Accountability and No Child Left Behind: Implications for Evaluation and Public Policy

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Purpose

- Examine the role of accountability and evaluation in public policy

- Explore criteria for effective accountability

- Use a case study to examine the use of organizational theory in evaluating a national program

Accountability

Process by which organizations are answerable to some higher authority for their actions and outcomes

Role of Accountability

- Democratic Control and Government Integrity
- Evaluation and Feedback
- Organizational Learning
- Legitimacy
- Program transparency and public confidence

Criteria for Effective Accountability

- Well Planned and Executed Design
- Transparency
- Responsiveness
- Compliance Monitoring
- Allocating Responsibility

Organizational Theory

- Provides new lens through which to view accountability and public policy
- Highlights interactions between performance and program context
- Enhances the use of evaluation to inform public policy

Important Questions from Organizational Theory

- What are the essential parts of the system?

- How do these parts affect one another?

- How are system parts connected and how is it possible to make adjustments between them?

- What are the goals of the system?

Organizational Mechanisms and Program Efficacy

Table 1			
Organizational Mechanism	**Accountability Function**	**Control Mechanism**	**Primary Impact Area**
Structure	**Exercise Democratic Control**	**Bureaucratic Structure Network structure**	**Responsibility**
Decision Making	**Exercise Democratic Control Promote Legitimacy**	**Centralized or Decentralized Decision-making**	**Responsiveness**
Evaluation and Performance Monitoring	**Enhance Integrity Improve Performance Promote Legitimacy**	**Monitoring and Reporting Requirements**	**Transparency**
Resource Allocation	**Exercise Democratic Control Improve Performance**	**Funding**	**Compliance**

No Child Left Behind: 2001

- Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) – 1965
- Title I – improve education for poor and disadvantaged students
- Improving America's Schools – 1994
- NCLB - 2002

Accountability and No Child Left Behind

- Narrow focus on performance measures
- Utilizes high stakes testing to determine Annual Yearly Progress measures
- Implements sanctions

Utilizing Organizational Theory for NCLB

- Expand accountability measures to include organizational mechanisms and systems
- Provide information on student outcomes AND on organizational and institutional factors that impact these outcomes
- Result in a rich base for program assessment and improvement

Organizational Mechanisms and NCLB

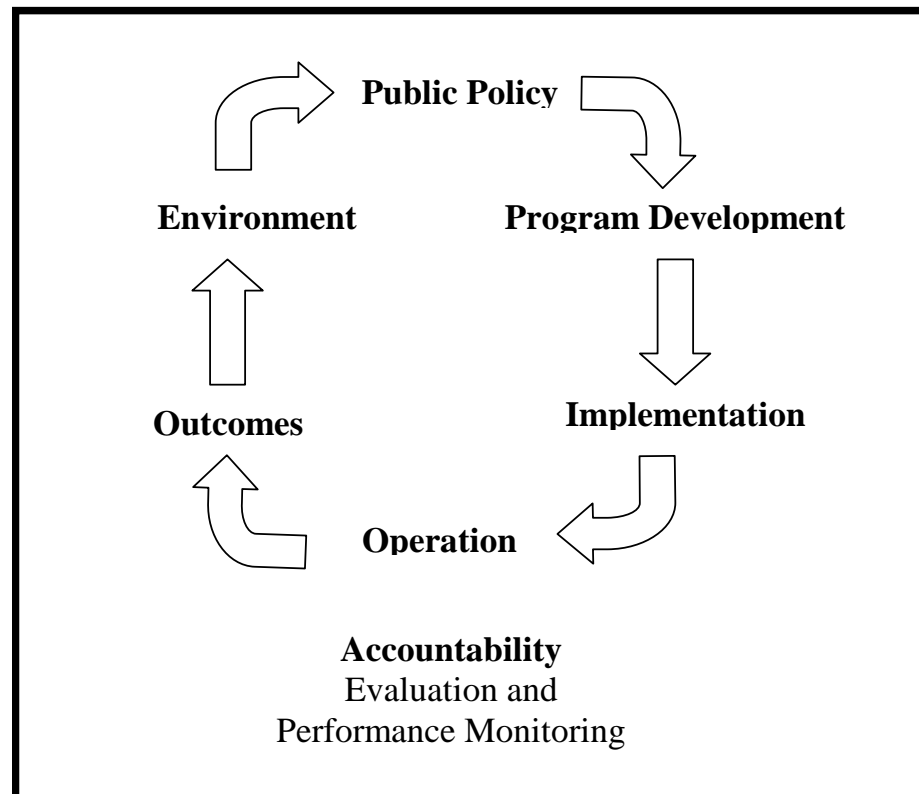| Table 2			
Organizational Mechanism	**Accountability Function**	**Mechanism**	**Impact**
Structure	**Democratic Control**	**US Dept. of Education, State education departments, and local education agencies**	**Lines of reporting and responsibility facilitate or inhibit program functioning**
Decision Making	**Democratic Control Promote Legitimacy**	**US Department of Education, state, local districts and school boards**	**Control of educational program enhances "buy in" or encourages resistance**
Evaluation and Performance Monitoring	**Enhance Integrity Improve Performance Promote Legitimacy**	**Annual achievement tests Publication of test results**	**"High stakes" testing provides performance measures but alienates stakeholders. Transparency leads to informed choices**
Resource Allocation	**Democratic Control Improve Performance**	**Title I and other federal funding**	**Compliance or face loss of federal funds which negatively impacts those schools with high populations of students at-risk for academic failure**

Impact of Accountability on Program Performance

As components of accountability, evaluation and program monitoring not only measure program performance but also influence it by interacting with it at different points in the program cycle.

Impact Model

Figure 2
Impact Model

Implications of Current Accountability System for NCLB

- Current practices ignore systemic nature of programs
- Stakeholders question legitimacy and effectiveness of current accountability design

Future Implications for NCLB

- Sensitize stakeholders by documenting factors contributing to performance
- Influence policy makers for needed change
- Supply best practices

Accountability, Evaluation, and Public Policy

- Accountability an influential player in policy arenas
- Accountability an integral part of program systems
- Evaluation a necessary part of accountability

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