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ACCOUNTABILITY OF STAKEHOLDERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

ASHOKKUMAR B SURAPUR

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION(B.Ed) KARNATAKA STATE WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY
BIJAPUR

Abstract:

In India, promoting quality in education has been the focus of almost all the committees and commissions constituted at different stages of the development of the higher education system. Every education commission which has examined the educational problems of the country had drawn attention to the most important components of the educational system, ie teachers, students, clients, management/government employees.

KEY WORDS:

Accountability , Higher education , promoting quality fraudulence.

INTRODUCTION

Accountability has always been a basic concept in public education, as it is in all public affairs, although ideas about how to accomplish it have changed. Accountability signifies a quest for efficiency, where efficiency implies a demand that public money should not be wasted through fraudulence or incompetence.

The quest for educational accountability relies on a three-legged stool:

Standards
Assessment
Consequence

The point is accountability should not be punitive toward either students or teachers or for that matter schools but ensure that when a student is awarded a diploma, it should mean that the student has obtained the requisite knowledge and skills necessary to be successful. Restoring value and credibility to a senior school certificate is good for our students, good for our economic future and good for our society as a whole.

In India, promoting quality in education has been the focus of almost all the committees and commissions constituted at different stages of the development of the higher education system. Among the various national consultations, discussions and recommendations that give a direction and focus to our developmental strategies, the National Policies on Education(NPE) played a major role. The NPE of 1986 was greatly influenced by the inclusion of Education in the concurrent list so that the central government could have a meaningful role to ensure quality of Education.

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WHY DO WE NEED QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

The question is answered by the word “accountability”. This answer immediately provokes a second question “accountability to whom?”. There are several answers to this question because higher education (from whole universities to colleges, departments and individual teachers) is accountable to at least three different groups-societies (government), clients (students, employers) and subject (profession, colleagues).

There is a popular demand and on Economic necessity for more higher education. Society pays for much of this through taxes. Government acts for society in distributing funds to higher education either directly to higher education, either directly to the universities or indirectly through student grants or loans. Government have a responsibility to society to ensure that what they 'buy' from higher education is acceptable and provides value for money. Governments all over the world have established agencies concerned with quality and efficiency in higher education. However, accountability to society is not only a matter of return or investment. Universities and colleges exist to safeguard and transit a cultural heritage. Society needs assurance that universities are not failing in this duty also. This is also very much a part of quality assurance.

Some institutions are of higher quality than others. How should the available funds be allocated? Should higher levels of funding go to institutions of higher quality (a reward to encourage all institutions to do better)?, or to institutions with lower quality in order to raise them at least to an acceptable threshold standard?. The latter option is the one to be more supported in a country like ours where the institutions are deprived of quality for want of support from the state. Need based funding has to be there and there should be mechanisms to find out the ground realities causing deterioration of quality. There should be provisions for remedying them. In the case of quality institutions, there should be institutions for sustaining and promoting them and helping them to achieve much higher levels of quality.

Teachers are accountable to their professional colleagues, that the integrity of their discipline is upheld and that students develop positive attitudes towards their subject and its use in society. Making only teachers accountable is not justified as they have very little to do between text and tests or the opportunity to use their creativity and ability. They have to first finish content and syllabi determined by someone and prepare their students for tests which will be decided by yet someone else. So why should they be held accountable for something ever which they have no control?.

Usually teachers disown the results of a process which is not initiated by them, but is imposed on them by administrative authorities. And teachers ask “how I am accountable to your-end results of my secondary school leavers? I am only a subject teacher”. The initial enthusiasm with which new teachers enter schools gets evaporated once they encounter unanticipated working conditions in schools and lack of support from the head teacher or senior colleagues.

A professional accountability system is a set of commitments and practices that are intended to enhance the probability that good learning processes will occur for students, minimise occurrence of harmful practices and provide for internal self correctiveness in the system to diagnose and change direction of action that may not promote good practices among students, Accountability includes assisting learner needs and progress, assessment of teachers, supervisory authority and school functioning. A professional accountability system desires to ensure responsibilities and practices that are backed by knowledge and are client friendly.

Professional accountability system should pay attention to recruitment policies, teacher supervision, teacher support, evaluation of teachers, opportunities for sharing professional concerns, assessment of classrooms practices, creation of mechanism to redress, teacher grievances, provide incentives for good work and provide avenues for sustained teacher learning.

CONCLUSION

As lorni Earl (1998) points out “accountability looks forward. Being accountable is not a ledger page or a spreadsheet. It means taking the information and using it to make judgements about quality, about how good is good enough, and most importantly, about how to make changes that will enhance and extend students learning for all students accountability is active not passive. Those who really want an accountable education system can best achieve it by becoming intensively involved in their local school striving to develop a common vision for public education in their community and working with the entire school community to achieve it.

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ASHOKKUMAR B SURAPUR

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION(B.Ed) KARNATAKA STATE
WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY BIJAPUR.

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