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Accountability of Elementary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

A teacher plays an important role in the whole teaching learning process. Accountability of teachers is very essential for bringing quality in the education system. The present study aims at exploring the accountability of elementary school teachers in relation to their gender, teaching experience and marital status variation and the problems faced by the teachers in their accountability. 100 elementary school teachers of Gaya city were selected conveniently for the study. From among them 30 teachers were interviewed for exploring their problems in their accountability. A self-developed teacher's accountability scale and a semi-structured interview schedule were used for the study. Female teachers, teachers having less than 10 years of teaching experience and unmarried teachers were found to have more accountability. They faced problems with regard to lack of classrooms, irregularity of students, lack of resources, more engagement in activities other than teaching etc. Some suggestions were given for ensuring better accountability of teachers. The study will be helpful for the teachers, administrators and the government for ensuring better accountability of teachers.

Keywords: Accountability, Teachers, Elementary school

INTRODUCTION

A teacher occupies a very important place in the whole teaching learning and evaluation process and acts as a catalyst to bring changes in the education system. Teacher is the medium through which the objectives of education can be achieved. The role of the teacher is very important for bringing positive changes in individuals and society. Like other professions, teaching as a profession has its own guidelines, principles, morality and accountability which a teacher has to follow while dealing with the stakeholders like students, parents, administrators and community people. Accountability is one of the most important aspects of teaching profession. Accountability has been defined as the liability for results obtained through the responsible exercise of delegated authority (Good 1959). Accountability of teachers is viewed as the responsibility for maintaining trust to every student as assigned to them in a specific organisation. National Policy on Education-1986 has stressed on the accountability of teachers towards students, parents, community and their own profession. Accountability implies the responsibilities of teachers for maintaining quality and standards and also for promotion of academic excellence. Self-evaluation is the best method of assessment of accountability of teachers (Mohanty 2003). An accountable teacher seems to shoulder the duties and responsibilities idealistically to the institutions that they are serving and to the student community and then through the institution and the students, tries to serve the society at large with the aim of doing good with their good performances (Ignacimuthu 2006). The teacher is responsible to the students for their holistic development, optimal learning and achievement of their goals. Apart from

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classroom teaching, a teacher should be concerned about the community development, public relation, parent counselling, inculcation of human values like truth, beauty, goodness, love, equality, honesty, punctuality, regularity etc. A teacher is also accountable towards the nation and should have the required knowledge in understanding the different issues and problems of the nation and in solving these problems. Professionally accountable teachers are dedicated, committed, have patience, are optimistic in outlook and are aware about their roles and responsibilities (Kanika, 2012). Teachers should be committed in providing quality programs and adopting strategies that will make them more accountable and effective in their teaching. Teachers have to be strategic in assessing their own learning needs, developing annual professional growth plans, addressing critical issues, designing curriculum and mentoring peers (Roika, 2012). Effective teachers possess relevant competence and use the competence properly to attain their objectives. Accountability and teaching efficiency depends largely on some personal and demographic variables like gender, marital status, teaching experience, locality, teaching competency, attitude etc. Srivastava (1989) found a sense of accountability among teachers in relation to their gender, experience and training variation. Chahar (2005) reported higher level of teaching competencies of female teachers than the male teachers at the primary school level. Syeeda (2007) found no significant differences in the teaching competencies of the primary school teachers in relation to their teaching experience, locality and type of management variation. Male teachers were found to have better teaching competencies than the female teachers. Taljera (2008) in a study on academic accountability of teacher educators revealed that age, gender and teaching experience differences contribute significantly in the academic accountability of teacher educators. Female, more experienced and more aged teacher educators were found to have greater accountability to the academic aspects. Muchhal and Chand (2010) found the female teachers to be more accountable and more satisfied towards their job than their male counterparts. Roika (2012) revealed that female teachers, less experienced teachers, unmarried teachers and private school teachers are more accountable than their counterparts.

With the unstable home and society conditions, the composition of classrooms has become more complex with different academic, behavioural, social, emotional and personal problems of the students. There is an increased sense of pressures on teachers from the society, parents and administrators. They have to manage resources, curricular and co-curricular activities, examination, manage time, resolve conflicts etc which requires specific skills and abilities. Teachers have a great responsibility in shaping the behaviour of the students not only through their teaching but also by their own accountability and typical way of living. But in the present era, most of the teachers do not enter the profession by choice but they enter by chance. Hence, they do not think teaching as their career. A majority of teachers are influenced by their family circumstances, attraction of holidays and vacation, earning money through private tuition, taking less responsibility and a secure government job. They are less concerned about their own values of life and the values of their students. These problems are very pertinent in the government schools at the elementary level in India and most specifically in the government schools of Bihar. Most of the students at the elementary level are not able to read and write correctly even in their mother tongue and are far behind in achieving the minimum levels of learning as expected for them. In view of the deplorable condition in the learning outcome of the students, high dropout rate and the backward education system in Bihar, there has been a felt need to bring major reforms in the education specifically at the elementary school level. This can only be possible by preparing highly committed and efficient teachers. An attempt has been made through this study to explore the accountability of the Elementary school teachers, to identify the problems faced by them and to provide suggestions for promoting accountability of the teacher.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- The following objectives have been framed for the conduct of the study:
- To study the accountability of the elementary school teachers.
- To find out the differences in the accountability of the elementary school teachers in relation to their gender, teaching experience and marital status.
- To study the problems faced by the elementary school teachers in ensuring accountability in their profession.
- To suggest measures for improvement in accountability of elementary school teachers.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following null hypotheses have been set up for the study on the basis of the objectives. All the hypotheses have been expressed in null form.

Ho₁ : There is no significant difference in the accountability of elementary school teachers in relation to their gender variation.

HO₂ : There is no significant difference in the accountability of elementary school teachers in relation to their teaching experience variation.

HO₃ : There is no significant difference in the accountability of elementary school teachers in relation to their marital status.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMS USED

Accountability of Teachers- Accountability refers to the responsibilities of the teachers towards the institution, students, society, nation and to their own self. Here in the present study, accountability is considered in terms of academic contribution of the teachers towards their students in their institutions.

Elementary School Teachers- Elementary school teachers here refers to the teachers teaching in classes from one to eight.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study was to assess the role of gender, teaching experience and marital status on teacher's accountability. The study was delimited to 100 teachers working in government elementary schools in Gaya district Bihar.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Descriptive type of survey method was used in the study to assess the accountability of elementary school teachers of Gaya district, Bihar. A mixed methods approach of both quantitative and qualitative nature was used for analysis of data. To study the accountability of elementary school teachers 100 (52 male and 48 female) elementary school teachers from government elementary schools of Gaya district were selected by convenient sampling procedure. For studying the problems of teachers in ensuring their accountability, 30 teachers from 10 elementary schools were selected conveniently for interview purpose. To assess the accountability of teachers, a self-developed Self-Rating Scale has been used in the study. The scale consists of 50 items in a five-point scale which are to be rated by the teachers under 5 heads like not practised, occasionally, frequently, most often and always. Each activity was scored from 1 to 5 respectively. The scale consists of items related to organising and evaluating classroom teaching learning and evaluation activities, preparing lesson plans and teaching learning materials, emphasis on students with special needs and using community resources.

More score in the scale indicated high accountability of the teachers. To study the problems faced by the teachers in ensuring their accountability, a semi structured interview schedule was used for the teachers. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques of data analysis were used in the study. Under quantitative techniques percentile, mean, standard deviation and t test and under qualitative techniques narrative analysis and discourse analysis were used in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

Study of Accountability of Elementary School Teachers- One of the objectives of the study was to study the accountability of elementary school teachers. A self-developed Accountability scale was administered to 100 elementary school teachers of government schools of Bihar Board of Gaya district. The highest score of the scale was 250 and the lowest was 50. The obtained scores of accountability of teachers ranged from 130 to 240. When the scores were plotted into a smoothed frequency distribution curve, it was revealed that 69.25%, 94% and 100 % of the cases lie within $M \pm 1SD$, $M \pm 2SD$ and $M \pm 3SD$ respectively as against 68.28%, 95.73% and 99.96% in case of a normal distribution. The skewness and Kurtosis of the scores were -0.35 and 0.258 respectively as against 0 and 0.263 in case of normal distribution. The distribution of the scores was negatively skewed and leptokurtic in nature. The scores slightly deviated from the normal distribution which may be due to sampling error. The teachers were categorized under five levels of accountability like extremely high, high, average, low and extremely low. The cut off points were decided as more than P_{75} , P_{60-75} , P_{40-60} , P_{25-40} and less than P_{25} for extremely high, high, average, low and extremely low accountability respectively. 17%, 15%, 20%, 13% and 35% of the teachers were regarded to have extremely high, high, average, low and extremely low level of accountability.

Differential Analysis on Accountability of Teachers due to gender, teaching experience and marital status variation.

One of the objectives of the study was to find out significant differences in the accountability of elementary school teachers in relation to their gender, teaching experience and marital status variation. To find out the significance differences in the various groups of elementary school teachers, the t ratios were calculated and presented in table below:

Table 1:- Subsample Wise Differences in the Accountability of Elementary School Teachers

Group	Sub group	N	Mean	SD	SED	't'	Remark
Gender	Male	52	192.6	31.5	5.62	1.16	NS
	Female	48	199.1	24.5			
Teaching Experience	More than 10 years	41	187.5	31.5	5.87	2.36	S
	Less than 10 years	59	201.4	24.7			
Marital Status	Married	77	194.17	28.45	6.7	0.98	NS
	Unmarried	23	200.8	28.18			

Critical value of 't' with df 98 at 0.01=2.63 and at 0.05= 1.98

It was revealed from the above table that t ratio in case of gender was found to be not significant as the calculated t value (1.16) is less than the table value (1.98). Hence the null hypothesis that there does not exist significant differences in the accountability of elementary school teachers could not be rejected. But when the mean scores were compared it was found that the female teachers had high level of accountability than their counterparts. It may be due to the fact that the female teachers enter the profession by choice and are more satisfied in the job and consider teaching as

their career while most of the male teachers enter the teaching profession by chance, join school being fascinated by the government job and could not consider teaching as their career. The findings is in conformity with the studies conducted by Taljera(2008), Muchhal & Chand(2010) and Roika(2012).

The t ratio was significant in case of teaching experience variation where the teachers having less than 10 years of teaching experience were found to have more accountability than their counterparts. This may be due to the fact that the teachers having more experience have made their entry into the teaching job with lower qualification, are more confronted with their social, personal and professional problems and are stagnated in their career. But the teachers with less experience are found to be young, energetic, are subjected to more responsibilities, face more threats from the school, self and students and spent more time with their class and students and hence found to be more accountable. The findings is in conformity with the research studies conducted by Roika(2012). However Taljera(2008) found more experienced teachers found to be more accountable.

When the differences in the marital status of the elementary school teachers were considered, no significant difference was found in the accountability of teachers. But from the mean differences it can be concluded that the unmarried teachers were found to have better accountability in their job as compared to the married teachers. This may be due to the fact that the unmarried teachers have less burden and responsibilities in their family, devote more time in their class, with students, preparing teaching learning materials for the class. The study was in conformity with the findings of Roika(2012).

STUDY OF PROBLEMS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THEIR ACCOUNTABILITY

To study the problems of teachers in their accountability, 30 teachers from 10 elementary schools of Gaya district were interviewed. Majority of them claimed that they are accountable in their duties as teachers. They complete their syllabus in time, take tests in the stipulated time, give feedback on the performance of students and discuss the problems of students with their parents. They love their students and try their best to inculcate values in their students. They perform all the tasks assigned to them by the school, community and government. The heads of the institutions support them in performing their duties and responsibilities. However with respect to maintaining high accountability in their job, they face many problems as follows:

Majority of the rural government schools have shortage of classrooms. The students of 2 to 3 classes sit in one class which creates lots of problems in completing their teaching, learning and evaluation activities effectively.

Irregularity of students is another challenge for the teachers to maintain continuity in their teaching and helping the students in achieving the desired learning outcomes. Majority of the students belong to poor families and are generally engaged in their domestic works and in different agricultural and business activities to supplement their family income. Parents are not serious about the study of their children.

Apart from the classrooms, most of the government schools have only one room which is used as office room, principal cum faculty room and store room also. Hence the teachers face problems in preparing for their classes and correcting homework of their students.

The schools face problems in timely release of funds from the government. Hence the schools face problems in procuring the minimum essential facilities in the teaching learning activities like purchasing of chalk, duster, register and maintenance of the infrastructures in the school. This interferes the teachers in performing their daily academic activities in the school.

Due to lack of resources, the teachers could not organize different curricular and co-curricular activities like competitions, cultural activities and sports activities frequently for the students. The schools do not have good laboratory and library facilities also.

Apart from classroom teaching, the teachers have to perform many other activities like census survey, election duties at different levels, monitoring mid-day meal, organizing Parent teacher meeting, solving different types of problems of the students and the community etc. Due to shortage of teachers in the school, they have to take more than 5 to 6 classes per day. Hence they do not get proper time to prepare daily lesson plans and teaching learning materials (TLM) for their teaching.

Some teachers said that they are taking initiatives for preparing low cost improvised teaching learning materials with the help of students. But they could not store for future uses due to lack of storing facilities. This demotivates them in using and preparing teaching learning materials for their class.

Majority of teachers said that they are interested in using different new and innovative methods of teaching and evaluation, but they do not have proper awareness and skill in using them in their classroom. Some teachers said that they are not skillful in designing appropriate strategies for the slow, disadvantaged and disabled students.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

To ensure high quality of school education, teachers should be more accountable to their teaching professions. Based on the above mentioned problems, the following suggestions have been provided by the teachers for ensuring accountability of teachers.

- Need based in-service-training programs should be organized for teachers. Teacher training programmes should be organized by the educational administrators to increase the level of teaching and should be made compulsory for teachers to attend all teacher training programmes.
- The appointment of teachers should be rigorously done with proper screening, interview and testing procedures. Screening of teachers should be done through a team of experts in a fair way. The dedicated, committed and motivated teachers should join teaching profession and should enter the profession by choice but not by chance.
- The government should provide at least the minimum facilities in the school for the smooth functioning of the teaching learning and evaluation process. Proper monitoring mechanisms should be adopted for ensuring accountability of teachers.
- The teachers should be allowed to participate in the professional development programmes like seminar, workshop, symposia, training programmes etc. for upgradation of their knowledge and making innovations in their teaching, learning and evaluation activities.
- Autonomy should be given to the teachers in performing their activities in the school. Management should provide opportunities for the teachers to contact with the parents for discussing the problems of the students frequently.
- Frequent transfer of the teachers should be avoided. Care should be taken to retain senior teachers in the school. Teachers should be motivated and rewarded for the participation in different school activities.
- Responsibilities should be assigned to the teachers on the basis of their interest, skills and expertise. The heads of the institutions should follow participatory approach in managing the school. Teachers should be involved in decision making process to create a sense of belongingness and dutifulness among them.

- Government should undertake research studies to find out reasons for low teaching accountability and appropriate measures should be undertaken based on the research findings for enhancing the level of teaching accountability of teachers.

CONCLUSION

The accountable teachers generally get success in their teaching profession. They can understand the varied problems of the learners, contribute a lot in the holistic development of the learners and prosperity of the nation. Hence the teachers should be committed, dedicated, motivated and accountable towards their profession which can bring quality in education. Teaching is considered as a noble profession which gives rise to all other profession. Teaching profession should be made more attractive which can motivate talented students to join this profession by choice. A proper monitoring and motivation mechanism in the education system would be helpful in enhancing the level of accountability among the teachers. Consequently, it will enhance the quality of school education.

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