

Alignment of Accountability and Language Planning and Policy in the Third Millennium

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Abstract: In the language planning and policy setting of the third millennium, the specific mechanisms in curriculums for educational states and schools are important in the process of transferring the high quality of instruction to educators. Accountability as a new and critical trend in language education has to do with these mechanisms which lie in governmental policies and helps us to understand how standards effects teaching and learning and how it can be implemented in language planning and policies. The governments try to achieve educational accountability through developing national standards for different curriculum domains, and the role of these standards is so dominant that it cannot be ignored. Following the influence of accountability gives us the reason for investigating how alignment and accountability interact with each other for districts, schools, and classrooms in which leads to enhancing the performances and creation of mutual relationships between accountability and intra-school accountability. This paper is a review related to accountability and its mechanisms, the models in the external mechanism, accountability and standards, and accountability in language planning and policies in the third millennium.

Keywords: accountability, external mechanism, standards, language planning and policy

INTRODUCTION

In the current period of time, political, social, technological, and cultural issues are changing rapidly. Consequently, curriculum planning and development have changed through movements from modern to postmodern towards a constructivist approach and utilizing connectivists ideas, which Littlejohn (1998) called it a future curriculum. In this paper, issues on accountability in curriculum planning in the third millennium are discussed.

Based on Hadely (1998), the structural syllabus was at the center of attention in 1970, and then communicative aspects of language came to the core of curriculum development gradually. The focus on communicative aspects of language continued till 1990, and after that, there was a shift from communication to form and structure.

Significant events have led to the rapid improvement of American influence. Hadely (2006) examined the informal empire of Anglo–American cultural norms, both explicitly and implicitly in the expanding circle, depending on their mastery of the English language. Accordingly, Nunan (2006) made some predictions about the postmodern curriculum in which the growing dominance of a limited number of world languages is related to Hadely’s experiment.

Maftoon and Taie (2016) believed that two philosophical issues attributed to the curriculum in the third millennium toward the concept of accountability. The first one is the interdisciplinary nature of language and the second one is a shift from modern to postmodern or shift from structuralist to poststructuralist. From a postmodern viewpoint, the subject needs circular interpretation; thus, the curriculum must be opened to reflect the documents and must be used in a productive way in order to create a community of interpreters (Marsh, 2005).

Littlejohn (1998) believed in six factors that have influenced the future curriculum. The elements are coherence, significant contents, decision-making in the classroom, use of students’ intelligence, cultural understanding, and critical language awareness. Moreover, he discussed that language is a part of society, and postmodernism has a significant effect on language curriculum development, as Weidman (2003) referred to postmodernism as a model for applied linguistics, especially language teaching. The concept of accountability is a hot topic in the postmodern curriculum in which some researchers believed that considering accountability in education can directly enhance and improve educational objectives, while some others believed that considering accountability can provide negative effects on educational purposes. In this paper, the issues on accountability from different perspectives are discussed.

WHAT IS ACCOUNTABILITY?

Generally, accountability is defined as "a process by which actors provide reasons for their actions against the backdrop of possible negative (or positive) consequences (Schillmans, 2008 cited in Hooge, Burns, and Wilkoszewski, 2012, p.26).

But in education, according to Brill, Grayson, Kuhn, O'Donnell (2018), accountability refers to specific mechanisms for educational institutions and schools to be responsible in transferring the high quality of instructions to educators. This mechanism lies in governmental policies, and the governments are responsible for the teacher's and student's performance. Erdağ (2017) described accountability as building a powerful trust between people and the government, in which the objective is to illustrate how schools or institutions work effectively, successfully, and efficiently; it permits the bureaucracy to administer in the way of being more democratic and is figured out as a value in relations to the results and situations provided.

Based on Hooge, Burns, and Wilkoszewski (2012), there are two approaches of accountability: vertical known as top-down or hierarchical and horizontal described as non-hierarchical. The former deals with regulatory and performance accountability, which in managerial, there is a relation with laws and regulation, and its focus is on the quality of the input of education. Still, in periodic performance, evaluation is a concern. In the latter – horizontal accountability – professional and multiple accountabilities are considered into account. Levin (1974) stated that professional accountability deals with professional standards for teachers or employees, and multiple accountabilities deal with

students, parents, or stakeholders. According to these two types of accountability, it can be understood that there are two contemporary shifts of accountability in the educational system. The first shift is a move from regulatory to performance accountability, and the other movement is the probability of change from singular to multiple accountabilities (OECD, 2011).

According to Brill et al. (2018), accountability measures various aspects that are related to schools or institutes, governments, and the quality of the instructions. Two major measures of accountability are students' assessment and schools or institutions evaluations. Many countries consider the score of student tests results from the national assessment as the accountability measures. Still, there are some evidence and documents that its challengeable and may not be satisfactory (Stobart, 2009). Of course, in Levin's (1974) framework for accountability, the schools or institutes performance reports are based on pupil's examination results, and these results make the stakeholders able to find the effectiveness of schools and institutes (Ng, 2010 cited in Brill et al., 2018).

EXTERNAL ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

According to Erdağ (2017), external accountability mechanisms produce high quality in the system of education and a high level of students' achievements through triggering schools or institution's internal accountability mechanisms. In this way, the consequences are an increase in various performances and the creation of mutual relationships between accountability and intra-school accountability. This explains about "who will give what results, how they will be explained and to whom, and how they can defend the legitimacy of their actions" (Erdağ, 2017, p.1409). These types of external mechanisms have a relationship with political accountability, rule, bureaucracy, performance, marketplace, and occupation. Each of the mentioned accountability is discussed briefly in the following as dominant accountability models.

BUREACRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

Bovens (2010) believed that the Bureaucratic accountability model illustrates the authorization of awarding, punishment, and determination of standards or laws of educational services. Nevertheless, institutes and schools are responsible in the ranked structural mechanism that are accountable for operative and input processing, implementing, satisfying the objectives, and laws.

PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

In this model, the emphasis is on the results of education instead of focusing on input and the process of education. The fundamental aspects in performance accountability lies in goal-setting theories in which the significant reasons for demotivation in low level schools or institutions are defended. The performance accountability model wants to implement some policies including planning and developing programs for highly standardized education such as science, reading skills, or math, evaluation of programs through standardized tests, announcing the results of the performance of schools or

institutions, reinforcing the schools based on the accomplishments they have, and implementation of teacher training program based on standards. Of course, some policies are implemented in performance accountability to decrease the costs, like contracts and the way of paying for the performance of the teacher (Bruns, Filmer, and Patronas, 2011).

MARKET ACCOUNTABILITY

According to Bruns et al. (2011), it refers to the implementation of policies, for example, local decision making for controlling schools, instructional programming, affairs that have to do with budgets or employees. Since the school system is a complex procedure, thus the issues on this complicated process cannot be discovered through unified management. In this context, the market accountability model restricts the laws showed by the authority and profits from external factors. Harmoniously, it gives opportunities for parents to choose the school for their children and provides them the option to change the school when they are not satisfied with the situations or the schools. It can be drawn that this kind of accountability offers various opportunities in decision making for parents. Another aspect of this model is the policies which are considered for private schools, charter schools, or any competitive financial systems for education by which the schools should give a report about the performance status of children and the children will be supported by the government based on their performance (Spencer, 2006).

PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

In this model, the bureaucratic tools are not able to manage the educational system very effective and efficient because the educational system in the professional model is significantly technical and complex. The model refers to the idea of using suitable authorities and highly qualified teachers with a high level of knowledge. Thus, the model suggests that there must be some standards to have such a qualified teacher who is responsible for children, parents, authorities, and also community (Bruns et al., 2011).

ACCOUNTABILITY AND STANDARDS

One prominent trend in line with other trends in post method areas such as identity, World Englishes, and culture is standards movement. According to Richards and Schmidt (2010), standards movement looks for educational accountability through developing and improving standards in curriculum domains, which is to say standards are connected with the educational system.

Since we live in the age of accountability, teachers and schools are responsible for their student's performance. The concept of accountability has a dynamic sense, in which it is not only delivering reports to authorities but also its responsibility to ensure the capacity of different groups to be effective (Robinson and Varley, 1998). Accountability, standards movement, and standards are defined according to the Longman dictionary of applied linguistics as follow:

"the answerability of all those involved in applied linguistics for the quality of their work ... language program administrators are accountable to clients who pay for special courses, as well as to students for the quality of instruction; and public-school program administrators are accountable to parents and other members of the public. Accountability includes the documentation and reporting of procedures used to develop curriculum and courses and practices used in the hiring of teachers, selection of materials, evaluation of teachers and courses, and assessment of learners and learning outcomes" (P.5).

Richards and Schmidt (2013) reported that standard movement occurs in the US and some other countries in which they seek to certify the educational accountability system through evolving national standards in order to achieve various zones in the curriculum. This leads to the progression of educational goals by providing a pure description of thoughts and performances which are expected in the curriculum to be operationalized. In language learning and language teaching, the standards are educational objectives for learning, which increase the expectations in the curriculum and learning.

Maftoon and Taie (2016) believed that standards movement is a prominent factor in curriculum development, which is investigated to achieve educational accountability through developing national standards for different curriculum domains. The role of these standards is so dominant that it cannot be ignored. Standards seek for expectations and encourage consistency. Based on Davies (2008), standards are a requirement of accountability, and consequently, the philosophy of needs analysis put focuses on standards in curriculum development.

According to South Australian Accountability Curriculum (2005), in order to understand the meaning of the notion of accountability and standards, the purpose of it must be taken into account. The purpose has roots in the dimension of curriculum accountability and responsibilities of learners, teachers, and state office employees. These responsibilities relate to providing progression and improvement of learners' outcomes. These responsibilities are accessible via four dimensions of curriculum accountability. The first one is administrating a curriculum that is suitable for learners' diversity. The second one is providing dynamic feedback of the students through assessment. The third one is implementing the program according to the analysis of the students and other data. And the fourth and last dimension is presenting the outcomes and curriculum standards which are related to the learners, parents, and the community. Thus, administrating a responsive curriculum is required, and learners have a few duties on their shoulders like developing their knowledge to achieve appropriate methodology or taking part in the construction of materials and activities.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND LANGUAGE PLANNING

The accountability movement started in 1990 and peaked in 2000. According to the National Research Council (1999), accountability is a key issue in the enhancement of the educational system. Accountability structure contains mechanisms to place consequences on the result of performance assessment. That is to say; it focuses on students' performance by which schools will be accountable to the states. Traditionally, states and schools and institutions followed some rules and some laws related to education, and the funds were spent according to the rules. Thus, it can be said that the focus was on input. For example, the number of textbooks existed in the school library,

the number of employees and staff. Then focusing on input changed to outcomes and mainly student achievement outcomes which were called by the National Governors Association (1986), a horse trade, in which the teachers, policymakers, stakeholders and whoever has a close relationship to students can meet the needs of the students. This new scheme of accountability is designed for teachers and administrators. It wants to encourage them to create, invent, and develop purposeful and efficient curriculum and instructional programs to enhance students' performance. Accountability mechanisms wish to find which school has to succeed in the educational process and which school is failing.

There are some challenging issues in planning and designing the means of accountability. For example, the challenges are the respond of the school to the accountability pressure, the process of external and internal accountability, and their effects on educational goals and desires (National Research Council, 1999).

The first step and critical issue to understand the process of accountability is to figure out who is accountable. The Committee on Appropriate Test Use of the National Research Council asserted that high-stake decisions like promotion, should not "automatically be made on the basis of a single test but should be buttressed by other relevant information about students' knowledge and skills, such as grades and teacher recommendations" the second step is to understand the goal and the purpose of accountability which encourage schools to concentrate their attempts on enhancing students' performance (National Research Council, 1999, p.279).

Accountability can also improve the quality of instruction of the classroom by which instructor evaluate a system that keeps instructors and schools to particular standards for instruction and compare instructor's production of pupil outcomes to others in their school. Nowadays, new accountability mechanisms are known as new policies. They are revising the instructor's evaluation process in order to have a more exact and precise criterion for school accountability. Having these two policies seek to improve and enhance students' achievement through how instructions are presented and how students learn those instructions (Coburn, Hill, and Spillane, 2016).

Based on Coburn, Hill, and Spillane's (2016), curriculum narrowing was a fundamental shortcoming of the accountability movement at the beginning. The challenges have changed, and new policies like the new teacher and accountability mechanisms are used to solve these challenges.

In order to explain the implementation of accountability in policies, there were two theories: the first one is on how national policy is able to have effects on schools and classrooms through standard-based subjects. The second one is that local implementation and domestic policy are strictly related to district policies and educational infrastructures. But in the third millennium, ideal investigation and opportunity exist. In other words, we have the integration of alignment and accountability, and we must search for how alignment and accountability interact with each other for districts, schools, and classrooms.

CONCLUSION

Since we live in the age of accountability, Coburn, Hill, and Spillane (2016) asserted that following the influence of standards and interaction between policies and Standards is critically significant. Thus, we must understand how standards effects teaching and

learning. Besides the policies which are designed to have impacts on the aspect of classrooms, like the content and the theme of what the instructors teach, the level of students' proficiency, the standard based reform, and accountability reform. It should be mentioned that very limited researches have been done on accountability in developing policies on language learning. In this respect, it suggests that every community must consider accountability in relation to standards and policymaking in education and conduct researches in any specific context, specifically in language learning policy and planning.

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