



Community Scorecards and Educational Governance

A Commentary on Accountability Mechanisms in Lubombo's Public Schools

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ABSTRACT

Public education governance in Eswatini faces challenges in accountability and service delivery. Community scorecards have been introduced as a participatory social accountability tool to bridge gaps between schools and local stakeholders, particularly in rural regions. This commentary critiques a recent empirical study on the implementation of community scorecards in the Lubombo Region. It aims to analyse the study's findings on the tool's efficacy and to propose refinements for its application in educational governance. The approach is a critical analysis and synthesis of the published study's methodology and findings, situated within broader literature on social accountability and community-based monitoring in African development contexts. The original study found that scorecard implementation led to a marked improvement in teacher attendance and punctuality, cited by over 70% of community respondents. However, its impact on deeper pedagogical quality and learning outcomes was limited, constrained by power dynamics and procedural formalities. While community scorecards can enhance certain operational aspects of school management, their transformative potential for educational quality is mediated by entrenched institutional hierarchies and the capacity for sustained civic engagement. Future iterations should integrate scorecard data with formal government audits and include specific indicators for student learning. Facilitator training must address power asymmetries to enable more substantive dialogue between parents and officials. social accountability, educational governance, community participation, public services, monitoring and evaluation, Sub-Saharan Africa This commentary provides a novel critical framework for assessing the scalability of participatory tools, arguing that their design must explicitly confront local power structures to move beyond procedural compliance towards substantive educational improvement.

Keywords: *social accountability, educational governance, community participation, Southern Africa, public service delivery, participatory monitoring, primary education*

Article Highlights

- Scorecard implementation led to marked improvement in teacher attendance and punctuality.

Core Limitation

The tool's efficacy is bounded by local power structures, often reducing dialogue to procedural compliance rather than

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact on pedagogical quality and learning outcomes remained constrained.• Transformative potential mediated by institutional hierarchies and civic engagement capacity.• Future designs must integrate with formal audits and include specific learning indicators.	<p>substantive change.</p> <p><i>This commentary critiques a field study to propose refinements for participatory accountability tools.</i></p>
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