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Hal Cafone

Ron Cramer

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MAIN IDEAS AND IMPORTANT DETAILS

By Hal Cafone
Ron Cramer

As the demand for "accountability" grows, the writers of this column thought it necessary to refer our readers to various sources of information on that controversial topic.

Entire issues of educational journals have been devoted to accountability in one form or another. For example, see the December, 1970, issue of the *Phi Delta Kappan* as well as the Fall, 1971, volume of the *Journal of Research and Development in Education*. For those in need of bibliographies, write to ERIC/CRIER Clearinghouse on Reading, 200 Pine Hall, Bloomington, Indiana, 47401, for "Accountability" by Saretsky, Blanton and Laffey or refer to *Audiovisual Instruction*, May, 1971, where Roger Domjahn has compiled an "Annotated Bibliography on Accountability", pp. 93-101.

More recently, the June, 1972, issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* has two interesting articles you may want to read. "The Many Faces of Educational Accountability" by Gene Glass delves into the meaning of accountability and discusses six (6) activities (performance contracting and behavioral objectives among them) currently associated with it. The second article by Rosenshine and McGraw, "Issues in Assessing Teacher Accountability in Public Education", focuses on *outcome accountability*, which refers to changes that take place in the student, and *transaction accountability*, which includes assessment of teacher-student interaction and use of teaching materials in the learning situation. Warning

the readers about our inadequate information on education, the authors decry the fact that "Now, we are seeking to assign responsibilities and to hold people accountable when we lack adequate instruments to measure important aspects of student growth and are unable to specify precisely the processes which lead to growth."

Other voices have been raised concerning the lack of adequate evaluative instruments. Stephen Klein's article in the January, 1971, issue of *Evaluation Comments* (Vol. 2, No. 4) from the Center for the Study of Evaluation at the University of California at Los Angeles, entitled "The Uses and Limitations of Standardized Tests in Meeting the Demands For Accountability" points out four such inadequacies: (1) likelihood of poor overlap between the test's and school's objectives and the priorities associated with these objectives, (2) inappropriate test designs and formats for the target populations, (3) difficult and confusing test instructions and administration procedures that introduce irrelevant facts into a student's score, and (4) low test validity in the sense that the tests do not really assess the kinds of student's skills and abilities that their titles imply they do.

Perhaps the most interesting writing on the topic was done recently by Allen Berger in "Performance Contracting and Educational Accountability: Past, Present, and Future," in the April, 1972, issue of *Elements*. He points out that "...performance contracting is not a unique concept, for nearly one hundred years ago a

similar idea involving payments by results was put into practice in Canada, the only essential difference being that the payments went to schools rather than commercial firms and many of the current concerns (e.g., teaching for the test, etc.) were present then." What was the effect of this practice in the Province of Ontario? Berger quotes from Phillip's *The Development of Education in Canada*, "The effect was, of course, to narrow all school effort to the cramming of content most likely to be tested in the subjects prescribed for examination. The system also caused teachers to concentrate on the average and slightly below average pupils, with whom their efforts would pay dividends through a larger percentage of passes, and to neglect other students — the bright because they would pass

anyway, and the dull because they were hopeless or at best a poor risk in terms of expenditure of time. But payment by results undoubtedly did lash both teachers and pupils to work harder at drill and review in order to avoid failure."

However, "... there was a storm of protest against the sacrifice of all other educational values for the attainment of this end. In 1883 payment by results was abandoned in the province."

Berger wonders "... whether the State of Michigan knows what happened in the Province of Ontario. For the state ... has now linked its share of 'federal compensatory funds (\$23 million) to student achievement gains as measured by standardized tests'."

(Ron Cramer and Hal Cafone are on the faculty at Oakland University.)