

WHO IS TO BLAME? A CRITICAL VIEW OF SHARED RESPONSIBILITY IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

¿DE QUIÉN ES LA CULPA? UNA MIRADA CRÍTICA A LA CORRESPONSABILIDAD EN LA EDUCACIÓN CONTEMPORÁNEA

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Manuscript information:

Recibido/Received: 24/10/2025

Revisado/Reviewed: 14/05/2026

Aceptado/Accepted: 10/06/2026

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

educational responsibility, shared responsibility, school culture, school-family relationships, teacher ethics.

In contemporary educational debates, the search for those responsible for low academic performance and school challenges has become a recurrent discourse. Teachers often blame parents for the lack of support at home; parents hold teachers accountable for failing to motivate or understand their children; students are criticized for apathy or disinterest, while the educational system is accused of being bureaucratic and ineffective. This article offers a critical and reflective perspective on educational co-responsibility, understanding that learning and formation are complex processes that require the active and committed participation of all involved actors. From a hermeneutic and qualitative approach, the study analyzes the tensions that arise within the relationship among school, family, and society, and examines the structural, cultural, and ethical factors that influence the delegation of responsibilities. The analysis argues that education cannot be reduced to a game of blame but demands a collective commitment grounded in cooperation, empathy, and continuous pedagogical dialogue. It concludes that only through a genuine sense of co-responsibility where each actor assumes their role with ethical awareness, reflection, and community engagement will it be possible to advance toward a transformative, inclusive, participatory, and socially just education.

RESUMEN

Palabras clave:

responsabilidad educativa, corresponsabilidad, cultura escolar, relaciones escuela-familia, ética docente.

En el debate educativo contemporáneo, la búsqueda de responsables ante los bajos resultados académicos y las problemáticas escolares se ha convertido en un discurso recurrente. Los docentes suelen culpar a los apoderados por la falta de apoyo en el hogar; los apoderados responsabilizan a los profesores por no motivar o comprender a sus hijos; los estudiantes son señalados por su apatía o desinterés, mientras que el sistema educativo es acusado de burocrático e ineficaz. Este artículo propone una mirada crítica y reflexiva sobre la corresponsabilidad educativa, entendiendo que el aprendizaje y la formación son procesos complejos que requieren la participación comprometida y activa de todos los actores involucrados. Desde un enfoque hermenéutico y cualitativo, se analizan las tensiones

que surgen en la relación entre la escuela, la familia y la sociedad, y se examinan los factores estructurales, culturales y éticos que inciden en la delegación de responsabilidades. El estudio plantea que la educación no puede reducirse a un juego de culpas, sino que demanda un compromiso colectivo sustentado en la cooperación, la empatía y el diálogo pedagógico permanente. Se concluye que solo mediante una corresponsabilidad genuina donde cada actor asuma su rol con sentido ético, reflexivo y comunitario será posible avanzar hacia una educación transformadora, inclusiva, participativa y socialmente justa.

Introduction

Between Blame and Responsibility: Tensions in the Contemporary Education System

Education, rather than merely a process of transmitting knowledge, is a profoundly human social practice, imbued with values, emotions, and shared responsibilities. It brings together different perspectives, expectations, and tensions that reflect not only the reality of the classroom but also the patterns of thought that underpin society. Within this context, the question “Whose fault is it?” has become a recurring refrain and, in many cases, a refuge from the complexity of contemporary educational problems.

In recent decades, the search for someone to blame has largely replaced collective reflection. Teachers blame a lack of family commitment; parents blame the school for students’ poor performance or lack of motivation; students attribute their difficulties to the rigidity of the system; and educational institutions cite bureaucracy to justify their limitations. Each actor seems to look the other way, and so the question “Whose fault is it?” becomes a symbolic strategy for avoiding self-criticism and shifting blame.

This trend is not coincidental, but rather a reflection of a social context characterized by fragmentation, pressure to produce results, and a loss of trust among educational stakeholders. Standardization policies, accountability systems, and media discourse have helped to entrench the idea that academic failure is the result of individual failings rather than structural causes. As a result, education is perceived as a series of personal mistakes rather than as a collective phenomenon that requires cooperation and dialogue.

Freire (1997) warns that any form of education that limits itself to assigning blame forfeits its liberating potential. Emancipatory education—the kind that transforms and humanizes—requires recognizing that learning is a collective act, that no one educates themselves or educates others without mediation. In this sense, guilt, as a cultural construct, acts as a divisive force; whereas shared responsibility—understood as an ethic of mutual care and shared commitment—represents an opportunity to rebuild the fabric of education.

In the Chilean and Latin American context, this issue takes on particular significance. Structural inequality, the administrative burden on teachers, and growing social distrust of educational institutions have created a situation in which the teaching profession is caught between its calling and the need to be accountable. As Bolívar (2015) argues, contemporary education systems have transformed professional responsibility into a form of control, in which teachers are evaluated more for meeting performance indicators than for educating students. This shift has eroded the ethical meaning of educational work, reducing the teaching profession to a technical and bureaucratic role.

Similarly, the discourse of blame permeates everyday interactions in the classroom and within the school community. Parent-teacher meetings, institutional reports, and analyses of results tend to focus on the question “Who failed?” rather than asking “What can we improve together?” This dynamic perpetuates a punitive mindset that stifles critical thinking and discourages cooperation. As Fullan (2014) points out, when educational improvement is based on fear or suspicion, innovation comes to a standstill and collective learning is undermined.

Given this situation, there is a need to rethink educational responsibility as a shared endeavor, in which each stakeholder—teachers, families, students, institutions, and the government—consciously assumes their role. Shared responsibility does not seek to eliminate individual responsibility, but rather to contextualize and complement it within a network of moral interdependence. From this perspective, education is viewed as an ethical and political act that requires collaboration, empathy, and dialogue, rather than punishment or blame.

This article aims to critically analyze the discourses and practices that underpin the culture of blame in the educational sphere and, at the same time, to explore shared responsibility as a possible path toward transformation. Through a hermeneutic approach and documentary analysis, grounded in teaching experience in vulnerable contexts, this study seeks to understand how the logic of blame is constructed, reproduced, and can be overcome in contemporary schools.

This reflection aims to contribute to the academic and professional debate on the moral purpose of education, promoting a perspective that goes beyond the search for culprits and embraces shared responsibility as a more humane and just way of educating. In the words of Freire (1997), *“education is an act of love and, therefore, an act of courage”*; an act that requires everyone’s participation, because no one educates alone, and no one can be saved without others.

The complexity of this scenario has been further compounded by the social, cultural, and technological transformations that characterize the 21st century. Contemporary schools no longer face only the challenge of imparting knowledge, but also that of responding to new demands related to social interaction, inclusion, cultural diversity, social-emotional well-being, and civic education. These demands have significantly raised the expectations placed on educational institutions, creating tensions between what society expects from schools and the actual capacity for action of the various stakeholders involved.

In this context, families have also undergone profound changes. The diversity of family structures, work demands, economic insecurity in some sectors, and the growing influence of digital technologies have changed traditional forms of educational support. Although family involvement continues to be recognized as a key factor in academic success, the specific conditions under which this involvement can take place are becoming increasingly diverse. Consequently, simplistically attributing responsibility for learning exclusively to the family or the school means ignoring the complexity of the social processes that influence contemporary education.

Furthermore, the spread of information and communication technologies has profoundly transformed the way children and young people access knowledge. School is no longer the primary source of information; instead, it has become one of many spaces where learning and meaning are constructed. This reality has redefined the role of teachers, who are no longer limited to conveying content but must instead guide, support, and develop critical thinking skills that enable students to function in increasingly complex and changing environments. However, this transformation has not always been accompanied by the necessary institutional and educational conditions, giving rise to new tensions regarding educational responsibilities.

Added to this is the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on education systems worldwide. The prolonged closure of schools forced much of the teaching and learning to take place at home, clearly highlighting the interdependence between schools and families. During this period, many teachers had to quickly adapt their teaching practices, while families took on the role of academic mentors—a task for which they did not always have enough time, resources, or preparation. This experience highlighted both the strengths and weaknesses of shared responsibility in education, demonstrating that educational processes depend on a complex network of relationships and mutual support.

Various international organizations have pointed out that today’s educational challenges cannot be addressed from fragmented perspectives. UNESCO (2021), for example, highlights the need to forge a new social contract for education, based on cooperation, democratic participation, and shared responsibility among all stakeholders in the educational community. Similarly, the OECD has emphasized that the most effective

education systems are those capable of fostering strong bonds of trust and collaboration among schools, families, students, and public authorities.

The scholarly literature has also highlighted the importance of viewing education as a collective responsibility. Epstein (2018) argues that partnerships between schools, families, and communities are one of the most important factors in promoting successful and sustainable educational trajectories over time. From this perspective, family involvement should not be viewed as an external obligation or as an extension of schoolwork at home, but rather as a form of collaboration based on shared goals and mutual recognition of abilities and responsibilities.

Similarly, Bryk & Schneider (2002) emphasize that relational trust is a fundamental resource for school improvement. When teachers, families, and students build relationships based on respect, communication, and cooperation, they are better able to collectively address educational challenges. Conversely, when mistrust, suspicion, or the search for someone to blame prevail, the chances of transformation are significantly reduced.

In this regard, shared responsibility in education emerges as a conceptual and practical alternative to the limitations of approaches centered on assigning blame. Rather than assigning blame to individuals for school-related problems, this approach aims to recognize the interdependent nature of educational processes and promote forms of participation that strengthen cooperation among the various stakeholders. Education, understood as a shared social responsibility, requires the simultaneous commitment of teachers, families, students, institutions, and public agencies, each contributing according to its specific expertise and capabilities.

Therefore, before asking who is responsible for educational problems, it is necessary to understand the social, cultural, and institutional conditions that influence the construction of those responsibilities. Only on the basis of this understanding will it be possible to move toward more collaborative, equitable, and sustainable forms of educational coexistence—ones capable of replacing the logic of blame with a genuine culture of shared responsibility.

Method

A Hermeneutic-Documentary Approach to Interpreting Discourses on Blame and Educational Responsibility

This study is based on a qualitative methodology of a hermeneutic-documentary nature, aimed at understanding the meanings and tensions that arise around guilt and responsibility in the educational context. Rather than describing facts or measuring behaviors, the aim is to interpret the discourses and practices that shape contemporary educational culture, recognizing that all understanding is a situated, historical, and ethical act (Gadamer, 2002).

The choice of hermeneutics stems from the need to address an essentially symbolic phenomenon: educational guilt. This cannot be reduced to empirical data or statistical categories, because it resides in language, emotions, and the normative frameworks that structure school life. In line with Ricoeur (1999), it is assumed that language not only reflects reality but also shapes it; therefore, analyzing discourses on responsibility involves examining how institutions construct their own truths.

The analytical framework consists of normative and theoretical texts that engage with one another and with teaching experience:

- National policies issued by the Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC, 2019, 2023).
- Reports from international organizations such as UNESCO (2019, 2022), the OECD (2021), and ECLAC (2022).
- Contributions from leading figures in contemporary educational thought: Freire (1997), Bolívar (2015), Fullan (2014), Hargreaves (2021), and Tedesco (2000).

These texts were selected for their relevance to understanding how responsibility is distributed within educational systems and how the search for someone to blame becomes normalized. The review was not limited to a literal reading, but rather involved a dialogic exercise in interpretation, in which each document was compared with the others and with the researcher's professional experiences.

Teaching experience, gained in schools with high levels of social vulnerability, is incorporated as an epistemological—rather than anecdotal—component. From this vantage point, the author-researcher analyzes how institutional policies and discourses play out in everyday practice, highlighting tensions, contradictions, and opportunities for transformation. This implication acknowledges, following Freire (1997), that “no one conducts research from a position of neutrality,” because every act of knowledge is also an act of commitment.

The analytical process was organized as an interpretive spiral:

1. Comprehensive reading of regulatory and theoretical texts.
2. Identification of emerging categories related to blame, the fragmentation of responsibility, institutional trust, and shared responsibility.
3. A reflective synthesis of theory and practice, contrasting findings from the literature with educational experience.

The validity of the study is based on three fundamental criteria:

- Theoretical coherence, which ensures consistency between the hermeneutic approach and the study's objectives.
- Interpretive transparency, expressed through an explicit description of the reflective process and the categories that guide the discussion.
- Ethical rigor, understood as respect for the individuals and institutions involved and as a commitment to interpretive truth rather than empirical verification.

This methodology recognizes education as a field of contested meanings, where blame and responsibility are constantly negotiated. For this reason, the method is not conceived as a rigid sequence, but rather as an open, reflective process that integrates theory, experience, and ethics.

In this way, research also becomes an act of moral reconstruction: a critical analysis that seeks to understand how a culture of blame arises in education and how it can be replaced by a practice based on shared responsibility.

Although the study does not aim for statistical generalizability, interpretive validity was ensured through three strategies:

- (a) theoretical consistency between the concepts under analysis and the emerging categories;
- (b) critical comparison with recognized conceptual frameworks; and
- (c) the researcher's reflective self-reference, in which the researcher acknowledges his or her role as an active participant in the educational phenomenon being analyzed.

Research ethics were addressed in accordance with the principles of respect, confidentiality, and interpretive fidelity. Since this research is based on experiences and

documents, no personal or sensitive data was included, ensuring a responsible and respectful approach.

In short, the hermeneutic method made it possible to reconstruct the pedagogical meaning behind the discourses of guilt, in order to reframe them in terms of shared responsibility and transformative commitment. This approach aims to generate knowledge that can be applied to teaching practice, rather than to produce universal truths.

Results

The results stem from the integration of documentary analysis and educational experience. Far from being merely a list of empirical findings, they are presented as interpretive categories that reveal how the concept of guilt and responsibility is shaped in contemporary schools. Four main dimensions emerged from the review and reflection: (1) the fragmentation of educational discourse, (2) the transfer of responsibility, (3) the crisis of institutional trust, and (4) the need to rebuild shared pedagogical responsibility.

Fragmentation of Educational Discourse

An analysis of ministry documents, improvement plans, and teachers' statements reveals a persistent disconnect between institutional expectations and pedagogical realities. While public policies emphasize accountability and achievement standards, teachers' day-to-day experience is marked by administrative overload, a lack of resources, and the emotional strain resulting from societal demands.

This gap creates a sense of professional isolation, and as a result, the search for external "culprits" becomes a defense mechanism in the face of institutional powerlessness. The documents reviewed (MINEDUC, 2023; UNESCO, 2022) reveal a tendency to implicitly hold teachers responsible for academic failure, while overlooking the structural conditions that contribute to inequality. When internalized, this mindset reinforces extreme self-expectations and fuels a culture of burnout.

Transfer of Liability

The second category identified relates to the phenomenon of responsibility transfer, understood as the symbolic shifting of blame onto other actors. In school settings, teachers often attribute learning difficulties to a lack of interest or a lack of family support; parents, in turn, blame teachers for failing to motivate their children; and educational institutions shift the pressure onto teachers, citing their "vocation" as a justification for their excessive workload.

This circular dynamic creates a system in which no one fully assumes their role. As Bolívar (2015) points out, shared responsibility requires breaking away from the logic of blame in order to move toward building an "educational 'we.'" However, the individualistic culture fostered by academic competition and comparative assessments hinders this transition.

Crisis of Institutional Trust

The hermeneutic analysis revealed a profound crisis of trust among educational stakeholders. Families perceive the school as distant or inflexible; teachers feel that society does not value their work; students feel disconnected from the institution. This loss of mutual trust is one of the main obstacles to building effective shared responsibility.

The literature agrees that trust is the foundation of all sustainable educational improvement (Fullan, 2014; Hargreaves, 2021). However, external monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, combined with media coverage that often undermines the legitimacy of teaching, have eroded the sense of community. Teachers are shifting from being agents of change to policy implementers, and families are shifting from being collaborators to being demanding.

Rebuilding Pedagogical Joint Responsibility

Finally, the results point to the need to reestablish pedagogical co-responsibility as an ethical and operational principle. This involves moving toward models of genuine collaboration between schools and families, centered on horizontal communication, mutual respect, and shared learning. Educational experience shows that when teachers and parents are able to build relationships based on trust and a shared purpose, students develop a greater sense of belonging and commitment to their learning.

This reconstruction also calls for a thorough review of the role of the state and of educational policies. It is not just a matter of delegating responsibilities, but of ensuring the structural conditions that make shared responsibility possible: institutional time set aside for collaborative work, teacher training in empathetic communication, and policies that value community participation.

In summary, the results reveal that a culture of blame acts as a symbolic barrier that hinders educational improvement. Overcoming this culture will not be achieved through more rules or controls, but rather through an ethical and relational shift: recognizing that education is a shared responsibility and that transformation begins when each stakeholder takes on their role with humility and commitment.

Discussion and Conclusions

From Human Nature and Cognitive Dissonance to Shared Responsibility in Education

Reflection on guilt in education cannot be reduced to an institutional analysis; it also requires an understanding of the human condition. In anthropological and psychological terms, guilt is a moral emotion that arises when a person perceives that they have violated a value or a norm. However, from an educational perspective, blame often becomes a defense mechanism: a way to protect one's self-esteem by shifting responsibility onto others. This shift has deep roots. As Festinger (1957) points out, human beings tend to avoid cognitive dissonance—that is, the psychological discomfort that arises when beliefs and actions do not align. In the field of education, this dissonance manifests itself when the stakeholders—teachers, families, or institutions—recognize, even if only implicitly, that they are not fully fulfilling their role, but are unwilling to accept this inconsistency.

Thus, blaming others (the system, the home, the student, or the teacher) reduces internal conflict by offering an emotionally comfortable—though intellectually poor—explanation. This psychological phenomenon fuels a culture of guilt, because it allows people to maintain a semblance of personal consistency without assuming collective responsibility. A sort of *tacit pact of self-exoneration* takes shape: each actor preserves their moral integrity by shifting the burden onto the others. In Ricoeur's words (1999), unprocessed guilt turns into resentment, and resentment prevents us from understanding and transforming.

Cognitive dissonance also explains the tendency to drop out or give up when faced with educational challenges. When a teacher, administrator, or family member feels that their efforts are not yielding visible results, they may experience frustration and discouragement. To reduce the discomfort, the subject reinterprets the situation: “It’s not worth trying,” “Students don’t want to learn anymore,” “Families don’t cooperate,” “The system is against us.” These phrases are not mere excuses; they are unconscious strategies for emotional self-regulation that alleviate the tension between duty and helplessness. However, in doing so, the individual ends up relinquishing his or her moral agency. As Bauman (2002) points out, liquid modernity has diluted the bonds of responsibility: each person acts as if the solution did not depend on themselves, but rather on an institutional abstraction that is always absent.

In schools, this logic translates into fragmented practices: teachers who teach out of a sense of obligation, families who delegate responsibility without providing support, students who learn out of fear of punishment, and school administrators who design policies without considering the reality of the classroom. The result is an educational community that coexists without ever truly coming together. Guilt thus becomes a shared language that everyone speaks, but that no one translates into commitment. The paradox is that this defensive rhetoric seeks to protect the dignity of those involved, but ends up eroding the fabric of trust that underpins the educational mission.

Overcoming this dynamic requires a paradigm shift: moving from “It’s not my fault” to “I am part of the solution.” Shared responsibility in education is presented here as an ethical and pedagogical alternative. It is not a matter of eliminating guilt—an emotion necessary for moral learning—but rather of transforming it into critical awareness. Shared responsibility requires recognizing the interdependence among stakeholders and accepting that every action (or inaction) has consequences for others. Gadamer (2002) noted that understanding is not justifying, but rather accepting the other’s point of view as a possible truth. In that sense, educational responsibility cannot be imposed from the outside, but must be cultivated from within the individual’s ethical core.

The ethics of care (Noddings, 2012) complements this perspective by situating the educational relationship within the realm of empathy and reciprocity. Taking responsibility does not mean taking the blame for others’ mistakes, but rather responding to others with commitment and respect. When a teacher acknowledges their limitations but continues to seek new strategies, or when a family, despite its shortcomings, maintains an honest dialogue with the school, an act of shared responsibility takes place: both recognize their vulnerability and, at the same time, their power to bring about change.

From a structural perspective, institutions must foster spaces for dialogue where this awareness can be cultivated. Education policies based solely on accountability perpetuate this dissonance: they demand responsibility without creating the conditions for exercising it. Instead, a policy of shared responsibility must combine support, reflection, and shared evaluation, recognizing that trust cannot be decreed but must be built.

From a Culture of Blame to an Ethos of Shared Responsibility in Education

The question “Whose fault is it?” has become an accepted framework for interpreting school life. On a symbolic level, it functions as a mechanism that imposes moral sanctions, regulates expectations, and stabilizes—at least on the surface—unresolved structural tensions. From the hermeneutic perspective adopted here, this is

not a discursive accident but a cultural habit that shapes the interpretation of educational events: when unsatisfactory results emerge, the first reaction is to identify a subject to whom causality and blame can be attributed. Based on a review of the literature and contextual analysis, it can be concluded that this culture of blame is reinforced on three fronts: (a) the excessive emphasis on technocratic accountability, (b) the fragmentation of roles among schools, families, and the state, and (c) the erosion of trust as a pedagogical and social bond (Bolívar, 2015; Fullan, 2014; OECD, 2021; MINEDUC, 2019, 2023; UNESCO, 2019, 2022).

The Blame Mechanism: Anatomy of an Institutional Habit

In light of Foucault (1975), the modern school not only teaches content; it also produces subjects under regimes of visibility and judgment. The proliferation of indicators, rankings, and protocols transforms evaluation into a space where accountability is individualized and context is rendered invisible. When a class performs poorly, the focus shifts to the teacher (their “classroom management”), then on the student (their “motivation”), and finally on the family (their “support”), but rarely on structural conditions: school segregation, inequitable funding, intensified teacher workloads, or policies that dictate rather than empower (ECLAC, 2022; MINEDUC, 2019).

This pattern is not merely rhetorical. It has practical consequences: it shifts professional energy away from pedagogical inquiry and toward defending one's own innocence. Instead of asking *what* aspects of the instructional design or institutional support need to be adjusted, the focus is on *who* should be held accountable for the outcome. The cost is twofold: it impoverishes the pedagogical conversation (because it is reduced to judgments) and it weakens cooperation (because each participant defends their position). Freire (1997) offers an epistemological solution: to shift the focus of the conversation from blame to critical praxis—understood as reflection and transformative action—where mistakes do not lead to criminalization but do entail a commitment.

Fragmentation of Roles and Blurring of Responsibility

An analysis of policies and reports reveals a consistent discourse on “collaborative work” and the “educational community,” but the concrete implementation of these concepts remains fragmented (UNESCO, 2019, 2022; MINEDUC, 2023). Schools are expected to simultaneously meet curriculum requirements, manage student interactions, submit administrative reports, and achieve standardized test scores; families are expected to provide ongoing support; and the government is expected to provide regulation, funding, and oversight. In practice, each actor operates according to different evaluation criteria, with incentives that do not always align. The result is a kind of “spun-out” responsibility: everyone is responsible for everything, and, paradoxically, no one takes full responsibility for anything.

On this point, Tedesco (2000) offers valuable insight: when technical efficiency replaces the educational purpose, the goals become blurred, and the school retreats into measurable tasks that are not necessarily meaningful. Hargreaves (2021) adds the emotional dimension: teaching becomes intense, with expectations piling up that exceed the limits of professional control. In this context, blame serves as an outlet: it offers a quick—albeit simplistic—explanation for failure.

Pedagogical Trust: The Missing Moral Infrastructure

A review of the evidence and current practices shows that trust is the element that has been most eroded and, at the same time, the one most needed for improvement (Fullan, 2014). Without trust, evaluation becomes scrutiny; dialogue, an argument; and

coordination, compliance. The crisis of confidence stems not only from adverse personal experiences, but also from a governance model that prioritizes external control over the development of internal capacity. The result is an ecosystem in which mistakes threaten professional and parental identities, rather than fostering organizational learning.

Rebuilding trust does not mean abdicating responsibility. This involves redefining it as a promise that can be fulfilled among actors who recognize their interdependence: the school promises quality education and care; the family promises realistic and respectful support; the government promises conditions of equity and support. When these promises are kept, trust becomes the moral foundation of school life.

Shared Responsibility: An Ethical, Political, and Pedagogical Shift

Shared responsibility does not mean diluting responsibilities into a “everyone and no one” scenario. It is a compromise-based design that clearly allocates tasks, acknowledges power imbalances, and establishes mechanisms for mutual support. From the perspective of the ethics of care, the educational relationship is not contractual but relational: it is woven through the recognition of the other as a subject of dignity and knowledge (Noddings, 2012). In practical terms, this means:

- Reframe assessment as a formative conversation: shared evidence, collaboratively developed criteria, and areas for improvement with specific goals (not just broad standards).
- Institutionalize opportunities and spaces for collaborative work (teachers–families–support teams) that are neither incidental nor voluntary, but rather an integral part of the school’s design.
- Develop professional capacity (continuing professional development, communities of practice) focused on solving real-world problems, not just on complying with requirements.
- Aligning policies with practices: autonomy with support, accountability with guidance, and requirements with resources (UNESCO, 2022; MINEDUC, 2023; OECD, 2021).

This shift requires distributed leadership (Bolívar, 2015): not a leadership style that centralizes decision-making, but rather a pedagogical approach that empowers shared voices and responsibilities. It also involves shifting from “dealing with blame” to managing learning: where the central question is not *who was at fault*, but *what we need to change together*.

5. Implications for the parties involved: taking responsibility without bearing the burden, responding without assigning blame

- Teachers. The challenge is twofold: to maintain professional standards while also safeguarding emotional well-being in the workplace. Shared responsibility encourages us to engage in hopeful self-reflection: recognizing areas for improvement, seeking support, documenting evidence, and sharing it. Professionalism is strengthened through community, not in isolation (Fullan, 2014).
- Families. Sharing responsibility does not mean shifting the school’s role to the home, but rather opening channels for parents to contribute their knowledge, time, and perspectives, with realistic expectations. Schools should teach students how to support others, not just ask for support.
- Students. Stop treating them as objects of evaluation and recognize them as agents. Giving them a voice in setting goals, criteria, and evidence fosters a sense of belonging and reduces the tendency to place blame on others.

- Status. Public accountability cannot be achieved through oversight alone; it requires a level playing field (funding, training, social-emotional support, and intersectoral networks). A state that shares responsibility “demands and empowers”: it balances accountability with capacity building (OECD, 2021; ECLAC, 2022).

Operational Criteria: From Concept to Design

To ensure that shared responsibility is not merely a slogan, we propose verifiable criteria for implementation:

1. Explicit definition of roles and expected deliverables for each stakeholder (what each will do over the next 90 days and what evidence they will provide).
2. Shared guidelines for family support (frequency, type of support, channels) that take sociocultural diversity into account.
3. Short improvement cycles (plan–do–review–act) led by teaching teams with management support, documenting adjustments and results.
4. Guidelines for shared responsibility (school–families–students) with institutional status: public agreements, monitoring, and feedback.
5. Systemic formative assessment: reports that include not only scores, but also actions taken, lessons learned from mistakes, and next steps.

These criteria translate ethics into organizational architecture, avoiding the “moral trap” of demanding unconditional collaboration.

Limitations and Scope of the Approach

Like all interpretive research, our analysis does not aim to make statistical generalizations; rather, it seeks to make a phenomenon intelligible and to offer avenues for action. Its strength lies in the coherence between the framework, methodology, and situated interpretation. There are still avenues for future research: case studies of schools that have transitioned from a judgmental approach to one of collaboration; the impacts of short-term improvement cycles involving family participation; or comparative analyses of policies that foster (rather than merely control) shared responsibility.

In light of this journey, we maintain that education is not strengthened by assigning blame, but by sharing commitments. A culture of blame, while it may offer quick explanations, undermines pedagogical judgment, erodes trust, and delays necessary changes. Shared responsibility, on the other hand, requires a more difficult kind of courage: taking responsibility together with others. It means taking responsibility for one's own part, acknowledging the parts of others, and creating the conditions for those parts to be fulfilled.

For this reason, we propose understanding educational responsibility as a public promise: what schools can reasonably deliver, what families can sustain within their actual means, what students can take on with support, and what the government must guarantee so that these expectations do not remain mere rhetoric. Only then will assessment once again become learning, leadership once again become service, and the school once again become a community.

From an ethical standpoint, this conclusion can be summarized as a warning and a hope. The warning: Blame divides; it turns participants into adversaries and shuts down educational dialogue. Hope: Shared responsibility brings people together; it reorganizes efforts, redistributes decision-making power, and creates the moral climate for learning. In closing, and without straying from an academic tone, it is worth recalling the principle that guides our conscience:

“For each one will bear his own burden” (Galatians 6:5, RVR1960).

Not as a call for isolation, but as a reminder that each part is indispensable and, at the same time, insufficient without the others. A quality education begins there: where responsibility and care go hand in hand

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