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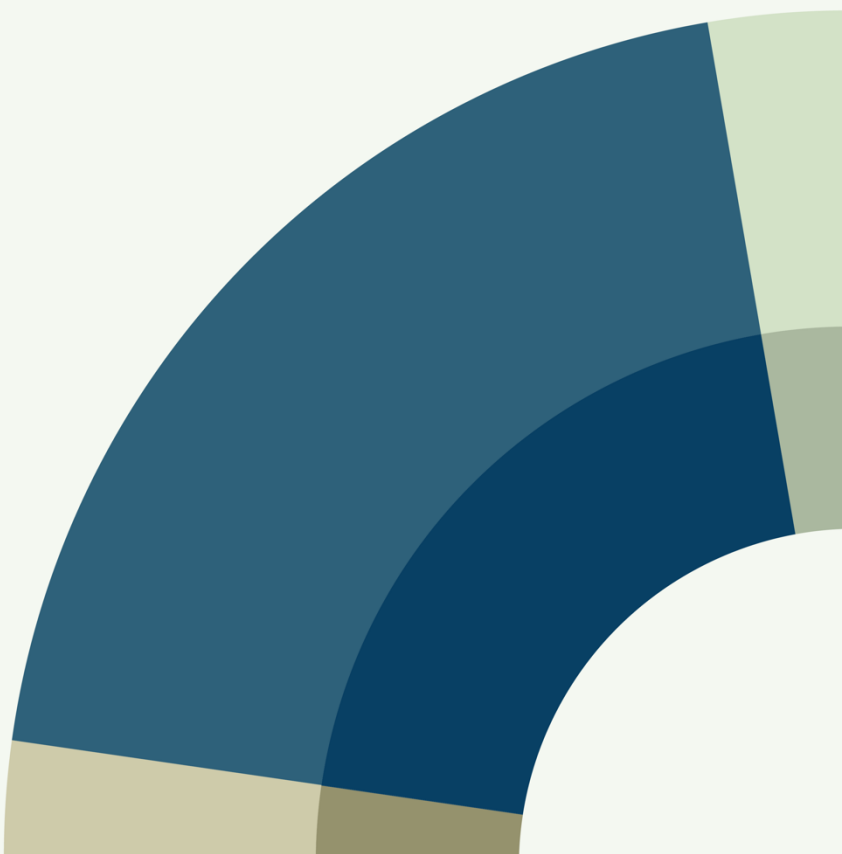
INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE REVIEW

ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY

Summary of country report (3 pages)

Authors: AI generated with human checking
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Poland



Authorship. This AI generated summary has been created and checked by the CES team (see ces.partners/resources/methodologies). It is based on the original Country Reports created by EPPI. The author of the full report has not made final checks for accuracy.



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The EPPI Centre

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Poland – AI generated Accountability Policy summary

RQ1: Purposes, Values and Aims

The accountability system's stated aims include improving key skills for social and economic life, fostering a continuous learning culture among educators, and promoting transparency and stakeholder involvement. The system is linked to learning theory by ensuring mastery of foundational skills and core competencies at key progression stages, aligning with international approaches. Values such as equity through inclusion, meritocracy via external examinations, professionalism, transparency (public reporting), shared responsibility, and trust guide implementation. Inclusion is prioritised explicitly through specialised inspections, dedicated Educational Information System (SIO) data collection, adapted national assessments, and funding weightings for special needs. A major policy shift occurred in 2021 when mandatory routine evaluations were abolished, moving the focus toward outcome-based measurement, including monitoring graduates' career paths.

RQ 2 – Levels, measures, and mechanisms of accountability

The accountability structure features vertical hierarchies (state control) and horizontal networks (community involvement). Vertical accountability, enforced top-down by the Ministry of National Education (MEN) and Regional Education Authorities (REAs), holds schools, leaders, and teachers accountable for legal compliance, standards, and curriculum quality. Consequences range from monitoring and support to sanctions or changes in leadership. The system monitors inputs (qualifications), processes (management), and outputs (performance).

REA inspectors conduct compliance audits. Since 2022, mandatory external quality evaluations have been replaced by auditing for legal compliance. Quantitative data is collected via the Educational Information System (SIO) and external standardised examinations (eighth-grade, matriculation). Exam results are aggregated and publicly reported, significantly influencing school reputation and parental choice. While persistently low results prompt targeted interventions, the system does not use formal, automatic sanctions or financial rewards tied directly to test performance.

Horizontal accountability involves professional peer review via the Teaching Council, and stakeholder participation via the School Council, Parents' Council, and Student Government. These bodies contribute to internal evaluations and non-academic decisions. Improvement is linked via standards, pedagogical feedback, sanctions, mandatory in-service teacher training, and stakeholder voice.

MEN defines national standards, and REA Heads enforce compliance through supervision. Local governments manage school finances and administration. The Educational Information

System (SIO) provides reporting data that central and regional authorities use to monitor compliance, enabling a risk-based approach to trigger regulatory actions, ensuring quality assurance and transparency.

RQ 3 – Managing change and policy processes

Accountability policy change is managed through a structured process led by the MEN. Policy development requires cross-ministerial consultation and formal input from local governments, NGOs, and trade unions. Implementation uses vertical accountability (MEN via REAs) and horizontal mechanisms (councils). Reviews are ad hoc, triggered by challenges or external recommendations, with no single fixed timetable. The 2016 Education Law reform was centrally designed and implemented nationally in phases without a formal pilot for structural changes. Conversely, the 2019 "Model of Education for All" for inclusive education used an iterative approach, piloting expert-developed recommendations before legislative changes. Stakeholder involvement, including academics, practitioners, and NGOs, was crucial for incorporating diverse expertise, ensuring policy legitimacy, and alignment with international agreements like the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

RQ 4 – Assessments of effectiveness and evaluation

System-wide assessments of accountability effectiveness are ad hoc and fragmented, focusing on components like financial audits and compliance. Evaluations are primarily internal, conducted by government bodies, including the Ministry of National Education and Regional Education Authorities. Success metrics emphasise vertical accountability, including student performance in national examinations, compliance with the core curriculum, teacher qualifications, and REA supervision audit results. Unintended consequences, such as administrative workload or reduced teacher motivation, are not systematically monitored, but are identified via ad hoc channels like inspections and international surveys. Policy evaluation, particularly in inclusive education, has demonstrably led to design changes, moving toward a universal support model. The system also draws on international research and comparative analysis from organisations like the OECD.

RQ 5 – Historical, cultural, and political influences

Polish reforms were historically shaped by post-communist centralisation, linking changes more to political transition than education planning. Accountability policies in the 1990s introduced neoliberal ideas, promoting decentralisation and shifting managerial and financial responsibility to local governments. This resulted in overlapping governance paradigms: traditional state control, market-based mechanisms (standardised assessments, public ranking), and cooperative models. International organisations, notably the OECD and the EU, spurred the adoption of evidence-based policies and standardised testing. Despite decentralisation, strong regulatory oversight remains. Institutionally, efforts to introduce a collaborative inspection culture faced resistance due to traditional mistrust and the

perception of supervision as punitive. The high-stakes ninth-grade exam directly links accountability measures to student progression and choice of upper secondary tracks.

RQ 6 – Impact on outcomes and workforce

Research evidence concerning the intended and unintended effects of the accountability system on student outcomes or the teaching workforce was not identified in the systematic review.

Timeline - recent accountability reforms

- **Early 1990s: Decentralisation and Neoliberal Reforms.** Aimed at dismantling the state monopoly. Key Features included shifted management and financial accountability to local governments.
- **1993–1999: Formal Transfer of Management.** Municipal councils gained responsibility for primary schools (1996); counties for post-primary schools (1999).
- **Early 2000s: Standardised Exams.** External tests were introduced after grades 6 and 9 (2002), and the maturity exam after grade 12 (2005).
- **2009: New School Inspection System.** Combined internal/external evaluation, aimed at collaboration and self-improvement.
- **2016: Education Law.** Reorganised school stages; changed core curriculum.
- **2021: Policy Shift.** Abolished routine external/internal evaluations; introduced Graduate Career Monitoring.