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Autonomy in Higher Education - Towards an Accountability Management Model

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ABSTRACT

Higher Education Institutions cherish the desire to obtain the status of 'Autonomy'. This gives substantial freedom and maneuverability to improve the quality of education and global brand building exercise which is crucial for their survival and growth in the face of challenges and competitions. Autonomy implies the freedom to have self-sustainable practices in the overall management of academic and administrative matters. Developing new courses, designing curriculum, determining fee structure, admission of students, engaging teachers, remuneration and retention, teaching-learning, examination and evaluation, and grading, all come under the purview of autonomy. Eventually, autonomy is paving way for increased responsibility and accountability. This paper aims to discuss the institutional responsibility-autonomy linkages in the main operational areas of autonomy and illustrates the accountability outcomes of autonomy. An attempt is also made to arrive at an Accountability Management practice styles and discusses the processes which come into play therein. Besides, key principles of Accountability management are elaborated.

Keywords: Autonomy, Accountability Management, Higher Education Institutions

1. INTRODUCTION:

It has become common in developed countries to give autonomy to educational institutions. Devoid of political and bureaucratic control, autonomy helps institutions to improve their systems and practices to enhance quality standards, thereby contributing to society. Autonomy helps institutions to think independently with responsibility and generate accountability. Such thinking is considered as 'thinking from the top'. On the other hand, in many countries, higher education is controlled by corrupt politics and bureaucracy and

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hence they cannot think independently. Institutions that cannot think with responsibility and accountability to further their growth are considered as 'thinking from the bottom'. Such institutions remain stunted chained by regulations of accreditation organizations. Autonomy implies the freedom to have self-sustainable practices in the overall management of academic and administrative matters. Developing new courses, designing curriculum, determining fee structure, admitting students, engaging teachers, remuneration and retention, teaching-learning, examination and evaluation, and grading, all come under the purview of autonomy. Eventually, autonomy is paving way for increased responsibility and accountability.

2.RELATED WORKS :

There are many scholarly research publications on issues related to autonomy, innovation, best practices, pedagogy, quality, accountability, etc some of which focus on teacher accountability and institutional autonomy. A gist of selected works is provided in table 1.

S. No.	Area of Work in	Reference	
5. 110.	HEIS	Focus / Issues	
1	Teacher	Performance indicators for	Banta, T. W. et al.
	accountability	accountability and improvement	(1994). [1]
2	Teacher	Change in accountability system in HE	Wellman, J. V.
	accountability	system	(2001). [2]
3	Teacher	Funding and autonomy for reform and	Kallison, J. M. et al.
	accountability	accountability	(2010). [3]
4	Teacher	Societal Expectation And Institutional	Aithal, P. S. et al.
	accountability	Accountability	(2015). [4]
5	Teacher	'Theory A' for managing people for	Aithal, P. S. et al.
	accountability	performance	(2016). [5]
6	Teacher	Application of Theory of	Aithal, P. S. et al.
	accountability	Accountability on faculty performance	(2016). [6]
7	Teacher	Accountability pressure, academic	Lauen, D. L. et al.
	accountability	standards, and educational triage	(2016). [7]
8	Teacher	Need for accountability in education in	Mbiti, I. M. (2016).
	accountability	developing countries	[8]
9	Teacher	Dynamic effects of educational	Macartney, H.
	accountability	accountability	(2016). [9]
10	Teacher	Seven Silos of Accountability in	Brown, J. T. (2017).
	accountability	Higher Education	[10]
11	Teacher	How to Boost Faculty Research	Aithal, P. S. (2018).
	accountability	Performance using Theory of	[11]
		Accontability	
12	Institutional	The concept of autonomy in Higher	Warnock, M. (1992).
	autonomy	education	[12]
13	Institutional	The decline of academic autonomy in	Benjamin, E. (1994).
	autonomy	higher education	[13]

 Table 1: Related Scholarly Work

	T		
14	Institutional	Academic identity and autonomy in a	Henkel, M. (2005).
	autonomy	changing policy environment	[14]
15	Institutional	Regulatory autonomy and	Enders, J. et al.
	autonomy	performance	(2013). [15]
16	Institutional	Academic freedom and university	Ren, K. et al. (2013).
	autonomy	autonomy	[16]
17	Institutional	Strategic Planning in Higher	Srinivasa Rao, A. et
	autonomy	Education Institutions	al. (2015). [17]
18	Institutional	Autonomy and Accountability in	Tripathi, K. et al.
	autonomy	Higher Education	(2016). [18]
19	Institutional	Opportunities and Challenges for	Aithal, P. S. et al.
	autonomy	Private Universities in India	(2016). [19]
20	Institutional	Autonomy for excellence in higher	Sankaran, K. et al.
	autonomy	education in India	(2016). [20]
21	Institutional	Innovations in private universities	Aithal, P. S. et al.
	autonomy		(2016). [21]
22	Institutional	Autonomy and accountability in	Zare, R. N. (2018).
	autonomy	institutions of higher education	[22]
23	Institutional	Autonomy in Higher Education	Waghodekar, P. H.
	autonomy		$(20\overline{1}8).$ [23]
24	Institutional	Analysis of Higher Education in	Aithal, P. S. et al.
	autonomy	Indian National Education Policy	(2019). [24]
		Proposal 2019	

3. OBJECTIVES AND AGENDA :

The paper is conceptual in nature and the following objectives are set:

- (1) To know the implications of autonomy for higher education institutions
- (2) To relate autonomy with institutional accountability
- (3) To identify responsibility accountability linkages
- (4) To determine the accountability outcomes of autonomy in HEIs
- (5) To distinguish conventional management and accountability management
- (6) To attempt an Accountability Management model that applies to organizations/institutions

4. RESPONSIBILITY-ACCOUNTABILITY LINKAGES:

Starting from designing curriculum to admitting students, teaching-learning, examination, evaluation, and grading, covers the broad spectrum of institutional activities that benefit from autonomy and translates its responsible actions to ensure accountability. Eight major areas of autonomy identified and discussed here reveal the responsibility-accountability relationship on the institutional side. For instance, it is well within the responsibility invested in the institutions having the autonomy to choose courses which they should offer. Conventional multipurpose courses now serve no use such that institutions should respond to changing times and evolving context of job markets. Business Analytics, E-Commerce, Supply Chain Management, etc. are some such examples of evolving

interdisciplinary areas. While at the same time, it shall be binding to ensure that the students who take up such courses are employable and secure employment. Another aspect is designing a curriculum where it is well within the maneuverability of institutions to make it student-centric. This would ensure adequate development of the knowledge and skills of the students. Coming to admissions to various programs, the institution should ensure merit as decisive to preserve the equal opportunity to all prospective students. The fee is a sensitive issue because it is the financial backbone of the institution. The very high fee structure can prevent genuine students from losing the opportunity, while very low will render unviable to operate or maintain quality. The responsibility in this regard would be deciding on a reasonable fee structure and obviously, it demonstrates accountability very well [25-26].

Teachers are the instruments of the institution which would serve to display its accountability through the fulfillment of the goals of the institution. The goals would invariably include quality teaching to quality produces. The responsibility of hiring competent teachers thus becomes important. Remunerating and retaining such teachers call for equitable rewards that reflect the institution's accountability to maintain a contented and productive workforce. In modern times partnership-based learning has received great attention in higher education, where teaching and learning are mutually complementary. Students and teachers narrow their distance (physical and intellectual) and students actually become empowered to discover knowledge. Learning what they don't know is also discovering knowledge because the teacher then assumes the role of a facilitator. This cannot be attained in the conventional frame and needs to evolve innovations and best practices. Examination and evaluation put together is the true measure of student competence acquired through doing the course and it is the responsibility vested in the institutions to make it so. Foolproof examination and evaluation spell out the accountability of the institution for results that are a true measure of competency acquired. In the end, grading serves to indicate the accomplishment of students, and reflect the quality of the institution [27-28]. The institutional responsibilityaccountability linkages are shown in table 2.

	Table 2.Institutional desponsibility and Accountability Linkages					
Sl.No.	Area of Autonomy	Explicit Responsibility	Implicit Accountability			
1.	Choice of Courses	Customized to industry relevance	Employability generation			
2.	Designing Curriculum	Student-centric in focus	Development of knowledge and skills			
3.	Admission of Students	Merit as decisive	Ensure equality of opportunity			
4.	Determining fee structure	Reasonable viable	Not deterrent to deserving			

Table 2:Institutional Responsibility and Accountability Linkages

5.	Engaging Teachers	Depends on competence	Fulfillment of goals of the
			institution
6	Remuneration and	Equitable rewards	Contentment for sustaining
	Retention		efficiency.
7.	Teaching and	Innovations and Best	Partnership based learning
	Learning	practices	
8.	Examination and	True measure of	Commitment to results
	Evaluation	competence	
9.	Grading	Projects accomplishments	Reflection of quality
	_	of students	

5. ACCOUNTABILITY OUTCOMES OF AUTONOMY :

It is interesting to see the accountability dimensions in terms of institutional, teacher, and students against some of the prominent actions and its outcomes, in the major areas of autonomy. Taking, for instance, autonomy to offer new courses will result in exploring new opportunities which suits the needs and interests of the prospective students as well as the demand factor in the job market, existing body of knowledge already accumulated in the subject, influence of other institutions and even those of competitors. Similarly, the autonomy for curriculum design and development affords plenty of freedom to customise as per need and relevance. Taking the two together it will create institutions, as well as converting it student-centric. Teachers are accountable through building the desired competency among the learners as well as enhancing student learning. Students also display accountability by offering themselves willingly to take challenges opened up through the new courses and demonstrate increased involvement in learning. Accountability dimensions of nine major areas that can translate autonomy in action are listed in table 3.

Sl.No.	Autonomy in Action	Outcome	Institutional Accountability	Teacher Accountability	Student Accountability
1.	New Courses	Exploring opportunities	Filling knowledge	Building desired	Willingness to undertake
2.	Curriculum Development	Customization	gaps Student- centric focus	competency Enhance student	challenges Increased involvement in
	Development		contri lo rocus	learning	learning
3.	Teaching- Learning Methodologies	Variety and diversity	Promoting innovation	Adopting Best practices	Developing Partnership
4.	Determining Fee Structure	Generating Revenue	Maintaining quality service	The best return for the students	Value for money

 Table 3:Accountability Outcomes of Autonomy

5.	Remuneration	Fair Rewards	Rewards	Expressing	Respect for the
	and Rewards		suited to serve	commitment	profession
			as motivators		
6.	Examination and	True and	Ensure	Best suited to	Reverence and
	Evaluation	Objective	transparency	student needs	acknowledgment
	Reforms	assessment			
7.	Faculty	Merit as a	Nurture	Maintain	Honest and
	Performance	measure of	standards	consistency	objective
	Assessment	performance			
8.	Student	Cultivate	Practice	Empowered	Avoid misuse
	Associations	leadership	democracy	students	
9.	Grading	Translating	A true	Symbol of	Mark of success
	_	assessment	reflection of	effort	
		into the score	judged ability		

6. CONVENTIONAL VS. ACCOUNTABILITY MANAGEMENT :

Conventional management and Accountability management is distinguished in Table 4. Seven major styles of practices in conventional management are listed and the corresponding styles in accountability management are presented. The start of an activity is assigning responsibility. In contrast, accountability management is more proactive, the individual owns to assume responsibility. If this condition is to be created a process has to be set in motion which gives greater and sufficient role clarity for the individual. Role clarity here is not about structured rules, structured relationships, and structured rules but of understanding and identifying himself as the performer. This evolves out of conceptualization of self where the individual looks inward rather than look outward to discover his role. Targets are set and given, rather imposed on the person usually in conventional management practice whereas in accountability management the person arrives at the target, a process involving role perception -how he looks at it - as friend or enemy. This boils down to looking at work (and target) as a friend or enemy, definitely a question of attitude. The consciousness of the task enables one to befriend the target. Individuals work as a team in executing a task and usually, teams are engaged. Accountability management believes that teamwork is inherent quality, but there needs to further teamwork through a process of role enrichment where the employee identifies his role as being shared by others and integrate himself into a team. This builds a bond that releases considerable synergy through collaborative action. Extracting work is most often what conventional management is all about. Every other activity is built around making it softer in appeal to the individual. Accountability management believes in creating (generating) work, something that is a conscious and willful action of the individual. This is set in place through a process of role actualization, a condition that is manifested by a philosophy of creative manifestation. In order to sustain and maintain momentum, incentives are used as inducements. It could be material or non-material inducements.

Table 4					
Conventional	Accountability	Processes	Principles		
Management	Management				
Practice styles	Practice styles				
Assigning	Assuming	Role Clarity	Conceptualization		
responsibility	responsibility		of self		
Fixing Target	Arriving at Target	Role Perception	Consciousness of		
			Task		
Engaging Teams	Promoting	Role Enrichment	Synergise through		
	Teamwork		collaboration		
Extracting work	Generating	Role actualization	Creativity		
	performance		manifestation		
Inducing incentives	Projecting models	Role modeling	Positive message		
Ŭ	v e)	C C		
Subjecting to	Jointly reviewing	Role matching	Collective reflection		
assessment					
Monitoring	Recycling	Role reactivation	Goal attainment		
	v				

Table 4 :Horizontal Vertical Matrix of Accountability Management

In accountability management projecting role models is initiated as a process throughout. These role models are the best performers. The idea is to lay a positive image to copy so that inhibitions or negative feelings are reduced. Performance is periodically assessed, a painful feeling for the individual is replaced by a joint review that leads to a process of role matching which is real learning. Such learning paves way for improvement. Here the philosophy adopted is a collective reflection, where no accusing finger is pointed. Lastly, there is monitoring which means keeping track of individual and his work. This is replaced with recycling where drawbacks are washed out through a process of reactivation. This is the point of attainment of the goal [29-31].

The sequencing in conventional management is vertically matched with sequencing in accountability management. The accountability management may be visualized both horizontally or vertically as depicted in the table. The individual is replaceable in an accountability management model with an institution. Here, for instance, autonomy refers to a new environment (conditions) to function for the organization and is synonymous with a new individual in a job situation. Autonomy release a host of issues that alter the work environment for an institution where it has enough choices to make by virtue of the extent of freedom vested in it. Hence involves the adoption of management practices, of how an institution should be managed, just as how an individual should be managed.

7. CONCLUSION :

The present era of evolving organizational-institutional behavioural theories has thrown up new systems of management, the one that is suggested here namely Accountability Management. Accountability management is distinguishable from Conventional man



management or Human Resources Development Management. It presupposes that an urge for creativity exists in every individual and work is an expression of creativity. Individual loves work and likes works, where he is provided the opportunities to own a sense of belongingness with his work, assume responsibility instead of assign responsibility, arrive at target instead fixing targets, promoting teams instead of engaging teams, generating performances instead of extracting performances, projecting models instead of inducing incentives, jointly reviewing instead of subjecting to assessments, and role reactivation and recycling instead of monitoring. Overall the Accountability Management model is meant to build and manage accountability, not individual or his work. The model suggested here has great relevance because it is not limited to individuals in work situations, but also to organizations and institutions that function in a broader social environment where particularly there is scope for autonomy in operation.

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