareness of the initiatives, perception of the usefulness of information, and ease of understanding the presentation of data in both SRC/TB and CMS. Educational capacity, in other words, did not matter when it came to understanding the interests and behaviour of stakeholders with respect to open data. The interviews attested to parents’ high interest in school data. As noted, there was significant interest in school finances, which was also reflected in the survey results (84.85 per cent). It should be noted that the parents did not make any reference to the school head as someone who could influence their views on open data. This suggests that parent leaders are concerned with school data and will access them whenever possible, regardless of the school head’s disposition.

5. For parents, teachers, and community leaders, the survey indicates that they were mostly able to access data through instances in which face-to-face interaction took place. In both SRC/TB and CMS, face-to-face meetings served as the most common way for stakeholders to discuss the concerns of the school. These meetings included PTA meetings and distribution of report cards. The parents confirmed
in interviews that they considered these interactions to be effective venues to access and gain sufficient understanding of information. Moreover, these provided opportunities to inquire, clarify, and comment on the information made available in SRC or TB. At the community level, human interaction is an important supplement to the supposedly technical and cold objectivity of data. Access for most people at community level goes beyond the physical transfer of data from government to them. It is through the animation of discussion, problem-solving, or any kind of exchange or engagement, that people often begin to make sense of data. Nevertheless, the parents also considered the distribution of printed copies of data as an effective means to facilitate access. They valued having data in a tangible form that they could review at home.

6. As well as the interactive meetings, the interviews with teachers highlighted particularly the updating of information, ease of use, and good location of information sources as factors influencing the effectiveness of open data mechanisms. A unique feature of the teachers’ view of effectiveness is the extended reach of their concern. They think of these factors not only as they affect their own lives and work, but also as they affect other stakeholders, particularly parents.

The teachers are not only direct users, but also disseminators of information. That is why they were concerned about these physical aspects of access. They are consulted by parents and students, and sometimes even by the principal, on matters relevant to the school. As Nemia Gajo put it, ‘We need to access school data and know what’s happening in the school. Otherwise, what do we say if we’re asked?’ As teachers, they are expected to be informed and the SRC/TB, and even the CMS initiative, enabled them to perform this role because they were up to date, easy to use, and readily accessible. Needless to say, the regular updating of information made the access mechanism more credible. Information was characterized as easy to use when the teachers could easily cite them in meetings or decision-making. Finally, one teacher clearly illustrated the importance of location: ‘Before, the Transparency Board was inside the office, now it’s outside for everyone to see.’ Many teachers were happy with the Transparency Board and supported it because they saw it as a breath of fresh air in the context of the usual administration of schools. The simple act of putting the information board outside the office of the principal meant a lot. At least, teachers can now see it (to paraphrase teachers’ union leader, Benjo Basa) and can share information with others as well.

7. Student leaders see promotions and responsiveness of authorities as key to the success of SRC/TB and CMS initiatives. They value promotions because their awareness and involvement were mostly triggered through invitations, public announcements, and other special efforts or materials that attracted their attention. SRC and TB did not, however, directly target students and student leaders. They are not invited to assembly meetings, for instance. They would not have known about or paid close attention to information and the mechanisms to access them were it not for these promotions. The promotions served as an amplifier of the awareness of the initiatives and facilitated the interested students’ involvement in the process. The student leaders who became involved in the initiatives developed a deeper appreciation of the usefulness of information when they witnessed the response or action of authorities, consisting primarily of the school principal or the teachers. Their involvement in meetings to address a problem or study options had been empowering for them as student or youth leaders. A student leader articulated this simple element as important in making access to information effective: ‘We need someone to talk to regarding the information. Someone should be able to respond when students have questions.’
8. The community and civil society sector shares the view of parents and teachers that interactive face-to-face meetings contributed to their successful use of open data initiatives. But while the venue for discussion and reporting of SRC/TB information is institutionalized, CMS has to make the arrangements for a venue and convince the government authorities to attend. In both situations, community and civil society members were able to translate information into actionable discussions, including clarification of issues and even agreements on solutions to problems.

These meetings, therefore, usually showcased the responsiveness of government authorities. As with the student leaders, this sector also highlighted this as a crucial condition of the success of the SRC/TB and CMS initiatives. In this context, however, government authorities have a broader scope. They include the entire bureaucracy of DepEd from school level up to division and central office, as well as local government units and even other line agencies that could address an identified issue.

There is one key lesson concerning community and civil society engagement with government in these open data initiatives. It will only be effective if the motivation is to help and the approach is proper and constructive. CMS coordinator Ana Villanueva shared their messaging to engage school officials effectively: ‘How can we [civil society] help if we won’t know the situation?’

5.2 Limits and risks

According to the survey of parents, teachers, and community leaders, the risks involved in the process are marginal, as far as access to school data is concerned. Among the surveyed teachers, 82.76 per cent did not believe that there are data that should not be accessed, while 81.33 per cent of parents came to the same conclusion. All surveyed community leaders believed that there are no data that should not be accessed.

Almost 70 per cent of the teachers and community members did not see any risks in accessing school data. The parents demonstrated slightly higher confidence in handling data at 75.52 per cent.
Among parents who shared possible risks in accessing data, close to half of them felt that open school data could influence parents’ decision not to enrol their child. Thirty per cent noted potential tensions between the school officials and/or teachers and communities as possible risks. More than a quarter said it could heighten inequalities between schools.

For teachers who identified potential risks in accessing data, a fifth highlighted the risk that the data can influence parents’ decision not to enrol in the school. The frustration of stakeholders not acting on the information was also cited by three of the school teachers in the survey.

In the interviews, many of the stakeholders expressed the belief that opening up data poses no or only low risk. The few risks cited were ‘varied interpretations’ or ‘error in interpretation’, which can create false impressions, offensive statements, and conflict among stakeholders. Possible intentional misuse also crops up as a risk, particularly in the context of a political agenda. In areas with law-and-order problems, there was concern that information about funds and resources could make the school a target for robbery.

Nonetheless, the stakeholders identified at least four types of data the public sharing of which should be limited or regulated. These are: a) personal and private information, e.g. personal health condition, individual test results, guidance counselling records; b) information that poses danger to people’s lives or creates stigma; c) information that requires official authorization, e.g. based on DepEd orders; and d) freedom of information (FOI) exceptions, e.g. for reasons of national security.

5.3 Strategies to improve the impact of initiatives

Stakeholders identified a two-pronged strategy to improve the impact of the open data initiatives, involving: a) capacity building, and b) advocacy and awareness-raising.

Capacity building

Only school heads thought capacity building a condition for the effective use of open data mechanisms, but it was highlighted by various stakeholders as a means of improving open data implementation. Within central DepEd management, it was viewed as a necessity, unsurprisingly since it is their mandate to ensure the bureaucracy’s readiness to implement its programmes and calibrating programme improvement entails continuing learning.
Though schools already have had long exposure to SRC and similar mechanisms, the recent issue of the DepEd order and organizational restructuring require fresh capacity-building efforts by school principals and other DepEd officials. Policy-makers need to ensure they are clear about the objectives and mechanics for engagement of the SRC initiatives.

The broader policy context must, likewise, be discussed in order to assure the accountability dimension of the SRC initiatives. DepEd officials and employees are not exempted from the application of laws like ARTA (RA 9485) and the Code of Conduct (RA 6713) just because they limit the intent of SRC to information and communication. The point of calibration is to determine the appropriate intervention, given the reality on the ground, which the national laws or policies may not accurately represent. Nevertheless, ground-level practices must eventually catch up with the imperatives of the policy through the enhancement of stakeholders’ capacity. In this context, Dexter Pante’s insights on continuous preparations for schools are worth considering.

Box 13. SED chief insights on continuous preparations for the schools

In the words of Dexter Pante, school effectiveness division (SED) chief:

The law may be harsh, but it is the law. The law should not adjust to the individual. But we have to also acknowledge the fact that while it is provided by the law, there may be some people who are not knowledgeable. So the duty of DepEd should be providing the information. If they’re not familiar with the law, or if there are individuals or school heads who are familiar but do not know how to follow it, it's again the duty of DepEd [to enforce it]. While we have the legal framework on accountability and transparency, part of that would be providing capacity to our employees, so they will be able to follow and observe the law. That’s why one of the things that we’re doing in DepEd is continuously preparing our schools to be ready for more accountability and being able to be transparent with stakeholders. I’m looking at it as a journey. We cannot expect things to happen overnight, especially for some schools in our data; there are some schools that are always laggards in adopting certain policies. There’s also the concept of social justice. We have to take into consideration that there might be sectors or segments of your population that are not able to access the information, and that’s why they’re unable to follow. They don’t have the capacity also, so we’re trying to come up with strategies on that as well in our implementation.

On the part of principals and teachers, there was open admission of a lack of or limited capacity on open data and its use. Data encoding always came up during the interviews as the training they had received that related to open data most closely. Thus, they support the need for capacity building, or even just orientation programmes, to advance the implementation of the open data initiatives. Capacity building is also important to guide stakeholders on the proper use of information and to avoid conflict due to misunderstanding of information. One principal mentioned efforts to produce a school handbook with guidance on the use of open data.

Parents likewise see the value of developing their capacity to fully utilize open data mechanisms. A parent put it this way, with reference to the Transparency Board: ‘In the general assembly, parents and the students should advocate for it. They should know about the Transparency Board. They must be oriented about its use.’ The parents, of course, expected the school principal and the teachers to provide this to them, though some also see NGOs as another option.

Local chief executives, on the other hand, consider capacity building as a strategy but only for a specific constituency: the parents and the PTAs. The role of PTAs is both practical and strategic. They have a direct and high stake in the access and use of the information because it affects their children. They are the constituency that should inform and engage
with local government about the conditions of the schools. Thus, it is in the interests of local government to ensure they have adequate capacity to perform the role. Two mayors even expressed willingness to cover the costs of such capacity-building programmes for the parents.

**Advocacy and awareness-raising**

Parents, students, and community/civil society groups recommended a better public engagement strategy through a variety of advocacy and awareness-raising actions. The strategy comes in different forms.

The first is scope. The survey revealed high awareness of open-data mechanisms as well as high interest in the available information among parents, teachers, and community leaders. The Transparency Board notably registered higher awareness because of its built-in feature of being publicly visible, as compared with SRC and CMS. But students appear to have been left out of the picture. They may see the Transparency Board in the school vicinity, but they do not exactly understand its purpose or how it works. Aside from the students, the local government officials also need to be informed about these mechanisms. Interestingly, they were more aware of and had more engagement with CMS than SRC/TB. As the CMS experience showed, local government’s awareness and interest in the information can translate into provision of additional assistance and other benefits for the school. Finally, the media and some national civil society organizations know little of these school-level open-data initiatives. Their awareness and interest should be targeted to expand the constituency and support for these initiatives. They can provide a broader view of the usefulness of open-data mechanisms and link it with policy-making.

The second form is visual design. The students, in particular, suggested enhancements in the visual presentation of the SRC/TB materials. They noted the importance of the size of the postings, size of fonts, choice of colours, use of non-technical language, and use of graphics and illustrations. The strategy should aim to demystify the mechanism and the idea of access to information itself, thereby attracting more people and mainstreaming it in public consciousness.

The third concerns the documentation and sharing of stories about the benefits of open data. Part of the strategy of engaging the public should be the generation of good stories on how open data worked for and benefited people, schools, and communities. These stories can be shared in school meetings and forums, by the media, and through social media.

Conditions of success, limits, and strategies for improvement of the three initiatives, as perceived by various stakeholders, are summarized in Table 12.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Conditions of success</th>
<th>Limits</th>
<th>Risks</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DepEd management</td>
<td>SRC/TB: Calibrated implementation of policies; balancing of interests; link with planning; proper oversight</td>
<td>Personal/private information that creates stigma</td>
<td>Varied interpretation; unintended consequence; inaccurate data creating false impressions; fund information invites robbery in areas with law-and-order problems</td>
<td>Capacity building (laws, guidelines)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School heads</td>
<td>SRC/TB: Leadership by example; trust; capacity CMS: feedback function; linkages</td>
<td>Personal/private information; official authorization</td>
<td>Misinterpretation of data</td>
<td>Capacity building (school handbook)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>SRC/TB: Updated information; ease of use, good location CMS: proactive assistance; linkage</td>
<td>Personal/private information</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>Capacity building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>SRC/TB: Face-to-face meetings; printed materials CMS: Face-to-face meetings; proactive assistance; independence</td>
<td>Personal/private information</td>
<td>Overcritical</td>
<td>Awareness-raising; support for stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>SRC/TB: government responsiveness; proper coordination CMS: Promotions; linkage; proactive assistance</td>
<td>Personal/private information</td>
<td>Offensive use of data</td>
<td>Create visual, colourful design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community leaders/civil society</td>
<td>SRC/TB: Interface; government responsiveness CMS: linkage; proactive assistance</td>
<td>Data that endanger lives; personal/private information</td>
<td>Conflict between parents and principal/teachers; misuse for certain agendas, especially political</td>
<td>Advocacy; share stories of good use of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local chief executives</td>
<td>SRC/TB; CMS: Legal basis; PTA participation CMS: LGU support, validation of government information</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Capacitate PTAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>SRC/TB: Ease of access; timeliness of release; simplified data CMS: validation of government data</td>
<td>FOI exceptions; under embargo or investigation (case to case); personal/private information</td>
<td>Misuse, identity theft</td>
<td>Share about mechanism through media; Harmonized data; harmonized mechanism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Conclusion and recommendations

The emergence of SRC/TB and CMS in their current forms is a milestone in the already long experience of the Philippines in using SRC as an open-data tool. The present point at which DepEd has institutionalized SRC and Transparency Board, and the manner by which community stakeholders’ participation has also been organized and structured through CheckMySchool, are indicative of a maturing culture of openness. Their evolving practices, involving government on the one hand, and citizens on the other, are beneficial because each type of initiative has inherent weaknesses which the other somehow helps to correct. Information provision, for instance, is the strength of SRC/TB, on which the CMS initiative must rely. The push for accountability, on the other hand, is the advantage of CMS that supplements the activities of SRC and TB.

As this case study shows, SRCs in the Philippines have undeniably contributed to improving transparency and accountability in managing the education system. SRC has effectively supported important aspects of management, including increasing stakeholders’ awareness and interest in education information, providing means to access it, and the actual use of information to get school managers to address school problems. It has arguably offered an alternative mode of decision-making and posed a challenge to the overall power structure at school level. It overturned the principal's usual monopoly on information, which gave them wide discretion, and created spaces for informed engagement with the stakeholders in the process. As Undersecretary Mateo put it, 'The SRC keeps them [school principals] on their toes.'

This is made possible by one crucial factor: stakeholders’ cooperation. The case of the Philippines shows the primary importance of being able to rally the bureaucracy and its stakeholders behind this kind of initiative. This required clear understanding of their behaviour based on constant monitoring and assessment of developments on the ground. This understanding manifested itself in the so-called calibration strategy of the Department of Education’s SRC policy. The department viewed SRC implementation not only from the perspective of generating compliance based on the force of policy; it also took into account the acceptability of the requirements and the ability of school principals to deliver them.

Another enabling requirement is the SRC’s dynamic design. The implementation of SRC in the Philippines does not only involve the publication of school information. It also provides a specific venue – assembly meetings – for the discussion of the information. Despite the limitations of the DepEd's SRC as an information and communication tool, the interaction and dialogue with school authorities based on the posted information helped make the initiative credible. It provided a natural opportunity for clarification, questioning, criticism, and even problem-solving, which are important elements of transparency and accountability in decision-making. Incidentally, the CMS intervention also highlighted and showcased the value of these elements and demonstrated favourable results. It has complemented the operational limitations of SRC and TB well. Thus, the cases of the dynamic implementation of SRC taught us that when its design incorporates active participation and anticipation of results, it effectively invites stakeholders’ cooperation. It is sustained and gains trust when clear results are consistently obtained through the process.

In this regard, the Department of Education should ensure that its calibration strategy has a clear trajectory in the future. The communication-focused function of the current SRC may lose efficacy if it becomes stuck there. The stakeholders will certainly expect more than just the supply and presentation of information. DepEd must adequately prepare schools to be ready to adjust as the questions and demands build up.
DepEd must have already sensed the build-up of these questions and demands from the public. While it has effectively calibrated its response, the more critical question now is not whether it has improved transparency and accountability in the management of the education system, but what level of effectiveness it should have attained by this time. Are the documented gains commensurate with the time and resources that have been invested in the initiatives? The department planners and managers should be able to discuss this when they review the implementation of the initiatives.

6.1 Information model

Comparing the government-led and citizen-led initiatives, this case study found SRC/TB to be a better model in providing access to information than CMS. In both content and medium, SRC/TB proved to be in a better position to respond to stakeholders’ interests. This is evidenced by the higher awareness of the SRC/TB, as well as the high appreciation of the government-supplied information, among direct users. Higher awareness, of course, translates into more opportunities for stakeholders to access it.

The government’s ‘consult–supply–discuss’ model is faithful to its mandate of facilitating access to needed information. DepEd may not have conducted a direct consultation on the SRC design (as admitted by the SED chief), but its use of a proper proxy resulted in good alignment of the selected sets of information with the needs of public users. In the supply of information, the advantage of the government is demonstrated more prominently through the Transparency Board, whose key operating principle is the public posting of information. Traditional as it may be, it nevertheless has a clear advantage in being able to reach a captive audience efficiently. The passivity of the posting, meanwhile, is offset by the opportunity to discuss the available information.

The government model fared better than the ‘issue–access–discuss’ model of the citizen-led CMS initiative. The issue contextualization of CMS applies only when stakeholders seek immediate action on information. It does not serve the broader purpose of increasing public knowledge or even improving public access. Not all information needs are based on or dependent on the issue/problem. Note that CMS’s experiential access to information is limited to the volunteer intermediaries and other participating stakeholders. It also gets to share information only when discussions commence.

This partly explains why several remarks on information relevance made reference to the generic functions or purposes of information. The examples include performance and reporting requirements (for principals), to fulfil responsibility for informing others (for teachers), to know the status of services and facilities, to help raise awareness (for students), advocacy (for civil society), and planning (for local chief executives). The parents’ appreciation of relevance is the closest to being issue-based or problem-driven.

It appears that stakeholders want any information the government can provide or open up. The government’s special sensitivity to public interest and its ability to fulfil its mandate only increases satisfaction, as it already starts from a high level of appreciation. The CMS information is well appreciated, too, because it has additional information that is contextualized according to stakeholders’ needs. CMS not only allows them to experience access, but also deepens their understanding of the situation based on information.

To summarize, CMS has some ingredients and can guide stakeholders as to what information to consume, but it is SRC/TB that really feeds and nourishes them with all needed information. The supply of information is, of course, the government’s domain and it has to remain that way. Citizens or civil society need not invade or encroach on that role, but must hold government to account and urge it to listen to the people about the information they want and the ways in which it might be presented and disseminated.
6.2 Accountability model

This study found the citizen-led initiative, CMS, to be a better model for accountability than government-led initiatives, SRC and TB. This is not just because SRC and TB were intended only as information and communication tools while CMS is concerned with social accountability. As earlier discussed, SRC and TB have accountability implications because they stimulate citizen demand for answers and are governed by anti-corruption laws with formal sanctions for non-compliance or violation. The ‘pre-public participation’ in SRC/TB has triggered actions and generated results. According to the survey, the teachers, in particular, took more action based on SRC/TB than CMS, perhaps because they were familiar with the school system and had some power to navigate within it. But these results could be more transactional than demanded, i.e. dependent on or driven by the school principal’s good graces. Take the principal out of the picture and the accountability aspect of SRC/TB could disappear; the stakeholders may not be able to stand on their own. The sanctions defined in the anti-corruption laws for non-compliance to SRC/TB did not figure as they were not enforced. Stakeholders may not be aware that these laws apply in the implementation of SRC/TB.

The accountability model of CMS, based on public participation, fared better than SRC/TB because it is deliberate and proactive. Consequently, it has pressed the school and other concerned government offices to be more responsive, generated more accounts of improvement in school services, and was deemed more empowering by stakeholders, including those outside the school. The importance attached to face-to-face meetings and the responsiveness of authorities as conditions of effective SRC implementation indicates the importance of public participation in accountability. Note that SRC assembly meetings are organized only twice a year: at the start and at the end of the school year. In certain circumstances, CMS is able to fill in the gap.

For responsiveness to be a measure of accountability, it has to happen on a continuing basis. The twice-a-year assembly meeting through SRC may have to be recalibrated to adapt to CMS’s dynamic, constructive engagement and continuing follow-ups to pursue issues.

Furthermore, CMS has developed a broader view of the complexity of the basic education sector’s accountability system. It is not confined to the level of the school, but recognizes that accountability for school improvements is shared by the school principal with many other actors in the DepEd bureaucracy, from the division to the regional and central offices.

This explains why stakeholders appreciate the CMS role as a bridge to other government agencies, including local government units. Even the principals recognize and value that role because they themselves are at the receiving end of the complex, bureaucratic system of DepEd.

The SRC’s face-to-face meetings will not be responsive, and could even become a source of frustration, if the stakeholders’ view of the extent of their participation is limited to the school level. Even if it is just an information and communication tool, it has to impart awareness of the schools operating within a broader bureaucracy. This manages expectations as to what the school head can actually do and opens up the horizon for other options, if needed. When DepEd recalibrates SRC, it may consider the CMS framework for understanding mandates and accountabilities.

In summary, the CMS’s purposive approach to accountability has enabled its users to secure better government responsiveness than has SRC/TB. The SRC assembly meetings, however, have provided an opening for stakeholders to use information to pursue accountability. There are indications that SRC is ready for recalibration to include accountability among its essential functions.
6.3 SRC and inequity in the educational system

The study has not observed any inequity. As revealed in the survey, the educational attainments of the stakeholders was not a factor in understanding the interest and behaviour of stakeholders with respect to open data. The use of traditional modes of access to information, particularly the boards and assembly meetings, both of which are offline, has made SRC inclusive.

6.4 Recommendations for decision-makers, managers, and planners on the design and implementation of open data

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study recommends the following improvements in SRC design and implementation to DepEd decision-makers, managers, and planners.

**Integrate SRC and TB**

Two different units in the DepEd central office oversee SRC and TB, the School Effectiveness Division (under the Bureau of Human Resources and Organizational Development) and the Planning Service (under the School Operations and Governance Division), respectively. They separately issue policy, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation guidelines. They have separate focal persons and databases. At the division level, there are also separate tracks of oversight for the two initiatives. Given the connected and complementary purposes of SRC and TB, it is recommended that they be located in a single unit. This will facilitate easy integration of their common management agenda.

**Formally recognize students not only as beneficiaries but as users of information in SRC policy**

Current practice appears to provide only token involvement to students in the SRC process. It is recommended that SRC policy formally recognizes them as a group of users of information, with their own unique needs and interests, perspectives, and representation. They should be informed and consulted on the rationale, purpose, design, and mechanics of the SRC. They should be invited to or have representation in the assembly meetings when the SRC is presented. Better yet, a separate venue should be introduced for them, where they can ask about, comment on, or discuss issues concerning SRC information and the implementation of the initiative itself.

**Issue instruction on the documentation and reporting of SRC assembly meetings**

SRC should include documentation of meetings as part of its report. The documentation should include the issues and concerns arising from discussions. In the next meeting, the school principal should review this with the participants to check whether the issues have been addressed. This practice enhances the principal’s responsiveness to stakeholders and optimizes the use of the assembly meetings as an accountability mechanism.

**Set calibration trajectory**

The calibration strategy worked well for DepEd in securing stakeholders’ support for SRC and TB. School principals had been generally cooperative in implementing them in more than 47,000 schools nationwide. To sustain this effect, it is recommended that DepEd look into the longer-term expansion of the schemes and set the phases for its development. From being an information and communication tool, DepEd must plan for a transition to being a management tool – a school-based management tool – with transparency and accountability dimensions. For instance, DepEd and school officials and employees must receive orientation about their implementation in the context of related anti-corruption laws, with explanations on related penalties for violations. Furthermore, they should be made to understand the broader context of SRC beyond the school. As DepEd reviews the
calibration strategy, the managers and planners must take into account both the progress of the recent restructuring and the whole experience of schools in implementing SRC.

**Study institutional adoption of CMS-type of citizen-led initiative to strengthen use of SRC**

The schools and DepEd benefit from the unique role of third-party initiatives, such as CMS, in promoting transparency and accountability. This study also noted the additional capacity support that it is able to provide parents, students, and even teachers and principals. The use of such initiatives, however, is opportunistic and not particularly common. It is recommended that the department consider the institutional adoption of a CMS-type citizen-led initiative, so it can be made available to all interested schools in the country.
Annex A. DepEd organizational structure

Source: Department of Education: http://deped.gov.ph/structure/central-office
Annex B. Survey Sampling

The three municipalities of Guimaras from which the six sample schools were drawn have the following characteristics:

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nueva Valencia</td>
<td>3rd class</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>39,810</td>
<td>10,217</td>
<td>95.52</td>
<td>9358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>3rd class</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>36,096</td>
<td>9,752</td>
<td>98.25</td>
<td>8283</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buenavista</td>
<td>2nd class</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>50,437</td>
<td>12,428</td>
<td>98.11</td>
<td>10,125</td>
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</table>

Source: National Statistics Office, 2010 Census of Population and Housing; DepEd’s E-BEIS.

The calculation of sampling for the survey in Guimaras was as follows:

- Number of schools =
- Population =
- N =
- Margin of error =

Source: http://www.tools4dev.org/resources/how-to-choose-a-sample-size/

The reference for the total population was the enrolment in all six schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nueva Valencia</td>
<td>Nueva Valencia National High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nueva Valencia</td>
<td>Nueva Valencia Central School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Santa Teresa National High School</td>
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<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Bugnay Elementary School</td>
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<td>Buenavista</td>
<td>Supang National High School</td>
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<td>Buenavista</td>
<td>Old Poblacion Elementary School</td>
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Based on student enrolment, the population of parents was calculated at 25 per cent of enrolment, with only one parent representing a student. The teacher population is based on the number of teachers in all six schools. The community leaders, who are barangay leaders and civic society leaders, were calculated at 25 per cent of the teachers.

The number of parents of students per grade level was also calculated using the base enrolment per grade level of each school.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Parents (25% students)</th>
<th>% Parents</th>
<th>N= Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>% Teachers</th>
<th>N= Teachers</th>
<th>Community leaders (25% Teachers)</th>
<th>% Community</th>
<th>N= Community leaders</th>
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Annex C. Interviewees

DepEd management
- Jesus Mateo, DepEd Under-secretary
- Ma. Luz delos Reyes, Guimaras Schools Division Superintendent
- Dexter Pante, SED chief
- Deogracia Genito, DepEd BEIS
- Dana Dolores Gania, Guimaras Division E-BEIS
- Edlyn Legita, Guimaras Division School Governance and Operations

Civil society
- Addie Unsi, E-Net Philippines
- James Nigel Panganiban, ANSA/CheckMySchool
- Ana Eva Villanueva, GPEFI
- Charrie Joy Masculino, GPEFI

Media
- Janvic Mateo, Philippine Star
- Ria Fernandez, PTV4

Local government units
- Emmanuel Galila, Nueva Valencia Mayor
- Ruben Corpuz, Jordan Mayor
- Eugene Reyes, Buenavista Mayor

Guimaras school heads
- June Umadhay, Supang National High School, Buenavista
- Arlee Ferraro, Old Poblacion Elementary School, Buenavista
- Cirila Capilitan, Teacher-in-charge, Bugnay Elementary School, Jordan
- Natividad Solis, former Principal, Bugnay Elementary School, Jordan
- Candelaria Torrento, Santa Teresa High School, Jordan
- Evrod Jardeleza, Nueva Valencia Central School, Nueva Valencia
- Marcelino Dumasis, Nueva Valencia National High School, Nueva Valencia

National Teachers Association
- Benjo Basas, Teachers Dignity Coalition

Guimaras Schools Teachers Associations
- Angeline Joy Jarangue, Supang NHS Teachers Association President
- Ivy Hiponia, Old Poblacion ES Teachers Association President
- Rojelyn Galimba, Bugnay ES Teachers Association Treasurer
- Melanie Escobar, Bugnay ES Teachers Association Member
- Analyn Ymalay, Sta. Teresa NHS Faculty and Staff Organization President
- Maria Dolores Castalanales, Nueva Valencia ES Teachers Association President
- Nemia Gajo, Nueva Valencia NHS Teachers Association President
- Vivian Lozada, Nueva Valencia NHS Teachers Association Secretary
- Mildred Pitpitan, Nueva Valencia NHS Teachers Association Public Information Officer
- Marie Elena Ecle, Nueva Valencia NHS Teachers Association Auditor

National PTA
- Willy Rodriguez, National PTA Board of Trustees President
- Bob Castillo, National PTA Board of Trustees General Secretary
- Rey Rigamonte, National PTA Board of Trustees Treasurer
Guimaras Schools PTA

• Carlo Pillora, Supang NHS PTA President
• Janet Aleman, Old Poblacion ES PTA President
• Gina Taguligan, Bugnay ES PTA President
• Gil Esmael, Santa Teresa NHS PTA President
• Rexie Traigo, Nueva Valencia CS PTA President
• Eva Garcia, Nueva Valencia NHS PTA Vice-President

NCR Federation of Supreme Student Governments

• Ferdinand Sanchez II, NCR SSG Federation President and Manila Science HS SSG President
• Ray Silvestre Binas, Manuel G. Araullo HS SSG President
• Cherwin Dale Eguez, Cayetano Arellano HS SSG President
• AJ Vincent A Bactat, FG Calderon HS SSG President
• Abi Adino Francisco, Lakan Dula HS SSG President

Guimaras School Supreme Student/Pupil Government

• Hannah Manero, Supang NHS SSG President
• Ella Gabitanan, Supang NHS SSG Secretary
• Joan Desoy, Old Poblacion ES SPG President
• Daphne Lomugdang, Bugnay ES SPG President
• Alejah Sardiniola, Santa Teresa NHS SSG President
• Reymart Galvez, Nueva Valencia SSG President
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Stanley Rabinowitz

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Nisa Felicia

Punjab, Pakistan: Using open school data to improve transparency and accountability
Kashmali Khan
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The case study

The number of countries providing access to school data to the general public has grown rapidly over the past decade, encouraged by the development of information technologies and under the pressure of social movements demanding the right to information. A wide variety of initiatives have been developed by both governments and civil society, to share school-level information in the form of ‘school report cards’. These provide key information about a school, e.g. on student enrolment, funding, number of teachers, teacher qualifications, pupil–teacher ratios, conditions of school facilities, textbooks, and student achievement. But now that such data are in the public domain, how can it be ensured that they are used to promote not only transparency but also accountability in the education sector?

This publication compares the design and implementation of three major open school data initiatives implemented in the Philippines: school report cards (SRC) and transparency boards introduced by the Department of Education (DepED), and CheckMySchool, a civil society initiative. It covers the types of information published, who publishes it and how it is accessed; the critical data for improving transparency and accountability; how different categories of stakeholders access and use it; the requisite conditions for improving transparency and accountability; and the limitations of such processes.

The study highlights that the emergence of current forms of these initiatives is a sign of the maturing culture of openness in the Philippines education system, with SRC and transparency boards being the preferred model for information access, and CheckMySchool for accountability. The publication concludes with a number of detailed recommendations including: integrating SRC and transparency boards into one implementing unit of the DepED, formally recognizing students as SRC users, issuing instruction on the documentation and reporting of SRC assembly meetings, setting calibration trajectories for SRC implementation, and studying institutional adoption of CheckMySchool-type of citizen-led initiatives to strengthen the use of SRC.

The author

Redempto S. Parafina is the Executive Director of the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP). As an international development practitioner, he has a recognized track record in civil society networking, capacity building, and innovation in citizen participation in governance. He has been consulted on the technical application of social accountability in various fields and sectors, including education, health, public procurement, ICT, and youth.