SCHOOL - SITE ACCOUNTABILITY: THE LANGUAGE USED IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study examines the variety of ways in which teachers express their own accountability. Based on the language used by teachers, the study aims to explicate how school-site accountability is perceived by the teachers. Factors to be analyzed: the content of each answer, based on three dimensions: 1.individual conceptions of responsibility; 2.shared expectations among school participant and stakeholders 3.internal & external accountability mechanisms (formal or informal). Survey data were taken from a sample consisted of 91 teachers, who filled in a self-report and respond the same question: As a teacher, what are you accountable for? The open-ended answer was limited in no more that 5 sentences. The results show that there is a little cohesion among the teachers; the used language is very different and it converges in individual responsibility; the accountability is constructed, mostly, on personal values and beliefs.

Key words: *school-site accountability, strategy, responsibility, teacher, language used*

1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Recently, accountability has been the dominant feature of very reform efforts in schools (Elmore, 2007; Wagner, 1998). For Wagner (1989:16-8), the pressure for more accountability in education can be traced to two basic concerns: a. the over rising costs in public services and whether they are justified by educational outcomes; b. schools are failing for an unacceptable number of youths. The specific nature of an accountability policy, mechanism or tool depends on the answers to five questions: 1.What level of accountability is called for? 2. Who is expected to provide the account? 3. To whom is the account owed? 4. What is to be accounted for? 5. What are the consequences of providing an account? (Wagner, quoted in Leithwood, 2005). Elmore (2007: 133-8) differ internal accountability from the external one. In his work, Elmore (Ibid:138) explains that internal accountability (school – site accountability**)** has three main dimensions: 1.individual conceptions of responsibility; 2.shared expectations among school participant and stakeholders 3.internal & external accountability mechanisms (formal or informal). For Elmore, understanding these factors (Ibid, 192) is a major precondition to understanding how and why schools respond the way they do to external pressures for accountability.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH AND HYPOTHESES

This study was inspired by one of the works of Richard Elmore, "When accountability knocks, will anyone answer" (Elmore, 2007: 133-200). The start point is that schools, in response to external systems of accountability, construct their own internal systems of accountability, or site-school accountability, which may be strong/ collective or weak/ atomized. The site-school accountability system is analyzed through the language used by teacher. From the five answers that define accountability policy is taken in consideration only the one, given to: What is to be accounted for? There was not part of the study a preliminary introduction/explanation of the accountability definition to the teachers. Based on the language used by teachers, the study aims to explicate: how much the individual conceptions of accountability are uniform, based on the same coded methodology of 16 items and measured through them. The hypothesis is that schools construct their own accountability, shaped more from the individual beliefs and values of teachers (individual conceptions of responsibility).

3. METHODOLOGY

The research has quantitative nature and is content analysis. Survey data were taken from a sample (*ad libitum*) consisted of 91 teachers, part of 3 school of Tirana city, who filled in a self-report questionnaire and responded the same question: As a teacher, what are you accountable for? The open-ended answer was limited in no more that 5 sentences. The type of three schools was the same: 9-years' schools. The chosen schools were suggested by the Directory of Tirana City, upon request. Each of the schools, for ethical purpose, is named, respectively, 1, 2 and 3.

In order to distinguish, as much as possible, the fine variations of language used and to have a precise estimation of the degree of uniformity, all the answers of teachers was coded through 17 indicators (items):

1. Security of pupils in school environment 2. Pupils must feel good during instruction time 3. Achievement of pupils in "my" subject 4.Without answer 5. The quality of teaching 6. Citizenship education/ education proces 7. Class management 8. Relationship 9. Order in school 10. Be correct, as teacher, at school 11. Documentation 12. Program/ objective 13. Professional development 14. Care for child health 15. Pupils Wellbeing 16. For my pupils 17. Evaluation process.

Each of the indicators (items) is clustered in one of three Elmore dimensions (aspects) of accountability. A very strong criterion for classifying an item in one or other dimension was the language used from teachers. For example, the all answers that have as part "the quality of teaching", the language used was very personal, referring "the quality of teaching" as individual achievement, from the personal perspective and not as a expectations or pressure from outside.

Table 1. The dimensions of site-school accountability, according to language used.

Nr. of items	Individual conceptions of responsibility (Weight: 37.5 %)	Shared expectations among school participant and stakeholders (Weight: 31.3 %)	Internal & external accountability mechanisms (Weight: 31.3 %)
1	Achievement of pupils in "my" subject (3)	Pupils must feel good during instruction time (2)	Security of pupils in school environment (1)
2	Relationship (8)	Class management (7)	Citizenship education/ education process (6)
3	Be correct, as teacher, at school (10)	Professional development (13)	Order in school (9)
4	For my pupils (16)	Care for child health (14)	Documentation (11)
5	Evaluation process (17)	Pupils Wellbeing (15)	Program/ objective (12)
6	The quality of teaching (5)		

4. MEASURES

The data analyses are made on SSPS and are applied some simple statistical techniques. Each of these dimensions, was scored into a scale from 0-5 (0, the answer doesn't contain any of the items; 1, the answer contains one item; 4 the answer contains four items).

Example a: The answer of teacher 1 from school 1 was: I am accountable for the security of pupils at school environment; they must for feel good during instruction time; for the realization of minimal curriculum objectives. This answer was coded as: security of pupils at school environment = accountability mechanisms; must for feel good during instruction time = shared expectations; realization of minimal curriculum objectives = Individual responsibility. After, this answer was scored

with 3 items and this scale: 1 (once) accountability mechanisms; 1 (once) shared expectations; 1 (once) Individual responsibility.

Example b: The answer of teacher 9 from school 1 was: I am accountable for the achievements of pupils in "my" subject, relationship at school and pupils must feel good during instruction time. This answer was coded as: the achievements of pupils in "my" subject = Individual responsibility; relationship at school = Individual responsibility; pupils must feel good during instruction time = shared expectations. This answer was scored with 2 items and this scale: 1 (once) shared expectations; 2 (twice) individual responsibility.

Table 2.1. Individual conceptions of responsibility, how often is used

		Individual conceptions of responsibility				Total
		not in answer	once	twice	3 times	
Number of items	1 item	**4**	**6**	**0**	**0**	**10**
	2 items	**2**	**11**	**2**	**0**	**15**
	3 items	**6**	**9**	**18**	**0**	**33**
	4 items	**4**	**2**	**9**	**4**	**19**
	5 items	**0**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**2**
Total		**16**	**28**	**31**	**4**	**79**

Individual conceptions of responsibility

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not in answer	**16**	**17.6**	**20.3**	**20.3**
	once	**28**	**30.8**	**35.4**	**55.7**
	twice	**31**	**34.1**	**39.2**	**94.9**
	3 times	**4**	**4.4**	**5.1**	**100.0**
	Total	**79**	**86.8**	**100.0**	
Missing	without answer	**12**	**13.2**		
Total		**91**	**100.0**		

			Individual conceptions of responsibility				Total
			not in answer	once	twice	3 times	
Number of items	1 item	Count	**4**	**6**	**0**	**0**	**10**
		% within Individual conceptions of responsibility	**25.0%**	**21.4%**	**0.0%**	**0.0%**	**12.7%**
	2 items	Count	**2**	**11**	**2**	**0**	**15**
		% within Individual conceptions of responsibility	**12.5%**	**39.3%**	**6.5%**	**0.0%**	**19.0%**
	3 items	Count	**6**	**9**	**18**	**0**	**33**
		% within Individual conceptions of responsibility	**37.5%**	**32.1%**	**58.1%**	**0.0%**	**41.8%**
	4 items	Count	**4**	**2**	**9**	**4**	**19**
		% within Individual conceptions of responsibility	**25.0%**	**7.1%**	**29.0%**	**100.0%**	**24.1%**
	5 items	Count	**0**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**2**
		% within Individual conceptions of responsibility	**0.0%**	**0.0%**	**6.5%**	**0.0%**	**2.5%**
Total		Count	**16**	**28**	**31**	**4**	**79**
		% within Individual conceptions of responsibility	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 2.2. Shared expectations among teachers, how often is used

		Shared expectations among teachers			Total
		not in answer	once	twice	
Number of items	1 item	**6**	**4**	**0**	**10**
	2 items	**11**	**3**	**1**	**15**
	3 items	**15**	**14**	**4**	**33**
	4 items	**10**	**7**	**2**	**19**
	5 items	**0**	**1**	**1**	**2**
Total		**42**	**29**	**8**	**79**

Shared expectations among teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not in answer	**42**	**46.2**	**53.2**	**53.2**
	once	**29**	**31.9**	**36.7**	**89.9**
	twice	**8**	**8.8**	**10.1**	**100.0**
	Total	**79**	**86.8**	**100.0**	
Missing	Without answer	**12**	**13.2**		
Total		**91**	**100.0**		

			Shared expectations among teachers			Total
			not in answer	once	twice	
Number of items	1 item	Count	**6**	**4**	**0**	**10**
		% within Shared expectations among teachers	**14.3%**	**13.8%**	**0.0%**	**12.7%**
	2 items	Count	**11**	**3**	**1**	**15**
		% within Shared expectations among teachers	**26.2%**	**10.3%**	**12.5%**	**19.0%**
	3 items	Count	**15**	**14**	**4**	**33**
		% within Shared expectations among teachers	**35.7%**	**48.3%**	**50.0%**	**41.8%**
	4 items	Count	**10**	**7**	**2**	**19**
		% within Shared expectations among teachers	**23.8%**	**24.1%**	**25.0%**	**24.1%**
	5 items	Count	**0**	**1**	**1**	**2**
		% within Shared expectations among teachers	**0.0%**	**3.4%**	**12.5%**	**2.5%**
Total		Count	**42**	**29**	**8**	**79**
		% within Shared expectations among teachers	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 2.3. Internal & external accountability mechanisms, how often is used

		Internal & external accountability mechanisms				Total
		Not in answer	once	twice	3 times	
Number of items	1 item	**9**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**10**
	2 items	**5**	**10**	**0**	**0**	**15**
	3 items	**9**	**19**	**5**	**0**	**33**
	4 items	**2**	**6**	**6**	**5**	**19**

5 items	**0**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**2**
Total	**25**	**37**	**12**	**5**	**79**

Internal & external accountability mechanisms

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not in answer	25	27.5	31.6	31.6
	once	37	40.7	46.8	78.5
	twice	12	13.2	15.2	93.7
	3 times	5	5.5	6.3	100.0
	Total	79	86.8	100.0	
Missing	without answer	12	13.2		
Total		91	100.0		

			Internal & external accountability mechanisms				Total
			Not in answer	once	twice	3 times	
Number of items	1 item	Count	**9**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**10**
		% within Internal & external accountability mechanisms	**36.0%**	**2.7%**	**0.0%**	**0.0%**	**12.7%**
	2 items	Count	**5**	**10**	**0**	**0**	**15**
		% within Internal & external accountability mechanisms	**20.0%**	**27.0%**	**0.0%**	**0.0%**	**19.0%**
	3 items	Count	**9**	**19**	**5**	**0**	**33**
		% within Internal & external accountability mechanisms	**36.0%**	**51.4%**	**41.7%**	**0.0%**	**41.8%**
	4 items	Count	**2**	**6**	**6**	**5**	**19**
		% within Internal & external accountability mechanisms	**8.0%**	**16.2%**	**50.0%**	**100.0%**	**24.1%**
	5 items	Count	**0**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**2**
		% within Internal & external accountability mechanisms	**0.0%**	**2.7%**	**8.3%**	**0.0%**	**2.5%**
Total		Count	**25**	**37**	**12**	**5**	**79**
		% within Internal & external accountability mechanisms	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 3. Mean, median, mode, std. Deviation, variance, Range, Minimum, Maximum, Sum, Percentiles.

		Number of items	Individual conceptions of responsibility	Shared expectations among teachers	Internal & external accountability mechanisms
N	Valid	**79**	**79**	**79**	**79**
	Missing	**12**	**12**	**12**	**12**
Mean		**2.8481**	**1.2911**	**.5696**	**.9620**
Median		**3.0000**	**1.0000**	**.0000**	**1.0000**
Mode		**3.00**	**2.00**	**.00**	**1.00**
Std. Deviation		**1.01386**	**.84961**	**.67337**	**.85400**
Variance		**1.028**	**.722**	**.453**	**.729**
Range		**4.00**	**3.00**	**2.00**	**3.00**
Minimum		**1.00**	**.00**	**.00**	**.00**
Maximum		**5.00**	**3.00**	**2.00**	**3.00**
Sum		**225.00**	**102.00**	**45.00**	**76.00**
Percentiles	25	**2.0000**	**1.0000**	**.0000**	**.0000**
	50	**3.0000**	**1.0000**	**.0000**	**1.0000**
	75	**4.0000**	**2.0000**	**1.0000**	**1.0000**

Figure 1. The distribution of items for any answer

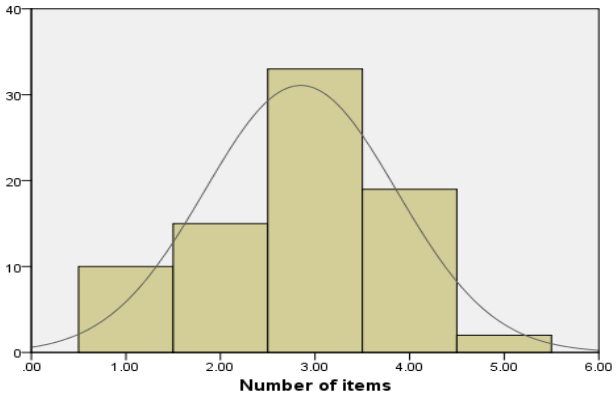


Figure 2. The Individual conception of responsibility – the distribution for any answer

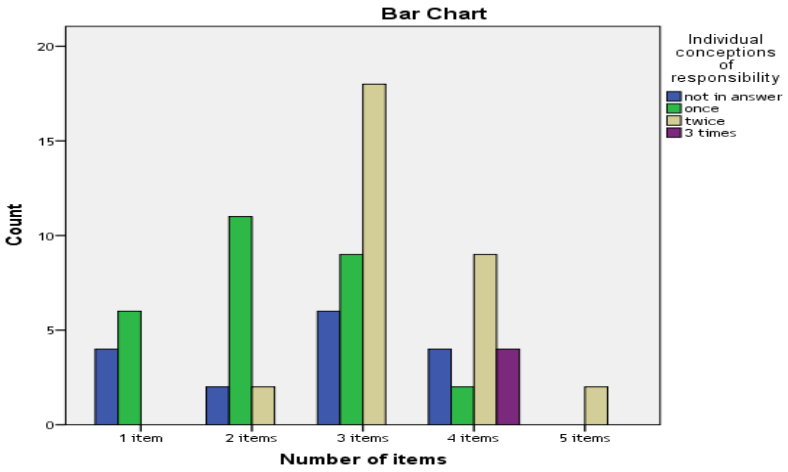


Figure 3. The shared expectations among teachers – the distribution for any answer

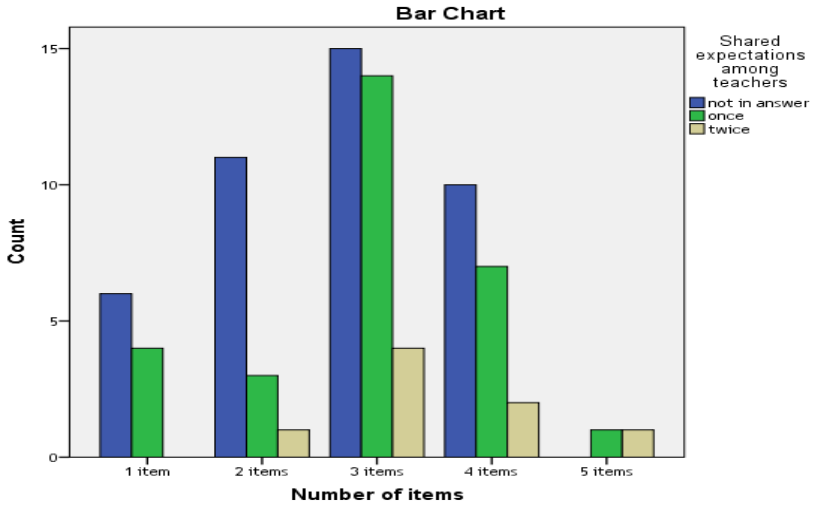
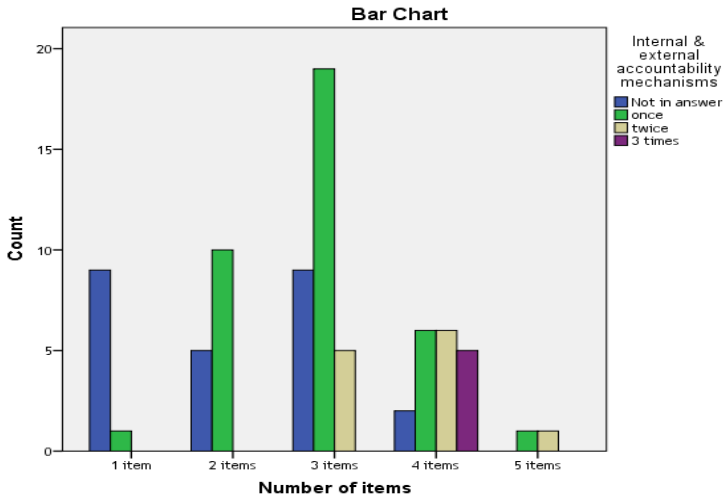


Figure 4. Internal &external accountability mechanism – the distribution for any answer



5. RESULTS

The examination of mean values revealed that number of items containing in each answer is significantly higher than those of each dimension of accountability. So, the language is not uniform. Further, comparing the mean for each of the dimension, Individual conceptions of responsibility has the highest values. Applying Estimated Distribution Parameters we have, respectfully: normal distribution of "Individual conceptions of responsibility" has a location of 1.2911 and scale of .84961; normal distribution of "Shared expectations among teachers" has a location of .5696 and scale of .67337; normal distribution of "Internal & external accountability mechanisms" has a location of .9620 and scale of .85400.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the present study was to assess how much the individual conceptions of accountability constructed at school, based on the language used by teacher are uniform. The results show that there is a little cohesion among the teachers; the used language is very different and it converges in individual responsibility; the accountability is constructed, mostly, on personal values and beliefs.

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