

Accountable Ethics or Ethical Accountability ?

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ABSTRACT : In this paper, the author has differentiated between the two concept, explained the more basic issue of Authority- Responsibility relationship, and has inferred that unless genuine steps are courageously taken, the terms - -Accountability and Ethics - would degenerate into conveniently allotropic forms, leading to a situation where what is accountable would be unethical and what is Unaccountable would be ethical : The paper, thus, answers questions on the Authority-Responsibility-Accountability interface, on the concept of the work ethics, and on the steps that could be taken to stem the rot. It is for academic ostrich to decide and soon Satisfy, Oppose or Puts its head in the sand.

The World of Higher education has taken a farcical turn: Faculty Accountability and Work Ethics have become platitudes like Convocation Addresses - ritualistic "drivel" that even the Speaker (or his speechwriter) does not believe in : baseless accountability and allotropic work-ethics. Why is this so ? What is the relationship between faculty Accountability and Work Ethics ? What hinders productivity ? What solutions are available? To answer this questions, the paper has been structured along these lines :-

1. The Concepts
2. The Causes
3. The Consequences
4. The Culmination
5. The Cure

Answers are particularly important now if the lofty goals of the New Education Policy are to bear fruit.

The Concepts :

Every term of the Theme - Faculty Accountability and Work Ethics is fraught with interpretational possibilities. Consequently, this

paper's title too.

FACULTY : Teachers and those who double as teachers (research scholars, lab incharges, nonteaching staff (for general subjects), temporary teachers of various hues (guest, visiting, adhoc, part- time, temporary) and seniors who pass the burden on to powerless juniors. Which of these shall we consider ? Does Faculty mean teachers or those who do the job of teaching ?

ACCOUTABILITY : Misunderstood in the Responsibility (obligation to perform the delegated work to the best of ability according to directions received) - Authority (right to decide what to do and to require someone to do it) context, Accountability is the requirement of the answerability for one's performance Are teachers Responsible or Accountable?

WORK : Activity that produces value, transactions that produce mutually beneficial linkages. But dictionaries have made it un-

disireable by giving it negative synonyms (labour, toil, travail, drudgery) rather making it an essential for survival and respectability, and a pleasure. Why, then, is idling considered bad ?

ETHICS : Often confused with Morality (codes of personal conduct based on likes and dislikes), Ethics equates with temporarily established rules of behaviour that people accept as good or bad. The remark, "Morality is for personal life, while Ethics is for the professional one", get explained thus. Can there be relative ethics as well ? Whose ethics ?

WORK ETHICS : Is it viewing work as central life interest and a desirable goal in life or is it endowing work with intrinsic moral worth that everyone should do one's best irrespective of the rewards like a Karma Yogi ? Is it the willingness to work hard or the enjoyment of working ? Is it desirable declining or dead ?

AND : How does one relate faculty Accountability and Work Ethics, given these variations ? Are they interrelated, mutually exclusive, in conflict, necessary, stemming from one another ? This leads us to the title of the paper.

ACCOUNTABLE ETHICS : Ethics should be accountable or non-accountable. A rise in failure-rate is accountable, while a principled action to help a student in genuine distress is not so labelled.

ETHICAL ACCOUNTABILITY : Accountability could be ethical (why the teacher did

not conduct his scheduled test), Non-ethical (how he approaches the subject while teaching), or Unethical (why he is permitting informality among students).

It is pity that even in educational institutions Faculty Accountability and Work Ethics are not understood in the right spirit (or is not allowed to be ?). While the former is seen as curbs on a teacher's autonomy, the latter seems to question his integrity. How did this come to pass ?

The Cuases :

1. Lopsided view of the goals of education Students see the goals in this order of importance: Job, Degree, Time Pass Maytrimony (in the case of most girls), Knowledge. Teachers in this order : knowledge Degree, Job. Target-oriented others merely tinker with this goals, and stress procedure rather than education itself. Purist courses andexamination-orientation,naturally, predominate.

2. Square-peg Round-hole syndrome. How many in the educational system counting from the top - Ministers, Secretaries, Vice Chancellors - have the knowledge aptitude, concern, or commmitment? when Mr. Narasimha Roa was made education Minister it was widely endorsed that it was come down for him. Also because the goals are incongruous anybody could manage it.

3. Contradictory requirements of the profession. As the goals appear to be in conflict (acquisition or dessemination of knowladge?), teachers are selected on the basis of the papers, research, seminars, rather than on the bases of their pedagogical

skills or devotion ! Pity that it holds true for promotional avenues as well. The lacadaisical and disdainful approach to Mehrotra and Dogra Committee reports (the latter would breed its own brand of Centre-State teachers-castes, one fears) are proof enough of how government really respect teachers.

4. Counterproductive nonteaching staff : Amazing how those with dismal academic records hold responsible designations in higher education ! If they allow procedures to rule and form cliques to survive and politic, it is as natural to expect as their ignorance of the purpose behind procedures or slighting of teachers.

5. Teachers are incidental in teaching institutions : Non teaching bureaucracy has access to more facilities and information. and is privy to several things. Teachers play subordinate roles even to clerks and peons whose smug access to confidential things rankles. Educational institutions are probably the only where professionals play non-roles at policy making levels : not a lawyer in a court, or a doctor in a hospital.

6. Inadequate facilities and unconducive atmosphere : The environment - labs classrooms, libraries, faculty rooms (if any) - is uninspiring. Secondary issues like housing, transport, recreation, and the like also impinge on the teacher's mind. The focus of the atmosphere is towards obedience and exam-orientation, as the "noble" profession ought not to fuss about comforts.

7. Satisfying students rather than guiding them : Students are thrilled with teachers

who teach less, who are exam-oriented, who give few assignments, who do not fuss about appearance/punctuality/attendance, who are free mixing, and who give liberal marks. Dedicated teachers, therefore, are branded. This perception because students are not selected well, guided on the role of education, their career prospects or interests, And the rot commences at the School- leaving level.

8. Advantages of perpetuating the system : For teachers, it protects one's level of knowledge and convenience, creates positions (even though frivolous justifications and cosmetic mutations), concentrates authority. For nonteachers campus peace is more important than work-increasing creativity. For policy makers, targets rather than utility count. The consequences of all these is for all to see.

The Consequences :

1. Education-Employment linkage is thwarted: The swelling numbers in the Job market panics planners to offer these solution- (1) Delinking jobs from degrees (making degrees but ego-trips, offering neither knowledge nor utility), and (ii) Stressing professional courses (causing the aptitudeless stampede for such courses).

2. Deprofessionalising of professional courses : Despite talk of job-orientation the efforts of clerk-producing degree-mills masquerading as universities are supplemented by the "theoreticalisation" of professional courses. Witness the inability of the Electrical Engineer who cannot repair even a basic gadget, and his contempt for the Electrician who can. And the aptitudeless stampede

would become teachers too !

3. Degree Collectors : In the career planning and aptitude/interest tests, Degree-hunting (examination-oriented studies and activities) taken primacy over knowledge - a point that comes home to roost in the form of high-scoring students who are myopic teachers.

4. Scholarship versus Pedagogy : Scholarship today is publications (even if pirated ideas), degrees, seminars, and high designations : not excellence in the teaching or dedication. Teachers, therefore, concentrate on the former and disillusion the relatively few potentially interested students too.

5. Loyalty or Talent : Teaching, for many, is the last resort. A student after his Bachelor's failing to secure a good job, opts for Master, Is and for his doctorate and, though sympathetic inbreeding, becomes a teacher. He offers loyalty more than talent, which is reciprocated by his trespasses being forgiven.

6. Resource crunch : As the linkage between education and income-generating capacity appears to be but fortuitous, subsidising of education is becoming debatable. Talks of privatisation, pay-and learn, loans, education-bonds, and capitation fees are often heard in corridors of the power. The vagueness of the linkage also takes away possible scientific criteria for the allocation or disbursement of resources.

These consequences culminate in Faculty Accountability-work Ethics issues.

The Culmination :

This rather bleak view of the system and its limited improvement possibilities in the foreseeable future causes the teachers to choose his approach from these options :

1. Plough one's lonely furrow : Being "sincere" towards oneself and one's expected accountability, and being studiously oblivious of his distortions.

2. Fight the system : Be branded as querulous and as an eccentric, and be denied the benefits that one's sacrifices bring to others.

3. Escape the system : Avoid the profession and if in it, escape while it is possible. It is generally held that after a lapse of time teachers become unemployable for everything, even teaching !

4. Exploit the system : If prudence is able to shifle ideals, one can benefit a great by adhering to the legal side of social responsibility. The philosophy would be : What is not categorically codified as wrong is not wrong.

Most teachers situationally vacillate between these four, the more disillusioned being mutedly vociferous, the clever ones making most of the system. And logically too. After all, any occupation is expected to provide -

(a) Good income (in keeping with expectations of the job and social standing),

(b) Opportunities for advancement (to professional and higher academic-administrator

levels), and

(c) Satisfying work environment (physically and emotionally)

(d) Social status (defined as power and respectability),

The education system today is neither able to fulfill these to a reasonable extent, nor able to balance the expectations by adjusting the perceived weights between them.

The cleverer teacher becomes "practical". If the system cannot fulfill the expectations, he seeks them in avenues outside it. For income, he writes books/notes, does examination work, takes private tuition, runs shop in his wife's name; for advancement, he writes (rewrites/steals/rehashes) papers, attends Seminars, collects a doctorate, gets into hobnobbable committees; for a satisfying environment, he seeks out clubs and cliques; for social status within the organization, he projects a loyal, dependable, informative and obsequious profile.

It is such teachers who distort FA by genuflecting to the interpretations of the powerful; who accept WE to mean obedience, and loyalty to person (not principles) as against dedicated teaching or research.

The problems of FA and WE arise here. Whereas policy-makers and nonteachers demand FA and expect WE to be a sacred duty, teachers would wish to question this authorityless accountability and the futility of expecting WE in an unstimulating climate. As the average teacher is seldom associated at

policy levels, he would not wish to be answerable for the irresponsibilities of the others; only for the faults of his own making. Further as good teaching does not take the teachers far (not even personal promotion schemes take note of it), the teacher assumes that it is better to play up to those above than to please students who come and go. A "good" teacher's expected WE is papers, obedience, ensuring visibility at higher level through showmanship, and generally not allowing the heart to dedicate to the head.

This is also the result of trying to compromise the conflicting motives between the various stakeholders (teachers, student, policy-maker, administrator, other employers, society) of the educational system, which leads to pluralistic social responsibilities - Economic (job), Legal (codified), Ethical (social expectations) and Discretionary (community roles).

The struggle between FA and WE commenced here. A mature teacher would distinguish between reasonable (ethical) and unreasonable (non/un-ethical) accountability and agonise over managements that expect accountability for trivia because of ignorance or to feed it ego.

The biggest problems, thus, are-

1. FA is sought indiscriminately without built-in safeguards and without reciprocally defining the nonfaculty accountability to the system and society.
2. WE is sought to be developed without comprehending the goals of the educational

system and the roles of the teachers and nonteachers therein.

3. Not understanding the relationship between FA and WE as the satisfaction performance-reward relationship, not realising that the increase in the FA would lower genuine WE.

Fortunately, the very fact that one is clear of these three fundamental problems indicates that cure is possible.

THE CURE

The New Education Policy Draft shows that the ills are broadly known. The Action Plan, however, gets lost in sermons? the planners are either unrealistic or cowardly. Only when vision is complemented with courage, sincerely, and authority, can the cure be thought of, introduced from the grassroot level, and acted upon ruthlessly for the good of education system. The more important suggestions are listed here.

1. Clear goals of higher of Education : As the customer focus is vital for any sound system, judicious mix of job-oriented knowledge and skills supplemented by social and aesthetic sensibilities should be the primary goal of education. The differential role to be played by pure and by applied courses needs to be realised.

2. Clear tasks of higher educational institutions : The balance between "creation" acquisition, disseminating, retaining, evaluating, and applying knowledge needs to be dearly weighted so that procurement and evaluation of personnel is relevant. Duties relating to learning Teaching, Training, and Extension could follow.

3. Funds for the Educational System : Based on the above and the man-power need-projections, funds should be allocated. A moratorium on the establishment of new institutions (including upgradation, autonomy) and the winding of the "unproductive" (including mergers) are worth considering in the context of governments resorting to overdrafts to pay salaries.

4. Career planning : Students should be selected only after their career plans (based on ability, aptitude and interest) crystallise and the utility of the courses are relatable. After all, even future teachers have to be formed among them !

5. University-Society linkage : Once the general purpose of higher education accepted, other issues follow - what education? When? Where? How? for whom? Society's (the user - the funder) reaction? Feed forward should be an ongoing feature : the employability of students, for example, would help plan the next phase and cycle.

6. University Employees : The goals now crystallised, the various University employees can now be recruited, the emphasis again being on ability, aptitude and interest with respect to the job in question (rather than with respect to past and unrelated achievements so to avoid the onset Peter principle) : teachers with knowledge skills and responsibility and nonteachers who are competent.

7. Training of Trainers : It is very important that teachers ought to have knowledge, skills, and aptitude (Arjuna and Bhishma,

Drona, and Krishna to provide this three!), a clarity of goals, and the desire to improve the system; policy makers should understand that position of the Vice-Chancellors are so vital that they should be advertised and interested for University administrators should undergo the course in management that emphasise humility and human relations.

8. Pressurised Faculty : Attempts to pressurise staff into compromises, and to suppress is "whistle blowers" should stop, and stringent action be initiated against those who censure constructive dissent.

9. Work atmosphere : An understanding of the contribution of education to development enforced by competent people would enable the creation of an empathetic and entrepreneurial climate vital for the genuine growth of the institution. As both satisfaction and performance depend on the reinforcement of the work-related reward system, work should be apportioned between the various goals and evaluating rewards.

10. Weeding out : The unpleasant yet essential task of removing the square-pegs, the fossils, the Shirkers, and the distorters of work Ethics should be identified, trained, refitted, or removed. It is not fair that their should incompetent, dishonest, or parasitical in the highly subsidised education system of the capital-starved country. Codes of conduct, then, should not be confined to teachers.

Key to excellent organizations success in achieving high productivity are : high performance expectations, creating the right en-

viroment, leading through self-example, respecting employees as individuals, trusting them, treating them as adult. Studies in Japanese Management tell us this simple axiom : if you want excellence create employee involvement. What a pity that we teach management rather practice it !

It is in this light that Education Management has a vital role to play it could make or break the entire edifice. Once the goals and tasks are clear, people are recruited competently, tasks are assigned and prioritised expected balance between tasks are explained, and reward-punishment system are established for the entire system, the temptation to play politics in order to obtain power and status would decline. FA would then be understandable and WE would be genuine.

Recapitulation

1. The ignorance of the goals of Education led to the indifference towards it resulting in inertia in its tasks causing an inept system which loses its importance, in turn leading to the repetition of the cycle.

2. This force distortions in FA (to mean answerability for others' faults as well) and WE (to mean abject surrender to the system) causing one to brood over Accountable Ethics (the rest being "nonaccountable") the Ethical Accountability (the others not requiring to be accountable !)

3. The temptation, then, is to fight, give up, leave, or exploit system. Accountability becomes absolute, Ethics becoming gamesmanship. After hovering between Altruism (social benefit) and Principles (both ends and means to be morally right), faculty is sorely

tempted to settle for Egoism (an act is right if the individual benefits). Relative morality resolves the conflict between professional ethics and survival, and rationalises behaviour. Even those wanting to work devotedly are losing interest because the rewards are unrelated to the work put in.

4. If the Educational system is improved, then individual capacity, the motivation to work, and the organization's ability to offer a productive climate must work in unison. The culture of shared values (what's important?) beliefs (how things work?), and norms (How things must be done ?) must be inculcated and ingrained. These can be done only if the vision, ability, and courage are present at the higher level downwards. For attaining these, everyone in the system needs to be appropriate.

5. Tremendous burden, therefore, is placed on the management of the Education System. Time alone would tell whether stakeholders mean business, can do things, and make Faculty Accountability and Work Ethics equitable, productive, and satisfying.

Notes

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2. Schwartz, D. : Introduction to Management (New York :Harcourt,1980) p 60-61.

3. Steade, R.D., Lowry, J.R., Glos : Business (Cincinnati :South Western,1984) p 585.

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5. Largely abstracted from Narayanan, S V : "University Management in India - the trauma and the treatment", paper presented at the International Conference on Education, in Pondicherry, April 14-18, 1987, and quoted in depth in the HINDU, June 2 1987.

6. Largely abstracted from Narayanan, S V: Mansoor Ali, and D K Nauriyal : "Human Resource Development - Scissors crisis in Universities", paper presented at the 40th Annual Conference of the Indian Commerce Associations, at Trivendrum, July 3-5, 1987.

7. Kast, F E, and J E Rosenzweig : Organisation and Management (New York : McGraw Hill, 1985) p 157, which quotes from the categorisation made by Carroll.

8. Schermerho, rn J R Hunt, and R N Osborn: Managing Organizational Behaviour (New York : John Wiley, 1985) P 92.

9. Wahle, R P : "A study of educational leadership in India", Journal of Education and Psychology (India), Vol 44, Jul-oct 1986, p77-91, shows through a survey that education leaders and policy makers were not clear about the role of education, their parts therein, and the administrative attributes required for the same.

10. That a person's ancient academic competence should be used to determine the suitability for an administrative post (such as the Vice-Chancellor' guarantees the onset of Peter Principle : everyman in an organization rises to the highest level of his incapetence. Peter, L J. and R Hall : The Peter Principle

(New York : Bantam, 1969)

11. The concept of Academic Staff Colleges : in this context, is laudable. Unfortunately, it would fritter away resources unproductively if its creation follows the pattern envisaged : (i) nonclarity of its goals (would it become a refresher course centre?), (ii) emphasis on education degree for its Chiefs (What should count more - breadth of knowledge or an Education degree ?), (iii) conventional interviews to recruit (Are teaching skills and administrative acumen unimportant here ?)

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14. Peters, T.J. and R.H. Waterman : In Search of Excellence (New York : Warner, 198

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17. Uttal, Bro : "The Corporate Culture Vultures", Fortune, Oct 17, 1983, p66-72

18. Venkatasubramaniam, K : Issues in Education (Madras : Macmillan, 1982) p190-191 lists the role of the education manager : interpreter, consultant, advisor, evaluator, adjudicator, arbitrator, coordinator, extension officer, homeliness-oretor, and state agent.

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GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

- 1) The articles should be typewritten and in duplicate, accompanied by the author's brief biodata (Not more than 100 words).
- 2) The length of the article should normally not exceed 3,000 words a proximately.
- 3) The article should be sent six weeks earlier than the Month of Publication of the Quarterly Journal which is published in Jan. April, July and Oct. of every year.
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