

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF TEACHER'S ACCOUNTABILITY

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Every time there is a pay commission, it invariably tries to tag the enhanced salary to certain conditions. This is done with an intention to ensure better qualitative changes in the educational scenario. The minutes details of implementing the enhanced scales of pay are worked out carefully, checked and rechecked both by the authorities and the recipient teachers both taking utmost care in every possible detail. However, neither of these two give an equal importance to the other side of it-the demand for quality assurance. Importance, if any, is narrowed in the apprehensive examination of the conditions laid by the committee, to be criticized and objected to by the teachers associations.

It is true that teaching is considered a noble profession and is unique in self-accountability. But a combination of over romanticisation of the profession and self accountability as a sole measure of evaluation may sometimes give rise to delusions of grandeur among teaching community.

Increasing resistance to all attempts at evaluation of the teachers is noticed especially in the past two decades. The democratic and the most practical way of teachers' evaluation by students (in the anonymous secret feedback box) and the practice of the principal/Head of the department attending and assessing the class of a junior colleague has almost become extinct yielding to the resistance from teachers' associations. The only assessment that prevails at present is the ritual called the Annual Confidential Report - ACR as is popularly known. Even this, acquired sufficient taboo as it either remained just a formality or is condemned to be used as a "stick" by the management. Thus, taking a full turn we realise that the teaching profession is left without any meaningful evaluation and accountability.

In countries like Poland radical trials like allowing the choice of teachers to students are being experimented as a measure of quick quality enhancement (university News 12 April 1993). Though it is too early for India to chew such ideas, serious thinking has to go into finding the means of filling the great void in accountability. But the very concept of accountability in the teaching profession has, in phases, completely evaporated into the thin air not leaving behind even a faint fragrance. Given such conditions, it is rather difficult to decide the pivotal point of its revival. Nevertheless, reviving it is more or the only saving device to protect the quality of secondary education from further slide which may be devastating.

Concern with continuously falling standards of education led to a search of causes as well as remedial measures not only to stem this trend but also to reverse it. This led to the emergence of the concept of teacher accountability. In India this concept gained currency after the publication of National

Policy on Education (1986) and Programme of Action (1986). Some of the educational institutions like IITs have adopted it some form while other institutions are sitting on the threshold unable to take a decision whether or not to adopt it. In this chapter it is proposed, at first, to describe the concept of accountability and different stages of accountability process in education. The major thrust of these sections are to uncover the misconceptions of notoriety woven around the term "accountability", and to discuss different stages of the process of accountability in the field of education.

CONCEPT OF ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to examine critically the concept of accountability in education, a closer look on some definitions of accountability will lead to the right direction.

According to Neave (1967), Accountability is a Process which involves the duty both of individuals and the organisation of which they are part to render periodically accounts for tasks performed, to a body having both the power and authority to modify that performance. As commonly understood "accountability" means holding people responsible or answerable for the work they perform. More formally, it expresses a role relationship: the requirement on the occupant of a role, by those who authorize that role, to answer for the results of work expected from the role. This definition suggests that in an accountability process, both individual and the organization can be held responsible for the work they perform or are answerable for the performance or outcome and on the basis of the outcome modify their performance. We may also conclude from this definition that accountability has to be ensured at two levels : individual and institutional levels.

Lessinger (1973) defined accountability as : "Accountability is to be responsible for something to someone with predictable consequences for the desirable and understandable performance of the responsibility." This definition like Neave's definition too stressed responsibility or answerability of some one for something.

According to the concise Dictionary of Education (1982), "Educational accountability is a concept in which the school system, and especially teachers, are held responsible for the learning and academic progress of students". This definition stresses on the responsibility of teachers as well as school systems for the academic progress of students.

According to Armstrong (1981), "Accountability is an expression of the Public's demand that evidence be provided for demonstrating that education and educators are giving the taxpayers 'their money's worth.' He further explained that the subject matter of accountability for the teacher, principal and superintendent is distinct. For example, the subject matter of accountability for the teacher involves the learning of the pupil, developing learning materials, and interpreting the purposes and processes of instruction to people who have had less opportunity to study them. The subject matter for principal involves Scheduling staff time, providing support material and equipment and identifying resource assistance for staff members. The subject matter of the superintendent involves identifying and

acquiring staff expertise, planning for budgetary distribution, and maintaining supportive environmental influence on the school. This definition points out the cause or pressure for accountability and gives an impression that education and educators should demonstrate the evidence of their performance in terms of money spent on education. This definition also enumerates the task assigned to teachers, principals and superintendents, for which they are responsible. Unlike previous definitions, this definition defines accountability as demonstrating performance proportionate to the money spent on it. With the improvement in the pay scales and service conditions of schools and university teachers, this definition has assumed greater relevance. Ever increasing expenditure on education requires that education system as well as the educators provide proof to the society that they are providing services to the society whose worth, if not more, is at least commensurate with the expenditure being incurred.

According to Wagner (1989), accountability has two aspects-moral and legal (or contractual).

Moral accountability- It is based on a sense of responsibility - a feeling that one is responsible to one's clients (students and parents) colleagues and oneself.

Legal Accountability - It is being responsible to one's employer in terms of fulfillment of employment.

Though both the aspects of teachers' accountability are crucial for the effective performance of the role, it is quite possible for a teacher to satisfy legal responsibility, yet not live upto moral responsibility. A teacher may take his classes according to schedule, but in a disinterested manner fulfilling the requirement of legal accountability but not for moral accountability (Shukla, 1998). It is therefore, desirable to shift emphasis from legal accountability to moral accountability.

A.Gnanam (1994) mentioned that, from broader and analytical perspective, accountability in education may be considered in two forms, namely, macro and Micro Accountability.

Macro Accountability (other wise called social accountability) refers to the responsibilities of the education system to the society represented by the students, parents and the government.

Micro Accountability is concerned with the responsibilities and performance of each one of the functionaries within the system academic, administrators and the various bodies of the education system to the management board as to what they have accomplished towards the overall objective of education during the given period of time.

According to International Dictionary of Education, Teacher Accountability means, "Theory that teachers and school system should take responsibility for improvement in pupil achievement and that teacher effectiveness by this criterion should be measured by external agencies".

Educators are divided in their opinion concerning accountability, some fearing that accountability is to be the vehicle to cut costs and evaluate teachers solely by means of financial Criteria. Other educators, equally, see

the accountability movement as a necessary step to restore public confidence in the public education system through more efficient educational management. Thus, the precise meaning of the term 'accountability' remains vague and universally accepted definition of accountability does not exist. The terms real definition has meaning only when expressed in the context of a particular application.

Hence, it is very difficult to define accountability in a sentence or a paragraph. However, we can infer only about the real nature of accountability from the description of various definitions and opinions of experts on the term accountability, which highlight its following distinguishing features:

Accountability means holding people responsible or answerable for the work they perform.

It express a role relationship : the requirement on the occupant of a role, by those who authorize that role, to answer for the results of work expected from the role.

Accountability is not a one way conceptual formation. In an educational system it includes teachers as well as principal, supportive staff, other members of the schools, community's responsibility to the school.

It is a process to render periodically accounts for task performed, to a body having both the power and authority to modify that performance subsequently, perhaps by use of sanction or reward.

Accountability is an expression of public demand to demonstrate evidence that education and educators are giving the taxpayers their money's worth.

The process of accountability may use various tools and techniques to establish itself. No single method, no matter how sophisticated and comprehensive, is appropriate to establish accountability.

Another way of understanding the concept of accountability is through citing its non-examples. It is useful to consider a few such non-examples.

The first non-example of accountability is performance contracting, in which students' performance is the basis for payment : no achievement no money. It may be useful tool to achieve accountability, but certainly, it is not accountability.

Secondly, Programme-Planning-Budgeting-System (PPBs) or Programme-Evaluation-Review-Technique(PERT), and similar systematic planning schemes are not accountability at all. These techniques are ways to achieve accountability. As such they are not accountability.

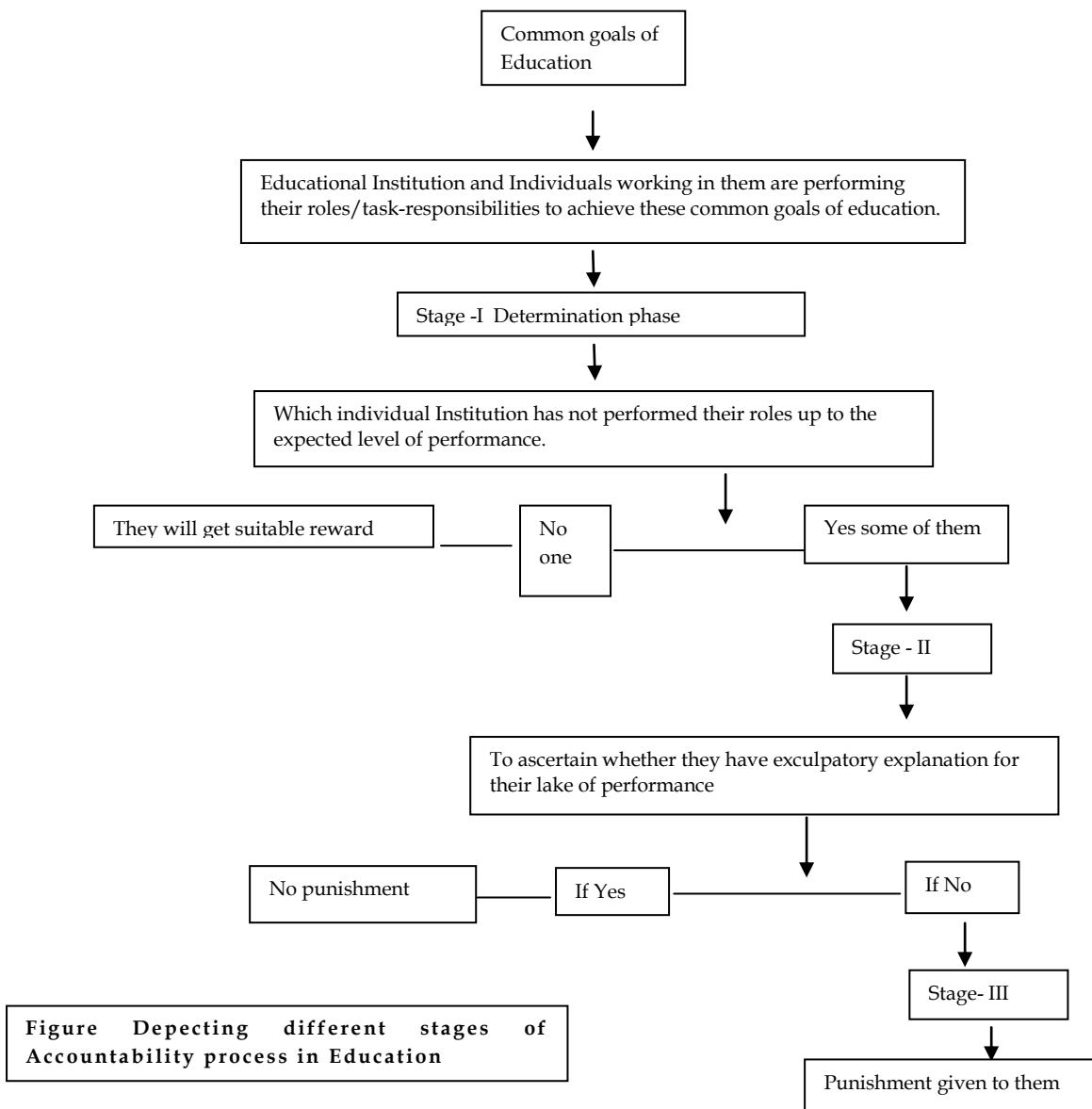
Thirdly, situational testing in which teachers are tested directly by observing their classroom behaviour and by testing the 'effects' of the teacher in special situations, is not accountability. Since Situational Testing measures the performance of teachers and the students, it is a measurement device and not accountability.

Fourthly Accountability is often related with evaluation, assessment, measurement and monitoring. The term 'assessment' is used to describe the collection and tabulation of such data as student scores on test, whereas

'evaluation' is generally, an assessment or appraisal of any appropriate entity and expressed descriptively or numerically. Though the word 'evaluation' includes assessment, but goes beyond that to include judgment of the quality of the obtained measurement. Thus, one could assess a teacher's performance in terms of his or her students' test scores; but to evaluate whether or not the performance is satisfactory one must also have a set of standards against which to judge the quality of that performance. Similarly, 'measurement' is the process of ascertaining the quantitative extent of a given physical characteristic with the use of an appropriate scale and measuring device. On the other hand, 'monitoring' is a device that makes continuous observations of some situation or process, as with closed-circuit T.V apparatus serving as a monitor on the building entrance. The purpose of monitoring is continuous observation and possibly to regulate a process or endeavour accountability is different from all the above mentioned concepts because 'accountability' means holding individual/institution responsible or answerable for the work they perform and assessment, evaluation, measurement, and monitoring are useful tools to achieve accountability.

STAGES OF ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS

As stated earlier accountability is a process which involves the duty both of the individuals and the organization of which they are part. The process of bringing institutions/ individuals working in them to account has three consecutive and connected stages (see fig. 1.1). First comes the determination stage whether any, and if so which of them have, not performed their roles/ task-responsibilities upto the expected level of performance. If the out come is negative, the process comes to an end by giving suitable rewards to them. If it is positive, then the next move is to ascertain whether institutions/individuals have an excuse, that is, an exculpatory explanation for their lack of performance. If they have an excuse investigation ends and no punishment is given to institution/individuals. But if they have no excuse, they enter the third stage, imposition of punishment to them.



Conclusion

Traditionally teachers have been held in high esteem and education as an acclaimed pre-occupation of the society. Teachers were recognized to be men and women of high calibre and unquestionable integrity and education as a means to attain higher levels and of human existence. Teachers were supposed to be duty-bound and spared no efforts to educate and improve the wards placed in their charge and also work timelessly to explore new knowledge and thus improve their own. The teachers lived a simple life and personified the popular belief of an ideal human being giving more to the society they lived in and expecting very little in return. They have in fact been placed on the same pedestal as that of parents and to some extent on level with the super natural being, the God. It was a matter of faith on the part of the society that teachers were considered responsible, reliable and

dependable beyond any doubt. Thus the accountability of a teacher was never a debatable issue, till recently.

The changing scenario of society and its influence on education is forcing education to change its objectives as well. Deteriorating standards of education and the poor quality of products coming out of educational institutions, have made the society to question the do's and dont's of the education system. Recently, however, teachers sense of responsibility and integrity has been questioned and many of them are criticized for their negligence of duty and obligations. It is said that they are more concerned for improving their service conditions and emoluments than for discharging their legitimate duties and responsibilities. Particularly, deterioration in the quality of education and poor performance of pupils have raised the question of teachers accountability. Thus accountability of teachers and the urgency of introducing a formal system of accountability in general and secondary education in particular is the need of the hour.

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