Accountability: a Review

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Abstract

Accountability has not assigned a proper definition which is accepted by all yet, then also from ages it is understood as the answerability of the accountee (the person who has the responsibility for the task he/she is answerable for) to the accountant (the person who has the authority to ask for the status of responsibility given). In this paper researcher has tried to give the review of the meaningful insights for the word accountability given by different authors in different contexts.

Keywords — Accountability, responsibility, Transparency.

I. INTRODUCTION

Accountability is a wider term for accepting responsibility and when comes from within, it’s at its best. An accountable Person has a plan for the way he will accomplish the thing. He doesn’t need a praising party for his accomplishments as he finds it obvious for himself. He is his own taskmaster and his own expediter, and for that he doesn’t need continuous external supervision. Only when we assume full accountability for our thoughts, feelings, actions, and results we can direct our own destiny; otherwise, someone or something else will. The tips for creating a culture of accountability are S.I.M.P.L.E.: viz, Set expectations, Invite commitment, Measure progress, Provide feedback, Link to consequences, and Evaluate effectiveness.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT DICTIONARIES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dictionary</th>
<th>Meaning/definition of accountability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>According to the Merriam-Webster's Unabridged Dictionary1</td>
<td>the quality or state of being accountable; is an obligation or willingness to account for one's actions or to accept responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>According to Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine2</td>
<td>responsibility for one's own actions</td>
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<td>Mosby's Medical Dictionary3</td>
<td>Accountability or responsibility for</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segen's Medical Dictionary4</td>
<td>moral and legal requirements for proper patient care.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medspeak</td>
<td>(1) A situation in which individuals who exercise power are guarded by External resources and internal norms. (2) Taking responsibility for one's own actions and shielding them to anyone who asks (e.g. to stakeholders, partner agencies, colleagues, the general public and policy makers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford English Dictionary 2nd Ed</td>
<td>Accountability&quot; comes from late Latin accomptare which means ‘to account’, a prefixed form of computare which means ‘to calculate’, which is derived from putare that means ‘to reckon’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGraw-Hill Concise Dictionary of Modern Medicine5</td>
<td>A condition in which people who exercise power are restricted by external means and internal norms, The extent to which a person is answerable to a senior authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosby's Dental Dictionary…..acc ountability</td>
<td>an obligation to periodically disclose appropriate information in adequate detail and consistent form to all contractually involved parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition10</td>
<td>1. Expected or required to account for one's actions; answerable. 2. Capable of being explained: an accountable phenomenon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collins English Dictionary11</td>
<td>1. responsible to someone or for some action; answerable 2. able to be explained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random House Knerman Webster's College Dictionary12</td>
<td>1. Subject to the compulsion to justify something; answerable, responsible; 2. explicable, capable to be explained.</td>
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### WordNet 3.0...13
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<tr>
<th>liable to account for one’s actions:</th>
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<td>answerable, subject, responsible, obliged, liable, amenable, obligated, chargeable</td>
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### Collins Thesaurus of the English Language14
| 1. Legally obligated: Amenable, answerable, liable, responsible. |
| 2. Capable of being accounted for: illstratable, interpretable, decipherable, explainable, explicable, |

### The American Heritage® Roget's Thesaurus15
| responsible |

### Multilingual Translator17
| responsible, contable |

### English-Spanish Medical Dictionary18
| The obligation i.e. obligatory by law or lawful order. The person having this obligation might or might not have actual possession of the belongings, credentials or financial means. Accountability is concerned mainly with records, while responsibility is concerned mainly with care, custody, and safekeeping. |

### Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms19
- According to Greiling and Alachmi
  “Accountability has to do with aptness of actions and adherence to obligations.” But they cautioned that: “too many provisions to ensure accountability can prevent organizations from achieving their missions.” Then proposed “designing proper and adequate accountability arrangement to foster organizational learning” as a target for new approaches to accountability.20
  
#### III. ROOTS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Urch, Edwin J. (July 1929) argues for accountability has rooted in Babylon, Roberts, Jennifer T. (1982) stated that its roots are in Greece, while Walzer, Michael (1994) says it’s in Israel, where as Ezzamel, Mahmoud (1997) argued that the concept of account-giving has prehistoric roots in record keeping actions related to governance and money-lending structures that initially developed in Ancient Egypt, and Plescia, Joseph (January 2001) argued for that of Rome.

#### IV. TYPES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Bruce Stone, Joseph G. Jabbar and O.P. Dwivedi have listed 8 types of accountability, viz.: moral, managerial, market, professional, administrative, political, and legal/judicial and constituency related.

  Feltus C. (2011) stated that In Administrative view the accountability is defined as "an element which is component of a unique responsibility which represents a compulsion for an actor to achieve the goal, or to execute the procedure of a task, and the justification that it is done to someone else, under threat of sanction”

  Thompson, Dennis F. (2014) in his work talks about the dilemma of confusion between individual accountability and organizational accountability and the solution he proposes for this is to hold people accountable for the blueprint of the business corporation, both prospectively and retrospectively.

**Internal** and **External**

**Accountability**: Internal accountability involves arrangements within organizations to hold constituent entities accountable, mainly because the accountability holder is given that legitimacy or financial resources to the agent. While Internal accountability, the entity is accountable to individuals who are exterior to the entity and whose lives the entity affects.9

**V. ACCOUNTABILITY IN DIFFERENT FIELDS OF STUDY**

Political accountability is the accountability of the government, civil servants and politicians to the public and to legislative bodies such as a congress or a parliament.7

Ethical accountability within an organization aim to improve both the internal standard of individual and group conduct as well as external factors, such as sustainable economic and ecologic strategies.7

Researcher accountability implies that researchers are cognizant of, and take some responsibility for, the potential impact of their ways of doing research – and of writing it up – on the social fields of which the research is part. 7

In sociology the accountability thing can be traced to J. L. Austin's 1956 essay "A Plea for Excuses", in which he used excuse-making as an example of speech acts, even the thought of account giving was articulated in a 1968 article on "Accounts" by Marvin Scott and Stanford Lyman.

In ethics and governance, According to Dykstra, Clarence A. (1939), accountability is
answerability, blameworthiness, liability, and the expectation of account-giving. According to Williams, Reyes (2006), as in leadership roles, accountability is the recognition and supposition of responsibility for products, decisions, actions, and policies including the governance, management, and implementation within the span of the role or service position and encircling the compulsion to report, explain and be accountable for consequential issues.

In governance, According to Mulgan, Richard (2000), accountability has expanded beyond the basic definition of "being called to account for one's actions".

In journalism field Starr, Paul (2012), describes that The digital revolution has been good for freedom of expression and information but has had mixed effects on freedom of the press": It has disrupted traditional sources of funding, and new forms of Internet journalism have replaced only a tiny fraction of what's been lost.

In education, according to National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), accountability is "A program, often legislated, that attributes the responsibility for student learning to teachers, school administrators, and/or students.

In media, the work of Brunetti, Aymo; Weder, Beatrice (2003), accountability gains acknowledgments as their Econometric research found that countries with greater press freedom tend to have less corruption.

VI. ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE EYES OF DIFFERENT RESEARCHERS

Tembo, F., (2012) argues that Researchers at the Overseas Development Institute found that empowering citizens in developing countries to be able to hold their domestic governments to account was incredibly complex in practice. Though, by budding explicit procedures that generates change from persons, groups or communities (Theories of Change), and with the mix of political economy analysis and the results mapping tools, the intricate state-citizen dynamics can be better understood. Like that, more effectual ways to attain outcomes can also be produced.

Van Zyl, Albert, (2013) stated that Researchers at the International Budget Partnership (IBP) found that civil society organizations play an important role in achieving accountability outcomes. Their research showed that CSOs may have an impact in a wide range of economic as well as political contexts. The researchers found that CSOs are most efficient when they sketch in a broad maze of actors from across the accountability system, including the political parties, the legislature, auditors, donors, executive insiders, and media.

Schedler, Andreas (1999), in their work stated that accountability is repeatedly described as an account-giving relationship among individuals, e.g. "X is accountable to Y when X is obliged to inform Y about X's (past or future) actions and decisions, to justify them, and to suffer penalty in the case of eventual wrongdoing" Lewis, Charles (2014) proposes for the creation of a new multidisciplinary academic field called Accountability Studies. He describes that Students from broadly diverse academic backgrounds are energized about the panorama of learning, exactly how to explore those in authority and hold them accountable.

Behn, Robert D (2001) described that everybody wishes that the other people should be held accountable. He adds that everybody in the accountability setting is liable for contributing to attain the conformity. The compact is built on trust and the desire of all parties to cooperate to produce results they collectively desire. He further adds that having mutual responsibility means removing the distinction between accountability holders and accountability holdees.

VII. CONCLUSION

Seeing a plethora of definitions of accountability and being accountable it can be concluded that Accountability is often used as a synonym for responsibility, answerability, transparency, disclosure etc. Seems accountability is just a matter of power. Accountability is either expected or assumed by an individual or an organization for account-giving behaviour of an individual or an organization. But rather holding someone accountable for something its good when accountability comes from within. It will be good to understand accountability as a relative term, which changes its meaning in relative contexts.

REFERENCES


